UMAN IMMORTALITY AND PRE-EXISTENCE

J. ELLIS McTAGGART

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HUMAN IMMORTALITY AND PRE-EXISTENCE

BY

JOHN M'TAGGART ELLIS M'TAGGART

LITT.D. (CAMBRIDGE), LL.D. (ST. ANDREWS)

FELLOW AND LECTURER OF TRINITY COLLEGE IN CAMBRIDGE

FELLOW OF THE BRITISH ACADEMY

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PREFACE

THE two parts of this work originally appeared as Chapters III. and IV. of a larger work entitled *Some Dogmas of Religion*, published in 1906, the rest of which deals with questions of less immediate practical concern. They are now issued separately in the hope that they may be of interest to a larger circle of readers than would be attracted to the study of the other parts of the original work.

They have been reprinted with the alteration of a few phrases only.

J. E. M'T.

TRINITY COLLEGE,
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PART I

HUMAN IMMORTALITY

I DO not propose to offer here any arguments in support of the positive assertion that men are immortal. I believe that such arguments exist, and that, in spite of the difficulty and obscurity of the subject, they are of sufficient strength to justify a belief in our immortality. But to expound these arguments would require an elaborate and lengthy treatise of technical metaphysics, for they could only be proved by a demonstration of some idealist theory of the fundamental nature of reality.[1] My present design is merely to consider some

[1] Cp. *Postscript* at the end of the present volume.

arguments against immortality which have been based on certain facts of ordinary observation, and on certain results of physical science. I shall endeavour to show that those arguments are invalid, and that the presumption against immortality, which they have produced in many people, should be discarded.

It is better to speak of the immortality of the self, or of men, than of the immortality of the soul. The latter phrase suggests untenable views. For, in speaking of the identity of a man during different periods of his bodily life, we do not usually say that he is the same soul, but the same self, or the same man. And to use a different word when we are discussing the prolongation of that identity after death, calls up the idea of an identity less perfect than that which lasts through a bodily life. The form in which the question is put thus implies that the answer is to be in some degree negative—that a man is not *as much* himself after death as he is before it, even if something escapes from complete destruction.

Moreover, it is customary, unfortunately, to say that a man *has* a soul, not that he *is* one. Now if our question is put in the form 'Has man an immortal soul?' an affirmative answer would be absurd. So far as it would mean anything it would mean that the man himself was the body, or something which died with the body—at any rate was not immortal—and that something, not himself, which he owned during life, was set free at his death to continue existing on its own account. For these reasons it seems better not to speak of the soul, and to put our question in the form 'Are men immortal?'

What reasons are there for supposing that our existence is only temporary? I see around me bodies which behave so like my own, that I conclude that they are related to other conscious selves in the same way that my body is related to myself. But from time to time these bodies are observed to cease to behave in this way, and to become motionless, unless moved from outside. Shortly after this the

body dissolves into its constituent parts. Its form and identity as a body are completely destroyed. The experience of the past leads me to the conclusion that the same thing will happen in the future to every human body now existing, including my own.

How does this affect the question of my existence? It is clear that if I am a mere effect of my body—a form of its activity—I shall cease when the body ceases. And it is also clear that, if I could not exist without this particular body, then the destruction of the body will be a sign that I have ceased to exist.

But, besides death, there is another characteristic of nature which tends to make us doubt our immortality. Of all the things around us, from a pebble to a solar system, science tells us that they are transitory. Each of them arose out of something else, each of them will pass away into something else. What is a man that he should be exempt from this universal law?

Thus we have three questions to consider:

(1) Is my self an activity of my body? (2) Is my present body an essential condition of the existence of my self? (3) Is there any reason to suppose that my self does not share the transitory character which I recognize in all the material objects around me?

With regard to the first of these questions, it is certain, to begin with, that my body influences my self much and continuously. A large part of my mental life is made up of sensations. Sensations are continually produced in connection with changes in the sense-organs of my body, and, so far as we know, they are never produced in any other way. And the course of my thoughts and emotions can be profoundly affected by the state of my body. If my body gets no food for twenty-four hours, they will be affected one way. If I introduce whisky or opium into it, they will be affected another way. If my body is very fatigued, the ordinary current of my mental life will be entirely suspended in profound

sleep, or completely broken by dreams. If any of these processes is carried far enough, my body dies, and I cease to have any relation to it for the future, which is certainly an important event for me, whether I survive it or not.

It is equally certain that the mind acts on the body. My limbs, on many occasions, move according to my will. And the normal behaviour of the body can be altered by the mind, as much as the normal behaviour of the mind can be altered by the body. Grief, or fear, or anger, can produce bodily illness, and even death.

Now each of these groups of events—the effects of body on mind and of mind on body—could be explained on the hypothesis that the self and the body were two separate realities, neither of which was the mere product of the other, though each affected the other, and caused changes in it. And it might be thought that this would be the most natural conclusion to adopt, since the action

appears to be reciprocal—mind acting on body as much as body acts on mind.

There is always, however, a very strong tendency to adopt the view that the self is a mere activity of the body—or at any rate to hold that the only escape from this view lies in accepting some form of revealed religion which denies it. The cause of this tendency is, in the first place, the incomplete nature of the explanation which would be furnished by the recognition of the self and its body as independent realities.[1] All ultimate explanation endeavours to reduce the universe to a unity. The self is spirit, the body is matter. Spirit and matter, taken as independent realities, are very heterogeneous to one another. It is evident that a theory which makes either spirit or matter to be the sole reality in the universe, introduces a greater degree of unity

[1] By independent I do not here mean isolated, or unconnected realities, but such as stand on an equal footing, so that though each is connected with the other, neither is subordinate to the other.

than a theory which makes them to be equally real.

Monism then, whether it be materialism or idealism, is more attractive to the majority of inquirers than dualism is. We must now consider the various causes which tend to make a materialistic monism more plausible than an idealistic monism, and which impel us to the conclusion that matter is the only reality, while human spirit is nothing more than one of the activities which characterize matter when it is in the special form of a human body. (It is immaterial for our present purpose whether the adherents of this view suppose matter to exist as a substance, to which these activities belong, or whether they say that the activities *are* the matter. The difference is insignificant, although the second alternative is sometimes put forward as a great improvement on the first. The essential point is that the spiritual is in either case reduced to a temporary form of an activity whose fundamental nature is non-spiritual.)

One of these causes is the fact, so continually pressed upon the notice of every man, that the nature of matter is almost entirely independent of his will. I cannot create matter, and there are narrow limits to the extent to which I can alter it. I cannot make into bread the stone which I see and touch. However passionately I may desire that it should be bread, however serious the consequences to myself and others of its remaining a stone, a stone it remains. By a transition which is natural though illegitimate we tend to believe that whatever is so independent of our will must be independent of us altogether.

To some extent, indeed, the will can affect matter. But the amount of its effects is comparatively insignificant. All the exertions of human beings can only affect the surface of the earth, and that very slightly. On the other hand, matter seems far more powerful in its influence on spirit. The diminution of the temperature of a single planet is an absurdly trivial episode in astronomy. But,

if the planet were our earth, it would put an end to the only conditions under which, as far as our observation goes, it is possible for spirit to exist. Since spirit, then, appears so much weaker than matter when they are taken separately, is it strange that, when an attempt is made to reduce the one to the other, it is spirit that is called on to give way?

In matter, too, we can observe a unity and a persistence which *may* belong to spirit but does not obviously belong to it. Spirit we only know in the form of separate individuals, set in the midst of matter, which forms the only means by which they are able to communicate with one another. No human spirit has ever, as far as we know, been open to observation for much more than a hundred years, and the lower animals only slightly exceed this limit. Matter forms one vast system, which history informs us has existed for thousands of years, while science extends the period to millions.

And, again, the amount of knowledge which science gives us about matter is far greater

than the amount which it gives us about spirit. On the one side is the whole vast extent of the physical sciences. On the other side we have only psychology—and not the whole of psychology. For the psycho-physical side of that science deals as much with matter as it does with spirit.

All this increases the apparent importance of matter, and seems to render it more probable that matter, rather than spirit, is the sole reality. Spirit, then, would be the way in which matter behaves under certain circumstances. And in support of this it may be said that the activity of matter does take different forms. The same energy, science informs us, which sometimes shows itself as heat, shows itself at other times as motion, or, again, as electricity. And this same energy, it is asserted by the materialist, is transformed under other circumstances—when it is found in a human body—into thought, will, and emotion. Certainly, he admits, thought, will, and emotion are not very like heat, motion,

and electricity. But then heat, motion, and electricity are not very like one another. And, if they can all be reduced to this common unity, why should not the forms of consciousness share the same fate?

These conclusions depend, it will be seen, on the proposition that matter can exist independently of spirit. For if this were not so, it would obviously be absurd to explain away the separate reality of spirit by making it one of the temporary forms which the activity of matter takes. Deeper inquiry will, I think, show us that there is no reason to believe that matter does exist. If this is the case we cannot be entitled to consider the self as the activity of its body.

Of what nature is the matter supposed to be which, it is asserted, can exist independently of spirit? It is not conceived as having all the qualities which, in ordinary language, we ascribe to matter. We say of an orange that it is soft, yellow, sweet, and odorous. But these qualities are not held to belong to the

orange when it is not being observed. In strictness they are not held to be qualities of the orange at all, but effects excited in the observer by qualities of the orange. The orange is no more yellow when no one sees it than it is desired when no one knows of its existence.

But the object is conceived as having other qualities which really do belong to it, and give it that nature which it has independently of observation, and if no one observes it. Its size, its shape, its position in space, its motion, and its impenetrability are of this nature. It is these qualities, or others of the same nature, which have the power, under certain circumstances, of exciting in the observer the sensations of softness, yellowness, and the like.

The qualities which are held really to belong to the matter are often called its primary qualities. The others are called its secondary qualities, though, on this theory, it is scarcely correct to call them qualities of the object at all.

Matter, then, is held to be extended, to have position, and to be capable of motion independently of observation. It is also impenetrable—that is, no two pieces of matter can occupy the same position in space. But it has no colour, it is neither hard nor soft, it has no taste, no smell, and no sound.

This is matter as it is conceived in physical science. It may be said also to be the ordinary conception, for although we speak of an orange as yellow, yet the idea that it is not yellow in the dark is generally known and generally accepted.

What reason can be given for a belief in the existence of matter? I conceive that such a belief can only be defended on the ground that it is a legitimate inference from our sensations.

This view has been contested, but I believe that the objection to it rests on a misunderstanding. It has been said, and with perfect truth, that my belief in the existence of matter does not *arise* as an inference from my sensations. I do not first become aware of my

sensations and then infer the existence of an orange. On the contrary, I am aware of the existence of the orange first. If I am studying psychology or am doubtful of the validity of my knowledge, I may then consider the sensations of sight, touch, and so on, connected with my knowledge of the object. But in most cases I never do consider the sensations at all. And there are young children who are quite aware of the existence of a material world, but who have never realized that they have sensations.

These facts are sufficient to refute the view, which has sometimes been held, that our belief in a material world *arises* as an inference from our sensations. But they are quite irrelevant to the question now before us — whether our belief in a material world must not be *justified*, if it is to be justified at all, as an inference from our sensations. And when such facts are used, as not infrequently happens, as bearing on this question, it involves a very serious confusion.

The belief in a material world requires justification. It is natural, in the sense that everyone who has not reflected on the subject holds the belief as a matter of course, together with many of those who have reflected on it. But it is not inevitable. It is possible to disbelieve it. Many philosophers have done so. And there is, at any rate, nothing obviously self-contradictory in its denial. Berkeley's theory on the subject—to take only one out of many theories which deny the existence of matter—whether true or false, is not obviously self-contradictory.

Since disbelief in the existence of matter is neither impossible nor contradictory, the question becomes inevitable—what is the justification of the belief? And it becomes more pressing, because in many cases our judgements as to the existence of matter are admitted to be wrong. In the first place, the quite unreflective consciousness has no more doubt that the world of matter is coloured than it has that the world of matter is ex-

tended. But either this or the more reflective judgements of science and the modern world must be wrong here, since they disagree. Again, if a man, who sees a cloak hanging up by moonlight, believes that he sees before him the body of a dead friend, it is obvious that he has completely mistaken the character of the matter before him. And if our judgements as to what the external object is are so often wrong, we have little justification for assuming without inquiry that our judgement that there is an external object is ever right.

There is a stronger case than this. For in dreams we do not only make wrong judgements as to the nature of matter, but as to the existence of matter. If a believer in the existence of matter dreams that he sees a roc's egg, he no more doubts, during his dream, that the roc's egg exists as independent matter, than he doubts, during waking life, that his table exists as independent matter. And yet, on waking, he will admit that in his dream he was neither observing a roc's egg nor any

other really existing matter which he mistook for a roc's egg. Not only was his dream-belief 'this is a roc's egg' mistaken, but his dream-belief 'this is independently existing matter,' was also mistaken. And if this is mistaken, it is mere credulity to trust his belief in the table's existence without examination. For that belief is no stronger and no more evident than the other had been previously.

On what can we base a justification of the belief in the independent existence of matter? Nothing is available except the sensations. They are there, and they are certain. We never believe that we are observing matter unless we experience sensations more or less analogous to the qualities we believe to exist in the matter. We may not be conscious of the sensations as such at all. Indeed, as was said above, in the majority of cases we never are conscious of them. But whenever we look for them, on such occasions, we find them. And the sensations are certain. I may be wrong in believing that matter exists inde-

pendently of me. But the suggestion that I am wrong in believing I have a sensation is absurd. The belief is not sufficiently separable from the sensation for the possibility of error. I may, of course, be wrong in believing that I had a sensation in the past, for memory may deceive me. And I may be wrong in the general terms which I apply to a sensation, when I attempt to classify it, and to describe it to others. But my knowledge that I am having the sensation which I am having is one of those ultimate certainties which it is impossible either to prove or to deny.

And we find that although the sensations are generally ignored, as sensations, when the correctness of the judgement about the matter is not doubted, yet, as soon as I myself, or other people, entertain a doubt of the correctness of the judgement, the situation is changed. If it is suggested that what I believe to be an experience of matter of a certain sort is really a dream or a delusion, I fall back on the sensations which I have experienced, and consider

whether they can be accounted for on any other hypothesis than that of the existence of the matter in question. If they cannot, I consider that I was right in my judgement that the matter did exist.

And we must act in the same way if a doubt arises, not merely of the correctness of our judgements that this or that matter exists, but of the correctness of all judgements that matter of any sort exists. The fact which it is impossible to deny is that we have the sensations. Are we entitled to conclude from this that the material world really exists, and that the natural judgement that it does exist—which is not, however, as we have seen, an inevitable or universal judgement—is correct?

It is evident that the sensations are not themselves the matter in question. A sensation is not matter, and it cannot exist apart from the self to whom it belongs. It can have no independent existence. But the sensations, since they begin to exist, must have causes.[1]

[1] This step might not be accepted by any one who denied the universal validity of causality. A thinker,

Now it cannot be said to be obviously impossible that all the causes of my sensations should lie within my own nature. It is certain that they do not lie within that part of my own nature of which I am conscious, for I am not conscious of producing my sensations. But it might be said, as Leibniz has said, that all my sensations arise out of the depths of my own unconscious nature, and that when a self has once come into existence it is as independent of outside influences in its sensations as a clock, when once wound up, is in striking. But there are difficulties in the way of this view into which we have no time to enter, and I do not wish to lay any weight on the possibility of its truth. I am prepared to admit—what seems to me by far the more probable view—that all my sensations have causes which are not myself nor anything in myself. Such causes must in each

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however, who denied the universal validity of causality could not, as far as I can see, have the least justification for a belief in the existence of matter.

case be merely part-causes. I am unquestionably *one* of the causes of my own sensations, for, if I did not exist, my sensations also would not exist.

It may thus be admitted that my sensations make it, at any rate, highly probable that some reality exists, which is not myself or anything within myself, but exists independently of me. But we have not got to matter. A reality which exists independently of me need not be matter—it might, for example, be another spirit. We do not call anything matter unless it possesses the primary qualities of matter given above. These qualities correspond to certain sensations, or elements in sensations, and the presence of the sensation in me is held to prove the existence of the corresponding quality in the material object.

But is this legitimate? The independent reality has been admitted to be the part-cause of the sensations, but that does not prove that it is like them. Causes do not necessarily resemble their effects. Happiness in A does

not resemble the misery which it may cause to the envious B. An angry man does not resemble a slammed door. A ray of sunshine does not resemble a faded water-colour.

And, on this very theory, the external causes of all mental events do not resemble those events. When I see a sphere of red-hot iron I have sensations of form, sensations of colour, and (if I am near enough) a feeling of pain. Now the ordinary theory of matter makes the matter the cause of the sensations of colour and of the feeling of pain, as much as of the sensations of form. Yet it denies that the matter is red or painful. Here, therefore, is an external cause of mental events which does not resemble them. It is therefore impossible to fall back on the principle, that the external cause of mental events always resembles them. And what other principle have we to justify us in ascribing the primary qualities to the external causes of the sensations ?[1]

[1] It must be noticed that the resemblance which the theory attributes to the sensations and their external

The distinction between the primary and secondary qualities renders the theory of the existence of matter less tenable than it would otherwise be. In the first place, there is the inconsistency, which we have just noticed, of asserting that we can argue from some of our sensations to a resemblance in their causes, and not from others. If our perception of the secondary qualities varies from time to time, and from individual to individual, so also does our perception of the primary qualities. If our perception of the primary qualities exhibits a certain uniformity from time to time, and from individual to individual, so also does our perception of the secondary qualities.

And, in the second place, matter, while ex-

causes is very limited. The causes are not sensations, nor are their qualities sensations. All that can be said is that, in some way not too easy to define, certain predicates of the causes resemble the content of some of the sensations which are the effects of those causes. But it is not necessary for my argument to follow out the ambiguities and difficulties which follow from this elaborate combination of similarity and difference between sensations and matter.

tended and impenetrable, is destitute both of colour and of hardness, since these are secondary qualities. Now the sensations of extension and impenetrability only come to us by sight and touch. When they come by sight they are invariably conjoined with sensations of colour, when they come by touch they are invariably conjoined with sensations of hardness. We cannot even imagine to ourselves a sensation which gives extension without giving either colour or hardness.

Thus the theory which makes the external causes of our sensations material reaches a climax of inconsistency. Its one defence was the principle that the causes of the sensations must resemble the sensations they cause. But now it turns out that that which the causes are to resemble is a mere abstraction from our sensations, a naked extension, which is so far from being a sensation which we experience, that we cannot even imagine what such a sensation would be like.

Is it possible to avoid this inconsistency by

dropping the distinction between primary and secondary qualities? Shall we say that matter has not only shape, size, position, motion, and impenetrability, but also colour, hardness, smell, and taste? This view certainly avoids some of the objections to the more ordinary theory. It does not make an arbitrary and gratuitous difference in the treatment of two sets of qualities. And it gives matter a nature not utterly unlike our experience, and not utterly unimaginable by us.

But on the other hand the theory would no longer have the support of physical science. For that science treats matter as devoid of the secondary qualities, and it endeavours to show that the primary qualities of matter, under certain circumstances, excite in us the sensations of the secondary qualities.

Of course the independent existence and ultimate nature of matter is a question for metaphysics and not for science. And therefore a metaphysical theory that matter possesses the secondary qualities as well as the

primary cannot be upset by the fact that science, working from its own more superficial point of view, finds it convenient to treat matter as possessing only the primary qualities. If science keeps to its own sphere, it cannot clash with any metaphysical theory. If attempts are made to treat its results as if they were metaphysical truths, they have no claim to validity in this sphere, and a metaphysical theory is none the worse for being incompatible with these misapplications.

But the theory that matter exists depended very largely for its plausibility on the illegitimate support which it obtained by taking science as if it were metaphysics ; and if it loses this support, as it must in the suggested new form, it loses, indeed, no real strength, but much of what caused people to believe it. As has been already said, the fact that physical science treats matter as independent of spirit, and that physical science forms a vast system, coherent, accepted, and, from its own standpoint, irrefutable, has done much to strengthen

the belief that matter, at least, must be real, and that, if one of the two must be explained away by the other, it is spirit which must go, and matter which must stay. The inference is quite illegitimate, since nothing in physical science touches, or can touch, the buestion of the independent existence of matter. But it is an inference which is frequently made. And when the theory of the independent existence of matter defines the nature of that matter in a manner completely different from the definitions of physical science, it will no longer be able to gain apparent support in this way.

Nor does the amended theory, while less inconsistent than the original form, altogether avoid inconsistency. The red-hot sphere of iron is now admitted not only to be a sphere, independent of any observer, but to be red, independent of any observer. But the pain still remains. It is not asserted that the iron is painful, although it causes me pain. Now the pain is a result produced in the observer

which is quite as real as the sensations of form and colour, and quite as independent of the observer's will. It is likewise just as uniform. The iron will not give me the sensations except under certain conditions. (I shall not see it to be red, for example, if I am blind, or have my eyes shut.) And, under certain conditions, quite as definite, it will inevitably give me the feeling of pain. Yet nothing resembling the mental effect is attributed to the cause in this case. Why should a difference be made between this case and the others ?

And, even if we limit ourselves to sensations, the amended theory does not escape inconsistency. For, even if the secondary qualities are predicated of matter, it remains impossible to assert that matter is like the sensations which it causes. These sensations change for me from moment to moment. If I look at a thing under one set of conditions, as to light and shade, I get one sensation of colour from it ; if I change the conditions next minute I get quite a different sensation.

And if two men look at it simultaneously under the different conditions of light and shade they will have, simultaneously, the two different sensations of colour which I had successively. Now it is impossible to suppose that the object has at once two different colours. And if it has only one, then that colour must differ, at least, from one of the two sensations experienced by the two observers, since these sensations differ from one another.

The same is the case with the other secondary qualities. And it is also the case with the primary qualities. Two men who look at a cube from different positions simultaneously have two quite different sensations of its shape—not merely numerically different, but sensations which do not resemble one another. Yet an object cannot have two shapes at once, and each of these men would, under normal circumstances, agree about the shape of the object, although they started from non-resembling sensations. It is clear,

therefore, that the shape attributed to the object cannot resemble the sensations of shape which it causes, since they do not resemble one another.

Now if it is once admitted that the qualities attributed to the external object do not resemble the qualities of the sensations it causes, we have no reason to attribute those qualities to it at all. The only reason we had for supposing the causes of our sensations to have these qualities was the supposed resemblance of the qualities to the sensations. But now it becomes clear that the qualities attributed to the causes, although partially resembling the sensations, do not resemble them completely. It follows that a cause of a sensation may lack some of the qualities of the sensation it causes. And in that case there seems no reason for denying the possibility of its being quite different, and having none of the qualities in question.

It may be replied, no doubt, that it is nevertheless possible that the causes of the sensa-

tions do possess qualities partially resembling the sensations. The causes exist, and must have some qualities. And it may be these qualities which they have, and so they may be entitled to the name of matter. But such a possibility would be far too vague to give any support to the theory that matter exists. They may possess these qualities, for there is no reason why a cause should not resemble its effect in certain respects. But there is no reason to believe that they do possess them, or that their possession of them is in the slightest degree probable. A man who boils a lobster red may have a red face—there is nothing to prevent it. But his action in causing the redness of the lobster gives us no reason to suppose that his face is red.[1]

[1] The statement that the bare possibility of the external causes being material still remains open must be taken as referring only to the arguments in this chapter. I believe that further consideration should convince us, for reasons somewhat analogous to those of Hegel and Lotze, that all substance must possess certain characteristics which are essential to the nature of spirit, and incompatible with the nature of matter. If this

The result is that matter is in the same position as the Gorgons or the Harpies. Its existence is a bare possibility to which it would be foolish to attach the least importance, since there is nothing to make it at all preferable to any other hypothesis, however wild.

If we ask, then, of what reality the vast mass of knowledge holds true which science and everyday life give us about matter, we must reply that it holds true of various sensations which occur to various men, and of the laws according to which these sensations are connected, so that from the presence of certain sensations in me I can infer that, under certain conditions, I shall or shall not experience certain other sensations, and can also infer that, under certain conditions, other men will or will not experience certain sensations.

It will be objected that this is not what

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view is right—a question beyond the purpose of this book to investigate—the existence of matter would be positively disproved.

common experience and science profess to do. When we say that this bottle contains champagne, and this vinegar, we are not talking about our sensations. And physical science deals with such things as planets, acids, and nerves, none of which are sensations.

It is quite true that it is usual to express the conclusions of common experience and of science in terms which assume the independent existence of matter. Most people in the past have believed that matter does exist independently; our language has been moulded by this belief, and now it is easier and shorter to express our conclusions in this way. Besides this, most people at present do hold the metaphysical opinion that matter exists independently, and tend to express themselves accordingly.

But the conclusions remain just as true, if we take the view that matter does not exist. Something has been changed, no doubt, but what has been changed is no part either of common experience or science, but a theory

of metaphysics which forms no part of either. And so we sacrifice neither the experience of everyday life nor the results of science by denying the existence of matter. We only sacrifice a theory of metaphysics which we have already seen cannot be justified.

I say, in ordinary language, that this is champagne and this is vinegar. Supposing that there is neither champagne nor vinegar as matter existing independently of observation, but that it remains true that a certain group of sensations of sight and smell is a trustworthy indication that I can secure a certain taste by performing certain actions, and that another group of sensations of sight and smell is a trustworthy indication that I can secure a different taste by performing similar actions. Does not this leave a perfectly definite and coherent meaning to the experience of everyday life, which fits every detail of that experience as well as the more common theory does, and only differs from it on a question of metaphysics?

It is the same with science. Every observation made by science, every uniformity which is established, every statement as to the past or the future which it asserted, would still have its meaning. The observations would inform us of what had been experienced, the uniformities would tell us the connexions of various experiences, the statements as to the past and future would tell us what has been or will be experienced, or would be so if the necessary conditions were present. What more does science tell us, or what more could it desire to tell us? If the language in which scientific results are generally expressed does seem to tell us more, and to imply the independent existence of matter, that is not science but metaphysics—the unconscious and uncritical metaphysics of ordinary language—and its rejection does not involve the rejection or the distrust of a single result of science.

Science requires, no doubt, that experience should exhibit certain uniformities, so

that a certain experience can safely be taken as an indication of what other experiences will follow it under certain conditions. But this proves nothing as to the independent existence of matter. If the external causes of my sensations, and I myself, have a constant nature, the sensations which are their joint result will exhibit uniformities. And a non-material cause can have a constant nature just as easily as a material cause could have.

Science also requires that experience should have a community of nature between different persons, so that it shall be possible for us to infer from any experience what the experience of another person would be under conditions more or less similar. This, again, can be explained as easily without matter as with it. If my nature and that of other persons were not more or less the same, our experience would not be similar, whatever the nature of its external cause. But if our natures resemble one another, then it is obvious that the action on us of the same

external cause would produce results which resembled one another.

The denial of matter, it must also be noticed, does not lead us towards solipsism—that is to say, to the denial by each individual of all reality except himself. The arguments which prove that my sensations must have causes which are not myself, nor in myself, but are some other reality, lose none of their force if we decide that these causes are not of a material nature. And the other arguments against solipsism—the consideration of which is apart from our present object—are just as strong on the hypothesis that matter does not exist.

It might be supposed that the theory I have been advocating was a form of agnosticism. Agnosticism holds that we can know nothing but phenomena. Beneath these phenomena lies a reality on which they are based, but of this reality, agnosticism declares, we can know nothing. If we only know of the external causes of our sensations that they do

cause the sensations, have we not in effect taken up the agnostic theory that the reality on which phenomena depend is unknowable?

But this is not the case. Agnosticism says that we can know nothing whatever of the reality behind the phenomena. And, in saying this, it contradicts itself. For it asserts that such a reality exists, and that it stands in certain relations to the phenomena. Thus we do know something about it, and it is therefore not the case that we can know nothing about it.

But the theory which I have put forward does not say that we can know nothing about the causes of sensations. It only says that we do not know that they are like the sensation they cause. Even if this should destroy all knowledge of them except of the fact that they were causes, it would not be a general assertion of the impossibility of any knowledge of them, and so there would be no inconsistency in saying that we knew they were causes. To know *m* of anything is incon-

sistent with being unable to know anything about it, but it is quite consistent with knowing nothing about it except *m*.

Nor does it follow that we know nothing else about the causes of our sensations if we cannot conclude that they resemble the sensations. It might be possible, as various philosophers have maintained, to determine the qualities which must belong to every substance in virtue of its being a substance. And it might turn out that this could give us a considerable knowledge of the nature of these substances. We might, for example, be led to the conclusion that all substance was spirit. But we cannot here do more than point out the possibility of such a result.

And we have thus, I think, proved our original contention that the self cannot be one of the activities of its own body. If the self were, as such a theory would require it to be, merely a way in which matter behaved under certain circumstances, it would be possible to explain the self satisfactorily in

terms of matter. And it would be possible that a state of things should exist in which those circumstances, which determine the activity of matter to take the form of spirit, occurred nowhere in the universe, which would then be a universe of matter without any consciousness. But so far is this from being the case that, as we now see, we have no reason to suppose that matter exists at all, and to talk of matter existing without consciousness is absurd. Matter is so far from being the sole reality, of which the self is only an activity, that, taken by itself, it is not a reality at all. The only things which have, in any sense, the qualities attributed to matter, are the sensations experienced by selves. In place of an independent reality we find events in men's minds which are real, indeed, but not an independent reality. Matter is simply our illegitimate inference from these events.

This may be put in another way. If my self is one of the activities of my body, then, since

what appears as my body is only events in the life of some conscious being, my self must also be events in the life of some conscious being. It is clearly absurd to suppose that I am an activity of my body, as my body is known to myself, for then I should be events in my own life. But it is equally impossible that my self should be one of the activities of its own body as perceived by some other self. In that case the self *A* would be events in the life of another self *B*. But how about *B*? By the same rule it also will have to be events in the life of another self. If this self is *A*, the absurdity will recur in an aggravated form. For then *A* would be the events which happened in a self which was itself events in *A*. But if we say that *B* is events in the life of a third self *C*, the same question will arise about *C*, and so on without end. If every self is only events in the life of some other self, no self is explicable until we have reached the end of an infinite series—that is, no self is explicable at all. And so we are brought back to the

conclusion that the self cannot be an activity of its body.

I may be thought to have dwelt unnecessarily on this point. Surely, it may be said, it is obvious that the theory that the self is an activity of the body must fall with the theory of the independent existence of matter. Surely no one would maintain that the body only existed for spirit, and at the same time, that spirit was an activity of body. Yet this has been done. Men of ability have maintained that what I call matter is nothing but my thoughts and sensations, and, at the same time, that my thoughts and sensations are nothing but an activity of my brain—which, being matter, will itself be thoughts and sensations !

The bearing of this discussion on the question of our immortality is that it disproves a hypothesis which would render immortality incredible. If the self was an activity of the body, it would be impossible that it should continue to exist when the body had ceased to exist. We might as well suppose, in that

case, that the digestion survived the body as that the self did. But the body, as we have now seen, only exists for the selves which observe it, and we cannot, therefore, reduce any self to be an activity of its own body.

It has been admitted, indeed, that there is reality external to myself—the reality which includes the external part-causes of my sensations—although we are not justified in regarding that reality as material. And nothing that we have said excludes the possibility that my self may be a product or activity of some other reality, and one which is destined to cease to exist when some change takes place in its cause.

But while this view has not been refuted, there is not any reason, that I can see, why it should be held to be true, or even probable. There is no reason why we should regard our selves as the product or activity of any other reality whatever, and there is no reason why, if we did regard them as such products or

activities, we should consider them likely to cease.[1]

If the external reality had been independently existing matter, it would have been different. In that case there would have been, as we saw above, a strong tendency to regard matter as the only ultimate reality, and the self as an activity of its body. The tendency would not be due to a logical necessity, since the facts, as we have seen, would not be inconsistent with the hypothesis that spirit and matter were independent, though connected, realities. But the tendency would be very strong, owing to our desire to find as much unity as possible in the universe. If the self is an independent reality, it is a non-material reality. And, granted the independent exist-

[1] It is commonly held that human selves are not products of non-divine realities, but that they are all produced by God. I have given in *Some Dogmas of Religion* (Chapter VI.) the reasons why this view does not seem to me to be necessary. But, supposing that they are produced in this way, we should have no ground for supposing that their divine production involved their subsequent destruction, though it is not, of course, incompatible with such destruction.

ence of matter, more unity would be gained by denying the independent reality of spirit. But without independently existing matter the case is changed. No increased unity is gained by making the self a mere activity of something else, unless that something else is already known to exist and to be of a non-spiritual nature. Independently existing matter would, of course, be of a non-spiritual nature. But, when we have rejected this, I have no reason to believe that the reality outside myself is non-spiritual, and so I should gain no increased unity for the universe by denying the independent reality of my self.

And, again, if the self is an activity of its body, it must be a temporary activity, since the body is only a temporary combination of matter. But if the self were an activity of some non-material reality outside itself, there would be nothing to disprove the permanence of the state of things which produces the self —though, of course, there would equally be nothing which proves that permanence.

We must now pass on to our second question. My self cannot be a form of the activity of my body. But it is still possible that the nature of my self makes the perception of my present body, by my self or other selves, a necessary condition of the existence of my self. In that case it would be an inevitable inference that when my body dissolves, and ceases to be known as a body at all, my self must have ceased also. If *A*, whenever it exists, is necessarily accompanied by *B*, then the cessation of *B* is a sure sign of the cessation of *A*.

What evidence is there in favour of such a view? In the first place, while we have plenty of experience of selves who possess bodies, we have no indubitable experience of selves who exist without bodies, or after their bodies have ceased to exist. Besides this, the existence of a self seems to involve the experience of sensations. Without them, the self would have no material for thought, will, or feeling, and it is only in these that the self

exists. Now there seems good reason to suppose that sensations never occur in our minds at present without some corresponding modifications of the body. This is certainly the case with normal sensations. And, even if the evidence for clairvoyance and thought-transference were beyond dispute, it could never prove the possibility of sensation without bodily accompaniments. For it could not exclude—indeed, it seems rather to suggest—the existence of bodily accompaniments of an obscure and unusual kind.

But, after all, these considerations would, at the most, go to show that *some* body was necessary to my self, and not that its present body was necessary. Have we, after the results already reached, any reason to suppose that the death of the body must indicate anything more than that the self had transferred its manifestations to a new body, and had, therefore, passed from the knowledge of the survivors, who had only known it through the old body? The apparent improbability

of this lies, I think, simply in our instinctive recurrence to the theory that the self is an activity of the body. In that case, no doubt, it would be impossible that it should be successively connected with two bodies. But that theory we have seen to be untenable. The most that a body can be is an essential accompaniment of the self. And then the supposition that the self has another body would fit the facts quite as well as the supposition that the self has ceased to exist.

There seems no reason why such a change should not be instantaneous. But even if it were not so, no additional difficulty would be created. If a body is essential to the action of a self, the self would be in a state of suspended animation in the interval between its possession of its two bodies—a state which we might almost call one of temporary non-existence. But this is nothing more than what happens, as far as we can observe, in every case of dreamless sleep. During such a sleep the self, so far as we know, is un-

conscious—as unconscious as it could be without a body. Yet this does not prevent its being the same man who went asleep and who woke up again. Why should the difficulty be greater in a change of bodies?

And then, have we any reason, after all, to suppose that a body is essential to a self? It seems to me that the facts only support a very different proposition—namely, that, *while a self has a body*, that body is essentially connected with the self's mental life.

For example, no self can be conceived as conscious unless it has sufficient data for its mental activity. This material is only given, as far as our observations can go, in the form of sensations, and sensations again, as far as our observations can go, seem invariably connected with changes in a body. But it does not follow, because a self which has a body cannot get its data except in connexion with that body, that it would be impossible for a self without a body to get data in some other way. It may be just the existence of the body

which makes these other ways impossible at present. If a man is shut up in a house, the transparency of the windows is an essential condition of his seeing the sky. But it would not be prudent to infer that, if he walked out of the house, he could not see the sky because there was no longer any glass through which he might see it.

With regard to the connexion of the brain with thought, the chief evidence for it appears to be that diseases or mutilations of the brain affect the course of thought. But this does not prove that, even while a man has a brain, his thoughts are directly connected with it. Many things are capable of disturbing thought, which are not essential to its existence. For example, a sufficiently severe attack of tooth-ache may render all consecutive abstract thought impossible. But if the tooth was extracted, I should still be able to think. And, in the same way, the fact that an abnormal state of the brain may affect our thoughts does not prove that the normal states of the brain are necessary for thought.

Even if the brain is essential to thought while we have bodies, it would not follow that when we ceased to have brains we could not think without them. The same argument applies here as with the organs of sense. It might be that the present inability of the self to think except in connexion with the body was a limitation which was imposed by the presence of the body, and which vanished with it.

We have now considered the two arguments against the immortality of the self which spring from the death of the body. But we have said nothing as to the bearing on this question of stories as to the ghosts of the dead. Such stories, however numerous and well authenticated, could never give us any positive evidence that the self was undying. At the most they could prove that it survived its body for a few centuries. But indirectly the evidence could be of considerable importance. For it might possibly prove that the self survived the death of its body. Now the

death of its body is by far the strongest reason that we have for doubting the self's immortality. And if the appearance of ghosts could prove that this reason had no weight, they would have removed the greatest difficulty in the way of the belief.

Much of the evidence offered on this subject is doubtless utterly untrustworthy. But there is a good deal which investigation has failed to break down. And there is much to be said in support of the view that, after all deductions have been made for fraud, error, and coincidence, there is still a sufficient residuum to justify the belief that such apparitions are in some cases caused by the dead man whose body they represent.

But the mere proof that there was this causal connexion between the dead man and the apparition would not suffice to prove that the dead man had survived his death. A chain of effects may exist long after its original cause is destroyed. Chatham may be one of the chief causes of the pride which England

excites in an Englishman to-day, but this proves nothing as to Chatham's present existence. And, as far as I know, all stories of apparitions would be equally well explained by the theory that a man might, before his death, initiate a chain of circumstances which would cause his apparition to appear, after his death, under certain conditions, to men still alive. In this case, nothing would be proved about his existence after death.

This may appear improbable. But, on the other hand, any attempt to prove empirically that man could survive death would have to struggle with such an enormous mass of negative evidence that its antecedent improbability would also not be small. Investigation may give us more evidence, and evidence incompatible with any theory except that of survival. But at present it seems to me that we have much more chance of proving our immortality by metaphysics than by psychical research.

We now come to the third question. Is

there any reason to suppose that my self does not share the transitory character which I recognize in all the material objects around me?

What exactly is this transitory character? When science says that a material object—a planet, or a human body—ceases to exist, what does it mean? It does not mean that anything is annihilated. It means that units, which were combined in a certain way, are now combined otherwise. The form has changed. But everything which was there before is there now.

We need not inquire whether this distinction between an unchanging matter and a changing form can have more than a rough approximate correctness. It is sufficient to note that the analogy of science—whatever weight may be attached to it—does not give us reason to suppose anything to be transitory except combinations.[1]

[1] I do not mean to imply that science necessarily accepts any units as indivisible and imperishable. My

Is the self a combination? It certainly resembles a combination in one respect, for it is differentiated and contains a plurality. We can have different sensations at the same moment, and sensations, thoughts, and desires can exist simultaneously. But it does not follow from this that a self is a combination. For if a whole is a combination it is built up of parts which could exist without being combined in that way, while the combination could not exist without them. If the bricks of a wall, for instance, were destroyed, the wall would be destroyed too. But the wall might be destroyed by being taken to pieces, and the bricks would remain unchanged.

Do the parts of the self stand in this relation to it? Could my thoughts, my volitions, my emotions, exist isolated, or in new combinations, when my self had ceased to exist? It

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point is that it tells us that whatever does perish does so only by the separation of the parts of which it is composed. Those parts may themselves be combinations. Thus it is possible that they may perish, and so on *ad infinitum*. But nothing perishes but combinations.

seems clear to me—the point is too ultimate for discussion—that they cannot. It is inconceivable that a thought, a sensation, a volition, or an emotion should exist outside of a self. And it is inconceivable that the same thought, sensation, volition, or emotion which was once part of my mind could ever be part of somebody else's. The self, we must say, is complex, but not a compound. It has parts, but it is not built up out of them. For, while it depends on them, they depend just as much on it.

The self, therefore, cannot cease by the separation of its parts. For its parts only exist as united in it, and therefore could not separate from it. If it did cease to exist, it could only be by annihilation. It is not only that the form would have changed, but that the form and content alike would have perished.

Now there is no analogy in science to suggest the probability of this. For science treats nothing as perishable except combina-

tions. This, indeed, does not give us any safe analogy for the persistence of the self. In the first place, there is reason to doubt the absolute validity of the distinction between content and form, which science finds it convenient to make. And, in the second place, the difference between a self and matter is too great for an analogy from one to the other to be very conclusive. But at any rate science gives no analogy against us.

All this still leaves us very far from a positive assertion of immortality. Even though the death of the body is no argument for the destruction of the self, and the self cannot be decomposed into its parts, it is still possible that the self should not be immortal. And this view has been held in many systems of idealism. It may be maintained, for example, that finite individuals only exist to carry out some divine purpose, and that it is possible that an individual may cease to be necessary for such a purpose, and so cease to exist. This was Lotze's view. Or again, it may be main-

tained that there is something contradictory in the idea of a self, which prevents us from regarding it as an adequate expression of reality, and that therefore there is no reason to suppose that any particular self shares the eternity which is characteristic of true reality.

To meet such doubts as these it would be necessary to construct a complete metaphysical system. We should have to determine what was the general nature of all reality, and whether that nature involved the existence of finite selves. And if in this way we reached the conclusion that the existence of finite selves was eternally necessary, the question would arise whether each self was eternal, or whether, on the other hand, there was an unending succession of transitory selves. And, if the former alternative were accepted, we should have to consider the relation between eternity and immortality. All that I have endeavoured to do here has been to show that the more obvious arguments against immortality—those

which have most weight with most people—have no validity.

In spite of all arguments, however, the idea that the self cannot be immortal continually returns to us. Reflection may drive it away, but in unreflective moments it besets us again. We seem so small, and the transitory seems so great. It is always hard — there are times when it seems impossible — to believe that each of us can be a permanent element in a universe in which nations and planets are but momentary shapes.

And the belief in immortality seems all the more incredible when we consider many of the believers. Many people believe in it because they wish it to be true, their desires blinding their judgments. Many believe in it on the authority of some religion claiming to be revealed—most of which must, on any hypothesis, be untrustworthy. It is illogical to conclude that a belief cannot be true because it has generally been believed for mistaken reasons, but it is difficult, in practice, to

keep our distrust from spreading from the reasons to the belief. Yet I think that reasons for the belief in immortality may be found of such strength that they should prevail over all difficulties.

PART II

HUMAN PRE-EXISTENCE

I WISH here to point out some reasons for thinking that, if men are immortal, it is more probable that the beginning of the present life, in which each of us finds himself now, was not the beginning of his whole existence, but that he lived before it, as he will live after it. I wish, secondly, to consider the explanation which this theory, if true, would afford of some of the facts of our experience, and to consider what would be the practical value of such immortality as it can offer us.

The present attitude of most western thinkers to the doctrine of pre-existence is curious. Of the many who regard our life after the death of our bodies as certain or probable,

scarcely one regards our life before the birth of those bodies as a possibility which deserves discussion.[1] And yet it was taught by Buddha and by Plato, and it is usually associated with the belief in immortality in the far east. Why should men who are so anxious to-day to prove that we shall live after this life is ended regard the hypothesis that we have already survived the end of a life as one which is beneath consideration ?

The explanation of this, I suppose, is that in modern western thought the great support of the belief in immortality has been the Christian religion. Under these circumstances a form of the belief which was never supported by that religion was not likely to be considered of any importance. And, for some reason, Christians have almost unanimously rejected those theories which placed pre-existence by the side of immortality, although there seems

[1] Lotze, for example, treats it as a serious objection to a particular argument for immortality, that it would lead to the 'strange and improbable' conclusion of pre-existence. *Metaphysic*, Section 245.

nothing in pre-existence incompatible with any of the dogmas which are generally accepted as fundamental to Christianity.

The most effective way of proving that the doctrine of pre-existence is bound up with the doctrine of immortality would be to prove directly that the nature of man was such that it involved a life both before and after the present life. But, as I said at the beginning of Part I., such a demonstration, if it is possible at all, as I believe it to be, would be far beyond the scope of this book, since it would involve a determination of some of the most fundamental characteristics of reality.

I must content myself with stating in a more general manner my grounds for believing that any evidence which will prove immortality will also prove pre-existence. There are two ways in which a proof of immortality may be attempted. The first is the directly metaphysical way. We may attempt to show that the nature of man is such that he cannot cease

to exist while the universe continues to exist; or that his nature is eternal, and that an eternal nature cannot have an end in time; or pursue some similar line of argument.

In this case it seems to me that, if we succeed in proving immortality, it will be by means of considerations which would also prove pre-existence. I do not see how existence in future time could be shown to be necessary in the case of any being whose existence in past time is admitted not to be necessary. If the universe got on without me a hundred years ago, what reason could be given for denying that it might get on without me a hundred years hence? Or if it is consistent with my eternal nature that its temporal manifestation should begin at some point in time, could we find any reason for supposing that the cessation of that manifestation at some point in time would be inconsistent with that nature? I do not see of what kind such a reason could be, nor do I know of any attempt that has been made to establish one.

There is another way in which attempts have been made to prove immortality. This consists in demonstrating that the universe is the work of a benevolent creator, or has a purpose harmonious with our ideals of morality, and then arguing that the absence of immortality would be inconsistent with the benevolence of such a creator, or with such a moral purpose. Arguments of this type could prove immortality more readily than they could prove pre-existence. No wrong can be done to the non-existent, and it could hardly be made a reproach to the goodness of the universe that it had waited a long time before it produced a particular person. But, once produced, any person has certain moral claims, and if it could be shown that his annihilation was inconsistent with those claims, we could argue from the goodness of the universe to the impossibility of his annihilation.

Can we, however, validly conclude from the goodness of the universe to the impossibility of a particular evil? It cannot be denied that

some evil does exist. The ultimate nature of reality, then, is not incompatible with the existence of some evil. And when this is once admitted, can we hope for an *a priori* proof that any particular evil is too bad to be consistent with the nature of the universe? It seems to me that we cannot, and that we must therefore reject all arguments which attempt to prove that a thing is unreal because it would be evil.

We may call arguments of this sort ethical, since they involve the conception of the good. Modern demonstrations of immortality have almost always been of this character, and not purely metaphysical, and this explains why it has often been held in modern times that immortality was proved, although pre-existence has almost always been disbelieved. Even the arguments of the eighteenth century, which were attacked by Kant, had an ethical element in them. Their supporters endeavoured, indeed, to prove by purely metaphysical considerations that the nature of man's spirit was

such that it could not be destroyed in the ordinary course of nature. But they held that each man had been created by an act of the divine will, and they admitted that a similar act could destroy him. In order to show that God never would will to destroy a man whom he had once created, they either fell back on the asserted evidence of revelation, or contended that such destruction would be inconsistent with what we knew of God's moral character, in which case their argument had passed over into the ethical class.

If, as I have maintained, ethical arguments of this sort are invalid, we are forced back on the purely metaphysical arguments, and here we seem unable to treat the past and the future differently. My conclusion is, then, that any demonstration of immortality is likely to show that each of us exists through all time—past and future—whether time is held to be finite or infinite.

We must now inquire what consequences would follow from the truth of pre-existence

and immortality. Each man would have at least three lives, his present life, one before it, and one after it. It seems more probable, however, that this would not be all, and that his existence before and after his present life would in each case be divided into many lives, each bounded by birth and death. This doctrine of a plurality of future lives and of past lives may be conveniently referred to as the doctrine of plurality of lives.[1]

There is much to be said for the view that a plurality of lives would be the most probable alternative, even on a theory of immortality which did not include pre-existence. We do not know what is the cause which produces the limitation of our present lives by birth and death, but some cause there must be, and a cause which produces so important an effect

[1] In one sense, of course, a belief in pre-existence and immortality is itself a belief in a plurality of lives, since it is a belief in three at least. But it will, I think, be more convenient to reserve the name for the belief mentioned above—that for each of us existence on one or both sides of the present life would be divided into more lives than one.

is one which plays a great part in our existence, as long as it continues to act.

If we accept immortality and reject a plurality of lives—and this is the most common opinion, though plurality of lives is accepted more frequently than pre-existence—we must hold that the causes, whatever they are, which operate on each of us so as to cause his death once, will never operate again on any of us through all future time. This is, of course, not impossible. The true nature of death may be such that there is no need, and no possibility, of its repetition. But I do not see that we have any reason to believe this to be even probable.

It is quite clear that a life which stretched on unendingly without death would in many respects be enormously different from our present lives. An attempt to imagine how our present lives would be transformed if neither we ourselves, nor our fellow-men, had in future any chance of death, will make this evident. A believer in immortality who denies, or

regards as improbable, the doctrine of the plurality of lives, must assert, or regard as probable, that the death which ends his present life for each of us will change profoundly and permanently the conditions of all future life. And for this there seems no justification.

If we are immortal, the value of our existence either remains permanently at about its present level, or rises or falls after death. In the first case, we should have no reason to suppose that it was so changed that death would not recur. As I have said, it is not impossible that it should be so. But when anything has a particular characteristic, the presumption is that, if that thing continues to exist, its characteristic will not suddenly vary. The presumption is certainly not strong, and it can give us no firm belief. But it is, I think, sufficient to render it rather more probable that the characteristic of periodic mortality will not be left behind at the end of our present lives.

I do not think that this would be very

generally denied. The denial of the plurality of lives is generally based on the belief that our lives do not remain at the same level after death. It is not because men have died once that it is held that they cannot die again. It is because it is believed that after death they are in heaven or hell, the one much above the level of earthly life, the other much below it. It is contended that the change effected in this manner renders further deaths improbable. This is especially maintained with regard to heaven.

It might be admitted that a state of absolute perfection would render further death improbable. But even the best men are not, when they die, in such a state of intellectual and moral perfection as would fit them to enter heaven immediately, if heaven is taken as a state of absolute perfection which renders all further improvement unnecessary and impossible. This is generally recognized, and one of two alternatives is commonly adopted to meet it. The first is that some tremendous

improvement—an improvement out of all proportion to any which can ever be observed in life—takes place at the moment of death, at any rate in the case of those who die under certain conditions. For this, so far as I know, there are no arguments. The other and more probable alternative is that the process of gradual improvement can go on in each of us after the death of our present bodies.

But if our existence immediately after our present life is imperfect, and a state of improvement and advance, it has not yet reached that absolute perfection which might make future deaths improbable. And it seems to me that the natural inference from this view—though it is not drawn by the majority of those who hold it—is that this life will be followed by others like it, each separated from its predecessor and successor by death and re-birth. For otherwise we should be limited to the hypothesis that a process of development, begun in a single life bounded by death, would be continued as an indefinitely long

life not divided by birth and death at all. And to suppose, without any reason, such a change from the order of our present experience seems unjustifiable.

Should any persons be destined to attain a state of great and permanent degradation, there would be still less reason for supposing that this would exclude all death from their future existence. Death may possibly be incompatible with absolute perfection, but it has no characteristic which can be suggested as incompatible with the extreme of human degradation. In addition to this we may urge, as in the case of heaven, that it is unreasonable to suppose an extreme change at the moment of death, and that, even if the completed degradation was likely to exclude death, there could be no reason for supposing that the process towards it would do so from the first.

Again, processes begun in this life are sometimes finished in it, and sometimes left incomplete. We continually find that death

leaves a fault without a retribution, a retribution without a repentance, a preparation without an achievement, while in other cases, where the life has lasted longer, a similar process is complete between birth and death. If men survive death, we must expect that these processes, when not worked out before death, will be worked out in a future life. And if the content of our existence after death has so much similarity, in essential features, with the content of our present lives, the presumption is increased that they have not changed so far as to have shaken off the necessity of periodical death.[1]

There seems, therefore, good reason for regarding plurality of lives as the least improbable alternative, even if we accept immortality without accepting pre-existence. But if pre-existence is also accepted, the case for a plurality of lives becomes stronger. For then the death which alters my present life

[1] On this subject we may refer to Browning's *Evelyn Hope*.

is no longer an unique event in my existence. One life, if no more, came to an end for me before my present life could begin. Thus any theory would be false which should try to reject the plurality of lives on the ground that it was probable that death could only occur once in a man's existence. And the plurality of lives could only be regarded as improbable, if there was reason to suppose that an event, which happened twice in a man's existence, would never happen a third time. Now while it might be contended—though, as I have said, I do not think it could be rightly contended—that there were features about death which made it probable it would only occur once in a man's existence, it is difficult to see the slightest ground for the suggestion that there is anything about death which should make it improbable that it should occur three times, although it was known that it occurred twice. We can only accept immortality and pre-existence, while rejecting the plurality of lives, if we hold that the causes which break off

a life by a death, after remaining dormant from the beginning of our existence, act twice within an interval of from five minutes to about a hundred years, and then never act again through all future time.

The result seems to be that, even granting that pre-existence is certain, there can be no absolute demonstration of plurality of lives, but that the plurality of lives is the more probable supposition in any case, and is still more probable on the hypothesis of pre-existence.

There are various features of our present life which can be explained more satisfactorily on the theory of pre-existence than on any other. I do not, however, wish to suggest that the ease of explaining them on this hypothesis, or the difficulty of explaining them without it, is so great as to form any proof of the doctrine of pre-existence. That doctrine, I believe, can only be proved by metaphysical arguments of the type mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

The most important of these features is to be found in personal relations. Two people who have seen but little of each other are often drawn together by a force equal to that which is generated in other cases by years of mutual trust and mutual assistance.

The significance of this fact has been, I think, very much underrated.[1] It is generally explained, when any attempt at explanation is made, by the capriciousness of sexual desire. This explanation is inadequate, because the fact to be explained is found with as great proportional frequency in friendships which have no connexion with sexual desire.

[1] The same may be said of all facts connected with the love of one particular human being for another. Philosophy and theology, when they profess to take men's love seriously, generally confine it either to a love for God, or to a passion for mankind as a whole. It is rarely that the writings of a philosopher or a theologian find anything in a young man's love for his sweetheart except a mixture of sexual desire and folly, or anything in a young man's love for his comrade except folly pure and simple. Hegel is, I think, to be regarded as an exception. Possibly, also, the writer of the first epistle of St. John.

On the theory of pre-existence such relations would naturally be explained by the friendships of past lives. The love which comes at first sight, and the love which grows up through many years in this life, would be referred to similar causes, whose similarity would account for the similarity of the effects. Each would have arisen through long intimacy, and the only difference between them would be that in one case the intimacy had been suspended by death and re-birth.

Again, as a man grows up certain tendencies and qualities make themselves manifest in him. They cannot be entirely due to his environment, for they are often very different in people whose environment has been very similar. We call these the man's natural character, and assume that he came into life with it. Such tendencies and qualities, since they are not due to anything which happens after birth, may be called innate, as far as the present life is concerned.

Now when we look at the natural characters

of men, we find that in many cases they possess qualities strongly resembling those which, as we learn by direct experience, can be produced in the course of a single life. One man seems to start with an impotence to resist some particular temptation which exactly resembles the impotence which has been produced in another man by continual yielding to the same temptation. One man, again, has through life a calm and serene virtue which another gains only by years of strenuous effort. Others, again, have innate powers of judging character, or of acting with decision in emergencies, which give them, while yet inexperienced, advantages to which less fortunate men attain, if they attain to them at all, only by the experience of years. Here then we have characteristics which are born with us, and which closely resemble characteristics which, in other cases, we know to be due to the condensed results of experience. If we hold the doctrine of pre-existence, we shall naturally explain these also as being the condensed

results of experience—in this case, of experience in an earlier life.

But, it may be said, can we not explain these features of our life quite as well by means of the theory of heredity, without accepting pre-existence? In the case of personal relations, I do not see that heredity would help us at all. I have admitted that it is not impossible to explain the facts otherwise than by pre-existence. The attraction may be simply due to something in the character of each of the two persons, though in many cases we cannot see what that something could be. In this case it is possible that the element in question has been produced by heredity. But there is nothing in heredity which should make it likely that it should produce this result rather than another, and so the abstract possibility that the attraction is due to some undetected element in the two characters is not increased by the suggestion that the characters were produced by heredity. On the theory of pre-existence, however, we

can regard the effects as produced by a cause which would be likely to produce this result rather than another — that is, by relations formed in an earlier life.

Heredity, however, can produce a more satisfactory explanation of innate aptitudes. My ancestors cannot—if pre-existence is false —have loved my friend, and therefore there is nothing in the fact that I inherit from them that explains my loving him at first sight. But my ancestors may have yielded to certain sins, or resisted them, or practised certain activities, and then, supposing that I can inherit the results which they have acquired,[1] there would be a reason why I should have an innate strength or weakness in certain directions, which closely resembled similar characteristics which other men have acquired by their own action in the course of their present lives.

We must, however, remember that such

[1] The possibility of this, however, is, to say the least, highly uncertain.

innate dispositions often occur in cases where nothing of the sort can be traced among the ancestors—even if, as sometimes happens, the ancestors themselves can be traced for many generations back. It is possible, no doubt, that the acquirement of some more remote ancestor may have remained dormant through the intervening generations and have now re-appeared, but the explanation is naturally much less probable than it is in the cases where the ancestral acquirement is known to have existed.

But, as I have said, while I regard the explanation of these facts by pre-existence as better than any which can be offered without it, I do not regard the superiority of the explanation as sufficient to give by itself any appreciable probability to pre-existence, which, if established at all, must be established by more directly metaphysical arguments.

Whether acquired qualities can be inherited or not, there is no doubt that there is a certain tendency for men—not merely their bodies

but themselves—to resemble their ancestors. And it may be thought that this would be an objection to our theory of pre-existence. If a man's character is determined by his previous lives, how can it be also determined by the character of the ancestors by whose bodies his body was generated?

There is, however, no real difficulty here. We may have reason to believe that a man's character resembles to some extent that of his ancestors, but it would be impossible to demonstrate, and there is no reason to believe, that there are no elements in it which could not be derived from that source. On the other hand, the doctrine of pre-existence does not compel us to deny all influence on a man's character of the characters of his ancestors The character which a man has at any time is modified by circumstances which happen to him at that time, and may well be modified by the fact that his re-birth is in a body descended from ancestors of a particular character.

Thus the two ways in which the character in this life is said to be determined need not be inconsistent, since they can both co-operate in the determination, the tendencies inherited with the body modifying the character as it was left at the end of the previous life. But there is no impossibility in supposing that the characteristics in which we resemble the ancestors of our bodies, may be to some degree characteristics due to our previous lives. In walking through the streets of London, it is extremely rare to meet a man whose hat shows no sort of adaptation to his head. Hats in general fit their wearers with far greater accuracy than they would if each man's hat were assigned to him by lot. And yet there is very seldom any causal connexion between the shape of the head and the shape of the hat. A man's head is never made to fit his hat, and, in the great majority of cases, his hat is not made to fit his head. The adaptation comes about by each man selecting, from hats made without any special reference to

his particular head, the hat which will suit his particular head best.

This may help us to see that it would be possible to hold that a man whose nature had certain characteristics when he was about to be re-born, would be re-born in a body descended from ancestors of a similar character. His character when re-born would, in this case, be decided, as far as the points in question went, by his character in his previous life, and not by the character of the ancestors of his new body. But it would be the character of the ancestors of the new body, and its similarity to his character, which determined the fact that he was re-born in that body rather than another. The shape of the head—to go back to our analogy—does not determine the shape of the hat, but it does determine the selection of this particular hat for this particular head.

But how, it may be asked, would each person, in this case, be brought into connexion with the new body that is most appropriate to

him? I do not see any difficulty here. We know that various substances which have chemical affinities for one another will meet and combine, separating themselves, to do so, from other substances with which they have been previously in connexion. And we do not find anything so strange or paradoxical in this result as to make us unwilling to recognize its truth. There seems to me to be nothing more strange or paradoxical in the suggestion that each person enters into connexion with the body which is most fitted to be connected with him.

And, if there were any difficulty in this supposition, it is a difficulty which would be just as serious for the theory adopted by most believers in immortality who reject pre-existence. If no man existed before the formation of his present body, the question still arises—how did he become connected with a body such that his character resembles the characters of the ancestors of that body? The question would not arise if we supposed that

the whole character of the self was simply produced by the body. But this is not the ordinary view. Indeed, it would be difficult to hold this without also holding that the self, as well as its character, was produced by the body. And such a view as this would be all but incompatible—if not quite incompatible—with the belief in immortality.

Again, the question of how the connexion is determined, might be considered to have been answered if it were held that the parents created the new person at the time that they generated the body. I will not discuss the difficultes which, as it seems to me, are involved in this view, since I am dealing with the consequences of pre-existence, and not with the theories which deny it. It is sufficient to remark here that this is not the view most generally adopted. The common belief is that the person is created, not by the parents of his body, but directly by the supreme power of the universe.

And then the question still remains—how

does this person get into connexion with the appropriate body, since they come into existence independently? It seems that there are only two alternatives. It may be said that the connexion is due to a special act of divine providence in each case. But, if it is legitimate to invoke such a special act at all, it is surely just as legitimate to invoke it to make a connexion for a previously existing person as for a newly created person. Or else it may be said that the appropriate connexion is brought about by some general law. And there can be no greater difficulty in supposing such a law to act on persons who had previously existed than in supposing it to act on persons newly created. The difficulty, therefore, if there is one, is no greater for those who accept pre-existence than for those who deny it.

Is the truth of pre-existence desirable? How much would an immortality be worth to us which was coupled with pre-existence?

The most serious objection relates to memory. We do not now remember anything of any previous life. If, nevertheless, we have lived previously, and have forgotten it, there seems no reason to expect that we shall remember our present life during subsequent lives. Now an existence that is cut up into separate lives, in none of which memory extends to a previous life, may be thought to have no practical value. We might as well be mortal, it has been said, as be immortal without a memory beyond the present life. The question becomes more serious if not only pre-existence, but also the plurality of lives is true. For then it might reasonably be feared that we might lose memory, not only twice in our existence, but an indefinitely large number of times.

Sometimes, indeed, it has been asserted that such a state would not be immortality at all. Without memory of my present life, it is said, my future life would not be mine. If memory ceases at the death of my body, I cease with it, and I am not immortal.

If each life had no continuity with its successors, and no effect on them, then indeed there might be little meaning in calling them lives of the same person. But we cannot suppose that this could be the case. If the same self passes through various lives, any change which happens to it at any time must affect its state in the time immediately subsequent, and, through this, in all future time. Death and re-birth, no doubt, are of sufficient importance to modify a character considerably, but they could only act on what was already present, and the nature with which each individual starts in any life would be moulded by his experiences and actions in the past. And this is sufficient to make the identity between the different lives real.

It has also been objected that the re-birth of a person without a memory of his previous life would be exactly equivalent to the annihilation of that person and the creation of a new person of exactly similar character. (By this it is not meant that the new person

would be exactly similar to the old one at the moment of the latter's annihilation, but that he would be exactly similar to what the old person would have been if he had undergone the process of re-birth.) Now, it is argued, I should not regard myself as immortal if I knew that I was to be annihilated at death, even if I knew that an exactly similar person would then be created. And therefore, it is concluded, re-birth without memory cannot be considered as real immortality of the self.

But the objection supposes an impossibility. There could not be another self which would have a character exactly similar to what mine would have been under the same circumstances. The self is not a 'thing in itself,' whose nature is independent of its qualities. The self is a substance with attributes, and it has no nature except to express itself in its attributes. If the character of the new self, under certain circumstances, were exactly similar to my character under the same circumstances, its attributes would be exactly

similar to my attributes. Then the substance also would be the same, and I should not be annihilated at all.[1] But if there were a new self, then the difference between the selves must be expressed by some difference in the attributes. Then the new self would not be of exactly similar character to what I should have been under the same circumstances, and therefore the creation of a new self would *not* be exactly equivalent to my re-birth. Thus exact similarity of attributes is always sufficient to prove personal identity, not because it would be sufficient if the substance were

[1] It will be seen that I am assuming here that there cannot be two different substances with exactly similar attributes. It does not lie within the scope of this book to discuss this principle, commonly known as the Identity of Indiscernibles. It is sufficient for our present purpose to remark that the principle is accepted by most philosophers of the present day. And those who deny it, and assert that things which are exactly similar may yet be numerically different, would not hold that the annihilation of one thing and the creation of another could be exactly equivalent to the continuance of the first, even though the second was exactly similar to the first. For, although exactly similar, they would be numerically different.

different, but because it proves that the substance is the same.

We may say then that, in spite of the loss of memory, it is the same person who lives in the successive lives. But has such immortality as this any value for the person who is immortal?

I do not propose to discuss whether any immortality has any value. Some people maintain that all human existence is evil, however favourable the conditions. Others regard existence as of such value that they would be prepared to choose hell rather than annihilation. Among those who differ less violently, some regard the life of the average man on earth at present as of positive value, while others will only regard it as valuable if it is the necessary preparation for a better life which is to follow. Such differences as to the value of life must obviously produce great differences as to the value of its unending prolongation. All that I shall maintain here is that the loss of memory need not render

immortality valueless if it would not have been valueless without the loss of memory.

If existence beyond the present life is not expected to improve, and yet immortality is regarded as valuable, it must be because a life no better than this is looked on as possessing value. Now it is certain that in this life we remember no previous lives, whether it be because we have forgotten them, or because there have been none to remember. And if this life has value without any memory beyond itself, why should not future lives have value without memory beyond themselves? In that case a man will be better off for his immortality, since it will give him an unlimited amount of valuable existence, instead of a limited amount. And a man who believed that he had this immortality would have a more desirable expectation of the future than if he did not believe it. If, indeed, a man should say that he takes no more interest in his own fate, after memory of his present life had gone, than he would take in the fate of

some unknown person, I do not see how he could be shown to be in the wrong. But I do not believe that most men would agree with him, and to most men, therefore, the prospect of a continuance of valuable existence, even with the periodical loss of memory, would still seem to be desirable.

But immortality is not only, or chiefly, desired because it will give us more life like our present life. Its attraction is chiefly for those people who believe that the future life will be, at any rate for many of us, a great improvement on the present. Heaven is longed for, not merely because it will be unending, but because it will be heaven.

Now it might be said that our chief ground for hoping for a progressive improvement after death would be destroyed if memory periodically ceased. Death, it might be argued, would not only remove us from the field of our activity, but would deprive us of all memory of what we had done, and therefore whatever was gained in one life would be lost

at death. We could no more hope for a permanent improvement than a man on the treadmill can hope to end higher than he started.

We are not discussing the chance of future progress, but only the relative chance of such progress if memory ceases at death. We must ask, therefore, what elements of value are carried on by memory from the present to the future. And then we must consider whether they can be carried on without memory.

I think I shall be in agreement with most people when I say that memory is chiefly of value in our lives in three ways. In the first place, it may make us wiser. The events which we have seen, and the conclusions at which we have arrived, may be preserved in memory, and so add to our present knowledge. In the second place, it may make us more virtuous. The memory of a temptation, whether it has been resisted or successful, may under various circumstances help us in resisting present temptation. In the third place, it

may tell us that people with whom we are now related are the people whom we have loved in the past, and this may enter as an element into our present love of them.

The value of memory, then, is that by its means the past may serve the wisdom, the virtue, and the love of the present. If the past could help the present in a like manner without the aid of memory, the absence of memory need not destroy the chance of an improvement spreading over many lives.

Let us consider wisdom first. Can we be wiser by reason of something which we have forgotten? Unquestionably we can. Wisdom is not merely, or chiefly, amassed facts, or even recorded judgements. It depends primarily on a mind qualified to deal with facts, and to form judgements. Now the acquisition of knowledge and experience, if wisely conducted, may strengthen the mind. Of that we have sufficient evidence in this life. And so a man who dies after acquiring knowledge—and all men acquire some—might enter his new life,

deprived indeed of his knowledge, but not deprived of the increased strength and delicacy of mind which he had gained in acquiring the knowledge. And, if so, he will be wiser in the second life because of what has happened in the first.

Of course he loses something in losing the actual knowledge. But it is sufficient if he does not lose all. Most progress is like the advance of a tide, whose waves advance and retreat, but do not retreat as far as they advanced. And is not even this loss really a gain? For the mere accumulation of knowledge, if memory never ceased, would soon become overwhelming, and worse than useless. What better fate could we wish for than to leave such accumulations behind us, preserving their greatest value in the mental faculties which have been strengthened by their acquisition?

With virtue the point is perhaps clearer. For the memory of moral experiences is of no value to virtue except in so far as it helps to

form the moral character, and, if this is done, the loss of the memory would be no loss to virtue. Now we cannot doubt that a character may remain determined by an event which has been forgotten. I have forgotten the greater number of the good and evil acts which I have done in my present life. And yet each must have left a trace on my character. And so a man may carry over into his next life the dispositions and tendencies which he has gained by the moral contests of this life, and the value of those experiences will not have been destroyed by the death which has destroyed the memory of them.

There remains love. The problem here is more important, if, as I believe, it is in love, and in nothing else, that we find not only the supreme value of life, but also the supreme reality of life, and, indeed, of the universe. The gain which the memory of the past gives us here is that the memory of past love for any person can strengthen our present love of him. And this is what must be preserved, if

the value of past love is not to be lost. The knowledge we acquire, and the efforts which we make, are directed to ends not themselves. But love has no end but itself. If it has gone, it helps us little that we keep anything it has brought us.

But past hours of love are past, whether we remember them or not. Yet we do not count their value to be lost, since their remembrance makes love in the present stronger and deeper. Now we know that present love can also be stronger and deeper because of past love which we have forgotten. Much has been forgotten in any friendship which has lasted for several years within the limits of a single life—many confidences, many services, many hours of happiness and sorrow. But they have not passed away without leaving their mark on the present. They contribute, though they are forgotten, to the present love which is not forgotten. In the same way, if the whole memory of the love of a life is swept away at death, its value is not lost if the

same love is stronger in a new life because of what passed before.

Thus what is won in one life may be preserved in another, if the people who love in the first life love the same people in the second, and if their love is greater in the second because it was there in the first. Have we any ground to hope that these two conditions will be fulfilled ?

Let us take the first. We shall, if my theory is right, have many lives—perhaps many millions of lives, and perhaps an infinite number. Now if the fact that I loved a person in this life gave me no reason to suppose that I should love him in any other, then the whole value of love would be as much confined to a single life as if there were no immortality. And in that case it might perhaps be said that the value of life was equally confined, and that immortality, though real, was worthless.

The chance of a love recurring in any future life, must depend primarily on the conditions which determine where and how the lovers

are born in the future life. For if memory does not survive death, it will be impossible for love to occur in any life in which people do not meet. If the conditions which determine the circumstances of our birth, and through them our juxtapositions throughout life, were themselves determined by chance, or by some merely mechanical external necessity, the probability of meeting our friends in another life would be too small to be regarded.

This is a consideration of great importance, but it does not affect the question of the comparative value of immortality with or without loss of memory. Let us take the more ordinary view according to which our existence after this life will be one and unbroken, with a possibility of remembering in it, not only the events which occur in it, but also the events of this life. If the course of that future life is determined by chance, or by mechanical necessity, there will be no reason for hoping that we shall meet beyond death the people whom we have loved in this life. Nor would

there be any reason for hoping that the love thus denied fruition would be able to remain unextinguished through unlimited ages of separation and new activities. Once admit events to be determined in this way, and there is no comfort to be gathered from immortality, whether with or without memory, either for love or for any of our other interests.

If immortality is to give us an assurance or a hope of progressive improvement, it can only be if we have reason to believe that the interests of spirit are so predominant a force in the universe that they will find, in the long run, satisfaction in the universe. And, in this case, the constitution of the universe would be such that, whether with or without memory, love would have its way. I will not here inquire whether the ultimate significance of spirit is anything except love. But it will scarcely be denied—least of all by those who feel the difficulties which I am now considering—that the significance of love for spirit is very great. And, if this is so, then the

emotional relations which exist between people must be highly significant of their real positions towards one another in the scheme of the universe.

In other words, people who are joined by love cannot be dependent for their proximity to each other — and consequently for the possibility of their love—on some chance or mechanical arrangement whose recurrence we could have no reason to expect. Their love is not the effect of proximity, but its cause. For their love is the expression of the ultimate fact that each of them is more closely connected with the other than he is with people in general. And proximity in a particular life, like everything else, is the effect—or, rather, the manifestation under particular circumstances—of those relations which make up the eternal nature of the universe.

If, therefore, love has joined two people in this life, we have, on the assumption we have been discussing, good reason for believing that their existences are bound up with one

another, not for one life only, but for ever. This would not involve their meeting in every life, any more than it would involve their meeting every day of each life. Love can survive occasional absences, and is often even stronger for them. And the universe is on a large scale, which might require long absences. What we are entitled to believe is that, while time remains, their eternal nearness must continually find its expression in proximity in temporal life.

As for the second condition; if friends are not to be separated, then certainly the value of love in one life need not perish because there is no memory of it in the next. If by means of it we make our relations stronger and finer, then they will be stronger and finer at the next meeting. What more do we want? The past is not preserved separately in memory, but it exists, concentrated and united, in the present. Death is thus the most perfect example of the 'collapse into immediacy'—that mysterious phrase of Hegel's—where all

that was before a mass of hard-earned acquisitions has been merged in the unity of a developed character. If we still think that the past is lost, let us ask ourselves, as I suggested before, whether we regard as lost all those incidents in a friendship which, even before death, are forgotten.

I do not deny that in each particular life the prospect of the loss of memory at the end of it will appear to some extent a loss and a breach of continuity. In losing memory we lose that in which we have found great value. Arguments may convince us—as I have said, I think that they ought to convince us—that we do not lose all the value, or any of the highest value, but only the comparatively worthless form, a form which the lapse of years would change to a positive evil. But no doubt we shall always have a tendency to shrink from the loss of memory. Yet I believe that, as we come to understand life better, we shall shrink from such a loss less and less.

We may, I think, fairly conclude that the

value of immortality would not be lessened much, if at all, by pre-existence. For the loss of memory which pre-existence renders probable, seems to me the only ground on which it has been held to diminish the value of immortality.

Pre-existence, indeed, as we have seen, renders more probable a plurality of future lives. And the prospect of a great number of lives—perhaps an infinite number, though this, I think, could be disproved—gives us the prospect of many dangers, many conflicts, many griefs, in an indefinitely long future. Death is not a haven of rest. It is a starting-point for fresh labours. But if the trials are great, so is the recompense. We miss much here by our own folly, much by unfavourable circumstances. Above all, we miss much, because so many good things are incompatible. We cannot spend our youth both in the study and in the saddle. We cannot gain the benefit both of unbroken health and of bodily weakness, both of riches and of poverty, both of

comradeship and of isolation, both of defiance and of obedience. We cannot learn the lessons alike of Galahad and of Tristram and of Caradoc. And yet they are all so good to learn. Would it not be worth much to be able to hope that what we missed in one life might come to us in another? And would it not be worth much to be able to hope that we might have a chance to succeed hereafter in the tasks which we failed in here?

It may be that the change, the struggle, and the recurrence of death, are endless, or, again, it may be that the process will eventually destroy itself,[1] and merge in a perfection which transcends all time and change. Such an end may come, perhaps, but at any rate it cannot be near.

But though the way is long, and perhaps endless, it can be no more wearisome than a single life. For with death we leave behind

[1] 'As a God self-slain on his own strange altar,
Death lies dead.'
SWINBURNE: *A Forsaken Garden.*

us memory, and old age, and fatigue. And surely death acquires a new and deeper significance when we regard it no longer as a single and unexplained break in an unending life, but as part of the continually recurring rhythm of progress—as inevitable, as natural, and as benevolent as sleep. We have only left youth behind us, as at noon we have left the sunrise. They will both come back, and they do not grow old.

POSTSCRIPT

In the nine years which have passed since I first wrote these pages, I have become more firmly convinced that the nature of reality can be shown to be such as to justify a belief both in immortality and in pre-existence. I hope at some future time to publish my grounds for this conviction, as part of a treatise on the general question of the fundamental nature of reality.

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