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Modern psychology postulates that human consciousness is a creative and interactive system that constructs a model of a lawful world, attributes minds to others, and creates a self upon which to base a personal narrative. Truth is determined by the brain's belief systems, which involve complex neuronal networks and many different

neurotransmitters. Social forces often make belief more a matter of solidarity than of reason. Just as perception makes a model that explains the world we experience, so religious belief creates a purpose for our existence, often attributing this to a divinity. The human brain has many different states of awareness. Meditation combines aspects of both sleep and wakefulness. Inward thinking often deals with matters beyond the reach of perception. Our intuitions of the transcendent (or the manifestations of the divine) vary from one culture to the next. Science adapts its theories as new information becomes available, whereas religion defines its truth in doctrines, denouncing other beliefs as heresy. Yet many religious parables remain elusive to definitive interpretation.

Scientific determinism leaves no place for freedom of the will, even though such freedom is essential to human morality. However, just as physical determinism does not work in the subatomic world, so biological determinism may not work at the level of complexity represented by the human brain. Physiological experiments purporting to demonstrate that human consciousness only occurs after the brain has already made decisions about how to act are reviewed and criticized as being inappropriately dualistic. Human morality is centered on the ideas of compassion, justice and wisdom. Religion proposes these in the form of divine instruction, whereas science says such laws were learned so that human society could survive in a hostile world. Ideas of justice and morality lead to politics, where compassion is ever in conflict with power. Justice and morality require that we consider the consequences as well as the causes of our actions. Human principles of justice call into question the concept of a God who does not or cannot prevent needless suffering.

Death comes to us all. Science proposes that death is the end of the individual consciousness. Grey areas exist on the borderline of death, particularly when breathing is artificially maintained. Nevertheless, when the heart finally stops beating, the body becomes a corpse and enters into decay. The belief that we may somehow survive death runs deep in human thought. The immortality of the soul leads to ideas of resurrection in the West and of reincarnation in the East. In both, death comes with judgment. Our lives determine whether we are bound for heaven or condemned to hell, whether we escape from continual rebirth or return. Science says these ideas are fanciful. Yet science knows not what will happen when the stars go out and reality is no more. Perhaps

we may escape from mortality by understanding ourselves, contributing to human knowledge, and thereby becoming part of a more general consciousness.