

Soul

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The **soul**—in many traditional spiritual, philosophical, and psychological traditions—is the incorporeal and immortal essence of a person, living thing, or object.^[1] According to some religions (including the Abrahamic religions in most of their forms), souls—or at least immortal souls capable of union with the divine^[2]—belong only to human beings. For example, the Catholic theologian Thomas Aquinas attributed "soul" (*anima*) to all organisms but taught that only human souls are immortal.^[3] Other religions teach that all biological organisms have souls, and others further still that even non-biological entities (such as rivers and mountains) possess souls. This latter belief is called animism.^[4] Anima mundi and the Dharmic Ātman are concepts of a "world soul."

Soul can function as a synonym for *spirit*, *mind* or *self*;^[5] scientific works, in particular, often consider 'soul' as a synonym for 'mind'^[citation needed].

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Linguistic aspects

Etymology

The Modern English word *soul* derived from Old English *sáwol*, *sáwel*, first attested to in the 8th century poem *Beowulf* v. 2820 and in the Vespasian Psalter 77.50, and is cognate with other Germanic and Baltic terms for the same idea, including Gothic *saiwala*, Old High German *sêula*, *sêla*, Old Saxon *sêola*, Old Low Franconian *sêla*, *sîla*, Old Norse *sála* as well as Lithuanian *siela*. Further etymology of the Germanic word is uncertain. A more recent suggestion^[6] connects it with a root for "binding", Germanic **sailian* (OE *sēlian*, OHG *seilen*), related to the notion of being "bound" in death, and the practice of ritually binding or restraining the corpse of the deceased in the grave to prevent his or her return as a ghost.

The word is probably an adaptation by early missionaries—particularly Ulfilas, apostle to the Goths during the 4th century—of a native Germanic concept, which was a translation of Greek ψυχή *psychē* "life, spirit, consciousness".

The Greek word is derived from a verb "to cool, to blow" and hence refers to the vital breath, the animating principle in humans and other animals, as opposed to σῶμα (*soma*) meaning "body". It could refer to a ghost or spirit of the dead in Homer, and to a more philosophical notion of an immortal and immaterial essence left over at death since Pindar. Latin *anima* figured as a translation of ψυχή since Terence. *Psychē* occurs juxtaposed to σῶμα e.g. in Matthew 10:28 (<http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Matthew&verse=10:28&src=!>) :

— καὶ μὴ φοβεῖσθε ἀπὸ τῶν ἀποκτενόντων τὸ σῶμα, τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν μὴ δυναμένων ἀποκτεῖναι·

φοβεῖσθε δὲ μᾶλλον τὸν δυνάμενον καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ σῶμα ἀπολέσαι ἐν γέεννῃ.

Vulgate: *et nolite timere eos qui occidunt corpus animam autem non possunt occidere sed potius eum timete qui potest et animam et corpus perdere in gehennam.*

Authorized King James Version (KJV) "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

In the Septuagint (LXX), ψυχή translates Hebrew נפש *nephesh*, meaning "life, vital breath", which is in English variously translated as "soul, self, life, creature, person, appetite, mind, living being, desire, emotion, passion"; e.g. in Genesis 1:20 (<http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Genesis&verse=1:20&src=!>) :

— וַיֵּצְרֵם אֱלֹהִים יְשָׂרְצוּ הַמַּיִם יִשְׂרָץ גִּבֹּרֵת תַּיָּהּ —

LXX καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός ἐξαγαγέτω τὰ ὕδατα ἔρπετα ψυχῶν ζωσῶν.

Vulgate *Creavitque Deus cete grandia, et omnem animam viventem atque motabilem.*

KJV "And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth."

Paul of Tarsus used ψυχή and πνεῦμα specifically to distinguish between the Jewish notions of נפש *nephesh* and רוח *ruah* (spirit) (also in LXX, e.g. Genesis 1:2 (<http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book=%20Genesis&verse=1:2&src=!>) וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים = πνεῦμα θεοῦ = *spiritus Dei* = "the Spirit of God").

Semantics

Although the terms *soul* and *spirit* are sometimes used interchangeably, *soul* may denote a more worldly and less transcendent aspect of a person.^[7] According to psychologist James Hillman, soul has an affinity for negative thoughts and images, whereas spirit seeks to rise above the entanglements of life and death.^[8] The words *soul* and *psyche* can also be treated synonymously, although *psyche* has more physical connotations, whereas *soul* is connected more closely to spirituality and religion.^[9]

Philosophical views

The Ancient Greeks used the same word for 'alive' as for 'ensouled', indicating that the earliest surviving western philosophical view believed that the soul was that which gave the body life. The soul was considered the incorporeal or spiritual 'breath' which animates (from the Latin, *anima*, cf. *animal*) the living organism.

Francis M. Cornford quotes Pindar in saying that the soul sleeps while the limbs are active, but when one is sleeping, the soul is active and reveals in many a dream "an award of joy or sorrow drawing near".^[10]

Erwin Rohde writes that the early pre-Pythagorean belief was that the soul had no life when it departed from the body, and retired into Hades with no hope of returning to a body.^[11]

It has been argued that a strict line of causality fails to explain certain phenomena within human experience such as free will, which have at times been attributed to the soul. (See also: Determinism and free will)

Socrates and Plato

Plato, drawing on the words of his teacher Socrates, considered the soul the essence of a person, being that which decides how we behave. He considered this essence to be an incorporeal, eternal occupant of our being. As bodies die, the soul is continually reborn in subsequent bodies. The Platonic soul comprises three parts:

1. the logos, or logistikon (mind, nous, or reason)
2. the thymos, or thumetikon (emotion, or spiritedness, or masculine)
3. the eros, or epithumetikon (appetitive, or desire, or feminine)

Each of these has a function in a balanced, level and peaceful soul.

Aristotle

Aristotle defined the soul or *psyche* (ψυχή) as the *first actuality* of a naturally organized body,^[12] but argued against its having a separate existence from the physical body. In Aristotle's view, the primary activity of a living thing constitutes its soul; for example, the soul of an eye, if it were an independent organism, would be seeing (its purpose or final cause).

The various faculties of the soul or *psyche*, such as nutrition, sensation, movement, and so forth, when exercised, constitute the "second" actuality, or fulfillment, of the capacity to be alive. A good example is someone who falls asleep, as opposed to someone who falls dead; the former actuality *can* wake up and go about their life, while the second actuality can no longer do so. Aristotle identified three hierarchical levels of living things: plants, animals, and people, for which groups he identified three corresponding levels of soul, or biological activity: the nutritive activity of growth, sustenance and reproduction which all life shares; the self-willed motive activity and sensory faculties, which only animals and people have in common; and finally *reason*, of which people alone are capable. Aristotle treats of the soul in his work, *De Anima (On the Soul)*. Aristotle concludes, in the fifth chapter of the third book of this work, that the human active intellect is immortal.^[13]

Avicenna and Ibn al-Nafis

Following Aristotle, the Persian Muslim philosopher-physician, Avicenna (Ibn Sina) and Arab philosopher Ibn al-Nafis, further elaborated on the Aristotelian understanding of the soul and developed their own theories on the soul. They both made a distinction between the soul and the spirit, and in particular, the Avicennian doctrine on the nature of the soul was influential among the Scholastics. Some of Avicenna's views on the soul included the idea that the immortality of the soul is a consequence of its nature, and not a purpose for it to fulfill. In his theory of "The Ten Intellects", he viewed the human soul as the tenth and final intellect.

While he was imprisoned, Avicenna wrote his famous "Floating Man" thought experiment to demonstrate human self-awareness and the substantiality of the soul. He told his readers to imagine themselves suspended in the air, isolated from all sensations, which includes no sensory contact with even their own bodies. He argues that, in this scenario, one would still have self-consciousness. He thus concludes that the idea of the self is not logically dependent on any physical thing, and that the soul should not be seen in relative terms, but as a primary given, a substance. This argument was later refined and simplified by René Descartes in epistemic terms when he stated: "I can abstract from the supposition of all external things, but not from the supposition of my own consciousness."^[14]

Avicenna generally supported Aristotle's idea of the soul originating from the heart, whereas Ibn al-Nafis rejected this idea and instead argued that the soul "is related to the entirety and not to one or a few organs". He further criticized Aristotle's idea that every unique soul requires the existence of a unique source, in this case the heart. Ibn al-Nafis concluded that "the soul is related primarily neither to the spirit nor to any organ, but rather to the entire matter whose temperament is prepared to receive that soul" and he defined the soul as nothing other than "what a human indicates by saying 'I'".^[15]

Thomas Aquinas

Following Aristotle and Avicenna, St. Thomas Aquinas understood the soul to be the first actuality of the living body. Consequent to this, he distinguished three orders of life: plants, which feed and grow; animals, which add sensation to the operations of plants; and humans, which add intellect to the operations of animals.

Concerning the human soul, his epistemological theory required that, since the knower becomes what he knows^[16] the soul was definitely not corporeal: for, if it were corporeal when it knew what some corporeal thing was, that thing would come to be within it. Therefore, the soul had an operation which did not rely on a bodily organ and therefore the soul could subsist without the body. Furthermore, since the rational soul of human beings was

a subsistent form and not something made up of matter and form, it could not be destroyed in any natural process.^[17] The full argument for the immortality of the soul and Thomas's elaboration of Aristotelian theory is found in Question 75 of the *Summa Theologica*.

Immanuel Kant

In his discussions of rational psychology Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) identified the soul as the "I" in the strictest sense and that the existence of inner experience can neither be proved nor disproved. "We cannot prove a priori the immateriality of the soul, but rather only so much: that all properties and actions of the soul cannot be cognized from materiality." It is from the "I", or soul, that Kant proposes transcendental rationalization, but cautions that such rationalization can only determine the limits of knowledge if it is to remain practical.^[18]

James Hillman

Contemporary psychology is defined as the study of mental processes and behavior. However, the word "psychology" literally means "study of the soul",^[19] and psychologist James Hillman, the founder of archetypal psychology, has been credited with "restoring 'soul' to its psychological sense."^[20] Although the words *soul* and *spirit* are often viewed as synonyms, Hillman argues that they can refer to antagonistic components of a person. Summarizing Hillman's views, author and psychotherapist Thomas Moore associates spirit with "afterlife, cosmic issues, idealistic values and hopes, and universal truths", while placing soul "in the thick of things: in the repressed, in the shadow, in the messes of life, in illness, and in the pain and confusion of love."^[21] Hillman believes that religion—especially monotheism and monastic faiths—and humanistic psychology have tended to the spirit, often at the unfortunate expense of soul.^[7] This happens, Moore says, because to transcend the "lowly conditions of the soul ... is to lose touch with the soul, and a split-off spirituality, with no influence from the soul, readily falls into extremes of literalism and destructive fanaticism."^[22]

Hillman's archetypal psychology is in many ways an attempt to tend to the oft-neglected soul, which Hillman views as the "self-sustaining and imagining substrate" upon which consciousness rests, and "which makes meaning possible, [deepens] events into experiences, is communicated in love, and has a religious concern" as well as "a special relation with death."^[23] Departing from the Cartesian dualism "between outer tangible reality and inner states of mind," Hillman takes the Neoplatonic stance^[24] that there is a "third, middle position" in which soul resides.^[25] Archetypal psychology acknowledges this third position by attuning to, and often accepting, the archetypes, dreams, myths, and even psychopathologies through which soul, in Hillman's view, expresses itself.

Philosophy of mind

For a contemporary understanding of the soul/mind and the problem concerning its connection to the brain/body, consider the rejection of Descartes' mind/body dualism by Gilbert Ryle's ghost-in-the-machine argument, the tenuous unavailability of Richard Swinburne's argument for the soul, and the advances, which have been made in neuroscience and which are steadily uncovering the truth/falsity of the concept of an independent soul/mind. The philosophies of mind and of personal identity also contribute to a contemporary understanding of the mind. The contemporary approach does not so much attack the existence of an independent soul as render the concept less relevant. The advances in neuroscience mainly serve to support the mind/brain identity hypothesis, showing the extent of the correlation between mental states and physical-brain states. The notion of soul has less explanatory power in a western world-view which prefers the empirical explanations involving observable and locatable elements of the brain. Even so, there remain considerable objections to simple-identity theory. Notably, philosophers such as Thomas Nagel and David Chalmers have argued that the correlation between physical-brain states and mental states is not strong enough to support identity theory. Nagel (1974) argues that no amount of physical data is sufficient to provide the "what it is like"

of first-person experience, and Chalmers (1996) argues for an "explanatory gap" between functions of the brain and phenomenal experience. On the whole, brain/mind identity theory does poorly in accounting for mental phenomena of qualia and intentionality. While neuroscience has done much to illuminate the functioning of the brain, much of subjective experience remains mysterious.

Religious views

Ancient Near East

Main article: Religions of the Ancient Near East

In the ancient Egyptian religion, an individual was believed to be made up of various elements, some physical and some spiritual. See the article *Egyptian soul* for more details.^[*citation needed*]

Similar ideas are found in ancient Assyrian and Babylonian religion. Kuttamuwa, an 8th century BC royal official from Sam'al, ordered an inscribed stele erected upon his death. The inscription requested that his mourners commemorate his life and his afterlife with feasts "for my soul that is in this stele". It is one of the earliest references to a soul as a separate entity from the body. The 800-pound (360 kg) basalt stele is 3 ft (0.91 m) tall and 2 ft (0.61 m) wide. It was uncovered in the third season of excavations by the Neubauer Expedition of the Oriental Institute in Chicago, Illinois.^[26]

Bahá'í

The Bahá'í Faith affirms that "the soul is a sign of God, a heavenly gem whose reality the most learned of men hath failed to grasp, and whose mystery no mind, however acute, can ever hope to unravel."^[27] Bahá'u'lláh stated that the soul not only continues to live after the physical death of the human body, but is, in fact, immortal.^[28] Heaven can be seen partly as the soul's state of nearness to God; and hell as a state of remoteness from God. Each state follows as a natural consequence of individual efforts, or the lack thereof, to develop spiritually.^[29] Bahá'u'lláh taught that individuals have no existence prior to their life here on earth and the soul's evolution is always towards God and away from the material world.^[29]

Brahma Kumaris

In Brahma Kumaris, souls, called *atmas*, are believed to be an infinitesimal point of spiritual light residing in the forehead of the bodies they occupy. Every soul has three separate faculties which are inherent in all human beings irrespective of place of birth. Just as electrical energy produces warmth, sound or light depending on the device through which it passes, similarly, the energy of consciousness functions through three different but closely connected faculties, referred to respectively by the terms mind, intellect, and personality.

The Mind With the power of the mind, one imagines, thinks and forms ideas. Thoughts are created in the mind. The thought process is the basis of all emotions, desires and sensations. It is through the minds that, in an instant, thoughts reach anywhere, a memory can be relived and the feeling of happiness or sadness is experienced. The metaphysical mind should not be confused with the heart, the physical organ that maintains blood circulation.

The Intellect Thoughts are processed and interpreted by the intellect. This is the faculty which understands. The capacity to understand is perhaps the single most crucial ability of the soul. Clear understanding of anything is possible when the intellect becomes broad, deep and farsighted through the regular study of spiritual knowledge and the disciplined practice of meditation. The intellect also reasons, memorizes, discriminates and

makes decisions. The non-physical intellect should not be confused with the physical brain, which is the physical focus of the nervous system. The brain is the soul's control panel; it provides the facilities for the soul's expression.

The Personality^[30] Any action once performed leaves an impression on the soul. Habits, temperaments and tendencies are all embedded in the soul (as images, feelings, sounds, trains of thought, etc.) as a result of every action performed. The most fundamental feature of every soul, its personality, is determined by such stored impressions. These impressions, formed in the past, are the reservoir which we draw upon, often sub-consciously, as our source of thoughts and actions in the present^[citation needed]

Buddhism

Buddhism teaches that all things are in a constant state of flux: all is changing, and no permanent state exists by itself.^{[31][32]} This applies to human beings as much as to anything else in the cosmos. Thus, a human being has no permanent self.^{[33][34]} According to this doctrine of *anatta* (Pāli; Sanskrit: *anātman*) – "no-self" or "no soul" – the words "I" or "me" do not refer to any fixed thing. They are simply convenient terms that allow us to refer to an ever-changing entity.^[35]

The *anatta* doctrine is not a kind of materialism. Buddhism does not deny the existence of "immaterial" entities, and it (at least traditionally) distinguishes bodily states from mental states.^[36] Thus, the conventional translation of *anatta* as "no-soul"^[37] can be confusing. If the word "soul" simply refers to an incorporeal component in living things that can continue after death, then Buddhism does not deny the existence of the soul.^[38] Instead, Buddhism denies the existence of a permanent entity that remains constant behind the changing corporeal and incorporeal components of a living being. Just as the body changes from moment to moment, so thoughts come and go. And there is no permanent, underlying mind that experiences these thoughts, as in Cartesianism; rather, conscious mental states simply arise and perish with no "thinker" behind them.^[39] When the body dies, the incorporeal mental processes continue and are reborn in a new body.^[38] Because the mental processes are constantly changing, the being that is reborn is neither entirely different than, nor exactly the same as, the being that died.^[40] However, the new being is *continuous* with the being that died – in the same way that the "you" of this moment is continuous with the "you" of a moment before, despite the fact that you are constantly changing.^[41]

Buddhist teaching holds that a notion of a permanent, abiding self is a delusion that is one of the causes of human conflict on the emotional, social, and political levels.^{[42][43]} They add that an understanding of *anatta* provides an accurate description of the human condition, and that this understanding allows us to pacify our mundane desires.

Various schools of Buddhism have differing ideas about what continues after death.^[44] The Yogacara school in Mahayana Buddhism said there are Store consciousness which continue to exist after death.^[45] In some schools, particularly Tibetan Buddhism, the view is that there are three minds: *very subtle mind*, which does not disintegrate in death; *subtle mind*, which disintegrates in death and which is "dreaming mind" or "unconscious mind"; and *gross mind*, which does not exist when one is *sleeping*. Therefore, *gross mind* less permanent than *subtle mind*, which does not exist in death. *Very subtle mind*, however, does continue, and when it "catches on", or coincides with phenomena, again, a new *subtle mind* emerges, with its own personality/assumptions/habits, and *that* entity experiences karma in the current continuum.

Plants were said to be non-sentient (無情),^[46] but Buddhist monks should avoid cutting or burning trees, because some sentient beings rely on them.^[47] Some Mahayana monks said non-sentient beings such as plants and stones have buddha-nature.^{[48][49]} Some buddhists said about plants or divisible consciousnesses.^[50]

Certain modern Buddhists, particularly in Western countries, reject—or at least take an agnostic stance toward—the concept of rebirth or reincarnation, which they view as incompatible with the concept of *anatta*. Stephen Batchelor discusses this issue in his book, *Buddhism Without Beliefs*. Others point to research that has been conducted at the University of Virginia as proof that some people are reborn.^[51]

Judaism

The Hebrew terms נפש *nephesh* (literally "living being"), רוח *ruach* (literally "wind"), נשמה *neshama* (literally "breath"), חיה *chaya* (literally "life") and יחידה *yechidah* (literally "singularity") are used to describe the soul or spirit. In modern Judaism the soul is believed to be given by God to a person by his/her first breath, as mentioned in Genesis, "And the LORD God formed man [of] the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." (Genesis 2:7). From this statement, the rabbinical interpretation is often that human embryos do not have souls, though the orthodox often oppose abortion as a form of birth control. Judaism relates the quality of one's soul to one's performance of mitzvot and reaching higher levels of understanding, and thus closeness to God. A person with such closeness is called a tzadik. Judaism also has a concept of purity of body and soul, which requires avoidance of "unclean" things. Such practices mentioned in the Torah include the keeping of kashrut and daily bathing (tevilah) in a mikveh. In biblical times, it was believed that "impurity" was something that could be spread by touching, and unclean people were temporarily separated from the group. Though Jewish theology does not agree on the nature of an afterlife, the soul is said to "return to God" after death.

Kabbalah and other mystic traditions go into greater detail into the nature of the soul. Kabbalah separates the soul into five elements, corresponding to the five worlds:

1. *Nephesh*, related to natural instinct.
2. *Ruach*, related to emotion and morality.
3. *Neshamah*, related to intellect and the awareness of God.
4. *Chaya*, considered a part of God, as it were.
5. *Yechidah*, also termed the *pintele Yid* (the "essential [inner] Jew"). This aspect is essentially one with G-d.

Kabbalah furthermore proposed a concept of reincarnation, the *gilgul*. (See also *nefesh habehamit* the "animal soul").

Christianity

See also: Soul in the Bible

Most Christians understand the soul as an ontological reality distinct from, yet integrally connected with, the body. Its characteristics are described in moral, spiritual, and philosophical terms. According to a common Christian eschatology, when people die, their souls will be judged by God and determined to spend an eternity in Heaven or in Hell. Though all branches of Christianity – Catholics, Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox, Evangelical or mainline Protestants – teach that Jesus Christ plays a decisive role in the salvation process, the specifics of that role and the part played by individual persons or ecclesiastical rituals and relationships, is a matter of wide diversity in official church teaching, theological speculation and popular practice. Some Christians believe that if one has not repented of one's sins and trusted in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, one will go to Hell and suffer eternal damnation



Soul carried to Heaven by William Bouguereau

or eternal separation from God. Variations also exist on this theme, e.g. some which hold that the unrighteous soul will be destroyed instead of suffering eternally (Annihilationism). Believers will inherit eternal life in Heaven and enjoy eternal fellowship with God. There is also a belief that babies (including the unborn) and those with cognitive or mental impairments who have died will be received into Heaven on the basis of God's grace through the sacrifice of Jesus. And there are beliefs in universal salvation and Christian conditionalism.

Soul at inception of life

Among Christians, there is uncertainty regarding whether human embryos have souls, and at what point between conception and birth the fetus acquires a soul and consciousness. This uncertainty is the general reasoning behind many Christians' belief that abortion should not be legal.^{[52][53][54]}

Roman Catholic beliefs

The present Catechism of the Catholic Church defines the soul as "the innermost aspect of humans, that which is of greatest value in them, that by which they are most especially in God's image: 'soul' signifies the *spiritual principle* in man."^[55] All souls living and dead will be judged by Jesus Christ when he comes back to earth. The souls of those who die unrepentant of serious sins, or in conscious rejection of God, will at judgment day be forever in a state called Hell^[citation needed]. The Catholic Church teaches that the existence of each individual soul is dependent wholly upon God: "The doctrine of the faith affirms that the spiritual and immortal soul is created immediately by God."^[56]

Orthodox Christian beliefs

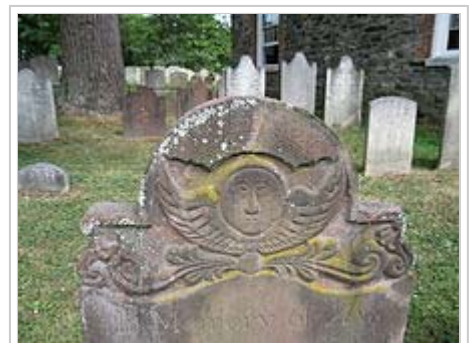
Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox views are somewhat similar, in essence, to Roman Catholic views although different in specifics. Orthodox Christians believe that after death, the soul is judged individually by God, and then sent to either Abraham's Bosom (temporary paradise) or Hades/Hell (temporary torture).^[citation needed] At the Last Judgment, God judges all people who have ever lived. Those that know the Spirit of God, because of the sacrifice of Jesus, go to Heaven (permanent paradise) whilst the damned experience the Lake of Fire (permanent torture). The Orthodox Church does not teach that Purgatory exists.

Protestant beliefs

Protestants generally believe in the soul's existence, but fall into two major camps about what this means in terms of an afterlife. Some, following Calvin,^[57] believe in the immortality of the soul and conscious existence after death, while others, following Luther,^[58] believe in the mortality of the soul and unconscious "sleep" until the resurrection of the dead.^[59]

Other Christians reject the idea of the immortality of the soul, citing the Apostles' Creed's reference to the "resurrection of the body" (the Greek word for body is *soma* σωμα, which implies the whole person, not *sarx* σαρξ, the term for *flesh* or *corpse*). They consider the soul to be the life force, which ends in death and will be restored in the resurrection.

^[citation needed] Theologian Frederick Buechner sums up this position in his 1973 book *Whistling in the Dark*: "...we go to our graves as dead as a doornail and are given our lives back again by God (i.e., resurrected) just as we were given them by God in the first place."^[citation needed]



Depiction of the soul on a 17th century tombstone at the cemetery of the Old Dutch Church of Sleepy Hollow

Christadelphian beliefs

Christadelphians believe that we are all created out of the dust of the earth and became living souls once we received the breath of life based on the Genesis 2 account of humanity's creation. Adam was said to have become a living soul. His body did not contain a soul, rather his body (made from dust) plus the breath of life together were called a soul, in other words a living being. They believe that we are mortal and when we die our breath leaves our body, and our bodies return to the soil. They believe that we are mortal until the resurrection from the dead when Christ returns to this earth and grants immortality to the faithful. In the meantime, the dead lie in the earth in the sleep of death until Jesus comes.^[60]

Seventh-day Adventists beliefs

Seventh-day Adventists believe that the main definition of the term "Soul" is a combination of spirit (breath of life) and body, disagreeing with the view that the soul has a consciousness or sentient existence of its own.
^[citation needed] They affirm this through Genesis 2:7 "And (God) breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."^[61] When God united His breath, or spirit with man, man became a living soul. A living soul is composed of body and spirit.^[62] Adventists believe at death the body returns to dust and life returns to the God who bestowed it. This belief is expressed in the following quotation from their fundamental beliefs, "The wages of sin is death. But God, who alone is immortal, will grant eternal life to His redeemed. Until that day death is an unconscious state for all people..." (Rom. 6:23; 1 Tim. 6:15, 16; Eccl. 9:5, 6; Ps. 146:3, 4; John 11:11–14; Col. 3:4; 1 Cor. 15:51–54; 1 Thess. 4:13–17; John 5:28, 29; Rev. 20:1–10.)

Jehovah's Witnesses

Jehovah's Witnesses take the Hebrew word *nephesh*, which is commonly translated as "soul", to be a person, an animal, or the life that a person or an animal enjoys. They believe that the Hebrew word *ruach* (Greek *pneuma*), which is commonly translated as "spirit" but literally means "wind", refers to the life force or the power that animates living things. A person is a breathing creature, a body animated by the "spirit of God", not an invisible being contained in a body and able to survive apart from that body after death. Jesus spoke of himself, having life, as having a soul. When he surrendered his life, he surrendered his soul. John 10:15 reads "just as the Father knows me and I know the father, and I surrender my soul in behalf of the sheep." This belief that man is a soul, rather than having a soul, is also in line with the knowledge that Hell (Sheol in Hebrew and Hades in Greek) represents the common grave with the hope of resurrection rather than eternal torment in hellfire.^{[63][64]}

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints beliefs

Latter-day Saints (Mormons) believe that the spirit and body together constitute the Soul of Man (Mankind). "The spirit and the body are the soul of man"^[65] They believe that the soul is the union of a domain of 'Elemental Intelligence'^[66] co-eternal with God, a portion of God's spirit which gives life, and a temporal body, which is formed by physical conception on earth. After death, the spirit continues to live and progress in the Spirit world until the resurrection, when it is reunited with the body that once housed it. This reuniting of body and spirit results in a perfect soul that is immortal and eternally young and healthy.^[67]

Other Christian opinions

Soul as the personality: Some Christians regard the soul as the immortal essence of a human – the seat or locus of human will, understanding, and personality.^[citation needed]

Trichotomy of the soul : Augustine, one of western Christianity's most influential early Christian thinkers, described the soul as "a special substance, endowed with reason, adapted to rule the body". Some Christians espouse a trichotomic view of humans, which characterizes humans as consisting of a body (*soma*), soul (*psyche*), and spirit (*pneuma*),^[68] However, the majority of modern Bible scholars point out how spirit and soul are used interchangeably in many biblical passages, and so hold to dichotomy: the view that each of us is body and soul. Paul said that the "body wars against" the soul, and that "I buffet my body", to keep it under control. Philosopher Anthony Quinton said the soul is a "series of mental states connected by continuity of character and memory, [and] is the essential constituent of personality. The soul, therefore, is not only logically distinct from any particular human body with which it is associated; it is also what a person is". Richard Swinburne, a Christian philosopher of religion at Oxford University, wrote that "it is a frequent criticism of substance dualism that dualists cannot say what souls are.... Souls are immaterial subjects of mental properties. They have sensations and thoughts, desires and beliefs, and perform intentional actions. Souls are essential parts of human beings..."

Origin of the soul: The origin of the soul has provided a vexing question in Christianity; the major theories put forward include soul creationism, traducianism and pre-existence. According to creationism, each individual soul is created directly by God, either at the moment of conception or some later time (identical twins arise several cell divisions after conception, but no creationist would deny that they have whole souls). According to traducianism, the soul comes from the parents by natural generation. According to the preexistence theory, the soul exists before the moment of conception.

Hinduism

Main articles: Ātman (Hinduism) and Jiva

In Hinduism, the Sanskrit words most closely corresponding to soul are "Jeev", "Aatma" and "Purusha", meaning the individual Self. The term "soul" is misleading as it implies an object possessed, whereas Self signifies the subject which perceives all objects. This self is held to be distinct from the various mental faculties such as desires, thinking, understanding, reasoning and self-image (ego), all of which are considered to be part of Prakriti (nature).

All the three major schools of Hindu philosophy agree, on the basis of the Vedic revelation, that the Aatma or jeevaatma (individual Self) is related to Brahman (lit. "the Immensity") or the Supreme Self of the Universe (ParamAatma). But they differ in the nature of this relationship. In Advaita Vedanta (non-dualism) the Individual Self (jeevaatma) and the Supreme Self (paramaatman) are one and the same. Dvaita or dualistic rejects this concept of identity, instead identifying the Self as separate but similar part of supreme Self (God), but it never lose its individual identity. Visishtadvaita or Qualified Non-dualism takes a middle path and accepts the jeevatman as a "mode" [prakara] or attribute of the Brahman. For an alternative atheistic and dualistic view of the soul in ancient Hindu philosophy, see Samkhya.

The jeevatman becomes involved in the process of becoming and transmigrating through cycles of birth and death because of ignorance of its own true nature. The spiritual path consists of Self-realization – a process in which one acquires the knowledge of the Self (brahma-jñanam) and through this knowledge applied through meditation and realization one then returns to the Source which is Brahman.

The qualities which are common to both Brahman and jeevaatma are: being (sat), consciousness (chit), and bliss/love (ananda). Liberation or Moksha (final release) is liberation from all limiting adjuncts (upadhis) and the unification with Brahman.

The Mandukya Upanishad verse 7 describes the Aatma in the following way:-

"Not inwardly cognitive, not outwardly cognitive, not both-wise cognitive, not a cognition-mass, not cognitive, not non-cognitive, unseen, with which there can be no dealing, ungraspable, having no distinctive mark, non-thinkable, that cannot be designated, the essence of the assurance of which is the state of being one with the Self, the cessation of development, tranquil, benign, without a second (a-dvaita)—[such] they think is the fourth. That is the Self. That should be discerned."

In Bhagavad – Gita 2.20^[69] Lord Krishna describes the soul in the following way:

na jayate mriyate va kadacin nayam bhutva bhavita va na bhuyah ajo nityah sasvato yam purano na hanyate hanyamane sarire

"For the soul there is neither birth nor death at any time. He has not come into being, does not come into being, and will not come into being. He is unborn, eternal, ever – existing and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain." [Translation by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (Sri Prabhupada)]^[70]

Sri Prabhupada,^[71] a great Vaishnava saint of the modern time further explains: *The soul does not take birth there, and the soul does not die...And because the soul has no birth, he therefore has no past, present or future. He is eternal, ever-existing and primeval – that is, there is no trace in history of his coming into being.*

Since the quality of Aatma is primarily consciousness, all sentient and insentient beings are pervaded by Aatma, including plants, animals, humans and gods. The difference between them is the contracted or expanded state of that consciousness. For example, animals and humans share in common the desire to live, fear of death, desire to procreate and to protect their families and territory and the need for sleep, but animals' consciousness is more contracted and has less possibility to expand than does human consciousness.

When the Aatma becomes embodied it is called birth, when the Aatma leaves a body it is called death. The Aatma transmigrates from one body to another body based on karmic [performed deeds] reactions.

In Hinduism, the Sanskrit word most closely corresponding to soul is "Aatma", which can mean soul or even God. It is seen as the portion of Brahman within us. Hinduism contains many variant beliefs on the origin, purpose, and fate of the soul. For example, advaita or non-dualistic conception of the soul accords it union with Brahman, the absolute uncreated (roughly, the Godhead), in eventuality or in pre-existing fact. Dvaita or dualistic concepts reject this, instead identifying the soul as a different and incompatible substance

[72]

Islam

Further information: Nafs

According to the Quran, Ruh (Spirit) is a command from Allah (God).

And they ask you, [O Muhammad], about the soul (Rûh). Say, "The soul (Rûh) is of the affair of my Lord. And mankind have not been given of knowledge except a little." [Quran 17:85]

Islam teaches the soul is immortal and eternal. What a person does is definitely recorded and will be judged at the utter court of the God.

Jainism

Main articles: Atman (Jainism) and Jiva

Further information: Jain philosophy, Jainism and non-creationism, and Atma Siddhi

In Jainism soul exists too, having a separate existence from the body that houses it. Every living being from a plant or a bacterium to human, has a soul. The soul (Jiva) is differentiated from non-soul or non-living reality (ajiva) that consists of: matter, time, space, medium of motion and medium of rest.^[citation needed]

Shamanism

According to Nadya Yuguseva, a shaman from the Altai, "A woman has 40 souls; men have just one[.]"^[73]

Sikhism

Sikhism considers Soul (atma) to be part of God (Waheguru). Various hymns are cited from the holy book "Sri Guru Granth Sahib" (SGGS) that suggests this belief. "God is in the Soul and the Soul is in the God."^[74] The same concept is repeated at various pages of the SGGS. For example: "The soul is divine; divine is the soul. Worship Him with love."^[75] and "The soul is the Lord, and the Lord is the soul; contemplating the Shabad, the Lord is found."^[76] The "Atma" or "Soul" according to Sikhism is an entity or "spiritual spark" or "light" in our body because of which the body can sustain life. On the departure of this entity from the body, the body becomes lifeless – No amount of manipulations to the body can make the person make any physical actions. The soul is the ‘driver’ in the body. It is the ‘roohu’ or spirit or atma, the presence of which makes the physical body alive. Many religious and philosophical traditions, support the view that the soul is the ethereal substance – a spirit; a non material spark – particular to a unique living being. Such traditions often consider the soul both immortal and innately aware of its immortal nature, as well as the true basis for sentience in each living being. The concept of the soul has strong links with notions of an afterlife, but opinions may vary wildly even within a given religion as to what happens to the soul after death. Many within these religions and philosophies see the soul as immaterial, while others consider it possibly material.

Taoism

According to Chinese traditions, every person has two types of soul called hun and po (魂 and 魄), which are respectively yang and yin. Taoism believes in ten souls, *sanhunqipo* (三魂七魄) "three *hun* and seven *po*".^{[77][78]} The pò is linked to the dead body and the grave, whereas the hún is linked to the ancestral tablet. A living being that loses any of them is said to have mental illness or unconsciousness, while a dead soul may reincarnate to a disability, lower desire realms or may even be unable to reincarnate. Also, *Journeys to the Under-World* said there can be hundreds of divisible souls.^[79]

Zoroastrianism

Main article: Zoroastrianism

Other religious beliefs and views

In theological reference to the soul, the terms "life" and "death" are viewed as emphatically more definitive than the common concepts of "biological life" and "biological death". Because the soul is said to be transcendent of the *material existence*, and is said to have (potentially) eternal life, the death of the soul is likewise said to be an *eternal death*. Thus, in the concept of divine judgment, God is commonly said to have options with regard to the dispensation of souls, ranging from Heaven (i.e. angels) to hell (i.e. demons), with various concepts in between. Typically both Heaven and hell are said to be eternal, or at least far beyond a typical human concept of lifespan and time.

Some transhumanists believe that it will become possible to perform mind transfer, either from one human body to another, or from a human body to a computer. Operations of this type (along with teleportation), raise philosophical questions related to the concept of the soul.^[citation needed]

Spirituality, New Age and new religions

Theosophy

In Helena Blavatsky's Theosophy the soul is the field of our psychological activity (thinking, emotions, memory, desires, will, and so on) as well as of the so-called paranormal or psychic phenomena (extrasensory perception, out-of-body experiences, etc.). However, the soul is not the highest, but a middle dimension of human beings. Higher than the soul is the spirit, which is considered to be the real self; the source of everything we call “good”—happiness, wisdom, love, compassion, harmony, peace, etc. While the spirit is eternal and incorruptible, the soul is not. The soul acts as a link between the material body and the spiritual self, and therefore shares some characteristics of both. The soul can be attracted either towards the spiritual or towards the material realm, being thus the “battlefield” of good and evil. It is only when the soul is attracted towards the spiritual and merges with the Self that it becomes eternal and divine.

Anthroposophy

Rudolf Steiner differentiated three stages of soul development, which interpenetrate one another in consciousness:^[80]

- the "sentient soul", centering on sensations, drives, and passions, with strong conative (will) and emotional components;
- the "intellectual" or "mind soul", internalizing and reflecting on outer experience, with strong affective (feeling) and cognitive (thinking) components; and
- the "consciousness soul", in search of universal, objective truths.

Miscellaneous

In Surat Shabda Yoga, the soul is considered to be an exact replica and spark of the Divine. The purpose of Surat Shabd Yoga is to realize one's True Self as soul (Self-Realisation), True Essence (Spirit-Realisation) and True Divinity (God-Realisation) while living in the physical body.

George Gurdjieff in his Fourth Way taught that nobody is ever born with a soul. Rather, an individual must create a soul by a process of self-remembrance and observation during the course of their life. Without a soul, Gurdjieff taught that one will "die like a dog".^[citation needed]

Eckankar, founded by Paul Twitchell in 1965, defines Soul as the true self; the inner, most sacred part of each person.^[81]

Science

Science and medicine seek naturalistic accounts of the observable natural world. This stance is known as methodological naturalism.^[82] Much of the scientific study relating to the soul has involved investigating the soul as an object of human belief, or as a concept that shapes cognition and an understanding of the world, rather than as an entity in and of itself.

When modern scientists speak of the soul outside of this cultural and psychological context, they generally treat *soul* as a poetic synonym for *mind*. Francis Crick's book, *The Astonishing Hypothesis*, for example, has the subtitle, "The scientific search for the soul". Crick held the position that one can learn everything knowable about the human soul by studying the workings of the human brain. Depending on one's belief regarding the relationship between the soul and the mind, then, the findings of neuroscience may be relevant to one's understanding of the soul. Skeptic Robert T. Carroll suggests that the concept of a non-substantial substance is an oxymoron, and that the scholarship done by philosophers and psychologists based on the assumption of a non-physical entity has not furthered scientific understanding of the working of the mind.^[83]

Daniel Dennett has championed the idea that the human survival strategy depends heavily on adoption of the intentional stance, a behavioral strategy that predicts the actions of others based on the expectation that they have a mind like one's own (see theory of mind). Mirror neurons in brain regions such as Broca's area may facilitate this behavioral strategy.^[citation needed] The intentional stance, Dennett suggests, has proven so successful that people tend to apply it to all aspects of human experience, thus leading to animism and to other conceptualizations of soul.^[84]

Parapsychology

Some parapsychologists have attempted to establish if the soul exists by scientific experiment. Milbourne Christopher in his book *Search for the Soul* (1979) explained that none of the attempts by parapsychologists have yet succeeded.^[85]

Photograph of the soul

The French physician Hippolyte Baraduc had claimed to have photographed the human soul.^[86] However some professional photographers have suggested that the effect observed in his photographs could have been caused by tiny pinholes in the bellows behind the lens of the camera.^[87]

Weight of the soul

In 1907 Dr Duncan MacDougall made weight measurements of patients as they died. He claimed that there was weight loss of varying amounts at the time of death.^[88] His results have never been reproduced, and are generally regarded either as meaningless or considered to have had little if any scientific merit.^[89]

See also

- Ekam
- Kami
- Life form
- Metaphysical naturalism
- Mind-body problem
- Neural correlates of consciousness
- Philosophical zombie
- Soul dualism
- Vitalism

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1a) breath (of God)
1b) breath (of man)
1c) every breathing thing
1d) spirit (of man)
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External links

- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry on Ancient Theories of the Soul (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ancient-soul/>)
- The soul in Judaism (<http://www.chabad.org/k1499>) at Chabad.org
- The Old Testament Concept of the Soul (<http://www.wlssays.net/node/1182>) by Heinrich J. Vogel
- Body, Soul and Spirit (http://www.jba.gr/Articles/nkjv_jbamay96.htm) Article in the Journal of Biblical Accuracy (<http://www.jba.gr/>)
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