

10 Good Questions about Life and Death

Our birth is nothing but our death begun
(Edward Young, *Night Thoughts*)

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Preface

This book might never have existed. Or it might have existed in a different form. I had a mind to write a more scholarly book, dealing with just some of the topics that are addressed here. But I somehow found my way into neighbouring fields, and wrote instead about the environment. And then, teaching philosophy of religion, I thought I saw a gap for a textbook. Again, it's unwritten. The book you're looking at now couples ideas from those different sources, with much about life and death, some about immortality, and a little about the population explosion. The textbook is now dead in the water, while the scholarly book should, in time, take shape.

My interest in these topics goes back a fair way, to my time as a graduate student in Santa Barbara. Tony Brueckner taught there, and some of the things he'd written, with John Fischer, about the badness of death struck me as deeply interesting and profoundly wrong. Around the same time I came across Derek Parfit's *Reasons and Persons*. Without these people, and their writings, my life today would be unaccountably different. I more or less gave up on epistemology, metaphysics and history of philosophy, and focused instead on these questions of life and death.

Several people have read and commented on various chapters, in various of their incarnations. I've gained much from their feedback, and thank them for their interest and their time. These people are Tina Beattie, Ann Gallagher, Steve Holland, Gary Kemp, Carrie Mercier, Catherine Morris, John Shand, Helena Silver, Andrew Ward, and Penelope Whitworth. Many other people have helped in a less direct way, for I've read papers dealing with the themes of several chapters in various places, including the universities of York, Glasgow, Cardiff and the Open University, benefiting always from those audiences' comments.

