

The Soul

(as understood by the Stoics)

Psyche=soul, animating part, true self, mind, “heart”
—made of **pneuma** (spirit, stuff of creation)

“The Greek word *psyche* is notoriously impossible to translate, because it corresponds with no single thing in English. It is the ‘soul,’ the animating part of a person and the true self; it is the conscious self or ‘mind,’ which thinks, remembers, feels, imagines, and so forth; sometimes it is ‘temperament’ or ‘character.’ It is a blanket term for the inner conscious and unconscious parts of a person, and hence is frequently distinguished from and coupled with the body. Marcus too uses ‘soul’ and ‘mind’ interchangeably when he is talking about the rational faculty of the soul. He also occasionally substitutes ‘spirit’ for ‘soul.’ ... The human soul is made of pure *pneuma*, spirit, which is at the same time the stuff that permeates all creation and maintains it.”

(Robin Waterfield, note on Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, Book II:6)

“By ‘soul’ we ought not to assume anything immaterial, immortal or supernatural. Instead in this context we should understand it simply as mind, thoughts and beliefs ... For Socrates, and later the Stoics, this concern with taking care of one’s soul was all the more important because he and they held that the condition of our soul ultimately determines the quality of our lives.”

(John Sellars, *Lessons in Stoicism*)

“[Stoics] think that nature is a designing fire ... that is to say breath that is fiery and endowed with designing power. The soul is a nature capable of sense perception. It is our inborn breath. ... It is perishable, though the soul of the universe, of which the souls of living beings are parts, is imperishable.”

(Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, Book 7)

—Greek writer, Third Century C.E.—