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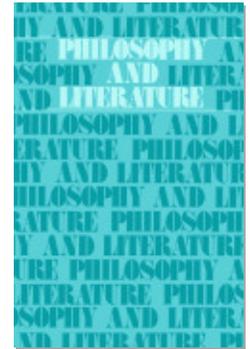
Immortality Revisited

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IMMORTALITY REVISITED

IN HIS ESSAY, "Poets and Thinkers: Their Kindred Roles in the Philosophy of Martin Heidegger," J. Glenn Gray points out that Heidegger "does not treat imaginative literature and other works of art qua literature and art but as aspects of philosophy or meditative thought."¹ To Heidegger's question, "How long are we going to prevent ourselves from experiencing the actual as actual?", Gray is inclined to answer as follows: "Until we have become aware that the poetic eye is capable of seeing as deeply into nature and man as the scientific eye," and he adds that "there is hope that philosophers may once again take seriously the discoveries of creative writers who are not consciously seeking to 'do' philosophy."²

There is little evidence that Gray's hope has materialized to any great extent; few philosophers are paying much attention to discoveries of creative writers, thus bearing out Heidegger's contention that "at this moment in the world's history we have first to learn that the making of poetry, too, is a matter of thinking."³ But it should not surprise us that when philosophers turn to the thinking of poets they will not necessarily agree in their interpretations. Although it has been remarked that Rilke translated Nietzsche into poetry and then in turn Heidegger translated Rilke into prose, when we look at what Heidegger actually says about Rilke's ideas, we may find that these ideas allow alternative interpretations.⁴ Nevertheless, the fact that alternative interpretations are possible bears out the soundness of Heidegger's and Gray's claim that at least some poetic thought is worth taking seriously.

In this article we shall examine Rilke's view of the relationship between life and death, as expressed in his *Duino Elegies*. Since this is a theme which figures prominently in Heidegger's philosophy, it is only proper to begin by pointing out certain basic correspondences between the views of the two thinkers on this topic. But as we pursue the matter further it soon becomes apparent that Rilke has set forth an intriguing and original, albeit unorthodox, notion of immortality, a notion that

does not need to be tied down to Heidegger's philosophy as a whole but can be defended in its own right. This article constitutes such a defense.

I

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger suggests that death "belongs" to Dasein. "In Dasein there is undeniably a constant 'lack of totality' which finds an end with death. This 'not-yet' 'belongs' to Dasein as long as it is; this is how things stand phenomenally."⁵ Rilke's way of expressing a similar thought is to say, in the First Elegy, that "all of the living make the mistake of drawing too sharp distinctions."⁶ The contrast he speaks of is that between life and death. Like Heidegger, Rilke calls attention to phenomena that seem to go against the ingrained tendency to view life and death as belonging to two separate realms. Both manage to break the hold of pictures which for so long have led our thinking on this topic into dead ends. The radical temporality of human existence, its inevitable mortality, leads Heidegger to include the resolute acceptance of "being-toward-death" as a necessary condition of authentic existence. The "not-yet" of eventual death is always with us; since we cannot escape it, we must not keep denying our mortality by self-deception or by resigned waiting but should take it up into a resolute anticipation. The factor of death must be included in the consciousness of our vital decisions. In other words, death is to be taken up *into* human life and is to be viewed, paradoxically perhaps, as its essential component. Thus, the radical contrast between life and death is undermined.

The taming of death is one of the central themes in Rilke's poem. Like Novalis before him, Rilke thought of death as the night-side of life. "Death is the side of life that is turned away from us and is unilluminated for us."⁷ But he made use of still another notion to break down a distinction which, in his opinion, we the living draw too sharply. For that purpose he employs the concept of space. When we reflect on his use of this concept, we realize that, although his application of it is unusual, it is not meant just metaphorically; the literal meaning of physical space is extended and subsumed under a more inclusive notion. To see this we must examine some of Rilke's images.

The sort of phenomena to which Rilke calls attention is familiar to us from Sartre's writings. Consider Sartre's example of how Pierre's *absence* from a cafe may be the significant fact for his friend who is looking for him there.⁸ While Sartre seems to be using his example mainly as an instance of negativity, of the crucial importance of negation for human consciousness, Rilke's analysis of such phenomena is richer.

He calls our attention, for instance, to the fact that an empty space through which a bird has just flown has been changed by its flight. It has become more intimate, literally animated by the living creature passing through it. There is a difference, Rilke seems to be saying, between inhabited and uninhabited spaces, and even between a space that was always empty and that which at least for a time has been occupied by a living creature. (I suppose this must be at least part of the reason why we often wish to return to places where something significant has happened, e.g., the place of our birth, of the first close encounter, or of a tragic incident. For that matter, consider the trips to the cemetery.) For Rilke, the kinship of living creatures is not a one-way street. *Our* presence in the world makes a difference to other animals, who may respond to the feeling which we project into spaces around us.

. . . Fling the emptiness out of your arms into the spaces we breathe—
 maybe that the birds will feel the extended air in more intimate flight.
 (DE, I)

A general thought behind this observation seems to be that the way we experience the world makes a difference to it. It becomes a different world. Rilke expresses this philosophical insight in simple but telling ways.

Yes, the Springs had need of you. Many a star was waiting for you
 to espy it.
 (DE, I)

What *is* spring, we might ask. What belongs to its natural characterization? Not just the physical and biological phenomena, such as earth warming, sap rising, flowers blooming, birds singing. Part of spring is the *celebration* of spring. To come into itself, to reach its extended potential, spring requires the feelings appropriate to it. This is why Rilke says that spring has need of us. Otherwise, it does not quite come into its own, does not realize its full possibilities. Likewise with the stars. By spying them and by perceiving their order, both in astronomical calculation and in poetic response, we add something to the character of nature, namely, by knowing and by aesthetically appreciating that character. The lady who wondered how the astronomers ever discovered the names of stars may be simple-minded, but behind that simple-mindedness there is a germ of philosophical wonder. The physical world without physics is a diminished entity. Without taking an idealist turn, we may nevertheless acknowledge the difference

that ideas and their comprehension, in reflection and feeling, make to the world. After Kant it seems impossible to deny that the very notion of world is theory-laden.

The startling thought expressed by Rilke in *Duino Elegies* is that the dead, no less than the living, are *permanent* inhabitants of cosmic spaces. The affirmation contained in that thought is not devoid of sorrow, sadness, tragedy, pain, and the sense of precariousness of human destiny. On the contrary, the fragility of the human spirit within the immensity of cosmic spaces is acknowledged and lamented. And yet Rilke does not see how it is possible to deny that these cosmic spaces actually preserve and are permeated by the creations of the human spirit. They include ineradicable traces of all who once inhabited the earth and are now departed.

The full meaning of the way Rilke understands the notion of cosmic spaces, or the Open, as he also calls them, emerges from some of his own comments on that notion. A longer quotation from the already-cited letter to Witold Hulewicz, the Polish translator of the *Elegies*, conveys Rilke's philosophical intent.

Affirmation of life *and* affirmation of death reveal themselves as one in the *Elegies*. To concede the one without the other, as is experienced and celebrated in the poem, would in the end amount to a limitation that leaves out all infinity. Death is the side of life that is turned away from us and is unilluminated for us; we must try to attain the greatest consciousness of our existence, which is at home in both of these realms not closed off from one another and which is nourished out of both of them. . . .⁹

What we find in Rilke's poem is a return to the idea of immortality, but immortality conceived along different lines from those found in our religious traditions. As we have seen, Rilke does not paint human existence in monochrome. Much of our life is painful beyond description, full of disappointments and sorrows. Part of our sorrow stems from the impermanency of everything in life, including life itself. "We live our lives forever taking leave," the poet reminds us. Disillusionment, defeat, and inevitable final departure are built into our existence—death *belongs* to Dasein. But even the very experience of pain and lament, Rilke insists, testifies to the intensity of feeling that human lives bring into this world, thus animating the spaces we inhabit. "Does the cosmic space we dissolve into taste of us, then?" The poet's rhetorical question is answered affirmatively. Fleeting as we are, we nevertheless leave ineradicable traces. Neither happiness nor permanent glory is our end.

But because being here amounts to so much, because all this Here and Now, so fleeting, seems to require us and strangely concerns us. Us the most fleeting of all. Just once, everything, only for once. Once and no more. And we, too, once. And never again. But this having been once, though only once, having been once on earth—can it ever be cancelled?

(DE, IX)

The question to consider is the question about the *manner* in which death fails to cancel a human life. Rilke points to the ability of human beings to feel solidarity with the great creations of the human race and to see reflected in them their own highest aspirations. He names examples of achievements of which we can be proud: the Sphinx, the Chartres Cathedral, great music, the deeds of sung and unsung heroes.

. . . So, after all, we have *not* failed to make use of the spaces, these generous spaces, these *our* spaces.

(DE, VII)

But not only the actions of great or talented men transform the meaning of the human earth. Every single person, in his or her loves or sorrows, testifies to the presence of the spiritual dimension in the cosmic spaces.

For to each was granted an hour,—perhaps not quite so much as an hour—some span that could scarcely be measured by measures of time, in between two whiles, when she really possessed an existence. All. Veins full of existence.

(DE, VII)

In Rilke's generalizing phrase, our task on earth is to transform the visible into the invisible. By the latter he means the ability to understand, to express ourselves in language and in art, to appreciate, to mourn, to celebrate, to lament, to suffer, to enjoy, to praise. These are inward phenomena which, in the eyes of the poet, define the meaning and purpose of earthly existence. Things themselves are dumb, but their meanings can be captured in human experiences. This philosophical conclusion is summarized in the Ninth Elegy.

For the wanderer doesn't bring from the mountain slope a handful of earth to the valley, untellable earth, but only some word he has won, a pure word, the yellow and blue

gentian. Are we, perhaps, here just for saying: House, Bridge, Fountain, Gate, Jug, Olive tree, Window,—possibly: Pillar, Tower? . . . but for saying, remember, oh, for such saying as never the things themselves hoped so intensely to be. Is not the secret purpose of this sly earth, in urging a pair of lovers, just to make everything leap with ecstasy in them? . . .
Here is the time for the tellable, *here* is its home.

When we permeate our lives and surroundings with thought and feeling, with intelligent and creative designs, we rescue them from anonymity and meaninglessness. When the human spirit mingles with the materials of our physical existence, both the earth and the human spirit come into their own. What Rilke tells us here could be seen as a generalization of Locke's idea that property arises when human labor is mixed with the products of the earth. *Everything* touched by the human spirit, by its intellectual and emotional needs and capacities, is transformed beyond recognition. In a purely material world the idea of property would be an alien, but in *our* world, as we know it, it certainly is not. Similarly, all ideas and all ways in which the materials of the world are experienced are not intruders—otherwise the cosmic spaces would be forever blind, dumb, and deaf.

Following the lead of many philosophers, Western and Eastern, Rilke sees no justification in denying the undeniable *additions* that have come into the world with the entry of the human mind into it. Think of Plato's creation myth, according to which the wholly unintelligent and unintelligible chaotic matter *becomes* a world only with the infusion into it of intelligible, mind-governed Forms. The objects which Rilke mentions—house, bridge, fountain, olive tree, pillar, tower—*require* the human context to be what they are. A multitude of human meanings must be read into every one of them to get at their full significations. It would take a historian, a scientist, a poet, a philosopher, and perhaps an anthropologist to show concretely and informatively how these sorts of things are intertwined with the story of human development and culture, of aspiration and achievement, both on the large stage of life and in individual personal careers.

Like Heidegger, Rilke deplores the evacuation of the *human* meaning from the objects in the world, even the objects we ourselves create. Interestingly enough, and also like Heidegger, he associates this evisceration of the human form of life with American influences.

Still to our grandparents, a "house," a "well," a familiar steeple, even their clothes, coats, were infinitely more familiar, more intimate; almost everything a vessel in which they found something human and included

in its scope. Now there are intruding, from America, vacuous indifferent things, *dummies of life*. . . .¹⁰

Heidegger joins Rilke in deploring, not only in America but in the whole industrialized world, this *demotion* of things to shallow, purely utilitarian status from their fuller human significations, still thoughtfully acknowledged by previous generations.

The transformation of the visible into the invisible, because inner, experiences is advocated by Rilke as a return to the deeper sources from which our individual and collective lives emerge or to which they give witness. In a certain sense, the inner experiences reveal what is *important* in cosmic spaces. A quotation from another letter explicates this claim.

No matter how vast the "outer space" may be, yet with all its sidereal distances, it hardly bears comparison with the dimensions, the *dimension of depth in our inner being*, which does not even need the spaciousness of the cosmos to be within itself almost unfathomable. Thus, if the dead, if those that are still to come, need an abode, *what* refuge could be more agreeable and welcome to them than this imaginary space? To me it seems more and more as though our customary consciousness inhabits the tip of a pyramid whose base within us (and in some way beneath us) widens out so fully that the farther we find ourselves able to descend into it, the more inclusively drawn into it appear the actual circumstances of our earthly, in the widest sense worldly, existence, independent of space and time.¹¹

II

The Rilkean notion of immortality encourages us to view the moments when we achieve concentrated inwardness, "veins full of existence," as bringing together simultaneously the three dimensions of time *and* the three dimensions of space. The spatial coordinates of a visible human body undergoing invisible transformation so to speak "cut across" the temporal coordinates of past, present, and future in an event labeled in the philosophical tradition as *nunc stans* and by Heidegger as *Augenblick*, "moment of vision."¹² It would not be inappropriate to invoke here his translation of the German word for an event, *Ereignis*, as moment of appropriation, when Being comes into its own (*eigen*). Seen from the perspective of a particular individual life, such moments as nodes in the temporal span from birth to death realize the person's destiny. But if so, then every moment of life matters. As the particular moment acquires its meaning from its relation to the totality of a given life span, so the unique particularity of each human life as a whole

stands in a relation to the all-inclusive, time-containing cosmic space.

The concrete relatedness of every moment to its proximate and remote surroundings calls for a second look at one possible way of evaluating the meaning of a human life, namely in terms of its influence. Influence certainly is one of the candidates for the manner of appraising what a human life amounts to. Some may be prepared to claim that what we leave behind when we depart is the only indicator of the value of our life. The rest is relegated to oblivion—so runs an allegedly realistic, down-to-earth, non-sentimental comment on the human lot. Not only is the immortality denied, but the tendency toward exaggerated self-importance is kept in check.

If, however, we are at all attracted to the Rilkean notion of timeless cosmic space, taking up into itself, generously and democratically, all events of the world's history—including not only world-shaking historic deeds but also every one of the joys, frustrations, and achievements of each single person—then we are likely to look at the notion of influence, the posterity connection, with a more serious and sympathetic eye. Indeed, it seems that when we consider the typical options open to us with regard to this whole question, the Rilkean alternative may strike us as eminently sensible. In Aristotelian fashion it stands midway between views familiar to us from two opposing traditions. On the one extreme there stands the scoffing atomistic materialism, declaring human life to be but a brief candle that upon being snuffed out returns to eternal darkness. On the other extreme we have the religious faith, sometimes bolstered by questionable philosophical arguments, in the immortal survival of every individual. The Rilkean alternative preserves the truth contained in each of the two extreme positions, without accepting all the conclusions each is inclined to draw. Against atomistic materialism it insists on tracing out the influence of each person's life beyond its mortal confines. Against the religious claim of transtemporal existence it bows before the undeniable fact of the death of the individual. With the former it agrees in accepting the requirement of a physical embodiment for the existence of the individual, with the latter it agrees in seeing the meaning of a human life as not exhausted in its episodic experiences.

Clearly, the immortality we are speaking of is not immortality of individuals. Here we disagree with religious traditions that emphasize timeless survival of persons.¹³ But our disagreement with those who declare human life to be wholly ephemeral is just as strong, and probably stronger. We do not question personal individuality as a central value of life. On the contrary, we find it worth celebrating as the highest cosmic achievement. Personhood is an epitome of meaningful integration; it has its home in the experience of persons (and to some degree

of animals; especially higher animals, whom we sometimes treat as quasi-persons). The special role of consciousness is precisely the *production* of meaning, which is impossible without bringing to the present both memory and anticipation. It is in consciousness that the three-dimensionality of time becomes explicit.¹⁴

But our acknowledgement of personhood as the highest value we know of should not seduce us into denying the undeniable: death of individuals. Evidence against personal immortality is overwhelming, making the scrambling for ghostly scraps of "evidence" of such survival almost unseemly. This insistence on one's endless preservation may be a splendid candidate for Whitehead's "fallacy of misplaced concreteness." The delusive concentration of our gaze in the direction of eternal life may prevent us from giving their due to actual living and to kinds of influence brought about by our being and doing. The criticism which Santayana voiced against the idealist school of philosophy is certainly applicable to champions of personal immortality: they live in one world mentally beholding another.

Our celebration and cherishing of individuality has a proper expression in perpetuating the human kind. This conscious desire receives a tremendous boost from primordial biological sexual impulse; in that sense we cannot help being "pro-life." Furthermore, we have opportunities to promote the value of personhood by helping it to emerge in our children. But service to personhood is not exhausted in the parental role; in countless other ways—as lovers, friends, teachers, dispensers of guidance and inspiration, as purveyors of skills and knowledge—we are in a position to strengthen the presence of personality in the world. When we pay homage to the task of preserving the human race, of extending the history of our kind, we mean to ensure an unending supply of individual persons for cosmic spaces. Goethe saw this clearly when he declared that death is the trick of life to have *more* life. Nature, he continued, cares more for the species than for the individual.¹⁵ Life as a natural force presents a powerful, overwhelming spectacle. Many a writer has been impressed, even appalled by the irresistible push of life force in its almost infinite forms. From the point of view of sheer survival, in the teeming jungle of life, populating the earth with imaginable and unimaginable species across the eons of evolution, homo sapiens does not cut much of a figure. Biologists tell us that the more adaptable insects are likely to inherit the earth. Wasteful profligacy of nature is not always a cheery spectacle.

It is thought-provoking, however, that in its blind evolutionary surge nature has stumbled upon a species whose distinct characteristic is the cultivation of personal individuality. Perpetuation of the human race takes place by means of culture, and transmission of culture requires

a cooperation by individuals. The form which life takes on in human persons is no longer primarily instinctual, species-oriented. It puts explicit premium on individual talents and personal self-expression, which includes self-consciousness, the ability to reflect, and, by means of language, to *say* what one sees, does, or is. Here we are brought back to Rilke's claim that we are here for saying—in his extended sense of "giving meaning"—a capacity absent from things and largely from other forms of life.¹⁶

The question about the desirability of individual immortality should be preceded by another question, namely: how much individuality is worth having. ("How much land does a man need?", asks Tolstoy in one of his short stories.) It so happens that the use of mental powers and the exercise of social and moral functions of a person is inextricably tied up with physical characteristics of the human body. While human intelligence cannot be reduced to the activity of the nervous system, central and otherwise, and cannot be accounted for in terms of any form of behaviorism, logical or otherwise, it is nevertheless true—as Socrates, refusing to budge from jail, observed two millenia ago—that without the body a person could not execute his decisions.¹⁷ Nor could he engage in activities instantiating such spiritual gifts as charity and forgiveness; we cannot manifest them without some bodily behavior. Sturdy and durable as the human body is, it nevertheless wears out in time. Before it does so, however, it provides ample opportunities for the inhabiting soul to display its individual childish, adolescent, and mature bents and talents. If properly cared for and lucky enough to escape the assaults of crippling diseases, it may furnish a comfortable dwelling place for serene old age. Even if medical technology succeeded in replacing every single component of the human body, it is doubtful that we would welcome the chance of immortal existence, as Rilkean "dummies of life," in plastic replicas of ourselves. The main reason for this reluctance, I suspect, is that deep down we pretty much recognize the relative generosity of opportunities for self-realization, appropriate to each stage of life, which our natural condition provides us with. Personal identity confined to one lifetime is enough of a miracle for us to be duly impressed by and humbly grateful for. The desire for reincarnation or for a perpetual, body-transcending existence, smacks a bit of greediness.

There is something pathetic about clinging to *everything* about oneself. Much of what we do in life is not worth clinging to or even remembering. Trash is not worth preserving, and much of what happens in the world deserves to perish. Mephistopheles in Goethe's *Faust* is wrong in saying that everything deserves to perish,¹⁸ but he is right in raising the question whether some things are not better confined to oblivion. Nietzsche,

like other commentators on the wastefulness of sheer biological force, was impressed by the ubiquity of failure. He sensed the exuberant superabundance of energy on which the Will to Power can draw. But Nietzsche drew from this an encouraging conclusion: do not be afraid of failure and be strong enough to laugh it off, even at your own expense.¹⁹ Since life thrives on experimentation, since, in Heidegger's vocabulary, it is a *Wagnis*, a venture, it provides opportunities for individuals to strive for uniqueness, novelty, originality and excellence. The very idea of self-overcoming or self-surpassing is inspired by the thought of excellence. To be a person is to be an evaluator, to see in the present an opportunity to improve on what was achieved in the past. One of the metamorphoses through which we must pass is that of being a camel, a beast of burden, conscious of standards set for us by those who lived before us. Nietzsche was not alone in seeing the task of life in constant self-improvement and striving toward excellence. "Now what is history?" asked Boris Pasternak, and he answered: "It is the centuries of systematic exploration of the riddle of death, with a view to overcoming death. That's why people discover mathematical infinity and electromagnetic waves, that's why people write symphonies. . . ."

Exceptional achievements, however, in spite of the special homage they deserve and require, are but a part of striving and effort—in imagination, thought, and deed—that are poured into the cosmic spaces by the multitudes of the living. Those spaces, Rilke observed, must be generous enough not to be overcrowded with experiences poured into them by the human race. "How terribly big they must be, when, with thousands of years of our feeling, they're not overcrowded" (*DE*, VI). What goes into them, to be timelessly preserved, are all the experiences we find important, worthwhile, fulfilling. A. N. Whitehead elevated the category of importance to the pinnacle of human concepts, and he offered convincing arguments for this judgment.²⁰ It is true that everything we do is relative to our interests, talents, abilities, and limitations. Nevertheless, given these individual, social, and cultural relativities, it is still up to us to come up with a proper evaluation and appreciation of what we try to achieve in life. Bearing in mind both our indebtedness and our prospective influence, we can see in each moment an opportunity to affirm those values that strike us as important.

A consequence of this insight can be that one will cease selling oneself short and will recognize that one's place in the world has its own role and dignity. One will not feel that the real show is going on elsewhere, at some other time, in some other persons' lives. One will realize that the meaning of one's life consists in loyalty to one's own projects, in

the love of what one finds lovable, in the creation and maintenance of what one finds important, worth creating and maintaining. It will dawn on us that if something is really worth doing today, then its worth is affirmable in the future as well, as are the past events and actions that have contributed to today's affirmation. The "thin" descriptions of what we are doing at a moment are replaceable by "thicker" descriptions in which the wider significance of what we are up to is brought to light. Proximate continuities of our personal concerns merge into wider connections, and ultimately extend into all past and all future, timelessly animating the cosmic spaces with vibrations of what we are able to contribute to their meaning.

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1. J. Glenn Gray, *On Understanding Violence Philosophically and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 79.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 86.
3. Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. A. Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), pp. 99-100.
4. Cf. an excellent discussion by P. Christopher Smith, "Heidegger's Misinterpretation of Rilke," *PHILOSOPHY AND LITERATURE* 3 (1979): 3-19.
5. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Macquarrie and Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 286.
6. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, trans. Leishman and Spender (New York: W. W. Norton, 1939). (Hereafter cited in the text as *DE*.)
7. Letter to Witold Hulewicz, the Polish translator of *Duino Elegies*, of November 13, 1925. R. M. Rilke, *Briefe* II (Wiesbaden: Insel, 1950), p. 480 (my translation).
8. J.-P. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. H. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1966), p. 42.
9. *Briefe*, II, p. 480.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 483.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 452-53.
12. "In resoluteness, the Present is not only brought back from distraction with the objects of one's chosen concern, but it gets held in the future and in having been. That *Present* which is held in authentic temporality and which thus is *authentic* itself, we call 'moment of vision'" (*Being and Time*, p. 387).
13. Robert Browning was wondering whether all souls *deserve* eternal life. "The soul is doubtless immortal—where a soul can be discerned." Quoted by R. A. Tsanoff in *The Problem of Immortality* (New York: Macmillan, 1924), pp. 31, 374.
14. For a further discussion of these claims, see my *Religion Without God* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1976), and "On Being Religiously Human," *Religious Humanism* 12 (1978).

15. J. W. Goethe, "Fragment über die Natur (1781-82)," *Sämtliche Werke*, Jubiläumsausgabe (Stuttgart-Berlin: J. G. Cotta, 1902), vol. 39, p. 3.
16. Heidegger's interpretation of "saying" seems less democratic than Rilke's. While the latter urges everyone to celebrate things, to have "veins full of existence," the former focuses on poets as "sayers to a greater degree." According to Heidegger, poets say in a manner of a singer who is "turned away from all purposeful self-assertion." "The song of these singers is neither solicitation nor trade" (*Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 138). The suggestion seems to be that non-poetic saying and singing have these marks.
17. "If it were said that without bones and muscles and the other parts of my body I could not have carried my resolutions into effect, that would be true. But to say that they are the *cause* of what I do . . . would be a very loose and careless way of talking." Plato, *Phaedo* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1951), p. 52.
18. ". . . everything deserves to be destroyed; hence it would be better if nothing were born." J. W. Goethe, *Faust*, Part I, trans. B. Q. Morgan (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1954), p. 33.
19. "Man's greatest distance and depth and what in him is lofty to the stars, his tremendous strength—are not all these things frothing against each other in your pot? Is it any wonder that many a pot breaks? Learn to laugh at yourselves as one must laugh!" Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. W. Kaufmann (New York: Viking, 1954), p. 405.
20. "Importance' is a fundamental notion not to be fully explained by any reference to a finite number of factors." A. N. Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* (New York: Macmillan, 1958), p. 11ff.