

Plato's concept of the body and the soul essay sample

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Plato's concept of the body and the soul is a dualistic theory. He saw our existence in terms of two levels. These were the body and the soul. He believed that the body existed only in the physical world (World of Appearances) and that it is of this world meaning it is mortal. It is only interested in sense pleasures such as eating and sleeping and occasionally, the demands of the body take over a person and cloud their minds with the things of this world. Here, Plato is basically linking it with his allegory by saying at this stage we cannot see beyond the shadows.

The soul however, is immortal and unchanging. He believed that the soul inhabits the metaphysical world (World of Forms). It is immortal and inhabits a host until it dies, at which point it is released. It is also linked to thoughts and to the mind both of which Plato believed to be metaphysical. He understood that the soul had a 'thirst' for intellectual pursuits. He used the analogy of a charioteer to portray his belief that the soul (psyche) worked in harmony with the mind and body. He said that the charioteer was the soul and the two horses were the mind and the body.

The job of the charioteer (the soul) is to get the two horses (mind and body) to work in harmony. Plato argued that the seen as the soul is immortal; it must also have a pre-existence to the body. So Plato believed that as it learns more about the 'world of Appearances' it gets glimpses of the metaphysical world in which it used to live. Gradually, it will become unhappy with the world in which it is living and will yearn to return to the 'world of Forms'. He argues for the existence of the soul by simply pointing out what people say.

He observed that people say " I have a body" and not " I am body". He believed this to be a clear piece of evidence that we are referring to something within us that is beyond, or more than just a body or physical existence. One of Plato's books ' Phaedo' features an argument between Socrates and a character named Cebes, over the view that the soul disappears into nothingness when the host dies. Plato argued for the existence of the soul using two main points. One of which is called the Cycle of Opposites. The argument is that good cannot exist without evil, wet without dry or hot without cold.

Therefore, the opposite of the body must be the soul, and the world of Forms must be the opposite of the world of Appearances. The other is the argument from Knowledge in which, Plato states that knowledge is ' a priori', learned from before birth (innate) and therefore on conclusion ' real' knowledge is what is already known to us, hence virtues cannot be taught to us. Our perceptions on goodness and equality are also, according to Plato ' priori'. These points, to Plato are evidence of the pre-existence of the soul. Plato used a metaphor to explain one of the fundamental functions of the soul. He said that ' the eye is useless with out light.

The light gives knowledge of true goodness whilst the soul (the eye) helps us to give real understanding'. Plato therefore holds the same view as Socrates in stating that undertaking Philosophy is the rehearsal for death, since death focuses on the real truth that will continue. There are however a few criticisms of Platos concepts. These are included in the following. The existence of Forms is not essentially logical. For example, there is an

absence of convincing arguments to suggest that the world of Forms is more than real. This can be explained by the fact that one can walk into the 'appearance' of a lamp post, but into the Form of one.

The other criticism of his theory was his ideas on the pre existence of the soul. If we are born with prior knowledge and this is the ' world of Forms', we need out knowledge of the ' world of Appearances' on order to survive, so therefore would our knowledge of the ' world of Forms' go against our basic instincts? Plato also believed that the highest form of knowledge is the understanding of the Form of Good. According to ethics, do we actually know what goodness is and is it possible for two equally intelligent people to come to a two completely wrong conclusion conclusions about what is wrong and right?