

According to the medievals, the most logical of philosophers, "the argument from authority is the weakest of arguments." Nevertheless, it is an argument, a probability, a piece of evidence. Forty million Frenchmen can be wrong, but it is less likely than four Frenchmen being wrong.

The first argument from authority for life after death is simply quantitative: "the democracy of the dead" votes for it. Almost all cultures before our own have strongly, even officially, believed in some form of it. Children naturally and spontaneously believe in it unless conditioned out of it.

A second argument from authority is stronger because it is qualitative rather than quantitative: nearly all the sages have believed in it. We must not, of course, answer the challenge 'How do you know they were sages?' by saying 'Because they believed'; that would be begging the question pure and simple. But thinkers considered wise for other reasons have believed; why should this one belief of theirs be an exception to their wisdom?

Finally, we have the supreme authority of the teachings of Jesus. Belief in life after death is central to His entire message, "the Kingdom of Heaven." Even if you do not believe He is the incarnate God, can you believe He is a naive fool?

Arguments from reason are logically stronger than arguments from authority. The premises, or evidence, for arguments from reason can be taken from three sources, three levels of reality what is less than ourselves (Nature), ourselves (human life), or what is more than ourselves (God). Again, we move from the weaker to the stronger argument.

We could argue from the principle of the conservation of energy. We never observe any form of energy either created or destroyed, only transformed. The immortality of the soul seems to be the spiritual equivalent of the conservation of energy. If even matter is immortal, why not spirit?

The next class of arguments is taken from the nature of Man. What in us survives death depends on what is in us now. Death is like menopause. If a woman has in her identity nothing but her motherhood, then her identity has trouble surviving menopause. Life after menopause is a little like life after death.

The simplest and most obvious of these arguments may be called Primitive Man's Argument from Dead Cow. Primitive Man has two cows. One dies. What is the difference between Dead Cow and Live Cow? Primitive man looks. (He's really quite bright.) There appears no material difference in size or weight immediately upon death. Yet there is an enormous difference; something is missing. What? Life, of course. And what is that? The answer is obvious to any intelligent observer whose head is not clouded with theories: life is what makes Live Cow breathe. Life is breath. (The word for 'soul', or 'life', and 'breath' is the same in many ancient languages.) Soul is not air, which is still in Dead Cow's lungs, but the power to move it.

Life, it is seen, is not a material thing, like an organ. It is the life of the organs, of the body; not that which lives but that by which we live. Now this source of life

cannot die as the body dies: by the removal of the soul. Soul cannot have soul taken from it. What can die has life on loan; life does not have life on loan.

The 'catch' in this argument is that this 'soul' may in turn have its life on loan from a higher source, and transmit it to the body only after having been given life first. This is in fact the Biblical teaching, contrary to the Greek view of the soul's inherent, necessary and eternal immortality. God gives souls life, and souls can die if they refuse it. But in any case the soul survives the body's death.

Another quite simple piece of evidence for the presence of an immaterial reality (soul) in us which is not subject to the laws of matter and its death, is the daily experience of real magic: the power of mind over matter. Every time I deliberately move my arm, I do magic. If there were no mind and will commanding the arm, only muscles; if there were muscles and a nervous system and even a brain but no conscious mind commanding them; then the arm could not rise unless it were lighter than air. When the body dies, its arms no longer move; the body reverts to obedience to merely material laws, like a sword dropped by a swordsman.

Even more simply stated, mind is not part of the system of matter, not measurable by material standards (How many inches long is your mind?) Therefore it need not die when the material body dies. The argument is so simple and evident that one wonders who the real 'primitive' is, the 'savage' who understands it or the sophisticated modern materialist who cannot understand the difference between mind and brain.