

Earth Is God's Dime Novel

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Introduction

Over the years I have read a lot of books and articles on metaphysics. This article is a collection of observations on the nature (purpose, meaning) of human existence.

By its very definition, metaphysics (“beyond physics”) deals with matters that transcend the five physical senses – spiritual science as opposed to physical science. It is subjective, not objective; intuitive, not empirical. So how can we make any meaningful statements about metaphysics? Those of us who have profound revelatory experiences may stand firm in their beliefs about the nature of existence. I am not one of them. What I have to say is based simply on my observations and experience as an ordinary person, the observations of others, and ratiocination (logical reasoning).

It is said that what you think (dwell upon), you become. The key to spiritual insight and knowledge is meditation (or prayer, if you prefer). As it is said in *Psalms*, “Be still, and know that I am God.” I have read a lot and thought a lot about the big questions of life (Why am I here? What is my purpose in life? How can I make my life more meaningful / significant?). Over the years, many people have sought spiritual knowledge. Organizations that have focused on spiritual matters are the so-called “Mystery” schools and the mystic branches of major religions, such as the Hindu Vedanta, Zen Buddhism, Christian Gnosticism, Hebrew Qabalism, Chinese Taoism, and Islamic Sufism. There are many other paths to spiritual knowledge, including shamanism (Asian, African, American), Theosophy, Anthroposophy, astral projection, yoga, Holotropic Breathwork™, psychotropic plants (peyote/mescaline, ayahuasca), hypnosis, meditation, and prayer.

I am not an expert in any of these, or an adherent, disciple, or advocate of any of them. They all have something to say or offer on the issue of the meaning and purpose of life. Different people prefer different paths. My views are based entirely on what I have read of others, and my own reflections. If you are looking for commentary or observation or advice from someone who has had a profound spiritual or transcendental experience, I am not he. So why, you may ask, since I have not received a spectacular “revelation from God,” should you be interested in anything that I might have to say in these matters? Consider this: Since my views are based solely on ordinary reality (life experience, observation, reading, logical reasoning), I am not asking you to accept anything that I say on the basis that I have received a special “revelation from God.” The observations, facts, and books that I have read, you too may observe, read, and consider.

Since most of us do not have profound religious experiences, my views may therefore be of some interest.

While I may cite some references (e.g., work on spiritual regression), the views presented in this article are *my* views, taking into account all that I have read and experienced.

Some Definitions, Observations, Perspectives and Premises

It seems to me that we must start with a few “givens.” These are views on rather fundamental items that represent a general context for my more specific views. Some are observations. Some are definitions about fundamental concepts such as the universe and God. They are presented mainly as clarification – a lot of confusion and argument arises simply because people use the same word to mean different things.

As sensory-limited beings, there is a lot that we do not know about the universe. I shall list a number of axioms, or postulates, or premises, or assumptions. I cannot prove or disprove the following; they seem to me to be essential aspects of my existence. They are “articles of faith” or belief, or opinions – “truths held to be self-evident.” These articles are not necessary to support any of the assertions presented later in the paper, but, by summarizing the “givens” at the start, the subsequent discussion proceeds more smoothly. The articles reflect my attitudes and opinions on fundamental issues, and form a context for discussion. If you have a serious difference of opinion about my views on the fundamental issues, there is probably not much point to your reading beyond. The following are aspects of my reality that seem so real (and so difficult or impossible to prove) that I see little point in discussing them here.

1. The universe is all-inclusive, and is another name for God. We shall define the universe to be all that exists, or existed, or will exist – everything, for all time. Another name for the universe is God. *By definition*, the universe (God) includes both the creative force and the created product. *By definition*, God (the universe) created all things, and all things are part of God (the universe). *By definition*, there is nothing that exists (existed, will exist) that is not within God’s scope or control. The universe is under direct, positive control; it is not a mindless self-organizing system. There seems little point to creating such a fabulous item as a universe, and then just “walking away from it.” Since new life arises as old creatures die, it is clear that the life force, in particular, although visible to us only through its manifestations, is continuing all around us. Whatever can create human beings is assumed to be capable of fully sensing their perceptions, from both objective (external) and subjective (internal) perspectives.

If there are so-called “parallel universes,” then these are all included in my definition of “universe.” I could use “universe” with a lower-case initial letter to represent our own perceptible universe, and “Universe” with an upper-case initial letter (or “Multiverse”) to represent everything (our own perceived universe plus all others), but whether parallel universes exist is not a central concern, so I will not bother to do this. If we call the universe (everything – both the force of creation and the product of creation; all knowledge; all history (past, present, and future); all memory) God, then God (the collection, the whole) is omniscient (all-knowing, totally self-aware). (This seems to be a definition (i.e., the definition of omniscient), but it may be an assumption (if, e.g., it is not possible for God to remember everything, or know everything, or know everything at the same time, or know the future.) Parts (subsets) of the universe may not be self-aware or sentient (aware of anything; having sense perceptions; conscious) (e.g., rocks), or omniscient (e.g., human beings).

There is not a lot of point to engaging in discussions about omniscience and omnipotence. The universe knows what it knows, and it is capable of what it is capable. Does God (referring

here to some mental aspect of the universe) know the millionth prime number, or does he have to calculate it? Can he instantly imagine the design of a fractal pattern a thousand miles from its starting point, or does he have to propagate it and see? Can he change history? There is little point to such ruminations.

2. The universe is unitary. The universe is a unitary construct. All aspects (parts) of it are in some fundamental way connected to (in communication with, interrelated to) all other aspects (parts). (This premise is consistent with physical phenomena, such as the Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen (EPR) effect. It seems self-evident to me, when I consider the effect of gravity on two or more objects – if physical objects were essentially independent (separate, unconnected, noncommunicating, non-mutually-aware), how could one object possibly be gravitationally aware of and attracted to another. All physical objects seem to be under the influence of gravity, and so they all seem to be interconnected. (The concept that objects are gravitationally aware of each other via “gravity waves” seems unnecessarily and incredibly complicated, and strange – gravitational attraction seems to be instantaneous, not communicated with a delay.) It is a “leap of faith” to posit that just because all physical matter is interrelated, then *all* aspects (physical and nonphysical / spiritual) are also interrelated. Note that the assumption that all aspects of the universe are interrelated does not mean that macroscopic parts of it, such as human beings, are consciously aware of each other. For example, I, with my limited sense of vision, cannot see around corners or through opaque objects, and am not aware of objects that I cannot see.) Although the physical universe seems “real,” it is quite acceptable that it is simply a remarkably consistent and persistent figment of the mind of God and therefore totally imaginary (an illusion, “Maya”).

3. The Utility of Nonunitary Paradigms. Although the universe is a unitary concept, it contains myriad objects, such as ourselves, that, with respect to our perceptible senses, are distinct, separated, individuated. For ease of discussion, it is often helpful to define and consider separate aspects of things, as though they were essentially independent. For example, it may be useful to restrict the definition of “God” to the nonphysical, or to emphasize that aspect of God that created us (a dual universe consisting of the creative force (Brahman) and the created product (Maya). Or, it may be useful to consider a human being as comprised of a physical body and a nonphysical spirit, and speak of these as if they were separate, distinct entities. From the point of view of the unitary universe, they are all part of the same thing, but from the point of view of discussing and understanding them, it may be useful to speak of them as if they were separate, independent entities. For example, many religions consider that individuated souls were extruded (separated, individuated) from God (more precisely, from the creative aspect of God), and eventually, after many experiences and “growth,” return to (are dissolved, are absorbed into) God. This concept is discussed usually in a context in which the souls are considered to be separate from God during their existence. But if God is defined to be everything, then they are never totally separated from him. The concept of souls being “separated from” God is a semantic device – from the viewpoint of a unitary universe / God, nothing is truly separated from anything – everything is interconnected and interrelated.

This situation is similar to the problem of describing a physical human being. There are many subsystems that comprise the whole (e.g., the nervous system, the circulatory system, the respiratory system, the mind), and they are all interdependent. Nevertheless, it is helpful to understanding to discuss each of them as separate, distinct subsystems, before discussing the human body as a whole. Considering the universe as being comprised of distinct subsystems (e.g., the creative force vs. physical creation), or considering the human being as being comprised of body and spirit, can assist understanding. These views, or representations, are useful paradigms, or models. They may not be correct or complete representations of reality, but they may serve a useful purpose in understanding reality. Newton’s classical (non-

quantum) theory of physics may be an inadequate representation of the physical universe if you wish to build an atomic bomb, but it is a quite sufficient description for getting you to the moon. While my more complete view of God (the universe) is a unitary concept, I may from time to time speak of “God” and his relationship to “us,” as if we were two separate, independent entities. That is a semantic device, for convenience in discussion. It is more convenient to do this than to speak of the “creative aspect of the universe” and the “created aspect of the universe.”

4. Things are basically as they appear to be. Each of us (human beings, perhaps other sentient animals as well) has a strong and independent sense of identity, and a sense of free will. (I can't prove or disprove this, since I sense only my own being. But everyone else seems to be acting about the same way that I do, so I infer that they have the same sense of being that I do. I can't imagine that I am the sole sentient creature on Earth or in the universe (solipsism), and all of the others that I see are simply robots constructed and functioning in a dream in which I am the sole sentient being. The simpler explanation is that we are all the same, and, by the principle of Ockham's Razor, the simpler hypothesis is preferred / accepted.) This postulate implies that things are pretty much as we perceive them to be. There really *are* other human beings that surround you – they are not simply figments of your imagination (although you and they may certainly be viewed as figments of God's imagination). The physical universe may be considered, as posited by Eastern philosophy, an illusion (“Maya” – the product of the creative force, vs. Brahman, the creative force, and Ultimate Reality), but the illusion is consistent and homogeneous – you are not very different from all of the other human beings that you see. From the point of view of the “New Physics” (quantum physics, Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle), nothing is exactly the way that it appears, since the very act of observing changes things. What I am referring to is macroscopic objects, not subatomic particles.

5. God experiences what we experience. *By definition*, God experiences all that we experience (since God includes / is the entire universe, and we are part of it). Whatever we are capable of conceiving or feeling or doing, it created, and it knows and experiences (since “it” includes us). We are individually aware and sentient; therefore, it has created individual awareness and sentience and hence knows / experiences individual awareness and sentience. We are emotional, therefore it experiences emotions. We like to play games, and therefore it experiences games. We like to create and destroy, therefore it experiences creating and destroying. We love and hate and become jealous with rage, and it experiences all of these. There is no aspect of human existence that is not fully comprehended, willed, experienced, and controlled by it, since it, by definition, created all of them and includes us, and, as/through us, experiences all of our sensations and emotions.

This postulate precludes, for example, the possibility that God created (set in motion) the physical universe and “walked away from it.” It also precludes the possibility that a unitary God created many lesser gods (e.g., Elohim), whose actions he deliberately hides from himself, and empowers them to create even lesser creatures (e.g., us). In *Genesis*, the word “Elohim” (plural) is taken to refer to an aspect of the unitary God is fully aware (of their activities, states, and all of their subcreations). If you pray, you do not need to worry about praying to the wrong god or a lesser god. There is one God.

6. Subsets of the universe have different attributes, capabilities and limitations. Various parts of the universe vary in their abilities (e.g., our abilities exceed those of the ameba). Because we exist and do not have the ability to create ourselves, it follows that there is a force (forces) of the universe that is (are) far more powerful than we. It can create matter, energy, and life. We have control over physical motion (of ourselves and other physical objects), and a little control over our body operation (e.g., rate of breathing, heart rate, choice of foods, decision to focus

attention). We are objects of creation – parts of creation that have limited creative abilities. (“It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves.” This is obvious to me. I can create mental images in my mind, and control my dreams to a very limited extent, but I am totally unable to create any other physical object or creature – even a grain of sand, much less a living creature such as an ameba!) We cannot create or control life – what makes us alive and keeps us alive is a spiritual force that is quite distinct from our conscious mind or physical body, and about which we understand very little. We can cause the life spirit to leave a body (e.g., by crushing an insect), but we are unable to breathe life into physical matter. We can set things in motion for another life to occur (by sexual reproduction), but we have little control of or understanding of the biological-life process, other than “throwing the switch” to turn it on.

7. The attributes, capabilities and limitations of subparts of the universe do not necessarily apply to the whole universe. The attributes (characteristics, properties, nature, abilities, senses, perceptions) of a part (subset) of God’s creation (part of the universe) are not necessarily attributes of the whole (i.e., of God, of the universe). The creator (God, the universe) has created man with a range of emotions (e.g., desire, will, love, hate, compassion, anger, lust, rage, sorrow, doubt, grief, jealousy, envy), but this does not mean that any of these or any other emotions apply to it. It conceived these emotions and created the sensory devices (animals) for experiencing them (and the conditions that engender them), and has full knowledge, understanding and experience of them, but they are not *attributes* of it. God created emotions and the beings (sensory vehicles) that experience them, and God therefore *transcends* emotions. God created lust and adultery, but this does not mean that God lusts or is an adulterer – those are attributes that apply to human beings (parts of God), not to God as a whole. You and I and Jesus and Hitler are physical / mental manifestations (expressions, creations) of God (the universe), but the attributes that these beings possess are not attributes of the whole. You may create and play the game of Battleships, but you may have nothing to do with “real” naval warfare – you are the creator of the game or a player in the game, but you are not *the* game – the features (descriptors) of a game are not your features / descriptors. A writer of romances may feel, imagine, and describe many emotions, but the attributes of the book (the creation), the emotions described or engendered by the book are not the attributes of the author.

The mental capabilities of the spiritual aspect of the universe (that which created and maintains life) are far greater than ours, and subsume ours, and transcend ours. We are born, change, and die, and the creator (the universe) experiences this. Although the universe created and experiences all human emotions, it includes, and therefore transcends, these emotions. We may be tired, or jealous, or mistaken, but the universe (God) is not properly characterized by any of these human emotions or states, which are possible only because of our limitations. You cannot envy an object if you can instantly create it. You cannot fear an object if you can instantly destroy it. We may be born and die, but that does not mean that God does. We may change as we grow and die. God (the universe) may change in certain ways (e.g., creation, evolution, life on planet Earth), and not in other ways (e.g., it may not die / cease to exist). We may possess certain aspects or attributes of God (“Let us create man in our image” – Elohim in *Genesis*; “As above, so below” – Thoth / Hermes in the *Emerald Tablet* or *Emerald Table* (“That which is below is like that which is above, and that which is above is like that which is below.”), but simply because we possess certain characteristics (e.g., biological life, love, fear, pride, anger, illness, biological death) does not mean that he (it, the universe, the whole) does (as global characteristics).

Some Opinions

On Immortality

Our existence is comprised of several aspects – our physical body, our mind (mental powers), our personality (emotional aspects), and the spirit (life force) that makes us alive. This representation is simply a “paradigm,” or model, to facilitate discussion. Use of this paradigm does not imply that each of the aspects is a separate, distinct, independent entity, any more than discussing the body’s nervous and circulatory systems implies that they are independent, or that use of Newton’s classical mechanics to describe the motion of the planets denies the existence of quantum mechanics. Our physical body clearly dies. It seems to me (as is usually agreed) that our mind and personality also die soon after. The spirit – that part of the universe that is the force of life, continues. Even after we or anything else dies, other life forms continue. The spirit is what created life, and it clearly continues even if a particular live object (ameba, plant, human being) dies. New living creatures continue to be born as others die. It is obvious that the spirit, the life-force, the animating “spark,” continues (since life is all around us, and new creatures spring to life as old ones die).

Alternative paradigms. I discussed briefly above the utility of using alternative paradigms to assist understanding (e.g., using Newton’s classical mechanics as a paradigm for describing and understanding planetary motion, and Einstein’s relativity theory to understand nuclear explosions). Almost everyone believes that a human being or other animal is comprised of a physical body and a “spirit.” The “spirit” is the name given to whatever it is that makes the difference between a live body and a physically identical dead one. By definition (of the two words “physical” and “spiritual”) the spirit is not perceived by our physical senses – it is defined simply through its apparent manifestation. Many branches of spiritual science (theoretical spirituality) and religion (applied, social spirituality) postulate that a human being is comprised of a number of different bodies, representing different aspects of human existence. Almost everyone accepts (“believes in”) the “body” and “spirit” paradigm, or, at least, a “body” and “mind” paradigm. Some people speak of “body,” “mind,” and “spirit,” where the spirit is the life force, the body is the physical body we sense, and the “mind” is some sort of phenomenon that exists (springs into being) when a large number of neurons are suitably grown together. Some people speak of four concepts – body, mind, soul, and spirit. The “spirit” is the animating life force, which pervades the universe. The “soul” (Atman, atmic being / body, self) is an entity that was created (extruded from God), has many life and between-life experiences and grows, and then returns to God (is reabsorbed or dissolved, e.g., goes to Nirvana, or Heaven).

In many metaphysical “schools” (metaphysical philosophies, mystic branches of religions), there are usually six or seven such bodies (or components) – the physical body, the ethereal body, the astral body, the mental body, the causal body, the soul body, the atmic body, the spirit. These bodies “overlap” (interpenetrate) in some sense, and that is why the number of them varies. In all metaphysical philosophies, all of the component bodies eventually die, or “dissolve,” or are “reabsorbed” into a larger entity (the spirit continues to exist).

The reason why there are so many different (functional) decompositions of the human being is taxonomic. They represent different attempts to understand a very complex phenomenon (human life / existence). The problem is similar to defining colors. You may define three primary colors (red, yellow, and blue), or you may define six secondary colors (red, orange (red-yellow), yellow, green (yellow-blue), blue, purple (blue-red)), or you may define thousands or millions of colors, as is done in a computer video color scheme. The choice and definition of three primary colors (e.g., red, yellow and green – we could as easily have chosen orange,

green and purple) is arbitrary. It suffices for teaching small children. The choice and definition of six secondary colors is useful for teaching primary school children how to paint. But an artist (paint, computer graphics) is concerned with an infinite spectrum of color. He needs, and therefore defines, an infinite classification of color.

Here are a few different representations of the human being.

Anthroposophy (Rudolf Steiner,

http://wn.elib.com/SteinerBooks/GA009/English/GA009_c01_4.html):

1. Physical body
2. Life (etheric) body
3. Astral body
4. Soul body (ego, ruler of impulses and desires; connection between body and spirit; preserver of memory)
5. Spirit self as transmuted astral body
6. Life spirit as transmuted life body
7. Spirit man as transmuted physical body

Omraam Mikhael Aivanhov (Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov):

1. Atmic body
2. Buddhic body
3. Causal body
4. Mental body
5. Astral body
6. Physical body

Joshua David Stone:

1. Cosmic Adi
2. Cosmic Monadic
3. Cosmic Atmic
4. Cosmic Buddhic
5. Cosmic Mental
6. Cosmic Astral
7. Cosmic Physical
 - a. Logoic or Adi
 - b. Monadic
 - c. Spiritual or Atmic
 - d. Intuitional or Buddhic
 - e. Mental
 - f. Astral
 - g. Physical

The preceding classifications are simply examples of those that have been useful / used in the past. The various component “bodies” of the human being are interpenetrating (overlapping). The above categories may be (and have been) further subdivided, and they are often collapsed / combined. The categories are simply definitions, arbitrary classifications, such as in a biological taxonomy. The fineness of the classification depends on the level of detail of the consideration or discussion. While the binary “body and spirit” classification is useful for daily considerations, someone exploring astral projection will find it more convenient to characterize his experiences in an “astral” body. The exact definitions of the various component bodies vary from author to author, as they discuss different concepts and explore different aspects. While

the components may appear (in a discussion, or in an experience) to represent discrete entities (e.g., a person astral projecting seems to occupy a distinct astral body), it should be recognized that they represent arbitrary collections of overlapping aspects and attributes and sensations, rather than distinct (separate, separable) entities.

Of all of the preceding, only the spirit (the universal life force, creative force) is permanent. All other aspects of a human being – the physical body, the mind, the personality, the soul, are temporary manifestations of the creative force. They are created, they experience, they change, they grow, they remember, they think, they die (or, if you prefer, dissolve, return to / remerge with God). This is definition, not observation, not postulation. The product of creation is transient, and changing (Maya, illusion, creation). The creative force is permanent (Brahman, ultimate reality, creative force).

When I first read Eastern philosophy, I was surprised at the characterization of the physical universe as “Maya” – illusion – and the spiritual universe as the Ultimate Reality (God, Brahman). Since reality seems so “real” (to our physical senses) and the spiritual universe cannot be physically sensed at all, this seemed to be just the reverse of the way things were (seemed to be). But then occurred the realization that it is the physical universe that is the created (synthesized) entity (this is self-evident, since we, a part of the physical universe, are unable to create anything), and that it was (by definition) created by the creative force. The creative force is the actor, and the physical universe is the result. Without the creative force, the physical universe would not exist. The physical universe cannot create the creative force. Hence it is the real (creative, essential, permanent) aspect, and the physical universe is the illusion (created part, temporary, transient, ephemeral, destructible, expendable, dispensable). In a motion-picture theater, the film and projector are real (permanent, capable of creating the screen image), and the image on the screen is the illusion (temporary, transitory, created). (My confusion also stemmed partly from the fact that “illusion” is not a very good translation of “Maya.” From the *Encyclopedia of Authentic Hinduism*: “There are two eternal powers involved in the creation of the universe: (1) The absolute supreme Gracious God [Brahman] and (2) the metaphysical universal energy, the cosmic power, called maya. Maya, being initially lifeless, receives its enlivenment from the supreme Gracious God and then manifests the entire universe.” Maya means illusion in a metaphysical sense; in a physical sense, the physical universe is absolutely real, and not an illusion at all.)

Some people refuse to accept the existence of any aspect of human beings beyond the physically apparent. The October 4, 2004, issue of *Newsweek* magazine featured an article by Steven Pinker entitled, “How to Think About the Mind.” In it, Pinker describes the view of modern science that the soul does not exist. “Yes, people acknowledge that the brain is involved in mental life. But they still think of it as a pocket PC for the soul, managing information at the behest of a ghostly user. Modern neuroscience has shown that there *is* no user. ‘The soul’ is, in fact the information-processing activity of the brain. New imaging techniques have tied every thought and emotion to neural activity. And any change to the brain – from strokes, drugs, electricity or surgery – will literally change your mind. But this understanding hasn’t penetrated conventional wisdom.” This viewpoint / paradigm works perfectly fine for scientists who are concerned solely with studying the physical operation of the brain. It does not work well for explaining paranormal (nonphysical, metaphysical, spiritual) phenomena, since it does not include any consideration of those aspects. It is not very useful for considering what sentient aspects the physical universe may have other than human beings / biological life. (It seems preposterous to imply that there are none (since the creative force that created and animates life is surely sentient), but that is exactly what the *Newsweek* article implies, without explicitly stating so.)

On Sin

The physical universe that we sense strongly, and the spiritual universe that we sense faintly (intuitively), are the creations of God (the universe). They are the product of a will, an urge – the creative process. The universe that we perceive is, by definition, the result (product) of the creative process. By definition, the will that created the universe created it exactly as willed. Everything in the universe is “good,” by definition. There is nothing in the universe that is against God’s (the universe’s) will, by definition (of God / the universe / the creative process).

So, if everything that exists is the will of God, how do you explain the concept of sin, or evil? Most of us have a sense of right and wrong. If sin is wrong, and if God is good (i.e., everything is his will), why does he allow it? Why do bad things happen to good people? Why do murder and rape and poverty and disease and war occur? Well, the reason that they occur is that they make life interesting. Without challenges and obstacles and difficulties, life would be of no significance. Life only becomes truly significant in the context of life-and-death struggle. If only “good” things could happen to us, life would be totally uninteresting, meaningless, and without significant purpose.

If evil did not exist, God would have had to create it (which he did!). He created (*read*: the universe manifested) both Jesus Christ and Adolph Hitler to make the game of life interesting. Without Adolph Hitler, the Second World War may never have happened, and life on planet Earth would have been far less interesting than was the case.

So does sin exist? If so, how is it defined? And what are its consequences? Would God (the universe) have created human beings (part of itself), given them desires, and then punish them (part of itself) for all eternity for pursuing those desires? Could be, but that seems so perverse – whether viewed as God’s punishing his own creatures for doing what he created them to do, or viewed as punishing himself) as to be very unbecoming such a powerful being / will / urge.

Frithjof Schuon, in *Roots of the Human Condition*, writes: “Echoing the parable of the talents, St. James in his Epistle says that “to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin;” which is to say that God requires wisdom of him who possesses it potentially; whence the inclusion of esoteric spirituality (*tasawwuf*) in *ihṣān*. [right doing]. Further, he writes: “...the Prophet asked forgiveness of God every morning and evening, not because he had sinned, but because, in contingent existence, perfection is impossible; according to a hadīth, “Existence is a sin with which no other can be compared” – a daring expression to say the least, but heavy with meaning.”

The writer Michael Newton has much to say on the subject of souls, in his books, *Journey of Souls: Case Studies of Life Between Lives*, *Destiny of Souls: New Case Studies of Life Between Lives*, and *Life Between Lives: Hypnotherapy for Spiritual Regression*. His observations, based on hypnotic regression of thousands of patients, are consistent with those of the mystery schools (e.g., Rudolf Steiner’s Anthroposophy).

Based on Russell’s investigations, souls are individuated spiritual manifestations that last for a long time. Some “meld” themselves to human beings’ brains (“incarnate”), for the duration of the life of the host. They are “along for the ride,” from before the birth of the human being until its physical death. The souls do not control the human host – the most that they can do is make suggestions (hunches, intuition, “sixth sense”), in the role of a conscience. They experience everything that the human being experiences, throughout its lifetime.

Upon the physical death of the human body, the soul continues, retaining the memory of the previous life experience. It may incarnate in other bodies, or not. Some souls never incarnate, but briefly share the experiences of biological life forms for brief periods of times (unmelded to a brain). The human host, without the symbiotic soul-in-residence, would experience life as an ordinary (nonhuman) animal, e.g., a lion, responding to stimuli, having excitement, but unbothered by pangs of conscience. The soul, if not melded to the brain until death and unaware of its immortality, could experience a certain degree of excitement or other stimulation from a human being, but not nearly the incredible experience that it does when bonded to the brain for life, and unaware of its immortality (via the Veil of Forgetfulness).

In an objective (external) sense, sin does not exist – everything that exists is exactly the will of the universe. In a subjective (internal) sense, sin exists, in the sense that we may do things that we regret (or fail to do things that we regret not having done) or that our society or species regrets. We may punish ourselves, or we may be punished by other human beings, but there is no reason to believe that God (more specifically, the creative-force part of God / the universe) punishes us (the created part of God / the universe).

God created us for the play of the game of life. The more exciting, interesting, and fulfilling that game is, the better.

On Reincarnation

At the time of Christ, it is clear that early Christians believed in reincarnation (a soul's occupation of more than one body, either simultaneously or sequentially). Jesus asked one day, "Who do men say that I am?" And the disciples answered this, saying, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the Prophets." Several centuries later, the Catholic Church purged belief in reincarnation from the Church, perceiving that the faithful would be easier to control if they thought that they had only one shot (one life) at salvation.

One advantage of belief in reincarnation is that it addresses the problem of why bad things happen to good people. Under the concept of karma, things will "even out" over many lives. If you (the mortal being that controls your body, not the occupying soul, that simply experiences and does not possess/control) commit terrible crimes against people in one life, you (as the reincarnating soul that was bonded to your brain during your lifetime) will have the chance to experience what you did in a later life, until the host body "gets it right." The prevailing concept is that our souls get to choose the life they lead (i.e., the bodies that they inhabit). This process absolves God of any fault when bad things happen, because it was we ourselves who chose this particular life, given glimpses of what it would be like. (That newborn zebras and gazelles are brutally killed by lions is not evil. Evil and sin are only possible for an intelligent moral being (i.e., one given the knowledge of good and evil). A male lion that kills all of the cubs of the previous sire is not sinning. A stepmother who kills all of the children of a man's former wife is.)

Why would any soul choose incarnation (melding to a human being's mind / brain for life, and, like a wild roller-coaster ride, unable to get off until the host's death)? Because that is the only way that it gets to fully experience all of the human emotions that are possible in a physical world, but impossible in a spiritual world. As a human being, you get to experience warmth, sex, acquisition, conquest, love, hate, adultery, murder, aggression, pride, fear, anxiety, and a million other emotions that are only possible because of the limitations of physical biological life. The "Fall of Man," when mankind achieved the knowledge of good and evil, is the point that

souls began to meld to human being's brains. At that point is when the game became interesting. Souls desire human experience (symbiotically bonded to a human brain for life) to develop. They do not *have to* incarnate, but it is a much richer, challenging experience if they do.

The only challenges of great interest in life are life-and-death struggles that involve great risk. These challenges lose their fascination and intensity if we know that we are immortal, and will simply come to life again after we die. The gods envy human mortality. "A man is a mortal god, and a god is an immortal man" (Heraclitus). Mortality is an essential ingredient in meaningful games. Souls that bond to human brains give up their awareness of immortality. Through life, unaware of their immortality, they are as scared as we of dying. Otherwise, the "ride," lasting so long, would be very boring.

The usual concept of reincarnation is that the soul retains the memory of past lifetimes, but the human host does not (the so-called Veil of Isis, Lethe, Veil of Amnesia, Veil of Forgetfulness). The prevailing view is that each incarnating soul incarnates in a sequence of lives (a few or thousands), and that it remembers all of its past hosts' lives. (It can incarnate in two bodies simultaneously (by splitting its energy), but it has a limited amount of energy for coping with biological life, and it usually prefers to incarnate in only one body at a time.) The current host knows nothing of the soul's previous lives, unless these memories are revealed to him via hypnosis (with the consent of the soul and its spirit guides).

An alternative explanation for a soul's memory of previous lives is that all previous lives (of all creatures) are remembered by the universe (the so-called Akasha Chronicle or Akashic Records), and, under hypnosis or in a trance we are (the soul is) able to recall those memories. The exact process or conditions under which a soul remembers previous lives that it experiences is not important. It is the fact that it fully experiences these lives unaware of its immortality, that is significant.

It appears that upon physical death, the human body, the human mind, and the personality all cease to exist. This is generally agreed by all major metaphysical philosophies, and by modern science (e.g., the *Newsweek* article referred to earlier). They die as completely as the leaves on the trees or the birds in the air or the fish in the sea. There is no reason for any aspect of them to continue, any more than there is a reason for a leaf to "reinherit" and recall its previous lives as other leaves. What would be the point to this? (Ockham's Razon – why make things more complicated than they seem?) What point would there be to a lion's remembering previous lives of previous lions, or of other creatures (it appears that souls incarnate only as a planet's highest intelligent life form, and not as lower creatures)? If souls can meld to a sequence of human brains "for the ride," then they have an opportunity to experience many things and develop morally. But that is a different game. And after the soul has played it for a while, and advances, or gets tired, it simply reemerges with the One. All that remains is the spirit (the creative power of the universe). And the memories.

God (the universe) remembers all these lives, but there is little point to having souls for all living creatures, that can recall previous incarnations / inheritations. The process of reincarnation is by souls only using intelligent, moral hosts (the highest life forms on a planet).

The prevailing concept is that souls are the vehicles / vessels of memory (of the souls' previous lifetime experiences in mortal, intelligent, moral creatures). While this may be so, it (being a vessel for memory) is not an exceptional attribute. So are you, too (a vehicle of memory). So are animals (or anything else that remembers). A soul may be an instrument for viewing some

of the past (i.e., the previous lives that it has accompanied in addition to your current one), but the past, once formed, lasts forever. There is no satisfactory explanation of memory as some sort of “storage” process. It is much easier to conceive that the universe exists as a single integrated whole, including all of time. There is, in fact, no “stored memory” as such. The universe simply exists, for all time. The process of remembering is simply the process of viewing the universe at a different time and place (the “holographic universe” concept). Remembering is a process of viewing the universe at some other time and place – it is not a process or “retrieving” stored information. This concept is consistent with the findings of modern physics, that we exist in a space-time continuum. The quality of the “viewer” may vary tremendously. If we try to remember our childhood, we have a faint, faulty picture of it. If we undergo hypnosis or a lucid dream, the image is incredibly real. Those are much better viewers. In your existence right now, you are a “real-time, single-point-perspective” viewer, which sees things unfold at a “real-time” pace from your current location, in very good fidelity.

What you perceive, think, and experience, is being sensed by your physical, ethereal, and astral bodies, and dies completely when you experience physical death. The *record* of your life lasts forever in the universe. Your soul retains a memory of it (or more correctly, can *remember* it, since memory is a process, not a state), also, until it dissolves. You (what you sense to be you, your identity, your ego, your personality) exists only for this lifetime (as posited by the Catholic Church). Your soul retains a memory of your lifetime, as long as it exists. If what you feel is you were really your soul’s perception, then you would not suffer loss of mental capacity with brain injury or disease. You could hypnotize an Alzheimer’s patient and obtain total memory recall. You could hypnotize a brain-damaged person, and have total memory recall. You could hypnotize a person on drugs or alcohol, and speak to a totally coherent, sober person. But, as pointed out in the *Newsweek* article quoted earlier, this is not how it works. As your brain dies (or is damaged), you gradually lose your (holographic) memory – the “viewer” is being destroyed. With respect to your strong sense of identity, *that* is the real you – your soul is nothing more than a parasite, a hitchhiker, along for the ride. It perceives what you sense, but not the other way around (unless it gives you a little glimpse of thought, *déjà vu*, intuition, temptation, or pang of conscience from time to time). What you are experiencing is your physical identity / existence / ego, not your soul’s existence / identity / ego.

The rationale for this viewpoint (that what you are sensing in your mind is the biological (mortal) “you,” and not the soul) stems from the postulate that things are pretty much as they seem. Other animals, e.g., lions, appear to act and respond pretty much as we do. So our perceptions and theirs are pretty much the same. The only difference is that we have a soul melded to our brain, and have a sense of morality. What we perceive and what the lion perceives are about the same. More specifically, the sense of being that you perceive is about the same as the lion’s. But lions don’t have souls (this is arguable, but agreed by most religions, since they are not highly intelligent moral creatures). It follows that (most of) your sense of being is the physical, mortal you, and not your soul. You may sense at times that someone else (i.e., your soul) is present in your mind, but that sensation is very limited (e.g., pangs of conscience).

Note that I use the term “immortal” soul to refer to the fact that the soul survives physical death for a time. In Eastern philosophy, the soul lasts for a very long time, experiencing many lives, until it re-merges with the One. From my perspective, it does not matter whether the soul is truly immortal or simply lasts for a very long time, or lasts only for a while (past death). It does not matter to me whether a soul never incarnates, or incarnates a single time (à la the Catholic Church), or incarnates many many times (à la Hindu philosophy). It does not matter whether it experiences only a single lifetime (per the Catholic Church), and then goes to Heaven, Purgatory, or Hell. As Julius Evola observes (in *Revolt Against the Modern World*) , “The belief

that everybody's soul is immortal is rather odd; very little evidence of it can be found in the world of Tradition." The soul is playing a different game from that played by mortal man. Michael Newton is very interested in the "journey of souls," but I am much more concerned / interested with the issues facing a mortal human being (e.g., saving the planet's biosphere from destruction by global industrialization), than those facing "immortal" souls (accomplishing return to Nirvana, or going to Heaven).

You should get the most that you possibly can out of life, since when it is over, it is over (for your mortal sense of being – not for the immortal hitchhiker soul). You are making a temporary memory for your soul, and a permanent memory for God (the universe), but *you* (your sense of being / identity / ego / personality) will be soon gone forever. Make the most of this role – you only get to play it one time, and you only get to play one role. Don't worry about your soul. It is hardly a part of you, and it gets to continue to play the game for much longer (in other bodies, or between lives). But your soul is not *you* (who you strongly feel to be). You are the animal that the soul decided to attach to (temporarily forgoing its awareness / memory of immortality), for your biological lifetime. It may offer suggestions to you, as your conscience, throughout life. But that is solely for *its* benefit, in the course of its development as a soul, not for yours. Go for the gusto. Reach for the ring. Enjoy the ride – when it is over, it is over, and all that will be left of you is a pleasant memory in the mind of God. As for your soul, give it hell! It is nothing more than a parasite that is feeding on your emotions. Pay no attention to it. It is *your* life that you are living and dying. Do not live it and die it for your soul. If you waste this incredible experience listening to your parasite soul, you will give it more to talk about in its between-lives conferences, but you will have wasted part of your life by limiting / constraining your experience. To your soul, you are simply a piece to be played in the game of life. You (your sense of being) are just a temporary shell that the soul is using for its edification, and which it will discard when your biological life is over. Unfortunately for it, it cannot control (totally possess) you – it cannot make you do anything that you do not want to do. For its own purposes, it may suggest that you do certain things, or not do certain things. But the purpose of these are to advance its own spiritual development, not yours, since you will cease to exist as soon as you die.

As you play your life, and, if you grow old, as you near the end of your life, know that you maximized the experience – for yourself (the space-time continuum memory that you are creating), not for your soul. If you spend your lifetime accommodating your soul, you will throw it away, and spend your life and your closing days realizing that you wasted it simply to provide a playing-piece for your soul. You will have wasted your life playing someone else's (your soul's) game. Play the game for *yourself*, your mortal self, not for your soul! Forget about your soul. It is simply using you to develop itself. It will eventually die (dissolve, be reabsorbed into the One). The memory that you create, however, is permanent. It may be viewed by other souls. It remains in the mind of God (as a permanent part of the history of the universe). When you die, you will pass away from the real-time viewer as a faded rose or a withered leaf. You will be blown away by the wind of time, and gone forever, for all future time. You, your life, your actions, your thoughts – or, if you will, your memory – will be forever preserved, as a permanent part of the universe (unless, of course, the creative force of the universe decides at some point to eliminate (uncreate) the physical universe). The history that you carved out of life forever a part of the unitary space-time continuum. You are making memories (creating a small segment of the permanent space-time continuum). Make them the best that you can. Be the best that you can be. If you are a religious person, know that you, as an expression of God, glorify him by making your life the most exciting, interesting, fulfilling life that it can be. Play the game to win. Ride the rapids. Roll with the flow. Do it!

Your life is made meaningful only by your mortality. Your life is of no consequence to your immortal soul, both because it survives you and because you will die. If you play the game believing that “you” (your sense of identity) are your soul, you will play it differently. A stock-car race is exciting to the participants only because they know they may die. If you believe that you are your soul, you will play the game more cautiously (sensing that you must deal with future karma), and you will lose much of what life has to offer. Play the game for all it is worth. Play to win. When it is over, it is over forever for you. Do not concern yourself with what the soul will do next (between lives or in the next human being he attaches to) – that is its game, not yours.

The meaning of the Prophet’s quote, “Existence is a sin with which no other can be compared,” is clear. In physical life, the nonphysical (spiritual) aspect of God gets to experience all of the wild, crazy, exciting, death-defying, sinful experiences and acts that, as an all-powerful being, it cannot possibly experience. It gets to experience sin. It gets to fight sin. It gets to do good, it gets to do evil. It gets to play Adolph Hitler. It gets to play Jesus. It gets to play the gambler, the adulterer, the father, the wife, the lover, the conqueror, the capitalist, the pastor, the warrior, the thief. None of these experiences are possible for an all-powerful being or even a less-than-omnipotent spiritual being, who has no physical limitations. When a soul asks / agrees to meld to a human brain and forget its immortality, it is doing this in anticipation of participating in a life of sin, a life of accomplishment, a life of pride, a life of sex, a life of physical sensation and desire. This is the “Fall of Man” – the decision by a soul to experience a physical life as an intelligent, moral, desiring creature (by melding to its brain). We are indeed born into sin – we revel in it! That is the essence of the game of life. That is what the Prophet understood. And that is why Earth is God’s “dime novel.” (Note to younger or foreign readers: A “dime” is a ten-cent piece. In the 1930s, inexpensive novels (called “pulp fiction”) cost a dime. They were referred to (and still are) as “dime novels.” In the late 1940s, when I learned to read, the cost had risen to twenty-five cents (comic books still cost a dime). A cup of coffee and a cigar cost five cents (a “nickel”), as did a most chocolate bars and ice-cream cones. By the 1960s, after massive inflation had started, you often heard the expression, “What the world needs now is a five-cent cup of coffee,” or “What the world needs now is a good five-cent cigar.”)

The key thing to realize here is that you (your sense of being) will soon be dead, and only the memory will remain (as a part of the permanent space-time continuum / memory of the universe / God). The Fall of Man is what the *soul* chooses and does, because it had a choice in melding to your brain. It is not what you, the mortal living human being (physical + ethereal + astral + mental bodies) chose to do. You had no choice in the matter. You (the identity that you sense) are like the lion. When you die, not a trace will be left behind. The soul will be held accountable for its role in affecting your life, and how it used or responded to its participation in your life. But you will simply be gone (your memory will persist / exist: your life-path will be preserved forever be a part of the universe’s space-time continuum / memory, but your ego will not play any role past the date of your physical death, any more than a leaf or a chameleon will play a further role past the date of its physical death). The soul is simply the connection between the mortal, physical you and the immortal, universal spirit. It is using you for its edification, and it will abandon you as soon as you die. It may be temporarily accountable (in the life-between-lives time just after your death) for how it uses or misuses (leads or misleads) you, but, because of reincarnation / karma, it is never really accountable, since it can “work things out” in a later life.

It is important to realize that two games are being played here. One is the game being played by your strong sense of identity – your mortal physical being. The other is the game of reincarnation / karma being played by the “immortal” soul melded to your brain. What you sense as your identity is the mortal being. You are not sensing the soul’s identity. The game that you are playing is the mortal, single-play game. Give no consideration to the soul – it is

playing a different game, and is simply using you, tagging along for the ride, as part of its game. (If you are interested in the “journey of souls” reincarnation / karma game, you may investigate further, using between-lives spiritual hypnotic regression, per Michael Newton’s books. That realm is not of much interest to me, since I am mainly interested in playing the (mortal-combat) game of solving the Earth’s environmental crisis.)

You do not “own” your soul, and it does not “own” you. You both interact, for a while (until physical death). You (your physical / mental body, your strong sense of identity) are providing your soul with a fantastic physical experience. It (your soul) is providing you (physical you) with very little – a few pangs of conscience, an occasional “flash” of insight / inspiration / memory. You cannot “save” your soul – its development (“salvation”) is entirely in its hands. The spirit of the universe is giving you a physical experience. It is giving your soul that same experience (via you), plus future development, and perhaps experience of other physical lives (this is the definition of a soul, according to most theologies). What is in it for you? It may seem, since you are mortal and your soul lives on, that you are getting the short end of the stick. Wrong! You have the free will. You get to decide on the action. Then you die. Your soul does not have free will – it does not have control (possession) of your body. All it can do is cajole and coax, and experience the experience that you decide upon. You are the racing car and the driver. It is nothing more than a passenger in the seat next to you. The arrangement is a fabulous deal for you!

Are you (physical, conscious you) responsible for your soul, and its “salvation” (development, destiny)? Not in the least. It may bear responsibility for what it encouraged you to do, or discouraged you from doing, but you are not responsible. Your physical sense of existence ceases with your physical death. When your physical life is over, you are “off the hook.” Your soul is responsible for its own “salvation” (speed of return to God / re-absorption into God / dissolution).

I am not going to say much about the soul, since it is my physical existence that concerns and interests me at the present time. Not everyone has this same point of view. Should the mortal, physical you concern yourself with your soul’s destiny? I have expressed the viewpoint other places that people are overly and selfishly concerned over the fate of their wretched souls. Consider, however, the view of Frithjof Schuon, in *Roots of the Human Condition*: “Nothing is more absurd than to affirm that the search for salvation is “selfish”; a priori, it is even man’s duty, yet from the standpoint of the metaphysical consciousness of our nature, it is nonetheless a limitation, at least to the extent that it is exclusive. Vivekananda wanted one to be interested only in the salvation of others, which is nonsense, for only he who saves himself can save others; and to save others is to show them how to save oneself, *Deo juvante*.” On the other hand, as Jesus observed, “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it.”

In summary, on the issue of reincarnation, your soul may reincarnate (meld to other brains), but you (your ego / personality / sense of being) do not – when you die, you are dead as a doornail (but your life-path, your memory, lasts forever).

Summary

This article has presented answers, as I see them, to the fundamental questions of life. “Why am I here?” To play the game of life. “What is the purpose of life?” To lead as exciting and interesting life as possible. “How can I make my life more significant / meaningful?” By making the role that I play as meaningful (grand, satisfying, intense, interesting, exciting) as possible.

You are creating memories for the pleasure of creator-God, and viewing by other creatures (souls, whether incarnating or not). As Shakespeare wrote, the world is a stage and we are actors on it. You get to write your own role. Make it a really interesting one. You are born, you live, you die. Make your life worthwhile, meaningful, exciting, interesting.

(This is the first draft of a piece that will likely be revised and expanded at a later date. If you wish to read more of my views on religion / spirituality (written almost five years ago), see <http://www.churchofnature.com> or <http://foundationwebsite.org/CNMain.htm> . Comments are welcome.)