Digital Heaven

If you had the opportunity to live forever, would you take it? The obstacles to 1.____ your body alive indefinitely still seem insurmountable, but some scientists think there is another possibility opened up 2.____ digital technology: creating a digital copy of your "self" and keeping that "alive" online long after your physical body 3.____ ceased to function.

In effect, the proposal is to clone a person electronically. Unlike the familiar physical clones - offspring that have identical features as their parents, but that are completely separate organisms with a separate conscious life - your electronic clone 4.____ believe itself to be you. How 5.____ this be possible? The first step would be to map the brain.

How? One plan relies 6.____ the development of nanotechnology. Ray Kurzweil - one of the prophets of artificial intelligence - predicts that within two or three decades we will have nanotransmitters that can be 7.____ into the bloodstream. In the capillaries of the brain they would line up alongside the neurons and detect the details of the cerebral electronic activity. They would be 8.____ to transmit that information to a receiver inside a special helmet or cap, 9.____ there would be no need for any wires protruding from the scalp.

As a further step, Ray Kurzweil also envisages the nanotransmitters being able to connect you to a world of virtual reality on the internet, similar to what was depicted in the film 'Matrix'. With the nanotransmitters in place, by thought alone, you could 10.____ on to the internet and 11.____ of the pictures coming up on your screen they would play inside your mind. Rather than send your friends emails you would agree to meet up on some virtual tropical beach.

For Ray this would be, quite literally, heaven. Once you upload the brain onto the internet and log 10.____ to that virtual world the body can be left to rot 12.____ your virtual self carries on playing Counter Strike forever.

Generations of Christians believed in Christ partly because his resurrection held out the promise that we too might be able to enjoy life after death. But why 13.____ for the Second Coming when you can have a shot of nanobots and upload your brain onto the internet and live on as an immortal virtual surfer?

Who needs faith when you've got broadband?

(One snag: to exist on the net you will have to have your neural network parked on the computer of a web-hosting company. These companies want real money in real bank accounts every year or they will wipe your bit 14.____ the hard disc and sell the space to someone else. With your body six feet underground how will you pay? Here the analogy with heaven really breaks 15.____. God keeps heaven 16.____ for free, but the web is something you have to pay for.)

LIVEWORKSHEETS