

isn't who you really are, so it's burned and discarded as your spirit migrates to a new form to be reincarnated into another body.

What we do know about what happens after death is that the universe will continue on and trillions upon trillions of new life forms will proceed us and our loved ones. Is it possible we might experience the cosmos again in another form? Belief in reincarnation says yes.

We are also told by scientists that the universe had a beginning and thus will most likely have an end just as we do. Will this end be met by a God who decides to bring us back in the same form recognizable to the one we'll have to depart with at death? Belief in the resurrection says yes.

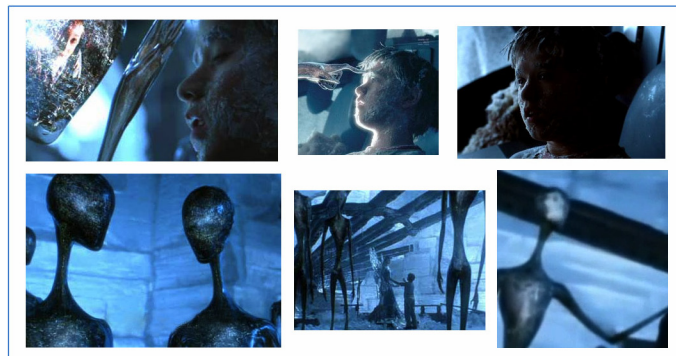
It should be clear that both perspectives speak not of our divisions and delusions, but of our need to reconcile East with West, head with heart, the material and the spiritual. Only through the synthesis of both can we see the legitimate place each side holds in the same reality/condition we all inhabit.

Until we discover the elixir that brings the fountain of youth and immortality to all beings, belief in the resurrection and reincarnation will never disappear for as long as we live with death on this earth. They are both inseparable from the very essence of what it means to be human. We will forever be bound to contradict our opposite with perspectives inherent to a duality.

But if we can stretch our limits and begin reconciling the great differences between the East and West, it should also be possible that we may bridge the divide between the theist and atheist minds. Through the discovery of our shared humanity, we have a basis from which to find more common ground than that which is used to separate and create war.

Upon closer examination, both sides in every duality share the experience of being at the mercy of the universe. The religious practitioners in East and West are utterly dependent on the great compassion of the cosmos in sparing them from a life of suffering in the flames of hell or imprisoned by a primitive body like an animal whose life many people don't give a second thought to torturing, slaughtering or eating.

Atheists are likewise just as dependent on this great compassion, whether it resides in the form of a divine being, Godlike alien or machine who has evolved beyond an intelligence conceivable to us. Those that cryogenically freeze their bodies are doing so with a religious like faith similar to those preserving them in caskets, that someday in the future a kind and benevolent entity may pity them enough to revive their form and provide an opportunity of a second life and potential shot at immortality.



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RESURRECTION



REINCARNATION

To the many religious practitioners on each side of the divide between East and West, the concept of resurrection and reincarnation in the afterlife is believed to be incompatible.

Religions in the West primarily concern themselves with the exterior realm. God's gender in the West is male and resides outside oneself as an exclusive divine personality to be contacted through the means of prayer and eventually invited to enter one's heart.

Religions of the East don't fall into the same category of those in the West. It is true that they can have the same external trappings of ritual and elaborate pageantry, but their focus lies in the internal realm. The idea of a paternal God outside ourselves is often rejected by Buddhists, Hindus and Taoists. To these practitioners, God is an impersonal concept that is more feminine in its all-embracing nature of spirit and is accessed within through the means of meditation.



Many Jews, Christians and Muslims pray to make contact with a God outside themselves while Hindus, Buddhists and Taoists meditate to connect to the God within.

In Hindu art, the divine feminine is the sub-conscious object of devotion. Even though the Hindu God's are identified as male, they are depicted in very feminine representations.



In this painting, Krishna appears as someone who could pass as a woman. In the next illustration of Shiva, this God not only wears earrings like a woman, but also has long hair, plucked eyebrows, long eyelashes and feminine lips. We can also see that this Hindu deity has made peace with the serpent; a symbol of sinister intent in western religion known for tempting the first woman into bringing sin and evil into the world. Other examples of male Gods appearing feminine, are Ram, Dattatreya, and Vishnu.



Conversely, God in the West is depicted in a very masculine mold.



In this famous painting by Michaelangelo, God is a stern old man reaching out to touch the hand of Adam. By creating the male first, God seems to be closer to the masculine gender which reflects in his favoritism on them with their assignment of writing his commandments and becoming spokesmen on his behalf as prophets for the divine kingdom.

To anyone on either side of the divide between yin and yang / East and West, it would seem that one side is wrong and the other is right because surely, reincarnation and resurrection can't both be correct. But is it possible that these perspec-

tives are just two sides of our world's collective religious coin? It was believed for many years that light couldn't possibly be a particle and wave at the same time even though it was later demonstrated to be true. What if the dual visions of the afterlife are just two perspectives demonstrating the split nature of the same indivisible reality?

Resurrection speaks to the perspective that sees the preciousness of our individual lives now and how we often want to identify with them or hang on to them for eternity. The amount of blood, sweat and tears that goes towards building our bodies and minds into what they are is staggering and how would we not hope that cosmic justice would not allow them to be taken away without being returned to us at some time in the future?

Reincarnation speaks to the perspective that seeks variety. As humans we like to change our clothes every day so why spend eternity locked into just one form? We've probably all wondered what it was like to live as our opposite gender, in another race or even species. How boring it would be stuck in one body for eternity when you could experience life as a hawk, dragonfly, a dolphin or even a dinosaur. Or think about the countless alien life forms that are possible elsewhere in the universe.

Most people who die in the West have their remains prepared in a way acceptable to the tenants of western religion. The shell of our body is to be laid to rest in a protective box that will preserve our remains until the resurrection where they will then be reassembled. Most people who die in the East have their remains prepared in a way acceptable to the tenants of eastern religion. The container of the flesh