

Chapter One

Is Heaven a Place *We* Can Get To?

Having shaken off the yoke of being chair of the department (after seven years) it is a great honor to be invited by my colleagues to give these lectures. It is also a particular delight. For this lecture series celebrates the memory of our wonderful former colleague, Carl Gustav “Peter” Hempel.

Like all those who knew him, I remember Peter as a very good and kind man. To mention just one small kindness—a single example among so many—one Princeton summer, long ago, Peter offered his magnificent office in McCosh to my then fellow graduate student Alison McIntyre and me, with the encouragement that we look into his library. It provided a great education in the long history of positivism, especially in the often unnoticed practical idealism of that movement, which appeared so forcefully in the many early pamphlets associated with its formation, pamphlets that Peter still kept on hand. One of those pamphlets contained a partial translation of August Comte’s *Système de politique positive*, in which I found an idea that I shall return to in the last lecture. I wonder what Peter would have made of it.

So now to begin on the lectures, I should say that I am very conscious of the awkwardness of my topic. To speak in this kind of academic context about whether we survive death is widely regarded as a form of bad

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taste. When I first announced the topic of these lectures, many of my friends in the department visibly flinched. And I believe that they are still a little nervous on my behalf. Why is this? Perhaps it is because there seem to be only two ways of proceeding, both bad ones at that. You either rehearse a scientifically established materialism about life and death, or you preach.

To do the first, to rehearse materialism, roughly the claim that the mind is merely the functioning of the brain and nervous system, so that a mind cannot survive the death of its brain, is just to insult peoples' cherished religious beliefs, and their consequent hopes that they and their loved ones are not obliterated by death. And that is not very helpful, is it?

Besides rehearsing the consequences of materialism, the only other option may seem to be apologetics or preaching; in effect, special pleading on behalf of *particular* religious beliefs. That is obviously out of court in an academic context. So how can you decently talk, in an academic context, about whether or not we survive death?

Well, we don't talk about it, or if we do, we talk about it under the arcane guise of what is called the philosophy of personal identity. This academic reticence on the question of life after death has at least two bad effects.

One effect is on the culture at large. Because there is something of a taboo on serious discussion of the topic, many people suppose that they have the right to believe anything they like about death and survival. So we get a good deal of second- or third-hand religiosity, mixed in with the whims of New Age wishful thought. Here as elsewhere, freedom of thought is confused with a license to believe anything. Philosophy is one of the few things that still enforces that disappearing distinction.

Another effect is to be found in the intellectual content of a major *idée fixe* of the day, namely the incessant discussion of the alleged compatibility or, as it might be, *incompatibility* of something called "religion" and something called "science." (As if Spiritualism and neurophysiology stood in the same relation as Unitarianism and, say, cosmology.) One reason why such discussions often seem like so much shadowboxing is that the crux of supernaturalist religious belief, the status of the afterlife, is not taken up in any detailed and concerted way.

One upshot of these lectures will be that dwelling on the *generic* motif

of science versus religion misses something crucial. As we shall see, various supernaturalisms, particularly the Protestant and the exoteric Catholic theologies of death, have obscured a striking consilience between certain implications of the naturalistic philosophical study of the self and a central salvific doctrine found in Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Vedanta.

THE POPULARITY OF THE OTHER WORLD

In 2003, the Barna Research Group conducted an extensive survey of the attitudes of Americans on the question of surviving death. Here is their own “executive summary” of their findings.

- Belief in life after death, like belief in God, is widely embraced. Not only do 81 percent of Americans believe in an afterlife of some sort, but another 9 percent said life after death may exist, but they were not certain.
- Moreover, a large majority of Americans (79 percent) agreed with the statement “Every person has a soul that will live forever, either in God’s presence or absence.”
- In fact, belief in the afterlife seems to be more popular than belief in the existence of God. Half of all self-described atheists and agnostics say that every person has a soul, that heaven and hell exist, and that there is life after death.

The Barna survey also explored Americans’ particular conceptions of heaven and hell.

- In all, 76 percent believe that heaven exists, while nearly the same proportion said that there is such a thing as hell (71 percent).

While there is no dominant view of hell, two particular opinions seem widespread.

- Four out of ten adults believe that hell is “a state of eternal separation from God’s presence” (39 percent) and one-third (32 percent) says it is “an actual place of torment and suffering where people’s souls go after death.” A third proposition, which one in eight adults will assent to, is that “hell is just a symbol of an unknown bad outcome after death.”

The popular view of where we are going after death appears to ignore, even to reverse, the consistent and ominous biblical warning: “Narrow is the gate to salvation, but wide is the road that leads to perdition.” For just one-half of 1 percent of Americans think that they will go to hell upon their death.

By the way, this is roughly the proportion of Americans who in other surveys are prepared to avow Satanism, or report that Satan is likely to be the highest power. So the level of anticipation of *effective* damnation, in the sense of ending up in *the wrong place*, may be considerably lower than half of 1 percent.

WHAT DOES DEATH THREATEN?

It is the kind of survey of American attitudes that shows that we need to significantly amend Nietzsche’s best-known aphorism. God is dead; but only in Australia, Scandinavia, and parts of Western Europe! In these “godless” countries, and the old country, Australia, it seems, is one of the more godless, much lower levels of belief in the afterlife are found.

These stark differences in levels of professed belief in an afterlife persist, even when we statistically correct for the difference in churchgoing as between, say, the United States and Australia. Here is a tempting speculation about the persistent difference between Americans and Australians. In Australia, for whatever reason, saying that you believe in God and the afterlife is *not* a speech act required of you in order to count as a conventionally good person. By contrast, *one* of the things American respondents are doing in announcing their beliefs in God and the afterlife is declaring themselves on the side of the good. (If that is right, then we should not expect that a significant increase in scientific literacy would automatically alter the rate of such avowals.) Like it or not, in this country, the present conventions are such that to openly avow atheism and materialism is thereby to create the presumption that you are a reprobate, a morally unprincipled person. You will then have, for example, little chance of being elected sheriff, let alone congressman, senator, or president.

Is this why atheists are now “coming out”—in part to erode these conventions?

Convention aside, is there any intelligible connection between alle-

giance to the good and belief in life after death? I think there is. Death confronts us with a threefold threat. For the person who is dying death threatens the loss of life with others, as well as the end of presence, the end of conscious awareness. As a generic phenomenon, death also threatens what we might call the importance of goodness. Belief in a life after death, where people get their just deserts, explicitly addresses this last threat. (Of course, it also promises the restoration of life with others and the persistence of conscious awareness.)

DEATH AND THE IMPORTANCE OF GOODNESS

How does death threaten the importance of goodness? To start with the more inchoate versions of the thought: Death is the great leveler; if the good and the bad alike go down into oblivion, if there is nothing about reality itself that shores up this basic moral difference between their lives, say by providing what the good deserve, then the distinction between the good and the bad is less important. So goodness is less important.

It is an argument with an ancient pedigree. Qoheleth, perhaps better known as Ecclesiastes, the “one who has gathered many things,” writing sometime after 450 BCE, famously makes this argument in the case of one prized form of goodness, namely wisdom.

So I turned to consider wisdom and folly. . . . Then I saw that wisdom excels over folly as light excels over darkness. The wise have eyes in their heads, but the fools walk in darkness. But then I remembered that the same fate befalls us all, wise and foolish alike. And I said to myself, “What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been *so very wise*?” And I came to see that this wisdom also is vanity. There is no enduring remembrance of the wise or of the fools, for in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. The wise die just like the fools. . . .

So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me; for all is vanity and a chasing after wind. (Eccl. 2:12–17)

And again:

Everything that confronts them is vanity, for the same fate comes to them all, to the just and the unjust, to the good and the evil, to

the clean and the unclean, to those who sacrifice and to those who do not sacrifice. (Eccl. 9:2–3)

The argument is not (or not *yet*) that the distinctions between the wise and the foolish, the just and the unjust, and the clean and the unclean are *obliterated* by the fact that they all face the same fate, the supposed nothingness of the grave. Rather it is that the distinctions lose their importance. The struggle to be wise, or just, or good, or clean is so much vain effort, given what death is.

This is not an isolated thought in the Jewish tradition.¹ *The Wisdom of Solomon*, written by a Hellenized Jew probably at the end of the first century BCE, rather than promoting Qoheleth's argument directly, offers a more telling conceit. The author has the wicked or "the ungodly" invoke their ally Death to vindicate their wickedness, by what is in effect a radicalized version of Qoheleth's argument.

The ungodly by their words and deeds summoned Death;
 considering him a friend, they pined away
 and made a covenant with him,
 because they are fit to belong to his company.
 For they reasoned unsoundly, saying to themselves,
 "Short and sorrowful is our life,
 and there is no remedy when a life comes to its end,
 and no one has been known to return from Death.
 For we were born by mere chance,
 and hereafter we shall be as though we had never been,
 for the breath in our nostrils is smoke,
 and reason is a spark kindled by the beating of our hearts;
 when it is extinguished, the body will turn to ashes,
 and the spirit will dissolve like empty air.
 Come, therefore, let us enjoy the good things that exist,
 and make use of creation to the full, as in youth.
 Let us take our fill of costly wine and perfumes,
 and let no flower of spring pass us by.
 Let us crown ourselves with rosebuds before they wither.
 Let none of us fail to share in revelry."

¹Notwithstanding the fact that the tradition is now somewhat divided about the afterlife, and in particular about the old Pharisaic doctrine of the resurrection of the dead.

So far, so good; we seem to have a sensible Epicurianism; there is nothing in itself wicked here. But now the reasoning of the wicked takes a nasty turn.

“Let us oppress the righteous poor man;
 let us not spare the widow
 or regard the gray hairs of the aged.
 But let our might be our law of right,
 for what is weak proves itself to be useless.”

In so reasoning, the wicked “reason *unsoundly*,” as the New Revised Standard Version of the Apocrypha has it; and it is clear from the surrounding text that the argument of the wicked is explicitly presented by the author as unsound, *but not invalid*. The author of the *Wisdom of Solomon* is telling us that if it were the case that the righteous and the wicked alike go down into the nothingness of Death, then one could validly infer that everything is permitted. But the argument of the wicked employs a false premise about death. On the author’s view, the righteous are saved by the goodness of God. As he says:

For the souls of the righteous are in the hands of God and no torment shall ever touch them . . . for though in the sight of men they were punished, their hope is full of immortality. (*Wisdom* 3:1–4)

And we might add, *righteousness* is thereby saved; its importance is preserved even in the face of death.

CAN THE THREAT BE DISMISSED?

Among contemporary philosophers, it is widely held that a few elementary considerations in moral philosophy will suffice to expose the confusion in this sort of thinking. Many moral philosophers would say that the wicked described in the *Wisdom of Solomon* are reasoning *invalidly*. The dominant view would be that it *doesn’t* follow from the supposed fact that all alike go down into the nothingness of the grave that righteousness or goodness is less important.

For example, modern moral rationalists would make the following points. Moral goodness is a normative property that attaches to acts because of the kinds of acts they are, and independently of whether those

acts are rewarded. Moral badness is a normative property that attaches to acts because of the kinds of acts that *they* are, and independently of whether *those* acts are punished. Whatever the merely self-interested or prudential point of view might tell you about the importance of the distinction between goodness and badness in the face of the nothingness of death, the moral point of view represents that distinction as *categorically* important; that is, important in a way that is not at all conditioned by your finding it in your self-interest to pursue the good. This is so even if we extend the notion of self-interest to cover your eternal salvation or damnation as meted out by a just God.

More than this, moral considerations *override* the considerations of self-interest; they place *absolute side constraints* on the pursuit of ends. In this sense they have an absolutely *preemptory authority* over anything we might desire. Therefore the force of moral considerations as reasons to act and prefer is independent of any desire-based incentive that the afterlife might offer. So much is just the content of the moral point of view, according to our modern moral rationalist.

That seems all very well as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. In thus ensuring the hardness of the moral “must,” our modern moral rationalists have thereby left morality all too brittle. For we can ask about the importance of the moral point of view itself, given that reality—as depicted by secular naturalism—is indifferent to the very distinction that point of view treats as so important. It is internal to the moral point of view that great injustice cries out for punishment, and that great sacrifice in the name of the good cries out for reward. But if the world itself is deaf to these cries then it can be rational to care less about the deliverances of the moral point of view.

Compare a corresponding attack on the importance of the prudential point of view; a point of view that presents the pursuit of one’s own long-term self-interest as a fundamental principle of rationality. From the prudential point of view, the pursuit of your long-term self-interest is *categorically* important; that is, the *force* of reasons of self-interest does not depend on your having antecedent desires to promote your self-interest. So from the prudential point of view, one can be criticized for not caring *enough* about oneself and one’s future. So young smokers and heavy drinkers are often criticized from the point of view of prudence alone, even when it is clear that they lack present desires to now act to satisfy their anticipatable future desires not to be in pain or misery.

How stable is such criticism in the face of certain truths about the world? Suppose I now remind myself that I am just one of the immense horde of humanity. There they are, the enveloping mass of humanity, billions of them, *teeming* around me. Each member in the horde takes himself so very seriously, but no individual matters that much. So how much then can I matter? Why should I take what is in my self-interest so seriously?

Or suppose I contemplate the fathomless extent of the universe and of my own miniscule place within it. The universe is much too vast, and I am much too small, for there to be any conceivable cosmic drama with me playing the role of Everyman. Or forget Everyman; I am too miniscule to be even a torch carrier in the back row of any conceivable drama played out on the vast cosmic stage. Seeing all this, it can reasonably seem to me that the pursuit of my self-interest doesn't matter much, precisely because I don't matter much. The effort and seriousness that it takes to prudently manage my own life is just not worth it.

Notice that I am not here adopting the *moral* point of view, and arguing from that point of view that prudence matters less. It's rather that in my practical reasoning I have access to a standpoint from which I can consider just how much prudence and morality matter, how important they in fact are. Moral and prudential reasons have a categorical *force*, but that does not settle their weight or importance. Compare the reasons of etiquette; like the reasons deriving from prudence and morality they do not have the force of reasons conditional on what you want to do. They are categorical, they tell you what you *should* do, whatever you may *want* to do. The rule is "Put the fork on the left, and the knife on the right" not "If you feel like it, put the fork on the left, and the knife on the right." Yet many of us, at the end of the day, find the demands of etiquette not to be too important, especially those that are not mere expressions of the requirements of considerateness. That is why we swap the knife and the fork for left-handers.

When I consider the question of the *importance* of the reasons deriving from morality, the nature of the universe seems highly relevant. The importance of prudence and of morality is not wholly settled from inside their respective points of view. Otherwise, we would expect some consensus as to how to comparatively weigh the reasons of self-interest and the reasons of morality. And despite enormous theoretical reflection on these two sources of reasons, no consensus has emerged or is emerg-

ing. Within certain limits, it seems that reasonable people, who grasp the force of both sources of reason, may disagree. This itself suggests that the respective standpoints, even when taken together, do not themselves settle how important the reasons they deliver are.

If that is right, the categorical and preemptory character of moral reasons does not invalidate the threat of death to the importance of (moral) goodness.

Let us try another way to make the threat come alive. Consider Qoheleth's remark, "The battle does not always go to the strong, nor the race to the swift, nor wealth to men of understanding." Compare Ogden Nash's ditty, which indicates something of the actual character of human life:

The rain it raineth every day
 On the just and the unjust fellas,
 But mainly on the just because,
 The unjust have stolen their umbrellas.

We can go further than Qoheleth and the ditty, and imagine a quasi-demonic scenario in which the signs are unequivocally reversed; where goodness is systematically punished, and wickedness systematically rewarded: Rwanda, Kosovo, Moscow after the collapse of the Soviet Union, parts of Iraq under Saddam, and, sadly, parts of Iraq to this very day. Now we understand perfectly well what morality requires of us in such a scenario; it requires that we soldier on in the name of the good, whatever punishments the demons deliver. This is moral heroism, and deeply admirable as such. But it is also clear that the quasi-demonic scenario is *morally* repellent: It is one that a moral being, just because of what morality is, should hope never to inhabit.

It is hard to resist the further conclusion that a moral being should hope for more than just this. Besides hoping that he not inhabit a morally incoherent universe, he should hope that the universe he inhabits is actually morally coherent. That is, he should hope that it is a universe in which the cries of great injustice to be punished, and the cries of great sacrifice in the name of the good to be rewarded, do not just echo in the void.

In saying that I mean to align myself with Immanuel Kant's conclusions about what we are *rationally required* to hope for in the face of death. In various places in his writings, Kant presents three related worries about the relation between death and moral goodness, or "virtue" as

he calls it. For Kant, being virtuous is being *worthy* of happiness, and this fact imposes a further moral requirement, namely that we all will the realization of a state, the so-called Highest Good, in which virtue and happiness converge. We have no reason to think that that virtue and happiness will converge in our lifetimes, or indeed in this world. Yet we are rationally required to believe in the possibility of realizing the objects of our will. So given the facts about this life, we are rationally required to hope for another life in which virtue is properly rewarded.

Kant's second thought is that without this hope we are naturally and rationally subject to moral discouragement. This is, anyway, how many do in fact react. When faced with the contrast between the professional torturer who dies calmly in his sleep at a ripe old age surrounded by his adoring family, and the nurse who, for her whole adult life, cared for the dying only to herself die young and alone from a horribly painful and degrading illness, people do tend to fall into despair over the importance of goodness. Unless, that is, they have hope or faith.

In the third *Critique*, Kant illustrates his concern over moral discouragement by the example of Spinoza; in Kant's view a paradigm of a just man, one who actively revered the moral law, and so needed no promises or threats in order to be motivated to follow its commands. Yet Spinoza had no belief in individual immortality (Kant supposes) and, a fortiori, no belief that our earthly lives would be judged in the afterlife by a just God. So, according to Kant, Spinoza was susceptible to having his unselfish resolve to bring about the good rationally undermined by considering the lives of other virtuous people and the manifest fact that "No matter how worthy of happiness they may be, nature, which pays no attention to that, will subject them all to the evils of deprivation, disease and untimely death" (*Critique of Judgment*, 452–43).

We can understand Kant's concern here if we consider that a good will cannot be a practically irrational will, not even conditionally or counterfactually. That is, a good will ought to be able to rationally maintain itself as the disposition that it is, even in the face of any relevant fact. But Kant is supposing that a good will, without irrationality, might not maintain itself in the face of the naturalistic picture of death that he takes Spinoza to have defended.

Kant allows himself a third variant on his theme of justice and the afterlife, perhaps the variant that is most relevant in an age in which the

world financial system is run on principles of naked power and legalized theft. Kant's third thought is that absent final justice, obedience to the moral law may simply turn the just into fodder for the predatory unjust. In the *Lectures on Ethics*, we find this extraordinary aperçu: "We are obliged to be moral. Morality implies a natural promise: otherwise it could not impose any obligation upon us. We owe obedience only to those who can protect us. Morality alone cannot protect us."² (And yet virtue, which on Kant's view consists in acting in accord with the moral law, must be its own reward; the thing we will have to see is just how that reward can also be some kind of *protection*.)

Despite these various anxieties about death and moral goodness, Kant himself never endorses the stronger conclusion drawn by the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon*, namely that if the cries of goodness to be rewarded and the cries of evil to be punished do simply echo in the void, then everything is permitted.

Even so, to follow Kant as far as he goes is enough, in a very abstract way, to render intelligible something like the conventional American expectation that one should confess to some kind of belief in God and the afterlife as part of signaling one's allegiance to the good. As in the case of Kant, this need not rest upon the base idea of the afterlife as the *incentive* to be moral, but on the better idea that morality by its nature requires the support of the afterlife.

It is a distinction that we would do well to keep in mind. William James, who seems to have mistaken Kant as proposing the afterlife as an *incentive* to be moral, referred to Kant's philosophical theology as "the uncouth part" of his philosophy. We repeat something like James's confusion when we indulge in the idea that our self-declared enemies, the suicide killers, must be relying on the imagined incentive of the "doe-eyed houris" of the next world. Instead, in many cases, the next life seems to function more as a guarantor of justice, which intensifies the would-be suicide killers' sense of injustice in this world. That, of course, is *much* more worrying, for the sense of injustice is in certain ways more robust than the appeal of the doe-eyed houris.

²Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, trans. Louis Infield (Hackett, 1981), 82. In thinking about Kant on this topic, I have learned much from David Sussman's very illuminating discussion of Kant's anthropology in *The Idea of Humanity* (Routledge, 2001), and from Paul Guyer and Desmond Hogan, who made extremely helpful suggestions along the way.

THE AIM OF THESE LECTURES

More to our purpose here, there seems to be little point in defending any response to death unless that response addresses the threat of death to the importance of goodness. For this reason, I shall simply ignore the classical refutation of death proffered by Epicurus, namely that death is nothing to us, because we do not live to experience the event of our death; for we are then dead, and so suffer neither it nor its consequences. Whatever other defects there are in his view, what Epicurus says is simply not designed to address the threat death makes to the importance of goodness.

I shall also simply ignore cryonics, endless tissue transplantation, and similar proposed methods of life extension. These are devices available only to the financial elite in advanced technological cultures. (Though apparently the promoters of deep-freezing of still-warm bodies are trying to penetrate a wider, less upscale market. Instead of freezing your whole body for \$170,000, you can simply have your head frozen for a mere \$80,000, a plausible option given that any future civilization sophisticated enough to revive a frozen head will probably be able to provide it with a prosthetic body!)

As such absurdities suggest, cryonics and the like are not the sort of things that could even begin to address the threat of death to the importance of goodness. At best, they represent speculative forms of life extension that would only postpone death for relatively few people. But the threat is a general threat that looms over the moral aspirations of all of us. Therefore the answer to the threat, if there is one, must lie in some possibility that *already* exists in human life, and indeed in any mortal and fragile form of life that finds itself under moral demands.

In the *Phaedo*, Socrates is pressed by his friends to explain why he is so calm in the face of his own impending death. He replies in perfectly measured terms: "I am in hope that there is something for us in death, and as was claimed from old, something better for the good than there is for the bad" (*Phaedo* 63c).³

This is the constraint that I take myself to be under, namely to show that there is something in death that is better for the good than for the bad. The interest of what I have to say may lie in the fact that in doing this I shall have no recourse to any supernatural means. I shall take us to

³See *Plato, Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson (Hackett, 1997).

be wholly constituted by our bodies. I shall find that there is no separate self or soul that could survive without the body or be reincarnated in another body. I shall argue that the idea of the resurrection of the body after its corruption is not, in the end, a coherent idea. Still, I shall maintain that the good, but not the bad, can overcome death, in part by seeing through it. And this, in its turn, will help us understand what goodness, the goodness that survives the threat of death, is.

Socrates' division between the good and the bad is not fine-grained enough for our purposes. People are better and worse; they are good to various degrees. "Overcoming death" will mean diminishing the threat of death to the one who is dying. Overcoming death will be a matter of degree, and will correlate with the degree to which one has a good will.

The conception of goodness that I have in mind is one shared by the best forms of Judaism, Christianity, and Buddhism. The good person is one who has undergone a kind of death of the self; as a result he or she lives a transformed life driven by entering imaginatively into the lives of others, anticipating their needs and true interests, and responding to these as far as is reasonable. The good person is thus a caretaker of humanity, in himself just as in others. By living this way, the good person encounters himself objectively, as just another, but one with respect to which he has a special trust.

To the extent that they *are* good, the good can see through death, and as a result death is less of a threat to them. Once we understand just how that is so, we will understand how the importance of goodness is vindicated even in the face of death.

But there is also a threshold of goodness at which the good person has forged a different kind of identity. And here, certain discoveries in the arcane subject known as the philosophy of personal identity will help us see how this new identity is not a mere metaphor but a basis for survival in what John Stuart Mill called "the onward rush of Mankind."

The one who is good in this sense is the one who follows the command of what the New Testament styles *agape*, and so has arrived at a thoroughly objective relationship with the human being he finds himself to be. He thereby sheds a certain kind of self-delusion, as it were the practical counterpart of the delusion of an enduring superlative self, and so finds that the death of a particular human being is so much less important to him than the onward rush of humankind that continues after

his death. He is more identified with that and with its rich magnificence, so much so that he can find the end of his own individual personality to be a final release from the centripetal force that continued through his life to pull him back into his smaller self. Such a person's pattern of identification has given him a new identity, one that is not obliterated by the death of his body and the consequent end of his individual personality.

Those remarks, which on their face express what seems to be an all too abrupt transition between identification and identity, would be both metaphorical and misleading, were it not for certain surprising facts that will emerge in the later lectures.

Woody Allen famously remarked, "I don't want to achieve immortality through my work, I want to achieve it by not dying." No doubt that is how many of us feel when we hear of a naturalistic surrogate for surviving death. We don't want the surrogate, we want our own selves, and our own individual personalities, to live through death; or even better, we want not to die at all.

I am not offering a naturalistic surrogate for that kind of thing, though I will explain how a good person *quite literally* survives death. My central concern is to respond to the threat that, from the naturalistic point of view, is posed by death to the importance of goodness. However, along the way, we will encounter certain surprising philosophical discoveries about what matters in survival, discoveries which show that the typical structure of concern for one's own continued existence, understood as the continued existence of one's self and one's individual personality, is deeply incoherent.

As I say, in all this there will be no reliance on supernatural means. The commitment to naturalism is a constraint on method; in responding to the threat that death makes to the importance of goodness, I shall have no recourse to the other world, but only to this world properly conceived.

The proper conception in question, the central part of which is wholly novel, will take some work to grasp, I'm afraid. It will require attention over several afternoons of extended argument, with the payoff coming only at the end. You will be happy to hear that there will be some comic relief. But this will not be a distraction from the real philosophy; it will be an essential part of the real philosophy. We will have to go through a lot of real philosophy to get to our destination, and throughout each

lecture I shall be throwing some red meat to the professional philosophers in the audience, particularly the local tigers, who are even now baring their fangs.

Nevertheless, I have some hope that a good deal of what I have to say will be accessible and worthwhile to those without any arcane philosophical training. And maybe, just maybe, you might come to see that philosophy is something to look into a little further.

THE PASSAGE OF THE SOUL

Why take the trouble, why not simply acquiesce in faith in the importance of goodness? Why not indeed? I have nothing but admiration for a serene, unelaborated, yet tested faith to the effect that death cannot threaten the importance of goodness. The trouble is that such a simple faith hardly ever exists. Either self-deception clouds the real fact of death, or some theological or quasi-theological elaboration gets in the way, an elaboration that involves supernatural means, means that carry with them extraneous psychological benefits that fatally distort the understanding of what goodness requires of us.

As a point of clarification, let me say that I am not *dogmatically* anti-supernaturalist. Supernaturalism is an empirical thesis about the extent of the world and about the way it operates. In my estimation it has turned out that the preponderance of the evidence counts against this thesis. However, my basic commitment to naturalism is methodological. I take the right starting point in the foundations of ethics and the philosophy of religion to involve questions like this: Is it possible to ransom any genuinely salvific ideas found in the major religions from their supernaturalist captivity, and what price do we have to pay for the ransom? Asking that question might lead us to see just what supernaturalism would do for us, if it *were* true in one or another of its religious forms.

The foundational question of whether the ransom is possible is forced upon us by our need for salvation and the fact that believing the epistemically dodgy claims of supernaturalism cannot be, morally and religiously speaking, necessary (let alone sufficient) for salvation.

To reject supernaturalism and yet talk of our need for salvation is likely to provoke more or less everyone in the misbegotten debate between religion and science. But I also take it that the claim that we need

salvation is an empirical thesis, one that is also overwhelmingly supported by the available evidence. It is a thesis that can be explained to the naturalist, and if he is not dogmatic he will come to see the widespread evidence for it.⁴ There are certain large-scale structural defects in human life that no amount of ordinary psychological adjustment and no degree of the resultant natural virtues of prudence, courage, moderation, just dealing, and so on, can adequately address or overcome. These large-scale structural defects include arbitrary and meaningless suffering, the decay of aging, untimely death, our profound ignorance of our condition, the destructiveness produced by our tendency to demand premium treatment for ourselves, and the vulnerability of everything we cherish to chance and to the massed power of states and other institutions. A truly religious or redeemed life is one in which these large-scale defects are somehow finally healed or addressed or overcome or rendered irrelevant.

Shouldn't it then be an urgent question whether any part of such a life is available within a naturalistic framework?

Furthermore, we can be methodological naturalists and yet admit that there could be supernaturalist narratives that would remain right in some fundamental sense, even if they are false to the historical facts and to the actual extent of the world. Perhaps the redeeming virtues can *at first* only be adequately depicted through compelling examples presented within a supernaturalist frame that invokes a God in another, prior or posterior, world.

Here is an example, deliberately drawn from a very mundane context, of being able to come to see what is there only by at first seeing what is not actually there. The correct way to begin to master pocket billiards involves seeing a white "ghost ball" touching your object ball at the point farthest from the intended pocket. You then shoot the cue ball directly at the ghost ball, and the object ball rolls into the pocket. (You hope.) This is the correct way to begin, even though there is no ghost ball, and even though seeing it actually gives the wrong aiming point on the object ball.⁵ If you do not have an extraordinary natural talent, you won't really be

⁴For a detailed naturalistic discussion of the fallen condition of humanity, and of our corresponding need for salvation, even given the naturalistic point of view, see my *Saving God: Religion after Idolatry* (Princeton University Press, 2009).

⁵The ghost ball method is an inaccurate method of aiming because of what is known as "contact-induced throw," a friction effect that occurs when the cue ball hits the object ball and drags it along with it.

able to learn to play well enough to appreciate what pocket billiards has to offer unless you *begin by continually seeing what is not actually there*. Still, someone who gets stuck on the ghost ball is not going to go very far.

Different things are appropriate for different stages of development, and a wise person does not jumble these up. It does not follow that because what was necessary at the earlier stage was literally false, that it was *then* the wrong way to approach things. If we had been taught the literally true history of our country in middle school, there would be no chance for the development of the proper piety towards our heritage. But once we have this proper piety, we can usefully investigate the more nuanced, and sometimes shaming, truth about our heritage.

A methodological naturalist who cares about the phenomenon of religion will inquire into the moral and religious *cost* of getting stuck at a stage of religious development. He will resist the inference that because a supernaturalist narrative of salvation was once helpful, perhaps even required, in order to see certain things in this world, it must therefore be a true description of history and of the actual extent of this world. And he will characteristically suspect that too much reliance on *literal* supernatural means, means that carry with them psychological benefits extraneous to salvation, can fatally distort the understanding of what salvation is, and of what goodness requires of us.⁶

Of a course, a supernaturalist will insist that the supernatural apparatus of heaven is not at all like the ghost ball; it is not just something that it is helpful to focus on at a certain stage of spiritual development in order to see *this* world in an appropriate way. It is required to make moral sense of life, to answer the threat that death and the other large-scale defects present to the importance of goodness.

In this lecture and the next, I shall take very seriously a variety of forms of supernaturalism concerning the afterlife, and I shall argue that even if we grant their assumptions, a deep philosophical problem remains: On any tenable view of personal identity *we* can't get there—be it heaven, hell, purgatory, or the *limbus infantium*—from here. Then in the remaining lectures, I shall address the question of how a certain kind of naturalism can meet the threat that death and the other large-scale defects of human life present to our conception of the importance of goodness.

⁶These are central themes of *Saving God*.

When it comes to surviving death, there are a number of different forms of supernaturalism worthy of review.

Consider first the conception of the afterlife embodied in what is perhaps the greatest work on the theology of death, *The Entombment of Gonzalo Ruíz, Count of Orgaz*.

The story of the painting? It was completed by El Greco in 1586, and remains on the wall on the right as you enter the vestibule of the Church of Santo Tomé in Toledo. The chasubled figure on the extreme right of the painting is Andrés Núñez, the parish priest of Santo Tomé, who commissioned the painting to commemorate a miracle that supposedly took place in his church 263 years earlier, in 1323. In that year, a certain Don Gonzalo Ruíz, native of Toledo, señor of the nearby town of Orgaz, went to his eternal reward. The Don had been a pious man who, among other charitable acts, gave a considerable sum to the Augustinian order for the building of a church to honor St. Stephen. At his burial in the church of Santo Tomé, to the astonishment of the mourners, both St. Augustine and St. Stephen had the good grace to come down from heaven to officiate and convey the earthly remains of Ruíz into his tomb, while an angel ushered his soul, depicted just above the middle of the painting as a nebulous infant, up through the birth canal of heaven.

There Ruíz is awaited by the Virgin and St. Peter on the left; and on the right, pleading to our Lord on behalf of the soul of Ruíz, we have John the Baptist and, quite remarkably, Philip the Second of Spain.⁷

It is the upper half of the painting that is relevant to our argument. It represents, as I say, a theology of death, perhaps the theology of death that is best known in the West. In the birth canal of heaven we see, in the form of a nebulous infant, the soul of Ruíz, which is to be reembodyed in a spiritual body and then judged for the life of Ruíz, with the prospect of joining the community of saints and angels in endless adoration prompted by the vision of God. The soul of Ruíz is, as we might put it, a seat of consciousness and the bearer of the personality of Ruíz; an immaterial something that carries the consciousness, identity, and moral quality of the man Ruíz; but this soul needs a body (be it material or

⁷Oddly enough, Philip was born almost two hundred years after the death of Ruíz and was still alive, though quite ill, in 1586, the date of the painting. So in any one of the twelve years until his actual death in 1598 Philip was in a position to visit this very painting and see himself in heaven. I do not know if he ever saw it.

spiritual) to sense, to communicate, and indeed even to encounter the face of God. So death is explicitly presented as a rebirth and reembodiment of the soul in another world. El Greco depicts surviving death as waking from a dark dream of moral confusion into a larger context of light, the context that makes moral sense of our earthly life. This larger context is already partly revealed to the faithful, who can hope for it while they are still locked inside the dream that is this life.

LOCKE AND THE *Wisdom of Solomon*

Of course, we are all inheritors of the rhetoric of the Enlightenment, which tells us that the real dream is not in the bottom half of the painting but in the top half. It is the same rhetoric that tells us to grow up morally and learn to adhere to our principles in the absence of such supernatural support.

Except that, as a matter of fact, the Enlightenment (when properly charted) does not simply consist of thinkers like Spinoza and Hume; major Enlightenment figures, such as Locke and Kant, have no time for such rhetoric. As we noted, Kant argues that as rational beings we are *obliged* to hope for another life that makes moral sense of things. And Locke, who, like Kant, took the truths of morality to be accessible to reason, nonetheless insists that it is only divine judgment after death that makes morality a law we are truly obligated to follow. (This position was revived in the twentieth century by G.E.M. Anscombe, who famously asked in response to moral “oughts” and “musts,” “Must I? And what if I don’t?” to which she thought the only coherent answer was a description of the consequences of Divine justice.)⁸

Locke admits that reason can *derive* the principles of morality, but he claims that without the help of revelation, reason cannot adequately account for the force and importance of those principles. For this we need judgment after death, and Locke claims that Jesus has “Given us unques-

I can't help thinking that the fabulous coruscating armor of Ruíz looks as though it was copied from Titian's 1550 portrait of Philip the Second, a painting El Greco must have known from his apprenticeship in the workshop of Titian. This painting, reproduced in figure 3, now resides in the Prado. Doesn't the armor look the same?

Perhaps El Greco is not just carrying out his stated commission but also presenting his moribund king with a profound meditation on his forthcoming death.

⁸See G.E.M. Anscombe, “Modern Moral Philosophy,” *Philosophy* 33 (1954).

tionable assurance and pledge of it, in his own resurrection and ascension into heaven.” And then, most remarkably, Locke allows himself to scoff at Aristotle and the Stoics by waxing poetic on the fragile character of their mundane ideal of virtue. He writes that after the promise of resurrection and final judgment, the familiar praise of virtue by the ancient “heathens” pales by comparison with what we can now say of it.

That [virtue] is the perfection and excellence of our nature; that *she herself* is her own reward, and will recommend our name to future ages, is not all that can now be said of her. It is not strange that the learned heathens satisfied not many with their airy commendations [of virtue].

For, unlike the learned heathens, we, “who possess the promise of the afterlife,” are now able to see that virtue “wears a fairer crown.” Virtue, Locke continues,

has another relish and efficacy to persuade men, [namely] that if they live well now they will be happy hereafter. . . . This view of heaven and hell will cast a flight upon the short pleasures and pains of this present state, and give attractions and encouragements to virtue. . . . Upon this foundation, and *upon this only*, morality stands firm and *may defy all competition*.⁹ (my italics)

That is John Locke, the intellectual father of the American Republic! The ancient argument of the *Wisdom of Solomon* returns, but now as a triumphal blast.

LOCKE AND PERSONAL IDENTITY

Famously, we also find something else in Locke—namely an explicit philosophy of personal identity and accountability, in part tailored to allow for the possibility of judgment in another world. Indeed, it would not be too far from the mark to understand the philosophy of personal identity

⁹John Locke, *On the Reasonableness of Christianity as Delivered in the Scriptures* (Clarendon Press, 1999), edited with an introduction and notes by John C. Higgins-Biddle. It’s a tough work to get through. In his essay in Leroy S. Rouner, ed., *If I Should Die* (Notre Dame University Press, 2001), Aaron Garrett discusses these and other passages by way of providing an intriguing narrative of the gradual mutation of the idea of immortality from the period of Scotus through to Locke.

as we now know it as an offshoot of the Christian, and in particular the Protestant, theology of death. Before Locke, Descartes, who at the very least was concerned to keep up the appearance of being a good Catholic, had written very proudly of his own achievements in the *Mediations*, and particularly of his arguments for the real distinction between mind and body, and the immateriality of the mind, on the ground that they opened the way for rational acceptance of Christian doctrine.

Locke seems more attuned than Descartes to actual Christian doctrine, at least as it is framed by Scripture. He knows that the essential doctrine of the New Testament is not the Platonic doctrine of the immateriality of the soul but of the resurrection of the dead, with subsequent judgment and assignment to heaven or to hell. And unlike the theology of death presented in *The Entombment*, the resurrection of the dead requires no mental or spiritual substance that at death might carry an individual's identity to heaven.

In Locke we get the first great meditation in the West on the nature of personal identity. This meditation is strongly conditioned by the Protestant theology of death, which at least in its earlier English form followed Martin Luther in excoriating the doctrine of the immateriality of the soul as an extraneous Platonic importation into true Christianity, indeed as a doctrine that obscured the radical promise of the New Testament. That promise was not a mere variant on the ancient theme of the soul's disposition after death; it was the promise to miraculously overcome the annihilation that is death by way of the General Resurrection. For Protestants like Locke, to dwell on the disposition of the soul in the period between individual death and final resurrection was in effect to invite the Trojan horse of Roman Catholicism back into the Reformed churches. For the inquiry as to the condition of the soul in the intervening period between death and Doomsday makes metaphysical room for purgatory as a place for the cleansing of the soul before the final judgment; this would justify the priestly craft of intercessory prayer for the sake of the dead, and also speak in favor of the very apparatus that Luther loathed and used as his lever for the Reformation—indulgences and masses for the dead. (You will remember what Sir Thomas More said of Luther: that he was a man who would rather see all the world lie in the fire of purgatory till Doomsday than have one penny given to a priest to pray for the dead.)

Luther himself favored a doctrine of soul-sleeping or “Psychopannychism” as it came to be called after Calvin attacked it, the doctrine that the soul is in a state of sleep or suspended mental life in the interregnum between death and the final judgment. Psychopannychism appears explicitly in Luther’s *Exposition of Salomon’s Book*, a commentary on Qoheleth Luther wrote in 1532, and which appeared in English forty years later. There Luther cites such passages as “the dead know not anything; neither do they have a reward” (Eccl. 9:5) and “there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, where thou goest” (Eccl. 9:10). Thus, on the alleged authority of Solomon, Luther outlines his doctrine of soul-sleeping, obviously intended to secure Reformed Christianity against “the fiction of purgatory” and its concomitants of intercessory prayer and, of course, the indulgences he so much despised.¹⁰

The seventeenth-century English advocates of “Christian mortalism,” most notably Richard Overton, John Milton, and Thomas Hobbes, outdid Luther in their attempt to insulate Reformed Christianity from the apparatus of intercessory prayer and indulgencies. They claimed that the soul itself was *annihilated* at death; the promised resurrection was therefore the resurrection of both soul and body. During the interregnum, the dead simply did not exist, for their souls were *also* dead—a doctrine that came to be called “Thnetopsychism.”

Overton’s Thnetopsychism was set out in his tract *Mans Mortallite*, which appeared in 1644 with the following frontispiece:

Mans Mortallite, or a Treatise Wherin ’Tis Proved Both Theologically and Phylosophically, that the Whole Man (as a Rationall Creature) is a compound wholly Mortall, Contrary to That Common Distinction of Soule and Body; and That the Present Going of the Soul Into Heaven is a Mere Fiction; and That the Resurrection is the Beginning of Our Immortality, and Then Actual Condemnation, and Salvation, and Not Before. With All Doubts and

¹⁰In the 1970s, the Lutheran doctrine of soul-sleeping began to catch on among some Catholic theologians, most notably Karl Rahner. In the early 1980s, in one of his first official acts as the prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, the then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger officially condemned Psychopannychism, by the obvious Catholic argument that it made practical nonsense of both masses for the dead in purgatory and of prayers to dead saints for intercession. We can only be thankful that the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith did not go on to deploy the methods it had at its disposal in the days when it was known under its original, and more ominous, title.

Objections Answered, and Resolved, Both By Scripture and Reason; Discovering the Multitude of Blashphemies and Absurdities That Arise From the Fancy of the Soule. Also Divers Other Mysteries, as, of Heaven and Hell, Christs Humane Residence, the Extent of the Resurrection, the New Creation etc. Opened, and Presented to the Tryall of Better Arguments.¹¹

Man's Mortallite is a barrage of unrelenting scorn directed at the idea of the soul's leaving the body at death, a proposition presented as the mere invention of Plato, confusedly mixed with true Christian doctrine, and in a way that obscures the radical promise of the resurrection. In defense of his anti-Platonic materialism, Overton appeals to the discoveries of the French physiologist Ambrose Paré to argue that men differ only in degree from the beasts, so that even reason depends on the proper functioning of the brain. It is in such contexts that materialism is first taken seriously in the English-speaking world, not only as a revival of ancient atomism but as an explicitly theological doctrine, whose purpose was in part to purge Christian belief of its Greek immaterialism and so to suppress any theological encouragement for the priestly craft of intercessory prayer and indulgences.

The same dynamic can be found in John Milton's *Christian Doctrine*, another spirited defense of Christian mortalism. Like Overton before him, Milton cites Christ's promise to the Good Thief as the major scriptural stumbling block for Christian mortalism:

Verily I say unto you, today you shall be with me in Paradise.

which unfortunately appears to entail that the Good Thief will exist in Paradise *before* the General Resurrection.¹² Luther would presumably have had the Good Thief's soul remain asleep in Paradise until Doomsday, but this does seem to invalidate Christ's promise, if not his reported words.¹³ More to the point, no mortalist like Overton or Milton could

¹¹As quoted in Norman Burns's brilliant history of the matter, *Christian Mortalism from Tyndale to Milton* (Harvard University Press, 1972).

¹²Burns (*Christian Mortalism*) has a nice discussion of Milton and Hobbes on these matters.

¹³Luther's soul-sleeping and his denial of individual judgment before the General Resurrection are obviously ill suited to handle the manifest content of the parable of Dives and Lazarus at Luke 16:19–34. This point applies a fortiori to those Christian mortalists who endorse Thnetopsychism. No fiddling with commas makes the obvious import of this parable go away.

tolerate a sleeping soul. So Milton suggests that the entailment is only apparent, and arises from an error in translation. We should, Milton says, move the comma so that Christ's promise reads:

Verily I say unto you *today*, you shall be with me in Paradise.

It is marvelous what can be revealed by attention to the syntax of sentences.

THE IRRELEVANCE OF THE SOUL?

Although Locke stands in the wake of the mortalist theological tradition, he finds independent philosophical reasons for not relying on immaterial souls to secure the possibility of resurrection. As carriers of our essential identities, souls would have to be substances, bearers of the acts and operations that make up our mental lives. But for Locke it is an open empirical question what actually lies at the base of our mental lives. He supposes that God is able to make matter that is "fitly disposed" come to think and experience, so there is at least the conceptual possibility that we only consist of material substances.

Moreover, it is Locke who initiates the method of imaginary cases in the philosophy of personal identity. (Ovid used similar cases, but to a different end.) By this method, Locke has us imagine someone surviving a succession of substitutions of his underlying spiritual substance. On the ground that such a person could still remember his earlier deeds, as it were "from the inside," Locke pronounces him the very same person, despite the imagined succession of underlying spiritual substances.

The description of the case is parasitic on Locke's definition of a person. By "person" Locke says he means "an intelligent thinking being that can know itself as itself, as the same thinking thing, in different times and places." Locke adds that "person" is a forensic concept; its primary use is to pick out something that is accountable for its past acts, and something that has a "concernment," as he calls it, a pattern of focused concern about its past and future. It is consciousness that, via memory and anticipation, extends this concernment outward from the present self. Accordingly, Locke believes that being the same person is not a matter of being the same animal, or the same immaterial substance or soul. It simply involves being the same *consciousness*. The great and reliable

sign of being the same consciousness, and so the same person or self that existed at an earlier time, is memory of experiences had, and deeds done, at that earlier time.

Given this, a person is something that can be resurrected and then appear before the Divine judge, even if the person's bodily substance is destroyed by death, and even if his soul or immaterial substance is likewise destroyed by death. So Locke's view is consistent with, though it does not entail, Thnetopsychism.

At Book 2, Chapter 27, Section 28 of the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke writes:

And therefore, conformable to this, the apostle tells us, that, at the Great Day, when everyone shall "receive according to his doings, the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open." The sentence[s on the Great Day] shall be justified by the consciousness all persons shall have, that they themselves, in whatever bodies they appear, or what substances so ever that consciousness adheres to, are the same that committed those actions, and deserve that punishment for them.

Thus Locke elegantly evades the heated controversy that divided the English Christian mortalists from the followers of Luther: the controversy of whether the soul is destroyed by death or "sleeps inactive," as Luther had it, until the General Resurrection on the Great Day. Since for Locke, it is the person and not the soul whose survival matters, the heated issue on the postmortem disposition of the soul, be it to nonexistence, to sleep, or to purgatory, goes by the board.

In the same vein, in a well-known passage from Book IV, Chapter 2, Section 6 of the *Essay* Locke obliquely disparages those who, like Descartes, have expended some effort to defend the idea of souls or immaterial substances.

All the great ends of Morality and Religion, are well enough secured without the philosophical Proofs of the Soul's Immateriality; since it is evident that He who, at first made us beings to subsist here as Sensible Intelligent Beings, and for several years continued us in such a state, can and will restore us to a like state of Sensibility in another World, and make us there capable to receive the Retribution he has designed to men, according to the doings in

this life. And therefore 'tis not a mighty necessity to determine one way or t'other, for or against the Immateriality of the Soul, as some overzealous have come foreward to make the World believe.

NEO-LOCKEANISM AND SURVIVAL

In so diverting our attention from the question of the persistence of either a bodily or spiritual *substance* to the question of the psychological connections that make for the same consciousness over time, Locke has bequeathed contemporary philosophy what is called “Neo-Lockeanism” or the “Wide Psychological View.”¹⁴ Twenty years ago, when I first turned to the topic of personal identity, Neo-Lockeanism was the dominant view, ably defended by Anthony Quinton, Sydney Shoemaker, and David Lewis.¹⁵ Rightly or wrongly, they took Locke to be offering a clearly inadequate memory criterion for personal identity over time, and therefore sought to bolster Locke’s position by adding other mental connec-

¹⁴*Psychological reductionism* is the view that truths about personal identity over time have as necessary and sufficient conditions statements about the holding of relations of mental continuity and connectedness. Connectedness involves the holding of direct psychological connections, such as the persistence of beliefs and desires, the connection between an intention and the later act in which the intention is carried out, and the connection between an experience and a memory of that experience. Connectedness can come in twice over in the statement of the conditions on personal identity. All psychological reductionists require that if two person stages are stages of the same person, then psychological continuity, the ancestral of strong or predominant psychological connectedness, holds between them. Some psychological reductionists also require that no two such stages be entirely unconnected psychologically. Neo-Lockeanism is sometimes called *wide* psychological reductionism because it has it that mental continuity and connectedness can secure personal identity even if the holding of these relations is not secured by its normal cause, the persistence of a particular human body or brain. For Neo-Lockeanism, any causal mechanism that operates so that these psychological relations hold will do. The identity over time of any particular human body or brain plays no strictly indispensable role in the identity of a particular person over time. Any particular human body or brain is just one causal means among others for the holding of the relations of psychological continuity and connectedness that constitute a particular person’s survival. So the characteristic sign of Neo-Lockeanism is the consequence that a person would survive Teletransportation.

¹⁵See David Lewis, “Survival and Identity,” in Amelie O. Rorty, ed., *The Identities of Persons* (University of California Press, 1976); Anthony Quinton, “The Soul,” *Journal of Philosophy* 59 (1962): 393–409; and Sydney Shoemaker, with Richard Swinburne, *Personal Identity* (Blackwell, 1984). Shoemaker clearly had some sympathy for the view that bodily continuity is constitutive of personal identity when he wrote *Self-Knowledge and Self-Identity* (Cornell University Press, 1963), although he allowed that in exceptional cases the bodily criterion of personal identity could be overridden by the memory criterion. He decisively abandons the bodily criterion in “Persons and Their Past,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 7 (1970): 269–85.

tions such as the persistence of beliefs and desires, the tendency to carry out intentions just formed, the immediate carryover of character, and so on, so as to include all the direct mental links that are typically found from one moment to the next in a single conscious life. Neo-Lockeanism thus arrives at the position that a person at one time is identical with a later person just in case there is a chain of such direct mental links *uniquely connecting* the first mentioned person and the second. So according to Neo-Lockeanism you will exist at a later time just in case you have a unique, and sufficiently close, mental continuer at that time. (Lewis found an ingenious way to drop the requirement of uniqueness.)¹⁶

The term “Neo-Lockeanism” may partly rest on a confusion about just what Locke is up to in his “On Identity and Difference.”¹⁷ Nevertheless, it does secure the possibility that Locke cared most about. Given Neo-Lockeanism, you can come before the throne of the Divine judge on the Great Day, even if death annihilates your body *and your soul or spiritual substance*. All it takes is that there be another body, perhaps a spiritualized body created for the occasion, whose psychology is uniquely continuous with your premortem psychology. All it takes, in other words, is for your unique mental continuer to come before the throne of God.

There are popular ideas, spontaneously generated from our computer-dominated culture, which are actually just unwitting variants on Neo-Lockeanism. One is that a particular mind is like a detailed software program that can be implemented in various machines, so that one could get to the next world if God there provides a new body-like computer on which one’s individual software can run again. Another is that a mind or soul is an information-bearing pattern instantiated in a brain and body, so that after a person’s death, God will remember the person’s “pattern” and will instantiate that pattern in a new brain and body at the resurrection. A sophisticated variant of this last view is used by John Polkinghorne to explain life after death.¹⁸

The arguments against Neo-Lockeanism set out below have been selected to also work, *mutatis mutandis*, against such mind-as-software and soul-as-pattern views.

¹⁶See Lewis, “Survival and Identity.” This proposal is discussed in detail below.

¹⁷*Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book 2, Chapter 27, Section 9.

¹⁸John Polkinghorne, *The Faith of a Physicist: Reflections of a Bottom-Up Thinker* (Fortress Press, 1996), 163ff.

NEO-LOCKEANISM AND CHRISTIAN MORTALISM

In the spirit of Locke, we may now contrast the Platonized theology of death in *The Entombment of Gonzalo Ruíz*, a theology which assumes that the soul is an immaterial, independent substance, with what has now become the standard Protestant conception, a conception which places the emphasis not on the immateriality of the soul but on the resurrection of the dead person.

Given Neo-Lockeanism, the Protestant view may seem to allow for a satisfying compromise with a sensible materialism, as in the Christian mortalist tradition of Overton, Milton, and Hobbes. These early Christian mortalists emphasized the dependence of the mind or soul on the body. Yet they observed that in re-creating the body at the resurrection, God thereby re-creates the mind, and hence the whole person. So whereas the implied theology of *The Entombment* requires that the depicted mind or soul be a separable entity distinct from the brain and body of Gonzalo Ruíz, Protestant mortalism exhibits no such vulnerability to the scientific discovery of the dependence of the mind on its brain.

Moreover, the Protestant view avoids the philosophical question that faces the theology of death pictured in *the Entombment*. Why does the item depicted in the birth canal of heaven count as the very man Gonzalo Ruíz, that generous person who lived on earth, rather than just a spiritual remnant of that person? What stops us from correctly describing what is depicted as the fate of a spiritual remnant of Gonzalo, but not of Gonzalo himself? Yes, there are persons on the other side, but they (perhaps with the exception of the Virgin, who was raised bodily into heaven) are persons because they have been provided with spiritual bodies. How can something made up of a soul and a spiritual body be identical with something that was made up of that soul and a material body?

BYPASSING THE BODILY CRITERION

It is important that holding to the resurrection of the person while rejecting the immateriality of the soul does not depend on a conception that takes a person to be identical with his body and then supposes that resurrection would bring the very body of the deceased person *back* into existence.

That conception of resurrection might help itself to what philosophers call “the bodily criterion of personal identity.” The bodily criterion has it that a person survives whenever and wherever his body does, for a person is identical with his body.¹⁹ The bodily criterion may seem to suit exactly the needs of the mortalist theological tradition, which holds that the soul is destroyed along with the body at death. Mortalism would then require that the bodily criterion be augmented with the auxiliary assumption that a given body can exist *again* if the perimortem state of the body is re-created, reproducing its matter and organization just as it was at the moment before death. (God, we may suppose, then heals and invigorates the resurrected body in various ways.)

This version of mortalism may seem to stumble over the distinction between being copied and genuinely coming back into existence. Peter van Inwagen drives this distinction home with the example of a lost manuscript penned by Augustine. Suppose that long after the manuscript has been destroyed, the atoms of the manuscript magically coalesce to create a piece of paper that is qualitatively just like the original manuscript. Surely, van Inwagen says, the new manuscript is a magically produced *copy* of the original manuscript that was penned by Augustine. And where we have a copy, we have two things, not one thing coming back into existence after a period of nonexistence.²⁰

However, upon reflection, van Inwagen’s appeal to the intuition that the resultant manuscript is a copy may not settle the issue. It may only serve as an illustration of the ontological importance of the distinction between immediate parts, such as two halves of a manuscript, and remote parts like atoms. If the two separated parts of Augustine’s manuscript were attached together that would be Augustine’s manuscript. So

¹⁹David Wiggins endorses something like the bodily criterion when he writes in *Sameness and Substance* (Oxford University Press, 1980), “a person is any animal that is such by its kind to have the biological capacities to enjoy fully the psychological capacities enumerated” (176) and extracts this consequence: “There would be no one real essence of persons as such, but every person could still have the real essence of a certain kind of animal. Indirectly this would be the real essence in virtue of which he was a person” (172). Peter van Inwagen also claims that persons are organisms, a centerpiece of his *Material Beings* (Cornell University Press, 1987). A vivid defense of this view, and by implication the bodily criterion of personal identity, is found in Paul Snowdon, “Persons, Animals, and Ourselves,” in Christopher Gill, ed., *The Person and the Human Mind* (Oxford University Press, 1990), and Eric Olson, *The Human Animal* (Oxford University Press, 1997).

²⁰Peter van Inwagen, “The Possibility of Resurrection,” *International Journal of Philosophy of Religion* 9 (1978), reprinted in Paul Edwards, ed., *Immortality* (Macmillan, 1992). Van Inwagen’s views are discussed in detail in the addendum to this lecture.

also, if, in a stunning archaeological discovery, the original planks that made up the last form of the Ship of Theseus were actually found, the archaeologists could then *reassemble* the Ship of Theseus. The very ship that took its last sea journey centuries ago could then be shown in a museum.

Perhaps a practical anticipation of this point about reassembly from *immediate* parts is found in the Jewish, or more specifically Pharisaic, practice of double burial; the body is interred, and then after a period of decay the bones are dug up and placed in an ossuary, where they may survive indefinitely. That makes sense if the bones are thought to be the crucial immediate parts of the body, the parts essential, and with some added flesh sufficient, for the reconstruction of the original body.

So why can't God reconstruct a person's original body in steps, organic molecules from the body's perimortem atoms, cells from those organic molecules, organs from the cells, and then the original body again from its immediate parts, the organs?

The traditional answer involved the comical case of the cannibal who has lived on an exclusive diet of human flesh, a fancy deployed to make the point that the same remote parts might be taken up in the lives of a succession of distinct persons, each near his or her respective death. At the resurrection, because of the diets of such cannibals, there just will not be enough previously body-constituting matter to go around in the way required to re-create the perimortem bodies of all the dead.

To which the standard, if even more ludicrous, response was that thanks to an equitable distribution of perimortem atoms, the resurrected bodies of the cannibals and their luckless victims will be considerably smaller than they were at death.²¹

²¹As late as the seventeenth century, even distinguished members of the Royal Society were still agonizing about the cannibals. For example, Robert Boyle, in his essay, "Some Physico-Theological Considerations about the Possibility of the Resurrection," writes,

When a man is once really dead, divers of the parts of his body will, according to the course of nature, resolve themselves into multitudes of steams that wander to and fro in the air; and the remaining parts, that are either liquid or soft, undergo so great a corruption and change, that it is not possible that so many scattered parts should be again brought together, and reunited after the same manner, wherein they existed in a human body whilst it was yet alive. And much more impossible it is to effect this reunion, if the body have been, as it often happens, devoured by wild beasts or fishes; since in this case, though the scattered parts of the cadaver might be recovered as particles of matter, yet already having passed into the substance of other animals, they are quite transmuted, as being informed by the new

The traditional invocation of the case of the resurrected cannibal was supposed to dramatize a point about the worrying competition on the Great Day for bodily parts had by more than one person at the moment of their respective deaths. How could both “perimortem” bodies be re-created from the same matter?

That kind of worry can be made vivid in a more exact, if less comical, way.

THE PROBLEM OF PERIMORTEM DUPLICATES

Consider two people, separated by two hundred years. Nonetheless, by the purest accident they turn out to be strict perimortem duplicates in the sense that at the moments of their respective deaths they have exactly the same bodily matter in the same bodily organization. After two hundred years of sweeping around the universe the matter that once made up one body at its point of death just happens to come to make up another, exactly similar, body at its point of death.

This, I am prepared to bet, will never happen. All I maintain is that such perimortem duplicates are what I shall call “per se possible,” which is to say there is nothing in the essence of human bodies that precludes the possibility of perimortem duplicates.

How does the per se possibility of perimortem duplicates show that it is mistaken to appeal to the bodily criterion to secure the possibility of personal resurrection on the Great Day?

Well, if the bodily criterion is to underwrite the possibility of resurrection by reassembly then it must be wedded to some auxiliary principle that implies that *exact* reproduction of a perimortem bodily state brings a body back into existence. If less than exact reproduction will do it, then surely exact reproduction will do it.

So, here we get to the red meat, partly so called because it is not that easy to digest. Let us begin with a definition.

form of the beast or fish that devoured them and of which they now make a substantial part . . . And yet far more impossible will this reintegration be, if we put the case that the dead man was devoured by cannibals; for then, the same flesh belonging successively to two different persons, it is impossible that both should have it restored to them at once, or that any footsteps should remain of the relation it had to the first possessor.

Robert Boyle, *Selected Philosophical Papers of Robert Boyle*, ed. M. A. Stewart (Manchester University Press, 1979), 198.

A body y at t reproduces a body x 's perimortem state if and only if y 's matter and organic form at t is identical at every level of analysis (for example, atoms, organic molecules, cells, organelles, organ, body) with the matter and organic form of x 's perimortem state.

Then our auxiliary principle will be

Necessarily, if at some time t after the death of a body x a body y comes together out of simple elements in such a way as to reproduce x 's perimortem state then y is numerically the same body as x ; that is, y is the very body x come back into existence.

The idea is that if the bodily criterion is to do effective eschatological duty, it must be the case that the exact reassembly on the Great Day of the bodily matter of a given perimortem body into the perimortem state of that body is none other than the re-creation of the very body that once died.

Now, any such principle, if true, will not be true simply as an accidental matter, a matter that could vary from one possibility to another. It must be true thanks to the nature of bodies. Accordingly, this auxiliary principle will be necessary if true.

But now, surely it is possible, if only in principle, that bodily matter be reorganized in a way that reproduced the perimortem state of a given person. This could be the act of a very powerful God with the capacity to draw together whatever matter he needs, and then organize it as he sees fit, or it could happen by the most unlikely accident; that is, its happening does not essentially depend on an act of God.

It seems to follow from this that the common perimortem state of *two* perimortem duplicates could be reproduced after their deaths. The one body that then results would be the body of *each* of the perimortem duplicates.

But recall the bodily criterion: Necessarily, a person survives where his body does, for a person is identical with his body. So long as we set aside a certain metaphysical conceit,²² we are stuck with the absurd consequence that two distinct people have become identically one and the

²²I have in mind a position on which the auxiliary principle is replaced by a principle governing when two non-identical body stages make up the same four-dimensional worm. Then we might say, in the fashion of David Lewis, that the two perimortem duplicates remain distinct *but become exactly coincident* in the afterlife. This idea is discussed in the section titled "Are We Worms?"

same. This yields a sheer contradiction given the necessity of distinctness, the principle that any two distinct things are necessary distinct and so could not ever become one and the same.

THE ARGUMENT ANATOMIZED*²³

In summary form, we may set out the argument from perimortem duplicates as follows:

1. Necessarily, two distinct things cannot become identical with one. (Necessity of Distinctness)
2. Necessarily, if at some time t after the death of a body x a body y comes together out of simple elements in such a way as to reproduce x 's perimortem state then y is numerically the same body as x ; that is, y is the very body x come back into existence. (The Auxiliary Principle)
3. Necessarily, the re-creation of a person's body is the re-creation of that person. (The Bodily Criterion)
4. It is possible that there be two people who have the same perimortem bodily state and then that a body y comes together out of simple elements at some later time t in such a way as to reproduce that common perimortem state. (Assumption)
5. It is possible that two distinct people become identical with one person. (From 2, 3, and 4, contradicting 1.)

It is clear that the resultant absurdity—the implied contingency of numerical distinctness—should be blamed not on the bodily criterion but on the auxiliary principle that needs to be added to the bodily criterion in order to underwrite the possibility of personal resurrection. After all, we could drop the bodily criterion of personal identity and yet still get a violation of the necessity of identity at the level of bodies.

So those who simply advocate the bodily criterion of personal identity can insulate themselves from this argument by denying the auxiliary principle, say by denying that the body can have either an intermittent or a scattered existence, in the manner of a disassembled artifact. They

²³From here on, when an asterisk is attached to the heading of a section, it is an indication that the section will be primarily of interest to philosophical specialists and may be skipped by the non-specialist reader without much loss.

could, for example, argue that the survival of a given body depends on the survival of the particular token dispositions to life functions that maintain that body. (Peter van Inwagen does just this.) When the body dies those particular token dispositions come to an end *forever*, even if the same type of dispositions are reproduced in a duplicate body reconstructed from the same matter. In this way a friend of the bodily criterion will be led to say that there is no possibility of re-creating a body after it has died and rotted away.²⁴

To see that it is the auxiliary principle that is at fault consider this argument:

6. Necessarily, if at some later time *t* after the deaths of body *x* and a body *z*, a body *y* comes together out of simple elements in such a way as to reproduce both *x*'s perimortem state and *z*'s perimortem state then *y* is numerically the same body as *x* and numerically the same body as *z*; that is, *y* is the very body *x* come back into existence, and *y* is the very body *z* come back into existence. (A direct consequence of the auxiliary assumption)
7. Necessarily, if *y* is the very same body as *x*, and *y* is the very same body as *z* then *x* is the very same body as *z*. (An upshot of the logic of identity restricted to bodies)

So,

8. Necessarily, there are no distinct bodies *x* and *z* with the same perimortem state such that *y* comes together out of simple elements in such a way as to reproduce both *x*'s perimortem state and *z*'s perimortem state.

The conclusion, 8, is false. What 8 represents as impossible, or necessarily not so, is indeed incredibly unlikely, but not impossible. Because 7 is a matter of the logic of identity, the falsehood of 8 is to be blamed on 6, a direct consequence of the auxiliary principle. So, once again we see that the auxiliary principle is false.

But absent the auxiliary principle there is no getting bodies to the

²⁴For direct difficulties with the bodily criterion of personal identity itself, and what is now called "Animalism," see my "My Body Is Not an Animal" in D. Zimmerman, ed., *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics*, vol. 4 (Oxford University Press, 2006).

afterlife by exact reassembly. And how could less than exact reassembly do the trick, if exact reassembly does not?

Bodies are stuck in this life, unless something very weird is happening at death.²⁵

MUNDANE NECESSITY*

To respond that 8 is in fact *true*, because God would not allow perimortem duplicates to arise, is not to understand the full force of the problem of perimortem duplicates. Conceptually speaking, this response brings God in “too late.” Although the idea that God comes in “too late” is a somewhat technical idea, it is a very useful idea, worthy of some discussion. After all, in the face of the old worry about the cannibals, someone might have just insisted that God actually monitors their diet, metabolism, and time of death, precisely to avoid messy complications on the Great Day. That response also brings in God too late. But what does “too late” mean when we are dealing with what is necessary and what is possible?

There thus remains a clear sense in which the logic of even the venerable argument from cannibals, an argument that has been around for much longer than a millennium, has not as yet been adequately clarified!

The whole issue turns on the kinds of necessity that might ground claims like

8. Necessarily, there are no distinct bodies x and z with the same perimortem state such that y comes together out of simple elements in such a way as to reproduce both x 's perimortem state and z 's perimortem state.

True, it is only possible *all things considered* that there be two people who are perimortem duplicates and who are followed by the relevant exact reassembly if it is not necessary that God prevents this from happening. A supernaturalist could then say that since persons are bodies that are only resurrectible by reassembly, God's essential justice requires that he prevent perimortem duplicates from existing, for if they existed then neither person could be resurrected and then face his or her just deserts.

²⁵See the addendum to this lecture for an examination of the weird possibilities.

What is wrong with this kind of response to the argument against the auxiliary principle? In what sense does it enter the scene “too late”?

On its surface, the argument against the auxiliary principle seems to have the following form. If the auxiliary principle is true then 6 is true, and since 7 is a logical principle, and 6 and 7 entail 8, then 8 is true; but 8 is not true, so the auxiliary principle is false.

If that is all there is to the argument then the invocation of God’s just will as the unexpected source of the truth of 8 would be responsive to the argument, and it would serve as a defense of the crucial auxiliary principle.

But there is more in the argument than that. The argument also shows that if the auxiliary principle is true then 8 is true in virtue of a *purely mundane necessity*, a necessity that holds thanks to the essences of the items (objects, events, times, properties, and relations) mentioned, described, or quantified over in 6 and 7. I say a “purely mundane necessity” because all those items are *mundane* items; that is, they include items like the relation of identity, the relation of reproduction of states, bodies, processes of reassembly, and perimortem states, but they do not include God or the operation of his just will.²⁶

If that is right, then the invocation of God’s just will as the unexpected source of the truth of 8 is *not* a relevant response to the argument.

Let us check to see that if premises 6 and 7 are true, then they are true thanks to mundane necessities, that is, necessities that hold in virtue of the essences of items other than God and his just will. Premise 7 is the easy one. It is merely a consequence of the principles of the symmetry and the transitivity of identity, restricted to bodies. These principles hold just in virtue of the nature of the relation of identity. It is not thanks to God’s just will that if $y = x$ then $x = y$. It is not thanks to God’s just will that if $x = y$ and $y = z$ then $x = z$. A will has no room to insert itself *here*.

Premise 6, the direct consequence of applying the auxiliary principle twice over, is true in virtue of a mundane necessity if the auxiliary principle is true in virtue of a mundane necessary. Let us now check the

²⁶In writing of truths and necessities holding thanks to the essences of certain items and not others I am directly relying on Kit Fine’s clarification and subsequent formalization of this crucial notion. See, for example, his “Senses of Essence,” in Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, ed., *Modality, Morality, and Belief: Essays in Honour of Ruth Barcan Marcus* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), and “The Logic of Essence,” *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 24 (1995).

auxiliary principle to see that if it is true then it is true in virtue of a mundane necessity.

Necessarily, if at some time t after the death of a body x a body y comes together out of simple elements in such a way as to reproduce x 's perimortem state then y is numerically the same body as x ; that is, y is the very body x come back into existence.

If this auxiliary principle is true then it is true thanks to a necessity that holds in virtue of the essences of the items it mentions, describes, and quantifies over. These happen to be mundane items; that is, they include items like the relation of identity, the relation of reproduction of states, simple elements, bodies, processes of reassembly, and perimortem states. These items, whose essences are jointly sufficient to ground the truth of the auxiliary principle if it is true, do not include God nor the operation of his just will.²⁷

So since the auxiliary principle entails 6, and 6 does not mention, describe, or quantify over items not mentioned, described, or quantified over in the auxiliary principle it follows that if the auxiliary principle is true, then 6 is true in virtue of a mundane necessity.

Since 6 and 7 entail 8, and 8 does not introduce new entities beyond those introduced in 6 and 7, it follows that 8 is true in virtue of a mundane necessity, a necessity that holds thanks to the essences of items like the relation of identity, the relation of replication, times, simple elements, bodies, processes of reassembly, and perimortem states.

So the deep form of the argument against the auxiliary principle is this. The principle entails 8*

8*. It is a mundane necessity that there are no distinct bodies x and z with the same perimortem state such that y comes together out of simple elements in such a way as to reproduce both x 's perimortem state and z 's perimortem state.

and 8* is false.

More explicitly elaborated, the argument is this. If the auxiliary principle is true then

²⁷The thought that God's will enters in here to secure an identity that would not otherwise hold is a version of identity voluntarism, explicitly argued against in the section titled "Identity Voluntarism, the Last Temptation."

- 6*. It is a mundane necessity that if at some later time t after the deaths of body x and a body z , a body y comes together out of simple elements in such a way as to reproduce both x 's perimortem state and z 's perimortem state then y is numerically the same body as x and numerically the same body as z ; that is, y is the very body x come back into existence, and y is the very body z come back into existence. (A direct consequence of the auxiliary assumption.)

But we also have

- 7*. It is a mundane necessity that if y is the very same body as x , and y is the very same body as z then x is the very same body as z . (An upshot of the logic of identity restricted to bodies.)

So,

- 8*. It is a mundane necessity that there are no distinct bodies x and z with the same perimortem state such that y comes together out of simple elements in such a way as to reproduce both x 's perimortem state and z 's perimortem state.

But, 8* is false, so the auxiliary principle is false.

Someone who says that *thanks to the essential justice of God* there cannot be perimortem duplicates has thereby offered no reason to doubt the falsity of 8*. Indeed, he may be thereby giving a kind of argument for the falsity of 8*, namely that there is no such mundane necessity; the only necessity in the vicinity is guaranteed only thanks to the just will of God.

All that follows from the objector's claim that *thanks to the essential justice of God* there cannot be perimortem duplicates is the claim that 8 is true.²⁸

This means that God's just will does not eliminate the problem posed by perimortem duplicates. That problem shows that the auxiliary prin-

²⁸Again, the idea of a necessity holding in virtue of the essences of some entities and not in virtue of the essences of other entities is an idea that Fine has done so much to make clear. Even if the essences of things derive from the essence of God, there are still some (necessary) truths that hold thanks to those derivative essences, such as the truth that I am necessarily self-identical. The specification of the truths that are grounded by those derivative essences will include many necessary truths. The subclass of these that makes no reference to God and his will are mundane necessities in my sense.

ciple is false. Without the auxiliary principle the bodily criterion does not underwrite the possibility of resurrection by reassembly.

In the same way, God's just will does not eliminate the problem posed by certain cannibal diets. That problem, properly worked up, could also be used to show that the auxiliary assumption is false.

“CHRISTIAN PHYSICALISM”

Does this failure of the bodily criterion to underwrite resurrection mean that there is no room for a Christian materialism, a view of resurrection which allows that the mind or soul is wholly dependent on the body, and so dies with the body?

Not yet, for it looks as though Neo-Lockeanism can come to the rescue! Neo-Lockeanism can make materialist sense of the resurrection while rejecting the bodily criterion of personal identity, and so allowing that one's postmortem heavenly body is not identical with one's perimortem body.

As it turns out, this is the very strategy pursued by the gifted theologian Nancey Murphy in her recent (2006) defense of Christian materialism, *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies*. She prefers to title her position “Christian physicalism” rather than “Christian materialism” on the plausible ground that “materialism” now connotes a godless worldview. Despite being a physicalist about persons *as they stand in the present dispensation*, Murphy anticipates her own resurrection in a new spiritual body, thanks to the fact that such a body could secure the memories, capacities, emotional orientation, and character that she takes to be the essential features of her person. (Following what she reads as a theme in Pauline theology, Murphy supposes that in the *Eschaton* there will be new body-constituting stuff governed by new laws of nature that work to secure a perfected alternative version of the present material world.)

She writes:

I suggest that one's body provides the substrate for all the personal attributes discussed above: it is that which allows one to be recognized by others; that which bears one's memories, and whose capacities, emotional reactions and perceptions have been shaped by one's moral actions and experience. It is an empirical fact, in this