



History of the Concept of Mind: Speculations About Soul, Mind, and Spirit from Homer to Hume

Paul S. MacDonald

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In the 20th century theorists were almost exclusively concerned with various versions of the materialist thesis, but prior to the current debates accounts of soul and mind reveal an extraordinary richness and complexity which bear careful and impartial investigation. This book is the first comprehensive, single-authored work to examine the historical, linguistic and conceptual issues involved in exploring the basic features of the human mind - from its most remote origins, to the beginning of the modern period. Paul MacDonald traces the development of an armature of psychical concepts from their earliest origins in the Old Testament and Homeric notions of soul as life-force, through Plato's infusion of an immortal and divine power, Aristotle's functional matter-form theory, the New Testament's doctrine of a double life and a double death, and its culmination in Augustine's Christian-Platonist synthesis. The central chapters discuss the medieval Islamic continuation and expansion of Aristotle, medieval European scholastic and popular views, the Renaissance revival of Platonic and Hermetic teachings, English language usage of 'mind' and 'soul' from Chaucer to Shakespeare, the 17th Century rationalist metaphysics of Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz, and concludes with an analysis of the 18th Century advocacy of an empirical science of the mind and a materialist account of its nature. Students and readers of philosophy, psychology, literature and theology will find this accessible, comprehensive text an invaluable resource.

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