OCR H573 | INDEPENDENT REVISION

A* Model Essay

Soul, Mind & Body

Philosophy of Religion

Does the dependence of mental life on the brain establish that human beings have no distinct soul?

1,499 response words | Complete annotated PDF | Individual topic edition

What is included

A complete original response, an argument plan, paragraph-level AO1/AO2 annotations and source works for further reading.

A* describes the intended style of this teaching model. This is independently written, not an OCR-marked script or a guaranteed grade.

Use this model to study argument and evaluation, then write your own answer. Do not submit it as your own assessed work.

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Argument plan

Does the dependence of mental life on the brain establish that human beings have no distinct soul?

Thesis: Brain dependence gives strong grounds for rejecting a readily separable, independently functioning soul, but dependence alone does not prove identity. Descartes fails to establish separability through doubt or conceivability, while reductive materialism still owes an account of conscious experience. Aristotle's embodied understanding of soul best accommodates the evidence without pretending that the philosophical problem of consciousness has disappeared.

1. Brain injury and changes in neural functioning strongly connect mental capacities to embodied organisation.

Counter-argument: Dependence is not logically identical to being the same thing; a dualist can propose an embodied instrument.

Interim judgement: The evidence shifts the explanatory burden to dualism without deductively proving reduction.

2. Descartes establishes the certainty of thinking and a conceptual distinction between mind and body.

Counter-argument: Epistemic certainty and conceivability do not by themselves establish two separable substances.

Interim judgement: First-person awareness is indispensable, but substance dualism requires further argument.

3. Materialism avoids an unexplained interaction between distinct substances.

Counter-argument: A physical description still appears to leave out the subjective character of experience.

Interim judgement: An embodied account is preferable, with Aristotle offering an important alternative to both separable soul and crude reduction.