

The Soul

By Miss Sass



Discussion: What are we?

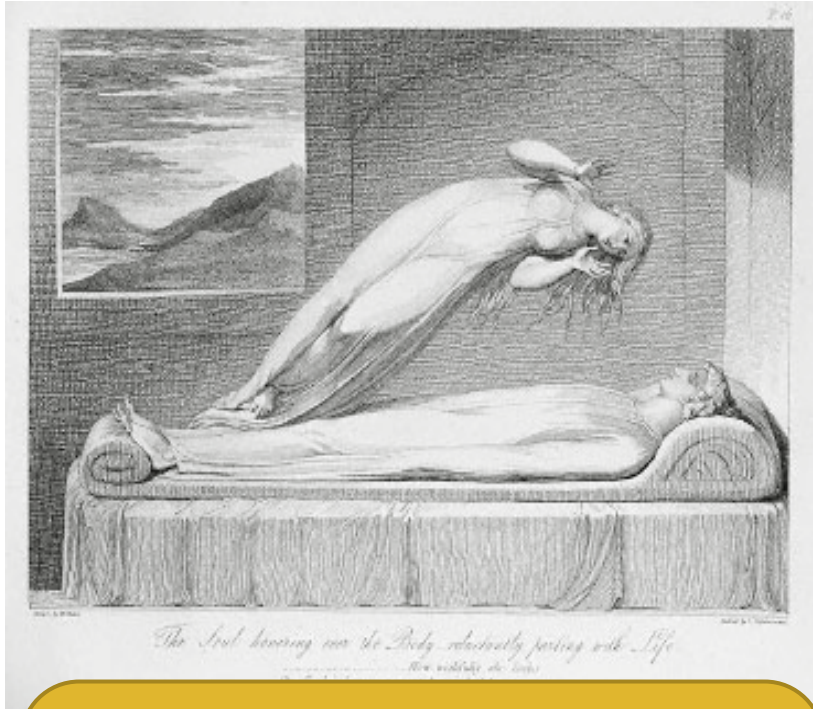
What do you think these things are?

Do you believe they exist?

What evidence do you have?

The Body The Mind The Spirit The Soul

So, what IS the soul?




The word 'soul' is used often and as though it has one clear meaning. So, what *does* it mean?

- Our **personality**?
- Our 'essence' (what remains, once everything else about us is boiled down)?
- Something **invisible**?
- Something **indescribable**?
- Something **immortal** (something that can live forever)?

Vocabulary/key terms

- body
 - soul
 - mind
 - dualism
 - monism
 - materialism
 - realm of the forms
 - Tripartite theory of the soul
 - coherent
 - incoherent
 - reasonable grounds
 - genetic legacy
 - ghost in the machine
 - subsist
 - immaterial
 - incorporeal
 - transcendental
 - realism
 - anti-realism
 - intermingling thesis/pilot and ship analogy
 - immortal
 - metaphysics
 - Essence
 - animism
-



You will be given one view to research. Answer the 4 questions and be ready to feed back.

- 1. Does the soul exist?**
- 2. Is it material? (it is made of matter like the body?)**
- 3. Is it immortal? (does it last for ever?)**
- 4. What is it's relationship with the body? (and the mind?)**

Hands up....

Are there reasonable grounds for belief in the soul?

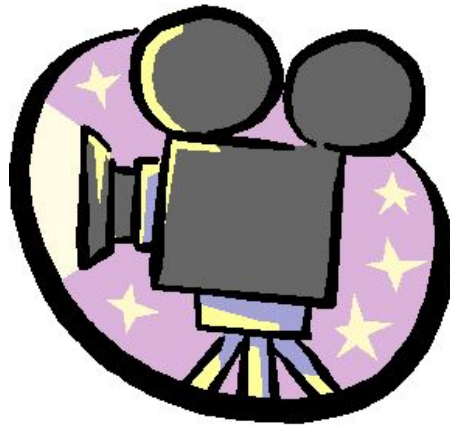
Evidence for the soul

What you need to be asking

- Are there reasonable grounds to *believe* in the soul?
 - If there are, what *is* the nature of the soul? (i.e. what is it like?)
 - What is the *relationship* between the soul and the body?
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A quick film break

[Disney and Pixar's Soul | Official Trailer | Disney+ - YouTube](#)



What about you?

How would you answer these questions?

- 1. Does the soul exist?**
- 2. Is it material? (it is made of matter like the body?)**
- 3. Is it immortal? (does it last for ever?)**
- 4. What is it's relationship with the body? (and the mind?)**

Idea:

1. Does the soul exist?
2. Is it material?
3. Is it immortal?
4. What is it's relationship with the body?
(and the mind?)

Me:

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Plato

Dualist



Plato on the soul:

- There IS a soul and the soul is **immortal**
 - Souls are trapped inside bodies and long to be free of them
 - Souls truly belong to a **transcendental** realm called the realm of the forms. This realm exists metaphysically, not physically. Metaphysics is the study of what lies *beyond* or outside of the 'material' realm that we live in now, the world we know through our senses.
 - The soul *has* to exist as there is no other way for knowledge of the forms to cross from the transcendent, intelligible realm into the physical realm. How else could we have knowledge of spiritual things.
 - The soul can be divided into 3 parts: **reason** (nous), **emotion/spirit** (thymos) and **longings/desire** (eros). Our emotions and desires pull us in separate directions and reason must control them (like a charioteer controlling two wilful horses) but each of these has a function in a peaceful and well-balanced soul
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Aristotle

Dualist with a
twist



Aristotle on the soul:

- Unlike Plato and the medieval religious tradition, Aristotle did not consider the soul to be a separate, immortal occupant of the body; just as rower needs a boat to row, the soul ceases to exist at the death of the body.
 - The soul, which Aristotle calls 'de anima', is the animating force in our body, Unlike Plato, Aristotle believes the soul dies with the body
 - He argues that the soul *has* to exist as there is no other way to explain movement. The body cannot move itself, so movement must originate in some other place.
 - Aristotle argued that the soul finds its source in the heart (i.e. it is not made by God)
 - Aristotle believed in a sort of hierarchy of souls- with a human soul being the highest, followed by animals and vegetables. He argued that it is rationality (reasoned thought – what we are doing now) that gives our souls this higher status.
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Rene Descartes

Dualist



Descartes on the soul

- Descartes uses 'mind' and 'soul' interchangeably
 - Through a process of scepticism, Descartes concludes that the existence of a sensory world (including bodies) is open to doubt. However, as long as we experience doubt we are thinking and therefore the existence of the 'mind' (i.e. an immaterial self) cannot be questioned
 - Descartes explains the relationship between body and soul through his 'intermingling thesis'.
 - Descartes adds that the soul is 'incorporeal' (non-bodily) and immortal, as it cannot be destroyed
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Kant

One of the 3
postulates

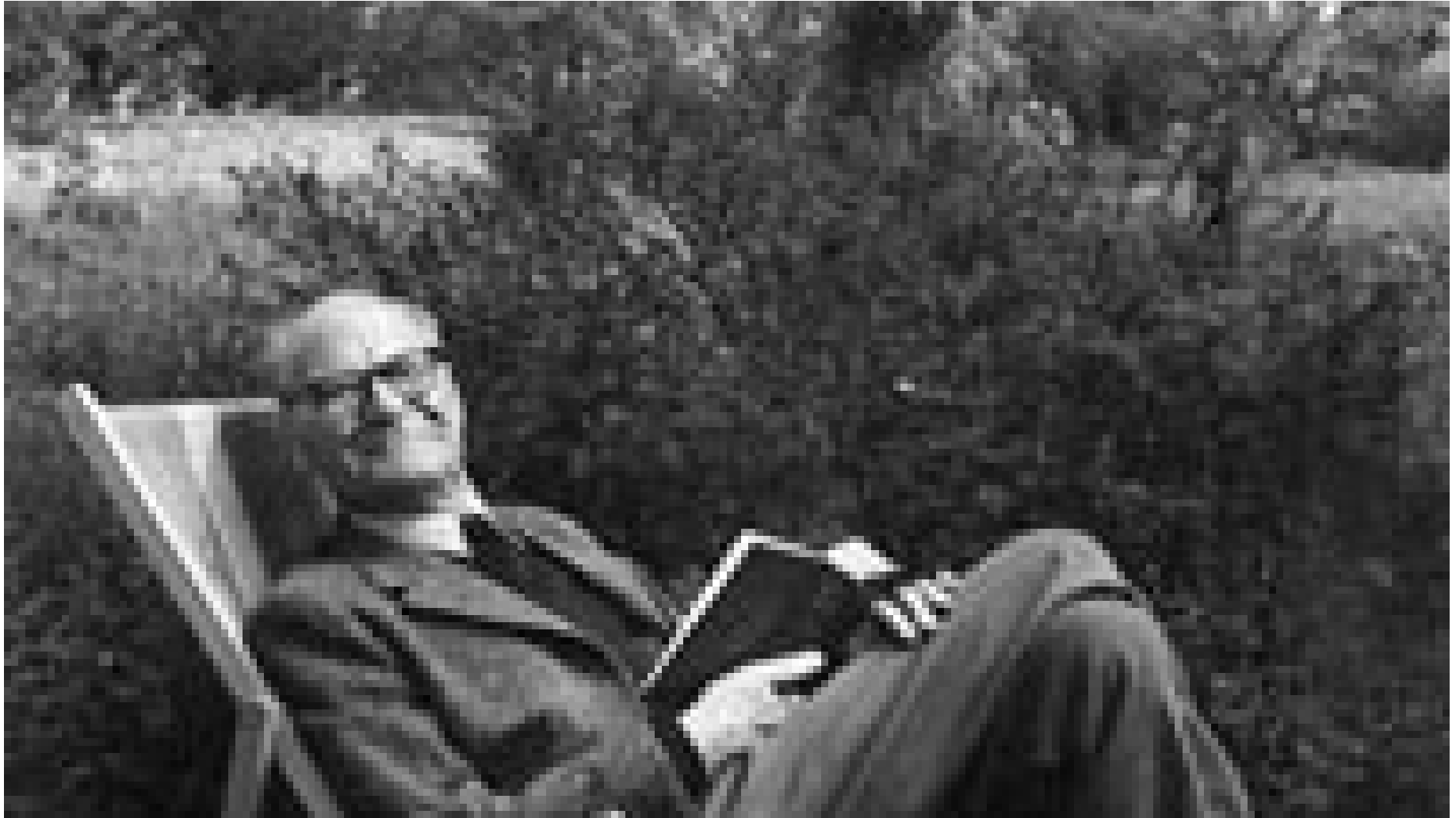


Kant on the soul

- The existence of an immortal soul is one of the *three truths of practical reason* in Kantian Ethics
 - The other truths are the existence of God and the possibility of free will (autonomy)
 - Kant argues that there *has* to be a soul for the reward of the “Higher Power” to be received as this cannot be given in *this* life, while decisions are still being made. Furthermore, the happiness that comes from rewards from the Higher Power” are too much to experience in a mortal lifetime
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Gilbert Ryle

Materialist

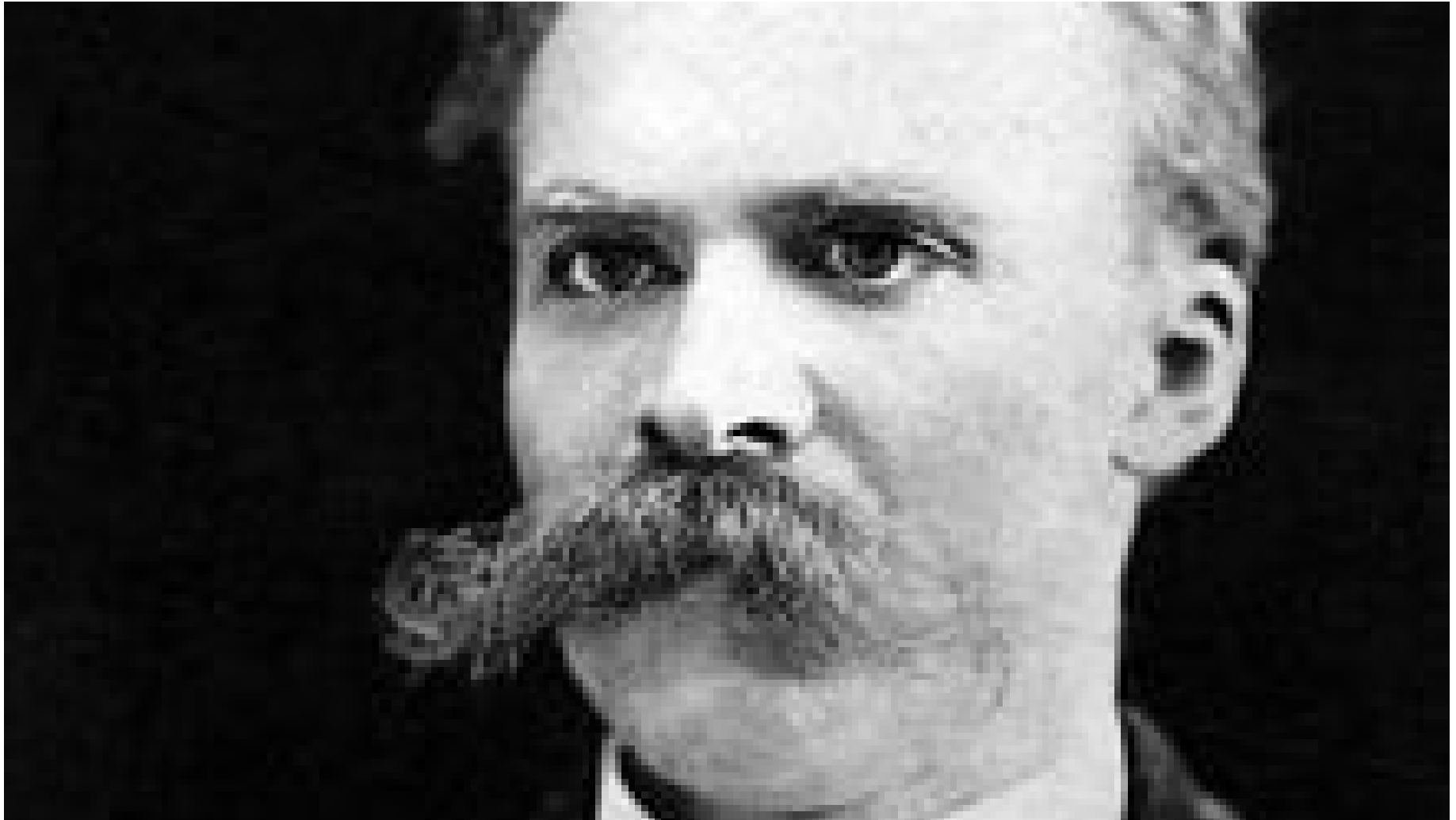


Ryle on the soul

- Ryle openly mocked the Plato's idea of a soul being 'trapped' inside a body, using the term 'ghost in a machine' to point out the absurdity of something immaterial (not made of matter) living within something material (i.e. a body)
 - Ryle also used the example of someone looking for the whereabouts of the team spirit during a cricket match to highlight the incoherence of the soul
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Nietzsche

Soul
'hypothesis'

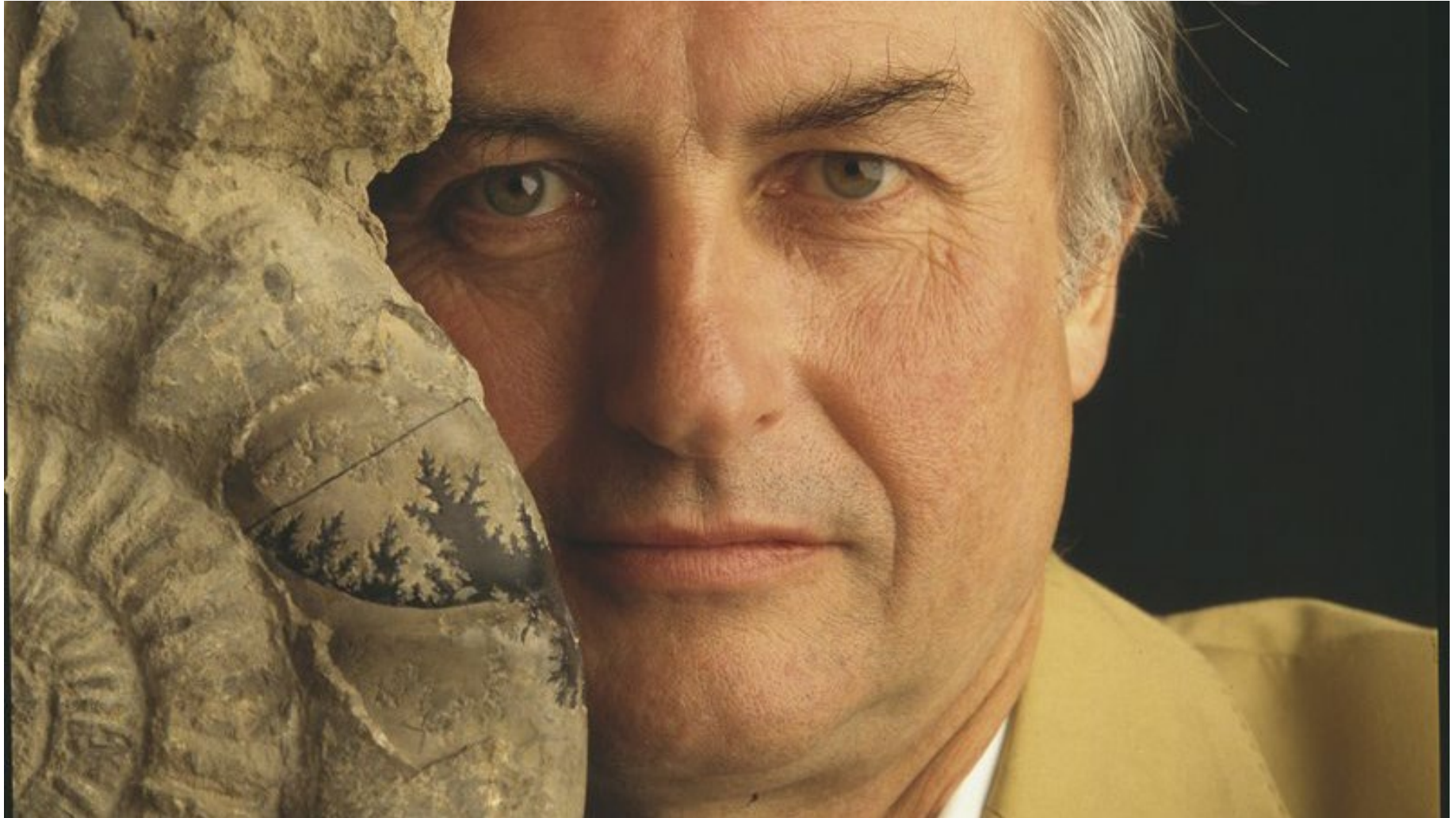


Nietzsche on the soul

- Nietzsche has a discussion of atomism (a scientific approach to the world)
 - He rejects the scientific urge to reduce all things to their most basic parts.
 - However, he also says we should reject the Christian idea of a soul as being something indestructible, eternal and indivisible
 - Rather we should hold onto a ‘soul hypothesis’- a new understanding of the soul in terms of its social structure and psychological power, and let go of the idea of a soul as being real, thereby taking an anti-realist perspective
 - Nietzsche claimed that there was a need to reinvent traditional views of the soul
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Richard Dawkins

Scientist and
Materialist



Dawkins on the soul

- The evolutionary biologist argues that the soul is an incoherent concept
 - As a materialist, he argues that all things are made of matter. As the soul is immaterial (i.e. not made of matter) then it cannot exist.
 - He sees all metaphysics as wishful thinking, ways of coping with the ultimate meaninglessness of life and death. As a humanist he argues we should live life to the full and accept that after death the only immortality we can experience is through our genetic legacy i.e. the survival of our DNA
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A different understanding of soul

- Animism is the worldview that natural physical entities—including animals, plants, and often even inanimate objects or phenomena—possess a spiritual essence.
- Many indigenous tribal peoples have different forms of animist belief.
- Although each culture has its own different mythologies and rituals, "animism" is said to describe the most common thread of indigenous peoples' "spiritual" or "supernatural" perspectives.
- Animism encompasses the belief that there is no separation between the spiritual and physical (or material) world, and souls or spirits exist, not only in humans, but also in some other animals, plants, rocks, geographic features such as mountains or rivers, or other entities of the natural environment, including thunder, wind, and shadows.

Vocabulary/key terms 1

- Body: the physical structure and material substance of an animal or plant, living or dead
- Soul: the spiritual part of humans as distinct from the physical part
- Mind: mind is the philosophical and general term for the centre of mental activity. Known as the *nous* in Greek/Platonic thinking
- Monism: there exists only one basic substance in the universe- that which is made of matter **or** that which is immaterial
- Dualism: the view that the universe is made of two substances: material (i.e. made of matter) or immaterial (not made of matter)
- Materialism: (a type of monism) the philosophical theory that all phenomena can be reduced to matter and the movement of matter



BACK

Vocabulary/key terms 2

- Realm of the forms: a reality in **Plato's** philosophy than can only be accessed by the intellect or soul; contains within it the abstract essence of all material items as well as virtues such as justice and concepts such as mathematics
- Tripartite theory of the soul: Plato argues that the soul is composed of three parts: the appetitive (desire), the rational (reason), and the spirited (emotion). The first and last are compared to horses that are controlled by reason, the charioteer
- Coherent: logically connected; consistent: e.g. a coherent argument; cohering; sticking together e.g. a coherent concept
- Incoherent: Without logical or meaningful connection; disjointed; lacking unity or harmony of elements
- Reasonable grounds: good reason for holding something to be true

Vocabulary/key terms 3

- Transcendental: beyond all human *experience*, but not beyond all human knowledge (as in metaphysics)
- Realism: there are objects and truths outside of the human mind; these exist in themselves, independent of being thought of or experienced by others
- Anti-realism: at least some, if not all things, have come to exist **because** individuals believe in or perceive them
- Essence: the true nature of something
- Genetic legacy: whatever is left behind by the passing on of genetic information
- Animism: the belief that all beings and natural objects have a spiritual essence



BACK

Vocabulary/key terms 4

- Ghost in the machine: The phrase was introduced in Ryle's book *The Concept of Mind* (1949) to highlight the perceived absurdity of dualist systems like Descartes' where mental activity carries on in parallel to physical action, but where their means of interaction are unknown or guessed at
- Subsist: to continue in existence
- Immaterial: not made of matter; incorporeal; spiritual
- Incorporeal: bodiless (no corpse)
- Immortal: something that cannot be killed or which can survive death in some way
- Metaphysics: concerned with abstract thought or subjects, as existence, causality, truth, the nature and existence of God, the soul, the afterlife and so on



BACK

Descartes' intermingling thesis

Nature...teaches me by these feelings of pain, hunger, thirst, etc., that I am not only lodged in my body, like a pilot in his ship, but, besides, that I am joined to it very closely and indeed so compounded and intermingled with my body, that I form, as it were, a single whole with it (Med VI, 159).



Realism: The Basics

- There **is** an external world
 - Our sense experiences **do** give us (mostly) accurate information about this external world
 - Our knowledge about the external world is caused, at least in part, by the objects themselves
 - These objects exist **independently** of the perceiver insofar as they continue to exist when not being perceived
 - In this view, the soul is 'real' iff (if and only if) it corresponds to an external set of events and therefore has *objective* existence
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Antirealism: The Basics

- The external world is entirely perceiver-dependent
 - Our sense experiences are limited in that they can only provide us with information about the experience itself- we cannot move past these experiences to establish what, if anything, exists beyond them
 - Therefore we live our lives in a state of uncertainty. We can only have certainty of our own experiences, not of what they relate to
 - Under this view, it is possible for me to argue that the soul exists in an anti-realist sense i.e. although I cannot be certain of its objective existence, I can be certain of my own *subjective* experience of it and in that sense I can consider it real
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