THE EVOLUTION OF THE SOUL by Richard Swinburne. Oxford: *Clarendon.* 1986, Pp 323, £25.00.

This book is a defense of an increasingly unfashionable creed, mind-body dualism. Dualism, it is true, still has a lot of support: among the population at large there are many, perhaps even a majority, who believe they have a 'soul' which in some sense exists 'over and above' all physical events going on in their bodies. But amongst scientists and philosophers, dualism's star is rapidly waning; and it must be said that Swinburne's book, though carefully and lucidly written, provides little of substance to arrest its decline.

The philosophical champion of dualism is Descartes, who believed the mind or soul (he made no distinction betwen the two) is a wholly non-physical substance, indivisible, immaterial, and not locatable in space. Swinburne's position is rather different from the Cartesian one. Firstly, Descartes identified the person, the essential 'me', with the soul, remarking that 'the mind or soul by which I am what I am is entirely distinct from the body and could exist without it'. But Swinburne suggests that a person is a combination of mind and body: ''we must say that the arms and legs and all other parts of the living body of a man are parts of the person. My arms and legs are part of me'. (146) Second, Descartes defined the soul in terms of full self-consciousness, regarding non-human animals as mere mechanical automata, whereas Swinburne argues that there are truths about animals (e.g. about their sensations and experiences) which are not revealed by an analysis of their physical attributes, so that it is correct to talk of them as having soul. Third and most important, Descartes regarded the soul as by nature wholly distinct from the body (including the brain) in its essential functioning, whereas Swinburne observes that 'there can be no justified general account of the nature of the soul; all we can say is that under normal mundane conditions, the functioning of the soul requires the functioning of the body'. (10) He offers an analogy: 'the soul is like a light bulb and the brain is like an electric light socket. If you plug the bulb into the socket and turn the current on, the light will shine. If the socket is damaged or the current switched off, the light will not shine. So too, the soul will function (have a mental life) if it is plugged into a functioning brain. Destroy the brain or cut off the nutriment supplied by the blood, and the soul will cease to function...' (310)

Does this version of dualism (which Swinburne calls 'soft' dualism) entail that the soul will cease to exist when the body dies? Swinburne maintains that there are no good arguments from science (physiological, psychological or even parapsychological) to demonstrate that the soul can survive the death of the body. But on the other hand he declares that there are no conclusive arguments that it will *not* survive: 'no human being knows how to move a soul from one body and plug it into another ... yet the task is one involving no contradiction and an omnipotent God could achieve it'. (311) Swinburne here allies himself not with the Cartesian notion of a wholly incorporeal future existence but with the more mainstream Christian doctrine of resurrection with some kind of new body.

The main reason for the decline of Cartesian dualism is simple: it makes what we experience as an unassailable fact of our everyday life a total mystery. If you tread on a drawing pin, you feel pain (physical events cause mental changes); and conversely if you decide to vote your hand goes up (mental events cause physical changes). Yet if the soul is a wholly non-physical substance, how can it act on and be acted upon by matter in this way? As Hume ironically put it, 'were we empowered by a secret wish to remove mountains or control the planets in their orbit, this extensive authority would not be more extraordinary nor beyond our comprehension'. Faced with this puzzle, some dualists (the so-called epiphenomenalists) have denied the efficacy of mental events, regarding consciousness (in John Searle's graphic phrase) as mere 'froth' on the waves of reality. Swinburne insists, however, that mental events are, and indeed must be, causally efficacious. (102) Yet how? How can the material light bulb mesh causally with the material socket? As far as I can see, Swinburne's 'soft' dualism fares no better than its Cartesian ancestor in coping with this intractable difficulty.

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The problem is compounded when Swinburne attempts to make his account of the soul mesh with the theory of evolution, suggesting that there is a kind of soul-evolution running parallel with the evolution of the natural world: 'Gradually the soul has passed from being passive and structureless to being structured and active—structured by causally influential beliefs and desires. Mutations of genes gave rise to organisms with brains which in certain environmental circumstances occupied states which gave rise to sophisticated and causally efficacious desires in the soul'. (297) Yet as to how or why the two realms should run in parallel, and even interact, Swinburne can tell us no more that that it 'remains a mystery'. The mystery at the evolutionary level is redoubled at the level of individual ontogeny. Does the individual soul come into existence at conception, or when mental processes first appear? Swinburne suggests that it is 'more natural' to say that the soul 'begins to exist only shortly before it first begins to function'; but he adds that this simply an 'arbitrary' stipulation. (179) In short, we seem up against what Paul Churchland has aptly called the 'explanatory impotence' of dualism—its failure to provide even remotely satisfying answers to detailed questions about the origins and functioning of our mental life.

The main argument that Swinburne invokes to support dualism is one which has become very familiar in recent years, the argument from the qualitative dimension of our experience. Sensations are, it is suggested, identified by reference to their phenomenological character—'what it is like' to have them (in Thomas Nagel's phrase). Now physics and chemistry Swinburne argues,

> could not possibly explain why (certain) brain events ... in turn give rise to sensations of blueness (as opposed to redness), a high noise rather than low noise, this sort of smell rather than that sort of smell—why sodium chloride tastes salty and roses look pink. (186)

But why is science powerless here? Swinburne supports his case by reference to the notion of 'qualia-swops': ripe strawberries and all such objects might look to you the way the sea and the sky look to me, yet assuming all your public behaviour (including linguistic behaviour) was the same as mine, the scientist would be 'utterly unable' to discover the difference bwteen us. (3) This type of argument has become a vexed issue in current philosophy of mind, and unfortunately Swinburne does not discuss some of the best recent work (e.g. that of Sydney Shoemaker). But the 'qualia-swop' argument seems to me inadequate, in so far as it makes the mistake of considering sensations as if they were isolated events unconnected with our other beliefs and judgments. Suppose we take the whole range of colour discriminations we make—not just that this is red and this is blue, but that this shade (purple) is more like that shade (magenta) than that shade (cobalt); suppose, in other words, we postulate a 'flagging system' that serves to mark out the whole complex family of resemblances and differences associated with our colour perceptions. If we now imagine someone whose internal mapping is complex enough to enable him to match us point for point in all the discriminations we make, then the suggestion that his sensory flagging system could be significantly qualitatively different from ours begins, it seems, to lose its grip.

This is a long and painstaking book, and there is no space here to indicate all the topics it discusses. Although the central arguments seem to me to fail, there is no mistaking the acumen and integrity of the author, and his courage in attempting to hold the difficult terrain which the dualist must occupy in the modern world.

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