Heaven and Hell

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Life After Death

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Life After Death

Following Osiris

Heaven and Hell

Belief in the afterlife is still very much alive in Western civilisation, even though the truth of its existence is no longer universally accepted. Surprisingly, however, heaven, hell and the immortal soul were all ideas which arrived relatively late in the ancient world. Originally Greece and Israel - the cultures that gave us Christianity - had only the vaguest ideas of an afterlife. So where did these concepts come from and why did they develop? In this fascinating, learned, but highly readable book, Jan N. Bremmer - one of the foremost authorities on ancient religion - takes a fresh look at the major developments in the Western imagination of the afterlife, from the ancient Greeks to the modern near-death experience.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead

A magisterial work of social history, Life After Death illuminates the many different ways ancient civilizations grappled with the question of what exactly happens to us after we die. In a masterful exploration of how Western civilizations have defined the afterlife, Alan F. Segal weaves together biblical and literary scholarship, sociology, history, and philosophy. A renowned scholar, Segal examines the maps of the afterlife found in Western religious texts and reveals not only what various cultures believed but how their notions reflected their societies’ realities and ideals, and why those beliefs changed over time. He maintains that the afterlife is the mirror in which a society arranges its concept of the self. The composition process for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam begins in grief and ends in the victory of the self over death. Arguing that in every religious tradition the afterlife represents the ultimate reward for the good, Segal combines historical and anthropological data with insights gleaned from religious and philosophical writings to explain the following mysteries: why the Egyptians insisted on an afterlife in heaven, while the body was embalmed in a tomb on earth; why the Babylonians viewed the dead as living in underground prisons; why the Hebrews remained silent about life after death during the period of the First Temple, yet embraced it in the Second Temple period (534 B.C.E. -70 C.E.); and why Christianity placed the afterlife in the center of its belief system. He discusses the inner dialogues and arguments within Judaism and Christianity, showing the underlying dynamic behind them, as well as the ideas that mark the differences between the two religions. In a thoughtful examination of the influence of biblical views of heaven and martyrdom on Islamic beliefs, he offers a fascinating perspective on the current troubling rise of Islamic fundamentalism. In tracing the organic, historical relationships between sacred texts and communities of belief and comparing the visions of life after death that have emerged throughout history, Segal sheds a bright, revealing light on the intimate connections between notions of the afterlife, the societies that produced them, and the individual’s search for the ultimate meaning of life on earth.

Excavating the Afterlife

Suppose you knew that, though you yourself would live your life to its natural end, the earth and all its inhabitants would be destroyed thirty days after your death. To what extent would you remain committed to your current projects and plans? Would scientists still search for a cure for cancer? Would couples still want children? In Death and the Afterlife, philosopher Samuel Scheffler poses this thought experiment in order to show that the continued life of the human race after our deaths—the “afterlife” of the title—matters to us and an astonishing and previously neglected degree. Indeed, Scheffler shows that, in certain important respects, the future existence of people who are as yet unborn matters more to us than our own continued existence and the continued existence of those we love. Without the expectation that humanity has a future, many of the things that now matter to us would cease to do so. By contrast, the prospect of our own
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deaths does little to undermine our confidence in the value of our activities. Despite the terror we may feel when contemplating our deaths, the prospect of humanity's imminent extinction would pose a far greater threat to our ability to lead lives of wholehearted engagement. Scheffler further demonstrates that, although we are not unreasonable to fear death, personal immortality, like the imminent extinction of humanity, would also undermine our confidence in the values we hold dear. His arresting conclusion is that, in order for us to lead value-laden lives, what is necessary is that we ourselves should die and that others should live. Death and the Afterlife concludes with commentary by four distinguished philosophers—Harry Frankfurt, Niko Kolodny, Seana Shiffrin, and Susan Wolf—who discuss Scheffler's ideas with insight and imagination. Scheffler adds a final reply.

The Palgrave Handbook of the Afterlife In every culture throughout history, people have asked the same fundamental question about what will happen to them when they die. From the underworld to the light at the end of the tunnel, beliefs and experiences of death abound. And even though we cannot know for sure what happens to us after death, our understanding of the afterlife can have a profound impact on how we live. Beyond the Threshold is the first book to seriously examine the afterlife through the lens of both world religions and metaphysical experiences. Christopher M. Moreman includes an introduction to the afterlife beliefs of ancient cultures, which are essential to understanding the roots of many modern ideas about death. He examines the folklore and doctrines of major world religions, including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. He also discusses psychic phenomena across traditions, such as mediums, near-death and out-of-body experiences, and past-life memories. While ultimately the afterlife remains unknowable, Moreman's unique, in-depth exploration of both beliefs and experiences can help readers reach their own understanding of the afterlife and how to live. No other book in the field approaches the issue of the afterlife from so many angles, but Moreman weaves them skillfully together into an accessible and engaging book.

Conceptions of Afterlife in Jewish Inscriptions What becomes of the wicked? Hell—exile from God, subjection to fire, worms, and darkness—for centuries the idea has shaped the dread of malefactors, the solace of victims, and the deterrence of believers. Although we may associate the notion of hell with Christian beliefs, its gradual emergence depended on conflicting notions that pervaded the Mediterranean world more than a millennium before the birth of Christ. Asking just why and how belief in hell arose, Alan E. Bernstein takes us back to those times and offers us a comparative view of the philosophy, poetry, folklore, myth, and theology of that formative age. Bernstein draws on sources from ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome, and Israel, as well as early Christian writings through Augustine, in order to reconstruct the story of the prophets, priests, poets, and charismatic leaders who fashioned concepts of hell from an array of perspectives on death and justice. The author traces hell's formation through close readings of works including the epics of Homer and Vergil, the satires of Lucian, the dialogues of Plato and Plutarch, the legends of Enoch, the confessions of the Psalms, the prophecies of Isaiah, Ezechiel, and Daniel, and the parables of Jesus. Reenacting lively debates about the nature of hell among the common people and the elites of diverse religious traditions, he provides new insight into the social implications and the psychological consequences of different visions of the afterlife. This superb account of a central image in Western culture will captivate readers interested in history, mythology, literature, psychology, philosophy, and religion.

The Ancient Roman Afterlife “Wonderful…. A smart and accessible take on the ultimate question: What is Heaven? Lisa’s book is a good place to begin to find an answer.” — Jon Meacham, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of American Lion “A rare combination of journalism, memoir, and historical research … this smart yet heartfelt book leads us into the center of one of the greatest conversations of all time. And Lisa Miller is the perfect conversation partner.” — Stephen Prothero, New York Times bestselling author of American Jesus and Religious Literacy A groundbreaking history of the hereafter, Heaven by Newsweek reporter and religion editor Lisa Miller draws from both history and popular culture to reveal how past and presage visions of heaven have evolved and how they inspire us to both good and evil.

Aspects of Death and the Afterlife in Greek Literature Of all the ancient peoples, the Egyptians are perhaps best known for the fascinating ways in which they grappled with the mysteries of death and the afterlife. This beautifully illustrated book draws on the British Museum's world-famous collection of mummies and other funerary evidence to offer an accessible account of Egyptian beliefs in an afterlife and examine the ways in which Egyptian society responded materially to the challenges these beliefs imposed. The author describes in detail the numerous provisions made for the dead and the intricate rituals carried out on their behalf. He considers embalming, coffins and sarcophagi, shabti figures, magic and ritual, and amulets and papyri, as well as the mummification of sacred animals, which were buried by the millions in vast labyrinthine catacombs. The text also reflects recent developments in the interpretation of Egyptian burial practices, and incorporates the results of much new scientific research. Newly acquired information derives from a range of sophisticated applications, such as the use of noninvasive imaging techniques to look inside the wrappings of a mummy, and the chemical analysis of materials used in the embalming process. Authoritative, concise, and lucidly written, Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt illuminates aspects of this complex, vibrant culture that still perplex us more than 3,000 years later.
Death and the Afterlife in Japanese Buddhism Osiris, god of the dead, was one of ancient Egypt's most important deities. The earliest secure evidence for belief in him dates back to the fifth dynasty (c.2494-2345BC), but he continued to be worshipped until the fifth century AD. Following Osiris is concerned with ancient Egyptian conceptions of the relationship between Osiris and the deceased, or what might be called the Osirian afterlife, asking what the nature of this relationship was and what the prerequisites were for enjoying its benefits. It does not seek to provide a continuous or comprehensive account of Egyptian ideas on this subject, but rather focuses on five distinct periods in their development, spread over four millennia. The periods in question are ones in which significant changes in Egyptian ideas about Osiris and the dead are known to have occurred or where it has been argued that they did, as Egyptian aspirations for the Osirian afterlife took time to coalesce and reach their fullest form of expression. An important aim of the book is to investigate when and why such changes happened, treating religious belief as a dynamic rather than a static phenomenon and tracing the key stages in the development of these aspirations, from their origin to their demise, while illustrating how they are reflected in the textual and archaeological records. In doing so, it opens up broader issues for exploration and draws meaningful cross-cultural comparisons to ask, for instance, how different societies regard death and the dead, why people convert from one religion to another, and why they abandon belief in a god or gods altogether.

Egypt in the Age of the Pyramids Explodes concepts of the afterlife as understood in the three main Western religions, examining the views found in sacred and historical writings from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife This book begins by arguing that early Greek reflection on the afterlife and immortality insisted on the importance of the physical body whereas a wealth of Jewish texts from the Hebrew Bible, Second Temple Judaism and early (Pauline) Christianity understood post-mortem existence to be that of the soul alone. Changes begin to appear in the later New Testament where the importance of the afterlife of the physical body became essential, and such thoughts continued into the period of the early Church where the significance of the physical body in post-mortem existence became a point of theological orthodoxy. This book will assert that the influx of Greco-Romans into the early Church changed the direction of Christian thought towards one which included the body. At the same time, the ideological and polemical thrust of an eternal tortuous afterlife for the wicked became essential.

Vedic Cosmology and Ethics This new second edition presents a clear, concise and comparative overview of the teachings and the death beliefs of the largest and fastest-growing religions in North America. Unlike many books on the subject of religious beliefs, the discourse here is refreshingly objective and nonproselytizing. Furthermore, each chapter is written by a different expert or scholar who is internationally recognized as an authority on a particular faith.

Experiencing the Afterlife Few issues apply universally to people as poignantly as death and dying. All religions address concerns with death from the handling of human remains, to defining death, to suggesting what happens after life. The Routledge Companion to Death and Dying provides readers with an overview of the study of death and dying. Questions of death, mortality, and more recently of end-of-life care, have long been important ones and scholars from a range of fields have approached the topic in a number of ways. Comprising over fifty-two chapters from a team of international contributors, the companion covers: funerary and mourning practices; concepts of the afterlife; psychical issues associated with death and dying; clinical and ethical issues; philosophical issues; death and dying as represented in popular culture. This comprehensive collection of essays will bring together perspectives from fields as diverse as history, philosophy, literature, psychology, archaeology and religious studies, while including various religious traditions, including established religions like Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism as well as new or less widely known traditions such as the Spiritualist Movement, the Church of Latter Day Saints, and Raelianism. The Routledge Companion to Death and Dying is essential reading for students and researchers in religious studies, philosophy and literature.

Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt In 1739 China's emperor authorized the publication of a medical text that included images of children with smallpox to aid in the diagnosis and treatment of the disease. Those images made their way to Europe, where they were interpreted as indicative of the ill health and medical backwardness of the Chinese. In the mid-nineteenth century, the celebrated Cantonese painter Lam Qua collaborated with the American medical missionary Peter Parker in the creation of portraits of Chinese patients with disfiguring pathologies, rendered both before and after surgery. Europeans saw those portraits as evidence of Western medical prowess. Within China, the visual idiom that the paintings established influenced the development of medical photography. In The Afterlife of Images, Ari Larissa Heinrich investigates the creation and circulation of Western medical discourses that linked ideas about disease to Chinese identity beginning in the eighteenth century. Combining literary studies, the history of science, and visual culture studies, Heinrich analyzes the rhetoric and iconography through which medical missionaries transmitted to the West an image of China as “sick” or “diseased.” He also examines the absorption of that image back into China through
missionary activity, through the earliest translations of Western medical texts into Chinese, and even through the literature of Chinese nationalism. Heinrich argues that over time “scientific” Western representations of the Chinese body and culture accumulated a host of secondary meanings, taking on an afterlife with lasting consequences for conceptions of Chinese identity in China and beyond its borders.

Surviving Death Provides an accessible account of the variety and subtlety of Greek and Roman philosophy of death, from Homer to Marcus Aurelius.

Heaven The articles by Henk Bodewitz collected in this volume, published between 1969 and 2013, deal with Vedic cosmology and ethics on basis of a systematic philological study of early Vedic texts, from the Ṛgveda to various Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads.

The Afterlife of Images Andreu describes the Egyptians as they spend a day in the marshes with family and friends. They glide on light skiffs through the papyrus plants, stopping occasionally to marvel at the marsh creatures: frogs, butterflies, kingfishers, ibises, herons, lapwings, weasels, and mongooses. Because the marshes also shelter crocodiles and hippopotamuses, the day is not without its perils.

The Myth of an Afterlife Afterlife and Narrative explores why life after death is such a potent cultural concept today, and why it is such an attractive prospect for modern fiction. The book mines a rich vein of imagined afterlives, from the temporal experiments of Martin Amis's Time's Arrow to narration from heaven in Alice Sebold's The Lovely Bones.

The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion This unique Handbook provides a sophisticated, scholarly overview of the most advanced thought regarding the idea of life after death. Its comprehensive coverage encompasses historical, religious, philosophical and scientific thinking. Starting with an overview of ancient thought on the topic, The Palgrave Handbook of the Afterlife examines in detail the philosophical coherence of the main traditional notions of the nature of the afterlife including heaven, hell, purgatory and rebirth. In addition (and breaking with traditional conceptions) it also explores the most recent exciting advance – digital models. Later sections include analysis of various possible metaphysical accounts that might make sense of the afterlife (including substance dualism, emergent dualism and materialism) and the science of near death experiences as well as the links between human psychology and our attitude to the afterlife. Key features: • Grounded in the most advanced philosophical, theological and scientific thinking • Contributions by eminent scholars from the world’s top universities • Balanced treatment of fundamental issues that are relevant to everyone • Diverse approaches ranging from the religious to the scientific, from the optimistic to the pessimistic • A major section on the meaning of the afterlife which includes chapters on fear, purpose, evil, and issues regarding identity The Palgrave Handbook of the Afterlife is essential reading for scholars, researchers and advanced students researching attitudes to and effects of beliefs about death and life after death from philosophical, historical, religious, psychological and scientific perspectives.

A Traveler's Guide to the Afterlife The concept of the afterlife has always been prominent in both Greek literature and modern scholarship alike. The fate of man after his/her allotted time has come to an end has a central position in poetry, philosophy and religion, often leading to questions and answers as to how one can best live one's life, and how can one deal with the burden of mortality that is inherent in every human being. The Greeks devoted a considerable amount of their literary production in an attempt to answer these questions through a variety of different media, whereas similar concerns appear to have been at the core of the ancient world in general. This volume represents the first to examine the influences, intersections, and developments of understandings of death and the afterlife between poetic, religious, and philosophical traditions in ancient Greece in one resource. Greek thinking on death and the afterlife was neither uniform, simple, nor static, and by offering an examination of these matters in a properly interdisciplinary context this collection of papers aims to demonstrate the full richness, complexity, and flexibility of these ideas in the ancient Greek world, and illuminate how freely writers from various genres drew inspiration from each other's thinking concerning eschatological matters. Contributors: Alberto Benarbi; Rick Benitez; Nicolo Benzi; Chiara Blanco; Radcliffe Edmonds; George Alexander Gazis; Anthony Hooper; Vaios Liapis; Alex Long; Ioannis Ziogas.

Practicing the Afterlife "Published for the Center for Hellenic Studies."

The Good Place and Philosophy "For more than a thousand years, Buddhism has dominated Japanese death rituals and concepts of the afterlife. The nine essays in this volume, ranging chronologically from the tenth century to the present, bring to light both continuity and change in death practices over time. They also explore the
interrelated issues of how Buddhist death rites have addressed individual concerns about the afterlife while also filling social and institutional needs and how Buddhist death-related practices have assimilated and refashioned elements from other traditions, bringing together disparate, even conflicting, ideas about the dead, their postmortem fate, and what constitutes normative Buddhist practice. "Death and the Afterlife in Japanese Buddhism constitutes a major step toward understanding how Buddhism in Japan has forged and retained its hold on death-related thought and practice, providing one of the most detailed and comprehensive accounts of the topic to date."--BOOK JACKET.

Afterlife and Narrative in Contemporary Fiction A grand survey of the world's death and afterlife traditions throughout history • Examines beliefs from many different cultures on the soul, heaven, hell, and reincarnation; instructions for accessing the different worlds of the afterlife; how one may become a god; and how ethics and the afterlife may be connected • Explores techniques to communicate with the dead, including séance instructions • Includes an extensive bibliography of more than 900 sources from around the world Drawing on death and afterlife traditions from cultures around the world, Mark Mirabella explores the many forms of existence beyond death and each tradition's instructions to access the afterlife. He examines beliefs on the soul, heaven, hell, and reincarnation and wisdom from Books of the Dead such as the Book of Going Forth by Day from Egypt, the Katha Upanishad from India, the Bardo Thodol from Tibet, the Golden Orphic Tablets from Greece, Lieh Tzu from China, and Heaven and its Wonders and Hell from Things Heard and Seen from 18th-century Europe. Considering the question "What is Death?" Mirabella provides answers from a wide range of ancient and modern thinkers, including scientist Nicholas Maxwell, the seer Emanuel Swedenborg, 1st-century Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna, and Greek philosopher Euripides, who opined that we may already be dead and only dreaming we are alive. He explores the trek of the soul through life and death with firsthand accounts of the death journey and notes that what is perceived as death here may actually be life somewhere else. He reveals how, in many traditions, ethics and the afterlife are not connected and how an afterlife is possible even without a god or a soul. Sharing evidence that consciousness is not simply a product of the brain, he offers a strong rebuttal to nihilists, materialists, and the Lokayata philosophical school of India who believe in the "finality" of death. He explains how specters and ghosts are produced and offers techniques to communicate with the dead as well as instructions for an out-of-body experience and the complete procedure for a séance. With an extensive bibliography of more than 900 sources, this guide offers comprehensive information on afterlife beliefs from the vast majority of cultures around the world and throughout history—a veritable "traveler's guide" to the afterlife.

Death and the Afterlife In ancient Rome, it was believed some humans were transformed into special, empowered beings after death. These deified dead, known as the manes, watched over and protected their surviving family members, possibly even extending those relatives' lives. But unlike the Greek hero-cult, the worship of dead emperors, or the Christian saints, the manes were incredibly inclusive—enrolling even those without social clout, such as women and the poor, among Rome's deities. The Roman afterlife promised posthumous power in the world of the living. While the manes have often been glossed over in studies of Roman religion, this book brings their compelling story to the forefront, exploring their myriad forms, and how their worship played out in the context of Roman religion's daily practice. Exploring the place of the manes in Roman society, Charles King delves into Roman beliefs about their powers to sustain life and bring death to individuals or armies, examines the rituals the Romans performed to honor them, and reclaims the vital role the manes played in the ancient Roman afterlife.

Conceptions of the Afterlife in Early Civilizations "The Atheist Afterlife describes an afterlife that is consistent with known law and requires nothing more than physics. It demonstrates that an afterlife is possible based on reason, and supports the probability of an afterlife with an original and testable support for dualism - the proposition that our mind and body are separate."--Back cover.

Life After Death

Death and Immortality in Ancient Philosophy Because every single one of us will die, most of us would like to know what—if anything—awaits us afterward, not to mention the fate of lost loved ones. Given the nearly universal vested interest in deciding this question in favor of an afterlife, it is no surprise that the vast majority of books on the topic affirm the reality of life after death without a backward glance. But the evidence of our senses and the ever-gaining strength of scientific evidence strongly suggest otherwise. In The Myth of an Afterlife: The Case against Life after Death, Michael Martin and Keith Augustine collect a series of contributions that redress this imbalance in the literature by providing a strong, comprehensive, and up-to-date casebook of the chief arguments against an afterlife. Divided into four separate sections, this collection opens with a broad overview of the issues, as contributors consider the strongest evidence of whether or not we survive death—in particular the biological basis of all mental states and their grounding in brain activity that ceases to function at death. Next, contributors consider a host of conceptual and empirical difficulties that confront the various ways of "surviving" death—from bodiless minds to bodily resurrection to any form of posthumous
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survival. Then essayists turn to internal inconsistencies between traditional theological conceptions of an afterlife—heaven, hell, karmic rebirth—and widely held ethical principles central to the belief systems supporting those notions. In the final section, authors offer critical evaluations of the main types of evidence for an afterlife. Fully interdisciplinary, The Myth of an Afterlife: The Case against Life after Death brings together a variety of fields of research to make that case, including cognitive neuroscience, philosophy of mind, personal identity, philosophy of religion, moral philosophy, psychical research, and anomalous psychology. As the definitive casebook of arguments against life after death, this collection is required reading for any instructor, researcher, and student of philosophy, religious studies, or theology. It is sure to raise provocative issues new to readers, regardless of background, from those who believe fervently in the reality of an afterlife to those who do not or are undecided on the matter.

The Atheist Afterlife The Tibetan Book of the Dead is one of the texts that, according to legend, Padma-Sambhava was compelled to hide during his visit to Tibet in the late 8th century. The guru hid his books in stones, lakes, and pillars because the Tibetans of that day and age were somehow unprepared for their teachings. Now, in the form of the ever-popular Tibetan Book of the Dead, these teachings are constantly being discovered and rediscovered by Western readers of many different backgrounds—a phenomenon which began in 1927 with Oxford's first edition of Dr. Evans-Wentz's landmark volume. While it is traditionally used as a mortuary text, to be read or recited in the presence of a dead or dying person, this book—which relates the whole experience of death and rebirth in three intermediate states of being—was originally understood as a guide not only for the dead but also for the living. As a contribution to the science of death and dying—not to mention the belief in life after death, or the belief in rebirth—The Tibetan Book of the Dead is unique among the sacred texts of the world, for its socio-cultural influence in this regard is without comparison. This fourth edition features a new foreword, afterword, and suggested further reading list by Donald S. Lopez, author of Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West. Lopez traces the whole history of the late Evans-Wentz's three earlier editions of this book, fully considering the work of contributors to previous editions (C. G. Jung among them), the sections that were added by Evans-Wentz along the way, the questions surrounding the book's translation, and finally the volume's profound importance in engendering both popular and academic interest in the religion and culture of Tibet. Another key theme that Lopez addresses is the changing nature of this book's audience—from the prewar theosophists to the beat poets to the hippies to contemporary exponents of the hospice movement—and what these audiences have found (or sought) in its very old pages.

On the Resurrection of the Dead Experiencing the Afterlife provides the first sustained analysis of popular, vernacular depictions of the afterlife written in Italy before the Divine Comedy by authors such as Uguccione da Lodi, Giacomo da Verona, and Bonvesin da la Riva. Manuele Gragnolati uses his readings of these poets to provide a new interpretation of Dante's work. Combining elements from several disciplines, he investigates the richness of high medieval eschatology and the concept of personal identity it expresses. Gragnolati is particularly concerned with how the notions of body and pain characteristic of medieval spirituality and devotion inform the eschatological representations of the time, especially in their paradoxic urge to stress at once the physical experience of the separated soul and the final necessity of bodily resurrection. By integrating lesser-known texts and scholarship from other disciplines into the specialized field of Dante studies, Gragnolati sheds new light on some of the most vigorously debated and crucial questions raised by the Divine Comedy, including the embryological discourse of Verratorio 25, the relation between the soul's experience of pain in Purgatory and the devotion that late medieval culture expressed toward Christ's suffering, and the significance of the audacious vision of resurrected bodies that Dante the pilgrim enjoys at the end of his journey. At the same time, Gragnolati brings these questions back into contemporary discussions of medieval eschatology and opens new perspectives for current and future work on embodiment and identity. Scholars and students of Dante and Italian studies, as well as those in medieval history, religion, culture, and art history, will be rewarded by the fresh insights contained in Experiencing the Afterlife.

The Formation of Hell Gregory Shushan challenges post-modern scholarly attitudes concerning cross-cultural comparisons in the study of religions. In an original and innovative piece of comparative research, he analyses afterlife conceptions in five ancient civilizations (Old and Middle Kingdom Egypt, Sumerian and Old Babylonian Mesopotamia, Vedic India, pre-Buddhist China, and pre-Columbian Mesoamerica). These are considered in light of historical and contemporary reports of near-death experiences, and shamanic afterlife 'journeys'. Conceptions of the Afterlife in Early Civilizations is a significant study, for it presents a comprehensive new comparative framework for the cross-cultural study of myth and religion, while at the same time providing a fascinating exploration of the interface between belief and experience.

Beyond the Threshold

The Early Greek Concept of the Soul The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion contains newly commissioned chapters by 21 prominent experts who cover the
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field in a comprehensive but accessible manner. Each chapter is expository, critical, and representative of a distinctive viewpoint.

'Iggrot Ha’Ari In Excavating the Afterlife, Guolong Lai explores the dialectical relationship between sociopolitical change and mortuary religion from an archaeological perspective. By examining burial structure, grave goods, and religious documents unearthed from groups of well-preserved tombs in southern China, Lai shows that new attitudes toward the dead, resulting from the trauma of violent political struggle and warfare, permanently altered the early Chinese conceptions of this world and the afterlife. The book grounds the important changes in religious beliefs and ritual practices firmly in the sociopolitical transition from the Warring States (ca. 453-221 BCE) to the early empires (3rd century-1st century BCE). A methodologically sophisticated synthesis of archaeological, art historical, and textual sources, Excavating the Afterlife will be of interest to art historians, archaeologists, and textual scholars of China, as well as to students of comparative religions. For more information: http://arthistorypi.org/books/excavating-the-afterlife

The Myth of an Afterlife Because every single one of us will die, most of us would like to know what—if anything—awaits us afterward, not to mention the fate of lost loved ones. Given the nearly universal vested interest in deciding this question in favor of an afterlife, it is no surprise that the vast majority of books on the topic affirm the reality of life after death without a backward glance. But the evidence of our senses and the ever-gaining strength of scientific evidence strongly suggest otherwise. In The Myth of an Afterlife: The Case against Life after Death, Michael Martin and Keith Augustine collect a series of contributions that redress this imbalance in the literature by providing a strong, comprehensive, and up-to-date casebook of the chief arguments against an afterlife. Divided into four separate sections, this collection opens with a broad overview of the issues, as contributors consider the strongest evidence of whether or not we survive death—in particular the biological basis of all mental states and their grounding in brain activity that ceases to function at death. Next, contributors consider a host of conceptual and empirical difficulties that confront the various ways of “surviving” death—from bodiless minds to bodily resurrection to any form of posthumous survival. Then essayists turn to internal inconsistencies between traditional theological conceptions of an afterlife—heaven, hell, karmic rebirth—and widely held ethical principles central to the belief systems supporting those notions. In the final section, authors offer critical evaluations of the main types of evidence for an afterlife. Fully interdisciplinary, The Myth of an Afterlife: The Case against Life after Death brings together a variety of fields of research to make that case, including cognitive neuroscience, philosophy of mind, personal identity, philosophy of religion, moral philosophy, psychical research, and anomalist psychology. As the definitive casebook of arguments against life after death, this collection is required reading for any instructor, researcher, and student of philosophy, religious studies, or theology. It is sure to raise provocative issues new to readers, regardless of background, from those who believe fervently in the reality of an afterlife to those who do not or are undecided on the matter.

Resurrection, Hell and the Afterlife Dive into the moral philosophy at the heart of all four seasons of NBC's The Good Place, guided by academic experts including the show's philosophical consultants Pamela Hieronymi and Todd May, and featuring a foreword from creator and showrunner Michael Schur Explicitly dedicated to the philosophical concepts, questions, and fundamental ethical dilemmas at the heart of the thoughtful and ambitious NBC sitcom The Good Place Navigates the murky waters of moral philosophy in more conceptual depth to call into question what Chidi’s ethics lessons—and the show—get right about learning to be a good person Features contributions from The Good Place's philosophical consultants, Pamela Hieronymi and Todd May, and introduced by the show's creator and showrunner Michael Schur (Parks and Recreation, The Office) Engages classic philosophical questions, including the clash between utilitarianism and deontological ethics in the "Trolley Problem," Kant's categorical imperative, Sartre's nihilism, and T.M Scanlon's contractualism Explores themes such as death, love, moral heroism, free will, responsibility, artificial intelligence, fatalism, skepticism, virtue ethics, perception, and the nature of autonomy in the surreal heaven-like afterlife of the Good Place Led by Kimberly S. Engels, co-editor of Westworld and Philosophy

The Routledge Companion to Death and Dying How do people in Japan conceive of life after death? Although many Japanese today claim that on their archipelago there has never been much interest in this topic, the evidence presented here shows otherwise. Documenting a rich range of historical as well as contemporary scenarios that present life as going on after death, these essays also show individuals and whole communities acting on the belief that the line between the living and the dead is porous and that it makes sense even now to practice the "life" one will have after becoming dead. They thus not only bring forward aspects of Japan obscured until now, but also can contribute to our own current discussions of life, dying, and death.

How Different Religions View Death & Afterlife A New York Times bestselling historian of early Christianity takes on two of the most gripping questions of human existence: where did the ideas of heaven and hell come from and why do they endure? What happens when we die? A recent Pew Research poll showed that 72% of
Americans believe in a literal heaven and 58% believe in a literal hell. Most people who hold these beliefs are Christian and assume they are the age-old teachings of the Bible. But eternal rewards and punishments are found nowhere in the Old Testament and are not what Jesus or his disciples taught. So where did these ideas come from? In this “eloquent understanding of how death is viewed through many spiritual traditions” (Publishers Weekly, starred review), Bart Ehrman recounts the long history of the afterlife, ranging from The Epic of Gilgamesh up to the writings of Augustine, focusing especially on the teachings of Jesus and his early followers. He discusses ancient guided tours of heaven and hell, in which a living person observes the sublime blessings of heaven for those who are saved and the horrifying torments of hell for those who are damned. Some of these accounts take the form of near death experiences, the oldest on record, with intriguing similarities to those reported today. One of Ehrman’s startling conclusions is that there never was a single Greek, Jewish, or Christian understanding of the afterlife, but numerous competing views. Moreover, these views did not come from nowhere; they were intimately connected with the social, cultural, and historical worlds out of which they emerged. Only later, in the early Christian centuries, did they develop into notions of eternal bliss or damnation widely accepted today. In this “elegant history” (The New Yorker), Ehrman helps us reflect on where our ideas of the afterlife come from. With his “richly layered-narrative” (The Boston Globe) he assures us that even if there may be something to hope for when we die, there certainly is nothing to fear.

Life After Death Gregory Shushan challenges post-modern scholarly attitudes concerning cross-cultural comparisons in the study of religions. In an original and innovative piece of comparative research, he analyses afterlife conceptions in five ancient civilisations (Old and Middle Kingdom Egypt, Sumerian and Old Babylonian Mesopotamia, Vedic India, pre-Buddhist China, and pre-Columbian Mesoamerica). These are considered in light of historical and contemporary reports of near-death experiences, and shamanic afterlife ‘journeys’. Conceptions of the Afterlife in Early Civilizations is a significant study, for it presents a comprehensive new comparative framework for the cross-cultural study of myth and religion, while at the same time providing a fascinating exploration of the interface between belief and experience.

Conceptions of the Afterlife in Early Civilizations Johnston presents an argument for a form of immortality that divests the notion of any supernatural elements. The book is packed with illuminating philosophical reflection on the question of what we are, and what it is for us to persist over time.

Life After Death Joseph S. Park examines the ancient Jewish inscriptions as they pertain to afterlife beliefs and compares them with afterlife expectations in Pauline literature.

Following Osiris Christian tradition has largely held three theological affirmations on the resurrection of the physical body. Firstly, that bodily resurrection is not a superfluous hope of afterlife. Secondly, there is immediate post-mortem existence in Paradise. Finally, there is numerical identity between pre-mortem and post-resurrection human beings. The same tradition also largely adheres to a robust doctrine of The Intermediate State, a paradisiacal disembodied state of existence following the biological death of a human being. This book argues that these positions are in fact internally inconsistent, and so a new theological model for life after death is required. The opening arguments of the book aim to show that The Intermediate State actually undermines the necessity of bodily resurrection. Additionally, substance dualism, a principle The Intermediate State requires, is shown to be equally untenable in this context. In response to this, the metaphysics of the afterlife in Christian theology is re-evaluated, and after investigating physicalist and constitutionist replacements for substance dualist metaphysics, a new theory called “Eschatological Presentism” is put forward. This model combines a broadly Thomistic hylemorphic metaphysics with a novel theory of Time. This is an innovative examination of the doctrine of life after death. It will, therefore, be of great interest to scholars of analytic theology and philosophy of religion.