

For a new approach, and if so, from what perspective? These seem to be very good questions.

The laws of science transcend culture, suggesting the possibility of a source of credible wisdom embraceable by all. The pervasive integration of science into the belief systems of nearly all world cultures is providing us with a common language with which to frame new levels of legitimate inquiry. Rather than seek divine answers that speak to one group or culture, perhaps we could re-examine the questions themselves in the light of basic neuroscience. From a neurotheological perspective, there is one characteristic about these three questions which stands out immediately. They can only be asked by a creature anchored in a chronologically referenced, abstracting, past-present-future sequential time frame. This doesn't even include humans until about the age of about three, when the prefrontal cortex comes on line; and it excludes the rest of life on earth entirely. For everyone and everything else, things just are or they just aren't. We ourselves started the same way. The idea of anything going anywhere in time didn't really figure into our own personal worlds for the first couple of years at least.

The present moment may be our ongoing experience, but we humans have perfected our sense of sequential chronology to give it purpose. Classical Greek has two words for time, *chairos* and *chronos*. *Chairos* can be "just in time," "the time I figured it out," or "the time of my life;" a momentary personal experience. From *chairos* we get "charismatic," and the little god *Chairos* is often depicted traveling on wheels like a Segway, making sure he gets there when the moment is right. *Chronos* is sequential time, the time that places us in context with our changing world, the time we perceive as passing, and the time we use when we remember or predict. Once we know chronological time, we know it's all going to be over some day. We are the only creatures on earth who know that we will die, so it's little wonder the Greek god *Chronos* is depicted as a fearsome ancient Father Time. In India, the Sanskrit *kala*, time, returns as fearsome *Kali*, the black (*kalo*) goddess garlanded with skulls who gets everyone in the end. Indians name little girls *Durga*, *Lakshmi*, *Tara*, all great goddesses worthy of worship; but only *Shiva*, timeless *Shiva*, can get a second date with *Kali*. With the rest of the world living almost entirely in *chairos*, it was the last evolutionary step of the human brain that placed us as a species on our chronological escalator from past to future. When we began to sequence images from past presents, we finally

discovered future imperfects and found ourselves confronted with anomalies arising from this specific new level of conscious time-keeping. One of these anomalies is the source of the major metaphysical questions that have provoked us since we started thinking this way.

Since we can't arrange time until we're well past the age of two, we can't sequence or retrieve full memories back to the beginning. It has been observed that nearly everybody's "perfect imaginary future" appears to be a world similar to "my childhood with me in charge." What this suggests is that we can't imagine further in front than we can remember behind, leaving us with no clear final prediction because we cannot remember where we started. We can't predict "our final future" in our minds without having "our very beginning" to reflect from. As a result, it's our inability to complete the timeline within our own lifetime that keeps us guessing. We sequence back and forth like a ping pong ball that keeps missing the end of the table on either side.

This is annoying. Since we can't access those first beginnings, we haven't the appropriate mental patterns, specific or general, to predict our final endings. The best we can do, in all cultures, is to imagine and hope for a return to an almost childlike and eternal state. This conclusion is provocative in itself. Is this where our notion of heaven comes from? The moment we are able to sense the passage of time, we never seem to have enough of it.

### Making Time For Ourselves

We have become familiar with some fundamental concepts basic to our perception of time. The first has to do with our memory capacity, and the other with sequential recall and projection. In fact, the computer itself was defined originally as a device able to instruct itself from an internal program that could access stored memory. The more spacious the memory, the more complex the instructions and the functions of the computer can be.

As to how these memory patterns are created in the brain, the jury is still out, but it's a fact that we simply cannot do anything in a physical environment without leaving some sort of trace. Total and complete disappearing acts happen only in imaginary places. The simple act of typing throws millions of atoms about, sending molecules of me into orbit, and Chinese plastic into space. Physical events are no less disruptive in a cellular environment. Every