



# Philosophy of Religion

An Anthology

SEVENTH EDITION

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should remember a lot of what A remembers; furthermore, B should remember at least some of what A takes to be “present experience.” There should also be some continuity among their goals, beliefs, desires, and other mental states. (This is not to deny that goals, beliefs, and desires change over time. But the idea is that if B exists, say, a mere ten seconds later than A, and if B has beliefs, desires, goals, and memories virtually *none* of which overlap with A’s, then B just is not the same person as A.) Olen favors the memory—or, psychological continuity—criterion, and he argues furthermore in favor of the possibility of life after death. On his view, the mind is like computer software: just as the same software can be transferred to different hardware, so too a mind can be transferred to a different brain (or other supporting medium). But to say that the mind can be transferred to a different medium is just to say that the mind can *change bodies*; and if it can change bodies, he contends, then the mind can survive the death of the body.

In our fourth reading, Lynne Rudder Baker examines the prospects for developing a satisfying doctrine of resurrection. She discusses some of the conceptual problems posed by the doctrine of resurrection, as well as the way in which different theories about personal identity over time give rise to different views about what resurrection consists in. She then defends her own favored view: the “constitution” view of human persons and their resurrection. On her view, human persons are material substances (so, not immaterial souls) that are constituted by but not identical to human bodies. The relationship between a person and her body is the same relation as that between a bronze statue and the piece of bronze that constitutes it. Resurrecting a human person is, then, just a matter of getting a body (though not necessarily the same body) to re-constitute the human person. (Note, then, that she apparently rejects the conceptual distinction between resurrection and reincarnation mentioned earlier in this introduction.)

Finally, we close this section with an essay on the Hindu view of life, death, and reincarnation by Prasannatma Das.

## VII.1

# Immortality of the Soul

PLATO

*Plato (c. 427–347 B.C.E.) lived in Athens, was a student of Socrates, and is almost universally recognized as one of the most important philosophers who ever lived. Indeed, it has been remarked that*

*the entire history of Western philosophy is but a footnote to Plato. The excerpts that comprise the following selection concern Plato's views about the soul. According to Plato, human beings are composed of two substances: body and soul. Of these, the true self is the soul, which lives on after the death of the body. All of Plato's writings are in the form of dialogues. In the first dialogue (from Alcibiades I) Socrates argues with Alcibiades about the true self. The second dialogue (from the Phaedo) takes place in prison, where Socrates awaits his execution. He is offered a way of escape but rejects it, arguing that it would be immoral to flee such a fate at this time and that he is certain of a better life after death.*

### FROM ALCIBIADES I

SOC. And is self-knowledge an easy thing, and was he to be lightly esteemed who inscribed the text on the temple at Delphi? Or is self-knowledge a difficult thing, which few are able to attain?

AL. At times, I fancy, Socrates, that anybody can know himself; at other times, the task appears to be very difficult.

SOC. But whether easy or difficult, Alcibiades, still there is no other way; knowing what we are, we shall know how to take care of ourselves, and if we are ignorant we shall not know.

AL. That is true.

SOC. Well, then, let us see in what way the self-existent can be discovered by us; that will give us a chance to discover our own existence, which without that we can never know.

AL. You say truly.

SOC. Come, now, I beseech you, tell me with whom you are conversing?—with whom but with me?

AL. Yes.

SOC. As I am with you?

AL. Yes.

SOC. That is to say, I, Socrates, am talking?

AL. Yes.

SOC. And I in talking use words?

AL. Certainly.

SOC. And talking and using words are, as you would say, the same?

AL. Very true.

SOC. And the user is not the same as the thing which he uses?

AL. What do you mean?

SOC. I will explain: the shoemaker, for example, uses a square tool, and a circular tool, and other tools for cutting?

AL. Yes.

SOC. But the tool is not the same as the cutter and user of the tool?

AL. Of course not.

SOC. And in the same way the instrument of the harper is to be distinguished from the harper himself?

AL. He is.

SOC. Now the question which I asked was whether you conceive the user to be always different from that which he uses?

AL. I do.

SOC. Then what shall we say of the shoemaker? Does he cut with his tools only or with his hands?

AL. With his hands as well.

SOC. He uses his hands too?

AL. Yes.

SOC. And does he use his eyes in cutting leather?

AL. He does.

SOC. And we admit that the user is not the same with the things which he uses?

AL. Yes.

SOC. Then the shoemaker and the harper are to be distinguished from the hands and feet which they use?

AL. That is clear.

SOC. And does not a man use the whole body?

AL. Certainly.

SOC. And that which uses is different from that which is used?

AL. True.

SOC. Then a man is not the same as his own body?

AL. That is the inference.

SOC. What is he, then?

AL. I cannot say.

SOC. Nay, you can say that he is the user of the body.

AL. Yes.

SOC. And the user of the body is the soul?

AL. Yes, the soul.

SOC. And the soul rules?

AL. Yes.

SOC. Let me make an assertion which will, I think, be universally admitted.

AL. What is that?

SOC. That man is one of three things.

AL. What are they?

SOC. Soul, body, or the union of the two.

AL. Certainly.

SOC. But did we not say that the actual ruling principle of the body is man?

AL. Yes, we did.

SOC. And does the body rule over itself?

AL. Certainly not.

SOC. It is subject, as we were saying?

AL. Yes.

SOC. Then that is not what we are seeking?

AL. It would seem not.

SOC. But may we say that the union of the two rules over the body, and consequently that this is man?

AL. Very likely.

SOC. The most unlikely of all things: for if one of the members is subject, the two united cannot possibly rule.

AL. True.

SOC. But since neither the body, nor the union of the two, is man, either man has no real existence, or the soul is man?

AL. Just so.

SOC. Would you have a more precise proof that the soul is man?

AL. No; I think that the proof is sufficient.

SOC. If the proof, although not quite precise, is fair, that is enough for us; more precise proof will be supplied when we have discovered that which we were led to omit, from a fear that the inquiry would be too much protracted.

AL. What was that?

SOC. What I meant, when I said that absolute existence must be first considered; but now, instead of absolute existence, we have been considering the nature of individual existence, and that may be sufficient; for surely there is nothing belonging to us which has more absolute existence than the soul?

AL. There is nothing.

SOC. Then we may truly conceive that you and I are conversing with one another, soul to soul?

AL. Very true.

SOC. And that is just what I was saying—that I, Socrates, am not arguing or talking with the face of Alcibiades, but with the real Alcibiades; and that is with his soul.

AL. True. . . .

#### FROM THE PHAEDO

SOCRATES: What again shall we say of the actual acquirement of knowledge?—is the body, if invited to share in the inquiry, a hinderer or a helper? I mean to say, have sight and hearing any truth in them? Are they not, as the poets are always telling us, inaccurate witnesses? and yet, if even they are inaccurate and indistinct, what is to be said of the other senses?—for you will allow that they are the best of them?

Certainly, he replied.

Then when does the soul attain truth?—for in attempting to consider anything in company with the body she is obviously deceived.

Yes, that is true.

Then must not existence be revealed to her in thought, if at all?

Yes.

And thought is best when the mind is gathered into herself and none of these things trouble her—neither sounds nor sights nor pain nor any pleasure,—when she has as little as possible to do with the body, and has no bodily sense or feeling, but is aspiring after being?

That is true.

And in this the philosopher dishonors the body; his soul runs away from the body and desires to be alone and by herself?

That is true.

Well, but there is another thing, Simmias: Is there or is there not an absolute justice?

Assuredly there is.

And an absolute beauty and absolute good?

Of course.

But did you ever behold any of them with your eyes?

Certainly not.

Or did you ever reach them with any other bodily sense? (and I speak not of these alone, but of absolute greatness, and health, and strength, and of the essence or true nature of everything). Has the reality of them ever been perceived by you through the bodily organs? or rather, is not the nearest approach to the knowledge of their several natures made by him who so orders his intellectual vision as to have the most exact conception of the essence of that which he considers?

Certainly.

And he attains to the knowledge of them in their highest purity who goes to each of them with the mind alone, not allowing when in the act of thought the intrusion or introduction of sight or any other sense in the company of reason, but with the very light of the mind in her clearness penetrates into the very light of truth in each; he has got rid, as far as he can, of eyes and ears and of the whole body, which he conceives of only as a

disturbing element, hindering the soul from the acquisition of knowledge when in company with her—is not this the sort of man who, if ever man did, is likely to attain the knowledge of existence?

There is admirable truth in that, Socrates, replied Simmias.

And when they consider all this, must not true philosophers make a reflection, of which they will speak to one another in such words as these: We have found, they will say, a path of speculation which seems to bring us and the argument to the conclusion, that while we are in the body, and while the soul is mingled with this mass of evil our desire will not be satisfied, and our desire is of the truth. For the body is a source of endless trouble to us by reason of the mere requirement of food; and also is liable to diseases which overtake and impede us in the search after truth: and by filling us so full of loves, and lusts, and fears, and fancies, and idols, and every sort of folly, prevents our ever having, as people say, so much as a thought. From whence come wars, and fightings, and factions? whence but from the body and the lusts of the body? For wars are occasioned by the love of money, and money has to be acquired for the sake and in the service of the body; and in consequence of all these things the time which ought to be given to philosophy is lost. Moreover, if there is time and an inclination toward philosophy, yet the body introduces a turmoil and confusion and fear into the course of speculation, and hinders us from seeing the truth; and all experience shows that if we would have pure knowledge of anything we must be quit of the body, and the soul in herself must behold all things in themselves: then I suppose that we shall attain that which we desire, and of which we say that we are lovers, and that is wisdom; not while we live, but after death, as the argument shows; for if while in company with the body, the soul cannot have pure knowledge, one of two things seems to follow—either knowledge is not to be attained at all, or, if at all, after death. For then, and not till then, the soul will be in herself alone and without the body. In this present life, I reckon that we make the nearest approach to knowledge when we

have the least possible concern or interest in the body, and are not saturated with the bodily nature, but remain pure until the hour when God himself is pleased to release us. And then the foolishness of the body will be cleared away and we shall be pure and hold converse with other pure souls, and know of ourselves the clear light everywhere; and this is surely the light of truth. For no impure thing is allowed to approach the pure. These are the sort of words, Simmias, which the true lovers of wisdom cannot help saying to one another, and thinking. You will agree with me in that?

Certainly, Socrates.

But if this is true, O my friend, then there is great hope that, going whither I go, I shall there be satisfied with that which has been the chief concern of you and me in our past lives. And now that the hour of departure is appointed to me, this is the hope with which I depart, and not I only, but every man who believes that he has his mind purified.

Certainly, replied Simmias.

And what is purification but the separation of the soul from the body, as I was saying before; the habit of the soul gathering and collecting herself into herself, out of all the courses of the body; the dwelling in her own place alone, as in another life, so also in this, as far as she can; the release of the soul from the chains of the body?

Very true, he said.

And what is that which is termed death, but this very separation and release of the soul from the body? To be sure, he said.

And the true philosophers, and they only, study and are eager to release the soul. Is not the separation and release of the soul from the body their especial study?

That is true.

And as I was saying at first, there would be a ridiculous contradiction in men studying to live as nearly as they can in a state of death, and yet repining when death comes.

Certainly.

Then Simmias, as the true philosophers are ever studying death, to them, of all men, death is the least terrible. Look at the matter in this way: how inconsistent of them to have been always

enemies of the body, and wanting to have the soul alone, and when this is granted to them, to be trembling and repining; instead of rejoicing at their departing to that place where, when they arrive, they hope to gain that which in life they loved (and this was wisdom), and at the same time to be rid of the company of their enemy. Many a man has been willing to go to the world below in the hope of seeing there an earthly love, or wife, or son, and conversing with them. And will he who is a true lover of wisdom, and is persuaded in like manner that only in the world below he can worthily enjoy her, still repine at death? Will he not depart with joy? Surely, he will, my friend, if he be a true philosopher. For he will have a firm conviction that there only, and nowhere else, he can find wisdom in her purity. And if this be true, he would be very absurd, as I was saying, if he were to fear death.

SOCRATES: And were we not saying long ago that the soul when using the body as an instrument of perception, that is to say, when using the sense of sight or hearing or some other sense (for the meaning of perceiving through the body is perceiving through the senses),—were we not saying that the soul too is then dragged by the body into the region of the changeable, and wanders and is confused; the world spins round her, and she is like a drunkard when under their influence?

Very true.

But when returning into herself she reflects; then she passes into the realm of purity, and eternity, and immortality, and unchangeableness, which are her kindred, and with them she ever lives, when she is by herself and is not let or hindered; then she ceases from her erring ways, and being in communion with the unchanging is unchanging. And this state of the soul is called wisdom?

That is well and truly said, Socrates, he replied.

And to which class is the soul more nearly alike and akin, as far as may be inferred from this argument, as well as from the preceding one?

I think, Socrates, that, in the opinion of every one who follows the argument, the soul will be

infinitely more like the unchangeable,—even the most stupid person will not deny that.

And the body is more like the changing?

Yes.

Yet once more consider the matter in this light: When the soul and the body are united, then nature orders the soul to rule and govern, and the body to obey and serve. Now which of these two

functions is akin to the divine? and which to the mortal? Does not the divine appear to you to be that which naturally orders and rules, and the mortal that which is subject and servant?

True.

And which does the soul resemble?

The soul resembles the divine, and the body the mortal,—there can be no doubt of that, Socrates.

## VII.2

# The Finality of Death

BERTRAND RUSSELL

*Bertrand Russell (1872–1970), once a student and tutor at Cambridge University, was one of the most significant philosophers and social critics of the twentieth century. In this short essay, Russell outlines some of the major objections to the idea of life after death. He argues that it is not reasonable to believe that our personality and memories will survive the destruction of our bodies. He claims that the inclination to believe in immortality comes from emotional factors, notably the fear of death.*

Before we can profitably discuss whether we shall continue to exist after death, it is well to be clear as to the sense in which a man is the same person as he was yesterday. Philosophers used to think that there were definite substances, the soul and the body, that each lasted on from day to day, that a soul, once created, continued to exist throughout all future time, whereas a body ceased temporarily from death till the resurrection of the body.

The part of this doctrine which concerns the present life is pretty certainly false. The matter of the body is continually changing by processes of nutriment and wastage. Even if it were not, atoms in physics are no longer supposed to have continuous existence; there is no sense in saying: this is the same atom as the one that existed a few minutes ago. The continuity of a human body is a matter of appearance and behavior, not of substance.

The same thing applies to the mind. We think and feel and act, but there is not, in addition to thoughts and feelings and actions, a bare entity, the mind or the soul, which does or suffers these occurrences. The mental continuity of a person is a continuity of habit and memory: there was yesterday one person whose feelings I can remember, and that person I regard as myself of yesterday; but, in fact, myself of yesterday was only certain mental occurrences which are now remembered and are regarded as part of the person who now recollects them. All that constitutes a person is a series of experiences connected by memory and by certain similarities of the sort we call habit.

If, therefore, we are to believe that a person survives death, we must believe that the memories and habits which constitute the person will continue to be exhibited in a new set of occurrences.

No one can prove that this will not happen. But it is easy to see that it is very unlikely. Our memories and habits are bound up with the structure of the brain, in much the same way in which a river is connected with the riverbed. The water in the river is always changing, but it keeps to the same course because previous rains have worn a channel. In like manner, previous events have worn a channel in the brain, and our thoughts flow along this channel. This is the cause of memory and mental habits. But the brain, as a structure, is dissolved at death, and memory therefore may be expected to be also dissolved. There is no more reason to think otherwise than to expect a river to persist in its old course after an earthquake has raised a mountain where a valley used to be.

All memory, and therefore (one may say) all minds, depend upon a property which is very noticeable in certain kinds of material structures but exists little if at all in other kinds. This is the property of forming habits as a result of frequent similar occurrences. For example: a bright light makes the pupils of the eyes contract; and if you repeatedly flash a light in a man's eyes and beat a gong at the same time, the gong alone will, in the end, cause his pupils to contract. This is a fact about the brain and nervous system—that is to say, about a certain

material structure. It will be found that exactly similar facts explain our response to language and our use of it, our memories and the emotions they arouse, our moral or immoral habits of behavior, and indeed everything that constitutes our mental personality, except the part determined by heredity. The part determined by heredity is handed on to our posterity but cannot, in the individual, survive the disintegration of the body. Thus both the hereditary and the acquired parts of a personality are, so far as our experience goes, bound up with the characteristics of certain bodily structures. We all know that memory may be obliterated by an injury to the brain, that a virtuous person may be rendered vicious by encephalitis lethargica, and, that a clever child can be turned into an idiot by lack of iodine. In view of such familiar facts, it seems scarcely probable that the mind survives the total destruction of brain structure which occurs at death.

It is not rational arguments but emotions that cause belief in a future life.

The most important of these emotions is fear of death, which is instinctive and biologically useful. If we genuinely and wholeheartedly believed in the future life, we should cease completely to fear death. The effects would be curious, and probably such as most of us would deplore. But our human and subhuman ancestors have fought and exterminated their enemies throughout many geological ages and have profited by courage; it is therefore an advantage to the victors in the struggle for life to be able, on occasion, to overcome the natural fear of death. Among animals and savages, instinctive pugnacity suffices for this purpose; but at a certain stage of development, as the Mohammedans first proved, belief in Paradise has considerable military value as reinforcing natural pugnacity. We should therefore admit that militarists are wise in encouraging the belief in immortality, always supposing that this belief does not become so profound as to produce indifference to the affairs of the world.

Another emotion which encourages the belief in survival is admiration of the excellence of man.

As the Bishop of Birmingham says, "His mind is a far finer instrument than anything that had appeared earlier—he knows right and wrong. He can build Westminster Abbey. He can make an airplane. He can calculate the distance of the sun. . . . Shall, then, man at death perish utterly? Does that incomparable instrument, his mind, vanish when life ceases?"

The Bishop proceeds to argue that "the universe has been shaped and is governed by an intelligent purpose," and that it would have been unintelligent, having made man, to let him perish.

To this argument there are many answers. In the first place, it has been found, in the scientific investigation of nature, that the intrusion of moral or aesthetic values has always been an obstacle to discovery. It used to be thought that the heavenly bodies must move in circles because the circle is the most perfect curve, that species must be immutable because God would only create what was perfect and what therefore stood in no need of improvement, that it was useless to combat epidemics except by repentance because they were sent as a punishment for sin, and so on. It has been found, however, that, so far as we can discover, nature is indifferent to our values and can only be understood by ignoring our notions of good and bad. The Universe may have a purpose, but nothing that we know suggests that, if so, this purpose has any similarity to ours.

Nor is there in this anything surprising. Dr. Barnes tells us that man "knows right and wrong." But, in fact, as anthropology shows, men's views of right and wrong have varied to such an extent that no single item has been permanent. We cannot say, therefore, that man knows right and wrong, but only that some men do. Which men? Nietzsche argued in favor of an ethic profoundly different from Christ's, and some powerful governments have accepted his teaching. If knowledge of right and wrong is to be an argument for immortality, we must first settle whether to believe Christ or Nietzsche, and then argue that

Christians are immortal, but Hitler and Mussolini are not, or vice versa. The decision will obviously be made on the battlefield, not in the study. Those who have the best poison gas will have the ethic of the future and will therefore be the immortal ones.

Our feelings and beliefs on the subject of good and evil are, like everything else about us, natural facts, developed in the struggle for existence and not having any divine or supernatural origin. In one of Aesop's fables, a lion is shown pictures of huntsmen catching lions and remarks that, if he had painted them, they would have shown lions catching huntsmen. Man, says Dr. Barnes, is a fine fellow because he can make airplanes. A little while ago there was a popular song about the cleverness of flies in walking upside down on the ceiling, with the chorus: "Could Lloyd George do it? Could Mr. Baldwin do it? Could Ramsay Mac do it? Why, no." On this basis a very telling argument could be constructed by a theologically-minded fly, which no doubt the other flies would find most convincing.

Moreover, it is only when we think abstractly that we have such a high opinion of man. Of men in the concrete, most of us think the vast majority very bad. Civilized states spend more than half their revenue on killing each other's citizens. Consider the long history of the activities inspired by moral fervor: human sacrifices, persecutions of heretics, witch-hunts, pogroms leading up to wholesale extermination by poison gases, which one at least of Dr. Barnes's episcopal colleagues must be supposed to favor, since he holds pacifism to be un-Christian. Are these abominations, and the ethical doctrines by which they are prompted, really evidence of an intelligent Creator? And can we really wish that the men who practiced them should live forever? The world in which we live can be understood as a result of muddle and accident; but if it is the outcome of deliberate purpose, the purpose must have been that of a fiend. For my part, I find accident a less painful and more plausible hypothesis.

is it possible for a person to survive the death of her own body?

The answer to the second question depended on the first. If we had concluded that the basis of personal identity is sameness of body, then we would have been forced to conclude that life after death is impossible. And there did seem to be good reason to come to these conclusions. How, we asked, could we assure that any memory claim is a case of genuine memory? Our answer was this. In the cases likely to confront us in our daily lives, we must establish some physical continuity between the person who had the original experience and the person who claims to remember it.

But the problem with this answer is that it is too limited. Because we can imagine cases like the Everglade-Badger example, and because our science-fiction tales and religious traditions offer

stories of personal continuity without bodily continuity, we can say the following. Regardless of what happens in our daily lives, our concept of a person is a concept of something that does not seem tied to a particular body. Rather, our concept of a person seems to be tied to a particular stream of consciousness. If there is one continuing stream of consciousness over time, then there is one continuing person. Our question, then, was whether we can give a coherent account of continuity of consciousness from one body to another.

The answer was yes. Using the computer analogy of the functionalist, we can explain such continuity in terms of programming. If it is possible to “program” another brain to have the same psychology as the brain I now have, then it is possible for me to change bodies. And if it is possible for me to change bodies, then it is also possible for me to survive the death of my body.

## VII.4

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# Death and the Afterlife

LYNNE RUDDER BAKER

*Lynne Rudder Baker (1944– ) is professor of philosophy at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. She has written extensively in metaphysics and philosophy of religion, and is perhaps best known for her work on the metaphysics of material objects and on the “first person perspective”. In the present article, she applies some of that work to making sense of the Christian doctrine of resurrection. After discussing some of the conceptual problems posed by resurrection and a variety of rival views about what it might consist in, she then goes on to defend her own “constitution” theory of human persons and their resurrection.*

## 1.

Death comes to all creatures, but human beings are unique in realizing that they will die. Hence, they are unique in being able to consider the possibility of life after death. Ideas of an afterlife of one sort or another have been promulgated by all manner of cultures and religions. For ancient peoples, the afterlife was a realm of vastly diminished existence populated by shades, ghostly counterparts of bodies. Ancient Indians and Egyptians before 2000 postulated a judgment after death. The Greeks had Hades; the Hebrews had Sheol. Far from being a matter of wish fulfillment, an afterlife, as pictured by ancient cultures, was not particularly desirable, just inevitable (Hick 1994, 55–60).

There are many conceptions of an afterlife. To say that there is an afterlife (of any kind) is to say that biological death is not the permanent end of a human being's existence: At least some people continue to exist and to have experiences after death. The idea of reincarnation is shared by a number of religions, including Hindu, Jaina, and Buddhist. According to the idea of reincarnation, one is born over and over, and the circumstances of one's life, even what sort of being one is, depend on one's actions in the preceding life. Among philosophers, Plato had a view of reincarnation. Plato developed the idea of the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedo*. According to Plato, a person is an immaterial soul, temporarily imprisoned by a body. Death is liberation from the prison of the body, but after an interval of disembodied existence, the soul is again imprisoned and is born again into this world. On Plato's view, all this occurs in the natural course of things.

### 1a. Christian Doctrine

All the great monotheistic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—recognize doctrines of an afterlife. I focus on doctrines of resurrection of the dead, which are common to them, and in particular on Christian doctrines.

Christian doctrines have two sources. The first source is Second-Temple Judaism, which contributed

the idea of resurrection of the body. (The New Testament mentions that the Pharisees believed in bodily resurrections, but that the Sadducees did not believe in an afterlife. Jesus endorsed the former, which was fixed as Christian doctrine by his own bodily resurrection.) The second source was Greek philosophy, which contributed the idea of the immortality of the soul (Cullman 1973).

To the early Church fathers, belief in the immortality of the soul was connected with belief in resurrection of the body. The belief that Jesus rose from the dead was the belief that his soul survived death of the body and was “reinvested with his risen body” (Wolfson 1956–57, 8). The belief in a general resurrection was the belief that surviving souls, at the end of time, would be “reinvested” with risen bodies. During the interval between death and the general resurrection, a soul would have a life without a body, but a person's final state would be embodied in some sense. In this general picture, belief in resurrection includes belief in immortal souls and belief in postmortem bodies (of some sort).

The Christian doctrine of an afterlife is pieced together out of hints and metaphors in Scripture. Jesus' resurrection is the paradigm case. According to Christian doctrine, Jesus was the Son of God, who was crucified, died, and was buried. On the third day he rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven. Although Jesus' resurrection is the ground of the Christian doctrine of resurrection, many questions are left open. Perhaps the most explicit, but still sketchy and metaphorical, account of an afterlife in the New Testament is in I Corinthians 15, with its “seed” metaphor. Our bodies are said to be sown in corruption and raised in incorruption; sown in dishonor, raised in glory; sown in weakness, raised in power; sown a natural body, raised a “spiritual” body. But this passage is notoriously open to several interpretations. What is a “spiritual body”? Is it made of the same flesh-and-blood particles as the pre-mortem body? Of the same kind of particles if not exactly the same ones? Of some entirely different kind of stuff? There is no unanimity.

There are two kinds of leading metaphors to guide answers to these questions: on the one hand,

the seed metaphor, just mentioned (I Corinthians 15), or the metaphor of tents or garments that we take on as a covering in incorruption (II Corinthians 5); and on the other hand, the statue metaphor that Augustine preferred. According to the seed metaphor, developed by Origen, the body is dynamic and always in flux. Just as the body is transformed in life, so too it is transformed in death. The resurrected body will be radically changed, and will not be made of the same material as the pre-mortem body (Bynum 1995, 63ff). Augustine, by contrast, insisted on the reanimation of the same bodily material, which would be reassembled from dust and previous bones (Bynum 1995, 95). Thomas Aquinas rejected both metaphors for understanding the nature of the body that is to be resurrected. His concern was more with the integrity of the body than with the identity of material particles. The resurrected body will contain the same fragments and organs, if not the identical particles (Bynum 1995, 265). However, Aquinas sometimes suggested that there would be material continuity of the body in the resurrection.

The various Christian views of resurrection have at least these characteristics in common. First, *embodiment*: resurrection requires some kind of bodily life after death. Postmortem bodies are different from pre-mortem bodies in that they are said to be spiritual, incorruptible, glorified. Even if there is an “intermediate state” between death and a general resurrection, in which the soul exists unembodied, those who live after death will ultimately be embodied, according to Christian doctrine. Second, *identity*: the very same person who exists on earth is to exist in an afterlife. Individuals exist after death, not in some undifferentiated state merged with the universe, or with an Eternal Mind, or anything else. Not only is there to be individual existence in the Resurrection, but the very same individuals are to exist both now and after death. “Survival” in some weaker sense of, say, psychological similarity is not enough. The relation between a person here and now and a person in an afterlife must be identity. Third, *miracle*: life after death, according to Christian doctrine, is a gift from God. Christian doctrine thus contrasts with the Greek idea of

immortality as a natural property of the soul. The idea of miracle is built into the Christian doctrine of life after death from the beginning.

There are many questions to be answered about the doctrine of resurrection. For example, is there immediate resurrection at the instant of death, or is there a temporary mode of existence (an intermediate state) before a general resurrection at the end of time (Cooper 1989)? There is no general agreement. But whatever the details of the conception of an afterlife, a particular philosophical question arises: In virtue of what is a person in an afterlife identical to a certain person in a pre-mortem state? A similar question arises for traditions of reincarnation: In virtue of what is a person of one generation the same person as a person who lived previously? The philosophical issue in any conception of an individual afterlife is the question of personal identity. To have life after death is to have post-mortem experiences linked to each other and to pre-mortem experiences in a way that preserves personal identity (Price 1964, 369).

### 1b. The Problem of Personal Identity

There are at least two philosophical problems of personal identity. The synchronic problem is solved by answering this question: In virtue of what is something a person, at some given time? The diachronic problem is solved by answering this question: In virtue of what is a person at one time identical to a person at another time? The problem of personal identity as it is raised by the idea of an afterlife is a diachronic problem: Under what conditions are persons at  $t_1$  and at  $t_2$  the same person? People change dramatically over time, physically and mentally. A woman of 50 is very unlike a girl of 10 physically, even if the woman of 50 is the same person who, forty years earlier, had been the girl of 10. They do not even have any matter in common. A girl of 10 has different memories, attitudes, personality from a woman of 50—even if the woman of 50 is the same person, considered forty years later, as the girl of 10. In virtue of what is the woman of 50 identical to the girl of 10 considered forty years later?

The needed criterion of personal identity is not epistemological. It does not say how an observer can tell that the woman of 50 is the girl at 10 considered forty years later. Rather, the criterion of personal identity is metaphysical. It says what makes it the case that the woman of 50 is the same person as the girl of 10, whether anyone recognizes the identity or not.

This question of a criterion of personal identity extends to the conception of an afterlife. The question How is survival of bodily death even possible? requires a theory of personal identity. In virtue of what is a person in an afterlife (in heaven, purgatory, or hell, say) the same person as a person who lived a certain life at a certain time on earth and died in bed at the age of 90, say? We can divide potential answers to this question into categories, according to what they take personal identity to depend on: an immaterial substance (such as a soul); a physical substance (such as a human body or brain); a composite of an immaterial substance and a physical substance; or some kind of mental or psychological continuity (such as memory). In addition, my own view is that personal identity depends on a mental property—an essential property in virtue of which a person is a person (having a first-person perspective) and in virtue of which a person is the person she is (having that very first-person perspective). Although to be a person is to be an entity with mental properties essentially, on my view, sameness of person does not require mental continuity over time.

## 2.

Four traditional positions on personal identity yield four views on the resurrection. In virtue of what is a postmortem person the same pre-mortem person who walked the earth? The four answers are that the pre-mortem person and the postmortem person (1) have the same soul, or (2) are the same soul-body composite, or (3) have the same body, or (4) are connected by memory.

### 2a. Sameness of Soul

The idea of an incorporeal soul is the idea of a non-physical part of a human being, a nonphysical part

that thinks and wills. The early Christian Church considered three theories of the soul: (1) souls as custom-made: God creates especially for each new child a new soul at birth (creationalism); (2) souls as ready-made: God has a stock of souls from eternity and allocates them as needed (preexistentialism); (3) souls as second-hand: God created only one soul (the soul of Adam), which is passed down to his descendants (traducianism). All the traditional theories of the soul (custom-made, ready-made, traducian) describe the soul as being in a body as in a garment, or as in a temple, or as in a house. That is, they all allow that souls can exist apart from bodies. (Wolfson 1956-57, 21-2). Even Thomas Aquinas, who rejects these metaphors, takes the soul to be capable of the vision of God in a (temporary) disembodied state (Bynum 1995, 266).

These theories of the soul allow for a conception of an afterlife as populated with incorporeal souls. Experience without a biological organism has seemed to many to be conceivable. One might have visual, auditory, olfactory, sensual images—images of bodies, including one's own. The images would be mental images, acquired in pre-mortem life, and the postmortem person's experiences would be like dreams. The images would be governed by peculiar causal laws—psychological, not physical. For example, a "wish to go to Oxford might be immediately followed by the occurrence of a vivid and detailed set of Oxford-like images; even though, at the moment before, one's images had resembled Piccadilly Circus or the palace of the Dalai Lama in Tibet" (Price 1964, 370). These images would constitute a world—"the next world"—where everything still had shape, color, size, and so on, but had different causal properties.

The postmortem world, although similar to a dream world, need not be solipsistic. One postmortem person could have a telepathic apparition of another person, who "announces himself" in a way that is recognizably similar on different occasions. Thus, an image-world need not be altogether private. It "would be the joint product of a group of telepathetically interacting minds and public to all of them" (Price 1964, 373, 377). There may be

various postmortem image-worlds in which people communicate telepathically with each other.

The image-worlds would be constructed from a person's desires and memories and telepathic interactions. The postmortem worlds are "wish-fulfillment" worlds, but of one's genuine wishes. If repression is a biological phenomenon, then repressed desires and memories would be revealed. In that case, in the next world, one's mental conflicts would be out in the open, and the fulfillment of one's wishes may be horrifying. One's guilt feelings may produce images of punishments, which would be a kind of appropriate purgatory for each person. The kind of world one would experience after death would depend on the kind of person one was.

Where, one may wonder, is this "next world"? The question of its spatial relation to the physical world has no meaning. The images that make up the next world are in a space of their own, but, like dream images, they bear no spatial relations to our world. If you dream of a tree, its branches are spatially related to its trunk; you can ask how tall the dreamed-of tree is, but not how far it is from the mattress (Price 1964, 373). "Passing" from this world to the next is not a physical passage. It is more like passing from waking experience to dreaming.

Richard Swinburne (1997) has developed a contemporary view of the soul as the immaterial seat of mental life, or conscious experience. Mental events like believings, desirings, purposings, sensing, though not themselves brain events, interact with brain events. Although Swinburne believes in evolution in biology, and sometimes speaks of souls as having evolved (182), the evolution of souls requires God's hand. On Swinburne's view, the human soul does not develop naturally from genetic material; but each soul is created by God and linked to the body (199).

Although souls are in this world linked to brains, there is no contradiction, according to Swinburne, in the soul's continuing to exist without a body. Indeed, the soul is the necessary core of a person which must continue if a person is to continue (1997, 146). Because, on Swinburne's view, no natural laws

govern what happens to souls after death, there would be no violation of natural law if God were to give to souls life after death, with or without a new body. Swinburne solves the problem of personal identity for this world and the next by appeal to immaterial souls.

Recently, scientific philosophers have suggested materialistic conceptions of the soul. For example, the soul is software to the hardware of the brain; if persons are identified with souls (software), they can be "re-embodied, perhaps in a quite different medium" (MacKay 1987, 724-25). Another materialistic view of the soul conceives of the soul as an "information-bearing pattern, carried at any instant by the matter of my animated body." At death, God will remember the pattern and "its instantiation will be recreated by him" at the resurrection (Polkinghorne 1996, 163).

### 2b. Sameness of Soul-Body Composite

Thomas Aquinas took over Aristotle's framework for understanding human beings, modifying it as little as possible to accommodate Christian doctrine. On Aristotle's view, all living things had souls: plants had nutritive souls, nonhuman animals had sensitive souls, and human animals ("men") had rational souls. The soul was not separable from the body. A human being was a substance: formed matter. The body supplied the matter, the soul the form. No more could a rational soul exist apart from the body whose form it was than could the shape of a particular axe exist apart from that axe. The soul is the form of the body. So, Aristotle had no place for an afterlife.

Following Aristotle, Aquinas agreed that the soul is the form of the body, but, building on Aristotle's concession that the "agent intellect" is separable (1941, *De Anima* 3.5, 430a17), Aquinas held that the soul is a substantial form that could "subsist" on its own. Aquinas assumed that there is a general resurrection at the end of time, before which those who have died are in an "intermediate state." The human being—the substance, the individual—does not exist as such during the intermediate state. What continues through the intermediate state is only the rational soul, which "subsists" until reunited with



the body, at which time the human being is fully recovered. The disembodied soul can neither sense nor feel; it is only the part of the person that thinks and wills. While the soul is disembodied, the soul is *not* the person who died. It is merely a remnant of the person, awaiting reunion with the person's body. It is only when the soul is reunited with the body (the same body) that the person resumes life.

So Aquinas's view of a human person is rather of a composite of body and soul. He does not equate personal identity over time with identity of soul. However, Aquinas's conception of the afterlife does require separability of souls from bodies, albeit temporary, and continued existence of souls after death. So, it is reasonable to include Aquinas's view both with the theories of survival of souls and with the theories of bodily resurrection.

### 2c. Sameness of Body

The Christian doctrine of resurrection of the body suggests that personal identity, at least in part, consists of bodily identity. If personal identity consists in bodily identity, even in part, then reincarnation is ruled out, as is Price's (1964) conception of an afterlife. Reincarnation requires that the same person have different bodies, and Price's conception of an afterlife was of a disembodied consciousness.

For millennia "resurrection of the body" has been taken to mean that the very same body that died would come back to life. Although I Corinthians 15 plainly asserts that the resurrected body is an incorruptible "spiritual" (or "glorified") body, the spiritual body was to be reconstituted from the dust and bones of the original premortem body. The body may undergo radical change, but it is to persist in its postmortem state as the same body. The earliest Christians supposed the body to be the person; later Christians (such as Aquinas) took the body to be an essential part of the person, along with the soul. Either way—whether personal identity is bodily identity or personal identity just entails bodily identity—if a person is to be resurrected, the person's body, the same body, must exist in the afterlife.

There are at least two ways that this story may be filled out, depending on how the idea of "same body" is taken. The first way of understanding "same body," shared by most of the Church fathers, is in terms of same constituent particles. Suppose that Jane is to be resurrected. At the general resurrection, God finds the particles that had composed Jane's body, say, and reassembles them exactly as they had been before Jane's death, thereby restoring Jane's body. If personal identity is bodily identity, then God thereby restores Jane, that is, brings her back to life. The same body, in both its premortem and postmortem phases, has the same particles.

The second way of understanding "same body" appeals to a natural way to understand identity of human bodies over time. Unlike inanimate objects, human bodies undergo a complete change of cells every few years. Not a single one of Sam's cells today was one of his cells ten years ago; yet Sam has not changed bodies. So, perhaps identity of body should not consist of identity of constituent cells, or even of identity of some small percentage of constituent cells. The natural thing to say is that identity of body consists of spatiotemporal continuity of ever-changing constituent cells. Perhaps in the resurrection God slowly replaces the atoms that had composed Jane's organic cells by glorified and incorruptible elements, and He carries out the replacement in a way that preserves spatiotemporal continuity of the body. If that is possible, and if identity of bodies consists in spatiotemporal continuity, then a premortem body could be the same body as a postmortem body even though the premortem body is corruptible and the postmortem body is incorruptible.

### 2d. The Memory Criterion

The memory criterion is that sameness of person is determined by psychological continuity, not by continuity of substance, material or immaterial. The originator of the memory criterion was John Locke, who was explicitly motivated in part by a desire to make sense of the idea of resurrection. Locke took identity of a person over time to

be identity of consciousness over time—regardless of identity of substance (1924, II, xxvii). Locke's idea allows for the possibility that a single consciousness could unite several substances into a single person and for the possibility that a single consciousness could even exist over temporal gaps. Such an approach is clearly congenial to the idea of resurrection.

Suppose we say that A and B are the same person if and only if A can remember what B did, or B can remember what A did. What it means to say that A can remember what B did is that what B did caused, in the right way, A's memory of what B did. What secures sameness of person are causal connections of a certain sort among mental states. It is difficult to spell out just the right kind of causal connection, but "of a certain sort" is supposed to rule out cases like the one where B cuts the grass and tells C what she had done; then B gets amnesia, and C reports back to B that B had cut the grass. C's telling B that B had cut the grass causes B to have a mental state of thinking that she had cut the grass, and B's apparent memory of cutting the grass is ultimately caused by B's having cut the grass. But B's apparent memory is not a real memory, because B's mental state of thinking that she had cut the grass was caused by her cutting the grass, but it was not caused in the right way. The causal chain between B's cutting the grass and her apparent memory went through C. B would not have had the apparent memory of cutting the grass if C had not told B that she had cut the grass.

So, it seems that we have a criterion for sameness of resurrected person and earthly person that does not require sameness of body or sameness of soul: if a resurrected person has Jones's memories (i.e., mental states of what Jones did, caused in the right way), then that resurrected person is Jones.

### 3.

All the traditional views of personal identity just canvassed have been targets of criticism. Some of the criticisms that follow are well-known; others, as far as I know, are novel.

### 3a. Sameness of Soul

There are familiar arguments in the secular literature from the seventeenth century on about the problem of understanding how immaterial minds can interact with material bodies. These arguments apply equally to the conception of the soul as an immaterial substance that can exist unembodied.

Another important criticism of the idea of a disembodied soul, however, concerns the question of individuating souls at a time: the synchronic problem. In virtue of what is there one soul or two? If souls are embodied, the bodies individuate. There is one soul per body. But if souls are separated from bodies—existing on their own, apart from bodies—then there is apparently no difference between there being one soul with some thoughts and two souls with half as many thoughts. If there is no difference between there being one soul and two, then there are no souls. So, it seems that the concept of a soul is incoherent.

As we saw in 2b, Aquinas has a response to this problem of distinguishing between one and two unembodied immaterial souls at a single time. Each separated soul had an affinity to the body with which it had been united in premortem life. Even when Smith's soul is disembodied, what makes Smith's soul *Smith's* soul—and not Brown's soul, say—is that Smith's soul has a tendency and potential to be reunited with Smith's body, and not with Brown's body. (But see 3b.) This reply is not available to proponents of immaterial souls, such as Plato or Descartes, who take a human person to be identical to a soul.

Even if we could individuate souls at a time, and thus at a single time distinguish one soul from two souls, there would still be a problem of individuating a soul over time: the diachronic problem. To see this, consider: either souls are subject to change or they are not. Suppose first that souls are not subject to change. In that case, they cannot be the locus of religious life. Religious life consists in part of phenomena like religious conversion and "amendment of life." If souls are immune to change, they can hardly participate in religious

conversion or amendment of life. Souls must be subject to change if they are to play their roles in religious life.

So, suppose that souls are subject to change. In that case, the same difficulty that arises for the identity of a person over time also arises for the identity of a soul over time. Just as we asked, *In virtue of what is person 1 at t1 the same person as person 2 at t2?* we can ask, *In virtue of what is disembodied soul 1 at t1 the same soul as disembodied soul 2 at t2?* Consider Augustine before and after his conversion—at t1 and t2, respectively. In virtue of what was the soul at t1 the same soul as the soul at t2? The only answer that I can think of is that the soul at t1 and the soul at t2 were both Augustine's soul. But, of course, that answer is untenable inasmuch as it presupposes sameness of person over time, and sameness of person over time is what we need a criterion of sameness of soul over time to account for. So, it seems that the identity of a person over time cannot be the identity of a soul over time.

The materialistic conceptions of the soul (MacKay 1987; Polkinghorne 1996) do not seem to fare any better. They would seem to succumb to the duplication problem that afflicts the memory criterion (see 3d). But if the Matthews argument (see 3d) rehabilitates the memory criterion, an analogue of that argument could save these materialistic conceptions of the soul.

### 3b. Sameness of Soul-Body Composite

Aquinas's contribution was to give an account of what happens between death and resurrection in terms of the subsistence of the rational soul. Aquinas's view has the advantage over the substance dualists like Plato and Descartes in that it gives a reason why resurrection should be bodily resurrection: the body is important to make a complete substance.

On the other hand, Aquinas's account buys these advantages at a cost. His account commits him to a new ontological category of being: the rational soul as a subsisting entity that is not a substance. It is not really an individual, but a kind of

individual *manqué*. We can say very little about this new kind of entity except that it fills the bill. It would be desirable to make sense of a Christian doctrine of resurrection without appealing to a new and strange kind of entity, and in section 4, there will be an attempt to do so.

More important, however, is a problem internal to Aquinas's thought. There is a tension in Aquinas, with respect to ontological priority, between his conception of the human being as a composite of soul (form) and body (matter), and his conception of the soul as itself a substantial form that accounts for the identity of a human being through an unembodied period. On the one hand, Aquinas says that the soul without a body is only a fragment, not a human being. So, the human being seems to have ontological priority. On the other hand, he says that the soul is a substantial form that carries our identity and can enjoy the beatific vision on its own; the body is just an expression of its glory. So, the soul alone seems to have ontological priority. The tension arises between whether the human being (the body-soul composite, either part of which is incomplete without the other) or the substantial soul has ontological priority.

The reason this tension threatens the Thomistic view is that Aquinas holds that disembodied souls are individuated by the bodies that they long for and desire reunion with. But if the soul is the substantial form that accounts for the identity of the resurrected person, and if the body is merely matter (potency) of which the soul is the form, then the body of the resurrected human being that rises—whatever its matter—will be that human being's body, by definition. As Bynum put it, "God can make the body of Peter out of the dust that was once the body of Paul" (1995, 260). If this is the case, souls cannot be individuated at a time by their yearning for a certain body—because the identity of the body (whose body it is) will depend on the identity of the soul. It is difficult to see how Aquinas can combine the Aristotelian view that matter individuates with his view that the soul is a substantial form that can "subsist" and experience God—apart from a body.

### 3c. Sameness of Body

During much of Christian history, the idea of the resurrection of the body was of a literal, material resurrection. The resurrected body was considered to be the same body as the earthly body in the sense that it is composed of (at least some of) the same particles as the earthly body. At the resurrection, it was held, God will reassemble and reanimate the same particles that composed the person's earthly body, and in that way personal identity would be secured in the afterlife.

There are some well-known difficulties with taking the resurrection body to require reassembly of the premortem body. For example, in the early years of Christian martyrdom, there was concern about cannibalism: the problem becomes acute if, say, a hungry soldier eats a captive, who himself has eaten a civilian. So, the soldier's body is composed in part of the captive's, which in turn is composed of the civilian's. The same cells may be parts of three earthly bodies, and there seems to be no principled way for God to decide which parts belong to which postmortem bodies. In light of God's omnipotence and omniscience, however, I doubt that this objection is insurmountable.

Three further difficulties raise more serious logical concerns. Suppose that Jane's body was utterly destroyed, and the atoms that had composed it were spread throughout the universe. Gathering the atoms and reassembling them in their exact premortem positions relative to each other would not bring Jane's body back into existence. To see this, consider an analogy. Suppose that one of Augustine's manuscripts had been entirely burned up, and that later God miraculously reassembled the atoms in the manuscript. The reassembled atoms would be a perfect duplicate of the manuscript, but they do not compose the very manuscript that had been destroyed. The reassembled atoms have their positions as a result of God's activity, not of Augustine's. The duplicate manuscript is related to the original manuscript as a duplicate tower of blocks is related to your child's original tower that you accidentally knocked over and then put the blocks back in their original positions. The tower that you built is

not the same one that your child built; the manuscript that God produced is not the same one that Augustine produced (van Inwagen 1992).

The situation with respect to God's reassembling the atoms of a body that had been totally destroyed is similar to God's reassembling the atoms in Augustine's manuscript. If a corpse had not decayed too badly, God could "start it up" again. But if the body had been cremated or had been entirely destroyed, there is no way that it could be reconstituted. The most that is metaphysically possible is that God could create a duplicate body out of the same atoms that had composed the original body. The same body that had been destroyed—the same person on the bodily criterion—could not exist again. Not even an omnipotent and omniscient God could bring that very body back into existence. So, the "reassembly" view cannot contribute to an account of the resurrection. But because the preceding argument depends on metaphysical intuitions about bodily identity, perhaps this second argument is not insurmountable either.

There is a third argument, also from van Inwagen (1992), that seems to be logically conclusive against the view that resurrection involves reassembly of a premortem person's atoms. None of the atoms that were part of me in 1960 are part of me now. Therefore, God could gather up all the atoms that were part of me in 1960 and put them in exactly the same relative positions they had in 1960. He could do this without destroying me now. Then, if the reassembly view were correct, God could confront me now with myself as I was in 1960. As van Inwagen points out, each of us could truly say to the other, "I am you." But that is conceptually impossible. Therefore, the reassembly view is wrong.

I should point out that these considerations do not make van Inwagen a skeptic about bodily resurrection. God could accomplish bodily resurrection in some other way, for example, by replacing a person's body with a duplicate right before death or cremation, and the duplicate is what is cremated or buried. This shows that it is logically possible that bodily resurrection, where the resurrected body is the same one as the premortem body, be

accomplished by an omnipotent being—even if we lack the conceptual resources to see how. The present point, however, is that resurrected bodies are not produced by God's reassembling the atoms of premortem bodies.

Putting aside van Inwagen's arguments, the final difficulty for bodily resurrection comes from reflection on the following question: How can an earthly body that is subject to decay or destruction by fire be the same body as an incorruptible glorified body? I suggested that if identity of bodies consists of spatiotemporal continuity, and if God could replace the organic cells of a body by incorruptible and glorified cells in a way that preserved spatiotemporal continuity, then a premortem body could be the same body as a postmortem body even though the premortem body is corruptible and the postmortem body is incorruptible.

However, I doubt that one and the same body (or one and the same anything else) can be corruptible during part of its existence and incorruptible during another part of its existence. The reason for my doubt is that being corruptible and being incorruptible concern the persistence conditions of a thing, and a thing has its persistence conditions essentially. To say that a thing is corruptible is to say that there are a range of conditions under which it would go out of existence; to say that a thing is incorruptible is to say that there are no such conditions. It is logically impossible—or at least it seems so—that a single thing is such that there are conditions at one time under which it could go out of existence, and that there are no such conditions at another time under which it could go out of existence. This difficulty could be overcome by not requiring that the (incorruptible) resurrected body be the very same body as the (corruptible) earthly body; see section 4.

### 3d. The Memory Criterion

Many philosophers find psychological continuity an attractive criterion of personal identity, but there are well-known, and potentially devastating, problems with it. The major problem is called "the duplication problem." The problem is that,

however "in the right way" is spelled out for the causal connections between mental states of Jones now and a future person, two future persons can have mental states caused by Jones's mental states now in the right way. It is logically possible that Jones's memories be transferred to two future persons in exactly the same "right way" (whatever that is). In that case, the memory criterion would hold, per impossibile, that two future persons are Jones. Whatever causal connections hold between the mental states of Jones now and person B in the future could also hold between the mental states of Jones now and a different person C in the future. But it is logically impossible that Jones be both B and C.

To put this point another way: there is an important constraint on any criterion of personal identity. Identity is a one-one relation, and no person can be identical with two distinct future persons. So, any criterion of personal identity that can be satisfied both by person A at t1 and person B at t2 and by person A at t1 and person C at t2 entails that B = C. So, if B is a different person from C, a criterion that allows that A is identical to both is logically untenable. However, if sameness of memories sufficed for sameness of person, one person could become two: A's memories could be transferred to B and C, where B ≠ C, in such a way that B's and C's memories are continuous with A's memories in exactly the same way ("the right way"). It would follow on the memory criterion that A = B and A = C. But since B ≠ C, this is a contradiction. Hence, the memory criterion does not work (Williams 1973a).

The problem of duplication seems insurmountable for the memory criterion. Philosophers have responded to the problem of duplication with rather desperate measures; for example, Jones is the same person as a future person, as long as there are no duplicates. If there are two future persons at t2 related to Jones at t1 in the same way, then Jones is neither. Jones just does not survive until t2; at t2, there are two replicas of Jones, but Jones herself is no longer there. But if only one future person at t2 is related to Jones at t1 in exactly that way, then, according to this response to the duplication

problem, Jones is that person at t2. Thus, Jones can be made not to survive by duplication. This sort of move seems to many a most unsatisfying way to think of personal identity.

There may be another way, at least if we allow religious assumptions, to salvage the memory criterion. A religious philosopher may respond to the duplication argument by saying that God would not bring it about (or let it be brought about) that both B and C have A's memories. Thus, God in His goodness would prevent duplication (Locke 1924, II, xxvii, 13). But the memory criterion would still be vulnerable to the charge that, even if God would not allow both B and C to have A's memories, memory would not be a metaphysically sufficient criterion for personal identity. It would still be metaphysically possible for two people, B and C, to have all A's memories, that is, for each to have memories continuous with A's.

However, there is an argument using religious premises that rehabilitates the memory criterion by showing that it is metaphysically impossible for God to bring it about that B and C both have all A's memories. Because this way was suggested to me by Gareth B. Matthews, call it "the Matthews argument." The premises of this argument are explicitly religious. They appeal to God's necessary attributes—namely, that God is essentially just—and to the notion of a judgment after death. If God is essentially just and God judges everyone, and A is a person who deserves punishment, then it would be metaphysically impossible for B and C to have A's memories.

The reason it would be metaphysically impossible for B and C to have A's memories is this: A deserves punishment. God is essentially just and judges everyone. Suppose that B and C both had A's memories (caused in the right way). Whom does God punish? If God punished B but not C, or C but not B, then God would not be essentially just: B and C are related to A in exactly the same way; it is impossible to be just and to judge B and C differently. On the other hand, if God punished both B and C, then there would be twice the punishment that A deserved, and again God would not be essentially just. Either way, supposing that B and

C both had A's memories (caused in the right way) violates God's essential justice in judgment. Because God is essentially just, if A deserves punishment, it is metaphysically impossible for God to bring it about that B and C both have A's memories.

If everyone deserves punishment except Christ, then this argument shows that it is metaphysically impossible for God to transfer A's memories to two distinct nondivine people. It is metaphysically impossible for God to transfer Christ's memories to two distinct nondivine people since Christ is divine. The Matthews argument relies on heavy theological assumptions, but it does rescue the memory criterion from the duplication problem.

## 4.

There is yet another view of human persons, which is compatible with the doctrine of resurrection. Suppose that human persons are purely material substances—constituted by human bodies, but not identical to the bodies that constitute them (Baker 2000). On this view, "the constitution view," something is a person in virtue of having a first-person perspective, and a person is a human person in virtue of being constituted by a human body. (I do not distinguish between human organisms and human bodies; the body that constitutes me now is identical to a human organism.) The relation between a person and her body is the same relation that a statue bears to the piece of bronze (say) that makes it up: constitution. So, there are two theoretical ideas—the notion of constitution and the notion of a first-person perspective—that need explication. I'll discuss each of these ideas briefly.

### 4a. The First-Person Perspective

A first-person perspective is the ability to conceive of oneself as oneself. This is not just the ability to use the first-person pronoun; rather, it requires that one can conceive of oneself as the referent of the first-person pronoun independently of any name or description of oneself. In English, this ability is manifested in the use of a first-person pronoun

embedded in a clause introduced by a psychological or linguistic verb in a first-person sentence. For example, "I wish that I were a movie star," or "I said that I would do it" or "I wonder how I'll die" all illustrate a first-person perspective. If I wonder how I will die, or I promise that I'll stick with you, then I am thinking of myself as myself; I am not thinking of myself in any third-person way (e.g., not as Lynne Baker, nor as the person who is thinking, nor as her, nor as the only person in the room) at all. Even if I had total amnesia and didn't know my name or anything at all about my past, I could still think of myself as myself. Anything that can wonder how it will die ipso facto has a first-person perspective and thus is a person. In short, any being whatever with the ability to think of itself as itself—whether a divine being, an artificially manufactured being (such as a computer), a human clone, a Martian, anything that has a first-person perspective—is a person.

A being may be conscious without having a first-person perspective. Nonhuman primates and other higher animals are conscious, and they have psychological states such as believing, fearing, and desiring. They have points of view (e.g., "danger in that direction"), but they cannot conceive of themselves as the subjects of such thoughts. They cannot conceive of themselves from the first person. (We have every reason to think that they do not wonder how they will die.) So, having psychological states such as beliefs and desires and having a point of view are necessary but not sufficient conditions for being a person. A sufficient condition for being a person—whether human, divine, ape, or silicon-based—is having a first-person perspective. What makes something a person is not the "stuff" it is made of. It does not matter whether something is made of organic material or silicon or, in the case of God, no material stuff at all. If a being has a first-person perspective, it is a person.

Person is an ontological kind whose defining characteristic is a capacity for a first-person perspective. A first-person perspective is the basis of all self-consciousness. It makes possible an inner life, a life of thoughts that one realizes are one's own. The appearance of first-person perspectives in a

world makes an ontological difference in that world: a world populated with beings with inner lives is ontologically richer than a world populated with no beings with inner lives. But what is ontologically distinctive about being a person—namely, the capacity for a first-person perspective—does not have to be secured by an immaterial substance like a soul.

#### 4b. Constitution

What distinguishes human persons from other logically possible persons (God, Martians, perhaps computers) is that human persons are constituted by human bodies (i.e., human animals), rather than, say, by Martian green-slime bodies.

Constitution is a very general relation that we are all familiar with (though probably not under that label). A river at any moment is constituted by an aggregate of water molecules. But the river is not identical to the aggregate of water molecules that constitutes it at that moment. Because one and the same river, call it R, is constituted by different aggregates of molecules at different times, the river is not identical to any of the aggregates of water molecules that make it up. So, assuming here the classical conception of identity, according to which if  $a = b$ , then necessarily,  $a = b$ , constitution is not identity.

Another way to see that constitution is not identity is to notice that even if an aggregate of molecules, A1, actually constitutes R at t1, R might have been constituted by a different aggregate of molecules, A2, at t1. So, constitution is a relation that is in some ways similar to identity, but is not actually identity. If the relation between a person and her body is constitution, then a person is not identical to her body. The relation is more like the relation between a statue and the piece of bronze that makes it up, or between the river and the aggregates of molecules.

The answer to the question What most fundamentally is x? is what I call "x's primary kind." Each thing has its primary-kind property essentially. If x constitutes y, then x and y are of different primary kinds. If x constitutes y, then what "the

thing" is is determined by y's primary kind. For example, if a human body constitutes a person, then what there is is a person-constituted-by-a-human-body. So you—a person constituted by a human body—are most fundamentally a person. Person is your primary kind. If parts of your body were replaced by bionic parts until you were no longer human, you would still be a person. You are a person as long as you exist. If you ceased to have a first-person perspective, then you would cease to exist—even if your body was still there.

Whether we are talking about rivers, statues, human persons, or any other constituted thing, the basic idea is this: when certain things of certain kinds (aggregates of water molecules, pieces of marble, human organisms) are in certain circumstances (different ones for different kinds of things), then new entities of different kinds come into existence. The circumstances in which a piece of marble comes to constitute a statue have to do with an artist's intentions, the conventions of the art world, and so on. The circumstances in which a human organism comes to constitute a human person have to do with the development of a (narrowly defined capacity for a) first-person perspective. In each case, new things of new kinds, with new sorts of causal powers, come into being. Because constitution is the vehicle, so to speak, by which things of new kinds come into existence in the natural world, it is obvious that constitution is not identity. Indeed, this conception is relentlessly antireductive.

Although not identity, constitution is a relation of real unity. If x constitutes y at a time, then x and y are not separate things. A person and her body have lots of properties in common: the property of having toenails and the property of being responsible for certain of her actions. But notice: the person has the property of having toenails only because she is constituted by something that could have had toenails even if it had constituted nothing. And her body is responsible for her actions only because it constitutes something that would have been responsible no matter what constituted it.

So, I'll say that the person has the property of having toenails derivatively, and her body has the property of being responsible for certain of her

actions derivatively; the body has the property of having toenails nonderivatively, and the person has the property of being responsible for certain of her actions nonderivatively. If x constitutes y, then some of x's properties have their source (so to speak) in y, and some of y's properties have their source in x. The unity of the object x-constituted-by-y is shown by the fact that x and y borrow properties from each other. The idea of having properties derivatively accounts for the otherwise strange fact that if x constitutes y at t, x and y share so many properties even though  $x \neq y$ .

To summarize the general discussion of the idea of constitution: constitution is a very general relation throughout the natural order. Although it is a relation of real unity, it is short of identity. (Identity is necessary; constitution is contingent. Identity is symmetrical; constitution is asymmetrical.) Constitution is a relation that accounts for the appearance of genuinely new kinds of things with new kinds of causal powers. If F and G are primary kinds and Fs constitute Gs, then an inventory of the contents of the world that includes Fs but leaves out Gs is incomplete. Gs are not reducible to Fs.

#### 4c. Human Persons

A human person at time t is a person (i.e., a being with a first-person perspective) that is constituted by a human body at t and was constituted by a human body at the beginning of her existence. (I say "was constituted by a human body at the beginning of her existence" to avoid problems raised by the Incarnation. The orthodox Christian view is that the eternal Second Person of the Trinity was identical with the temporal human Jesus of Nazareth, and that that Being was both fully divine and fully human. How this could be so is ultimately a mystery that requires special treatment far beyond the scope of this chapter.)

According to the constitution view, an ordinary human person is a material object in the same way that a statue or a carburetor is a material object. A statue is constituted by, say, a piece of marble, but it is not identical to the piece of marble that constitutes it. The piece of marble could exist

in a world in which it was the only occupant, but no statue could. Nothing that is a statue could exist in a world without artists or institutions of art. A human person is constituted by an organism, a member of the species *Homo sapiens*, but is not identical to the organism that constitutes her. The human organism could exist in a world in which no psychological properties whatever were exemplified, but no person could. Nothing that is a person could exist in a world without first-person perspectives. A human organism that develops a first-person perspective comes to constitute a new thing: a person.

Just as different statues are constituted by different kinds of things (pieces of marble, pieces of bronze, etc.), so too different persons are (or may be) constituted by different kinds of things (human organisms, pieces of plastic, Martian matter, or, in the case of God, nothing at all). What makes something a person (no matter what it is “made of”) is a first-person perspective; what makes something a piece of sculpture (no matter what it is “made of”) is its relation to an art world. A person could start out as a human person and have organic parts replaced by synthetic parts until she was no longer constituted by a *human* body. If the person whose organic parts were replaced by synthetic parts retained her first-person perspective—no matter what was doing the replacing—then she would still exist and still be a person, even with a synthetic body. If she ceased to be a person (i.e., ceased to have a first-person perspective), however, she would cease to exist altogether. To put it more technically, a person’s persistence conditions are determined by the property of being a person (i.e., of having a first-person perspective): a human person could cease to be organic without ceasing to exist. (She might have a resurrected body or a bionic body.) But she could not cease to be a person without ceasing to exist.

On the constitution view, then, a human person and the animal that constitutes her differ in persistence conditions without there being any actual physical intrinsic difference between them. The persistence conditions of animals—all animals, human or not—are biological; and the persistence

conditions of persons—all persons, human or not—are not biological.

#### 4d. Resurrection on the Constitution View

The constitution view can solve some outstanding conceptual problems about the doctrine of resurrection. The two elements of the constitution view needed to show how resurrection is metaphysically possible are these: (1) human persons are essentially embodied, and (2) human persons essentially have first-person perspectives.

1. Essential embodiment: although human persons cannot exist without some body or other (a body that can support a first-person perspective), they can exist without the bodies that they actually have. We can speak of human persons in the resurrection, where, though still embodied, they do not have human bodies with human organs and DNA. The same persons who had been constituted by earthly bodies can come to be constituted by resurrected bodies. The bodies on earth and in heaven are not the same, but the persons are.
2. Essential first-person perspectives: if a person’s first-person perspective were extinguished, the person would go out of existence. What makes a person the individual that she is is her first-person perspective. So, what must persist in the resurrection is the person’s first-person perspective—not her soul (there are no souls), and not her body (she may have a new body in the resurrection).

What is needed is a criterion for sameness of first-person perspective over time. In virtue of what does a resurrected person have the same first-person perspective as a certain earthly person who was born in 1800? Although I think that the constitution view solves the synchronic problem of identity noncircularly (Baker 2000), I think that, on anyone’s view, there is no informative noncircular answer to the question: In virtue of what do person P1 at t1 and person P2 at t2 have the same first-person perspective over time? It is just a primitive unanalyzable fact that some future person is I, but there is a fact of the matter nonetheless.

The constitution view is compatible with the three features of the Christian doctrine of resurrection mentioned at the outset: embodiment, identity, miracle. In the first place, the constitution view shows why resurrection should be bodily: human persons are essentially embodied, and hence could not exist unembodied. The first-person perspective is an essential property of a person constituted by a body of some kind. A nondivine first-person perspective cannot exist on its own, disembodied. So, the question Why is resurrection bodily? cannot arise. On the interpretation of the doctrine of resurrection according to which a human person exists in some intermediate state between her death and a general resurrection in the future, the constitution view would postulate an intermediate body. (Alternatively, the constitution view is compatible with there being a temporal gap in the person’s existence). Because the constitution view does not require that there be the same body for the same person, the problems found with the traditional theories of body are avoided.

In the second place, on the constitution view, it is possible that a future person with a resurrected body is identical to Smith now, and there is a fact of the matter about which, if any, such future person is Smith. To see that there is a fact of the matter about which resurrected person is Smith, we must proceed to the third feature of the doctrine of resurrection.

In the third place, resurrection is a miracle, a gift from God. The constitution view can use this feature to show that there is a fact of the matter about which resurrected person is, say, Smith. The question is this: Which of the resurrected people is Smith? Because the constitution view holds that Smith might have had a different body from the one that he had on earth, he may be constituted by a different (glorified) body in heaven. So, “Smith is the person with body 1” is contingently true if true at all.

Now, according to the traditional doctrine of Providence, God has two kinds of knowledge: free knowledge and natural knowledge. God’s free knowledge is knowledge of contingent truths, and His natural knowledge is knowledge of logical and metaphysical necessities. (I’m disregarding the

possibility of middle knowledge here.) Again, according to the traditional doctrine of Providence, the obtaining of any contingent state of affairs depends on God’s free decree. Whether the person with resurrected body 1, or body 2, or some other body is Smith is a contingent state of affairs. Therefore, which if any of these states of affairs obtains depends on God’s free decree. No immaterial soul is needed for there to be a fact of the matter as to whether Smith is the person with resurrected body 1. All that is needed is God’s free decree that brings about one contingent state of affairs rather than another. If God decrees that the person with body 1 have Smith’s first-person perspective, then Smith is the person with body 1 (Davis 1993, 119–21). So, there is a fact of the matter as to which, if any, of the persons in the Resurrection is Smith, even if we creatures cannot know it. On the Christian idea of Providence, it is well within God’s power to bring it about that a certain resurrected person is identical to Smith.

Notice that this use of the doctrine of God’s Providence provides for the metaphysical impossibility of Smith’s being identical to both the person with body 1 and the person with body 2. For it is part of God’s natural knowledge that it is metaphysically impossible for one person to be identical to two persons. And according to the traditional notion of God’s power, what is metaphysically impossible is not within God’s power to bring about. So, the constitution view excludes the duplication problem.

#### 4e. Advantages of the Constitution View

The constitution view can offer those who believe in immaterial souls (immaterialists) almost everything that they want—without the burden of making sense of how there can be immaterial souls in the natural world. For example, human persons can survive change of body; truths about persons are not exhausted by truths about bodies; persons have causal powers that their bodies would not have if they did not constitute persons; there is a fact of the matter about which, if any, future person is I; persons are not identical to bodies.



The constitution view also has advantages, at least for Christians, over its major materialistic competitor: animalism. (Animalism is the view that a human person is identical to a human organism.) On the constitution view, being a person is not just a contingent property of things that are fundamentally nonpersonal (animals).

On the animalist view, our having first-person perspectives (or any mental states at all) is irrelevant to the kind of being that we are. But the Christian story cannot get off the ground without presuppositions about first-person perspectives. On the human side, without first-person perspectives, there would be no sinners and no penitents. Because a person's repentance requires that she realize that she herself has offended, nothing lacking a first-person perspective could possibly repent. On the divine side: Christ's atonement required that he suffer, and an important aspect of his suffering was his anticipation of his death (e.g., the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane); and his anticipation of his death would have been impossible without a first-person perspective. This part of Christ's mission specifically required a first-person perspective. What is important about us (and Christ) according to the Christian story is that we have first-person perspectives. Given how important the first-person perspective is to the Christian story, Christians have good reason to take our having first-person perspectives to be central to the kind of being that we are.

The second reason for a Christian to endorse the constitution view over animalism is that the constitution view allows that a person's resurrection body may be nonidentical with her earthly biological body. According to the constitution view, it is logically possible that a person have different bodies at different times; whether anyone ever changes bodies or not, the logical possibility is built into the constitution view. By contrast, on the animalist view, a person just is—is identical to—an organism. Whatever happens to the organism happens to the person. On an animalist view, it is logically impossible for you to survive the destruction of your body. So, on an animalist view, if Smith, say, is resurrected, then the organism that was Smith on

earth must persist in heaven. The resurrection body must be that very organism. In that case, any animalist view compatible with Christian resurrection will have implausible features about the persistence conditions for organisms.

Let me elaborate. If, as on the animalist view, a person's postmortem body were identical to her pre-mortem body, then we would have new questions about the persistence conditions for bodies. Non-Christian animalists understand our persistence conditions in terms of continued biological functioning. But Christian animalists who believe in resurrection cannot construe our persistence conditions biologically unless they think that resurrected persons are maintained by digestion, respiration, and so on as earthly persons are. Because postmortem bodies are incorruptible, it seems unlikely that they are maintained by biological processes (like digestion, etc.) as ours are. But if biological processes are irrelevant to the persistence conditions of resurrected persons, and if, as animalism has it, biological processes are essential to our persistence conditions, then it does not even seem logically possible for a resurrected person to be identical to any of us. Something whose persistence conditions are biological cannot be identical to something whose persistence conditions are not biological.

To put it another way, a Christian animalist who believes in resurrection must hold that earthly bodies, which are corruptible, are identical to resurrection bodies, which are incorruptible. Because I think that biological organisms are essentially corruptible, I do not believe that a resurrection body, which is incorruptible, could be identical to a biological organism. Even if I'm wrong about the essential corruptibility of organisms, however, the fact remains that on Christian animalism, the persistence conditions for organisms would be beyond the purview of biology. A Christian animalist who believed in resurrection would have to allow that organisms can undergo physically impossible changes without ceasing to exist. For example, organisms would disappear at one place (on earth at the place where the death certificate says that they died) and reappear at some other place.

Moreover, death would have to be conceived of in a very unusual way by an animalist who is a Christian: on a Christian animalist view, a person/organism does not really die. For example, God snatches the body away immediately before death and replaces it with a simulacrum that dies (van Inwagen 1992). Alternatively, God makes organisms disappear at one place (on earth at the place where the death certificate says that they died) and reappear at some other place (Zimmerman 1999). In either case, Christian animalists who believed in resurrection would have to suppose that organisms routinely undergo physically impossible changes without ceasing to exist. Platonists would say that the body dies, but the soul never dies; it lives straight on through the body's death. Christian animalists would have to say something even stranger: the body of a resurrected person does not die either, if by "die" we mean cease functioning permanently. Death for human persons who will be resurrected, on this view, would just be an illusion. I do not think that that conception of death comports well with the story of the Crucifixion, which suggests that death is horrendous and not at all illusory.

So, there are several reasons why a Christian should prefer the constitution view to animalism. To make animalism compatible with the doctrine of resurrection, the Christian animalist would have to make two unpalatable moves: she would have to conceive of persistence conditions for organisms as at least partly nonbiological, and she would have to reconceive the death of a human person in a way that did not involve demise of the organism to which the person is allegedly identical.

Perhaps even more important is the fact that, according to animalism, the property of being a person or of having a first-person perspective is just a contingent and temporary property of essentially nonpersonal beings: animalism severs what is most distinctive about us from what we most fundamentally are. On the animalist view, persons qua persons have no ontological significance. I think that these are all good reasons for a Christian to prefer the constitution view to animalism.

## 5.

The doctrine of resurrection has not received as much philosophical attention as some other aspects of Christian theology (e.g., the problem of evil and the traditional arguments for the existence of God), but views on personal identity suggest intriguing possibilities for identifying conditions under which a pre-mortem person can be identical to a post-mortem person. Only if a pre-mortem and post-mortem person can be one and the same individual is resurrection even a logical possibility.

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## VII.5

# A Hindu Theory of Life, Death, and Reincarnation

PRASANNATMA DAS

*When he wrote this article, Prasannatma Das as a young Hindu philosopher studying at the Krishna Temple in Vrindavan, India. In this essay he describes the basic Hindu view of karma—the doctrine that says the way we live in this life will determine our initial state in the next life—and reincarnation—the notion that the same person lives in a different body in future lives based on the idea of karma. Prasannatma Das appeals to the Bhagavad Gita, the most sacred of Hindu scriptures, for his exposition. Lord Krishna, the main speaker in that work, is viewed by Hindus as an avatar (manifestation) of God. As with most major religions, there are many versions of Hinduism. This is one important Hindu version of the meaning of life and death, but not the only one. The term cosmogonical in the quotation from Thoreau refers to the origin of the world.*

### A HINDU VIEW OF LIFE AND DEATH

In a previous age, there lived a wise king named Yudhishthira. Having been banished by an evil cousin, he and his four brothers were wandering in a forest. One day the youngest brother went to get water from a nearby lake. When, after a time, he did not come back, the next brother went. He did

not come back either. Twice more this happened until finally Yudhishthira himself went. He came to the lake and was about to drink from it when suddenly a voice boomed forth, "Do not drink this water. I am the owner of this lake, and if you drink this water, you shall die like your brothers have before you!" Yudhishthira then saw the lifeless bodies of his brothers lying nearby. The voice continued. "You may drink of this water only on the condition that you answer my questions. If you

answer them correctly, you and your brothers shall live. If you fail, then you too shall die."

The voice then presented a series of questions to the king, all of which he answered perfectly. One of these questions was, "Of all the amazing things in this world, what is the most amazing?" The king replied, "The most amazing thing is that although everyone sees his parents dying, and everything around him dying, still we live as though we will live forever. This is truly amazing."

It is indeed amazing that even in the face of inevitable death, few perceive the urgency of our predicament; however, in every culture and tradition there have been those thoughtful souls who have done so. Within the Hindu tradition many such seekers have found the teachings of Lord Krishna as presented in the *Bhagavad Gita* to be a source of knowledge and inspiration. Appearing as an episode in the great epic of ancient India, the *Mahabharata*, the *Bhagavad Gita* is one of the most profound theological dialogues known to man. Henry David Thoreau once said, "In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the *Bhagavad Gita*, in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial."

The first message of Lord Krishna's teaching in the *Bhagavad Gita* is that we are not these bodies. The body is constantly changing; we once had the body of a small baby, then that of a child, of an adult, of an old person, and eventually the body will return to the dust from whence it came. Yet when we look in the mirror we think that this body is what we are.

But what are we really? Krishna explains that we are the eternal soul within the body and what we call death is merely the soul leaving one body and going elsewhere:

Never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor all these kings; nor in the future shall any of these cease to be.

As the embodied soul continuously passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at the time of death.

A sober person is not bewildered by such a change.

For the soul there is neither birth nor death at any time. He has not come into being, does not come into being, and will not come into being. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing, and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain.

As a person puts on new garments, giving up old and useless ones, the soul similarly accepts new material bodies, giving up old and useless ones. (2.12–13, 20, 22)

Krishna is explaining that we are not these bodies; we are the soul inside. I am not a twenty-year-old college student about to fail his philosophy course, but rather I am an eternal spirit-soul who, out of ignorance of his true nature, now identifies himself with the temporary forms of this world. When I enter a new body, I remain the same person.

For example, imagine a candle over which a series of filters are placed; the light appears to be changing according to the color of the filter obscuring it—blue, green, etc. But the original source of the light, the flame, is not changing, only the covering is. In the same way, the soul does not change, only the covering, the body, changes.

Sometimes at night we look up at the sky and see that the clouds are luminous. From the glowing of the clouds we can understand that because the moon is behind them, the clouds themselves appear to be luminous. Similarly when examining this body we can infer the existence of the soul by its symptom consciousness, which pervades the body and gives it the appearance of being alive.

Another basic teaching of the *Bhagavad Gita* is the law of *karma*, which states that for every action there is a corresponding reaction, or "whatever goes around, comes around." Our situation in this life was caused by the activities and desires of our previous lives. Similarly our future existence—our body, education, amount of wealth, happiness and distress, etc., will be determined by how we live now. If we harm others then we must suffer in

return, and if we do good then we correspondingly enjoy. Moreover, we are given a body which suits our consciousness. If, like an animal, a human spends his life eating, sleeping, mating, and defending, ignoring his higher capacities, then he may be placed into the body of an animal. At the time of death the consciousness we have cultivated during our life will carry us, the soul, to our next body. "Whatever state of being one remembers when he quits his body, that state he will attain without fail." (8.6)

The goal is not to come back to this world at all but to attain the supreme destination:

From the highest planet in the material world down to the lowest, all are places of misery wherein repeated birth and death take place. But one who attains to My abode . . . never takes birth again. (8.16)

Death is perceived according to the quality of one's existence. The ignorant see death as something to be feared. They have material desires, and death will defeat them. Those who are seeking wisdom understand death as an impetus to live correctly, as a time when their knowledge will be put to test. The most amazing thing in this world is that although everyone knows they are going to die, they still act as though they will live forever. Imagine a person who has received an eviction notice—he must vacate his apartment in two weeks. If he promptly prepared for this, and found another place to go, he would not be in anxiety. Unfortunately, even though our eviction notice was given at the time of birth, very few take heed.

Krishna states:

What is night for all living beings is the time of awakening for the self-controlled, and the time of awakening for all beings is the night for the introspective sage. (2.69)

There are different types of activities which have different values. There are pious activities which lead to taking birth in a situation of relative enjoyment, there are impious activities which lead to suffering and ignorance, and there are spiritual activities which lead one to God. Such spiritual

activities are called *yoga*. (*yoga* does not mean Indian gymnastics but actually refers to the process of reuniting one's self with God.)

This *yoga*, or real religious life, is not just a passive activity, but is an active cultivation. If a farmer wants to harvest crops, he must begin working early in the season; plowing the fields, planting seeds, watering, weeding, etc. The fruits of his labor will manifest themselves at harvest time. Similarly, one who desires to attain to perfection must engage in a cultivation of the soul which will yield the harvest of spiritual perfection. When death comes, he will taste the fruit of his endeavor.

In this world there is nothing so sublime and pure as transcendental knowledge. Such knowledge is the mature fruit of all mysticism. One who has become accomplished in the practice of devotional service enjoys this knowledge within himself in due course of time. "That is the way of the spiritual and godly life, after attaining which a person is not bewildered. If one is in this situation even at the hour of death, one can enter into the kingdom of God." (4.38; 2.72)

Death will come. No situation in this world is permanent. All changes. Whether a table, a car, a human body, a civilization, or a mountain, everything comes into being, remains for some time, and then finally dwindles and disappears. What of this world can survive the passage of time? As Krishna says, "One who has been born is sure to die." (2.27) Of this there is no doubt.

Yet many people do not see the urgency of our situation. "Yes, I know one day I shall have to die; but for now let me eat, drink, have fun, and get a big bank balance," they think. Dedicated to the pursuit of the temporary phenomena of this world, living a life of vanity, they die like ignorant animals without higher knowledge. They and their fantasies are put to ruin. Their valuable human form of life with its great potential of knowledge and self-realization is wasted.

On the other hand, a thoughtful person understands the reality of this world, and, like a student who knows he must pass a test before he can graduate, prepares himself. This process of preparation begins with inquiry. Who am I? When this body is finished, what happens to me? Why do I exist?

How can I be happy? By nature the eternal soul is full of happiness and knowledge. But now that eternal, blissful, fully cognizant being is something like a fish out of water. The lost creature will not be happy until it is placed back into the water. Giving the fish a new car or expensive jewelry will not rectify its problem; it will not become happy in this way. So too, no degree of rearranging this material world will solve our problems; we will not be satisfied until we are back in the spiritual world. Thus a wise person is not interested in attaining any of the tempting but temporary offerings of this world, knowing that they have a beginning and an end. As the founder of Christianity pointed out, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things will be added unto you" (Luke 12.31). Therefore, "The yogis,\* abandoning attachment, act . . . only for the sake of purification." (5.11).

The sage is not interested in attaining temporary things like fame, adoration or distinction.

An intelligent person does not take part in the sources of misery, which are done to contact with the material senses . . . such pleasures have a beginning and an end, and so the wise man does not delight in them. (5.22)

He does not mind leaving this world because he is not attached to it. Rather he is interested in things with real value. Krishna lists some qualities which a thoughtful person might cultivate:

Humility; pridelessness; non-violence; tolerance; simplicity approaching a bona fide spiritual master; cleanliness; steadiness; self-control; the perception of the evil of birth, death, old age, and disease; detachment; freedom from entanglement with children, wife, home and the rest; even-mindedness amid

pleasant and unpleasant events; constant and unalloyed devotion to Me; aspiring to live in a solitary place; detachment from the general mass of people; accepting the importance of self-realization; and philosophical search for the Absolute Truth. . . . (13.8–12)

A yogi has no desire to fulfill in this world. Thus he is not attached to it. Thus he does not mind leaving it. Thus he has no fear of death.

Since he has no personal desire in this world and has faith in God, he welcomes death in the same way that the kitten welcomes the jaws of the mother cat, whereas they are feared by the mouse. Krishna states:

To those who are constantly devoted to serving Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come back to Me.

To show them special mercy, I, dwelling in their hearts, destroy with the shining lamp of knowledge the darkness born of ignorance. (10.10–11)

For those of us who are not enlightened beings, the fact that we must die can serve as an impetus to reach that higher transcendental state; what have we to lose? If we are wrong in our hopes, and death does indeed end all, then have we lost anything by our effort? And if our hopes are correct, then certainly we have all to gain.

A faithful man who is dedicated to transcendental knowledge and who subdues his senses is eligible to achieve such knowledge, and having achieved it he quickly attains the supreme spiritual peace.

When one is enlightened with the knowledge by which [ignorance] is destroyed, then his knowledge reveals everything, as the sun lights up everything in the daytime. (4.39, 5.16)

\*Yogis are holy men. ED.