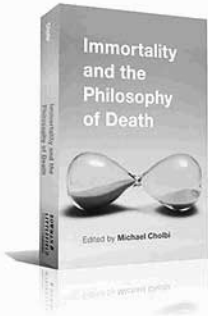


REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



Immortality and the Philosophy of Death

Ed. Michael Cholbi

Rowman and Littlefield International Ltd., Unit A, Whitacre Mews, 26–34 Stannary Street, London SE11 4AB. Website: <https://www.rowmaninternational.com>. 2015. 258 pp. £37. P.B. ISBN 9781783483846.

A foundational truth of the *Sanatana Dharma* is that we always were; and there never will be a time when we will cease to be. The book under review takes a narrow view of life and thus it fails to access and assess immortality. Dan Werner in his endnotes, 48 and 49 in the ninth chapter of this book, titled ‘Love and Death’, not only dismisses Plato but the entire Christian tradition too. This hubris mars this book. Here is Werner on page 152; all brackets are his:

48. If the claim is that love enables us to achieve immortality on earth, then that is empirically false (since there is no evidence of anyone ever having achieved such an immortality). If the claim is that love enables us to achieve immortality in some sort of afterlife, then it is incumbent upon the proponent of such a claim to explain why and how immortality is ‘rationed’ in this way—a case that will be impossible to make without some prior theological or other metaphysical assumptions.

49. In the *Phaedrus*, Plato also claims that the appropriate practice of *eros* can help us to free ourselves from the cycle of reincarnation, and achieve a more choice worthy form of existence (disembodied immortality). Yet, as with the Christian view ... the *fact* of eternal existence is already a given in Plato—all of us have an incorporeal soul that is eternal—and so is not something that we need to work to achieve. It is thus false that love allows us to *achieve* immortality (since immortality is not an ‘achievement’ at all).

It is sad to note that Werner does not understand that all souls within the Abrahamic religions are corporeal; there is no incorporeality involved. Only within Advaita Vedanta, which none of the contributors to this volume has bothered to study, is incorporeality an issue. While Plato glimpsed the redeeming power of love, as did Jesus; Werner could not move beyond John Hick’s (1922–2012) understanding of the impossibility of reincarnation in the latter’s intellectually flawed and thus popular book, *Philosophy of Religion* (1970). First world WASP philosophers disdain theology as does Werner explicitly in Note 40 on page 151: he bases his chapter ‘on wholly non-theological’ assumptions. In short, this chapter, typical of the book itself, would have nothing to do with say *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* which tells us without naming them; Plato and Christ were not wrong when they urged us to live compassionate lives.

Adam Buben’s *Resources for Overcoming the Boredom of Immortality in Fischer and Kierkegaard* is hilarious, to say the least. Buben situates the ontic need for humanity in tedium best symbolised by Tithonus; of course, punctuated universally with the relief provided by Major League Baseball. Buben, like the rest of the contributing authors, misses the teleologic point of being human: the ontic basis of humanity is self-actualisation in the here and the now. It is neither watching soccer hour upon hour nor to mimetically follow the immortal Tithonus and crib about being and nothingness. Life has a meaning and that meaning can be fully experienced right now if we are to become yogis.

The book is about death which has now become too real with the current Covid-19 crisis. But, it is a facile [superficial] attempt to say the least.

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