

Introduction

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In Heaven Everything is Fine

The 8th century poet (now a Muslim saint) Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya was said to have run through the streets of her city of Basra with a flaming torch in one hand and a jug of water in the other, in order, she explained, to set the heavens alight and extinguish the fires of hell, thereby to remove all impure motivations from our love of God. Needless to say, she failed to remove the concept of either from the public imagination. According to a recent poll by the Pew Research Center,¹ 72% of Americans believe in heaven. However, it has been my experience that surprisingly few of them have anything definitive to say about it. This is strange, because according to standard tenets of the Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), essentially the entirety of our existences will be spent either in heaven or in hell, as we will continue to exist in the afterlife for an infinite period.

The aim of this volume is to provide a collection of essays addressing various philosophical issues around the notion of the afterlife, heaven in particular, which will both be accessible to the non-philosopher and also make a genuine contribution to the philosophical literature (although occasionally not both at once). The topic of heaven is a particularly fertile one for philosophical inquiry. There are *metaphysical* issues, for example concerning freedom and personal identity. There are *ethical* issues: would it be fair for some people to be punished eternally for crimes committed in their finite earthly existence? And there are issues that appear

to straddle the fact/value divide: what kind of happiness could survive the knowledge of the suffering of those not in heaven? How should a belief in heaven and/or hell affect one's behavior while on earth? Should such a belief motivate one to act well, and if so, is this a "pure" motive, such that one should be praised for one's resulting good behavior?

While there are several themes that recur throughout, the essays in this collection can be grouped into clusters according to their dominant topic. We begin with a set of essays on the difficulties that surround the idea that a being in heaven could be the same person as a being that previously existed (and died) on earth. That is, the question of how one could actually get to heaven. Part of the puzzle about this issue is simply the question of personal identity across time, a topic that has been a favorite for philosophers for a very long time. To illustrate why this is an interesting question, it helps to be looking at a photograph of oneself as a small child. "That's me," one thinks. But in virtue of *what* is it me? It doesn't look much like me – the proportions are all wrong, for one thing. And if the picture is old enough, and it's a baby, it might be hard to tell – one might need to ask one's parents "is this me or my sister?" It is assumed that, if they say it's you, it really is. But again, what *makes* it you? The simple answer is to say that that child grew into you. But what does that mean? Does it mean you're made of the same stuff? Well, as probably most people know, you aren't. I once heard that around 80% of household dust is human skin cells, and while this is almost certainly wrong, it is nonetheless true to say that we shed cells all the time, and are constantly growing new ones. Another "well-known fact" is that over a seven year span we have replaced every cell in our bodies.² So you have at best a tiny number of cells in common with that child in the photo. But this does not shake your conviction that it is you. So being the same person over time does not depend on being made of exactly the same stuff. So, what then? One popular answer is that something does persist unchanged through

all these bodily changes, and it is one's *soul*. In popular discourse it is often unclear what a soul might amount to. There is a *Simpsons* episode where Bart sells his soul to Millhouse, foolishly thinking that he does not have one, and comes to regret it very quickly.³ Whether or not he regrets it, however, this notion of a soul will not underpin an account of being the same person, because Bart is able to remain Bart without his soul, whereas were one's personal identity to depend on one's soul, then Bart would go wherever his soul went. And in fact, since at least the time of the great ancient Greek philosopher Plato, philosophers have tended to equate the soul with an immaterial substance that is able to think and (usually) feel and have sensations. This view, a version of which was famously defended by René "I think, therefore I am" Descartes, appears to offer hope to those wishing to survive the death of their bodies.

The English philosopher John Locke, however, whose discussion of personal identity in his monumental *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* laid the groundwork for practically all debate that followed, rejected the theory that an unchanging immaterial stuff is what allows me to persist through time just as thoroughly as the idea that I am an unchanging material thing. He told a story of meeting a "Christian Platonist" (nowadays they would be a standard Christian, as the Platonic idea that we have souls has become mainstream since his time) who claimed to have Socrates's soul. On the soul theory, this would make that person Socrates. Socrates himself would have been standing there (albeit clad in a new body) addressing Locke. But this person did not claim to *be* Socrates, just to have his soul. This suggests that the soul is not the determining factor. Nor is it even a necessary factor, Locke went on to argue, because for all we know we have "soul cells" that we shed as often as bodily cells, and our soul is rebuilt continually like our body. How could we tell if our soul is immaterial and thus undetectable by any of our senses? Locke's theory was that it was the *psychological contents* of one's mind (which could be

something like the soul, but could also be simply one's brain (or a byproduct thereof), if you doubt the soul's existence, as most contemporary philosophers do) that constitute one's self. Simply put, in Locke's view, the reason I can know that I am the same person as the child in the photo is because I remember being him. (To illustrate the difference between one's soul and one's mental contents, most pertinently, memories, think of the memories as like your digital photos. You know that you have photos because you can look at them on a screen. But you don't know what memory banks they are stored in, especially if they are stored "in the cloud." They could be moved constantly. You yourself could have previously stored them on an SD card, or a thumb drive, or a CD or whatever. Those things would be like a series of souls, and your pictures are the memories that can be supported across various souls.) This psychological account of personal identity that Locke pioneered is also of comfort to those hoping to outlive their all-too-corruptible bodies. Indeed, the analogy of being "uploaded to the cloud" directly models a heavenly afterlife.⁴ (One's body could be the camera that took the photos and one's soul the SD card that temporarily housed them.)

However, Locke's account was just the beginning of the modern debate. And problems for it were raised almost immediately. First, it just doesn't seem to be true that one needs to remember doing something in the past to have done it. In the film *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* a company offers the service of deleting upsetting memories from one's mind. Suppose one committed a heinous murder but then had all memory of it deleted. Surely that would not mean that one was not responsible for it? Furthermore, as the Scottish philosopher Thomas Reid pointed out, the relationship of *being the same person as* is transitive, whereas the relationship of *remembering being* is not. Reid imagined an old general who remembered being a young captain, who in turn remembered being a boy who stole apples from an orchard. By

transitive properties this should show that the general was the boy. But the general did not remember being the boy. Paradox! Secondly, there is the problem of false memories. On the simple psychological account, there can be no such thing, for a false memory is a memory of something that did not really happen to me, but on the simple psychological account what it is to be me is to remember. So a false memory would have to be a memory I both have and do not have. A final problem is of particular import for the possibility of surviving in an afterlife. This is the problem of duplication. In the film *Blade Runner*, the main character, Deckard (Harrison Ford), reveals to Rachael (Sean Young) that she is not the human she believes she is, but instead a “Replicant” who has had the memories of a human (her creator’s niece) implanted.⁵ On the memory theory we might be prepared to say that Rachael *actually was* the niece, living on in a new body. (Indeed, this could be like our existence in heaven, if it involves actually walking around in human-like bodies.) But what if the niece never died, but just had her memories copied? Now we *can’t* say that Rachael *is* the niece, because *there can’t be two of them*. But if Rachael can’t be the niece when the niece is alive, how can she be the niece when she is dead? How can whether or not a totally distinct individual is alive or dead (possibly on the other side of the universe!) affect who one is, when one might have no way of knowing *whether* that individual is alive or dead?

Such puzzles as these have prompted many ingenious alterations to the psychological theory (and indeed different variants of it). Contemporary philosophers who have contributed greatly to this debate include, in particular, Sidney Shoemaker, Robert Nozick and David Lewis, and perhaps above all, Derek Parfit, who sadly died during the writing of this introduction. Recently, however, a variant of the theory considered mortally wounded back in Locke’s time, that what makes us now the same as us in the past is being the same *organism*, has regained

traction. And the writer who has perhaps done more than any other to defend it, is Eric Olson, a contributor to this volume. Animalism is the theory that what each of us is is an animal, and whether or not that's me in the photo of a toddler that I'm looking at depends not on whether we have the same soul or are made of the same atoms, but on whether we're the same *living organism*. Olson's arguments for this position are subtle, and he does not get into them in his chapter (the curious should start with his first book *The Human Animal*), but advantages of this view include that it does not require me to remember being born to have actually *been* born, and it allows us to say that the Alzheimer's patient really is Great Aunt Kathleen even if she can't remember anything about her former life.

So much for the quick overview of the positions on personal identity. In the three chapters that most directly tackle the topic, by Bertha Manninen, Olson and Jean-Baptiste Guillon, the question is, can any theory that plausibly accounts for identity between stages of my life on Earth also allow that some future version of me could survive the death of my body and continue my existence in heaven? In theory there seems to be little problem. I can easily imagine waking up one day to find myself in a new place and being informed that I have died, and that this is (I hope) heaven, or at least purgatory. This is the beginning of many films and TV shows (for example, Albert Brooks's film *Defending Your Life*, and the TV show *The Good Place*), and it requires very little suspension of disbelief. And if it is complicated enough to explain how it is that I am the same person as me-aged-two, why should we worry unduly if philosophers struggle to explain how it is that "me-in-heaven" could be the same person as me now?

As we shall see, however, there are special difficulties. As Olson points out in his chapter, the mere fact that we accept something in a work of fiction (in his example, the transporter on Star Trek) does not show that it is even possible, let alone probable. As he says,

were we to be told that Captain Kirk discovered the largest prime number, we would probably accept it without batting an eye, despite there being a mathematical proof that demonstrates that there is no such thing.

Furthermore, as we have already seen, even if that did happen to me, it wouldn't show that I, the person now existing in "heaven," really was the same being as the denizen of Earth I "remember" being, any more than the fact that Rachael remembered a childhood as a human demonstrated that she was not the artificial replicant, constructed as an adult, that Deckard knew her to be. So what *would* show that I could outlast the death of my earthly body?

The idea that there is an immaterial soul is the theory with the most obvious promise. Both Olson and Manninen are prepared to treat the classic theories of Plato and Descartes as essentially the same, because in many important respects they are, but Guillon points out that Descartes, unlike Plato, never denies that my body is an important part of me in my Earthly existence. (For Plato it is usually supposed that, if anything, my body is something of a fleshy prison for my soul from which it is better liberated.) However, all three of our writers dismiss straightforward Platonism as a tenable theory. For Manninen and Olson, the problem with Platonism is simply the idea that I think with an immaterial substance rather than with the very material brain that sits in an obvious location inside my head. As both point out, physical damage to my brain causes mental impairments. On a Cartesian or Platonic view, a blow to my head should not cause me to lose consciousness. At best it might cause me to lose contact with the physical part of me (and if my eyes are required for sight, everything might go black for a while) but I should be awake and aware. But I am not. And as brain conditions from lesions to Alzheimer's to Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (the human variant of what is colloquially known as "Mad-Cow Disease") demonstrate, our mental lives are intimately tied up with the physical state

of our brains. (This, of course, raises the associated question about heaven: if I die having undergone dementia, will the “me” in heaven suffer accordingly? If not, where did my memories go in the interim?) Guillon has a different reason for rejecting Platonism, however. His project is slightly different from that of the other two: he aims to determine which of a range of theories all of which have found favor among Christian philosophers is most compatible with a variety of constraints drawn both from “common sense” but also from Christian theology.⁶ And it is one of the latter that causes him to reject Platonism, specifically the view that is unique to Plato (not shared by Descartes) that the soul is the principle of life, *necessarily alive*, which would make the soul immortal by definition,⁷ and give no role to a creator God in giving life. As for Descartes’s view, Guillon goes on to suggest that there are two possible interpretations, and one of them – “compound dualism” – is his favored theory. However, the more standard interpretation of Descartes – “pure dualism” – that I am my soul, and not my body, fails the commonsense constraint of “physical predication.” That is, on this view it is strictly false to say that “I weigh 195 pounds” or “I am 74 inches tall,” whereas I would want to say that both of those are true (although the former is not always true, particularly over the holiday season).

Guillon is just as quick to dismiss straightforward materialism (which is actually a cluster of views that can include Olson’s animalism, as well as many psychological theories) because it fails to comply with the theological constraint of “the intermediate state,” which requires that I be able to survive the disintegration of the body and exist in heaven in a “disembodied state.” Neither Manninen nor Olson are so quick to dismiss materialist views, however, and not just because they do not regard Christian doctrine as a constraint on acceptable theories. Indeed, as all three writers acknowledge, there are prominent contemporary Christian philosophers who defend materialist accounts of resurrection, notably Peter van Inwagen, Lynne Rudder Baker and

Dean Zimmerman. This might strike one as odd, not just because the death of the body seems to rule out a materialist account of immortality, but because we are so familiar with a Platonist strain of Christianity.⁸ But materialist interpretations of Christian doctrine are not new. Indeed, the book of *Ecclesiastes* lends itself very readily to a materialist view of human existence, and one not very optimistic about a life beyond the grave.⁹ A more sanguine view was offered by the great English philosopher (and contemporary of Descartes) Thomas Hobbes, who argued that the Bible was most consistently to be read as promising that God would cause us to rise from our graves after the day of Judgement to begin anew unending lives in better, indestructible bodies that would nonetheless be entirely material. Olson, however, has several doubts as to the possibility of such a thing. How might it work, for one thing? A simple account, which he calls “reassembly theory,” would claim that God could gather up our atoms and reassemble us. While this view might seem to work for a Hobbesian account, it seems unable to support the commonly held view that we will appear in heaven (or hell, or purgatory) the moment we die on Earth. For, after our death on Earth, our bodies are *still there*, still using the atoms that God would need to reassemble us. (Van Inwagen’s suggestion is that God could perform a kind of switcheroo, taking our *real* body and leaving a perfect copy, so that nobody has ever buried or cremated their actual dead relatives, but only perfect simulacra of them. However, quite apart from the problem of how God manages to whisk away the originals without us noticing, there is the nasty implication that this makes God a deceiver. Zimmerman’s “falling elevator” model, so-called for reasons that Manninen explains, tries to avoid the problems of van Inwagen’s “body snatcher” account, but does so by being even more outlandish.) But there are other problems, faced even by a Hobbesian account. For one thing, it is just not the case that you can pick a particular set of atoms and say “those are *the* atoms that made me.” Each of us is using atoms that have been used

by others and will be used by others in the future.¹⁰ If I am to have the atoms that made up me during my lifetime, will that mean that a later human who used some of mine will be denied them when *she* comes to be resurrected? But no doubt I am made of atoms that were parts of previous humans, so will I have bits missing? There just won't be enough matter to go around! But on a more basic level, we are all of us made of different atoms at different stages in our lives. Should God use the atoms that made up me on my deathbed? Or the ones of which I was composed at my peak? Or suppose he made a 25-year-old me out of the atoms of which I was composed at age 25 *and* a 100-year-old me composed of the atoms I was made of when I met my end crashing my Maserati going 185 driving through the Alps. Now we have two denizens of heaven made up of different sets of atoms, each of whom would think himself me. But they can't both be right!

The obvious solution is to stop obsessing over the particular atoms and focus instead on the way they are arranged. Star Trek provides a model: in the original TV series they couldn't afford the special effects budget to have shuttles carry crew members to and from planets' surfaces, so they came up with the transporter: a system that involves a person on the ship dissolving and being "re-formed" at his or her destination. If we assume that what is "transported" is simply the information about how all the atoms that made (say) Spock up, and Spock is re-constructed out of atoms from the planet's surface, then this would be an instance of personal identity surviving through complete change of matter. It has two advantages for an account of how we might live on in heaven: there's no problem with leaving our bodies behind, as new bodies are supplied in heaven, and it involves a near-instantaneous change of location. However, it has serious problems. One is the problem of *duplication*. An episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* actually confronted this problem:¹¹ before he became second-in-command

of the *Enterprise*, Riker was the last person beamed up off a planet and only just made it through interference in the beam. Returning to that planet years later, they discover that Riker had both appeared on his ship *and* remained on the surface. Since then there have been are *two* people who think of themselves as Riker, and the one left on the surface regards the one that “made it back” as an interloper, and is jealous of the promotions he has received while he, the original, was stranded on the surface. Our intuition is that, if either of them is the *real* Riker, it must be the one on the surface, while the one that appeared on the ship is a copy. But the implication of this (not explored by the episode for obvious reasons) is that *nobody has ever survived transportation*. In the usual case, the original is killed and it is always a copy who merely *believes* him or herself to be the original but is no more the original than Rachael in *Blade Runner* is the little girl whose memories were implanted in her.

However, what if *God* were overseeing the transportation, couldn't *he* “make it so” that one of the two Rikers *really was* the original? Olson considers this suggestion (the “divine command theory of resurrection”) but points out that if God could just affect who was the same person as an earlier person *independently of changing any other facts*, then the implications would be strange indeed. It would imply the existence of identical worlds to this one, where I look and sound exactly as I always have, except that I'm Marilyn Monroe. Or I'm you and you're me. Or we switch back and forth every five minutes – without ever realizing it, because of course only God would have access to the “special knowledge” of who was whom across possible worlds. Olson's conclusion is that no materialist account of resurrection will work in a way that most theists would find acceptable, and, as he is a materialist, he is forced to conclude that there is no life awaiting us in the hereafter.

My Spirit is Crying for Leaving

We have seen that strict Platonism and strict materialism are rejected by all three of our authors as reasons to have hope for the possibility of a life beyond the grave. However Guillon, alone among the three, believes that one of a set of positions that fall somewhere between the two extremes marked out by those views holds promise. These views all suggest that both body and soul are important elements of our earthly existence (and are thus able to address the “problem of double predication,” which is that common sense tells us that it is both true that “I” have physical properties, like height and weight, and mental properties, like thinking). Guillon identifies three theories that seem most able to meet the double challenge, two of which are competing interpretations of Descartes’s view, and one of which is a modern version of the view of Saint Thomas Aquinas, itself an adaptation of Aristotle’s view. Guillon’s discussion is a little technical: of our three writers on personal identity his article is most clearly pitched at fellow academics, but his overall suggestion is this: according to the view he calls “Compound Dualism,” each of us earthlings has both a physical part and a mental part (where the mental part is a separate substance, because this is one of the Cartesian views), but just as I can survive if I lose a part of myself (say, my arm), so the mental part of me can survive losing the entire physical part of me. Notice that this is not simply Platonism, because before my death I am *not* one and the same with my soul, I am one and the same with the *combination* of my body and my soul. This view has been attacked (by Olson, in fact¹²) for philosophical problems with its implication that my soul and I are, after the death of my body, *coincident*, without being *identical*. This opens the door to saying that there can be two different things that exist in exactly one and the same place, which complicates counting things no end. Guillon considers ways to

make this position defensible and argues that a version of the idea that, while disembodied, I am *constituted* by my soul without being *identical* with it can be defended against Olson's criticisms. He thus remains hopeful that Compound Dualism is a view that fits both with common sense and Christian doctrine, and supports the possibility of an existence in heaven while one's body rots on Earth.

Guillon does not, however, consider all the arguments that critics have heaped on substance dualism since at least the time of Descartes. Manninen, however, is particularly troubled by just such problems. She catalogs many of the reasons for believing that our thinking is done not by some immaterial substance but by our brains. And not just our thinking: as demonstrated by the famous case of Phineas Gage, a railroad worker who survived a metal rod passing right through his brain, but at the cost of a total personality transformation, it is not just consciousness that can be affected by changes to the brain. Modern brain studies have shown that one's very sexuality can be affected by brain trauma: terrifyingly, a lesion to the brain can produce in a loving father uncontrollable pedophilic urges. This is hard to reconcile with a view that allows our essence to be non-material. She further points out that writers who defend dualism find it practically impossible to avoid spatial metaphors (unsurprising, given that the most serious criticism of dualism since Descartes' time – the "mind body problem" – is the insuperable challenge of showing how physical stuff is supposed to interact with non-physical stuff that doesn't even have a location, yet appears only to be connected with particular lumps of matter). She concludes by discussing the kinds of reasons non-philosophers have for believing in souls and arguing that (a) they, too, involve irreducibly physical conceptions, and (b) they are based on experiences for which brain scientists have convincing non-supernatural explanations.

As such, she reluctantly sides with Olson among the skeptics of a possibility of making it to heaven.

It is hard to imagine heaven other than as a place where one has a physical location and can see and touch one's loved ones just as one did on Earth. Should that be the case it would seem to follow that heaven itself has a physical location. This has odd implications, however, as Cruz Davis discusses in his chapter. He writes from a Christian perspective and notes that both Christian doctrine and Christian philosophers are divided on the possibility of heaven being located in the space-time continuum. Some, like Hud Hudson, are supportive of this notion. Some, like John Haldane, regard it as "profane." Davis himself comes down against the idea. He considers three kinds of "contemporaneous" accounts, whereby heaven exists *now* somewhere in the actual universe. The first of these he calls "naïve:" according to these there is a fact of the matter how far away heaven is in recognizable units of distance, and in theory we could at least get closer to it in a spaceship. This account he rejects as an instance of the old church heresy *Pelagianism*, the view that it is possible to merit entry into heaven solely on one's own merits.¹³ It is, he says "technological" Pelagianism to allow that technology could, even in theory, get us to heaven. The second type of contemporaneous account, "hyperspatial," is defended by Hudson. This is the suggestion that heaven is not in "three-space," the three-dimensional universe humans are equipped to perceive, but is only reachable by traveling in a different dimension. So there is no recognizable direction we can travel to get there.¹⁴ However, Davis believes this view is still vulnerable to accusations of Pelagianism, because, while it appears *naturally* impossible for us to make the hyperspace leap, it is not *metaphysically* impossible. (We can easily conceive of dimensional leaps – in fact, it is the subject of many plots in science fiction.) A third contemporaneous view, which Davis calls "concurrentism," is an offshoot of a more general

view that says that every interaction between created entities requires God to “concur” for any effect to happen. That is, no object can, by itself, have any causal powers: only God can bring it about that, say, a baseball bat causes a ball to accelerate off towards the bleachers. Applying this to heaven would render pelagianism moot because we can’t do *anything*, let alone enter heaven, without God’s permission. But Davis is still not satisfied: there is a difference between permission and grace, and he conceives of a case that he believes opens the possibility of entering heaven without God’s grace even on this view.

An alternative way to render a located heaven nonetheless beyond even our possible grasp is to have it be in the future. That is, from our point of view heaven does not exist *yet*. There is some Biblical support for this view,¹⁵ but Davis argues that it violates two key Christian doctrines: the idea that Jesus *is* now risen (up to heaven) and that he is now interceding on our behalf before his Father. Neither of these allows heaven to be solely in the future. Davis concludes by offering two possible ways for a believer in the possibility of bodies in heaven to avoid the problems of localized accounts: either to deny that bodies are necessarily material objects or to deny that material objects have location. Both are controversial indeed.

We have addressed the question of whether or not it is possible in theory for a person to get to heaven, but this is a different question from that of *when* and *if* God should admit them. Different religions and denominations have different views on the subject, of course, but inevitably raising this issue brings up the topic of what would become of those he does not admit, and quickly thereafter the topic of hell. Although this is a volume on heaven, it turns out that the two are intertwined in fascinating ways. The main question for our purposes is whether or not hell is even an option. In chapters 5 through 8, then, our authors all address in varying ways the possibility of *universalism*, which is the idea that all will be saved, that is, that heaven

will be full and there will be no souls in hell. (It will emerge that Rasmussen is the most optimistic, while Holdier, Daly and Yang all stick up for some version of hell, although not one that would satisfy any old-school fire-and-brimstone preacher.) Also, in chapter 9 Hereth argues for universalism for animals who are sentient, but not moral agents.

Heaven is Hell in Reverse

The topic of hell is connected with the problem of evil, which is a challenge for the view of God, now widely accepted amongst theists (who include all mainstream followers of the Abrahamic faiths), that holds that God is, among other things, all-loving and all-powerful. Very briefly and crudely, the problem, which has been discussed at least since the Ancient Greeks, goes as follows: If God loves all his creatures then he would do everything in his power to prevent them suffering. And if he is all-powerful, then everything *is* in his power, and no creature should suffer. But there is suffering, and in great profusion, so that seems to imply that in fact there is no God who meets the description required of him by theism. This problem looms large in theistic thinking and has implications for many topics in philosophy of religion (it is a particular focus of chapter 10), but one way to view heaven is as a response to it. However terrible our lives are in this vale of tears, it is said that our reward will come in heaven. Our suffering down here is in some sense made up for by the ecstasy of the life to come.¹⁶ However satisfying a response this is to the problem, it is undercut by the possibility of hell. Indeed, hell as it is traditionally conceived as a place of “Eternal Conscious Torment” (ECT) exacerbates greatly the quantity of suffering in creation and thereby also the problem of evil. Of course, it is usually assumed that the denizens of hell deserve the suffering they are undergoing, but many

theologians balk at the idea that *any* misdeed by finite beings such as us earthlings could merit such infinite punishment. And hellions are as much God's creatures as the redeemed in heaven so their suffering threatens the view of God as truly all-loving. This particular offshoot of the problem of evil may be called "the problem of hell."

While hell presents a problem for any theist, it so happens that all five of our authors approach it from a Christian perspective. As Helen Daly relates in her chapter, Thomas Talbott presents the problem of hell as that there is a triad of claims, all of which seem to be part of Christian doctrine, yet which cannot all be true together:

1. God loves all his creatures equally, and desires reconciliation with every one.
2. God will achieve all that he desires.
3. Some of God's creatures will never be reconciled with him.

The way to remove the inconsistency would be to discard one of the three. Augustine and Calvin rejected (1), but this view seems unduly harsh. The Arminians (followers of Jacobus Arminius) rejected (2), as do contemporary philosophers who espouse "Moderately Conservative Theism," who suggest that there may be important reasons for God to refrain from bringing about his plans, most centrally because respect for the autonomous choice of his free creatures prevents him. This view is associated with a now popular suggestion that hell is not a destination into which its denizens are driven against their will, but rather a destination (or state of mind – see Holdier's chapter) they choose. Hence, while God would wish for salvation for all, his respect for the choices of some among his creatures who are recalcitrant compels him to allow them to be damned. We will have more to say on this below. Universalists, of course, reject (3). The traditional case against universalism is that it seems to run contrary to various passages of scripture, and, of course, it seems somehow unjust that the worst dregs of humanity should

nonetheless be welcomed into the fold. Ivan, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, in a famous passage that is often cited to illustrate the problem of evil, recounts a story (“ripped from the headlines” by Dostoevsky) of a general who sets his hounds to tear a poor peasant boy to pieces in front of his mother, all because the child threw a stone that accidentally hit the paw of one of them. Ivan says that he does not believe that the general *should* be forgiven. But that is what universalism demands. Finally, defenders of the choice model of hell criticize universalism as a failure to respect the choices of those who turn away from God: better to choose hell freely than be forced into paradise.

Turning now to our authors: Joshua Rasmussen’s chapter is rooted in analytic philosophy: he wants to argue that it makes sense to say that God would have good reason to prefer possible worlds where universalism is true over those where not everybody is saved. To explain his argument, it will help to say a bit about what philosophers mean by *possible worlds*. The term originates with the great German polymath Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (probably best known today because of his tiff with Isaac Newton over who invented calculus) as a way to think of the notions of “possible” and “necessary.” A “possible world” is actually a complete universe rather than simply a planet, and its possibility arises more from its internal consistency than from its being a way *this* universe could have been.¹⁷ So, there is a “possible world” where God decided not to create the heavens and earth and simply existed alone for all eternity. One way to demonstrate that universalism *could* be true is to show that there is at least one possible world where it *is*. That, of course, does not show that it is *actually* true – there are possible worlds where pigs fly and penguins rule the world – but it does show that it is not necessarily false. To complicate matters further, Rasmussen wants to consider the question from the point of view of a number of competing philosophical camps on the question of *providence*. Providence is both

God's plan for how the future of the universe will unfold and the constraints that human (or more broadly "creaturely," to include supernatural beings and non-humans like sophisticated animals and intelligent extra-terrestrials) free will places on the manner and certainty of the plan reaching fruition. To place Rasmussen's argument in context requires a brief digression on the various camps concerning providence, so here goes.

A long-standing puzzle in theology concerns whether God's omniscience precludes human free will. That is, if God is truly all-knowing, then presumably he has foreknowledge of human actions. God already knows exactly what you will do tomorrow. But, the argument goes, for one's performance of any action to be truly free, it must be that one genuinely could have done otherwise. However, if God *knows* that I will do action X, then I *can't not* do X, and so it would appear that God's foreknowledge precludes any action being free. But freedom is also deemed to be of great value because it seems to be a prerequisite for moral responsibility. One of the reasons we do not hold small children or animals morally responsible for actions of which we disapprove is because we do not think they can do otherwise – they are not sophisticated enough to have the power of choice. But if we cannot really ever do otherwise than we do, then nobody is ever morally responsible for their actions. This, of course, raises all sorts of theological problems, most relevantly for the current discussion, to do with hell: if God not only knows what we're going to do before we do it, but knew it *before he even created us*, then how can he be justified in punishing us when we sin, particularly with an eternity of torment? It would be like a scientist designing a robot to kill a person and then being outraged at the robot for doing just that.

Confronted with this worry (and another serious worry that the love we are commanded to feel for God is either coerced or impossible), theists have divided into camps on the issue as

enumerated by Rasmussen. The most severe is probably *Calvinism*, which embraces our inability to do otherwise but nonetheless declares us responsible for our actions. Calvinism's strength lies in its safe view of providence: God is assured of knowing exactly what we will do, so we in turn can be assured that there is nothing we can do to prevent God's will unfolding exactly as he planned. However, Calvin's view that some of us were predestined for damnation seems at odds with contemporary views of a loving God. On the opposite extreme is *Open Theism*, which severs the link between omniscience and foreknowledge, taking the view that omniscience is knowing all that *can* be known, but that because the results of genuinely free action cannot be known beforehand, even an omniscient being cannot be expected to have infallible knowledge of what free beings will choose.¹⁸ The name comes from the idea that both the future and humankind's relationship with God are truly open, unknown even to God. This is a particularly *risky* view of providence. In theory it leaves open the possibility that everything goes wrong. Of course it also makes sense of the Biblical story of the flood – the first inhabitants of Earth so screwed things up that God had to kill almost all of them and start again.

A view that takes something of a middle ground is *Molinism*, originated by Jesuit theologian Luis de Molina, which unlike Open Theism insists that God does have foreknowledge, but unlike Calvinism denies that God can control actions that are free. God creates free beings, it is true, but only in the context of already settled “counterfactuals of freedom,” facts about what free being X would do in circumstance Y. So God will know, if he creates a certain being, exactly what she will do in any circumstances, but he does not determine that. The astute will notice that, aside from the strangeness of the counterfactuals (who or what decides them? How come God can determine what the very laws of the universe are but cannot affect these purported constraints?), the problem of foreknowledge seems to remain. Molinists

attempt to address this with a distinction among different *kinds* of knowledge, insisting that the kind of knowledge God has of his creatures' future actions does not rob them of their freedom. It is a controversial view, to say the least.

It should be clear that if Calvinism were true then universalism could easily be achieved, as God could simply create beings who never sin.¹⁹ Rasmussen also argues that the probability that God could “pull off a universalist world” if Molinism is true is practically 100%. As should be obvious, defending universalism under Open Theism is trickiest. God cannot know what his creatures will do when he makes them, and they will have an infinity of chances to go wrong. Even here, though, Rasmussen says that if God pursues a “never give up” policy where, after each “stage of judgment” where a sinner fails to make the grade, God grants them full knowledge of how they have fallen short and whether or not to repent, then there is an ever increasing probability that they will eventually repent at some point in their infinite existence. With this basic structure in place, Rasmussen is able to defend the co-possibility of the God of theism and universalism in the face of the criticism mentioned earlier: that universalism does not truly respect free choice. That is, what if the sinner, like Lucifer, chooses to rebel against God and reject him? If God was nonetheless to force the sinner into his presence, would that not count against God's perfection? This objection strikes some theologians as frankly bizarre, defending as it does damning someone to hell on the grounds of respecting their autonomy. Holdier cites the views of Marilyn McCord Adams, who contends that given the vast chasm between our understanding and God's, we have fewer grounds for objecting to his paternalism than a baby has to his mother's. But it is worth pointing out that this choice-based defense of hell is usually paired with a conception of hell's nature that rejects ECT. Alternatives to ECT include *annihilationism*, which, as its name suggests, is the idea that those who do not achieve salvation

simply cease to exist, and the view that hell is simply eternal existence away from the presence of God. A.G. Holdier suggests another possibility: that both blessed and damned are welcomed into God's presence, but their experience of it differs according to their status. That is, heaven and hell are the same place ("ontologically homogenous" – sharing the same being) but experienced differently ("phenomenologically distinct"). As illustration of what this might be like, I am reminded of when I was flipping through the cable channels and happened upon a televangelist making the following speech (or something approximating it): "Do you like peace and quiet? Well heaven's not for you then, because it's going to be thousands upon thousands of people yelling "HALLELUJAH!" for all eternity!" I felt I had lost a major incentive to be good. But on this view I would be experiencing phenomenological hell. Holdier defends his view, which he calls "obdurationist," both with Scripture and in light of apparently conflicting Biblical passages. He sees the advantage of his view that it makes concessions both to universalism – all end up in the presence of God – and the traditional view that some deserve punishment. Furthermore, the punishment of the damned is in keeping with their character and choices: God does not undermine the free will of those who rebel against him because their punishment is one and the same with their rejection of him.

They Say in Heaven Love Comes First

Recently, the philosopher Nicole Hassoun has presented a new spin on a particular problem for any non-universalist: how the redeemed can be as blissful as they are supposed to be knowing that some that they love are suffering in hell. Thus, what she calls "the argument from love" may be seen as an argument for universalism as the only way to ensure heavenly bliss for

those who make it there. Helen Daly and Eric Yang both take on this argument and defend interpretations of the experiences of both the blessed and the damned that, they argue, avoid the full force of the problem Hassoun outlines while avoiding the theological disadvantages of universalism. However, both also reject some alternative responses to the challenge that have been put forward. The traditional response, defended by Aquinas and Jonathan Edwards, is that the saved will not only not feel sorry for the damned, they will revel in their suffering. As Yang quotes Edwards: “a sense of the opposite misery, in all cases, greatly increases the relish of any joy or pleasure.” This is heartless indeed, to the extent that the contemporary philosopher Jonathan Bennett was moved to say that Edwards’s morality was “worse than Himmler’s.”²⁰ It is hard to reconcile reveling in the suffering of any, particularly if one is of a saintly disposition, and even more so where the person suffering is a loved one. A better response, then, defended by Stephen Davis and William Lane Craig, is that the redeemed are both ignorant of the fate of the damned and their memories of their loved ones have been selectively erased. This should remind us again of *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. But as we discussed earlier, our very personhood can depend on our memories and, as Yang asks, how are the memories of our loved ones to be removed without also removing a substantial part of ourselves? And as in the movie, lovers come to realize that they would rather have painful memories than none at all. The amnesia response, then, is unacceptable.

Perhaps, though, the redeemed in heaven will be changed to the extent that, while they may not rejoice in the suffering of their loved ones down below, they may not suffer. Daly rejects two versions of this response, but one of the two suggestions Yang makes might be seen as a variant of this view. Daly’s own suggestion is to offer nuanced interpretations both of the love experienced by the redeemed and the suffering of the damned. Love, she suggests, should

be seen as having a component both of compassion but also respect, in particular for the choices of those one loves. And, assuming (as all our non-universalist authors have) that hell is chosen by those who inhabit it, then both God and the redeemed loved ones of a soul who chooses hell will respect her choice. Furthermore, if we think of suffering as having both *objective* and *phenomenological* components, then, while the damned are objectively worse off in hell (and “suffer” in that way), they may not realize it, and need not therefore be pitied. They might be thought of as like somebody who enjoys a stroll on a nice day unaware that she is walking past the hidden entrance to Willy Wonka’s Chocolate Factory. She certainly wouldn’t consider herself suffering even if we know what she’s missing out on.

Daly’s view, while ingenious, faces obstacles. For one thing, we are still inclined to feel bad for the person who misses out on the Chocolate Factory, even if they don’t, and of course the redeemed are well aware of how good the damned could have it. Daly addresses this point. But there is also the point that the inhabitants of Daly’s hell might be said to have it *too* good. If we are concerned to reject universalism on the grounds that it does not respect justice, and because we balk at the idea that the likes of Giles De Rais, H.H. Holmes and Josef Mengele should be allowed in the pearly gates, then we are not going to be satisfied with a conception of hell that allows their only suffering to be unknown to them.

Daly also considers that a remaining problem for her view is that it does not address the suffering that those in heaven may feel because they are *separated* from their loved ones. This problem of *eternal separation*, is the main focus of Yang’s chapter. He offers two possible responses. The first of these is a variant on the idea that the natures of the redeemed are changed by the experience, so that they become closer in nature to God. In particular, God is supposed to be *impassible*, impervious to suffering, so it might be expected that the redeemed would at least

be less prone to it. Of course, this invites the response that this view is irreconcilable with the idea that God and the redeemed are still capable of love, but to rebut that Yang draws on a distinction between “passions” and “affections.” Anastasia Scrutton has argued that the former are appetitive, and thus unworthy of God, but the latter involve movements of the will, and are intellectual, and so while God’s impassibility rules out his having passions, he can still have *affections*, and so, suggests Yang, can the redeemed. Furthermore, while pity is a passion, compassion is an affection, and the redeemed could still feel that for their damned loved ones. He makes the case that this both allows love to persist but also blocks suffering on the part of the redeemed at separation from their beloved. However, Yang does concede that this view of love might seem a little cold and alien, and so also considers an alternative solution employing the concept of the *refrigerium*, an experience of spiritual refreshment said to be available to some in purgatory. Yang suggests that, just as the suffering of separation from a loved one who is incarcerated can be lessened by periodic visits, so we might imagine that those in heaven could be given periodic chances to reunite with their loved ones who are not. While one would still have to leave them there, Yang suggests that suffering could be averted both because of the great joy of communion with God, but also by knowledge that one would see them again, and in the meantime, they were realizing their own free choices.

In the foregoing we have seen the importance of human autonomy to the topic of a being’s eternal destination, given the “choice” model of hell. And we shall see that chapters 10 and 11 focus on the nature of the freedom attributed to former humans who are redeemed. But what of creatures who are conscious, and can feel pain and pleasure, but are not truly capable of the kind of choice that is a prerequisite for moral agency? In chapter 9 Blake Hereth presents an argument that, precisely because they lack moral autonomy, and thus are incapable of sins,

sentient non-human non-agents will all be admitted to heaven. Hereth offers two arguments for this conclusion. With the “No Fault Argument” Hereth argues that either a life that ends in bodily death or an immortality in a non-heavenly afterlife would be an unfair harm to sentient non-agents given that there is a version of them on some possible world who experiences a blessed immortality, and for this reason we should conclude that an all-powerful, perfect deity would actualize a world where that non-agent enters heaven. The “Just Compensation Argument,” on the other hand, is a variant on the use of heaven to respond to the problem of evil for humans. From the evident fact that vast numbers of sentient non-agents suffer horribly (often at the hands of humans), and the corollary that, as non-agents, they can have done nothing to deserve this, Hereth argues that a perfect deity would offer them compensation in the form of a heavenly afterlife. Hereth considers various alternative suggestions and criticisms, and offers a rebuttal to each.

Although Hereth does not make this case, it is worth noting that everything ze says about non-human non-agents could also be said about *human* non-agents, such as the cortically dead or very young infants. Lest it be said that either of these will *become* agents (or be restored to agenthood) in heaven, Hereth also considers a suggestion by Trent Dougherty that even non-human non-agents will be granted human-like capacities in heaven, but is unconvinced.

Everyone will Leave at Exactly the Same Time

The chapters by me (Simon Cushing) and Michaël Bauwens are both concerned with the issue of the freedom of those in heaven. What makes this a question of philosophical interest is that it is widely asserted that the redeemed are “impeccable,” or incapable of sin. This makes

sense, particularly in the context of a popular response to the problem of evil. This problem, recall, was why there should be evil (which is taken to include suffering) in a world created by a God both able and willing to prevent it. The most widely accepted theistic responses to this problem (which are called “theodicies” when they make claims to being true or likely, and “defenses” when they are put forward simply as not necessarily false), have tended to rely on two key notions about freedom. One is that the capacity to act freely is a prerequisite for some phenomena that are of immense value, where this could be love, morally responsible action or simply autonomy, to the extent that no world that lacks beings with this capacity can be truly excellent. (We have seen above how the autonomy of hellions is supposed to justify God’s refraining from ushering them into paradise.) The other is that the gift of free will to created beings unavoidably brings evil along with it.²¹ Thus it is that God was faced with a choice: create a world free of evil, but where no being has free will, or a world where many creatures are capable of genuine free choice, but which could not, as a result, be kept free of evil. The latter is a better world, goes the theodicy or defense, and that is the one we inhabit.

Such theodicies have long existed, and have been criticized by many. Perhaps the most sophisticated and currently well-known today is Alvin Plantinga’s “free will defense,” which uses a version of Molinism to argue that, while worlds where creatures are free but nonetheless none do evil may be *possible* (they are clearly *conceivable*), it may be that, nonetheless, they are not *actualizable by God*. Plantinga is thus committed to the idea that there are some possible worlds that God cannot bring into being, which might surprise many theists who thought that would be ruled out by God’s omnipotence. We do not have the time to get into the debate here, but for our purposes it is worth noting that heaven would appear to be just like those supposedly unactualizable worlds, as its inhabitants are both free and sinless. Heaven thus appears to be a

challenge to the two ideas about freedom behind free will theodicies: if the redeemed can be impeccable even as they act freely then the second claim is false. If, on the other hand, they are impeccable because they are *not* free, then it seems that heaven manages to be a plane of existence far superior to our own earthly one without any of its denizens possessing free will, which undermines the first claim. I call this the Heaven Dilemma for free will-based theodicies.

James Sennett has taken on the challenge of explaining how it is that it can be both true that earthly freedom unavoidably brings evil (in such a way that God cannot be blamed for the profusion of earthly evil) and that the redeemed, while also free, can be impeccable. To explain his approach, a digression into the general philosophical debate on free will is in order.

Earlier we saw that there was a puzzle about the apparent clash between God's foreknowledge of human actions and their being freely performed. A secular version of this conflict is that between the supposed truth of *determinism* and human freedom. Determinism is the idea that the universe is *orderly* and *predictable*, in such a way that there is a complete set of laws that govern its behavior. The French mathematician Pierre-Simon Laplace imagined an omnipotent demon who could hold all of the laws in its head, along with all the information (size, mass, location, velocity, *et al.*) about every particle in the universe right now, and who would, as a result, be able to describe with perfect accuracy the state of the universe at any other point in its history, either past or future. Something like this possibility is strongly hinted at by the predictive success of modern science. We believe we have discovered many laws of the universe, both physical and biological, and have, as a result acquired great predictive power. But, if we humans are, as philosophers like Eric Olson maintain, wholly material beings, then Laplace's demon would know with perfect accuracy everything we will ever do, and there would be no way for us to behave other than as the laws of the universe determine. But if truly free

action requires that we have genuine options, that at any point it is true that we could perform an action and also true that we could *refrain* from it, then determinism appears to rule out truly free actions. The philosophical view of *hard determinism* takes just this stance: determinism is true, and we are not free. Of course this is not a view that a theist committed to some version of the free will defense can accept. On this view human evil is just like the movement of the planets: something that results directly from the way God constructed the universe, and responsibility for which can just as plainly be laid at his doorstep. Human suffering would then be directly attributable to God's actions. Many non-theists also find this view repugnant because it appears to make nonsense of ideas of responsibility. We do not find robots praiseworthy for carrying out the tasks they are programmed to perform, nor blameworthy when wear-and-tear prevents them from so doing. Humans are just sophisticated biological robots to the hard determinist and equally inappropriate targets for praise or blame. Punishment, then, cannot be justified by saying to the punished "you chose to do wrong and so deserve what you get," for no real choice was involved.

For those who wish to defend the possibility of human freedom, then, there are two options: deny determinism or argue for a conception of freedom that is compatible with it. Of compatibilist views the view that says that determinism is true but humans are still capable of the kind of freedom required for moral responsibility is called *soft determinism* (or, often, simply *compatibilism*, because why would you argue for the compatibility of freedom and determinism simply to turn around and deny one of them?). This is a popular view amongst contemporary non-theistic philosophers and has had defenders that include such great philosophers as John Locke, David Hume and John Stuart Mill. The key idea of compatibilism is that actually what is important about freedom is that humans be able to control their actions (Bauwens calls this

contingency-D, where the D stands for the dependence of the actions on the agents) in an entirely predictable manner, which is not only consistent with determinism, it *requires* it.

The alternative option is *metaphysical libertarianism* (not to be confused with the political view), which takes the position that determinism, while it is *largely* true (planets do indeed move in predictable orbits, gravity does not occasionally lapse and allow things to fly into space) it is not *universally* true, and it is the indeterministic gaps that allow human freedom to creep in. Libertarians demand that for the action of a human to be performed freely, it must be that she genuinely could have done otherwise, consistent with the laws of the universe remaining unchanged. This is sometimes called the “Principle of Alternative Possibilities” (Bauwens calls it contingency-O, for “otherwise”), and it is what determinism (and in a different way, God’s foreknowledge) appears to rule out. Libertarians scorn compatibilism, pointing out that brainwashed subjects like the main character of *The Manchurian Candidate* would meet the compatibilist standard of freedom, because if you ask him if he is doing what he wants to be doing, he will honestly answer yes.²² The fact that his *desires* have been manipulated by others does not seem to rule out his actions being free by (simple) compatibilist standards, yet few indeed would say that the brainwashed assassin is truly responsible for his fatal acts. Compatibilists respond that they can fix that with a more sophisticated variant of their view, but that libertarian so-called “freedom” is just randomness. If free actions have to be free from the laws of physics, then they are truly unpredictable and uncontrollable.²³ They happen for *no reason*. But if my arm flies up and I truly cannot point to any reason for it doing so, I do not think that the epitome of free action on my part, I think of it as my body betraying me. In return, libertarians stress that they do not need *randomness* (for Bauwens, contingency-R), they just need it to be the case that my acts are not simply the result of the state of the universe up to my

moment of choice. There must be a break in the causal chain, otherwise I am just one domino among others, and not free.

As you can see, this is a thorny debate, with much back and forth. For our purposes, though, it would appear that compatibilism is a no-hoper for theists (although, admittedly, there are some philosophers who claim to be both) because if we can be free while entirely determined by the laws that God sets up, then again, our evil acts appear to result as directly from God's creative act as the rising of the Sun, and as much attributable to God (and as little to us).

Compatibilism *would* however, be a good explanation of how free beings could be impeccable: the actions that they choose to do could be (pre-)determined to include no sins. Conversely, only libertarianism has a chance of implying that free acts inevitably bring evil, one of the two core claims of any free will defense.

This brings us back to James Sennett. His proposal is, roughly, that libertarianism reigns on Earth, but compatibilism is true in heaven. That is, there are a significant number of undetermined free acts on Earth (whose undetermined nature (contingency-O) explains why they can result in evil) but that those who make it to heaven do so because their characters have become perfected, and those characters will determine their heavenly behavior (contingency-D) in a way that shall remain necessarily free from sin. Sennett's ingenious proposal has met with much praise, but also criticism from both sides. In chapter 10, I argue both that it is unconvincing and that even if it worked it would have several theologically unacceptable implications. It is unconvincing because it implies that knowing whether a being is free requires that being's complete history. Two currently identical beings, both acting in identical ways, for identical reasons, could differ in that one is acting freely on Sennett's account while the other is unfree. Worse than that, Sennett's view requires that the perfected self that enables the redeemed in

heaven to be impeccable must have been “self-formed” on Earth in a way that unfairly handicaps those whose God-created natures make such formation difficult, and, more pressingly, implies that millions who have died young have never had the chance to achieve self-formation and are thus condemned to unfree existence as “little angel automatons.” However, any attempt to avoid this implication (say, by invoking purgatory as a place for post-mortem, pre-heavenly self-formation) exacerbates the Problem of the Apparent Pointlessness of Earth: if it is possible for any beings to make it to heaven without the chance to sin, why would God have *any* of us face any possibilities of sinning on Earth first? Why have Earth at all, with its miseries and risks for damnation if we can have all the freedom in a post-earthly existence with none of the risk?

Bauwens’s concern in his chapter is to argue first, that there is a *libertarian* conception of freedom that permits impeccability in heaven, and second, that this freedom is not any less free than a kind that would permit sin. In a recent paper, Timothy Pawl and Kevin Timpe have suggested that Sennett’s account can be augmented to allow libertarian freedom for the redeemed. However, the kind they envisage, that allows undetermined choice but only amongst goods, with no option for sin, is dismissed by Bauwens as unacceptably shallow. He counts Pawl and Timpe amongst followers of Aquinas who prejudice what he calls “freedom-as-doing-good” (and they call “freedom for excellence”) at the expense of “freedom-as-choosing” (“freedom of indifference”). The former is freedom that, while undetermined by causes, is nonetheless guided by knowledge of the good (which pulls free actions towards it like a magnet pulling iron filings) so that it does not allow the possibility of evil-doing. This makes free actions *intelligible* (there is clearly a *reason* behind each action, namely, to do good) but Bauwens likens the unavoidably-good actions of perfected beings to the story of Odysseus binding himself to the mast to avoid succumbing to the lure of the sirens. That he remains steadfast is in some ways a result of his

free choice – the choice to have himself bound – but his “resistance” is not praiseworthy in the way that it would be were he to remain consciously steadfast in the face of temptation without requiring external impediments to lapsing. Similarly, a husband who remains faithful simply because of his original free exchange of vows is less of a loving husband than one who regards himself constantly able to stray but at every point chooses not to. Thus, true libertarian freedom requires freedom-as-choosing as well as freedom-as-doing-good. (Indeed, only the former can explain the fall of Lucifer, which would be ruled out if the latter were all that inhabitants of heaven possessed.) But, one might wonder, how is the impeccability of the redeemed ensured under these conditions? Bauwens’ answer is to suggest a third aspect of true freedom, which he calls “freedom-as-creating,” which, he claims, eases the apparent tension between the other two aspects. God’s freedom is surely increased by his power of creation, and, while we lack his power to create *ex nihilo*, humans become more free (and more like God) the more we create. However, sinning is anti-creation, in that sinful acts will inevitably compromise our future choices, while creative acts expand them. Drunkenness will corrupt and weaken us, whereas learning a musical instrument increases our opportunities by opening formerly unavailable possibilities, like composing or performing in ensembles. The upshot of Bauwens’ analysis is that the redeemed do not *lose* freedom by losing the opportunities to sin because sin itself is contrary to freedom. His argument is thus reminiscent of Rousseau’s argument that freedom does not include the freedom to sell oneself into slavery because that is contrary to the very nature of freedom.

Bauwens’ case, if successful, would appear to show that we do not need a bifurcated notion of freedom along Sennett’s lines. However, it does appear to exacerbate the Problem of

the Apparent Pointlessness of Earth and put free will theodicies at risk. Why would God grant us the chances to sin in the name of giving us freedom if sinning undermines freedom?

Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now

Finally, in chapter 12, for a bit of a change of pace from deep metaphysical discussions, I address the questions of whether or not the very existence of heaven provides a motivation for killing. If universalism is true, then anyone killed will end up there, as will the killer. And given that heaven is infinitely better than earth, killing would be, on this view, the greatest gift possible to the "victim." But if universalism is not true, there is perhaps an even greater incentive to kill one's loved ones if one knows them to be currently heaven-bound: that is, to save them from the risk of an infinitely terrible fate, that of somehow damning themselves between now and their natural death. This is an issue that we have all surely wondered about: if we're going to heaven, what's so bad about death that it must be condemned? But I think there is also a less-discussed problem raised by the very existence of heaven: that the existence of earth is thereby made redundant. What is earth but an annoying antechamber for heaven, one that we all wish we could bypass? I consider various attempts both to forestall the motivation for altruistic killing and to provide a justification for earth as more than a poor version of purgatory, and fail to find any that are truly compelling. I conclude that the existence of earth is therefore itself an argument against the existence of heaven.

It's Getting Dark, Too Dark to See

So there we have it: a dozen articles that give a small flavor of the kinds of debate philosophers are having about the nature and possibility of a post-mortem existence. Some readers might be frustrated, hoping for more of a concrete consensus about the nature of the life to come. Others will wonder about the whole enterprise, considering that we can easily find out by dying. But the obvious response to the latter view is that we need to have some idea about what death will bring so we can decide what life to live first.

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1. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/10/most-americans-believe-in-heaven-and-hell/>
2. According to “AskaNaturalist.com” this is not true. We never replace neurons in our cerebral cortex, for example, and cardiomyocyte heart cells are replaced very slowly, so that even in very old people, probably less than half of those cells have been replaced (<http://askanaturalist.com/do-we-replace-our-cells-every-7-or-10-years/>). However, this does not affect the point. It may very soon be possible to have nanobots replace our cells at a steady rate so that it *would* be true that we replace every cell over seven years, but should this happen this would *not* mean that after seven years we are different people.
3. “Bart Sells His Soul,” the fourth episode of the seventh season of *The Simpsons*, written by Greg Daniels.
4. After writing this I watched “San Junipero,” the fourth episode of the third season of Charlie Brooker’s *Black Mirror*, where the same parallel is noted by the character of Kelly.
5. He does this by telling her things she “remembers” but has never told anyone.
6. Guillon’s terminology is also slightly different. For example, Olson uses “resurrection” to cover all possible post-mortem conscious existence, which would of course include heaven. However, for Guillon existence in heaven is the “intermediate state” between life on Earth and life after the resurrection that Christian doctrine promises the faithful. Guillon also uses the term “anthropology” to refer to what I have called “theories of personal identity” rather than the academic discipline of studying terrestrial cultures.
7. Plato’s argument for this is contained in his dialogue *Phaedo*. It is, it must be said, a decidedly fishy argument.

8. I should note that Guillon argues that it was not Platonic influence that introduced dualism into Christianity, although, as he notes, many scholars disagree with him.
9. Especially Book 3, verses 19-20: “For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.”
10. It has been estimated that every time we breathe, we breathe in at least one molecule that was exhaled in Julius Caesar’s last breath! See <http://futurism.com/estimating-how-many-molecules-you-breathe-that-were-from-julius-caesars-last-breath/>.
11. “Second Chances,” the 24th episode of the sixth season, teleplay by René Echevarria, story by Michael A. Medlock.
12. Olson 2001.
13. One might resist this characterization: if the heresy is claiming that one can *merit* admission into heaven without God’s grace, it is consistent with it being possible to *approach* heaven (or even to break into it) – the one being a normative claim while the latter a descriptive one.
14. This view of heaven would dovetail neatly with the materialist accounts of post-mortem existence defended by van Inwagen and Zimmerman. One puzzle with those views is how our real bodies could be whisked away by God without us noticing. If they just move “sideways” into a different dimension, then it would look just like they vanished from our point of view.
15. *John 3:13*: “And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven.”
16. This is part of what Marx meant when he referred to religion as the opium of the people.

17. The study of possible worlds is a fecund sub-discipline of philosophy. Perhaps its most fascinating recent (in philosophical terms) development is in the work of David Lewis, who defends the claim (despite, he says, many “incredulous stares”) that all of the possible worlds are *real* (rather than, as many other philosophers argue, simply *descriptions* of universes, as you might find in the code of a massive computer game), and all that makes *our* universe special is that it is ours, but you could say the same of everybody else’s. “Actual” for Lewis is an “indexical” – a word like “me” or “here” whose referent depends on its circumstance of utterance. As one might imagine, if Lewis is right, then the problem of evil is massive indeed, for there are real universes consisting of nothing but innocent souls suffering horrendous torments. But on the upside, there is a universe somewhere within which you, dear reader (or at least your “counterpart,” to use Lewis’s terminology) are the happiest and richest person who exists.
18. This is not to say that one can truly surprise God, because God can know all possible courses of action and the precise probability of each. It is also worth noting that Open Theism is committed to a certain view of time and God’s relationship to it, specifically, that God experiences time just as we do, as a “moving now”, rather than being outside of time, viewing creation as a four-dimensional object. Another fascinating issue in metaphysics and philosophy of religion that we don’t have space (or time, or spacetime) for.
19. Of course, Calvin himself was certainly no universalist.
20. Bennett 1974, 129.
21. In chapter 10 I call the first claim “TVF” for “Transcendent Value of Freedom” and the second “IEF” for the Inevitability of Evil accompanying Freedom.

22. In the excellent 1962 film version, Raymond Shaw (played by Laurence Harvey) is captured and brainwashed so that, when he returns from the war as a “hero,” he can be sent into a trance like state by a certain cue (the queen of diamonds) and while in that state will murder on command.
23. Compatibilists also like to point out that, if any human action is a violation of the laws of nature, how is it that we can’t choose to violate, say, the law of gravity?