

## SPECIAL BOOK REVIEW SECTION: DO WE SURVIVE DEATH? A PHILOSOPHICAL EXAMINATION

### INTRODUCTION

By John Palmer, Editor

Several months ago, as I was looking for people to review books for the *JP*, I noted that a book by Michael Martin and Keith Augustine entitled *The Myth of an Afterlife (MoA)* came out at roughly the same time as Edward Kelly et al. came out with a sequel to their 2007 anthology *Irreducible Mind*, entitled *Beyond Physicalism (BP)*. *MoA* and *BP* deal with the same basic issue, the mind-body problem, but reach opposite conclusions. The opportunity to extend this confrontation to promote the education of *JP* readers on an issue so central to parapsychology was too good for an editor like me to pass up. I decided to frame it as a debate about postmortem survival. Even though *BP* does not for the most part deal with survival directly, the mind/body problem, a main theme of the book, is central to the survival issue for obvious reasons. Although I accept psi as a genuine Kuhnian anomaly, I am on the fence regarding survival, so I felt I could be an honest broker.

The script was as follows. I invited Douglas Stokes to write a critical review of *BP* and James Matlock to write a critical review of *MoA*. I then invited Kelly and Augustine to reply to the reviews, giving both the option to delegate some of the task to their coauthors. Augustine took advantage of the offer, hence the brief contributions by Ingrid Smythe and Claus Larsen. Kelly did not. For the first two stages, authors were free to make their own points even if they were not directly responsive to what was said in the piece they were reviewing or responding to (so long as they didn't overdo it), and there was no word limit. Kelly and Augustine responded to the latter in diametrically opposite ways, such that the replies of Augustine et al. are more than 10 times longer than the reply of Kelly. Finally, I invited Stokes and Matlock to reply to the replies, giving Matlock a limit of 15,000 words. Finally, I instructed myself to write a discussion section offering my take on the preceding contributions.

Augustine in particular was quite generous in providing page citations even when they were not required, and I decided to follow suit in my piece. When a page number is preceded by contributor initials, it refers to pages in this issue of the *JP*. If the page numbers stand alone, with no date, they refer to pages in *BP* (Part I) and *MoA* (Part II). There are a couple exceptions in which there are references to different sections of a paper by an outside author, but these should be clear from the context.