

OCR A LEVEL

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Philosophy of Religion



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CHAPTER 2

Soul, mind and body

Big Picture

This topic takes us into the philosophy of mind by asking questions of personhood and consciousness such as 'Who am "I"?', 'Am "I" simply a physical body?' is the question asked by followers of materialism who argue that consciousness is explained by the physical brain. Or am 'I' something more than a body? This is argued by followers of dualism; the something extra could be my mind or my soul.

Engage

Puzzle #1 – Robocop

Policeman Bob is badly injured in an explosion – he just survives. Doctors replace all his limbs from the head down with silicon versions. He gets a complete body transplant.

- Is Robocop still Bob?
- Should Robocop be rewarded for the brave actions of Bob in saving lives at the scene of the explosion?
- Is Robocop still married to Bob's wife?

Puzzle #2 – the brain transplant

By mistake, surgeons put Jay's brain in Pip's body and Pip's brain in Jay's body. Consequently, all of Jay's memories and personality traits are in Pip's body and vice versa.

- If prior to the operation Pip committed murder in Dallas, which one should be executed? (Texas has the death penalty.)
- If prior to the operation Jay won the lottery, who should get the money?
- Prior to the operation Jay was single and Pip was married. Which has a wife now?

The specification

Topic	Content	Key Knowledge
Soul, mind and body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the philosophical language of soul, mind and body in the thinking of Plato and Aristotle metaphysics of consciousness, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> substance dualism materialism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plato's view of the soul as the essential and immaterial part of a human, temporarily united with the body Aristotle's view of the soul as the form of the body; the way the body behaves and lives; something which cannot be separated from the body the idea that mind and body are distinct substances Descartes' proposal of material and spiritual substances as a solution to the mind/soul and body problem the idea that mind and consciousness can be fully explained by physical or material interactions the rejection of a soul as a spiritual substance
Learners should have the opportunity to discuss issues related to ideas about soul, mind and body, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> materialist critiques of dualism and dualist responses to materialism whether the concept of 'soul' is best understood metaphorically or as a reality the idea that any discussion about the mind-body distinction is a category error 		

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2.1 What is Plato's view of the 'soul'?



Aim

Find out why Plato argued for the existence of a soul.



Starter

Who am I?

On a sticky note, make a list of everything about yourself that makes you unique. Swap notes around the class and take it in turns to read out the lists. Can you guess who is being described?

What are the most important aspects that you have used to describe yourself? Use your answers to the Engage activity on page xx to help.

Clues: physical appearance, memories, soul, mind, conscious thought.

Plato's view of the soul

Remember Plato's theory of the World of the Forms and the World of Appearances? What did Plato consider to be real? Reread pages xx–xx.

Plato is described as a dualist because he talks about a soul being separate from the body. Plato argues that our bodies are controlled by the unreliable and imperfect senses, which deceive us. The body is constantly changing, aging and decaying, and at some point will cease to exist. This impermanence of the body means there must be something more permanent. For Plato, the soul is the real, essential part of us that can reason and therefore can access the true, unchanging reality of the World of the Forms. The body acts like a prison for the soul, which chains us to our senses, just like the prisoners in the Analogy of the Cave. For Plato, the soul is real and trapped in the body; it longs to escape and return to the World of the Forms.

Plato illustrates his view of the struggle between body and soul with a man driving a chariot. Reason is like the charioteer who controls the two wayward horses of spirit (emotions) and the physical appetites. When reason is in control, the soul is in harmony. However, more often bodily desires or emotions take over and we are driven by greed or anger. A modern example may help to understand what Plato means: a teenager is told they cannot go to a party, gets angry, walks out of the room and slams the door – there is no harmony in the soul because reason is not in control of the emotions.

Plato uses the argument from recollection and knowledge to support his view of the soul. He asks how we gain knowledge if it is only found in the World of the Forms, not in this world. Plato's answer is that our soul has previously witnessed the Forms before it was incarnated into our body. By using reason, our soul recalls what it knows about the permanent, immutable and perfect Forms. So, for example, when I see a beautiful flower, sunset and person, although they are different, my soul recognises the Form of Beauty participating in each one. This is called anamnesis or recollection of innate knowledge – knowledge that our soul has already and is not gained through experiences. Socrates' questioning of a slave boy also illustrates the argument from knowledge. Although the slave was uneducated, Socrates led him through a series of questions to work out how to calculate the answer to a maths problem. For Plato, knowledge is recollected by the soul, not learned, and this innate knowledge is proof that the body and soul are separate.

Analyse and evaluate**Plato is right, there is a separate soul**

- Plato does seem to describe the human experience of inner conflict. For example, I may know that I should go to the gym to keep healthy, but I feel too tired or lazy, or I choose to go to the coffee shop instead. This could mean that reason is not in control of my soul.
- When reason is in control, the soul is in harmony. For example, if the three parts of the soul are harmonious, the spirit shows courage, the rational part of the soul shows wisdom and together they control the appetites, showing moderation and order. As we become mature and make more rational decisions based on reason, we feel more unified as a person.
Therefore, there is a soul that is more important than and controls the wants and desires of the material body.

The soul, using reason, can access the World of the Forms because it remembers this world prior to being incarnated in the body. This 'remembering' is called anamnesis. We know what is fair or unfair before we have learned this because our soul recalls the Form of Justice from the World of the Forms.

Plato's argument from opposites

We recognise opposites such as large and small, light and dark, life and death. The body and soul are also opposites. Since life is something, death must also be something – the moving of the soul to the World of the Forms.

Plato is wrong, there is not a separate soul

- This inner conflict could be simply explained as emotion, personality type or a lack of maturity. It could be due to upbringing or DNA so that we are more easily swayed by desires or emotions rather than an immaterial soul.
- There is no verifiable evidence of an immaterial soul as something extra and beyond the physical body.

- A modern philosopher, Peter Geach, criticises this argument. He asks how a disembodied soul can 'see' the Forms when 'seeing' is a physical process.
- In Plato's example of the slave boy, Socrates' questions seem to lead the boy to the answer step by step. Even without an education, he could arrive at the answer by learning, not recalling.

The argument from opposites seems to be an assumption. For example, not everything has an opposite, e.g. what would be the opposite of the colour blue? There is no need to assume that the soul exists or is the opposite of the body.

**Tip**

Make sure you can explain reasons why the example of the charioteer or the arguments from knowledge or opposites support Plato's argument for a separate soul. Use them to evaluate Plato (AO2), giving reasons why they are strong or weak, rather than simply describing them (AO1).

Activities**Core**

- 1 Explain Plato's view of the soul in 100 words. Swap with a partner and add in any information they have missed.
- 2 Give two reasons why Plato argues that there is a soul. For each reason, include an example to support it.
- 3 Draw and fill in a table that shows the strengths and weaknesses of Plato's view of the soul.

Strengths of Plato's view of body/soul	Weaknesses of Plato's view of body/soul

Stretch

- 4 How successful is Geach's criticism of Plato's view of the soul? Give reasons for your answer.
- 5 Do you agree with Plato's views on body/soul? Construct an argument for your view, making sure you fully justify reasons why.

Challenge

- 6 Research and find out more about Socrates and Meno's slave boy. The original dialogue is in Plato's work called Meno. Socrates and Meno discuss arguments about innate knowledge, recollection and an immortal soul.



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2.2 Why does Aristotle argue that the soul cannot be separated from the body?



Aim

Learn why Aristotle's view of the body and soul differs from that of Plato.



Starter

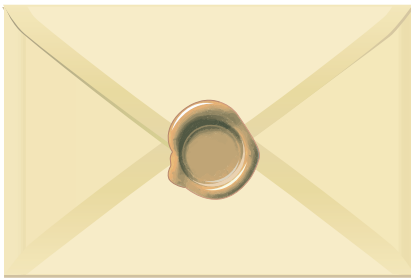
Look at the picture:

- What is the difference between a living chicken and a dead chicken? Make a list of characteristics of both.
- What physical aspects (matter) are the same?
- What has changed?
- What is different and why?



Can you recall Aristotle's four causes and why he based his views on empiricism? Reread pages xx–xx on the four causes to remind you.

Aristotle's view of body and soul



Aristotle has a different view of body and soul to that of Plato. Since Aristotle based his views on empiricism rather than on rationalism like Plato, he used observations and sense experience to conclude that there must be a soul, but he has a very different idea to Plato of what this is and what it means.

Although Aristotle recognises the existence of a soul, he thinks the soul cannot be separated from the body. He uses the example of how ancient letters and documents were sealed using a wax seal. The imprint from a seal or ring cannot be separated from the wax in which it is imprinted. This is like the inseparable body and soul: both matter (the material or wax) and form (the shape of the seal) are needed to make it what it is.

Aristotle observed that everything was made of matter (the material cause) and had a form (the formal cause), which are the shape and characteristics that make it what it is. The body is the material cause whereas the soul is the formal cause. Think about the example from the Starter – the living and dead chickens. Aristotle could observe the similarities. For example, they both have feathers and a beak (matter), but there are differences in form because the dead chicken no longer clucks, pecks and walks around (formal cause of a living chicken). Aristotle would suggest that the change is because the formal cause, the soul, has died with the body. For Aristotle, the soul is real but in a different way to Plato because it is the soul that animates the body and gives it its characteristics and form.

Aristotle applied the idea of soul to all living things, not just to people. Differences between living things are due to different types of soul:

- 1 vegetative (plants)
- 2 appetitive (animals)
- 3 rational (humans).

Aristotle identified three faculties (or abilities) of the soul. He thought that every living thing has a soul which contains one or more of the faculties:

• 'Vegetative' refers to characteristics of growing.

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**Tip**

Use examples in your essays to support an argument. Examples can show how and why an argument works. Try to use a scholar's examples as well as your own.

- 'Appetitive' refers to the ability to act and fulfil desires for food, reproduction and so on.
- 'Rational' abilities (intellect) are found only in human souls.

Therefore, a plant would have a vegetative soul, a lion could have both vegetative and appetitive souls, whereas humans have all three faculties of the soul. Some of Aristotle's writings suggest he thought that reason or intellect could survive death. However, his writings on this are unclear and it seems to go against his reliance on sense experience and observation because there is no way to observe intellect surviving death.

Analyse and evaluate***Aristotle's view of the soul is successful***

The soul is essential because it is the formal cause of the body – its characteristics. For example, the blade and handle of an axe are like the body; the form or soul is its ability to chop. The axe would not be an axe with only the matter, it needs the form (or soul) to be what it is.

British philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe supports this with the idea of intention. Although the action of pointing at an object is physical, it does explain the reason why we have pointed, or the intention behind the action. Intention could be linked to the soul because it shows there is more to me than just physical actions.

The body and soul cannot be separated because both are essential to the living being. For example, just as the shape of the imprint and the wax it is made of cannot be separated, so the body and soul are inseparable. If this is the case, there is no need to assume there is a life after death, which raises more philosophical problems (e.g. how can anything of 'me' survive death?).

Aristotle argues that because the body and soul cannot be separated, when the body dies, so does the soul. This explains the differences that we observe when something dies because the soul dies as well as the body.

Aristotle's view of the soul is not successful

Materialists (see page xx) would argue that we are made of physical matter only. There is no need to assume there is something extra, or immaterial, inside that is a soul.

Plato would argue that the soul can be separated from the body which imprisons it during life. After death, the soul is released to return to the World of the Forms and gains knowledge of the Forms before it is incarnated into another body.

However, materialists would argue that there is no need to assume something extra (a soul). For example, the physical body ceasing to function explains the difference between a living and a dead chicken because there is nothing else, no soul.

Activities**Core**

- 1 Outline Aristotle's views on body and soul in 100 words. Include his examples to help your explanation.
- 2 Aristotle also uses the example of the eye – the physical eyeball is the matter, but the form is the ability to see. Use this example to explain Aristotle's view of the soul, including why he thinks the body and soul are inseparable.
- 3 Compare the views of Plato and Aristotle on body and soul – what are the similarities and differences? Copy and fill in a table like this:

	Plato on body and soul	Aristotle on body and soul
Similarities		
Differences		

Using the table, decide whether you agree with Plato or Aristotle. Add your answer and reasons why to your notes.

Stretch

- 4 How does Aristotle explain the differences between living beings, such as plants, animals and humans? Is Aristotle right to believe that everything has a soul? Why or why not?
- 5 Make a list of strengths and weaknesses of Aristotle's view of the soul, putting them in order from strongest to weakest. Explain why you have chosen the strongest and weakest arguments.

Challenge

- 6 To what extent is it fair to say that the soul is real? Weigh up and evaluate the arguments from Plato and Aristotle to justify your view. Write up your argument in a paragraph – give reasons why you think these are the strongest or the weakest arguments.



2.3 Why does Descartes argue that the mind and body are separate substances?



Aim

Learn about Descartes' views on substance dualism.



Starter

Think about thinking:

- What is consciousness?
- How would you describe what 'thinking' is to an alien?
- Write a list of questions you could ask about consciousness, what it means or how it can be explained.



Meet the thinker

René Descartes (AD 1596–1650) was a mathematician and philosopher. You will meet him again when we consider arguments for the existence of God using reason (Chapter 4).

What is consciousness?

In this section, we move away from discussions about body and soul to philosophy about consciousness or the mind and ask questions about whether the mind and the body can be separated.

Consciousness describes intellect, thinking and being aware of who we are. The mind–body problem is about how the mind and the body relate to each other. Philosophers may discuss issues such as: How can consciousness be explained? Is the thinking mind something separate from my body? If the mind or consciousness is separate from my body, how do my mind and body interact?

Descartes' view of the mind and the body

Descartes is often labelled a substance dualist because he argues that the mind and the body are wholly different substances, or types. He reached this conclusion after he began questioning how he could be certain about anything. He decided that he could doubt everything because he could be being deceived by an evil demon and even his body could be an illusion and may not exist. However, he concluded that even if this was the case, he was still thinking. This led to his famous phrase 'Cogito, ergo sum' – 'I think, therefore I am'. The mind was where this 'thinking' took place and so Descartes decided that his mind was the essence of himself and that he must exist. This discovery underpins Descartes' theory of mind and body because he understood the mind to be completely separate from the body.

The physical part of us, the body, cannot think. The physical or material body can be divided into parts whereas the mind cannot. For example, an amputated limb is separated from the rest of the body, but it doesn't take away anything from the mind or who I am. The mind cannot be divided into parts. Even the mental capacity to feel and to understand is all done by the same mind. So, Descartes argues that since the thinking mind can be separated from the existence of a body, it must be in a different sort of category. Descartes argues that the mind is an immaterial substance whereas the body is a material substance. Therefore, Descartes is called a substance dualist because he understands the mind to be a different type of substance from the body.

If mind and body are separate substances, there needs to be a link between the body and the mind. Descartes suggests this link is in the pineal gland, in the centre of the brain. This is because there are two of everything else in the body (eyes, nostrils, ears, etc.) but only one pineal gland. He reasoned that the pineal gland was the home of singular thought as well as where the imagination and common sense are found.

Analyse and evaluate

The mind and body must be separate substances

The mind and body are different substances because they can be treated differently, the mind is immaterial and thinking whereas the body is physical. The body can be divided into parts which can be removed but the mind is a singular whole.

As a thinking being, I consider myself to be a whole person. The mind, or consciousness, is the part of me that holds the essence of **personhood**. For example, someone given a face or body transplant is the same person because their mind is the same.

Descartes gives an explanation of how the body and mind interact through the singular pineal gland. This solves the problem of how an immaterial mind could communicate with a material body.

The mind and body cannot be separate substances

Descartes' view of a separate body and mind can be criticised. If someone loses a limb, it may alter their outlook on life, their personality or their mind as well as their physical appearance, as seen in people who have survived a traumatic event such as a serious car accident or a war. This may suggest that the mind and body are more closely connected than Descartes allows.

What makes a person? Is it only the mind or is it a combination of factors that include body and mind? For example, would you recognise your classmates in 30 years' time because of their mind alone? You may recognise them by their physical characteristics, such as their eye colour, how they speak or their mannerisms.

- Medical research has now found the function of the pineal gland. The pineal gland secretes hormones that help regulate sleep patterns. Therefore, it has a physical function and is unlikely to be the point of contact between mind and body.
- How can an immaterial mind communicate with a material body? Gilbert Ryle (see page xx) uses this idea to criticise Descartes, saying that it is like a 'ghost in a machine' – how can a ghostly phenomenon pull the levers and handles to make a machine work? For Ryle, this does not make sense (see page xx).



Key terms

Substance dualism – there are two kinds of basic substance: mental and physical.

Personhood – what makes each individual unique, e.g. memories, physical appearance, mind, soul.



Tip

When writing an essay, focus on AO2, evaluation. Instead of listing what Descartes thought about the mind and the body, which would be knowledge (AO1), argue for or against his view using his examples to support or criticise.

Modern American philosopher Daniel Dennett adds another criticism of **substance dualism**.

He says substance dualists describe the mind as a Cartesian (derived from Descartes) theatre.

This is the idea that the mind is like a theatre where I am the audience of one. It would be like watching a screen or play at a theatre except I am the only member of the audience – I can observe and even control what is happening on the stage. 'I

am inside my head, looking out, watching and controlling all my actions. Dennett argues that this is an incorrect understanding of the mind because the mind does not work like this (see section 2.5 on materialism, page xx, for more on Dennett's view).

FPO

[insert fig 02_06]

Activities

Core

- 1 Explain what is meant by substance dualism.
- 2 Give reasons why Descartes argues the mind is a wholly separate substance from the body.
- 3 How does the mind interact with the body, according to Descartes?

Stretch

- 4 Draw a mind map with 'Critique of dualism' in the centre. Around the centre, add issues raised, strengths and weaknesses – use everything studied so far. Add to this when you read the next chapters.

- 5 Why does Ryle use the phrase 'ghost in a machine' to criticise Descartes?

Challenge

- 6 Investigate other types of dualism and philosophical responses to the mind–body problem. For example, you could research the arguments for interactionism, epiphenomenalism or parallelism, which have different ways of understanding how the mind and the body interact. Which solution is most convincing? Why?



2.4 Is Descartes making a category error?

How did Ryle criticise Descartes?



Aim

Find out how Ryle criticised Descartes' view of body and mind as separate substances.



Starter

Explain Descartes' view of mind and body to a partner in 1 minute (or write it out in less than 100 words). Ask your partner to write down or highlight all the key words that you use.

Was your explanation clear? Did it include these key words: substance dualism, separate parts, thinking, pineal gland, interaction? How could you improve your explanation?



Meet the thinker

Gilbert Ryle (1900–1976) was an analytic philosopher, which means he was interested in the ways we use language to describe reality. His criticisms of Descartes are found in his book, *The Concept of Mind* (1949).



Key term

Category error – a logical error with the use of language; a mistake is made by applying concepts or language to the wrong type of category.

[insert fig 02_07]

Descartes' substance dualism raises the issue of how an immaterial mind can communicate and interact with a material body. Ryle argues that Descartes incorrectly sees the physical, mechanical actions of the body being controlled by the mysterious and non-material mind, like a 'ghost in a machine'. A non-physical ghost could not pull the levers and handles to make a machine work. Ryle suggests that this problem arises because of an incorrect use of language. He uses examples to show why this was the wrong way to talk about consciousness:

- 1 A stranger tours the Oxford colleges, the library and the sports grounds, then asks where the university is.
- 2 A boy watching a military parade is told that a division will be marching past. The platoons, squadrons, batteries, etc. are pointed out to him. At the end he asks when the division will arrive. The boy does not realise that the units he has seen are collectively known as the division.
- 3 A stranger is introduced to the game of cricket and learns about the fielders, bowlers, batsmen, umpires and scorers, yet cannot see the team spirit.

All these people have made a **category error** in assuming that there is something extra to everything else that was seen. For example, in the cricket illustration, 'team spirit' cannot be seen in the way that the bowlers and fielders can, it is not another tangible type of person. 'Team spirit' is being used incorrectly because it is not in the same category as the fielders and bowlers, it comes out of the combination of all the previously listed parts.

Ryle accuses Descartes of making a category error because Descartes tries to categorise all events as either mental or physical. Descartes is saying there is something additional to the body, controlling its behaviour, which he calls an immaterial substance, the mind. Ryle argues that body and mind are not distinct and separate substances but a description of the whole person and what it means to be a conscious, thinking being.

When we talk about ourselves, we do not use phrases such as 'my hand is switching on the kettle' or 'my mind has decided to make a cup of tea for Grandma'. Instead, we think of ourselves as a being that encompasses both aspects of body and mind. For example, we are more likely to express ourselves as 'I'd like to stop work and have a cup of tea because Grandma is visiting'.



Tip

Do not assume that Ryle is a materialist because he disagrees with Descartes' dualism. Ryle is not arguing that humans are simply reducible to biological processes (i.e. he is not a materialist). Ryle wanted to clarify how we talk about ideas of consciousness. He criticised Descartes because, in his view, Descartes misused language about a material body and an immaterial mind.

Analyse and evaluate

It is a category error to talk about body and mind as separate substances

Personhood involves every aspect of physical and mental. The thinking part of 'me' is not something that can be categorised and separated. It would be like a ghost (non-physical) trying to work a machine (physical) – it could not work.

This use of language is inaccurate; it is a category error because the body and mind cannot be described in the same way.

- It would be like the foreign visitor asking where the university is when they have just seen all of its buildings, professors and students. 'University' is not another building or person, it is the combination of all the parts.
- Or someone asking, 'where is the team spirit?' in a game of cricket – it is not another type of physical object or person. Using the phrase in this way is a category mistake, an error in logical use of language.

The body and mind are not distinct (separate) because both are describing what it means to be a person. Ryle argues it would be like saying I have a left glove and a right glove but not a pair of gloves – both of these phrases are describing the same thing.

It is not a category error to talk about body and mind as separate substances

The thinking mind is an immaterial substance which is the real me. The mind directs the actions of the body, so talking about body and mind as separate substances helps to understand personhood and what makes me 'me'.

The physical body and the mind are completely different types of substances – one is physical, the other is spiritual or immaterial. Descartes argues that this is because the body can be divided into parts and even have parts removed but the same mind thinks, wills, motivates, etc. These mental processes and causes are very different from physical sensations and movements so must be distinct.

Descartes would argue that the mind is distinct from the body because of his argument from doubt. He doubted everything, including physical existence, but was still thinking. Since he was thinking, it showed that he must exist (I think, therefore I am) and that the mind is separate from the body.

Activities



Core

- 1 Write out and learn the definition of a category error.
- 2 For each of Ryle's examples, explain to a partner why they show a category error.
- 3 With a partner, decide who will be Ryle and who will be Descartes. Try to persuade your partner that your view of body/mind is correct. Keep asking your partner 'why?' to make sure they give reasons and justify their view.

Stretch

- 4 Draw a table of strengths and weaknesses of Ryle's views.
- 5 How successful is Ryle in his criticisms of substance dualism? Write a conclusion to an essay that gives clear reasons why you have reached this view.

Challenge

- 6 How could Ryle's criticism of category error be applied to materialism? (You may need to read about materialism first – see pages xx–xx.)

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2.5 Is materialism right? Am 'I' a body?



Aim

Learn about materialism: the view that there is only a body (no soul or separate mind).



Starter

Find out and write down the definitions of:

- materialism
- dualism.

What are the main differences between them?

There are several arguments from materialism that deny that there is anything more to personhood or consciousness than the physical, the body or the brain. Here are some examples you could choose to use in your studies.

The mind and consciousness can be fully explained by physical or material interactions

Dennett (see page xx) argues there is no place within my mind or brain where thinking, subjective experiences or consciousness happen. The brain is much more complex than this. Conscious thought is more likely to be lots of processes in the physical brain. Psychologists use brain scans to track neural activity in the brain, which show that many areas are used simultaneously for processing information, imagining and remembering experiences. Materialists, such as Dennett, argue that at some point psychologists will also be able to detect where or how thinking happens. Identity theory is an example of a materialist view claiming that all mental activity is centred in the brain. The brain is a physical organ that can be altered by the physiological effects of substances such as drugs. These can alter personality, mood or behaviour, which are often described by dualists as conscious processes linked to an immaterial soul or mind. For materialists, thinking, personal choices and decision making are simply activities of the brain. Therefore, when physical life ends, the brain dies, mental activity ceases and there can be nothing of 'me' that survives death.

Materialists reject the idea of a soul as a spiritual substance

While biologist R. Dawkins is a materialist and does not believe there is a soul, he uses the word soul to explain why he disagrees with the concept. Dawkins distinguishes between two versions of the soul. 'Soul One' is an ancient idea used by pre-scientific people because they needed to explain why humans were rational, thinking beings and to allow for a life after death. Soul One describes a mysterious life force, which Dawkins calls 'mystic jelly'. He claims this is not an explanation at all but sidesteps the issues, filling the gaps in knowledge with mythical ideas that do not stand up to scientific scrutiny. Instead he refers to 'Soul Two' as the intellect or mental abilities, which he argues will be explained by scientists soon, probably through DNA. For Dawkins, mental processes give an evolutionary advantage that help us survive and reproduce. Physical existence is all there is. There is no immaterial or spiritual substance that could survive the death of the body.

The word 'soul' is a metaphor

'Soul' does not refer to a real part of us but simply describes consciousness or personhood. Psychologist Susan Blackmore regards consciousness as a delusion because when we describe being conscious of thinking, we are looking for something extra that doesn't exist. We



Key term

Metaphor – a figure of speech that describes an object or action in a way that isn't literally true but helps explain an idea or make a comparison.

use the words mind or soul to describe what it means to be a person, so in this sense 'soul' is a **metaphor** for personhood, consciousness and identity. This is also how Dawkins uses 'Soul Two'. The soul is not real or an extra, spiritual or immaterial part of us. When we use the term metaphorically, we are actually talking about sensations that are part of our physical makeup as living beings. Blackmore also suggests that it is probable that scientists will be able to classify brain patterns to identify what we call consciousness.

Analyse and evaluate

Strengths of materialism

Functional magnetic scanners can detect changes in the brain when a subject's attention moves to different images. This could suggest that mental activity such as thoughts or attention is caused by physical events in the brain.

If there is nothing more to personhood than the body or brain, there is no need for an afterlife. This solves problems such as how can 'I' survive my death?

Materialism uses scientific methods and shows how modern studies of the brain can shed light on previously mysterious processes, such as thinking. For example, research from NASA has developed sensors placed on the throat, which can detect words said silently to oneself. Potentially, it might be possible to read a person's thoughts by the sensors detecting physical responses.

Weaknesses of materialism

Even if thoughts and other mental activities can be tracked by physical changes in the brain, there is still a problem about how this comes about and the intention behind it. Nerve functions in the brain can have no desires or intentions.

Materialism reduces all human experience and existence to the physical. However, there are many who point to a feeling of something more than the material, perhaps a sense of self or a metaphysical realm, to something beyond the physical world which may be accessed in the afterlife. Experiences of the paranormal could be used as examples to support this idea.

Dawkins claims that one day scientists will be able to fully understand consciousness is an assumption. He is filling the gaps in scientific knowledge with the assumption that materialism holds the answers. This is the same as those who fill the gap with the idea of an immaterial soul.

Activities

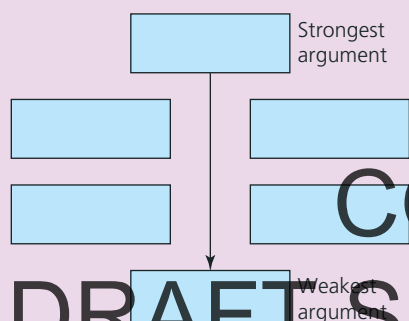


Core

- 1 Explain the difference between materialism and dualism.
- 2 What evidence do materialists give for there being nothing more than a body?
- 3 Choose one materialist view and explain it in less than 100 words. Read it aloud to a friend – do they understand what you mean? If not, amend your work to make it clear.

Stretch

- 4 Using the table of strengths and weaknesses of materialism, rank the arguments in order from strongest to weakest, using a diamond format.



- 5 How successful is materialism? Weigh up the strengths and weaknesses, then write a summary of your view with reasons.

Challenge

- 6 Research and think about the wider mind–body topic. For example, how does materialism address the problems of the consciousness of other living beings? For example, dogs and dolphins (and mice, if you have read *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*) are considered intelligent and conscious to some extent. How does this impact the status of humans?

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DRAFT SAMPLE MATERIAL

2.6 Materialism versus dualism



Aim

Use what you know from dualists and materialists to discuss which is most successful in answering questions about soul, mind and body.



Starter

The Ship of Theseus is a famous philosophical thinking problem. There are several videos about it online. Over time, every part of Theseus' ship wears out or is damaged so is replaced with a new part, until everything has been replaced:



- Does Theseus still have the same ship? Why? Why not?
- Is an object that has all its parts replaced still the same object?
- What if all the old and damaged parts were rebuilt into another ship? Which one is Theseus' ship? Why?
- Am 'I' only a (physical) body? Or am 'I' more than a (physical) body?

Read the dialogue below between Rick and Vic. What are the differences between dualism and materialism?

Rik: Is that a new mobile you have there?

Vic: No, it is my old phone.

Rik: Are you sure? It looks completely different. Your old one had a cracked screen, a different case – look, even the apps have changed on your home screen.

Vic: Well, yes, it was a bit battered, wasn't it. I'm always dropping it – my mum's always on my case about that! It got so bad that I couldn't even read my messages, so my techy brother got hold of it and fixed everything. It's had a new screen, he updated the IOS and I even bought this case for it.

Rik: So, it is like having a brand new phone then?

Vic: It is really because everything has changed about it – it's so much faster now.

Rik: If everything is different about your phone, it isn't really your phone anymore, is it?

Rik: Isn't this a bit like that discussion in Philosophy? Where we were talking about what makes 'me' – remember?

Rik: Yes, that's right. Didn't we talk about how we change throughout our lives but we still think of ourselves as the same person? All our cells and everything are regenerated and replaced over time.

Rik: It's a good job she can't hear this! But yes, if everything about our physical appearance has changed, how are we the same person?

Rik: Exactly! So, what makes your phone your phone is something different to its physical properties. It's like saying that what makes me unique is something extra to my physical characteristics.

Rik: Lots of the philosophers we studied thought there is a soul, which explains it.

Rik: But you've just said that there is something extra.

Vic: Well ...

Vic: Do you mean where we looked at those hilarious pictures of Miss when she was a baby, at primary school, secondary school, when she got married and now that she is ancient?

Vic: You mean like Miss now has wrinkles and bags under her eyes?

Vic: Ahh, I see what you mean now. My phone has changed so much and had lots of parts replaced so that it looks different, but I still think of it as the same phone.

Vic: OK, but what sort of thing could the 'extra' part be?

Vic: Hang on a minute ... I don't believe in a soul!

Vic: Agh. You've done it again. How do you always manage to get me to agree with you?



You should have noticed some similarities between Vic and Rik’s conversation and Theseus’ ship. Materialism argues that there is nothing apart from physical existence, so consciousness can be explained by physical factors: ‘I’ am a body and nothing more. Dualism challenges this, arguing that ‘I’ am more than a body with a mind or soul. However, neither materialism nor dualism can resolve all the issues.

Analyse and evaluate	
<i>Materialism is the best approach to the problems of soul, mind and body</i>	<i>Dualism is the best approach to the problems of soul, mind and body</i>
There is no need to assume the existence of an immaterial soul or something beyond the body. Evidence from brain scans or the use of drugs indicates that changes in thought and motives are physical. Studies from NASA that can ‘read’ silent words from sensors on the throat also support the idea that thinking has a physical source.	Physical terms cannot describe everything about an individual. There seems to be more to ‘me’ than just my body. Anscombe claims that intention cannot be explained by a physical action alone, such as pointing. It is the intention behind the action that indicates a mind or soul is directing the body.
Dennett, Dawkins and Blackmore argue that consciousness is not found in a single place, it is a combination of processes and responses in the brain.	Descartes argues that the mind is the place of singular thought, it cannot be divided, unlike the body which could lose limbs but not affect how we see ourselves.
An immaterial or mysterious mind or soul would not be detected or able to be verified. How would I know if the mind or soul existed?	Plato argues that a harmonious soul, with reason in control, explains how we choose to act and how we gain knowledge since it recalls the perfect Forms. Plato argues that evidence of self-control of emotions and desires, as well as recognition of goodness or beauty, is evidence of an immortal soul.
If there is something ‘extra’ that is my essence but that is not physical, how can we use language accurately to talk about it?	Aristotle’s understanding that the body and soul cannot be separated could solve the problems of language. The ‘soul’ is not an opposite immaterial substance but something that describes animation and intention behind physical actions. It is the difference between a stationary and moving car – both look the same – but ‘soul’ describes an animating principle.



Activities

Core

- Reread the conversation between Vic and Rik. Then discuss these questions:
 - Do you agree that Vic has a different phone? Why or why not?
 - Is Rik correct to say that there is something extra to the body that makes me me? Why or why not?
- Create a knowledge organiser about dualism and materialism. Include knowledge on different scholarly views as well as strengths/supporting views and weaknesses/criticisms. The outline below suggests one way of organising the material.

Dualism			Materialism		
Strengths (how/why dualism solves issues raised):		Problems:	Strengths (how/why materialism solves issues raised):		Problems:
There is a separate soul – Plato	Strengths	Criticisms	Consciousness is physical	Strengths	Criticisms
Body and soul are inseparable – Aristotle	Strengths	Criticisms	There is no soul	Strengths	Criticisms
Mind and body are separate substances – Descartes	Strengths	Criticisms Ryle	Soul is a metaphor	Strengths	Criticisms

- Choose either materialism or dualism. Make a list of reasons to support your chosen view (use examples and scholars' views). Make a second list of reasons against the opposing view (why it is weaker). Then challenge a partner to a debate.

Stretch

- Construct a table using sticky notes (if doing this activity as a class, use sticky notes to create a collaborative table). On each sticky note, write one argument that supports the idea of soul as either real or a metaphor.

The soul is a real thing	The word 'soul' is a metaphor

- Which do you think is the strongest view? Why? Why are you rejecting the other view? Explain the reasons for your views.

Challenge

- Find out about other views of body and mind such as epiphenomenalism or parallelism, or research further the views of Dennett or Keith Ward (English philosopher and theologian). There are several relevant debates online about the mind–body problem.
Remember to think critically about each view. What problems does it solve? Does it raise other issues? How does it fit with the views you have studied? How successful is it? Add your thoughts and findings to your notes on this topic.

Wrap up

CHECKLIST

- ☐ Give reasons for my opinions about:
 - Who am 'I'? What makes me unique – is it my brain, my appearance, my memories or something else?
 - How do I gain knowledge? Do I know it innately or have I learned it using my senses and observations? Why?
- ☐ Explain Plato's view of the body and soul using his arguments and examples
- ☐ Explain Aristotle's view of the body and soul using his arguments and examples
- ☐ Outline and assess Descartes' substance dualism
- ☐ Explain why Ryle accused Descartes of making a category error
- ☐ Explain the difference between dualism and materialism
- ☐ List and assess the strengths and weaknesses of dualism
- ☐ List and assess the strengths and weaknesses of materialism

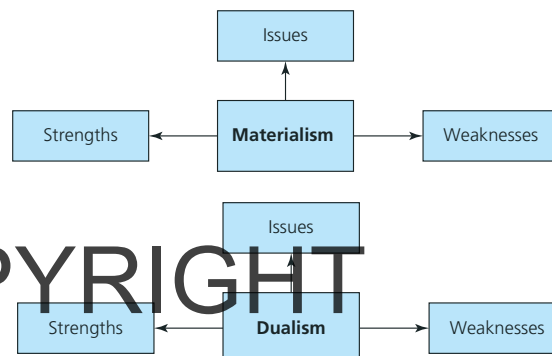
QUIZ

- 1 True or false? For a materialist, consciousness can be separated from the brain.
- 2 True or false? Identity theory is supported by research from NASA which used sensors to read words spoken silently.
- 3 What is the belief that humans have two elements, body and soul?
- 4 What illustration does Plato use to describe a harmonious soul?
- 5 Which philosopher criticises Plato by asking, how can a non-material soul 'see' the Forms?
- 6 Which of the four causes does Aristotle associate with the soul?
- 7 For Aristotle, there are different faculties of the soul but only humans have the final one – what is it?
- 8 What is the name given to a mistake made by applying something to the wrong type of category?
- 9 What does G.E.M. Anscombe use to suggest that both body and soul are needed?
- 10 Descartes' view of a separate body and soul is called what?

GET READY

Summarising

- 1 Make a set of flashcards to learn all the key terms and definitions for this topic.
- 2 Create two mind maps, one for materialism, one for dualism.
 - In one colour, add AO2 – what are the issues? Which scholars will you select to solve/argue about the issues? What are the strengths and weaknesses?
 - In a second colour, add all the AO1 from scholars – their views and examples.
 - In a third colour, add counter-arguments, e.g. that address the weaknesses.



Applying

- 3 Make a list of possible issues that could be discussed in an essay on this topic. For example, identity – what makes me 'me'? Am I a body or do I have a body?

Debate

- 4 'Everyone has a soul.' Discuss this in small groups and make a note of the points raised. Add them to your notes.

**Tip**

If you are struggling to remember who said what, don't waste valuable exam time stressing about it. Carry on and write about the scholars' theories, ideas and examples. Credit will be given for using scholarly views in your essay. There are no specific marks available for listing names!.

Get practising

One of the common mistakes in essays is too much listing of knowledge, without using it to support an argument or line of reasoning. Here are two examples

with comments. Think about how you can take this advice and use it to write your next essay.

The question is: 'Are we more than a collection of physical parts?' Discuss.

Plato's view of the body and soul is that they are separate. The body acts like a prison for the soul. The soul can remember the World of the Forms. Plato uses the chariot example. A charioteer (the soul) is trying to control two wayward horses, which want to go in different directions. The two horses are the body and mind. When the charioteer is in control, the chariot can be driven safely. This shows that Plato believes there is a soul which should control the body, not the other way round.

Comments: This section contains some accurate knowledge about Plato's views of body and soul but is all AO1, rather than the knowledge being used as part of an argument. There is an outline of Plato's ideas but it is more like a list of bullet points on a revision card. Although this material can be relevant to this question, it is not clearly focused on the question being asked.

It could be improved by adding reasons why Plato came to this conclusion about the soul. For example, the argument from knowledge can explain how or why the soul remembers the Forms. The charioteer example is mostly accurate but misses Plato's point. Plato also uses it to describe the inner workings and harmony of the soul when reason is in control and so turns it into a supporting argument for the existence of a soul.

For Plato, we are definitely more than the total of our physical parts, or more than a body. With the body we are only able to use our senses and as Plato indicated in the Analogy of the Cave, our senses deceive us, like the chains of the prisoners, making us think that this changing and imperfect 'shadow' world is all there is. So, the body acts like a prison for the soul which longs to return to the World of the Forms. The soul is the rational part of us, which Plato argues enables us to access the real world just as the prisoner could escape the cave. Using our rational soul, we can understand the true, eternal and perfect Forms, such as the Good, Beauty or Justice. Plato uses the argument from knowledge to support this view. Plato asks, how do we know? Using Socrates' slave boy, uneducated yet able to answer mathematical questions, he suggests that our soul recollects this knowledge from its time in the World of the Forms, before it was incarnated into the body. The example of beauty can be used to support this too. We all recognise a beautiful sunset, piece of music, a flower or a person, yet they are all beautiful in different ways. Plato claims our soul remembers the Form of Beauty when seeing the particulars and so we class them all as reflecting the Form of Beauty. The idea of being more than our physical parts is also illustrated in Plato's example of the charioteer. When reason is in charge of the soul, as the charioteer, both horses of the appetites and the spirit are pulled into order so there is harmony in the soul. If our soul is harmonious, it is more likely that we will not be distracted by bodily desires and will use our reason better. Therefore, it seems that Plato would support the statement that we are more than the sum total of our physical parts, we are not just a body but also have a soul. Because he has shown that only the soul through reason can bring true knowledge.

Comments: This is more focused on the question – it may help to use similar wording to the question when you write because it makes you think about why you are including the material. Here the knowledge is more detailed and accurate than in the first example and there are also more technical terms. This section is led by AO2, the argument. Where examples are used, they are explained and are directly linked to reasons why Plato holds this view and to the question. By the end of this paragraph, the writer shows they are in control of both the material and the line of argument.