

# Is the Soul the Real Person?

## CARTESIAN DUALISM

Dualism is the idea that we are really souls not bodies at all. Body and soul are separate and the soul controls the body. It denies that the body and soul make up the one person. The soul is the real person and the body just an accessory. The soul is a being that really exists but unlike matter doesn't have any parts. It's like a gas that has no parts. When the body dies the real person lives on.

Descartes held that the soul or mind is separate from the body. He said that you can imagine yourself not having a body but cannot imagine yourself not having a mind. Why? Because you know you have a mind. In other words, you cannot imagine that you are aware of nothing for then you are still aware. You are aware of your awareness and you cannot become unaware of it. You are aware therefore you exist.

He argued that since I can imagine myself not having a body I am not my body. I am sure my mind exists and I am not as sure of my body therefore my mind is not my body. When the body dies I can live on because my body is not me.

So if you imagine yourself as blind does that mean your eyes do not work? No - the argument for the soul is fallacious. The argument depends on imagination but the whole point of imagination is to be able to play lets pretend.

Descartes believed that what is in the mind is real in the sense that you are using real energies to see these images in your head. This is correct. If your mental picture of an apple didn't exist as a picture then you would see nothing. He thought this picture was made of spiritual energy - that is energy that is not made of matter but which is pure spirit. A more sensible thought would be, "I don't know what it is so I should not say. I don't even know if the idea of an entity that is spiritual and not made up of parts or material components even makes sense."

The dualist theory says that the mind is an immaterial reality, a being that really exists but which has no parts in other words: a soul, for it can imagine itself having no material components so it must be a spiritual force. Descartes logic is that our minds are spirit for we can imagine them as such. We cannot understand an immaterial being or imagine one so how could we imagine that we are immaterial beings?

If we say spirit exists we are talking about something we cannot understand. Believers say, "But we don't understand matter either." True but we know we could understand it if our minds were smart enough and we understand a little. But the problem with spirit is that we don't understand it at all or know if it is in any way coherent. We should then prefer materialist explanations to spiritual ones.

If we don't understand matter very well then who is in a position to say that our awareness and our mental images are not caused by matter and made by matter? Believers seem to think they are!

Pretend Descartes could manage to refute the idea of mind and body being one entity or identity on the grounds that the mind can imagine being immaterial. Then, if the mind were material it would be impossible to prove that it was not the body. If it is material then why couldn't it be the body?

I can pretend that I have no body and still be a body. It is forgotten that images and real things can be used to deceive. If I imagine I see snow on the ground I am using the image of snow to delude myself into seeing it on the ground though there is no snow. I can pretend that I don't exist and does that mean I cease to exist? Of course not!

## OBJECTIONS TO DUALISM

If dualism is true then we are separate from matter and the world and know nothing about them. The dualist theory is supposed to lead to scepticism. A calculator is outside me and I trust it so the objection seems flawed to say the least. The answer to that is that the point is not that you trust but that if you can know you can and should trust.

Even if the mind is matter and is still separate from the body the same problem will arise. You are never really sure if what is around you is real for you get all your data from a machine that you run but which is not you.

For the sake of knowledge and admitting the truth that we do know things, we must hold that mind and body though different are one and the same entity.

But what if one says, "Even if the mind were the body, there is still the problem of how something inside the head can really know what the senses tell it is true. It is like you being locked in a room with only a television to show you the outside world. How do you know what you see is true?"

We can learn about stones because we are outside stones so perhaps the mind is able to learn about matter not because it is attached to matter but because it is outside it? But what if matter is an illusion? You can avoid that by saying there is no reason to believe in a being that might be deliberately feeding wrong information to you. There is no God who deceives maliciously or for some alleged purpose that gives him no choice but to fool you.

Dualists like people who hold that body and soul are the one entity have to guess that what matter says to them is true. But if you must guess then guess in a way that involves taking the smallest leap.

If you are a spirit in a body you have to take a big guess that what you learn really is learned and is not misinformation.

If you are a material mind in a material body and the body is not you then you still have to guess. But at least you don't guess as much for you don't have the problem of how anything that is not material can really connect to matter.

If you assume the mind and body are material and the same then the guessing is minimised. That minimising makes it the rational choice.

You might ask, "But perhaps I trust matter because I am matter and not a soul?" What you are is irrelevant for the problem is that you are not the one learning and testing things for your body by which these things are done is not you.

It has been objected against spiritual dualism, that it says there is one soul in each body when there could be several if mind or soul is separate from matter. This can be dismissed on the grounds that our behaviour would mimic that of lunatics if that were true. There would be no consistency in us. It is unlikely that many minds would behave as one in me. And I don't see any reason to think I am a collection of different souls in the one body. My experience says there is just me.

Some say that if a person is a heap of souls in one body they don't care. They would argue, "As long as we are okay and will live after death who gives a damn?"

Only one mind is needed as an explanation. Remember do not complicate what needs no complication. The Cartesian knows that it is likely that there is one mind per body and is happy with that though there is no absolute proof.

Another criticism is that dualism is hard to fit with evolutionary theory. The notion of bodies growing until souls develop is ridiculous if souls are separate from bodies. They cannot be effected. And animals can have souls even more advanced than ours for their bodies are no indication of how good and advanced their souls are. It is not the souls fault if it is in a body that it cannot use well. The body is no reflection on the soul.

But perhaps evolution happened independently of our souls and our souls controlled animals and apes to produce reasonable bodies to inhabit the souls? Perhaps we took whatever was going. Perhaps developed minds only take developed bodies though sometimes blunders are made. This view still rejects the notion that evolution produces souls.

If the souls are not made by evolution then evolution is not as important as there being souls. That idea is an insult if it took evolution to make us what we are and put us here.

Another criticism still is that nobody can explain how mind controls the body. It seems it cannot when it is not material itself. The usual answer is "But when we don't understand souls how can we be so sure? But even if mind is matter we cannot explain how it does what it does anyway so there is no difference. If mind is not the body perhaps the mind uses its psychic powers to treat the body as if it were a part of the mind. This might take up all its energy which will explain why magic does not work. A thing can be true though we cannot explain it. Jack the Ripper may have been Chief Inspector Abberline though we cannot explain how he could have been." The fact of the matter is that if the soul is not matter and

Another criticism is that if I am not my body then how can I be sure that other bodies have minds? But even if I have a mind that is material how do I know that other people have a mind the same and how do I know that their minds are not dualistic? How do I know that they are not impersonal machines that behave like persons? Some dualists think the soul is psychic and can sense that other souls exist in bodies. They say that belief in the soul is better than believing the mind is the brain and not a soul.

Another criticism is that dualism seems to imply the soul is better and more valuable than the body for the body isn't necessary. But it could be countered that the body is valuable when the soul values it so much to be inside it controlling it

and feeling things through it.

Some reformulate Descartes' argument for dualism as follows. If I have a power that does not come from the body then I am not my body but something that is above nature. I can know my body. I cannot know myself the same way therefore I am not my body for I cannot stand outside my self and view it as something separate from me like I can my body (page 242, Handbook of Christian Apologetics).

That is like saying a tongue is not a tongue but a spirit because it cannot taste itself but only tastes what food it gets.

When you have a huge burst of energy in your body, machines can detect it. For example, extreme hate or love provoke physical changes and fill you with energy. But if you imagine you are feeling these things it is just as strong but it is not as strong in your body for you will not feel as tense in the body or anything. So where is the tension? It is said by some that it must be in some other kind of body that cannot be detected, some kind of body that is the real you or perhaps the soul. Unbelievers in life after death say it is in your memory which gives the illusion that it is strong. But tension in the body is felt in the mind not the body so logic says if the two bursts of energy are equal in the way they are felt they are equal in force. This forgets the fact that the body and imagination involve different kinds of energy. They experience it different ways. The body needs more energy to get worked up than the imagination does. It perceives energy differently from the imagination. That is why you can imagine feeling great hate and the body won't tense up in the way it would if you feel real hate. Nothing in this indicates that there has to be a soul.

Descartes failed to prove that the soul is the real person and is distinct from the body. And so did his supporters.

## MIND SEPARATE FROM BODY

Many think that they know that the mind can survive death and is independent of sensed matter when children who have hardly any brain matter still have minds which they take to mean that the mind is something that is plugged into the body and is not the brain.

The mind is a machine made of matter, undetectable matter or it is spirit (soul) if spirit can exist. It is not spirit or separate from the body for if a spirit goes unconscious then it would be non-existent for its nature is to be aware. Also, if we were spirits we would be able to speed up or slow down our perception of time. But we cannot. We cannot make a second seem like a minute. This suggests that the mind is subject to the same force that makes matter change and must be matter itself. And being without parts there would be no forgetting or making mistakes. That we have no souls or spirits is proven.

What does the machine be doing when we are asleep? Sleep is a function of the body. There is no reason why the body and brain can't sleep and the mind continue to work all the time even if it is only dreaming. The mystery of the children is not solved by advancing another and tougher mystery. Better to believe that the little brain matter they have is somehow enough though we can't see how.

It is thought, "I cannot be aware of a tree unless I am aware that I am aware that I am aware ad infinitum of it. When I see a tree my eye sees it and my consciousness or awareness sees what my eye sees. So, my awareness of my awareness sees what my awareness sees and so on and on forever".

It is thought that:

1 Like an ad infinitum line, so consciousness also is an infinite series of awarenesses."

2 The line does not contain all reality and power and neither does my infinite consciousness.

3 This proves that consciousness, the mind, is not a part of sensed destructible matter for matter is not an infinite duplication of awareness.

If consciousnesses or awareness is really infinite then it means that everything is my consciousness and I am God for infinite means unlimited. This is obvious nonsense. But awareness is just one level not many or an infinite. You have just one awareness and it focuses on one thing at a time. You don't need an infinity of eyes to see something, you only need the one! It is based on the notion that if I am conscious I am conscious of that, and then conscious of that that I have already refuted.

Awareness is something registering on your awareness. An image is registered on a mirror and infinite mirrors aren't needed. One consciousness is enough for information to register with. So, one mind is needed to register not an infinite number of minds.

“Out of body experiences and memories of previous lives could be subconscious fantasies or they could be real. It is most likely that they are real because when there is no evidence that something is delusion it has to be believed. There is no evidence that you are not dreaming your life in this world this very moment so what you experience you have to believe. In most cases, the mind tricking you makes no sense for why would it do that?”

I reply that the going out of your body could be a fantasy which contains elements of knowledge gained by clairvoyance or by the cleverness of the sub-conscious mind which can make a shockingly accurate number of good intelligent guesses so you never know if you really left your body. There is no decent evidence for clairvoyance – if it seems to happen then perhaps the person only psychically sees how the present will determine the future. The past causes the present which causes the future. For one to see the future would mean a change in this order so one cannot really see the future. It would mean that seeing what you saw caused what you saw so it is an evil gift if it is real.

AM I INFINITE?

Argument: The consciousness I have is one power. The distance between its existence and nothing is infinite therefore it is caused by infinite power – it takes infinite power for it to exist. My consciousness is made up of infinite power and so it cannot be destroyed because what is infinite cannot cease to exist. Something cannot become nothing and nothing cannot become something. Not only will we have no end but we had no beginning for we always were.

Reply: When what is infinite is one power (because infinite power means an unlimited force so there can be no other forces but one) I object that this means that there is only one consciousness and that anything that is not consciousness does not exist. This is absurd for we all experience ourselves as different beings. But we could have an infinite force that becomes many other beings and things. That force could manifest in me as awareness and change into something else when I die.

The one same pure awareness is not going to become billions of awarenesses for that is a waste of power for there is no need for all those. If reason says there is only one then we are left with a paradox, one awareness being many. The perception we all have that we are many would have to be caused by a mental defect for it is not real. We are not able to see the solution. Remember, we must have the least silly paradox. It is worse to say we are all one awareness than it is to say that we are not for the first fights what we know to be true and the second only what the rules of reason as we have them say. The latter is only denying our minds are right and not the validity of true reason.

Right, a paradox is assumed to account for diversity and things being separate and the existence of infinite oneness. But why can't we assume that infinity only seems to exist but does not and ignore the problem with that by saying that we have another paradox?

If I am infinite I should have infinite power. I am God. But I have finite power so I am not divine. So I can't be immortal on the basis that I am divine for I am not divine.

FREE WILL - PHYSICAL POWER OR NON-PHYSICAL?

Free will, assuming it is real and not just something we think incorrectly that we have, is something a conscious being will use. Some say the brain creates consciousness so it is a physical power in some way we do not understand well. Others say the brain does not create consciousness. It comes from some non-physical force. It is a non-physical force. Then what about free will? It could be a physical faculty that a non-physical soul uses. It need not be inherently part of the soul or the consciousness. If it is not then we are about existing not choosing. The choosing is only an extra and not an essential component.

Yet the whole emphasis about the non-physical soul is about trying to say it is a free agent!

FINALLY

Dualism imagines that because thoughts and feelings and ideas are not like anything physical they are not physical at all and have nothing to do with the physical and can be there if there is no physical. That is its fundamental logical error. If something does not seem physical that does not mean there is nothing physical about it.

Thinking and deciding and feeling are mistaken for spirit activities or non-material activities because they are what material things do and are not things. It is like thinking what the breeze does is non-material! But is not about material or immaterial but what the breeze does!

Religion believes you have a soul or are a soul inhabiting a body. The “evidence” is how a soul "explains" some aspects of our nature and how our minds work. But that is merely a souls of the gap theory. You may not understand how your dog got

a cut but that does not mean an alien came from space and did it or a demon or some magical being.

There is no reason for denying that the mind or soul is separate from the body. Both of them make up a unity – one person. When the body dies the mind dies as well for body and mind are one and the same. This is the simplest view and simplicity is the law in all things and in all philosophy. Don't assume more than you need to.

## BOOKS CONSULTED

AFTER DEATH – WHAT? Fred Pearce, Christadelphian Publishing Office, Birmingham  
ETERNAL LIFE, Hans Kung, Collins, London, 1984  
GOD AND THE NEW PHYSICS, Paul Davies, Penguin Books, London, 1990  
HANDBOOK OF CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS, Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli, Monarch, East Sussex, 1995  
JEHOVAH OF THE WATCHTOWER, Walter Martin and Norman Klann, Bethany House Publishers, Minnesota, 1974  
IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH? Paul Kroll, Worldwide Church of God, Pasadena, California, 1988  
MIND OUT OF TIME, Ian Wilson, Gollanez, London, 1981  
LIFE AFTER DEATH THE WONDERFUL FACTS, Alan Hayward, Christadelphian, ALS, Birmingham  
REASONS FOR HOPE, Ed Jeffrey A Mirus, Christendom College Press, Virginia, 1982  
THE AFTER DEATH EXPERIENCE, Ian Wilson, Corgi, London, 1987  
THE DEVIL HIDES OUT, David Marshall, Autumn House, Grantham, 1991  
THE LIFE OF ALL LIVING, Fulton J Sheen, Image Books, New York, 1979  
THE INCREDIBLE CREED OF JEHOVAH WITNESSES, Frs Rumble & Carty, TAN, Illinois, 1977  
WHATEVER HAPPENED TO HEAVEN? Dave Hunt, Harvest House, Publishers, Oregon, 1988

The Web

BIBLE QUOTATIONS FROM:  
The Amplified Bible