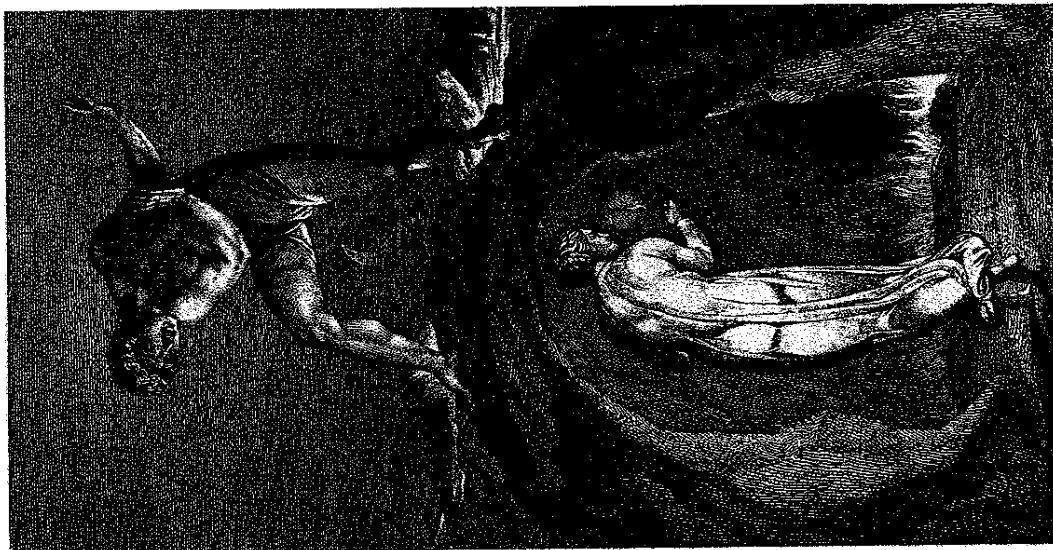


it will be like for me'. But death is like nothing for me, not because it is mysteriously unlike the things I have so far known, but because there is no me left.

Of course, this is so only if we deny ourselves the consolation of an afterlife. For many people, one of the attractions of the major religions is the promise of just such a life: a changed state of being, for better or worse. Ethics is one of the motivations to this belief. Life here is unjust or intolerable. So there must be a better one somewhere else. Or, it is intolerable that the unjust man meets happiness and success, and the just man meets misery and failure. So there must be another arena where justice is restored. Or, it is intolerable that some people, through no apparent fault of their own, are born to lives of want and misery. So, they must be being punished for some fault in a previous life. Such arguments sound suspiciously like wishful thinking rather than solid reasoning. Their form is: 'Things are in some respect intolerable here, so they must be better somewhere else.' But unless we are convinced of Divine purpose, the truth may be that life is in these various respects intolerable here, and that's the end of it. And, as David Hume (1711-76) argued, even if we *are* convinced of Divine purpose, there can only be one source of evidence of what it is. This must be what we find in the world around us. So if life here is unjust and intolerable, then the only defensible inference is that Divinity intends a fair dose of things that are unjust and intolerable. Job recovered in the end, but many just, upright men do not (see Fig. 6).

Many philosophers argue, and I agree, that belief in the afterlife involves an indefensible metaphysics: a false picture of how we as persons relate to our physical bodies. It imagines the soul as accidentally and only temporarily lodged in a body, like a person in a car. Whereas many philosophers think of the distinction between mind and body as much more subtle than this. They might say it is more like the distinction between the computer program and the machine on which it runs. There is a distinction, sure enough, but



5. William Blake, 'The Soul Exploring the Recesses of the Grave'.