

Hello,

My name is Toby. I'm 20 years old and I live in Iowa. I've been struggling with "life". I was raised in a Christian based family. I've recently decided, on my own, without someone else's guidance or the influence of online articles, to strip myself of all that has been fed to me. Anything I may have been told and lied to about or I have misinterpreted myself. I wanted to start over with a true look at everything. To keep it short, there were many things I concluded, but I still remained confused on it all. I then began a quest to find others who have experienced the same, honestly, and tried to learn more and understand more about these new realizations.

I've found many things and I happened to come across your site. I read the main entry on the home page, the conversation. It was confusing at first until I caught it and understood all that was said. I just have one question. In all the things I've looked at there has been some theory about what happens to your spirit-soul-self-being after physical death. I say theory because no one really knows for sure what happens after death because they haven't been there. That is to say our individual presence cannot recall another time of being previously alive and consequently died. I would like to know what you, as someone who has more knowledge about it than myself, have to say about life after death. In any sense - heaven, rebirth, enlightenment, ascension, whatever.

The thing is... in no theory have I heard that I will still remain myself after death. By that I mean, the awareness I have now will relinquish its memory because basically memory is mind and mind is a brain function which is left behind when we die. In no way does that or would that or should that comfort me or anyone.

If I was alive before... I don't remember it...how am I supposed to remember I'm my awareness if I'm dead and unconscious? And then as a baby whose memory doesn't develop until later, how can I reintroduce myself to myself if I can never be sure that I existed before...because there is no proof that I did exist or even that I will exist later?

I am aware right now. I am present. And no matter how much I'm present now I don't recall my presence before I specific moment in my lifetime. And I recall the moment I was

first aware of everything. Even as a young child I knew everything was familiar even the first time I saw it. And I don't know what's going to happen to my awareness after I die if I don't come back as a human being or as some animal. Am I just an evolved enough animal to be aware of what I am doing and then when I die I no longer exist? If that's the case, then why should I care?

I believe this my biggest struggle. People always say the truth is simple after it has been revealed. So what has been revealed to you?

James: Very cool reasoning! What advantage do you think there would be to remembering who you were? There is a science of this which I cannot explain to you in an email. It requires too much technical background information.

The reason you cannot remember is because awareness i.e. God is very compassionate. It would only confuse you in dealing with what you have to do in the present. Imagine that you murdered your mother in your last life. It would certainly have an impact on how you related to your mother in this life. What if you had been a rich and powerful king in a past life and you found yourself living in abject poverty in the ghetto? How helpful would that be?

In fact there is no direct evidence of reincarnation, only inferential evidence. The only continuity from one life to another are the vasanas, subconscious tendencies. The next 'you' is the result of the interaction of you vasanas with the new time and place. Hence 'you' end up being someone else.

In any case the verse below from an ancient Sanskrit text called Atma Bodh by Adi Shankaracharya. It includes my commentary. It might help you to sort this out. You can also order a video on the topic from Lida Van Geest. You can contact her by email at lidavangeest@gmail.com I hope this is helpful.

The individual's Gross Body, the medium through which pleasure and pain is experienced, is composed of matter. The type of body is determined by past actions."

That the body is comprised of food consumed and shaped by activity is obvious, but why such a variety of human forms? Or, how do experiences from the past come to determine the characteristics of the body that will be the medium of experience in this one?

Nobody questions heredity today, yet the idea of reincarnation has yet to gain widespread acceptance, even though both attempt to explain essentially the same phenomenon - how experience passes through time to program the future. Heredity describes how certain physical tendencies in former generations "reincarnate," return to flesh. Microbiology has discovered that these tendencies, which are the result of an ancestor's previous experience, are stored in a very subtle part of the cells, the DNA, and passed on to succeeding generations.

Spiritual science, which describes two additional bodies, the Subtle and Causal, contends that our psychic life, like physical experience, has also evolved a way of surviving physical death and remanifesting. We have material science to thank for an increasingly detailed and accurate picture of the processes that make up the physical body. Psychology, a relative infant science, is largely responsible for our rudimentary knowledge of the Subtle and Causal Bodies. In psychological language the Subtle Body, which will be discussed in the commentaries on the next verse, is the conscious mind. The phenomena playing in it outpicture even subtler elements, the *vasanas* or *samskaras*, that make up the Causal body or Unconscious mind.

If its true that we have two other bodies, bodies that may be much more essentially "us" than the physical, how is it that they come into being, what happens to them at death, and what is their relationship to the physical body?

The verse begins, "Determined for each individual by past actions." Imagine this situation. On the first day of creation a mountain shaped like a perfect cone thrust out of the earth and the first drop of rain struck the mountain's very tip.

What path would the drop take down the mountain?

The probability of any possible path is one hundred percent. It flipped a coin and slid down the south side leaving an imperceptible little trail.

Time passed and a second drop fell. What path would it take? High odds favor all paths but marginally greater odds favor the south side. It followed tradition and etched the existing path a little deeper. After thousands of rain storms other paths developed and the mountain sported canyons, ravines, and gullies all around.

And the original path had become a great river valley.

We obviously can't go back to the time when our psyches were perfectly clear like the Consciousness from which they emerged, but let's pretend we can. Let's say that on the day the first mountain sprung up the first man strolled out of his cave and looked around just as the first bear wandered out from behind the first tree. The bear spied the man and decided to have lunch. The man, however, picked up a huge rock and struck the bear so hard it died instantly. And, in life's first irony, first man had the world's first bearburger for lunch.

What kind of a day was it for our hero? He couldn't say because it was his first experience and he had no others with which to compare it. As he sat contentedly munching his burger the experience replayed several times, gradually diminishing in intensity and frequency. As evening fell it left his consciousness entirely and he dropped off to sleep.

On the second day first man bumped into first woman, one thing led to another, and they made first love, a delightful experience. When he fell asleep after dinner the memory accompanied him and cooked up delicious dreams.

The next few days saw many experiences, some good, some not so good. One morning, a week later, he woke up, ate his porridge, and looked out the entrance to his cave to see a hungry bear looking in. Suddenly an exciting and emotional replay of the encounter with the first bear flashed in his primitive consciousness and he understood what to expect if he ventured out.

Each experience, no matter how trivial, leaves a trace in our consciousness, like an elementary particle carving a track in a cloud chamber. The deep memory in which experience is saved, unlike Intellect's fact and figure memory, is the Causal Body, the Unconscious, which not only saves the essence of every experience but all subjective reactions: the feelings, emotions, and thoughts arising in the mind at the time.

What a blessing to have his experiences stored out of consciousness! He could get up in the morning, take his porridge, and venture out into the light of day without having the past intrude, very much like the first day.

But as time passed he noticed a change. One day, walking along without a care, he began to feel a little out of sorts - as if he wanted something. Trying to picture what he wanted made him uncomfortable and he was unable to keep his attention on the pristine world around.

Suddenly he knew! A picture of first woman appeared in his mind and the experience of their tryst vividly flooded his consciousness. Because the memory was so pleasurable and first woman no longer available he became unhappy. He wandered about in this state for several days when, as luck would have it, he met the second woman of the world. To make a long story short, they made love, and first man was happy once more.

After repeatedly experiencing love the Causal Body realized it was running out of storage space and edited the extraneous details: the color of her hair, the cut of her garment, and her name, saving only important details, the grunts and groans and, (of course) the big moment when the world stopped. As more experience flowed in it merged the experiences of many different women into the essence of woman, compacted myriad episodes into the essence of love, and created a file marked "high priority." In spite of the fact that the memories were meant to remain "sub" conscious, the woman memory eventually took on a life of its own, popping into his conscious mind, the Subtle Body, with disturbing regularity. Each repetition cut a deeper scar in the pristine landscape of his subconscious mind until it resembled first mountain after millions of years of wind and weather.

Now, sadly, when first man awoke he had an agenda. No longer able to sit blissfully in front of the cave enjoying the scenery as he'd done in the good old days, he longed for a companion. Just as rain tends to flow down the mountain's deepest valleys, our hero's consciousness rushed wildly down the deep sexual groove in the Causal Body, filling his conscious mind with desire.

His routine changed and he became increasingly indifferent to the practical details of life. Instead of enjoying random walks through the forest, staying home patching cracks in his cave or stocking winter stores, we now find first man haunting the first bar in hopes of finding love - day and night. The more he thought about a mate, the more he thought about a mate.

His emotional state was being saved and recycled too. Simply obsessing over the memory of previous love generated great desire. And with each longing the channel in the Causal Body got deeper and deeper, flooding the mind with fantasies, tossing it hither and thither like a small boat in a storm, driving him nearly crazy.

Furthermore, he started to notice a strange correspondence between his all-consuming desire and the probability of bumping into a first woman type. Were these not the chance encounters they seemed? In the beginning outer life seemed to be creating his inner reality, but now his cravings seemed control his destiny. Eventually he reached a point where inner reality became as vivid and real as the outer.

Because a theory cannot be verified with a known means of knowledge does not necessarily invalidate it. The history of science, for example, might be seen as the documentation of the destruction of hardened beliefs in light of new knowledge. Although the words "determined by past actions" could be interpreted to refer to only actions in the present birth, the verse is actually referring to the momentum from previous births which, like those of the first man, remain after death as "seeds" or "impressions" in the Unconscious mind. The Unconscious Mind is a dynamic megamemory that subtly programs every impulse of the ego self, impulses that will eventually create a new physical body to act out unfulfilled subconscious impressions. According to the theory, subtle bodies reincarnate because, like the first man, they believe the joy is in the object.

Materialists, who see life as a one-time happenstance event, don't take the psyche into account because it is thought to be an epiphenomenon, the result of biochemical processes. When the physical body goes, the psyche, a chemical by-product, is apparently meant to just dissolve into thin air. Religion's remarkable idea doesn't pretend to be scientific - at death we meet up with God who either sends us on up to heaven or down to hell depending in His evaluation of our past deeds - minus the physical body of

course. Even here, however, the subtle part, the soul,¹ does not miraculously dematerialize when the physical body gives up the ghost.

The theory of reincarnation suggests that when the physical body dies, the conscious mind separates and, propelled by the momentum of all previous activities, seeks out and takes up residence in the fertilized egg implanted in the uterine wall a short time after conception. Before this marvelous event, experienced by the mother as “quickenning,” no separate being lives in the mother’s body. Now that the individual has secured a point of entry into the material world it gestates until it’s capable of living outside the womb where it can work out unfilled *samskaras*.

The *samskaras*, like seeds, carry a sort of psychic DNA, the potentialities and proclivities built up in previous births. Exceedingly dynamic, they supply both the blueprint for the new life and the energy necessary to translate it into living reality, the so-called “will to live.” On the physical level they program the DNA, the determinant of physical characteristics, and on the psychological, the information that will outpicture as the subtle body (mind, intellect, ego), the character or personality that will develop. Their technical Sanskrit term is “*vasanas*,” fragrances, or “*samskaras*,”² formations, and their psychological address is the *karana sharira*, the Causal Body, or in western terminology, the Unconscious. These seedlike energy “waves” of consciousness, being subtler than physical matter are unaffected by the death and rebirth of the body. When a new physical entity is established in the uterine wall they propel the subtle body to enter the physical. The parent's *samskaras* are instrumental in attracting a particular individual to the womb. Though there are apparently exceptions, nature, through the agency of the macrocosmic mind, matches reincarnating souls with parents who can supply them with the situation necessary to continue their spiritual evolution. Thus matter, from the reincarnation perspective, is thought to be a creation of Consciousness for the purpose of It's spiritual evolution.

How do we know of this hidden process? Obviously the senses are useless because they cease to function at death and are incapable of perceiving the *vasanas* which are even subtler than subatomic wave/particles. Inference, a valid means of knowledge,

¹ I've used the word “soul” in these commentaries to refer to the Subtle Body.

² A *vasana* is the trace left in the sub or unconscious by an individual action or thought. When a number of *vasanas* accumulate they become a *samskara*, a formation, or complex.

suggests that reincarnation happens but doesn't reveal how seeds of past activity manifest in the present. Reincarnationists claim that this knowledge is obtained directly from yogis who, through a mystic method, remain conscious during the birth/death process.³

³ A fascinating book, "Introduction to Tantra," by Lama Yeshe, as do many Eastern texts, discusses this process in detail.