

THE SOUL - YOUR INTANGIBLE AND IMMATERIAL REAL SELF?

The soul is your real self - it is not your body or brain but something non-material. Nearly everybody thinks of the soul that way which is a sign that religion is prone to badness for it degrades the body and brain. Dualism tends to identify a person by the spiritual mind without any reference to the body and it is inhuman to do that. You want to be seen as a person who is a body not as a mere ghost.

WHY BELIEVE?

People believe in souls for different reasons.

One. Some states of awareness encourage the idea of a soul. Certain activities and situations alter our awareness so that we feel bigger than our bodies and outside of them. Sleep deprivation can do that as can over-exercise so unless you want to think of these as a poor soul trying to escape the body they are illusions.

Two, is religious conditioning.

Three is that they want to think they and their loved ones will be together again.

Four - notions such as that you have a soul say you have a part of you that no one or anybody can change or ruin and this is essentially fueled by arrogant passive-aggressiveness.hu

Four seems to be the main incentive. If you can be injured at your core and think you can't that guarantees that your endgame will be off the scale. It's what an enemy wants. And there are many people whose cores are devastated and who end up worse for they feel they are at fault for they have a centre that is strong no matter what happens. Three presupposes that God didn't just give you a soul to extend your life forever - its about empowering you to survive and grow. It shows how an utter disgrace the soul and God are.

It sees you as a soul which denies the finality of killing your spirit or murdering you. We need to see how fragile we all are. That is why nobody should be hated. Religion says there is a non-fragile part of us – our core is eternal. That encourages hate and feeds it. It takes away the finality of harm done or even killing somebody. If it is final then we need to see that. If it is final we hope that finality can put us off hurting the other.

The concept of mind not body enables oppression and self-destructive ideas. Making a difference between mind and body instead of identifying the two perpetrates violence against your own body and eventually that of others. Even if you see the mind as part of the body and not as a soul the problem can arise. The notion is that the mind is somehow better than the rest of the body. The body becomes the means to serve the end: the mind. You would be guilty of violence if you argued that only hands and feet mattered. You would be given an ideological cover for the violence and as good as trying to make sure it will arise.

Even loving your body turns it into a superior type of love where the great mind is showing how wonderful it is by loving the unworthy body. That is not love but pity.

The answer is to see that all of you is your mind. There is no puzzle about how the mind sits in the body like its king or queen or tenant. Your mind creates you and you create it with everything you do. Your body creates your mind as much as it creates things for the body.

If the soul is not real and we are mistaking a part of how our brain works for it then the importance we put on the soul means we are objectifying ourselves and others. It is objectifying to see a woman just as her breasts. Dualists have tended to hurt people over trying to purify their souls and seen sinners as having not much of a soul. That is not surprising.

Catholicism teaches another form of dualism. Catholicism teaches a form of additional dualism where the body is not its physical components. You see that in the doctrine that though the communion wafer does not change physically it is still the body of Christ. Its substance is turned into the substance of Jesus' body. Jesus' body then is not its size or colour or shape or even physical. It is bad enough to be dualist but this is salt on the wound. The Catholic Eucharist degrades Jesus' body and the human body.

Finally

There is no reason to think that the mind is some kind of non-physical supernatural or spiritual entity.

Whether we think our minds are spirit or matter, one thing is clear. The body and matter affects how we think and feel. For example, if we are tormented by sickness our minds will not work properly and we will mentally experience tremendous unhappiness. Misery is in the mind. So matter comes first in the sense that unless we look after our bodies, our minds will have nothing to want to exist for. This is an insight that can have practical use. It is more important than the dogma that nothing exists but matter. It is good for us to believe that nothing matters but matter.

Let naturalist Steven Pinker have the last word, "Nothing that we know about consciousness is inconsistent with the understanding that it depends entirely on neural activity."

TEACH YOURSELF PHILOSOPHY OF MIND, Mel Thompson, Teach Yourself Books, London, 2003