



Is Man Immortal?

I found the following passage in a book by Thomas Dick, *The Philosophy of a Future State*, published in Brookfield, Massachusetts, in 1830. It struck me as being as relevant to our present state of belief in life after death as anything argued today. And it is a particularly important contemporary issue since children in American public schools are taught the humanist doctrine that there is no afterlife, and that present existence is all that there is. Thomas Dick writes:



Next to the Being of a God, the doctrine of the immortality of man lies at the foundation of all religion, and of all the animating prospects which can cheer us in this land of our pilgrimage. Remove from the mind the belief of a future existence, and the hope of immortality, and religion becomes a shadow, life a dream, and the approach of death a scene of darkness and despair. Upon this short question, "Is man immortal, or is he not?" depends all that is valuable in science, in morals, and in theology—and all that is most interesting to man as a social being, and as a rational and accountable intelligence. If he is destined to an eternal existence, an immense importance must attach to all his present affections, actions, and pursuits; and it must be a matter of infinite moment, that they be directed in such a channel, as will tend to carry him forward, in safety, to the felicities of a future world. But if his whole existence be circumscribed within the circle of a few fleeting years, man appears an enigma, an inexplicable phenomenon in the universe, human life a mystery, the world a scene of confusion, virtue a mere phantom, the Creator a capricious being, and his plans and arrangements an inextricable maze.

The author then spends 308 pages to prove that there is life after death, and that man is an immortal being. He sees proof of this in the fact that the doctrine of immortality is a universal belief among all nations, whatever their religion, and in every period of history. He further observes that this restless desire for a future existence after death is implanted in the soul of man, which is further proof of our immortal nature.

Man's natural desire for knowledge, the principle of curiosity, are implanted in the human mind, which is proof of an immortal destination. Man's insatiable scientific curiosity has led him to probe the very nature of matter, which, in the 20th century, led him into the realm of anti-matter that rises out of nothing. Quantum physics alone should convince any rational individual that spirit is the source of matter, and that spirit is immortal. Dreams, ideas, memories, words emanate from matter but are not matter. Are they spirit? The American Heritage Dictionary defines spirit as: "The vital principle or animating force within living beings. Incorporeal consciousness. The soul, considered as departing from the body of a person at death." And what is the soul? "The spiritual nature of humans, regarded as immortal, separable from the body at death, and susceptible to happiness or misery in a future state."

Behavioral psychologists don't believe in the existence of the soul because they can't measure it. They are strict materialists and only deal with what can be observed, measured, and weighed. Thus, they do



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not deal with any of the spiritual emanations from matter. To them, the world is composed of only matter in motion.

Yet, they deny such obvious immaterial phenomena as dreams, memory, ideas, words, and consciousness. Memory is a particularly powerful phenomenon. Thomas Dick writes:

By the power of memory, we can treasure up, as in a storehouse, the greater part, if not the whole of the ideas, notions, reasonings, and perceptions which we formerly acquired, and render them subservient to our future progress in intellectual attainments. . . . Without this faculty we could never advance a single step in the path of mental improvement.

Thus, memory becomes an absolutely vital need if we are to grow physically, morally, and intellectually. All of us are programmed at conception to follow a pre-determined pattern of growth, from infancy, to childhood, to adulthood, to middle age, to old age. Memory connects these different stages of growth, so that we are able to learn what it means to live a purposeful life. Memory makes life whole. This spiritual emanation conducts us through life's ups and downs, molding our purpose. It is the force that gives life meaning and connects us to our Creator.

That in itself is proof that man is a spiritual being. By living a purposeful life a person confirms that he is a spiritual being. Purpose can only be achieved by spiritual means. If an atheist is living a purposeful life, he is behaving as a spiritual being, even though he may deny it. Matter does not have purpose. Purpose is a manifestation of spiritual power.

The question is: does man's spiritual nature survive his corporeal death? Each one of us will know that answer when we leave this vale of tears. But Thomas Dick is convinced that God would not have created all of this spiritual energy in millions of minds to then destroy them at the end of physical life. "Is it consistent," he asks, "with the common dictates of reason to admit, that matter shall have a longer duration than mind, which gives motion and beauty to every material scene? . . . The soul contains no principle of dissolution within itself, since it is an immaterial uncompounded substance; and, therefore, although the material creation were to be dissolved and to fall into ruins, its energies might still remain unimpaired."

The whole question of immortality really devolves around the larger question about the existence of God and His purpose. Thomas Dick writes:

If the doctrine of a future existence is set aside, man appears an enigma, a rude abortion, and a monster in nature, his structure is inexplicable, and the end for which he was created an unfathomable mystery; the moral world is a scene of confusion, the way of providence a dark impenetrable maze, the universe a vast, mysterious, and inexplicable system, and the Deity a Being whose perfections and purposes can never be traced nor unfolded.

But that's how atheists see the world, as a purposeless accident in which man is "a monster in nature." He lives like any other animal, and when he dies, his "soul" dies with him. The author then asks the same questions many of us ask in moments of doubt about our own lives:

I first of all look into myself, and inquire, whence I came? Whither I am going? Who produced me? Of what is my body composed? What is the nature of my senses? Of the thinking principle I feel within me? And for what purpose was I ushered into being?

These questions can only be answered by a believer who understands God's purpose. For as Christ has said, "For God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." And as the New Testament states, "Eternal



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life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Is it possible to have a rational concept of what life after death will be like? It is possible to indulge in fantasy about the afterlife, but I believe that we cannot know what it will be like until we actually experience it. Pictures of Heaven and Hell have been conjured up by some of humanity’s greatest poets. They are essentially human lore meant to frighten children into leading virtuous lives. Sometimes sufferings on earth can be as painful as what is supposed to take place in hell. And at other times, the pleasures and ecstasies of beauty and love are comparable to what we shall encounter in heaven.

Yes, we believe in life after death, but we can no more understand what that future state is like than understanding how spirit emanates from matter and how matter emanates from nothing. We are born into mystery. That’s what makes life so interesting. John Calvin once said that if you want to know more than what God permits you to know, you will be hitting your head against a stone wall. That said, for the human race, the ultimate mystery of life will mystify us forever.



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