

Question: "Is it possible to extract information from an interrogation subject's soul instead of reading their mind; that is, have you or anyone of your clan ever risked attempting such a thing, or would stealing the soul irreparably damage the physical mind beyond readability?"

Good evening. I was given your letter with the indication that you are an individual of some merit therefore it is worth the time and effort disclosing such information. Normally this is not information I would dispense casually but I had been assured that besides your trustworthiness, that you may have some benefit in your own research with said information. It is one of the many topics of research I have been working on along with my descendents as I feel the matters of ones soul is of the highest priority. It has been rather disheartening the complete lack of research. But that seems to be a trend with a lot of the long lived races in that they seem to lack any drive or incentive to really understand the forces that are at their disposal. Which is usually why there is a great deal of misconceptions.

One of the first basics is what exactly constitutes a "soul" as it is called these days. For many individuals they seem to be under the impression that a soul is similar to a personal storage which contains a sentient individuals "essence", like a spiritual fingerprint that identifies them as who they are. This usually comes from the fact that those with stronger "souls" tend to be strong individuals to begin with. The more powerful creatures such as dragons and demons do seem to have a stronger soul when one simply factors in raw power. And the souls of older individuals are by and large far stronger than the souls of children. I had often wondered if some creatures placed the rule within their cities that none shall harm children simply because they realized that fact to a degree. The other major factor that tends to lend to the theory that souls are a personal information storage unit is the magic that particularly involves the transfer of one's personal self over to another form. There have been several creatures which have boasted a potential discovery that allows them to extend their existence or even cheat death directly, though there are numerous complications and side effects from such a feat. I will address those first. There has been a lot of stigma and myth built up around the concept of "soul" when it comes to many creatures and in particular the beings. While it is true that there are some spells which "shatter" a soul thus making the person unable to be brought back to existence. Or the concept that a creature "devours" a soul, thus gaining the energy that a soul generally manifests to themselves. For some reason many creatures, particularly the beings, seem to be incredibly terrified of the concept due to various myths regarding an afterlife and that even upon their physical expiration, that the essence that makes up their existence will somehow transcend. A myth most likely created by creatures as a means to lull beings into a state of compliance either due to them assuming there is an afterlife or due to their fear of being denied said afterlife. But I digress...

There are some techniques in which one can "transfer" their soul into another vessel...most research indicates that the majority of said techniques and spells lack any real understanding outside of the short term consequences. Ironically enough it is the creatures with the long term lifespan that seem to be the most shortsighted. Far too many creatures I find have been indulging in activities that may finally be catching up to them as a whole after hundreds of thousands years. The angels come to mind first and foremost. As a race which has been the primary culprit of "soul-harvesting" it does not come as a surprise to me that one of the side effects has been a decreasing population. The energy that constitutes a soul seems to have a negative long-term effect when it is forcefully tampered with. In a sense it has a particular residue that I theorize over time causes a particular build up in later generations that inevitably damages the natural order.

I also theorize that this particular residue may be the cause in several power struggles and declines in races, including the Cubi race. That there has been a drastic decrease in clan leaders is not particularly surprising to me. The requirements for such a title seem to only be increasing. It would not surprise me if Cyra actually becomes the last clan leader to attain such a level and this in fact marks the end of a particular era for the Cubi race. But I digress yet again...

Transferring one's "soul" has a share of difficulties. As I mentioned prior, one should consider a soul to consist of a particularly adhesive substance. The act of transferring usually means that some of the essence will be lost. And truth be told, many creatures lack a knowledge about the process that they rarely take as much precaution even if the process involves them attempting to transfer their own essence. The end result always has a similar effect. I suppose a mental metaphor would be to think of the soul as a very sticky and fragile fabric holding together a large amount of sand. In its natural state it is suspended in stasis within a jar filled with a liquid that allows for it to never touch the sides of said jar. Now, when a transfer takes place, the fabric is temporarily removed and placed within another jar. On average, imagine the individual doing the transfer with a set of wool gloves. Besides residue from the handler, upon being placed within its new jar there is almost inevitably a small tear or hole as the gloves rip away. And now slowly bit by bit the sand contained inside will begin to leak within its new vessel. It may be a small leak, only one grain at a time, but bit by bit the contents will seep out and begin to alter the chemical inside the jar. And then with the next transfer, more leaks. And so on and so forth. This normally has no immediate consequence...the average individual even with their new lifespan will not feel any of the effects most likely for their entire new lifespan unless the process was incredibly poorly handled. However it comes as no surprise that there are no creatures that have been able to maintain a sense of sanity or go past seven such transfers. After the fifth it usually becomes apparent that their mental stability is depleting and the vessels they are containing themselves in suffer a faster degradation. However most creatures prefer not to transfer their souls. A vain lot in general, many find the idea of "trading down" for a less powerful vessel to be unappealing and there are few creatures of similar power who would wish to give up their existence for another.

However, an interesting development has recently occurred which has been able to give some exciting insight to the nature of such matters. The Undead race, created by an Aliph Soulstealer (I feel I must take a brief moment to pause and chuckle at their choice of last name. It never fails to amuse me everytime I type it) His recent spell backfire as given my clan a great chance to study several effects of souls. One thing of particular interest is the window of time in which a soul was transferred back into its original vessel. With no exception (save for one I will mention later and children which I later discovered as a deliberate adjustment of the spell on the casters part) only the souls of those who had died within eight months returned to their bodies. While some made claim this was due to the body decomposition making one unable to transfer over, considering the tombs and state in which some creatures and beings preserve their dead makes me think that it was more akin to the soul's expiration. Once the initial vessel expires, the essence which makes up the individual does seem to deteriorate quickly...similar in nature to the spell which "shatters" a soul which makes me theorize that such a spell does not really destroy a soul so much as it is returning it to its natural state: an energy which later reforms anew. While there are several methods which one can do to "contain" the essence of said individual, my research seems to indicate that the very intricate nature of what makes up a soul requires a very particular combination in which to contain it properly. At the core of it, I theorize that a soul forms in particular response to the vessel that makes up its container and the two act in perfect symbiosis. Which leads me to branch off into a topic regarding soul purity versus soul power. In testing, it was discovered that an individual who never comes into contact with soul-altering magic results in a particular soul that is devoid of residue and remnants.

Unfortunately at this time due to the meddling of many creatures and soul-altering time, it is difficult to find such individuals as the residue seems to even pass along into next generations. The most likely source of finding "pure" souls would be among beings as they lack most magic and lifespans in which to really delve into such matters. I've recently been teaching several of my clan members the method in which one can actually trace the residue and auras of the souls of individuals. It is quite an impressive spectacle I must confess. The amount of residue that clings to the average soul is almost like a pollution of sorts. In my spare time I have been looking into a method in which one could possibly filter this effect but as of yet there has been no real breakthrough.

Returning to the undead race, another interesting aspect was that the Undead which had been formed before then but were simply animated vessels...actually returned to life as well. This was an incredibly fascinating development since not only did they bypass the time expiration, but upon further study of one of the Undead I was able to acquire, the soul that they possess was in fact rather pure, as if the soul within them was designated for that particular vessel. This diverges from the average undead who upon researching, I have discovered that they are suffering from the effects one gets from a soul transfer in that their essence does have cracks. It will however lead to an interesting study topic as it will potentially allow me and my clan to study the slow long-term effects of a transfer as the Undead do not seem to suffer from aging. The effects of such essence leaks should prove to be very valuable information should the race manage to last longer than a few thousand years. However, the Undead that came to life before said time seem to suffer none of those ill effects. However it should be noted that the Undead who have been created like that seem to lack any knowledge of their former lives. One could theorize that their souls have been wiped clean and started anew. The individual my clan has acquired though has shown several traces of their former personality and life as they have progressed, making me speculate perhaps it is the same energy synchronization as before. At this time however one can only speculate and sadly the amount of Undead that have such a trait are incredibly rare and uncommon...or the ones remaining are fiercely protected at this point.

It has dawned on me at this moment that I have accidentally bypassed your very question, and for that I apologize. This particular subject of research has a great deal of my focus and attention and I have little doubt that if left unchecked I would likely end up sending you a novel. There are several theories and research focuses and I should mention that at this time a vast majority of these are still just theories. I have been told I have a very direct method of speaking and as such it often makes my theories sound like I am presenting them as facts.

As for your question, from what I have gathered the initial problem with extracting information from the soul directly is that while it seems like the soul does hold information, without a vessel in which to interact with it is all but impossible to translate and transcribe. The energy that makes up a soul requires some form of vessel if one is to interact with and as I mentioned earlier, simply transferring the soul has its own risks. As you theorized, the process runs a great deal of risk damaging the soul.

As for mind-reading, the process in which one reads ones mind is fairly risky because of that very nature. The process in which one of my clan uses to read the minds of an individual requires not only for them to shapeshift a part of themselves down to an astoundingly small and delicate molecular level which they then must very carefully spread across the inside of their targets brain...they must then intigrate a part of themselves so that the "soul" temporarily synchronizes as well. In layman's terms one must physically and mentally become the same individual...a process which upon backfiring is almost always fatal for both parties. In my clan's history we have only had to perform such a task eight times, three of which resulted in failure. I confess that the rumour of my clan being able to perform such things regularly has been deliberate, but at the same time has backfired in that it has become commonplace for many creatures to confuse the process with the natural empathetic thought-reading that all Cubi possess.

Thank you for your inquiry regarding such a matter. I apologize for the longwinded approach to your question and that it likely has only confused or caused more questions to stir. I hope though that if that is such a case, it will encourage you into furthering your own research. Should you come to any conclusions my clan would be very interested in any information you would gather. At some point if you would like to continue to exchange notes on the subject, please inquire with one of my family. It is refreshing to see another showing such interest in an obviously important topic as it will no doubt shape the future of not only the Cubi race, but I theorize all races will see the effects of such within the next thousands of years.

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