

Going Without a Soul

David N. Green, 2016

I have always liked to think that there is some kind of a lasting soul, and I still hope there is, despite the science and my learning. I like to think that regardless of how unfulfilled I feel in life, how tired I am of little ailments, how exhausted I am with thoughts circulating around my brain, there is contentment and peace in a more infinite existence later. In that afterlife, in "practical" terms (if there can be any), my soul will often eat pasta with cheese and pepper, with a glass of wine, every night perhaps, assuming the lasting soul would have evenings, and could eat pasta. I really do think this way.

It's not just for me either. I want people who are stuck in wheelchairs to float about and fly around, if that's what they dream of. My recently passed parents too come to mind. When I think of my mom, I like to think she can sit and watch people and traffic all day long, inventing gossip to tell us in the evening. And she could study maps and drink tea, any afternoon, with no household tasks to do; she liked maps. For my dad, he needed peace – like me maybe – his brain always seemed way ahead of his accomplishments, and I think that made him angry much of his life; I want him happy now. Giles, the neighbour's cat, should have a soul too; he got paralyzed and had to be put down. I like to think he is sitting in tall grass somewhere, ready to pounce on a noisy dry leaf in a driveway, planning to sneak into a house (God's place?) for a snack and snooze. I don't know that a cat would want an afterlife, but that's what I like to think is possible.

All this sounds a little shallow, or a little superficial (and a little too optimistic maybe, since things could get ugly according to some religions). Perhaps there is a soul, but it exists in another dimension or realm where there is no concern for previous worldly things. I guess that would be fine too, though I don't dream of such a state. I should admit as well that I don't think much about the soul in the current life. I do lean toward the Dualist soul-body notion, but whether my day-to-day thoughts are part of a soul overlapping with my brain, or my brain alone is doing the processing, it doesn't seem to matter to me much. But, whether it's spirituality in me, or various bits of consumed science fiction digesting in my brain, I want there to be something more beyond this life, I want it to be interesting and peaceful, and I am not yet convinced it won't be. Even if I have to will it. In fact, who is to say I can't will it?

In any case, let's say that I am wrong, or at least that my hope is false, and there is no soul. With my current impression of this life, and a hope for better existence beyond it, I would probably be disappointed to find "proof" that there is no soul. I don't think my reaction would be worse than that though. I hope it would not, since I will still need to make it (this limited existence) work somehow. Don't get me wrong, I find lots of little things rather nice about life, but knowing I can't extend it into some other realm might really kick me into gear. It would be time to do even more of the things I like to do, while I can. I will probably get fatter, quit my job, plough all my time and money into doing weird experiments and making useless gizmos, and I expect I will be drunk much of the time. I may learn how to live with the understanding that there is no soul, but I think in the back of my mind I will always look forward to there being one anyway; I mean, endless pasta with cheese. I sure hope there is a soul.