BELIEF AND ACCEPTANCE

Do I believe in God? … I believe in the idea of God. Of goodness and love. That there is—in everything—a common essence, shared and passed on. That doing good things for no other reason than to try to be good is what we all ought to strive for. Do I believe we were created, chosen? … I think what's more beautiful is the uniqueness of the human condition. The barriers our species overcame that lead us to who we are now. We were certainly created, but not directly, I don't think. But what started everything—in the beginning? Well, that's what I want to know too.

This project isn’t about God or religion, but it bumps up against the topic, so I think it appropriate to cover. While I personally am at odds with the concept of God, or of any deity for that matter, I have absolutely no problem with the belief in God, a god, or gods. I am always willing to be proven wrong—it is ever so exciting! And perhaps there is something out there. Maybe the flow of energy through time lends itself to something leaning on spirituality (in the transfer of energy through life, where the fluidity through beings becomes a current of spirit). I could see myself getting into that. It kind of reminds me of Andy Weir’s story, *The Egg*. Regardless, the essential catalyst is not incompatible with faith and spirituality; they just need a little redefining. Humanity is an extraordinary product of evolution and—while God can certainly be involved in the creation of matter in “the beginning”—any sense of divine intervention as significant as manifestations or tampering within time and space is a fundamental violation of the physical world *as we know it*. Again, I am happy to be proven wrong, but—for the moment at least—a worldview without significant contradictions in logic suggests that if God is real, it/he/she/they are an observer to us, waiting to see if we can stick this thing out.

I do however have a problem with the intentions of many institutionalized organizations who've found that they are really rather effective at getting people to do things out of pure faith. Anyone involved is/was just as human as you or me; there's *no reason* to treat any of their doctrines as infallible. No, we can’t allow ourselves to attain *personal* meaning through God.

Therein lies my belief: Our personalities are constructed from a foundation of nature and nurture and are built up from lived experiences. What makes us who we are is the unbelievably complex biology and chemistry in our heads and the energy required to power most of its functions. Death means the ceasing of that energy to its outputs, which in turn means the total loss of personality, if at all recoverable. The mind of a being is not separable from the functions of the brain (insofar as any neuroscientists can tell) and so when death rears its way to the inevitability of The End, that being is no more. It ends...

It is comforting to hold on to the hope that you will one day join those whom you loved and lost, but it is also comforting to know that they are still with you. True, memories are not lossless packets of data ready to be relived at any time, but the experience is still there, stored within you. Such memories are, in essence, a part *of you*. I mean, suppose you believe in an afterlife: would anything you do or say to the people in your life right now really matter if you knew you would see them again for eternity? Would there even be any urgency in the matter of relationships like that if we were promised to be united again? To me, the knowledge that everything has its end is what makes anything really meaningful.

One day, there will come a time when you see your mother for the last time; by that, I don’t mean to depress you, but wouldn’t that saddening knowledge now bring meaning to the next times that you see them? Because of this, every meeting grows more and more meaningful. See, Camus wrote that “in order to exist just once in the world, it is necessary never again to exist.”1 And so I don't see a point in eternal life. Even a life tragically cut short was beautiful in its time already spent here with us—to spend your time hoping for an eternally distant reunion instead of cherishing the moments you actually had with them only serves to weaken your memory of them as they were. This burden, this angst, this suffering from death—universal to all of humanity—is what makes us truly alive.