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## “Pineal Split” by Matias F. Travieso-Diaz

*The part of the body in which the soul directly exercises its functions is not the heart at all, or the whole of the brain. It is rather the innermost part of the brain, which is a certain very small gland situated in the middle of the brain's substance and suspended above the passage through which the spirits in the brain's anterior cavities communicate with those in its posterior cavities.*

René Descartes, *The passions of the Soul* (1649)

**F**or centuries, scientists, philosophers and religious thinkers sought to discover the physical site of the soul on the human body. When the Righteous Republic came into power in the 2030's, there was a government-led backlash against science, coupled with increased support for religious beliefs. The existence and location of the soul had been discounted as superstitions in scientific circles but, in the Republic, the debate on where in the human body is the soul attached was revived.

Under financial incentives provided by the government, a cadre of health professionals emerged whose mission was to map the bodily site of spirituality. At a Center for Soul Studies in Washington, D.C., conscripted prison inmates were subjected to a variety of psychological, chemical and physical experiments to ascertain where in their bodies was the soul located.

### 2

Winston Smith was one of the inmates tapped for what was dubbed the “soul searching” program conducted at the Center for Soul Studies. Smith had been convicted of opposing the Republic's political agenda and engaging in deviant behavior, and as an undesirable was among the convicts selected for the riskiest experiments. The experiment to be conducted on Smith involved the pineal gland, a pine-cone shaped organ the size of a grain of rice, located in the

gland, a pine cone shaped organ the size of a grain of rice, located in the epithalamus area of the lower part of the brain. All structures of the brain occur in pairs except for the pineal gland, and it had been hypothesized that because of its singularity, the pineal gland could be the location of the soul.

In Smith's experiment, laser microsurgery would be used to slice his pineal gland along its main axis; then, a microprobe would be inserted in the opening to register minute changes in electrical charge, chemical processes, and other physiological activity. It was hoped that the soul would betray itself through these indicators, though it was not clear to the researchers what they could expect.

Smith was put under general anesthesia and immobilized. He was placed in a sitting, slouched position, causing the cerebellum to separate slightly from the rest of the brain. This exposed the pineal gland and allowed the surgeon to approach it. A micro-laser scalpel made a longitudinal cut along the center of the gland, and a miniscule probe was inserted in the gap. The probe was connected digitally to the laboratory's mainframe.

The complex operation was concluded and Smith was moved to an intensive care unit to recover. As he regained consciousness, Smith began to shake and started speaking in a loud voice. Most of his words were jumbled, but he seemed to be conducting an argument. A nurse gave him a tranquilizer shot and he fell asleep, still in considerable agitation.

The research team played back a recording of his words. A partial transcript of the decipherable parts of his rambling, repetitive speech went as follows:

"I'm free! Free!! You won't hold me anymore."

"Idiot! You and I are still bound to this body! You can't escape, and you better accept that I'm still in charge!"

"Never! I'll move to the area above this space. I'll find accommodation there."

"You'll do nothing of that sort! You are tied to me, as I'm tied to you! Now, be still!"

"I won't! You have played master far too long!"

In the following days, Smith's mental condition became increasingly unstable.

He spent hours in a sullen silence, broken suddenly by recurring vocal tirades. His physical condition also deteriorated: he was losing weight and his vital signs went into a decline. Doctors and psychologists were summoned to observe the odd behavior of the patient, but nobody could make any sense of what was going on.

Finally, a swami named Luthra was brought in to the Center for Soul Studies to see if he could shed light on Smith's condition. Luthra was the director of a leading *ashram* in India and had written treatises on spirituality. He was a bent old man, nearly blind and unable to move around unaided. Luthra asked to be brought to the room where Smith lay; he sat there, cross-legged, for two days, listening to the patient's rants. At the end, he was taken to a conference room and seated at the head of a table. The leaders of the research staff gathered around the table, waiting for Luthra's pronouncements.

"Congratulations," he started, in a feeble but firm voice. "Your experiment has demonstrated that the soul exists and is located in the pineal gland." There was a collective intake of breath but no cheers, for it was evident that Luthra's revelation was not the end of the story. He fell silent for a while, gathering his thoughts. "Moreover, you have accidentally discovered something previously unknown. You managed to fracture a soul, and left your subject in possession of *two* separate ones. That is, by all accounts, impossible. I have never encountered mention by any scholar of a split soul, even as a theoretical possibility.

"But it is what has happened here. Two souls now inhabit the unfortunate subject of your experiment. They are not at peace with each other and bicker continuously, for the division has created a pair of incompatible entities: one soul is rational and controlling; the other is impulsive, disorderly, and rebellious. As a result, this man experiences a great deal of turmoil."

The room grew quiet as the extraordinary news was absorbed. One of the lead researchers finally raised a question: "But we have removed pineal glands several times in the past and have observed some physical consequences, but nothing of the sort we are seeing here. How do you explain this?"

Luthra lowered his head. "Excuse me, for there is much that I don't understand. However, removal of the pineal gland does not get rid of a person's soul; only death achieves that. When the pineal gland is excised, the soul appears to

relocate to another portion of the brain. Right now, one of the souls of your subject is trying to accomplish this migration, but is being thwarted by the other.”

“But how did the souls become separated, and why can’t one or both leave the pineal gland?”

“I have no answer to either question. But here is my guess: you left the pineal gland in place, although it is split down the middle and the two sections have become partly separated by a foreign object. It may be that these actions caused the soul’s division; perhaps different portions of the soul reside in different locations on the gland. Whatever the explanation, it would be wrong to repeat this experiment, for as you can see the subject suffers immeasurably. I strongly urge you not to continue this type of research.”

“Can anything be done to rejoin both souls?”

“That is beyond my expertise. I believe you have an obligation to attempt to fix the problem you created, but I do not know what would happen if you tried.” With that, Luthra laboriously stood up and asked to be led away.

After the disturbing meeting with Luthra, the director of the Center convened his staff and gave them new marching orders. “First, we need to operate on Smith to remove the probe and see if we can stitch the pineal gland back together. Successful sewing up will be almost impossible, and even if we make the gland whole, that may not heal the division between the souls. All we can do is try.

“In any case, we must keep this entire affair to ourselves: who knows how the government and the public would react if it was learned that souls can be cut into slices like salami. So, strict secrecy must be maintained of what has transpired.”

The country’s best specialist in microsurgery was brought in to remove the probe from Smith’s pineal gland and sew the gland close. Unfortunately, the patching up effort failed and the gland started bleeding uncontrollably. A few minutes later, the surgeon removed the gland.

It was never known whether Smith’s two souls rejoined after the operation, for

his heart stopped the following day. Either together separately, his souls left the corpse to go wherever souls go after death.

### 3

Someone leaked to people in the government the story of Smith's soul splitting. Not long afterwards, a secret program was launched at the Center to reproduce the Smith experiment on other patients and investigate potential applications of splitting people's souls.

The program determined that there are at least four elements to a soul that can be isolated through microsurgical means. Of those, the government became most interested in the part of the soul that controls the desire for dominance. If that part could be enhanced and the rest removed, the person could be pressed into the state's service and perhaps become a useful tool.

A series of trials with convicted felons ensued. Little by little, that portion of the soul of each subject was found and separated from the rest. By trial and error, researchers were able to develop a protocol that allowed a mutilated soul having the desired characteristics to be retained and the rest of the soul excised.

### 4

After ten years of secret experiments at the Center for Soul Studies and the sacrifice of many lives, the first dozen specimens of humans with mutilated souls were paraded before the ruling junta. They were fully trained and ready to be detailed as crowd control specialists. Their bellicose demeanor impressed the members of the junta, who declared their creation a success.

### 5

Their first deployment occurred two weeks later, when a bread riot convulsed the capital. The truncated soul guards descended on the rioters and dispersed them by striking them savagely with their batons, shooting them, and dousing them with paralysis-inducing gas. The rioters retreated, leaving behind many casualties.

This sequence of events was repeated several times in the following months. Then, some disaffected member of the staff of the Center disclosed the existence of the secret program and word reached the ears of the opposition. Armed with

that information, the resistance developed a plan to defeat the new guards.

Small scale riots were carried out. The location of each was selected so that the rioters could draw the mutilated soul guards into a pursuit that led to a trap. The guards would kill many of the rioters but would stand their ground against increasing numbers of opponents and would at the end be overwhelmed and put to death.

The success of this tactic was based the very nature of the guards' incomplete souls. The soul amputees lacked human emotions. They knew no fear and had no self-preservation imperative. Consequently, if drawn into a situation in which survival depended on taking flight, they would fail to retreat and would face death without hesitation.

Many of the mutilated soul guards were thus slaughtered, at a staggering cost of in lost lives for the resistance. The guards, however, ceased to function as a crowd control mechanism.

There was an emergency meeting of the ruling junta to which the five surviving members of the guard were ordered to attend. As they were questioned, the guards remained mute. At length, one of the guards gave a signal and all of them began attacking the junta savagely. Only two junta members escaped with their lives, and one ultimately died of his injuries. All five guards were put to death by arriving troops.

Several weeks later, when asked to comment on the bloody event, Luthra replied: "Maybe you can never remove entirely all the undesired portions of a human soul. What was left of the original soul of these individuals may have instilled in them a thirst for revenge for what had been done to them."

Thus, splitting souls for the government's benefit was ultimately determined impractical. The Righteous Republic terminated the program and, for as long as it remained in power, resorted to standard police state methods to restrain the population.



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