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Death

ATHEISM, PANTHEISM, AND THEISM

The problem of evil is closely related to the question of the meaning of life, and the question about such a meaning seems to be inevitably bounded to the development of a higher consciousness, as it has happened in the latest stages of human evolution.

Virtually all religious traditions have offered some sort of hope in the form of overcoming death. Even the Neanderthal man believed in some way or another in a future life, which he thought to be rather similar to the present existence. On account of this, Neanderthals buried the dead equipping them with the food and tools that they might need in the afterlife.[1]

The search for a meaning faces the universal experience of death as a reality that pertains to the human condition, but at the same time challenges it. Is meaning only temporal, a meaning within the limits of earthly existence, or is there an ultimate meaning that makes the human being significant even after his death?

Heidegger exposes a series of considerations about death in *Sein und Zeit* that have been highly influential in Western philosophy on account of their depth and richness. Heidegger pays attention to the fact that as human beings we always experience death in others, but we never experience the act of dying itself. And there is no possibility of substitution concerning death: no one can assume the act of dying of someone else, even if this person decides to die in order to save other people (like St. Maximilian Kolbe in Auschwitz). Death intrinsically belongs to the individual, and no one else can assume it: "my death is mine," and

1. Cf. James, "Prehistoric Religion," 23–38.

nobody, no institution, no religion, no philosophical system . . . has the right to deprive me of it.

For Heidegger, *Dasein* needs death in order to achieve its fullness, its integrity. While it exists, *Dasein* is lacking something. However, the completion of its integrity makes it become a *Nichtmehrdasein* ["no-more-*Dasein*"], no longer existing. This is the end of the *Dasein*. The resolution of *Dasein* so that it is no longer a "being that is not yet" leads to death, leads to its ceasing to exist as a *Dasein.* The *da* of the *sein* is therefore lost. Death is consubstantial to us, and our existence demands the assumption of the weight of death as something that is a phenomenon of life: death belongs to every *Dasein* and it defines its existence, for death reveals in its most radical way the condition of possibility that accompanies *Dasein.* Death illuminates the true possibilities of *Dasein.* Death is in fact a task which no one can avoid; otherwise, there is the danger of falling into the lack of authenticity: *Dasein* cannot achieve fullness without death. In Heidegger's own words:

> In the publicness with which we are with one another in our everyday manner, death is "known" as a mishap which is constantly occurring—as a "case of death." Someone or other "dies"; be he the neighbour or stranger . . . Death is encountered as a well-known event occurring within-the-world . . . Dying, which is essentially mine in such a way that no one can be my representative, is perverted into an event of public occurrence which the "they" encounters . . . Death, as the end of *Dasein*, is *Dasein*'s ownmost possibility, non-relational, certain and as such indefinite, not to be outstripped. Death is, as *Dasein*'s end, in the Being of this entity towards its end.[2]

In any case and if, as Heidegger says, death constitutes the unsurpassable possibility of *Dasein*, the possibility of the radical impossibility of existing [*Daseinsunmöglichkeit*], doesn't it make more sense to regard it as the frustration of a project rather than as the means of realization of *Dasein*? It seems that death, instead of bringing *Dasein* into its ultimate fulfilment, marks a sudden rupture within *Dasein* itself: *Dasein* could have continued to project onto the future, but its individual existence comes to an end through death, and so do its aspirations and its possibilities. Death, rather than the triumph of *Dasein*, is interpreted by many as its ultimate defeat. Heidegger thinks that an authentic existential project

2. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 296–97.

is based upon the understanding of death as something that belongs to *Dasein*. But, again, it seems that, rather than providing a meaning, death annihilates all possible meaning. Miguel de Unamuno (1864–1936) was extremely worried about the fate of his *ego*, of his identity, and for him it was not enough to believe in some sort of "social survival" in the memory of the future generations, what he calls, using a very strong language, "affective stupidity."[3] Hence, he could understand Kant's emphasis on postulating the immortality of the soul and the existence of God in the realm of practical reason. It was the only way to offer hope and to give an answer to the legitimate worry about the destiny of the individual.[4]

What is going to happen to me as an existential project? Why do I have to live if I have to die anyway? Why was I brought into existence if I had to be brought into death? And if there is no meaning, there is no necessity of conceiving of a fulfilment of the integrity of *Dasein*, or even of an authentic existential project: if there is no meaning, there is no reason to differentiate authenticity from non-authenticity.

The gravity of death is deep indeed. There are different approaches to death, different views on how it should be interpreted.

In atheism, death is regarded as a natural reality. Human beings are natural beings, and death is, therefore, part of them. We engender mortal, not immortal beings. There is a cycle in nature which is built upon the succession of life and death: there is life, because there has been death before (according to the law of "negation of negation" in Engels' dialectical materialism). Death is in fact a means of regeneration, and it favors the renewal in both nature and history. We must die so that other people may live.

One of the few words that Marx wrote about the meaning of death is in his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844): "death is the victory of the genus over the individual." Individuals perish, but humanity persists, and the reality of death speaks about the necessity of inserting the individual into the social dynamics. Marxism conceives

3. Unamuno writes, "Todo eso de que uno vive en sus hijos, o en sus obras, o en el universo son vagas elucubraciones con las que sólo se satisfacen los que padecen de estupidez afectiva, que pueden ser, por lo demás, personas de una cierta eminencia cerebral" (*Del Sentimiento Trágico de la Vida*, 20).

4. "El hombre Kant no se resignaba a morir del todo. Y porque no se resignaba a morir del todo, dio el salto aquél, el salto inmortal de una a otra crítica. Quien lea sin anteojeras *La crítica de la razón práctica* verá que, en rigor, se deduce en ella la existencia de Dios de la inmortalidad del alma, y no ésta de aquélla" (ibid., 11).

of a historical solidarity of humanity over time: the sufferings and defeats of the past are to be seen as means to encourage the advent of the utopian, classless society. The meaning of the individual lives must be understood in light of the whole history of humanity and of the deepest goal of history: the freedom of the entire human race. The individual may not drink any more, but humanity will continue drinking the wine of fraternity (Dorothee Sölle).[5]

Other forms of atheism explain that there is a natural impulse to death [*thanatos*], which coexists with the impulse to life, as in Freud. For Nietzsche, the theory of "eternal return" [*ewige Widerkunft*] is a way to avoid nihilism: the meaning of the passing of time is that everything is repeated, and everything happens again and again.

In a pantheistic approach, death is interpreted as the reintegration of the individual into the divine dynamics of cosmos and history. For Hegel (for whom the label of "pantheism" is certainly problematic), individual deaths are steps in the realization of the spirit as absolute spirit. In the *Upanishad*, the idea of an integration of the individual [*atman*] in the totality [*Brahman*] serves a similar goal: death is not to be feared, because it is a form of achieving the union of the singular and the universal; the meaning of the individual cannot be sought by itself: the individual is significant inasmuch as it gets integrated into the totality, which is the true liberation of the individual subject. Once liberation has been achieved, the chain of reincarnation ceases, and the individual penetrates into the eternal and imperishable *Brahma*. Temporal death is not the final answer to the question about the fate of the individual.

The doctrine of reincarnation is associated with this perspective: the self, the individual conscience, will remain alive, adopting new shapes, in a process that manifests the link between all things in nature. The transmigration of souls (a belief shared by Pythagoreanism, Orphycism, Druzism, and to some extent Buddhism)[6] or *metempsycho-*

5. Cf. Sölle, *Die Hinreise*, 22. According to Dorothee Sölle (1929–2003), a German theologian, God is suffering with us, and He is powerless in solidarity with us. The human struggle for a more just, more fraternal society is also the struggle of God. The question of whether or not "everything" comes to an end with death is actually an "atheistic" worry, since intrinsic to the definition of a "Christian" is the idea that he or she is not everything for himself or herself.

6. On Buddhism and death, cf. Román, *Un Viaje al Corazón del Budismo*, 77–82. Buddha did not speak about the ultimate nature of nirvana, but it seems that the annihilation of the subject to which his teachings refer is that of the "false subject," identified

sis resembles the notion of reincarnation in major Eastern traditions. Arthur Schopenhauer spoke in terms of *palingenesia*, an impersonal metempsychosis in which the will does not die and is the eternal, permanent reality that unveils itself in the new individuals.[7]

Theistic approaches to death are defined by the belief in a personal God. Death is not a natural reality: in different versions of Christianity, for example, it is the result of sin and fall, and the true destiny of the human being is immortality together with God, the eternal being. As St. Augustine writes in his *Confessions*: "*You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.*"

Plato developed the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, with its classical proof in *Phaedo*: the soul has no parts, and on account of its simplicity it cannot be divided, in opposition to material things. Death consists of the division of the body into parts which no longer form an organism, but this cannot happen to the soul. Hence, it is immortal:

> I suspect that you and Simmias would be glad to probe the argument further. Like children, you are haunted with a fear that when the soul leaves the body, the wind may really blow her away and scatter her; especially if a man should happen to die in a great storm and not when the sky is calm . . . And then we may proceed further to enquire whether that which suffers dispersion is or is not of the nature of soul—our hopes and fears as to our own souls will turn upon the answers to these questions . . . Now the compound or composite may be supposed to be naturally capable, as of being compounded, so also of being dissolved; but that which is uncompounded, and that only, must be, if anything is, indissoluble . . . And the uncompounded may be assumed to be the same and unchanging, whereas the compound is always changing and never the same . . . Is that idea or essence, which in the dialectical process we define as essence or true existence—whether essence of equality, beauty, or anything else—are these essences, I say, liable at times to some degree of change? Or are they each of them always what they are, having the same simple self-existent and unchanging forms, not admitting of variation at all, or in any way, or at any time? . . . The unchanging you can only perceive with the mind . . . Let us suppose that there are two sorts of existences—one seen, the other unseen. Let us suppose

with the external and superficial realities: with wish. Nirvana liberates the true subject, but it does not destroy the human being.

7. Cf. Whittaker, *Schopenhauer*, 43.

> them. The seen is the changing, and the unseen is the unchanging . . . And, further, is not one part of us body, another part soul? . . . And to which class is the body more alike and akin? Clearly to the seen—no one can doubt that . . . And is the soul seen or not seen?—Not seen . . . And we were not saying long ago that the soul when using the body as an instrument of perception, that is to say, when using the sense of sight or hearing or some other sense . . . were we not saying that the soul too is then dragged by the body into the region of the changeable, and wanders and is confused; the world spins round her, and she is like a drunkard, when she touches change? . . . But when returning into herself she reflects, then she passes into the other world, the region of purity, and eternity, and immortality, and unchangeableness, which are her kindred, and with them she ever lives, when she is by herself and is not let or hindered; then she ceases from her erring ways, and being in communion with the unchanging is unchanging. And this state of the soul is called wisdom? . . . When the soul and the body are united, then nature orders the soul to rule and govern, and the body to obey and serve. Now which of these two functions is akin to the divine? And which to the mortal? . . . The soul is in the very likeness of the divine, and immortal, and intellectual, and uniform, and indissoluble, and unchangeable; and that the body is in the very likeness of the human, and mortal, and unintellectual, and multiform, and dissoluble, and changeable.[8]

This vision involves a dualistic conception of human nature, which is also present in Gnosticism, Encratism, and in Descartes' distinction between *res extensa* and *res cogitans*.

But there is another theistic approach: resurrection. In resurrection there is a rebirth, a new coming into existence. Death is not denied: it is overcome. There are three principal types of resurrection: resurrection of the spirit, resurrection of the body, and resurrection of the totality of the person (both spirit and body).

Apocalypticism developed a highly original conception of history, and in this movement the belief in the afterlife, and especially the belief in the resurrection of the dead, found fertile ground. How did this happen? How is it possible that Judaism suddenly adopted a belief that had been absent in it for centuries? Still in late books like Job, Qohelet, and Ben Sira, eternal life is either explicitly denied or simply ignored.

8. Plato, *Phaedo,* 78–81.

Nonetheless, resurrection became a canonical belief for both Judaism and Christianity.[9]

THE ORIGIN OF THE IDEA OF RESURRECTION IN JUDAISM

In our opinion, there are three fundamental positions in recent bibliography regarding the origin of the idea of resurrection of the dead in Judaism:

a) Negative hypothesis: separation between resurrection and Israelite tradition

b) Positive hypothesis: continuity between resurrection and Israelite tradition

c) Synthetic hypothesis: novelty of resurrection (integration of both the negative and the positive hypotheses, admitting the originality of resurrection and even the possibility of cultural borrowings, and at the same time defending its deep roots in the Israelite religious traditions)

Negative Hypothesis: Separation between Resurrection and Israelite Tradition

George W. E. Nickelsburg[10] has analyzed the principal references to the ideas of the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the flex in Jewish intertestamental literature. Nickelsburg's approach is based upon the identification of the great theological themes and literary genres associated with the belief in the resurrection of the dead. This methodology is closely related to *Formgeschichte* ["history of forms"], in an attempt to discover the hermeneutic patterns which lie behind the different texts, in order to answer three essential questions:

9. Islam shares with Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity the belief in a final resurrection of the dead at the end of time. Cf. Abumalham, *El Islam*, 120–23. For an introduction to Islam, cf. Küng, *Islam: Past, Present and Future*.

10. The book *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*, by G. W. E. Nickelsburg, was first published in 1967, and it has been reedited and extended as *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism and Early Christianity*. The new edition of Nickelsburg's principal work on the development of the belief in the resurrection of the dead has inspired different reviews by Clanton (according to whom Nickelsburg's most outstanding contribution is to show the variety and vitality of Jewish thought on eternal life during the Second Temple period), Blanton, Schutte, and Whitley.

1. Have intrinsically different conceptions such as resurrection of the flesh and immortality of the soul served the same goals?
2. Did these conceptions assume new theological functions over time?
3. Why are they found only in certain texts?

In effect, resurrection of the flesh and immortality of the soul are two divergent, if not antithetical, ideas, reflecting different cultural and religious backgrounds. On account of this, historians of religion face a serious problem when realizing that there is a rather notorious confusion between both notions in several intertestamental texts. This gives the impression that the authors themselves were not fully aware of the full implications of the beliefs they wanted to express.

The elenchus of texts examined by Nickelsburg covers the whole range of Old Testament and intertestamental literature with connections with the belief in the resurrection of the dead, undertaking a rather comprehensive study.

He first analyzes Dan 12:1–3, taking Dan 12:2 as the first absolutely clear mention of resurrection in the Old Testament.[11] There is an almost unanimous consensus that this passage from the book of Daniel goes back to the time of Antiochus IV's persecution, around 164 BCE. His campaigns in Palestine might have provoked not only a political reaction against his figure, but a rejection of the ideas he embodied in the sphere of religious beliefs: a rejection of Hellenistic rationality, including a rejection of the Greek conception of immortality of the soul, which was meant to affect both the pious and the impious. This context of refusal of the Greek *logos* by certain Jewish groups may be interpreted as the frame in which to locate the emergence of an idea that in its beginning had to be bizarre, at least in comparison to the earlier beliefs held by the people of Israel. But, on the other hand, Nickelsburg also attributes the origin of this concept to a gradual individualization of religious practice and of eschatology.

11. Dan 12:1–3: "At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever."

The association of the idea of resurrection to the dramatic experience under Antiochus IV's persecution seems to presuppose a rather sudden emergence of this notion, without an apparent continuity with the precedent traditions of Israel. We must take into account, however, that the explanation of the birth of the belief in resurrection in terms of two causes (the reaction against Hellenism and the progressive individualization of religious practice) hides a contradiction. It is not easy to reconcile both proposals: on the one hand, a reaction involving important sectors of Judaism in their fighting Greek culture, and on the other hand, a loss of the sense of community that could have converted the idea of *restauratio* ["restoration"] of Israel, which had prevailed in the Old Testament, into the resurrection of the individual.

If we should wonder about the roots of the tendency leading towards an increasing predominance of individualism (that became more intense during the second century BCE), the answer would involve dealing with the infiltration of elements of the Hellenistic rationality. The thought about the individual in the ethical, religious, and cosmological realms found a higher development within Greek philosophy than within Hebrew religiosity, because in the latter the way to understand the individual was connected with his membership to the community, sharing the same beliefs and practices. The rejection of Hellenistic rationality was not therefore so radical, or otherwise it would be difficult to explain why the birth of the idea of resurrection meant, even unintentionally, an assumption of certain elements of that rationality.

Concerning the individualization of eschatology, Nickelsburg emphasizes the novelty of the resurrection doctrine in Daniel. For Nickelsburg, the language of Isaiah's Apocalypse[12] could have offered a decisive inspiration for Daniel's text, but it cannot be forgotten that Daniel presents a truly universal resurrection, affecting both the pious and the impious. It consists of a resurrection that is not imagined as a mere defence or vindication of the just, but as an instrument so that everyone may be judged.

The acceptance of a double eschatological destiny, that of the just and that of the wicked, can be found in Isa 66. Nickelsburg thinks that a new reading of Isa 66 in a context of persecution could have been more

12. Isa 26:19: "Your dead shall live; together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; for your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."

relevant for the emergence of the idea of resurrection than Isa 26. This faith was added to the deep conviction about the creative power of God, capable of renewing heavens and earth and of causing the rebirth of a nation. The suffering of the just under the persecution of Antiochus IV posed a dilemma that was not unknown to Hebrew theodicy, although it now appeared with greater intensity: how is it that the wicked can destroy the just person's will to fulfil the law of God? Is the just condemned to a common, natural death, participating in the same fate as the wicked? The contradiction that exists between the thesis of the triumph of the just and the antithesis of the triumph of the impious could have favored a new theological synthesis: the idea of resurrection as a prolegomenon to divine judgement. This divine judgement was represented as a particular judgement, too, following the dynamics of eschatological individualization which has been already mentioned by Nickelsburg. Resurrection emerges as the condition of possibility for judgement to take place.

Resurrection may be seen, in this sense, as an expression of the theological synthesis that a situation as complex as the one experienced under Antiochus IV's persecution demanded and that might have otherwise disputed the religious pillars of Israel. Resurrection is the tool of God to bring judgement into effect. Different authors have shown their disagreement with Nickelsburg's "dialectical" approach, aimed at justifying the birth of the idea of resurrection.[13] They especially focus on the fact that this model is unable to explain why not every Jewish group accepted this belief.

Daniel's structure can be interpreted, according to Nickelsburg, as follows: since judgement is needed, resurrection arises as a condition *sine qua non* for judgement. But it is to be noticed that Daniel does not present a completely universal resurrection: Dan 12:2 speaks in terms of "many of those" [*rabim mishné . . .* ; *polloi ton*], a fact that makes him state that resurrection is a functional notion for Daniel, allowing him to solve the problem posed by those who had an unfair end for their lives. It is not integrated into a systematic reflection on eschatology. The book of Daniel is not a general treatise on theodicy.[14] As it often happens in the history of ideas, in spite of the originally reduced and even provincial

13. Cf. Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel*, 194.

14. Cf. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism and Early Christianity*, 23.

perspective from which it emerged, the concept of resurrection finally acquired an undeniable transcendence for rabbinic Judaism.

The contrast between the Hebrew and the Hellenistic mentality can be seen in the recurrent topic of the persecution of the suffering just, which appears in both the Old Testament and intertestamental literature. Wis 1–6 (the justice of God will bring immortality) and the different stories about unfair condemnations (Joseph in Egypt, Ahikar, Mordecai, Daniel, Susanna . . .) reflect a didactic goal, and so do the songs of the Servant in Deutero-Isaiah, themselves an exaltation of the suffering just: "Our analysis has shown that the servant and the protagonists in the wisdom tales are analogous figures." [15] As a matter of fact, Nickelsburg consecrates an important part of his study to the elucidation of the topic of the exaltation of the just with its prophetic, wisdom, and intertestamental parallels (especially *1 Enoch* 62), highlighting the point that resurrection is also a proof of the sovereignty of God above all created realities: He is the One who judges and exalts, and resurrection constitutes an essential part of the systematization of the belief in the universal lordship of God, whose prophetic roots are clear. This approach appears in 2 Macc 7, where suffering does not mean divine abandonment.[16]

Regarding Qumran, we must first notice that Nickelsburg's considerations have been played down by the Émile Puech's far-reaching study.[17] Nickelsburg, just as Collins,[18] thinks that the Dead Sea Scrolls "contain not a single passage that can be interpreted with absolute certainty as a reference to resurrection or immortality." The *Hodayot*, the community's hymns, speak in terms of a "realized eschatology" in the present participation of future life: "The blessings of the eschaton are already a reality for the author of the Qumran hymn."[19] Nickelsburg stresses the fact that the topic of death is infrequent in Qumran, and this might lie behind the absence of a treatment of the idea of resurrection.

In a conclusive way, we might say that Nickelsburg thinks of resurrection as the manifestation of a theological demand, motivated by

15. Ibid., 66.

16. The perspective of the exaltation of the just people remains in later intertestamental writings, like 2 Baruch 49–51.

17. Cf. Puech, *La Croyance des Essèniens en la Vie Future*.

18. Cf. Collins, *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 123.

19. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism and Early Christianity*, 190.

the fundamental problem of classical theodicy: the suffering of the just. This problem became intensified during the crisis experienced in times of Antiochus IV. Jewish religion needed new answers of broad scope to resolve a complex and non-peaceful question: the future exaltation of the just people. The idea of resurrection appeared as a bright theological synthesis, incorporating traditional Israelite religiosity into a new frame of understanding. How resurrection is going to take place is not the principal issue (whether in terms of a realistic resurrection of the flesh or of a spiritual resurrection); what matters is the deep meaning of resurrection as a mechanism to vindicate the heritage of the just people on earth, of those who deserve the reward of God.

A similar perspective is adopted by *Hans Clemens Caesarius Cavallin*.[20] The texts he proposes generally coincide with those examined by Nickelsburg. Cavallin mentions Dan 12:2 and Dan 12:13 as the principal Old Testament references to resurrection. He classifies the texts according to their geographical and cultural setting rather than to their topic, identifying two great groups: texts coming from Palestinian Judaism and texts coming from Greek-speaking Judaism of the Diaspora.

Important texts falling into the first category are the Enochic cycle, the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, the *Psalms of Solomon* and the Qumran's manuscripts. Cavallin only finds one or at most two texts in the Dead Sea Scrolls which reflect the belief in resurrection (4Q181 1 II 3–6; 4QPsDn 38–40). He also studies the *Life of Adam and Eve* (with the *Apocalypse of Moses*), the *Book of Biblical Antiquities*, Pseudo-Philo, *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch*, the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, the *Testament of Abraham*, and the *Apocryphal of Ezekiel*. Finally, he goes on to analyze the most significant inscriptions found in Palestine.

The exposition of the texts from the Greek-speaking Jewish community of Diaspora starts with those passages in the Septuagint that deviate from the original Hebrew version (perhaps influenced by the belief in the resurrection of the dead), 2 Macc, 4 Macc, Wis, Philo's writings (concerned with the immortality of the soul), Josephus' testimonies, the *Sibylline Oracles*, *Pseudo-Phocylides*, *Joseph and Aseneth*, the *Testament*

20. The first part of the book *Life after Death: Paul's Argument for the Resurrection of the Dead in 1 Cor 15*, by H. C .C. Cavallin, is titled "An Enquiry into the Jewish Background," and it contains a detailed analysis of the intertestamental texts about the belief in the resurrection of the dead.

of Job, *2 Enoch* (*Slavonic Enoch*), and certain inscriptions from tombs of Jews in the Diaspora referring to life after death, although not clearly manifesting a belief in resurrection.

The examination of both sets of texts leads Cavallin to support the idea that a unified anthropology never appeared, but "the writers intend to state that the personality survives."[21] There is no further specification or aim of accuracy about how the personality survives, and a unified perspective on the structure of human being does not exist at all.

Cavallin finds three recurrent motives in intertestamental literature:

1. Astral immortality of the just (Dan 12:13; *1 Enoch* 104:2; Wis 3:7; *4 Ezra* 7:97; *Book of Biblical Antiquities* 33:5), also present in certain Old Testament passages (like Deut 12:3), but principally connected with Eastern *theologoumena*.
2. The assumption or exaltation of the just, recalling Isa 52:13.
3. The topic about the holy ones of Israel, stemming from the Old Testament imagery.

He ends up enumerating twelve important theses as a colophon to his research:[22]

1) *There is obviously no single Jewish doctrine about life or death in the period under consideration*.[23]

The texts examined by Cavallin prove that Second Temple Judaism did not know a uniform eschatology, neither in the Old Testament nor in intertestamental literature. There are at least three predominant perspectives: the oldest one, which conceives of Sheol as the common destiny for all human beings, the idea of resurrection of the flesh, and that of immortality of the soul.

2) *These ideas, partly contrary, partly possible to harmonize, but seldom actually harmonized, do not only change from one stream of tradition to*

21. Cavallin, *Life after Death*, 212.

22. Cf. ibid., 199–201.

23. Mowinckel has underlined this aspect: "These ideas were never systematically arranged; and any attempt so to present them would only result in an artificial picture" (*He That Cometh*, 267).

another, but appear simply juxtaposed in the same writings and even in passages very close to each other.

Resurrection and immortality of the soul may appear together in certain works (e.g., *4 Ezra* 7), indicating that by the time they were written, a systematic reflection on anthropology and eschatology had not taken place. Instead of this, the confluence of ideas from different origins (Greek, Old Hebrew, Eastern . . .) finds a common ground in the belief in the persistence of personality beyond death. The problem grows when we differentiate general eschatology (the consummation of the world) from particular eschatology (individual resurrection, judgement, and reward), both of which are intended to be reconciled in writings like *4 Ezra* through the idea of an intermediate state.

3) *It is necessary to demythologize texts in order to get their truly relevant meaning, which transcends the specific symbols or representations.*

This thesis must be understood in the context of 1970s dominant theology, and especially after the so-called demythologization proposal of Rudolf Bultmann[24] and the School of Marburg.

4) *Resurrection of the body does not prevail in most documents.*

In fact, few Old Testament and intertestamental eschatological texts may be depicted as containing explicit references to the resurrection of the flesh. The latter is often confused with the immortality of the soul or with the resurrection of the people in a collective sense (as a restora-

24. Demythologization advocates for a critical assessment of the mythological elements found in the primitive Christian writings, which make the preaching of the Gospel incompatible with the mentality of modern societies. Bultmann's work assimilates existentialist philosophy (most notably, Heidegger's existential analytics) to Christian theology. Cf. Jaspers and Bultmann, *Myth and Christianity*. Concerning Bultmann's interpretation of the faith in the resurrection of the dead, cf. Greshake, *Auferstehung der Toten*, 109–25. A fundamental problem that every project of demythologization is compelled to address is that of the definition of a "myth." What is, in fact, a myth? Does all human discourses fall into this category? Is it sufficient to characterize it from the study of rites, from a mythopoietic point of view, or from the examination of the unconscious? It seems, as Roland Barthes emphasizes, that mythology offers at least two dimensions: formal-semiological (which could be associated with the synchronic sphere) and historical-ideological (linked to the diachronic sphere; cf. Barthes, *Mythologies*, 112). Every myth exhibits a series of constant structural elements that reproduce universal human situations, but the expression of these situations is mediated by the historical scenario. For a structuralist approach to myth, cf. Segal, *Structuralism in Myth*; Barthes, *Mythologies*, 112.

tion). The majority of these texts might fit in what Cavallin has classified as Palestinian Jewish works (Dan 12:2; *Life of Adam and Eve*, *Book of Biblical Antiquities*, *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch*).

5) *Resurrection is associated with the divine glorification of the just rather than with a material, bodily dimension.*

Nickelsburg had already remarked that the idea of resurrection, both in the first Old Testament references and in the oldest intertestamental testimonies, possessed a functional nature regarding the exaltation of the suffering just by God.

6) *Palestinian sources do not emphasize the idea of immortality of the soul.*

The most important writings of the Greek-speaking Judaism of Diaspora, such as the works of Philo of Alexandria and the book of Wisdom, do not mention resurrection of the flesh. They gravitate around the idea of immortality of the soul, a concept of far-reaching importance in different Greek philosophical schools (Orphic, Pythagorean, Platonic).[25] Palestinian sources do not bestow such a nuclear position on the notion of immortality of the soul, although this statement should be confronted with different passages from the Enochic cycle, like *1 Enoch* 22,[26] which contain allusions to the imperishable nature of the spirits of the just and the impious.

7) *Qumran shows an anticipated eschatology, in which immortality and resurrection are "realized" realities.*

Cavallin shares the same point of view than Nickelsburg and Collins. This thesis should be compared with that of Puech (1993).

25. For an introduction to Pythagoreanism, Platonism, Orphism, and their views on the afterlife, cf. Reale and Antiseri, *Il Pensiero Occidentale dalle Origini ad Oggi: Storia delle Idee Filosofiche e Scientifiche.*

26. In *1 Enoch* 22:9–11 we read: "These three have been made in order that the spirits of the dead might be separated. And in the manner in which the souls of the righteous are separated (by) this spring of water with light upon it, in like manner, the sinners are set apart when they die and are buried in the earth and judgement has not been executed upon them in their lifetime, upon this great pain, until the great day of judgement—and to those who curse (there will be) plague and pain forever, and the retribution of their spirits. They will bind them there forever—even if from the beginning of the world."

8) *Several intertestamental writings attribute great importance to the idea of an imminent end of history, although 4 Macc, Philo, and Testament of Abraham are focused on the destiny of the individual.*

General eschatology and the concept of "consummation of history" are intrinsically linked to the apocalyptic imagination, as we have analyzed in the previous chapter. It is in fact difficult to understand the birth of the belief in resurrection without the parallel development of a theology of history. This development was nurtured by several apocalyptic authors. The eschatological concern of the apocalyptic writings affects history as a whole and the end of the world. Those writings influenced by the Greek cultural environment, such as Philo of Alexandria's works and 4 Macc, do not draw much attention on the topic of the consummation of history which involves a linear perspective in the arrow of time that was not so clear for the Hellenistic mentality. The interest in the fate of the individual goes beyond the interest in the destiny of history as a whole. Anyway, Cavallin has shown how both perspectives, the general and the individual, also coexist in certain writings, generating different problems of interpretation.

9) *These writings account for a harmonization between the common end of history and the immediate salvation of the individual.*

An example of this is *4 Ezra* and his idea of an "intermediate state," some sort of proposal to solve the apparent impossibility of reconciling the judgement and the destiny of the individual with the judgement and the fate of history as a whole.

10) *The so-called intermediate state implies a harmonization between the two perspectives (that of general eschatology and that of individual or particular eschatology).*

In Cavallin's own words, "there seems to be a tendency in 4 Ezra to try to combine and harmonize different eschatological ideas, inasmuch as it describes the intermediate state, harmonizing the end time of resurrection with the immediate retribution after death."[27]

27. Cavallin, *Life after Death*, 84.

11) *The most consistent topic in the different texts is the one of judgement and final retribution.*

Cavallin is admitting, as so does Nickelsburg, that the idea of resurrection initially constituted a functional instrument to express the notion of judgement and of vindication of the just people in spite of their earthly suffering. In fact, a majority of the texts place resurrection in parallel to the eschatological judgement.

12) *The rabbinic canonization of the resurrection of the dead is the culmination of a process beginning in early intertestamental literature.*

Just as Nickelsburg, Cavallin brings the origin of the idea of resurrection of the dead back to early intertestamental literature, at the end of the third century BCE. There exists a restricted continuity with the eschatological conceptions of the Old Testament.

Any analysis of Cavallin's work must be aware of the changes of appreciation in the theological and exegetical tendencies during the last decades.[28] However, it is true that his approach offers a perspective that cannot be ignored at all: the differences between the eschatological conceptions of the Old Testament and intertestamental literature make it necessary for both the theologian and the exegete to look for the essential doctrinal basis underlying these conceptions, beyond the particular representations that they may have adopted. This core content could be, according to Cavallin, the divine exaltation or glorification of the just. The resurrection of the dead might consist of a *theologoumenon* aimed at providing with a symbolic representation of the conviction that divine power cannot leave the just person unrewarded after his death.

In a strictly philosophical level, it is interesting to notice how this attempt to reach the essence of pre-rabbinic Jewish eschatology beyond its different symbolic representations keeps a close relation with Hegel's philosophical appeal to transcend the representation by the concept, retaining its universal content. In any case, it is extremely difficult, although not impossible, to separate the symbolism from the idea with the intention of being capable of recognizing the most genuine dimension of eschatology.

28. The proposal of a demythologized reading of the ideas of resurrection and immortality of the soul has been defended by Krister Stendahl, too, who thinks that both beliefs demand a creative, demythologizing interpretation if they are to be taken seriously by twenty-first-century thought (Cf. Stendahl, *Immortality and Resurrection*, 5).