

# Immortality – the existence of souls

Philosophy



Throughout life one will make thousands of choices: fight or flee, work or sleep, salad or fries; all of these can use some form of philosophical thinking. However critical one may be of philosophy it is an extremely handy tool in the decision-making process. What happens when we die? What is death? Do we have a soul? A few of the many questions Melinda and Melissa are asking themselves during their deliberations over their brother's 'life' or 'death'. The sisters have come to a point of disagreement; Melissa believes her brother is already dead; Melinda believes that although her brother is in a vegetative state he is still alive... because he still has his soul.

A large number of people today are very fact-oriented; if something cannot be proven with hard evidence, it isn't true. Although Plato lacks any 'real' proof of the souls existence, he does provide some very convincing arguments (many of which Melinda can use to convince Melissa). First is the idea of the Equal, it works something like this: we know the Equal, seeing to equal things help us recollect the Equal, so we must have possessed this knowledge before our birth.

To Plato it is obvious we have souls because learning is recollection of something we knew prior to our embodiment. Another thought is that of 'opposites'. Plato states that things " must necessarily come to be from their opposite and nowhere else:" (70e) hot from cold, tall from short, and life from death. So the souls of the living must come from the dead " and nowhere else. " We have no way of calculating the soul, other than it being life itself. The qualities used to define life are enumerated solely on physical qualities, like that which make it different from death and inanimate objects.

So, if an object contains life, than life can not be calculated solely on physical qualities. " What happens when we die? " a question almost wholly left up to faith in modern society. The lack of simplicity in its answer creates too many questions in our minds to attempt to explain it logically. The complicated nature of the answer is not lost on Plato in his efforts to describe and justify his own beliefs. To Plato and Melinda, death is the separation of the body from the soul, not just the end of 'life' in the body.

Melissa may now be convinced that souls exist within us, but how is she to know that the soul continues without the body? Plato explains this too. The soul is life; it is immortal so it cannot participate in its opposite, death. If a soul cannot die it is the opposite of death, therefore if a soul were to die it would be the opposite of itself, which cannot be so, thus proving the immortality of the soul. The soul is pure and unchangeable; it is close to the divine Plato speaks of. The divine is deathless, thus the soul will survive (and thrive) without the body.

The body hinders ones discovery of truth, it is a nuisance; sensory information cannot be trusted and the fundamental processes of life are, although necessary to physical survival, quite burdensome. The body impedes on the purity of the soul; with death comes the attainment of great wisdom which cannot be discovered while the soul is trapped within our bodies. Our intelligence stems directly from the immortality of the soul. Melinda believes that allowing Mathew's body to die could be murder, for it could mark the end of his soul.

Melissa believes that Mathew is already dead because his physical qualities are no longer in working order. Platonic arguments refute both of their beliefs. Souls exist, life on earth is a mixture of the body and the soul, death is the departure of the soul from the body, and the soul is immortal. Although Mathew is still alive, pulling the plug would not technically be murder. Mathew's soul will live on and will have the freedom to acquire profound understanding, to discover truth, and to cleanse to its ultimate purity.