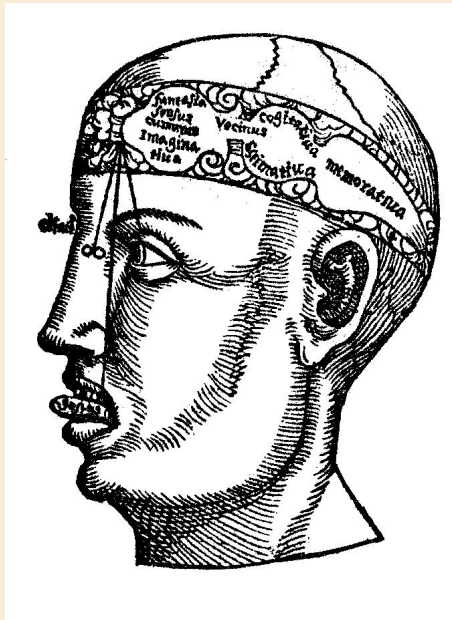




PHIL 204

Greek Philosophy

Lecture 9



The Structure of the Mind
Gregor Reisch, *Margarita Philosophica*,
Freiburg, 1503.

Aristotle *On the Soul* (*de Anima*):

The soul is the principle of movement of
living things.

Questions:

- (1) What kind of thing is the soul?
- (2) Is it a potentiality (capacity) or an actuality (activity)?
- (3) Does it have parts?
- (4) Are there different kinds of souls?

(5) What is the relation of the soul to the body?

(6) What is the relation of affections of the soul to affections of the body?

(7) Is there some affection of the soul which does not involve the body?

If understanding (thinking) requires imagination, then the characteristic activity of human beings requires the human body.

The soul can exist separately from the body only if there is some activity of the soul which does not require the body.

All emotions seem to require a body.

Example: Definition of anger.

[SOUL] anger is a desire to inflict pain in return
for pain

[= formal + final cause]

+

[BODY] accompanying a boiling of the blood
around the heart.

[= material cause]

The two distinguishing features of soul

(= the distinguishing features of life):

(1) self-movement

(2) sensation

Book 2: Chapter 1: What is a soul?

Substance:

(a) Matter ?

(b) Form ?

(c) A composite of matter and form ?

Matter versus Form:

Matter is not a *this-something*.

Form imposed on matter results in
a *this-something*.

Matter is **potentiality**.

Form is **actuality**.

Aristotle distinguishes two kinds of potentiality and two kinds of actuality:

(0) **First Potentiality**

= Potentiality to be able to do X

(1) **Second Potentiality = First Actuality**

= Potentiality of doing X

(2) **Second Actuality** = Actuality of doing X.

Example

- (0) A newborn baby is in first potential to speak English.
- (1) A silent English speaker is in first actuality to speak English.
- (2) Someone speaking English is in second actuality to speak English.

Being alive = self-nourishing, growing, and decaying.

A living thing is a composite substance - a kind of natural body.

A substance has a soul if and only if it is said to be alive.

Body is matter and subject - it is said to be alive so it cannot be the cause of life.

So soul cannot be the body.

So soul must be the form.

Aristotle's definitions of soul:

- (1) A soul is a substance: It is the form of a natural body that is potentially alive.
- (2) A soul is the actuality of a specific kind of body.
- (3) A Soul is the first actuality of a natural body that is potentially alive.
- (4) A Soul is the first actuality of a natural body with organs.

The relation of the soul and the body:

Soul and body are one in the way that potentiality and actuality are one.

The soul / form is the *what-it-is* of the thing in question.

The soul is what makes a human being to be what it is, i.e. a human being.

Thought experiment:

Suppose an axe were a natural body.

Being-an-axe would be its soul and essence.

If an axe loses the power to cut it is an
axe in name only.

Possession of a soul = possession of a set of abilities

Soul is the **first actuality** of a living thing

The second actuality = the acts characteristic of being alive.

“From this it indubitably follows that the soul is inseparable from its body, or at any rate that certain parts of it are (if it has parts) for the actuality of some of them is nothing but the actualities of their bodily parts. Yet some may be separable because they are not the actualities of any body at all.”

Chapter 2:

Characteristics of living things:

(1) Self-motion:

(a) Not from place to place (local motion)

- Growth, decay, nutrition [Plant]

(b) From place to place (local motion)

(2) Sensation

(a) Touch.

(b) Other senses, imagination, appetite.

[The most basic animal must have
(1) (a) + 2 (a)]

(3) Thought.

Human beings have (1), (2), and (3)

Thought as eternal is capable of existing apart from the body.

but

Since soul is the actuality of a certain kind of body it cannot exist without a body.

Book 3

Aristotle on Thought and Understanding

One of the most important discussions in western thinking about the mind.

Sensation involves a transfer of form from the sense object to the sense organ.

Example: a ‘sounding’ (= a sound) is a form imposed on the air surrounding bodies striking one another.

Form is transmitted to the air enclosed within the ear where it becomes a ‘hearing’ (= something heard).

The very same form is a ‘sounding’ and a ‘hearing’.

Understanding works the same way as sensation by the reception of forms.

Socrates (i.e. this human being) is an object for sense.

What-it-is-to-be a human is an object for understanding.

Important claims about understanding

1. If thinking is like perceiving, then the thinking part of the soul must be capable of receiving the form of its object.
2. It must be potentially **formally identical** with the object without being that object.
3. Since everything is a possible object of thought, the intellectual soul must be free from any determination.

4. So the intellectual soul cannot be a composite involving kind of corporeal matter.

Otherwise when it takes on the form it would become the corresponding object. So if it were composed of the appropriate matter, in thinking about fish it would become a fish.

5. What we understand is not a composite of matter and form such as flesh but rather the corresponding form (= what it is-to-be flesh).

6. The intellectual soul with respect to forms is like a blank slate on which anything at all may be written.

7. The intellectual soul can take the forms that are understood themselves as its objects and thus it can think about fish and about the thought of fish.

8. In thinking about thoughts the thinking and what is thought about are identical.

9. Within the intellectual soul we have to make a distinction between that which receives the forms [**THE PASSIVE INTELLECT**] and that which produces them [**THE ACTIVE INTELLECT**]

10. The active intellect is like a light which makes visible things which are there but are invisible in the dark.

11. The active intellect can exist apart from the body and the other parts of the soul.

12. The passive intellect is destroyed with the death of the body.

13. The active intellect apart from the body has no memory.

The Difference Between the Souls of Men and Women:

‘...the soul by nature contains a part that rules and a part that is ruled, to which we assign different virtues, that is, the virtue of the rational and that of the irrational parts. ...Hence there are by nature various classes of rulers and ruled. For the freeman rules the slave, the male the female, and the man the child in a different way. And all possess the various parts of the soul, but possess them in different ways; for the slave has not got the deliberative part at all, and the female has it, but without full authority, while the child has it, but in an undeveloped form’

[Aristotle, *Politics*, I, 13]