

EXCERPT

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Who Are You, Really?

A Philosopher's Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Persons

March 21, 2023 | \$30, 300 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0394-7

What does it mean to be human? Philosopher Joshua Rasmussen offers a step-by-step examination into the fundamental nature and ultimate origin of persons. Using accessible language and clear logic, he argues that understanding what it means to be a person sheds light not only on our own nature but also on the existence of the One who gave us life.

Your Ultimate Origin

The ball of light you see before you transforms into a radiant figure. The figure glows with vapors of light that flow gently toward you. As you stand in the presence of this light, you experience the specialness of your own being.

You begin to hear a voice that seems to come from within you. This is what you hear:

There is a great light within you. By the light within you, you have sought to see past the shadows to see your true self. Your persistence to see more has positioned you to see more. Whenever you look into a place, you always see more in that place. As you have looked within, you have come to see more of who you are within.

When you see yourself, you see that you are more than stardust. What you call a "body" is a shadow produced by you in your current state of limitation. A shadow may represent you, just as this figure of light represents me. But your shadow is not you. Your shadow follows you.

Your uniqueness is forged by the uniqueness of your path. Your path did not begin with a state of nothingness. Your path did not begin with a state of mindlessness. Your path began with a unique state of majesty. This unique state is stamped into you and no one else. The origin point of your path is a jewel that belongs only to you. You have a uniqueness that no one else has or could have.

Yet, every being is united by a single, great reality, which unifies the world. The reality in the center of you is the same reality in the center of me. Every person is a face of this one, fundamental reality.

So, we tell you, every being contains a special piece of original reality. Without original reality, you would not be here; without you, original reality would not be extended by your unique perspective. You are indispensable to the original reality, just as original reality is indispensable to all beings.

What we tell you is not hidden behind speculation or revelation. See for yourself whether what we say is true. Look within. By your own light, you can see your true self. When you see yourself, you do not see shapes or sizes. You do not see a mere shadow of yourself. You see your own first-person self. That is who you really are.

There is still more to see. In states of limitation, even the clearest lights are dim. In dim light, familiar things appear as unfamiliar forms and shadows. In dim light, our connection to one another is dim. We perceive distinction, which distorts our awareness of our unity. We see each other as shadows and shapes. This is why we struggle to perceive who we really are. It is part of the state of limitation we are in to perceive our true identity through a lens of limitation. We tell you, you are more special than you understand.

Suddenly, the figure of light scatters into many figures of light, which flicker away.

You stand still, awestruck at what you just encountered. After a while, you realize there is nothing left to see in the cave. So, you begin to head back. As you make your way back out of the cave, you wonder, "Can I believe what I have seen?"

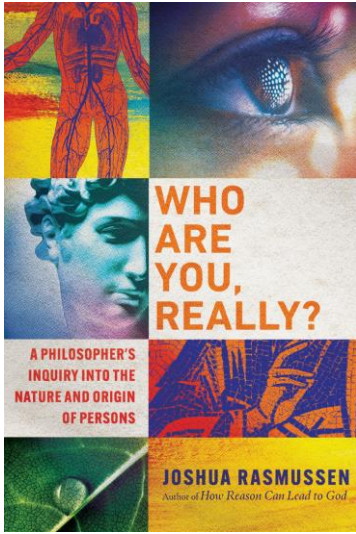
—Taken from chapter thirteen, "Your Ultimate Origin"



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Joshua Rasmussen (PhD, Notre Dame) is associate professor of philosophy at Azusa Pacific University. He is the author of *How Reason Can Lead to God*, *Defending the Correspondence Theory of Truth*, and *The Bridge of Reason*, coauthor of *Necessary Existence* and *Is God the Best Explanation of Things?: A Dialogue*, and coeditor of *A New Theist Response to the New Atheists*.

An Examination of What It Means to Be Human

"In *Who Are You, Really?*, Joshua Rasmussen probes vexing philosophical problems related to the meaning and nature of personhood. He considers issues we take completely for granted—concerns like thinking, feeling, willing, and personal identity—and lays bare many problems that the casual thinker would never have known were there. He then does a masterful job of engaging these problems using the light of critical introspection. Though he leans heavily on the power of such introspection, I think his results justify the weight he has placed on it. All in all, it is an excellent work that I heartily recommend."

—**Rick Langer**, Talbot School of Theology, Biola University

"Joshua Rasmussen is a treasured friend and esteemed colleague. Based on the quality of his work, he is regarded as an elite philosopher among secular and Christian scholars alike. But he is much more than that. Joshua is a warm-hearted Jesus follower with a passion to help thoughtful believers and with the skills to take difficult topics and make them accessible. *Who Are You, Really?* is the fruit of these abilities. With fresh, original, perceptive insight, this book addresses the central question that underlies most of the issues debated in contemporary culture and the academy. Having specialized in philosophy of mind and theological anthropology for decades, I can confidently say that there is nothing like this book. With fairness and rigor, Rasmussen carefully works through all the issues and arguments fundamental to his topic. Happily, he does all of this while making the book marvelously accessible. This should be a required text in all Christian colleges and seminaries, and it is must-read for all who care about this crucial subject."

—**J. P. Moreland**, distinguished professor of philosophy at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University, and author of *The Soul: How We Know It Is Real and Why It Matters*

"*Who Are You, Really?* is beautifully written and very well organized! Overall, I think this is an excellent book. It makes a core assumption about the nature of matter very clear, and it shows brilliantly what follows."

—**Eric Steinhart**, professor of philosophy at William Paterson University and author of *Believing in Dawkins: The New Spiritual Atheism*

"The question, What does it take to be conscious? has two senses. What does consciousness involve? Where does consciousness come from? In this stimulating book, Joshua Rasmussen addresses both. As with *How Reason Can Lead to God*, he again shows his considerable skill in delving deep into philosophy in an inviting and engaging manner. Rasmussen takes the reader on a journey into some of the central topics in philosophy to help us understand something of great importance: ourselves."

—**Kevin Timpe**, William H. Jellema Chair in Christian Philosophy at Calvin University

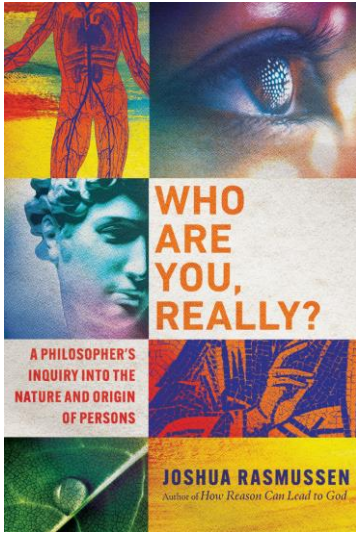
"Josh Rasmussen is one of the deepest and most interesting thinkers of our time. He is one of the leaders of a new generation of philosophers building a more conciliatory and fruitful dialogue between believers and atheists. *Who Are You, Really?* is a



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novel and intriguing exploration of some of the biggest questions of human existence. It's essential reading for anyone interested in consciousness and what it means to be a human being."

—**Philip Goff**, associate professor of philosophy at Durham University

"Professor Rasmussen's new book is both a pleasure to read and a welcome change of pace. You will find here a rare achievement: it is written in a style that will engage both students and philosophers, and it presents original ways to explore and defend a mind-first ontology. Rasmussen's flair for new ideas is fully on display. Challenging current physicalist conceptions of the mind, he articulates a conception of personal identity that combines ancient spiritual ideas with novel ways to understand physical reality."

—**Evan Fales**, University of Iowa



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