

# The Value of the Soul in the Religious Views

## An Overview targeting the Salvation of an Individual



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### ABSTRACT

The Soul is considered, both for religions and philosophy, to be the immaterial aspect or essence of a human being, conferring individuality and humanity, often considered to be synonymous with the mind or the self. For most theologies, the Soul is further defined as that part of the individual, which partakes of divinity and transcends the body in different explanations. But, regardless of the philosophical background in which a specific theology gives the transcendence of the soul as the source of its everlasting essence – often considered to survive the death of the body –, it is always appraised as a higher existence for which all should fight for. In this regard, all religious beliefs assert that there are many unseen battles aiming to take hold of the human soul, either between divinity and evil, or between worlds, or even between the body and the soul itself. These unseen battles over the human soul raging in the whole world made it the central item of the entire universe, both for the visible and the unseen worlds, an item of which whoever takes possession will also become the ruler of the universe. Through this philosophy, the value of the soul became abysmal, incommensurable, and without resemblance. The point for making such a broad overview of the soul in religious beliefs is the question of whether we can build an interfaith discourse based on the religions' most debated and valuable issue, soul?

Regardless of the variety of religious beliefs on what seems to be the soul, there is always a residual consideration in them that makes the soul more important than the body. This universal impression is due to another belief or instead need of believing that above and beyond this seen, palpable, finite life and the world should exist another one, infinite, transcendent, and available all the same after here. This variety stretches from the minimum impact that soul has on the body, as being the superior essence that inhabits and enlivens the matter (as in the early Hebrew religious view, in particular of Sadducees' view), to the highest impact in which soul has nothing to do with matter[1] and is only ephemeral linked to it, but its existence is not at all limited, defined or depended on the matter (as in the Buddhism)[2], or even placed to the extreme, as the very life of the matter thus this seen universe is merely a thought in the soul/mind (as in the belief of Solipsism, Nihilism or Brahmanism)[3]. In this extensive variety of soul overviews, the emphasis of the soul's importance gives an inverse significance to the body/matter, from being everything that matters to a thin, dwindle item that has no existence at all outside consciousness.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The soul is considered, both for religious and philosophical backgrounds, to be the immaterial aspect or essence of a human being with the extent to other living creatures, conferring individuality and humanity, often considered to be synonymous with the mind or the self. For most theologies, the soul is further defined as that part of the individual, which partakes of divinity and transcends the body in different explanations. Regardless of the religious belief, we are talking about, the soul and its awareness, have always been the central key-concepts of religious overviews, primarily on salvation. It is indeed a universal understanding and acceptance throughout human history and civilizations to meet such a variety of beliefs in the existence of the soul, regardless of the forms these beliefs took place.

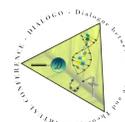
Starting from the empirical observation that there are things devoid of life, static and inert, while others are 'alive', dynamic, animated, man came first to the logical conclusion that there should be 'something' animating them, something amorphous, unseen, but nonetheless real, that animates the seen things. The most common allegory that explains the existence of the soul in things is that of a glove moved by the unseen, beneath it hand; similar to that the soul inhabits matter and 'moves' it from inside it. Sometimes envision as having the same material existence as the body or at least some palpable fabric, named 'celestial,' that can be 'seen,' feel, measured, and thus, to some extent, material. For example, the aura Buddhist faiths speak of can be 'seen' with the third eye or felt like an energetic field around. Some other times, the soul is without resemblance to the 'seen world,' incorporeal existence, having no resemblance with anything known. The only common issue that relates to all the religious visions on the soul is the

main action of religiousness that aims to value soul, soteriology. This creates a link between human existence, its soul, and the purpose of religiousness, regardless of the color of the religion we are talking about. "All known world religions address the nature of good and evil and commend ways of achieving human well-being, whether this is thought of in terms of salvation, liberation, deliverance, enlightenment, tranquillity or an egoless state of Nirvana."<sup>[1]</sup>

## II. SOUL, THE BREATHE AND MIND, FOR THE ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

The soul or *psychic* (ancient Greek: ψυχή *psykhē*, from ψύχειν *psýkhein*, 'to breathe') encompasses the mental abilities of a living being: reason, character, feeling, consciousness, memory, perception, thinking, etc. Depending on the philosophical system, a soul can be mortal or immortal.<sup>[2]</sup> In this basic understanding of the soul, it only fills in some explanations on the difference between the non-speaking beings or the inanimate, inert, dead corps, and those that are alive, rational, projecting the future. Envisioned as a (Hebrew *nephesh*), meaning "life, vital breath," and specifically refers to a mortal, physical life, as something that inhabits σῶμα (*sōma*, "body"), and lasts only until the death, which is the separation/splitting of them.

Starting with **Homer**, who assumed that souls do little more than leaving the body at death, remaining in the underworld as a shadow of the deceased, ancient philosophy elevated to Soul to more than Breath. After Homer, the term experienced an expansion in its connotation. The subsequent thinkers used the term to designate the faculty of making known one's emotions, thought, reasoning and his virtues. **Pythagoras** conceived Soul as an entity which partakes of divinity, existing before and after the physical body<sup>[3]</sup>. In **Plato**, it becomes a link



between matter and the immaterial forms. “The allegory of the cave in the *Republic* suggests that Plato had a perceptual model of knowledge.”<sup>[4]</sup> Nothing like the material body that encumbers the soul, the latter has an eternal existence before this life imprisoned in a body, and long after its death, that is seen as the soul’s Redemption. The only connection with this existence is that the soul is the principle of life and thus needed for the body. In contrast, the salvation of the soul [from the body imprisonment] resides in reasoning and coming to awareness, to the knowledge of the Forms. This became the beginning of the metaphysics of the soul. “The body, like the many sensible objects, is visible to the senses, ever-changing, many-faceted and perishable, while the soul is ‘very like’ Forms, which are invisible, perceived by the intellect, not the senses, unchanging, simple and imperishable. Note especially that a soul, like a Form, is said to be simple that is uncompounded, lacking parts.”<sup>[5]</sup> Still, the *Republic* introduces a more nuanced and more psychologically convincing picture, the famous account of the tripartite (or three-part) soul: each of us has a three-part soul, with a reasoning element, a spirited element (*thumos*) and a third which is the seat of the bodily desires (appetite). This makes a great deal in all future religious and philosophical interpretations on soul hosting opposable desires and thoughts at the same time, elevated or inferior, but not altogether inside the same compartment. In this direction, it is also important to fit **Socrates’** arguments for the immortality of the soul. Socrates says not only that the soul is immortal, but also that it contemplates truths after its separation from the body at the time of death. “Socrates launches his most elaborate and final argument for the immortality of the soul, which concludes that since life belongs essentially to the soul, the soul must be deathless — that is, immortal.”<sup>[6]</sup> Remarkable in his case

for the future Christian philosophy on the soul is the assertion that it is the soul that animates the body of a living thing<sup>[7]</sup>. “Now, as we have seen in some detail, the Greek notion of soul included the idea of a soul as an animating body probably as early as the sixth century, when Thales attributed soul to magnets.”<sup>[8]</sup> Also, through the idea of transmigration, Socrates’ argumentation is equally close to the Buddhist philosophy on souls. “According to the cyclical argument (70c-72d), being alive in general is preceded by, just as it precedes, being dead. Socrates takes this to show that a creature’s death involves the continued existence of the soul in question, which persists through a period of separation from the body, and then returns to animate another body in a change which is the counterpart of the previous change, dying.”<sup>[9]</sup>

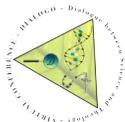
**Aristotle** was hostile to the independence of forms, and since he considered the soul as the form of the living thing, he thought of immortality in other circumstances, but not to the soul alone. From a contemporary perspective, Aristotle’s psychology (theory of the soul) contains far more promising insights. He kept the idea that souls are the source of living for all creatures, but it is only the compound of form and matter that is truly alive, not the parts, whether it is the Form (actuality) or Matter (potentiality). Aristotle distinguishes between two levels of actuality (*entelechies*).

[a] First potentiality: a child who does not speak French.

[b] Second potentiality (first actuality): a (silent) adult who speaks French.

[c] Second actuality: an adult speaking (or actively understanding) French.

Thus, the soul is the first actuality of a natural body that has life potentially<sup>[10]</sup>. A living thing’s soul is its capacity to engage in the activities that are characteristic of living things of its natural kind. Given that, it is clear that the soul is, according to Aristotle,



not itself a body or a corporeal thing. It is remarkable for Plato and moreover Aristotle that they elevate the explanation of the soul from that of materialist predecessors who had sought to explain all psychic functions in terms of the material constituents of living things. Of course, in this highly elevated and well-structured philosophic system, the soul should have different degrees of existence, Aristotle cataloged kinds of soul corresponding to kinds of life such as vegetative, animal and rational, and granted immortality to the rational alone.

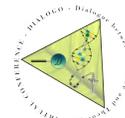
- [a] Nutritive soul (plants)
- [b] Sensitive soul (all animals)
- [c] Rational soul (human beings)

So on Aristotle's account, although the soul is not a material object, it is not separable from the body. The soul is not an independently existing substance. It is linked to the body more directly: it is the form of the body, not a separate substance inside another substance (a body) of a different kind. It is a capacity, not the thing that has the capacity.<sup>[11]</sup> Also, for a better understanding that Aristotle could not rise up radically [and with a very good outcome, I might add] from the predecessor materialists is the explanation on soul's activities as Plato did. "He insists that psychic phenomena such as perception, emotions (for example, anger), memory and thinking cannot occur except in an embodied organism (though he occasionally qualifies this concerning one kind of faculty – labeled active intellect – which is capable of independent, that is non-embodied, existence)."<sup>[12]</sup> The outcome is very tight to the future Christian Middle Ages' consideration on the structure of a human being. It is not the soul, but the organism itself, which is the subject of mental phenomena; in other words, "not that the soul is feeling pity, or thinking, or learning, but that the human being is doing so in virtue of the soul"<sup>[13]</sup>. Still, considering the soul as the form of the body

is very different from thinking of it as the arrangement of the material parts. "As we saw above, the form in the case of a living thing is the principle of the organization of that thing, its disposition to behave in all the ways characteristic of that kind of thing."<sup>[14]</sup>

Consequently to Aristotle's middle path between dualism and materialism, the *salvation* cannot be attained by the soul, since it is not existent *per se*, but only in the compound between soul and body, namely the individual Self: "it is also clear that the soul is the primary substance, the body is the matter, and man or animal is composed of the two as universal."<sup>[15]</sup> The "substance is some sort of principle and cause ..."<sup>[16]</sup>, but to be a substance is not to be an ultimate subject. This was the key-concept for the final Christian dogma on Redemption and the distinction between the two stages of the divine Judgment.

In opposition to these phenomenological and psychological theories is that of **Stoics** argument for the claim that the soul is a *body*. The best one of these is that the soul is a body because (roughly) only bodies affect one another, and soul and body do affect one another, for instance, in cases of bodily damage and emotion. Stoic physics allows for three different kinds of *pneuma* (lit. 'breath'), a breath-like material compound of two of the four Stoic elements, fire and air. They assert the existence of three kinds of *pneuma*, and man possesses all three of them. "The lowest kind accounts for the cohesion and character of inanimate bodies (e.g., rocks); the intermediate kind, called natural *pneuma*, accounts for the vital functions characteristic of plant life; and the third kind is soul, which accounts for the reception and use of impressions (or representations) (phantasies) and impulse (*hormê*: that which generates animal movement) or, to use alternative terminology, cognition and desire"<sup>[17]</sup>. **Epicurus**, as atomist, takes the soul, like



everything else that exists except for the void, to be ultimately composed of atoms of a nameless kind of substance. He thinks that the soul is dispersed at death along with its constituent atoms, losing the powers that it has while it is contained by the body of the organism that it ensouls. Despite this material conception of the soul, in the Epicurean tradition, the word 'soul' is sometimes used in the broad traditional way, as what animates living things, being composite of two parts, one rational, the other nonrational. The rational part, which Lucretius calls mind [animus], is the origin of emotion and impulse, while the nonrational part of the soul, which in Lucretius is somewhat confusingly called soul [anima], is responsible for receiving sense-impressions, all of which are true according to Epicurus.<sup>[18]</sup>

If one refers to what the term Soul designated in the early Greek philosophy, he will discover that the term was used primarily to distinguish the living man from the corpse. The term was then used to imply moral quality and intense emotions, which is still retained by Soul after the destruction of the physical body. Later Christian writers built their ideas on these Greek philosophers, especially that of Plato's, which persist all the way to modern thinkers.<sup>[19]</sup>

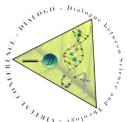
### III. SOUL AND NIRVANA IN BUDDHISM

For some, this disunion resides in the death of both parts, one decomposing into the ground, while the other vanishing into the ether. For others, as in **Buddhism**, the term *anattā*<sup>[20]</sup> (Pali) or *anātman* (Sanskrit) refers to the doctrine of "non-self," that there is no unchanging, permanent self, soul or essence in phenomena. In Buddhism *anattā* (Pali: "non-self" or "substanceless") is not permanent for it is formed of the 5 factors or aggregates (*khandas*; *skandhas*: *form and matter, sensations, ideas, emotions, and consciousness*) that make up the individual

and that are in a constant changing, and also of the three characteristics of all existence (*ti-lakkhana*). The absence of a self *anattā*, *anicca* (the impermanence of all being), and *dukkha* ("suffering") resides in the termination of life.<sup>[21]</sup> Self must stay the 'same' in order to remain a true self. An ego 'I-identity' can only be truly so if it remains identical and the same over time, but nothing here or there ever stays the same; all is transient and impermanent! Due to this phenomenological understanding of the soul, its salvation should be very intimate related to preserving life. "Thus, by not taking sides with the metaphysicians, the Buddha described how the consciousness "I am" comes to constitute itself in the stream of consciousness out of the five aggregates of form, feeling, conception, disposition, and consciousness."<sup>[22]</sup>

Alternative use of *Attan* or *Atta* is "self, oneself, essence of a person", driven by the Vedic era Brahmanical belief that the soul is the permanent, unchangeable essence of a living being or the true self.<sup>[23]</sup> The contextual use of *Attā* in *Nikāyas*<sup>[24]</sup> is two-sided. In one, it directly denies that there is anything called a *self* or *soul* in a human being that is a permanent essence of a human being, a theme found in Brahmanical (proto-Hindu) traditions. In another, states Peter Harvey, such as at *Samyutta Nikaya* IV.286, the Sutta considers the materialistic concept in pre-Buddhist Vedic times of "no afterlife, complete annihilation" at death to be a denial of Self, but still "tied up with belief in a Self"<sup>[25]</sup>. The elaboration of the *anatta* doctrine, along with identification of the words such as "puggala" as "permanent subject or soul," appears in later Buddhist literature.

Because of his Indian background, Siddhartha did not believe that death was a final release from suffering. As opposed to 'no-self', according to the laws of *karma* the power of individual that grants life



should not be wasted, and thus it may enter another body after death, inheriting the previous state of existence, good or bad, and elevate or punished to a lower one. In Siddhartha Gautama's teaching, *samsara* is the belief that after death, a person's innermost essence, or soul, transmigrates into a new body—it is born again.<sup>[26]</sup> This is the law of *karma*, that every action and deed has an effect in this life and the next, leading the process of *samsara* or reincarnation to a better or worst rebirth. The theory of transmigration is elevated to a more radical understanding by Mahāvīra, a contemporary of the Buddha that founded Jainism, claiming that while inflicting pain to other creatures, your own soul is harmed, transmitting the state further on.<sup>[27]</sup>

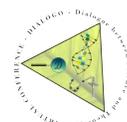
For that matter, *salvation* is bound to cleansing, for Jainism by practicing Self-mortification during fasting, a practice rejected by Buddha that felt the need to change the theory of saving the soul twice, after practicing self-mortification to a state of physical exhaustion. First, he considered useless the condition of *samsara* to be understood as an endless chain of existence, so that he “developed the idea of *moksha* or release. By leading a highly spiritual life (or several lives), a soul could be reunited with Brahman, the Ultimate Reality. The cycle of *samsara* would be broken.”<sup>[28]</sup> Then, after a period of six years of self-denial and penances, meditating constantly, he fasted to the extreme, considering that this path would lead to *moksha*<sup>[29]</sup>. Siddhartha realized that the path to wisdom did not lie in extremes. That was the moment he became enlightened under the Bodhi tree (tree of enlightenment) attaining nirvana and becoming Buddha (the “enlightened one”), a higher purpose for life than *moksha*, the end of suffering. “Having discovered the way to end his own suffering, he turned back, determined to share his enlightenment with others so that all living souls could end the cycles of their own rebirth and suffering.”<sup>[30]</sup>

Thus, the salvation of the soul, *atman*, is to end the suffering that is caused by desires. Therefore, suffering can be overcome by ceasing to desire. The way to end desire is to follow the Eightfold Path and rise to a higher state of holiness. For the nirvana to be achieved, one would have to follow the Buddha's Eightfold Path, losing their false idea of self and achieve nirvana by influencing the *skandhas* to a higher state of awareness. In this state of nirvana, a person would no longer accumulate bad karma, even if his life continued.

#### IV. THE CONCEPT OF AL-RUH (SOUL) IN ISLAM

In Islam, especially Sufism, *rūh* (Arabic: روح; plural *arwah*) is a person's immortal, essential self — *pneuma*, i.e. the “spirit” or “soul.” Accepting the Books of creation from the Judaic Bible, Islam implies that after the creation of the human from dust, God breathed his spirit into him and raised him above all other creatures (Q. 15:26–50). By breathing his spirit into the human, God provided him with God-like faculties and knowledge of creation that non-humans did not possess. If the human utilizes these faculties judiciously, then he can serve as God's vicegerent (administrative deputy) on Earth (Q. 2:30; 17:70), and this is also a matter of choice by the free-will man also received with his soul.

The major difference between the Islamic tradition and other religious views is that of the *al-Wafat*, death. In Islam, *al-Ruh* primarily implies the animated breath of life blown into a living, which departs his physical body at the point of death.<sup>[31]</sup> Abdullah b. Abbas stated that Allah takes Souls of his slaves in two occasions: The first being the time they are asleep (*al-Wafat al-Sugra* - the lesser death) and then the actual death (*al-Wafat al-Kubra*), ceasing that Soul for which He ordained death and sending the rest without



any mistake.<sup>[32]</sup> Other scholars have asserted that there should be made a differentiation between al-Ruh (Soul) and al-Nafs (Self, from the Semitic *nefesh*). Ibn Mandhur states for them to be the same, except that the former is masculine while the former is feminine. The concept of *lesser death* is interesting for many scholars because the sleep is regarded as the tool of Allah with which He grants knowledge, called a ‘truthful dream’<sup>[33]</sup>. Nevertheless, that is valid only for “the sleeper (who) is truthful, generous, and pure”; in regard to the sinful and a liar one, his soul that also move freely about the world and gather knowledge about the Unseen, meets *Shaytan* in mid-air at his returning into the body and mixes the true with false, making the person that awakes a confused one. Muqatil b. Sulayman explains that when one sleeps, Allah takes his Nafs and not his Ruh with which he still breathes<sup>[34]</sup>. The correct opinion concerning this matter<sup>[35]</sup> as affirmed by Scholars such as al-Qurtubi (1967), Ibn Taymiyyah (1988), and his student Ibn Qayyim (2004) is that the difference between the two is that of attributes rather than the substance. Thus, Nafs is that aspect of a man filled with vain desires, while Ruh is closer to the mind, the aware and rational Soul. Allah, the Exalted in the Quran, used the term Nafs to imply the departing Soul, as in verse below:

“--And If you could but see when Zalimun (wrong-doers) are in the agonies of death while the Angels are stretching forth their hands (saying): “Deliver your Nafs (soul)! This day you shall be recompensed with the torment of degradation because of what you used to utter against other than the truth. And you used His Ayat (proofs and lessons) with disrespect” (6: 93)

There are other differences between the Islamic explanation from that of the religions that preceded Islam, both Christian and Jewish traditions. For example, there is no original sin in Islam<sup>[36]</sup>. Adam and

Eve alone disobeyed God, and that act of disobedience was their own sin; therefore, they alone were responsible for their actions. Therefore we do not have the controversial inquiry of how the original sin is transmitted to the subsequent generations. At the same time, another difference in the Quranic account of the creation is that Eve—and women in general—are not blamed for the fall. In the Quran, Adam and Eve are both blamed for their disobedience. Subsequent generations of women do not face shame, disgrace, and hardship because of Eve’s temptations. The pains of childbearing and monthly menstruation are not women’s punishment for the fall (as described in Genesis 3:16–18). They are simply facts of life, the condition of humanity.<sup>[37]</sup>

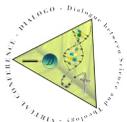
On the other hand, there are multiple other uses for al-Ruh in the Quran and Sunnah. For example, it is used to embody the breath of the Book itself that breathes upon the believers the conviction and guidance to earn the Grace and Mercy of their Lord.

*“And thus we have sent to you (O Muhammad) Ruh (a revelation) of Our command. You knew not what is the Book, nor what is faith? But we made it (this Ruh (Quran)) a light wherewith. We guide whosoever of Our slaves we will. And verily, you (O Muhammad) are indeed guiding (mankind) to a straight path” (42: 52)*

Also used to appoint an angel (26:193; 78:38 et al.), or to imply Allah’s support, assistance, and strengthening of believers (58: 22). A special significance for *al-RUH* is that of which the Lord bestowed Maryam with:

*“We breathed into her Our Ruh [آن حُورٌ, rūhinā plural]” (66:12; 21:91)*

As a result of this, Maryam believed in the Words of Allah (Bible, Luke 1:38), became obedient (66:12) and gave birth to the Messiah Isa and made him a “Messenger of Allah and His Words” (4: 171, لئلا لوسر).



It is important to see of all these examples that al-Ruh is mostly assimilated with connotations that imply the process of inhaling and exhaling, Allah breathed Their Ruh, during the sleep, *last breath* designated for the departing of Soul, etc, and all these associations are due to the act of creation of Adam,

“When I have shaped him and breathed from My Spirit into him, bow down before him” (38:72)

Another aspect that worth emphasizes here is the idea of Soul preexistence that is a ‘classical’ one according to many scholars who interpret the Hadith<sup>[38]</sup>. Dr. Shabir Ally says that “The soul pre-existed and God gathered all of the souls in the land of the souls. And then, eventually, put them in human bodies, as we have now.” The explanation goes further than the Hadith, even via some texts of the Quran that imply somehow the preexistence of souls.

“When your Lord brought forth descendants from the loins of Adam’s children and made them testify concerning themselves (saying) AM I NOT YOUR LORD? They replied: we bear witness that you are.... (this he did so) so that you should not say on the Day of Judgment that we had no knowledge of this.” (7:172)

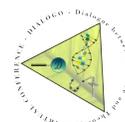
The idea that the Lord made a pact with them before their birth cannot be but a positive argument of this idea that we had an existence and conscious life before our birth<sup>[39]</sup>. For others<sup>[40]</sup>, ‘preexistence is a fabrication introduced by heretics and the people of innovations, borrowing the ideas foreign to Islam.’ The preexistence of souls is very important because it links tightly with eternity, judgment and afterlife concepts, which are indisputable if preexistence is accepted in the first place. Either way, concerning our secondary aspect of topic, salvation, it is important to mention that, in this regard, the Judgment of man has thus subject nor only the soul nor the body, but

both together, as *human* stands only for the union of them. “Finally, several verses and prophetic traditions confirmed that both Soul and the physical body are subjected to either bliss or punishment depending on the degree to which one attains spiritual virtue or condemns himself, and that only applies to the enslaved thing.”<sup>[41]</sup> It would be interesting to discuss on this topic either al-Ruh can be a thing, or a person, or just a quality/attribute, since it can assume awareness beyond its body, both in sleep or in actual death.

People turn to religion or, better, to their own particular faith, for the experience of healing and to inspire acts of peacemaking. That is why for the prophet Muhammad the salvation of soul lies in its cleansing, the most significant battle or *jihad* “We are returning from the *lesser jihad* [physical fighting] to the *greater jihad* [jihad alnafs].” For this inner jihad, Muslims have to exercise the Five Pillars of Islam.

#### V. SOUL AND REDEMPTION – AS CONCEIVED IN THE COMMON KNOWLEDGE OF JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

The concept of the soul in Christian literature and tradition has a complex history and it is both linked to the Judaic tradition, as well as of the ancient philosophy, moreover its reception by Arab and Christian philosophers. According to a common understanding in Judaism and Christianity, the Semitic thought *nefesh* is used to designate the spirit or principle of life that in such thought, is seen in the breath, which stands in contrast to the flesh. Under these two influences, Christianity had to answer to three different views **on the origin of the human soul**. “One, the *preexistence* view, has subsequently been declared heretical since it contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture about the creation of human beings. This view has two forms: platonic (uncreated)



and Christian (created). The former serves as a backdrop for understanding the latter”<sup>[42]</sup>. According to Plato, souls were eternal in the eternal World of Forms (Ideas). In contrast, the Christian reception of this idea, while preserving the ultimate attribute of God, declared that souls were indeed before the creation of the bodies, but eternally created by God. This view, held by Origen (c. 185-254) and Augustine (354-430 AD), was firmly rejected as a heretic for the Bible declares that human being as a whole was created at the same time and have a beginning (Genesis 1:27).

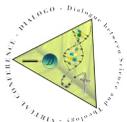
The second view is a *creation* with two main branches, *creationism* and *traducianism*, both valuable in explaining certain aspects of the Soul origin as well as other related issues. “The essence of *creationism*, concerning the human soul, is that God directly creates a new individual soul for everyone born into this world. While his parents generate the body of each new human being through a natural process, the soul is supernaturally created by God”<sup>[43]</sup>. In this view many variables hold on to different moments of ‘implanting’ the soul into the new generated body, from the moment of birth till the moment of procreation, with different variables in between (two weeks, 40 days, after conception, etc.), all in regard to the ethical question, *when can we speak of an individual human being and declare him with full rights accordingly?*

The last view, *traducianism*, comes from the Latin *tradux*, meaning “branch of a vine.” As applied to the origin of the soul, it means that each new human being is a branch off of his or her parents; that is to say, in the traducian model both soul and body are generated by father and mother.”<sup>[44]</sup> This rather unaccepted version explains further some gaps *creationism* has in regard with the *creation period* (God has completed His creation in six days, and He rested and has stopped creating ever since, Genesys 2:2;

Hebrew 4:4), the *scientific view* (that the individual comes from the sperm and ovum of its parents, so it is first conceived in the womb as a fully individual person), and the *inheritance of the original sin* (certainly a perfect God would not create a fallen soul, nor can we accept the gnostic idea that the contact of a pure soul with the material body equals its fall). Due to these rather partial-explaining theories, they remain only to this level – theories – and never rise upon the others, to the rank of *dogma*. The main point in this regard it is thus the revelation in the Bible, that when speaking of God who created ‘first’ [in the story] its body “out of the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (Gen. 2:7), we do not take these steps as two creation, but as a single act of creation or a simultaneous creation of body and soul<sup>[45]</sup>.

Another issue related to the Biblical conception on the Soul is about **its nature**. In the general opinion, Judaism and Christianity share a mutual understanding of the nature of man, which envisions man as a unique and unitary being, uniting body and soul, and not emphasizing just one of these two elements<sup>[46]</sup>. Still, three different hypotheses try to clarify this ‘unity’ of multiple elements. Of course, the very ‘unity’ of these various [in number] elements is lies under the shadow of unclarity, but let speak about one at the time.

The theories that address the number of the constitutive elements of human nature are *trichotomism*, *dichotomism* and *monism*. Only the second one is accepted as a dogma of Christianity [considering now the traditional confessions, Orthodox and Roman Catholic], the other two being heretics; nonetheless, there are variables in *dichotomism* that follow ideas of the other two. In short, *trichotomism*, lying on the philosophy of Plato and Plotin, asserts that the constitutive elements of a human are



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three, the material body and the immaterial principle made out of two elements, the living soul and the rational spirit<sup>[47]</sup>. In this conception, the soul is the power of the organic life, shared by all living beings, plants, animals, humans, while the spirit is only the concern of rational beings, man and angels; the latter has attributes like free will, knowledge, and ideal feelings. This conception, shared by early Apolinarists<sup>[48]</sup> and later Protestants, lies on some texts from the Bible that effectively speak of them: “May the God of peace himself make you perfectly holy and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body” (1 Thessalonians 5: 23) or “the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit” (Hebrews 4: 12).

quality of living holds the only difference, “the man bound to the earthly ones, not ascending to a higher life, remains physically or bodily [thus he has the only soul]; and he who rises to a higher religious-moral life, in the spirit of Christ, is a spiritual or spiritual [in Romanian there are two words for that, *spiritual* and *duhovnicesc*] man”<sup>[49]</sup>. In this dogma, the two mentioned ‘parts’, soul and spirit, are merely attributes and functions of the same spiritual nature, one of the organic life and the other of the superior, spiritual one<sup>[50]</sup>. Thus we can see that the common understandings between the *trichotomism* and *dichotomism* are more than the differences. The *monism* insists that man should not be considered separately, out of parts or components/entities, but as a whole Self. That is also true because there are texts in which MAN is not out of his body, or less; in other words, port-mortem we cannot speak of man until his resurrection. This conception raised against the emphasis of the immortality of soul as pronounced in opposition with the ephemerality of the body. They say that only with a body (Gr. σῶμα, ‘soma’) or perikaryon we can enjoy God’s creation, life, and afterlife, or, moreover, Christ could be crucified for our salvation. Even if the Bible stands less on the Greek σῶμα (body) and more on σὰρξ (flesh), from the Hebrew בָּשָׂר basar “the life-breath of all mortal **flesh**” (Job 12:10). John A.T. Robinson says that Hebrews did not ask so many questions in this regard as the Greek philosophy, that is why they held two separate words for the same component<sup>[51]</sup>. The main motif of this monist distinction lies on the principle of individuality, that the body, unlike the non-individualized ‘flesh,’ limits and isolates a human being from another<sup>[52]</sup>.

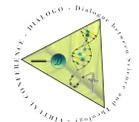
THREE VIEWS ON THE ORIGIN OF THE HUMAN SOUL

	Preexistence	Creationism	Traducianism
Time of Creation	From eternity (Plato) Before the world (Origen)	(1) At conception (2) At implantation (3) After implantation (4) At animation (5) At birth	Originally in Adam, instrumentally through parents
God's Role	None (Plato) He created all souls (Origen)	He creates each soul	He creates body and soul through parents
Parents' Role	No role in the crea- tion of the soul Efficient cause of the body	Occasional cause of the soul Efficient cause of the body	Instrumental cause of both soul and body
Nature of Man	Man is a soul Man has a body	Man is a soul Man has a body	Man is a unity of soul/body
Nature of Human Soul	Simple/Indivisible (unregenerable)	Simple/Indivisible (unregenerable)	Unified (regenerable)
Image of God	In soul only	In soul only	In soul and body
Immortality	Soul only	Soul only	Soul and body
Christian Proponents	Justin Martyr Origen Early Augustine	Thomas Aquinas Charles Hodge	W. G. T. Shedd Later Augustine Lewis S. Chafer

While the Bible speaks differently of soul (Gr. ψυχή *psychē*) and other times of spirit / duh (Gr. Πνεῦμα *pnévma*), they are considered mainly as the one and only spiritual element in human nature. The

CONCLUSION

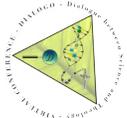
In the actual context of religious pluralism, there is a strong need for common



topics, which should attract the exponents of various religious beliefs in a dialogue on a mutual topic. When I approached the topic of 'soul,' but especially while looking for materials to present this interreligious topic, I understood that such a topic is not only common but also very useful in developing an interreligious dialogue. That because, in addition to the reality that the issue of the 'soul' is indeed found in all religions and spiritual beliefs and thus it can be a common global theme, also the expositions of all of them can find common elements. It is a joy to be able to present this work in a volume that aims to find the current problems, the belief in the 'soul' being perhaps still 'thorny' for many religious skeptics and not only.

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## BIOGRAPHY

**Tudor Cosmin CIOCAN,**

born in Constanta/Romania in 1977, attended several theological and psychological schools (BA, MB, Ph.D.), obtained his Ph.D. in Missiology and Doctrinal Theology in 2010. He was ordained as an orthodox priest in 2002. Highschool teacher from 1998, then Professor assistant and Lecturer from 2012, he has written more than 65 articles on theology and psychology, along with 4 single-author books in the past two decades. In 2013 he started a multidisciplinary program aiming to engage scholars from different files into friendly and academic debates with theology, and in the same year, a Research Center was founded in Ovidius University with researchers from 11 fields. In less than one year, he managed to gather people from around the globe around this idea, and thus the Dialogo Conferences project has started. In 2014 he received a Fulbright scholarship, and spent the summer in California along with four other states in the USA, gathering data and understanding how religious pluralism is possible at a high level of involvement; in the meanwhile he made friends from many different countries and religions that are now involved in this project or another, helping in his endeavor. Now he researches and teaches in this direction, towards building bridges between science and theology on the one side, and interfaith dialogue, on the other hand.



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