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## **2.7.2 Excursus: Immortality of the Soul, Reincarnation, and Karma**

In reflecting on the dissolution of the ego, we touch upon profound spiritual questions that I would like to explore in this excursus. To that end, I will present various perspectives from different religions on the themes of the immortality of the soul, reincarnation, and karma.

On the one hand, I want to look beyond the horizon; on the other hand, I want to show the origins of beliefs.

### **Back to the roots of faith**

Many spiritual seekers are drawn to commercial offerings, where often old wisdom is merely repackaged and attractively presented. Many do not bother to engage with the original sources of the great religions.

I have my doubts whether one can truly be led to God along such a path. For the unpopular aspects of the spiritual journey - such as humility, repentance, and reparation - are usually left out in such offerings.

**Yet there is no way to reach God that bypasses them.**

### **Spirituality: Between the true path and spiritual consumerism**

There is also the danger of getting lost in an endless array of new spiritual trends and losing sight of the true core of the path.

True spirituality cannot be consumed — in fact, it demands the opposite: to turn inward, embracing humility, simplicity, and silence.

The primary goal on a genuine spiritual path is not merely to feel good in the short term, but to find God. This sometimes requires us to let go of and sacrifice beloved things.

Here, a clear distinction in orientation becomes evident.

We should continually ask ourselves what we are truly seeking, so that we may recognize and, if necessary, correct our orientation.

At the same time, I do not wish to judge those whose first steps are through modern spiritual offerings. Every path begins somewhere - and sometimes, even a superficial entry point eventually leads to greater depth.

What matters is that we keep asking ourselves whether we are drawing closer to the truth, whether our hearts are being transformed, and whether we are truly willing to walk the uncomfortable parts of the path.

## **Sincere seeking leads us into the depths of our inner being**

Ultimately, we must come to a point where we are led by God Himself within our innermost being. No offering, no teacher, and no master can replace this.

However, this requires a real inner transformation.

The teacher closest to you is your own, original mind. You should learn to listen to what your original mind tells you.

You must reach this state. The Buddhist expression would be that you must purify your inner nature.

[Sun Myung Moon](#)

Those who seek sincerely will, sooner or later, discover the depth that true spiritual traditions hold.

## **Immortality of the Soul, Reincarnation, and Karma in Buddhism**

Buddhism takes the view of the dissolution of the ego a step further: There is no permanent self and no immortal soul that wanders from life to life – and thus no lasting spiritual beings.

Rebirth is explained by the law of karma – the effects of actions, words, and thoughts. These leave behind a kind of energetic trail that continues after death. One can imagine it like a candle flame lighting a new candle: The flame is not the same, but connected through cause and effect.

Ancestral worship in Buddhism at first glance seems to contradict the belief in the non-existence of an eternally existing soul. Since there is no permanent self in Buddhism, the ancestors do not exist as spiritual personalities in a spiritual world.

What is revered instead is the spiritual and cultural connection with the ancestors – an expression of gratitude and respect. Cultural and Confucian influences also flow into this.

The idea of a complete dissolution of the self and the Buddhist teaching of the non-existence of an immortal soul is difficult for many people to accept.

I can personally understand this idea insofar as it arose from the mystical experience of the Buddha. In this experience, he realized complete unity and the dissolution of the personal, individualistic ego, which led him to perfect freedom.

This deeply mystical perspective can be helpful in guiding people toward enlightenment, as it supports the consistent letting go of individual attachments

There are also Buddhist schools – such as folk Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, the Yogācāra school, and Pure Land Buddhism – that recognize soul-like concepts and speak of transitional states of existence in a spiritual world resembling heaven and hell.

Even in these traditions, individual existence ultimately ends in complete dissolution in the state of Nirvana.

## **Reincarnation in Zen Buddhism**

However, it is important to emphasize that reincarnation plays little to no role in Zen Buddhism. The practice is entirely focused on the direct experience of the present moment - on mindfulness, Zazen (sitting meditation), and the dissolution of the notion of self in the here and now.

Many people who have grown up with Zen religious education in Japan - like my wife - report that reincarnation was never addressed there.

**Zen is less concerned with metaphysical speculations and more with understanding one's own thinking and awakening directly.**

## **Memory of past lives through trance methods**

In the West, there are trance methods through which people believe they can remember past lives.

From a Buddhist perspective, however, such "memories" would not be the recollection of an eternal self, but rather projections of the ego-consciousness - ultimately illusions.

Trance states that produce images and ideas about the self are generally considered illusions of the ego and not spiritual insights that lead to liberation.

In Hinduism, by contrast, the soul (Ātman) is regarded as eternal and is reborn from life to life. Memories of past lives are basically possible here but are seen as rare blessings or as expressions of advanced spiritual maturity.

Thus, from a Hindu perspective, they cannot simply be induced at will through techniques like hypnosis.

## **Rebirth and spiritual return**

Many people in the West who believe in reincarnation associate it with the idea of an immortal soul that is reborn into a new body after death - an idea that primarily stems from Hinduism.

In classical Christianity, however, reincarnation is not envisioned.

The **Divine Principle** likewise assumes a single earthly life during which a person matures spiritually through lived relationships. Furthermore, man and woman unfold as a complete image of God, extending from the family to the whole human family.

After death, this development continues in the spiritual world - but without physical rebirth. The human being remains an eternal soul with personal responsibility.

In the Divine Principle, there is no physical reincarnation, but rather a **spiritual return** (**resurrection through spiritual return**). Through a spiritual relationship with people living on Earth, spirit beings can continue to grow.

## The significance of the body for spiritual growth

This process is based on the transfer of vitality elements from the body to the spirit, conveyed through the good deeds of the living.

These vitality elements are essential for the fundamental growth of the spirit and necessary for continuing its development on a higher spiritual level.

**In Christianity as well, the body is important for spiritual growth**, as it is regarded as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). The physical body is seen as a tool through which a person fulfills God's commandments and practices spiritual disciplines such as prayer, charity, and faith.

Christianity emphasizes bringing the body into harmony with divine principles and living according to God's will in the physical world in order to unfold spiritually and attain eternal life.

**In both Buddhism and Hinduism, the body is also necessary** up to a certain stage for spiritual growth, as it enables the spirit to learn and develop through experience, action, and mindfulness.

The physical body serves as a means to experience karma and to gain spiritual lessons that are essential for liberation and enlightenment.

## Karma in Hinduism

In Hinduism, **karma** refers to the law of **cause and effect** on a moral level: every action - whether good or bad - leaves an imprint on the consciousness (karma imprint) and influences a person's future destiny.

Karma operates **across multiple lifetimes**: a person's good or bad deeds affect not only their current life but also future reincarnations. The goal is to mature spiritually through good karma and ultimately achieve **Moksha** - liberation from the cycle of birth and rebirth (Samsara).

Depending on the philosophical school within Hinduism, after achieving liberation (Moksha), the soul either dissolves into the divine Absolute (Advaita Vedanta) or continues to exist as an individual soul in eternal unity with God in the spiritual world (Vishishtadvaita, Dvaita).

## Equivalence of Karma in Christianity

Christianity also teaches a **spiritual principle of cause and effect**. It is expressed in the biblical teaching of **sowing and reaping** - whatever a person sows, that they will also reap (Galatians 6:7). Good or bad deeds bear spiritual consequences that affect not only earthly life but also the soul's existence in the spiritual world after death.

## Transmission of guilt and blessing to the next generation

Christianity also has the notion that **blessings and guilt are passed down through inheritance**. Descendants can suffer from the consequences of previous sins - or partake in the spiritual legacy of good ancestors. This principle is similar in effect to the karmic understanding of inherited merit or burden by the ancestors.

In **Hinduism**, there is also a belief that karmic effects can influence multiple generations, both positively and negatively, and that these influences can be altered through rituals or spiritual practices.

In **Buddhism**, karma is individual, and there is no direct teaching that sins or negative karma are passed from generation to generation, although the environment can be influenced by the behavior of the ancestors.

## **Commonalities among various spiritual traditions**

The commonality we find in all religions is that, over the course of spiritual development, the ego-centered self transforms into a more selfless being, connected in love with all that exists.

Life continues after death - except in Buddhism - as an immortal soul.

The growth of an incompletely developed soul continues until it reaches full liberation in unity with the Divine - whether through reincarnation or spiritual return.

What is essential is that there is a principle of cause and effect, and our actions, both good and bad, have consequences - both for ourselves and for our descendants.

**Unity with God - the universal spirit or wholeness - and perfect love is the central goal of all traditions.**

How we envision the details is of secondary importance, as long as we keep the central direction in mind and continue to move forward on this path.

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