

The Enigma of the Soul

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“Haven't you realized that our soul is immortal and never destroyed?”

Socrates, Plato's Republic

This essay regards the soul. The soul is a first person concept; it is introspective, not extrospective. As Baker and Goetz in the introduction to Taliaferro (2011) ¹describe it

“The third-person perspective makes use of one or more of the five senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell) to acquire information about the external world. The first-person perspective is introspective in nature. It provides us with a direct and unique awareness of our own thoughts, perceptions, pleasures, pains, choices, hopes and fears.”

A hypothesis about the soul cannot be subjected to inference, at least not the inductive inference of Sir Ronald Fisher². However a soul hypothesis, while not evidentiary, is existential. As Sartre posited, I am my choices³. One of those choices relates to introspection of the soul.

A hypothesis is always a composite of priors, observation and conjectures. More than other hypotheses, a hypothesis of the soul is determined by the contingencies of existence. The branching process of existence, its possibilities and its choices, determine our concept of the soul. Sartre, in his defense of existential psychoanalysis, described it as a method which ‘*brought to light in a strictly objective form, the subjective choice by which each living person makes himself a person; that is, makes himself known to himself what he is.*’ Sartre argued against the categorization of empirical psychoanalysis, and for a comprehension elicited by biography. The irreducibility of biography leads to understanding of wider existential questions.

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¹ Taliaferro, C. in Baker and Goetz (2011). *The Soul Hypothesis*. New York: Continuum International Publishing.

² R.A. Fisher (1935). The Logic of Inductive Inference, *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 98, 1, 39-82.

³ Sartre, J-P. (1953). *Existential Psychoanalysis*, Translated by H. Barnes, Introduction by R. May. Chicago: Gateway.

This essay has been occasioned by my specific experience related to whistleblowing and synchronicity. That experience has determined the hypotheses discussed in the paper. Aligning specific experience with a more general hypothesis is not without risk. Some will deem it indulgent; yet only through the irreducibility of experience can we learn about general existential questions.

In his 1946 lecture *Existentialism is a Humanism*⁴, Sartre states and restates the position that

“Freedom is existence, and in it existence precedes essence.”

We are free to choose; those choices reveal who we are. We converge to our essence through choice; that convergence is typically continuous, the iteration of existence. But sometimes there is a discontinuity, an injunction which changes the iterative process and changes the perception of who we are. Blowing the whistle is such an injunction. When an individual blows the whistle, it comes to define them. They are no longer individual A; they are whistleblower A.⁵ It is a fast track to how others perceive them; and how they perceive themselves. Their Google trace now includes the adjunctive whistleblower. Whistleblowing represents a sudden change; there is a new perception by others and there is a new self-perception. Typically that change is irreversible; often it requires only a small action; an email, a memo or a conversation is sufficient to become a whistleblower; sufficient to generate an irreversible change; sufficient to invert a life. Whistleblowing is a defining existential event.

When I blew the whistle nearly twenty-five years ago, it was not as fashionable as it is today. The term whistleblowing was new; indeed as I recently expressed in another article⁶, in 1994 when I wrote a letter to a newspaper about whistleblowing, inserted next to the letter was a cartoon depicting a group of people with party hats on, sitting around a table blowing whistles. I didn't find the cartoon funny, but I suppose if you had never blown the whistle you may have. You can't afford to be too sensitive if you are a whistleblower. Whistleblowing of course will never be fashionable; it is fashionable in the abstract so that every political party now includes the phrase *increased protection for*

⁴ Sartre, J-P. (2007). *Existentialism is a Humanism*, Translated by C. Macomber, Introduction by A. Cohen-Solal. New Haven: Yale University Press.

⁵ Some have termed it as the whistleblower's new master status. See, for example, Rothchild, J. and T. Miethe (1999). Whistleblower Disclosures and Management Retaliation, *Work and Occupations*, 26(1), 107-28.

⁶ Sawyer, K. (2016). The Problem of Whistleblowing Advocacy, *The Whistle*, 86, April 2016, http://www.bmartin.cc/dissent/contacts/au_wba/whistle201604.pdf

whistleblowers in their manifesto⁷. But whistleblowing will never be fashionable in the particular; everyone wants to protect whistleblowers except the whistleblower in their firm, their department or the whistleblower next door. Whistleblowing is a very asymmetric problem; we want to protect every whistleblower except the one who may blow the whistle on us. However, whistleblowing does confer a dividend, a dividend not usually represented. Whistleblowing becomes a powerful test of who you are. You can never fully understand who you are until everyone else, or nearly everyone else, rejects you. Whistleblowing is a powerful test of the self; a powerful test of the soul.

Not at first, but certainly over the longer term, I borrowed significantly from existentialist writings. Existentialist writings provide recipes like few others. Take, for example, Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*. In *Either/Or* Kierkegaard defines the choice between the ethical and the aesthetic; it is the choice of the whistleblower. Kierkegaard identified with that choice; for as Hannay notes in the Introduction to the Penguin edition of *Either/Or*⁸

“Kierkegaard’s own suffering for truth was set off against the complacency of a bourgeois public which manifested its self-contentment not least in the manner of its religious observances.”

Kierkegaard blew the whistle on the self-contentment of the church. The modern whistleblower blows the whistle on the self-contentment of institutions and regulators.

In his preface to *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard endorsed the conjunction between philosophical literature and philosophical investigation. Kierkegaard began

“Perhaps it has sometimes occurred to you, dear reader, to doubt the correctness of the familiar philosophical proposition that the outward is the inward, the inward the outward. You yourself have perhaps nursed a secret which, in its joy or pain, you felt was too precious for you to be able to initiate others into it. Your life has perhaps brought you into touch with people of whom you expected something of the kind, yet without being able to wrest their secret from them by force or guile. Perhaps neither case applies to you and your life, and yet you are not a stranger to that doubt; it has slipped before your mind now and then like a fleeting shadow. Such a doubt comes and goes, and no one knows

⁷ The only reason they include such a phrase is because no whistleblower has ever been protected. For example, there has never been a prosecution for retaliation against a whistleblower in any Australian jurisdiction.

⁸ Kierkegaard, S. (1992). *Either/Or. A Fragment of Life*, Edited by V. Eremita, Introduction by A. Hannay. London: Penguin.

where it comes from or to where it hurries on. I, for my part, have always been of a somewhat heretical temper on this point of philosophy and have therefore early accustomed myself to undertaking, as best I may, observations and investigations of my own; I have sought guidance from the authors whose views in this respect I shared; in short, I have done everything in my power to fill the gap left by the philosophical literature.”

I have sought guidance from authors whose views I share; most notably Kafka but also Camus, Frankl, Sartre, Dostoyevsky and Kierkegaard. A whistleblower confronts real existentialist questions. A whistleblower, for example, has to recognize the arbitrariness of many of the judgments imposed on them. In 2002, I wrote a paper *Whistleblowing and the Trial: A Kafkaesque Experience*⁹ which identified the correlation between the experience of the whistleblower and the experience of Joseph K in Kafka's *The Trial*. The whistleblower is the Joseph K of our society; they experience the same arbitrariness, the same arrest of their career; the same inversion. Arbitrary judgments often define their path. They have to learn how to negate or at least discount the arbitrary judgments of others.

A whistleblower must also accept their status as an outsider; they were the insider; but now they are the outsider. Necessarily the whistleblower becomes the observer of their own existence. They have to detach. As Meursault reflects on the final page of *The Outsider (L'Etranger)*,¹⁰

“And I, too, felt ready to start life over again. It was as if that great rush of anger had washed me clean, emptied me of hope, and gazing up at the dark sky spangled with its signs and stars, for the first time, the first, I laid my heart open to the benign indifference of the universe. To feel it so like myself, indeed so brotherly, made me realize that I'd been happy, and that I was happy still.”

Whistleblowers have to learn how to invert that which has inverted them. Their survival depends on minimizing interaction with that which generates self-opprobrium, and maximizing interaction with that which generates joy. In Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*¹¹, he describes his experience on liberation from Auschwitz

“I walked through the country past flowering meadows; for miles and miles toward the market town near the camp.

⁹ Sawyer, K. (2002). Whistleblowing and the Trial: A Kafkaesque Experience, <http://www.bmartin.cc/dissent/>.

¹⁰ Camus, A. (1942). *The Outsider*, Translated by S. Gilbert, Introduction by C. Connolly. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

¹¹ Frankl, V. (2006). *Man's Search for Meaning*, Translated by I. Lasch, Foreword by H. Kushner, Afterword by W. Winslade. Boston: Beacon Press.

Larks rose to the sky and I could hear their joyous song. There was no one to be seen for miles around; there was nothing but the wide earth and sky and the larks' jubilation and freedom of space...I went down on my knees and I had but one sentence in mind always the same ... I called to the Lord from my narrow prison and He answered me in the freedom of space. How long I knelt there and repeated this sentence memory can no longer recall. But I know on that day, in that hour, my new life started. Step for step I progressed, until I again became a human being."

Learning to feel joy again permits a whistleblower to start being who they previously were, not the person they are now perceived to be.

Sartre posited that we define who we are through a desire for being. Whistleblowers inevitably explore what their whistleblowing implies about their desire to be. The decision to blow the whistle is a choice, albeit a choice mediated by the choices of those around them. The whistleblowing experience is ontological; it is a first person experience not easily translated to others.¹² Whistleblowing induces introspection; and for many whistleblowers there is an emergent spiritual dimension. Perhaps it is the imposition of their ethical presuppositions on the prevailing ethical paradigm; whatever the reason it is common for whistleblowers to reflect on the spiritual. It is a reflection consistent with Kierkegaard for, as Hannay notes in the introduction to the work, *Either/Or* was designed to converge the reader towards a spiritual choice and away from a choice of the spiritless. The whistleblower, like the reader of *Either/Or*, has that choice.

I experienced synchronicity. Whether this can be deemed spiritual is problematic. In 2013, I wrote a paper entitled *Synchronicity: The Anonymous Test of Existence*¹³. Jung defined synchronicity to be¹⁴

"The simultaneous occurrence of two meaningful but not causally connected events. Synchronicity was regarded by Jung as a bridge between external reality and a collective unconscious. It is a bridge most of us observe, but nearly all discount. Jung had documented and observed synchronicity for many years, in patients' recollections and in his own recollections. Jung was reticent about synchronicity; unquestionably he feared the ridicule of minds committed to the rational and the real."

¹² Unsurprisingly, protections for whistleblowers have not progressed since the early 1990s. It took twenty years for Federal whistleblowing legislation to be enacted in Australia, twenty years after it was recommended by The Senate Select Committee on Public Interest Whistleblowing, *August 1994, In the Public Interest*.

¹³ Sawyer, K. (2013). Synchronicity The Anonymous Test of Existence, *Social Sciences Research Network*, <http://www.ssrn.com/en/>.

¹⁴ Jung, C.G. (1973). *Synchronicity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

It is the ridicule risked by all who exposit about synchronicity. In that paper, I gave a number of benign examples of the synchronicity I have experienced. Two examples are

Example 1

I was in a second hand bookshop in Melbourne on a Wednesday. I was looking at a shelf of old books by Mark Twain. I dislodged a book that was next to those books. The book fell off the shelf and I picked it up; it was a book by the Russian author Ivan Turgenev titled *On the Eve*. I have been a collector of Turgenev's books for a couple of years, but I did not have *On the Eve*. Turgenev is not a well-known author in Australia and, aside from his work *Fathers and Sons*, most of his books are difficult to find. I had no money on me, so I decided the next time I came in to the city I would buy it. On that day, I travelled by train to the city with the intention to buy Turgenev's *On the Eve*. A fellow got on the train two stations after me, sat down next to me, and began reading a book. It was *On the Eve* by Turgenev.

Example 2

In 1993, as part of a legal matter within a university, three colleagues and I petitioned the Governor of Victoria in his role as the Visitor of the University. The Visitor is an ombudsman who receives petitions from appellants within universities. On the afternoon of November 16, 1993, the four of us signed the petition to the Governor in the office of a legal firm in Collins Street, Melbourne. We then proceeded to the car parked in the street below. As we left the parking bay, a car pulled alongside. It was the car of the Governor.

The recurrence and exactitude of synchronicity has implied meaning to me. While many synchronicities have been benign, others have been associated with significant life- turning points. Synchronicity is a first-person experience, not easily translated to others; and certainly not able to be tested by traditional hypotheses tests. The observer of synchronicity cannot underscore their observation with replication. Synchronicity cannot be anticipated; it is an injunction and no experimental design will eliminate confounding. Yet all synchronicities have a commonality, the exactitude of an improbable conjunction of events, if only in the mind of the observer. The credibility of the observation depends on the credibility of the observer.

Discussions of synchronicity are often renounced with allusions to the excessive joining of dots that should not be joined, excessive belief in an unknown representative heuristic, even apophenia. More than once I have been lectured about the improbability of chance events (the birthday problem is usually cited)¹⁵. Of course, it is always possible for chance to be interpreted as deterministic; but it is also possible for the deterministic to be regarded as chance; for we have such a poor understanding

¹⁵ See, for example, Jones, B. and R. Muirhead (2012). What a Coincidence! It's not as Unlikely as you Think, *Significance*, February, 40-42.

of chance. Sir David Spiegelhalter is coordinating a project *Understanding Uncertainty*¹⁶ at Cambridge University, which allows the observers of synchronicity to record their observations anonymously. The attendant website contains many examples of synchronicity; it is synchronicity's version of *Wikileaks*. In an email exchange with me, Professor Spiegelhalter offered his insight '*that such experiences happen to people who are perceptive, curious and sensitive.*' Sensitivity is important. Whistleblowing does tend to increase individual sensitivity, or at least release innate sensitivity; and perhaps synchronicity is related to that sensitivity.

Instead of a formal hypothesis test of the synchronicity I had experienced, I asked the simple question; what is the common sense possibility of such exactitude, of such recurrence, of such timing at pivotal moments; in sum what is the common sense probability of improbability with such exactitude? I concluded that the synchronicity I had observed was not consistent with chance, at least not the chance we have prescribed over the last five centuries of thinking; that there was determinism of unknown form for which conventional inference is meaningless. Synchronicity was a calibration of who I was; a calibration beyond my understanding. The universe appears to be coded; and synchronicity reveals some of the code. Perhaps Meursault was right; there may be a brother in the universe. But he is an enigmatic brother.

Whistleblowing and synchronicity are both enigmatic. Both depend on an observation. In both the credibility of the observation becomes the credibility of the observer. The observer becomes the outsider, the enigma. But everyone is an enigma. As Kierkegaard aphorizes in *Diapsalmata*¹⁷

“One should be an enigma not just to others but to oneself too. I study myself. When I'm tired of that I light a cigar to pass the time, and think: God only knows what the good Lord really meant with me, or what He meant to make of me.”

However, I do not know any whistleblowers who have had reason to light cigars.

When I began to write this essay, I visited many writings about the soul. Everyone has written about the soul from Aristotle to Crick and beyond. The soul is the enigma whose existence is questioned

¹⁶ The website of *Understanding Uncertainty* is <http://understandinguncertainty.org/>.

¹⁷ In *Either/Or* by Kierkegaard, *Op. cit.*

but not defined, pre-existence hypothesized but not tested, and post-existence anticipated but not determined. The soul is the most latent of latent variables; without definition, observation, or codification; yet referenced in perpetuity. The conversation we have with ourselves when we refer to our conscience is probably the closest we get to a dialogue with our soul. It is a dialogue never admitted to. In aggregate, it is the dialogue of our spiritual life, our unwritten spiritual amanuensis. Yet when they write our obituary, they never know of that dialogue; and certainly never reference it.

The soul, like whistleblowing and synchronicity, is a first-person concept. It represents our unique awareness of who we are. And that unique awareness is distilled in our beliefs about the soul. There can be no observation of the soul by an observer independent of their soul. There can be no testing of a soul hypothesis¹⁸ by a test that is independent of their soul. There can be no alternative hypothesis to the existence of the soul that is independent of their soul. The soul is too attached to be able to be observed or tested. Those who renounce the existence of the soul do so because of their unique awareness, or perhaps lack thereof, of their own soul. Put simply, the soul is too intrinsic to conclude anything about the soul of the self; and too intrinsic to be able to conclude anything about the soul of the other.¹⁹ Necessarily, a soul hypothesis must be considered in the abstract and not the particular; as a hypothetical without the possibility of realization.

Hypothesizing about the soul, even in the abstract, is difficult. Hypotheses are usually constructed from the material; and the soul is not material. Hypotheses are determined in the third-person; and the soul is cognizant only in the first person. Hypotheses of the soul are then necessarily speculative. The intangibility of the soul renders so many hypotheses possible. The Homeric poems, for example, suggest the soul to be defined by death, or at least by the risk of death.²⁰ The soul is also often associated with extremes of emotion, the polarity of love and hate, passion and dispassion, joy and grief, honor and dishonor. ‘*Nothing bites the soul of a man more than dishonor*’ is a phrase attributed to Ajax in an unknown tragedy²¹; but it is a recurring tragedy. Pericles²² extolled of ‘*the courage that springs from our souls*’, Heraclitus of Ephesus²³ that ‘*a dry soul is wisest and best*’ and Chapin²⁴ the timeless

¹⁸ Baker and Goetz (2011), *Op. cit.*

¹⁹ Consistent with subjective phenomenology.

²⁰ *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ancient-soul/>.

²¹ *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ancient-soul/>.

²² *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ancient-soul/>.

²³ *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ancient-soul/>.

²⁴ *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ancient-soul/>.

reflection that “*out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls.*” The soul apparently measures all emotions.

In primitive cultures, the soul was hypothesized as an invisible second self, a double, a shadow of the material.²⁵ When Dostoyevsky wrote *The Double*²⁶, was he writing of the soul of Mr Golyadkin?

“Golyadkin had fully recognized his friend of the night. It was none other than himself - Mr. Golyadkin ... Another Mr. Golyadkin, but exactly the same as him... It was, in short, his double...”

Perhaps the double was more than Golyadkin’s face in the mirror; perhaps it was the projection we all make of the self onto the self; the extension Me.soul on which the dialogues of life are downloaded. Tylor²⁷ provided a summary of how primitive cultures perceived the soul

“The soul is a thin unsubstantial human image, in its nature a sort of vapour, film, or shadow; the cause of life and thought in the individual it animates; independently possessing the personal consciousness and volition of its corporeal owner, past or present; capable of leaving the body far behind, to flash swiftly from place to place; mostly impalpable and invisible, yet also manifesting physical power, and especially appearing to men waking or asleep as a phantasm separate from the body of which it bears the likeness; continuing to exist and appear to men after the death of that body; able to enter into, possess, and act in the bodies of other men, of animals, and even of things.”

This seems to cover all speculations, except whether the soul exists. That the soul can generate such speculation is due to its latency and intangibility. Indeed, as Crawley (1909) documented, many cultures speculated as to the number of souls,²⁸ the location of the soul in the body,²⁹ the size of the soul,³⁰ the weight of the soul,³¹ and even the voice of the soul.³² Thales of Miletus purportedly

²⁵ Crawley, A.E. (1909). *The Idea of the Soul*. London: Adam and Charles Black . pp.100, 109, 182.

²⁶ Dostoyevsky, F. (1968). *The Great Short Works of Fyodor Dostoyevsky*, with an Introduction by R. Hingley, New York: Perennial.

²⁷ Tylor, E.B. (1889). *Primitive Culture: Researches into the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, language, art and custom, Vol 1 (3rd American from 2nd English ed.)* New York: Holt.

²⁸ The Bahau-Dayaks of Central Borneo believed in two souls, the Karo-Bataks of Sumatra in seven souls, and the Nias a threefold soul; see Crawley(1909,pp 106-120).

²⁹ The Bataks considered the head to be the seat of the soul; the Toltecs associated the soul with the heart; the Greeks with the breath; see Crawley(1909,pp 111, 158, 185).

³⁰ Crawley (1909, p.201, p.206) notes that ‘*The soul is frequently regarded as life-size, very rarely as larger than life, occasionally as infinitesimal or atomic. But, in the great majority of cases it is a miniature replica of the person, described often as a manikin, or homunculus, of a few inches in height...the ancient Hindus and the modern*

suggested ‘a magnet has a soul because it produces movement in iron.’ (Aristotle, *De Anima* 405a 19-21.)³³ And according to Xenophanes of Colophon³⁴, when Pythagoras observed a puppy being beaten, he intervened to stop the beating, saying ‘In truth it is the soul of a friend which I recognized upon hearing it cry out.’ Speculation about the soul is evidently boundless. Such is the soul.

Ruminations of the soul began in earnest with Aristotle. In *De Anima* 404, Aristotle wrote

“Now in our investigation of the soul, if we are in doubt about those things of which we should gain clear knowledge as we proceed, it is necessary that we collate the opinions of as many of our predecessors as we have given a view about the soul with the aim of adopting all sensible proposals and of guarding against anything that may have been not so sensibly suggested.”

Aristotle crystallized preceding opinion to be that the *ensouled* differed from the *unsouled* because of movement and perception.³⁵ Aristotle had a view of the soul that was *sui generis*³⁶; the soul was an abstraction with the potentiality to be realized when it inherited a body. The soul forms a partnership with the living; and the soul defines the limits of that partnership. Aristotle termed the soul ‘An actuality in the way that knowledge is. For sleeping and waking are a part of the soul’s being present, and waking is like contemplation, sleeping like having but not employing knowledge.’³⁷

Aristotle did not limit his hypothesis to humans; life itself determined the soul. Plants were *ensouled* because of their nutritive faculty. When insects were dissected, Aristotle observed that

“Each of the parts has perception and spatial movement, and if perception then also imagination and desire... But nothing is yet clear on the subject of the intellect and the contemplative faculty.”

Malays estimate the size of the soul as about the size of the thumb.’ Clearly, the size of the soul is as intangible as its concept.

³¹ Crawley (1909, p.207) asserts that “We found that in Nias the heaviest soul weighs about ten grammes. Modern spiritualists estimate the average weight of the soul at three or four ounces.” The soul is a weighty problem.

³² Crawley (1909, p.207) states that “It is a well-attested fact that ghosts and spirits have a thin, twittering voice, and small voice...As Tylor (I) puts it, ghosts have the ghost of a voice.”

³³ Aristotle (1986). *De Anima(On the Soul)*. Translated, with an Introduction and Notes, by Hugh Lawson-Tancred. London: Penguin.

³⁴ Leshner (1992). *Fragments/Xenophanes of Colophon.* , Fragment 7.

³⁵ Aristotle (1986). *Op. cit.* p.132.

³⁶ As termed by Sorabji (1974). Body and Soul in Aristotle, *Philosophy*, 49, 187, 63-89.

³⁷ Aristotle (1986). *Op. cit.* p.157.

Aristotle's observation is still true today. In his seminal paper *What is It Like to be a Bat?* Nagel (1974)³⁸ asserts

*“We cannot form more than a schematic conception of what it **is** like (to be a bat). For example, we may ascribe general types of experience on the basis of the animal's structure and behavior. Thus we describe bat sonar as a form of three-dimensional forward perception; we believe bats feel some versions of pain, fear, hunger, and lust, and that they have other, more familiar types of perception besides sonar. But we believe that these experiences also have in each case a specific subjective character, which it is beyond our ability to conceive.”*

We can never know what it is like to be a bat; just as we can never know what the soul is like; and just as we should never assume the primacy of the human soul. In his novel *The Soul*,³⁹ Platonov reflected on this assumption

“Such an assumption is worthless and empty, since the blackthorn is imbued with a scent and the eyes of a tortoise with a thoughtfulness that signify the greater inner worth of their existence a dignity complete in itself and needing no supplement from the soul of a human being. They might require a helping hand from Chagataev, but they had no need whatsoever for superiority, condescension or pity.”

Platonov expresses what Plato would have expressed. The Platonic view was that the nature of the soul could not be comprehended without comprehending the nature of the universe.⁴⁰ Plato like Aristotle represented the views of his time in deliberations about the soul.⁴¹ Unlike Aristotle, Plato referred to the soul throughout his works, rather than a systematic investigation in one work.⁴² There have been so many interpretations of the Platonic soul that any distillation is incomplete. Most understand the Platonic soul to be composed of three parts, reason, spirit and appetite for that is the soul of Plato's *Republic*. But the tripartite soul of the *Republic* is not the soul embodied in the *Phaedo*. The soul varies across Plato's works with a number of interpretations including as a force of vitality,

³⁸ Nagel, T.(1974). What is It Like to be a Bat?, *The Philosophical Review*, 83,4,435-450.

³⁹ Platonov, A. (2003). *The Soul*; Translated from the Russian by Robert and Elizabeth Chandler and Olga Meerson, with Jane Chamberlain, Olga Kouznetsova and Eric Naiman, London: Harvill. It is a novel that concerns the main character Chagatev in his search for his soul.

⁴⁰ See Roberts (1905). Plato's View of the Soul. *Mind*, 14,55,p.371.

⁴¹ Plato represented above all the views of Socrates, and is often regarded as Socrates' amanuensis. However, it is unclear whether Plato is representing the historical Socrates, or an artefact of Socrates.

⁴² See Roberts (1905). *Op. cit.* Plato's most well-defined arguments relating to the soul appear in *Phaedo and Republic*.

motion and cognition. Plato perceived the soul to be pivotal yet intangible; the soul was embedded in life; regulating and being regulated; providing feedback and being given feedback; intermediating and being mediated. The soul was the parry and thrust of life. However, Plato was uninformative as to why the soul was assumed to exist or how that assumption could be tested; except perhaps for the statement *'all that is soul presides over all that is without soul.'*⁴³ The soul was necessary for governance, but how was the soul itself governed?

Plato assumed the soul to be a unity of opposites.⁴⁴ Dualism was implicit throughout Plato's discussion of the soul. The separation of the body and the soul, the dualist hypothesis, has had many subscribers⁴⁵ as Baker and Goetz (2011, p.2) attest *'the list of dualists includes thinkers such as Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, and Kant, as well as hardcore scientists like Newton and Galileo... and Karl Popper, Wilder Penfield and Sir John Eccles.* Within Plato's works, other dualisms are represented. Each dualism implies a duality of permanence and impermanence; the permanence of the soul and the impermanence of the body; the permanence of the real and the impermanence of the changing; the permanence of knowledge and the impermanence of perception; the permanence of the immortal soul and the impermanence of the mortal soul. Implicitly, Plato tests the hypothesis of permanence against impermanence. The wisdom of Plato is the wisdom of Buddha and of the *Bhagavad Gita*; recognizing the impermanence of being is one of the principal tenets of enlightenment. But even that wisdom is subordinated by the wisdom obtained in death, for as Socrates concludes⁴⁶

"It would be unreasonable for a philosopher to fear death, since upon dying he is most likely to obtain the wisdom which he has been seeking his whole life."

To obtain wisdom in death underpins a belief that the soul is immortal. It is a non-testable but arguable belief; and a belief that can be hypothesized without the full information of death. Through Socrates, Plato advances four arguments for the immortality of the soul; the cyclical argument, the recollection argument, the affinity argument and the final argument. They are all familiar arguments

⁴³ Roberts (1905) *op. cit.* p.376

⁴⁴ Roberts (1905) *op. cit.* p.378. *'The soul may be considered as principle of intermediation between the intelligible and the sensible, yet the abstract opposition between these two realms is still maintained.'*

⁴⁵ Baker and Goetz (2011) *op. cit.* term this the Soul Hypothesis.

⁴⁶ Bostock, D. (2015) *Plato's Phaedo*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

and well documented by David Bostock in *Plato's Phaedo*⁴⁷. The cyclical argument, for example, is an argument of opposites. That just as the larger comes from the smaller; any state of nature comes from an opposite state. And since to be alive and to be dead are opposite states, all that dies must return to life. The recollection argument is concerned with the pre-existence of the soul; the explanation of innate knowledge. And while the cyclical argument relates to the existence of the soul, the recollection argument relates to the nature of the soul. The affinity argument suggests the soul to have the permanence the body lacks; as Bostock (2015, p.117) states '*the soul is not the kind of thing that would be expected to dissolve at death.*' The final argument is that the soul is the cause of life; and that which causes life is unlikely to be without life itself.⁴⁸ The four arguments pivot around the fulcrum of life and death, but ignore who we are and what it is that bounds us.

The search for the soul has gone beyond the search we conduct for our own soul; or the search conducted for us by theologians and philosophers; or the fictitious search of Chagataev in Platonov's *The Soul*. The search for the soul is now diffusing into science. In *The Astonishing Hypothesis, The Scientific Search for the Soul*,⁴⁹ Francis Crick explores whether consciousness can be understood through an understanding of how nerve cells behave. The increasing quest for the essence of everything means that the irreducible must be reduced to that which cannot be reduced. And that infinite quest for irreducibility defines the search for the soul.

Rather than continuously sample the opinions of others, let me return to the precepts I have formed about the soul. Kierkegaard posed the question "*What does it mean for a human being to exist?*"⁵⁰ That question is not separable from the question "*What does it mean to search for the soul?*" There is a duality in these questions; a duality that can only be considered when the bounds of existence are relaxed; and possibly an outsider can relax those bounds better than most. In 1924 Max Scheler⁵¹ stated the proposition that I have come to rely on

"We are the first generation in which man has become fully and thoroughly problematic to himself; in which he no longer knows what he essentially is; but at the same time also knows that he does not know."

⁴⁷ Bostock (2015). *Op. cit.*

⁴⁸ Bostock (2015). *Op. cit.*, p.178.

⁴⁹ Crick, F. (1994). *The Astonishing Hypothesis The Scientific Search for the Soul*, New York: Macmillan.

⁵⁰ As summarized by Hannay in his Introduction to *Either/Or*.

⁵¹ This quote comes from Scheler's *Man and History*, and is reproduced in Buber (1945) "The Philosophical Anthropology of Max Scheler", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 6,2.

Let me enunciate the precepts I regard as important to examine questions about the soul. Some are uncontestable; some very contestable.

1. My being is impermanent. My essence however may not be.
2. I am bounded by existence. I am free to choose, but only within the bounds of my existence.
3. I am bounded by an interval $[0, T]$ that is the term of my natural life.
4. I am bounded by the uncertainty of my maturity T , the uncertainty of my pre-being and my post-being.
5. I am bounded by a branching process of the realization of past choices and future contingencies.
6. I am bounded by the logic of my inductive inference.
7. I am bounded by the mediation of others who are similarly bounded.

We have invented the concept of the soul to free ourselves from the bounds of our existence. The soul is our escape clause; a projection outside the bounds imposed on us and by us. The problem with this projection is that because of who we are, we project as if the soul lies within the bounds of our existence. We project the soul to be an entity rather than a process; to be singular rather than universal; to be able to be prescribed rather than not prescribed. Our notion of the soul has not really progressed much beyond those of primitive cultures. We may have the science of the body and the mind, and we may have codified the sense of our being, but we cannot project outside of our being. We still do not know what it is like to be a bat; to know what it is like to see through the eyes of a tortoise; to know why the blackthorn has the scent it has. We still cannot project our being onto another; or to have another project their being onto us; and we cannot project our being onto a nothingness that we do not understand. We can unbind our existence no better than our ancestors could unbind theirs. Perhaps Kierkegaard stated it best in *Diapsamata*⁵² “*The true eternity lies not behind either/ or but ahead of it.*”

The problem of the projection of our being onto others was crystallized in my experience of whistleblowing. In 2004, I wrote a paper *Courage Without Mateship*⁵³ which amplified the Australian whistleblowing problem; and included the following description

⁵² In *Either/Or* by Kierkegaard, Op. cit.

⁵³ Sawyer, K. (2004). *Courage Without Mateship*, <http://www.bmartin.cc/dissent/>.

“Most Australians never see the Australia that whistleblowers see. As a consequence, there is a substantial divergence of opinion between non-whistleblowers and whistleblowers as to the state of our nation. Mick Skrijel, one of Australia’s most significant whistleblowers, summed up his experience this way. ‘I survived Fascism, I survived Communism, but (Australian) democracy is killing me.’ Most Australians could never identify with this sentiment, yet most whistleblowers would have no such problem. It is the divergence of opinion between whistleblowers and non-whistleblowers that makes Australia different in terms of whistleblowing. And it is this divergence of opinion which has made it so difficult to enact and enforce effective whistleblowing legislation.”

Writing of synchronicity is not so different from blowing the whistle. No exposition of synchronicity will ever purge the common view that synchronicity is simply chance. Chance, like the proverbial, happens. And no exposition of synchronicity will ever persuade the one to subscribe to the mind of the other. We cannot project our being onto another, just as they cannot project their being onto us. Synchronicity is the connection to the universe only we maintain. Neuroscience may provide the basis of our neural connectivity, but it will never provide the basis of our connectivity to the universe. Neuroscience will never reveal what it is like to be a whistleblower; or to be a refugee; or to be you. And Sartre understood this well. He emphasized the need to visit and revisit biography, from Flaubert to Dostoyevsky and beyond.

We respond to the boundedness of our existence in many ways. One response is to emphasize the material, the reducible and the evidentiary. Another is to subscribe to mythology and religion. A third is to maximize the connections we can observe; hence the current era of infinite connectivity where self-worth is determined by the number of friends on a Facebook page. Each response fulfills our desire to be; and our minimization of nothingness. The soul is the final repository; belief in the soul is a catch-all of all the possibilities outside the bounds of our existence. Those who believe in the existence of a soul logically believe in an essence free from the constraints of being; a hypothetical that is generated across multiple possibilities; multiple choices; multiple contingencies; and multiple existences. The enigma of the soul is that to understand these multiple possibilities, we need to be able to project our being onto the being of others and to have the being of others project onto us. But that is impossible; for we are bound by a single existence where we will never understand what it is to be another. We may have empathy with another, we may simulate another, but we will never be another.

What this means is that we are limited in the inference from the general to the particular. We cannot deconstruct a being using an infinite regression of their materiality; the history of their choices; or

the classification of their tendencies. A being is too unique in their unification to be so deconstructed and reconstructed.⁵⁴ For, as Sartre asserts in relation to Flaubert⁵⁵

“The irreducible unification which we ought to find, which is Flaubert, and which we require biographers to reveal to us-this is the unification of an original project, a unification which should reveal itself to us as a non-substantial absolute.”

In the *Platitudinous Introduction to The Musical Erotic*⁵⁶, Kierkegaard reflected on the unification required to produce a classic work. For Don Giovanni to be produced, the creative force of Mozart needed to cohere with the forces of circumstance. That which had to be composed was composed. Kierkegaard was alluding to an unobservable determinism outside the bounds of our reasoning; an irreducible unification of the composer and the composition. In the merging of Kierkegaard’s own personal and literary experience, there was also an irreducible unification; as Guido de Ruggerio⁵⁷ asserts

“The experience of Kierkegaard is an assiduous vindication of the irrational and the immediate, as existence, as life, as faith, as personality, against the universal values of reason, which, in their claim to universal validity, absorb what is singular in each individual.”

And it is through the singularity of biography that the irreducible unification becomes evident.

The irreducible unification of a person can never be fully comprehended within their lifetime, or in their obituary. The totality of a person is the aggregate of their choices, their actions, their interactions, and their dialogues, including their self-dialogue. To reference that totality, Sartre introduced us to the fundamental project of being.⁵⁸ He was guided by the principle ‘*to stop only in the presence of evident irreducibility; that is, never to believe that we have reached the initial project until the projected end appears as the very being of the subject under consideration.*’ Sartre was right to identify the comprehension of a being by the ends they realize; but often those ends cannot be estimated until long after their

⁵⁴ And not just human beings. As Platanov wrote ‘*Humanity-if it is not ennobled by animals and plants-will perish, grow impoverished, fall into the rage of despair, alone in its loneliness.*’

⁵⁵ Sartre, J-P. (1953). *Existential Psychoanalysis*, Op.cit.

⁵⁶ In *Either/Or* by Kierkegaard, Op. cit.

⁵⁷ De Ruggerio, Guido (1946). *Existentialism*, Edited by Rayner Heppenstall, London: Secker and Warburg.

⁵⁸ Sartre, J-P. (1953). *Existential Psychoanalysis*, Op.cit.

existence; which is why biography is so important; and why the life of Mozart could not be summarized at the time of his death in 1791; and why Mozart could never be separated from Don Giovanni, a work existing in perpetuity.

Sartre's fundamental project of being unlocks being from that which binds us; the bounds of existence; life, death and suffering. It is a pure principle of being, unfettered by existence. The project of being begins with what Sartre denotes as a for-itself being, ontologically defined by that which it lacks. And that which it lacks, it desires. The desire to be is the desire to fill the gap in its being. And the being it lacks Sartre denotes as the in-itself. The forward and backward propagation between the for-itself and the in-itself defines Sartre's project of being. The in-itself is the projection of the for-itself of what it lacks; and the for-itself is the annihilation of what it lacks. And Sartre designates the gap between them as nothingness.

The for-itself-in-itself duality is enshrined in our thinking; and often expressed in art such as by Escher, or in literature such as Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. Sartre expresses it like this⁵⁹

"The for-itself projects being as for-itself, a being which is what it is. It is as being which is what it is not, and which is not what it is, that the for-itself projects being what it is. It is as consciousness that it wishes to have the impermeability and infinite density of the in-itself. It is as annihilation of the in-itself and a perpetual evasion of contingency and facticity that it wishes to be its own foundation."

In his last days of internment, Frankl observed what the annihilation of the in-itself had produced; it is the observation of whistle blowers who withdraw from ostracism; and the observation of all those who suffer.

If the soul were to exist, it would be consistent with Sartre's for-itself being. The project of being would then constitute an evolution of the soul; an evolution that cannot be observed in a single existence where a being is bounded by that existence; where a being observes in the in-itself state; and where the projection of what the for-itself lacks and the annihilation of what the for-itself lacks can never be observed. To observe the project of being we need to be outside of our existence; just as we need to be outside of our existence to observe the soul.

⁵⁹ Sartre, J-P. (1953). *Existential Psychoanalysis*, *Op.cit.*

Let me conclude by overlaying my experience. Whistleblowing and synchronicity made me an outsider. Whistleblowing placed me outside the social network; synchronicity outside the network of bounded rationality. In a network, the thinking of one is the thinking of the network. The outsider is free; free to think. I have converged to conclusions contentious to most; that synchronicity is not chance but calibration. And that whistleblowing is not a chance event; so that as the forces cohered to bring Mozart to write Don Giovanni, forces cohere for a whistle blower to blow the whistle.⁶⁰ *I am my choices* may instead be *I am my choice of being*. And while we may be free to make that choice, the injunctions imposed on us may be determined by that choice. We reveal who we are through the response to those injunctions; we reveal who we are by being tested by those injunctions.

Platonov wrote that *'only you know what your soul is. And if you don't, the hypothesis would be that one day you will find out what your soul is.'* Perhaps; but while whistleblowing and synchronicity have led me to consider existential questions, the soul is of a different order. In his fundamental project of being, Sartre unlocks the bounds of existence through a pure principle of what it is to be. If the soul were to exist, it would be consistent with Sartre's for-itself being; and the project of being would constitute an evolution of the soul. This essay's hypothesis is that the soul can only be calibrated through dispassionate observation of the project of being. But our existence does not allow such dispassion. Our concept of the soul will always be an estimate of how a dispassionate observer in the universe may see us; but it is an estimate mediated by us for we cannot free ourselves from who we are in order to see who we are. That is the enigma of our existence.

⁶⁰ This assertion stems from experience in whistleblowing advocacy as expressed in Sawyer, K. (2016). *The Problem of Whistleblowing Advocacy, Op. cit.*