

# Aristotle on mind

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# **ARISTOTLE ON MIND**

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in Philosophy  
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## ABSTRACT

The mind as it is found in Aristotle's great work *De Anima* is a special capacity of the soul. It has both active and passive properties that work together to allow discursive thinking and moral ethical behavior to emerge. This work will look at Aristotle's philosophy of mind, and I will forward a new interpretation of the mind as he understood it: what I call the *active and passive mind property dualism*. Aristotle's four causes allow for a unique application of a form of dualism that accounts for the ontological status of the mind and the emergence of rational thinking. The importance of potentiality and actuality in Aristotle's metaphysics gives a different sort of formulation of the mind-body problem than is traditionally understood in the philosophy of mind. The first section of this paper will look at the terms used, especially actuality and potentiality. A comparison to Plato's tripartite soul will be given. Next, Aristotle's different kinds of soul and their varied capacities will be explored. Finally, the active mind will be explained as it appears in Book III, chapter 5.

## **DEDICATION**

For Matt

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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## INTRODUCTION

The human mind is a special feature of life on this planet. Some of those who speak of the mind define it by physical processes or as an organizational term to bring together thoughts of emotion, identity, intelligence and even spirit. The word psyche can be used to express these same terms, which means basically the same thing – the mind. Dictionaries can be found to define these terms as being opposed to the body, yet contemporary thinkers do best by rejecting Cartesian dualism of mind and body, in order to be taken seriously. Embodiment is thought by many to be the proper way to view the human mind. Material monism enables one to drop any unnecessary explanations or definitions that expand the mind beyond the body or the environment. Yet, the mind as a mysterious and independent force still emerges intuitively. In the works of Plato, the mind is synonymous with the human soul and the words *psuche* and *nous* are used almost interchangeably. In *De Anima*, Aristotle questions if the mind is separate from material substances and sees motion and change as the formal causes of life. For Plato the soul, and extended terms such as mind, is entombed and separate from the ultimate reality. But for Aristotle the active mind is of the same divine nature as the Prime Mover.

When entering into the philosophy of mind, one may begin with first order questions such as: What are the properties of the mind? Let us look into the distant past of ancient Greek philosophy and see where the philosophy of mind begins to appear. Aristotle may not be the first to theorize about the human soul or the power of thought, but his separation of the human mind from the soul is a great place to begin. Leibniz tells us that we will never find the actual cog in the machine that is responsible for perception. Is this true? No one knows for certain, at least not for now.



The first section of this work will briefly look at the terms *nous*, *psuche*, *dunamis* and *entelécheia* to see how Aristotle and Plato use them, and how they are often translated. The following section will consider Plato's tripartite soul as it is related to Aristotle's metaphysics and knowledge of the soul. This will lead us to focus on the nature of mental activity and the capacities of the soul. This will allow us to extract a clear idea of what the mind is and is not. I wish to explore Aristotle's great work *De Anima* and try to give an accurate demonstration of the mind and discover how this account compares to current modes of thought on the subject. This will help us question the accuracy of defining his theories with contemporary terms.

## ETYMOLOGY

In the study of Aristotle one must choose translations carefully. The title *De Anima* uses Latin words, but the original title is *Peri Psyches*.<sup>1</sup> The word *anima* in Latin takes on several meanings to include breath, wind, air, soul and vital principle. If we take the Greek word *psyches* to mean the exact same as its Latin transliteration into *anima*, we find that motion, the vital principle force of life and the animator of all natural bodies is the essence of the word soul. The result of which is a need for modern thinkers to set aside meanings ascribed to the soul that include eternal personality and a personal God, in order to understand Aristotle. The word *psyche* is close to the ideas that we might also relate to the mind, but the word *psyches* is used in conjunction with *anima*. The psychological functions of a human are the principles of change and motion, being exercised by that which has potential and matter. For Aristotle, whether we speak of Socrates or a plant, the principle source of motion is the same. These two living beings only differ in kind. Today we think of psychology as the study of mental processes, conscious

and unconscious. But for Aristotle, to study the psyche is to look at the entelechy of the composite substance of form and matter. Psychology would translate, for Aristotle, to the study of the soul. The mind is translated as the Latin word *nous*. It is something separate and distinct.

In *De Anima*, realization and actualization play an important role in the three different substances of form, matter and the composite of both form and matter. *Dunamis* is matter and *entelécheia* is form.<sup>2</sup> The *dunamis* is also the potential that is in matter. The *entelécheia* of form is realization or actuality. Aristotle uses the word actuality in two senses and states them as the “possession of knowledge and the exercise of it.”<sup>3</sup> Charlton says that the exercise of knowledge is contemplation and goes on to say that the soul is the actualization of form in knowledge. Charlton states, “[i]t should read not 'the soul is the first actuality', but 'the soul is the actuality in the first way.’”<sup>4</sup> That is to say that the soul is the actuality of the possession of Knowledge. This can lead to the reasonable assertion that knowledge is not proper to the mind, but is rather shared with those kinds of souls that contain the faculties of imagination and thought. Animals share with us these faculties of the appetitive soul, which uses emotion and desire and also the exercise of knowledge and perception.

The motion of the soul is the actualization of potentiality. If we have the potential that is contained in *energeia*, then the living creature can realize the potential in *dunamis*. “*Dunamis* and *energeia*, in connection with change, mean 'power' and 'exercise' or 'potentiality' and 'actualization', and contemplation is an *entelécheia* in the sense that it is an exercise of power.”<sup>5</sup> The form of an individual, that is always with its matter substance, can only be in actualization or actualized. The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy states that, “[a] linguistic analysis shows that, by actuality, Aristotle means both *energeia*, which means being-at-work, and *entelechia*,

which means being-at-an-end. These two words, although they have different meanings, function as synonyms in Aristotle's scheme."<sup>6</sup> Careful consideration of the usage of these terms can lead one to think that Aristotle is not using these two terms as synonyms. Aristotle says that things are "in *dunamis*" as the statue is in the bronze; and things are "in *energeia*" as they are actually existing.<sup>7</sup> Aristotle may use the words "in *entelechia*," but to mean the realized potential in form, not in the sense that something is in the state of actualizing potentiality (*energeia*.) For the change from the power to do something (*dunamis*) to the state of actualizing thought or life, we should find Aristotle using the term *energeia*. But to fully analyze the full truth of this statement would require a working knowledge of the ancient Greek and Latin languages, and access to the original source material. Still, it is reasonable to think that he is using a fine nuance that should prove critical to understanding his philosophy. This is especially true when he has created the words in order to use them in explaining his concepts. Any reading of Aristotle that uses these two terms synonymously should be considered closely, and it is certain to have been many times.

## THE TRIPARTITE SOUL

An inquiry into Aristotle's philosophy of mind best begins with a comparison to Plato's tripartite soul. In Plato's treatise the *Republic* the three distinct classes of citizens work by the principle of specialization and are the grounds for true justice. Justice in the *kallipolis*, or ideal city, is a result of the structured soul and is like a healthy mind. The appetite or lowest function of the soul and its corresponding merchant class live with the sensible. The merchant class with the auxiliary and guardian classes shares the ideals of temperance and justice. In addition, the auxiliary class must have courage and is represented in the corresponding spirited element of the soul. The guardian class has all three of these virtues and additionally must have knowledge of the forms and possession of wisdom. Socrates states in *The Republic* that, "...to the degree that the guardians' job is most important, it requires the most freedom from other things, as well as the greatest craft and practice."<sup>8</sup> The guardians, or philosopher kings, represent the highest order of the soul, which is reason. Just as the ideal city has three distinct classes so too does each human soul contain these three elements. The philosopher kings must know what reality is and understand the difference between being and becoming. In the same fashion, the highest order of reason must inform and control the lower spirited and appetitive functions of the soul. For Plato, the forms are the ultimate reality and are the universal standards by which we measure a particular item's participation in the Forms.

The human body is separated from the intelligible world as the soul waits to be freed in order to have complete knowledge of the Forms, this is the dual nature of human existence in Plato. The term mind in Plato is used interchangeably, since the mind is expressed as an element of a particular soul and therefore only shares in the Platonic Form of Knowledge. The structure

of human knowledge is illustrated by Plato's divided line, the line between the visible world of belief and imagination and the world of Forms and knowledge of the Good. The line separates the material world from which we ought to be liberated, from the intelligible world of Intellect and Reason. Cultivation of the soul through education leads to knowledge of the forms and the dialectic is the surest way to reveal the truth.

In Plato's *Timaeus*, the soul is made of the elements and “like can only be known by like.”<sup>9</sup> The Creator uses the elements and the harmonic ratios to organize the cosmos. The universe is a complete and living thing that shares in the likeness of a complete god; it is a harmony of proportion. “[I]t is a work of craft, modeled after that which is changeless and is grasped by a rational account, that is, by wisdom.”<sup>10</sup> Plato's cosmology constructs the world's soul in three stages. The creation of the mixture of indivisible, changeless being with the divisible is a mixture of Sameness and Difference. The second stage is the division of the mixture into portions and the final stage is the filling of intervals.<sup>11</sup> The soul is a mixture of the ideal forms of Same, Difference and Being. Plato's account of how the soul moves the body is given to us as an outcome of their interconnectedness. Aristotle states that, “...Plato identifies the movements of the soul with the spatial movements of the heavenly bodies.”<sup>12</sup> In the works of Aristotle, change is certain and the Prime Mover is unmoved.

For Aristotle the form cannot be removed and given an ideal essence for which all others must participate in. He also rejects Plato's notion of the soul as a spatial magnitude because the mind's movement is not circular. “But the mind is one and continuous in the same sense as the process of thinking; thinking consists of thoughts.”<sup>13</sup> The mind is also capable of thinking a thought only one time, “...if the same revolution recurs frequently, the mind must frequently

think the same thing.”<sup>14</sup> For Aristotle, the mind is separate from the perceptive faculty of the appetitive soul. The form is the animating soul, which is the principle change of matter into the composite substance that is individual life. This process is achieved by Aristotle's concept of hylomorphism.

## HYLOMORPHISM

Hylomorphism is the combination of matter of the body and form of the soul. The explanation of hylomorphism must contain Aristotle's four causes of material, formal, efficient and final cause. Matter has potentiality and is actualized by its form, a composite of form and matter can have essential form, like the human body, or accidental form, which it can lose and still exist. "The soul is an essential form, whereas perception involves the acquisition of accidental forms."<sup>15</sup> The body cannot lose its vital principle and still contain the potential for life. The soul of any living being or natural body is the primary source of change and motion.

A problem has been raised against the hylomorphism theory that is found in Aristotle's philosophy. Shields states the problem as such:

A hylomorphic account of change seems to require that bits of matter are only contingently enformed; the bronze is not made the bronze it is by gaining this or that shape. Instead, the bronze is the bronze it is because of its being an alloy of copper and tin, something it was before it was enformed by the shape of Hermes, something it remains while enformed by that shape, and, of course, something it is still after that shape has been lost. If human bodies are not bodies when they are not ensouled, and if the souls of bodies are, as Aristotle claims, their forms, then human bodies are not amenable to a hylomorphic treatment.<sup>16</sup>

The human body is not so certainly incapable of receiving a hylomorphic treatment. The soul is the principle of organization and the first actuality of the body, in the sense that the body now has life and contains within it the potential to continue living by the exercise of its power.

Potentiality precedes actuality; therefore a body that has actualized its ensouled form is in *energeia*. In the act of realizing its potential, the living being has possession of knowledge and so is realized. Once it no longer has its life giving soul, it no longer contains any potentiality. A soul is potentially alive at the time that it is actually alive. In the same fashion, the mind does

not actually exist until it thinks. That is not to say that there is ever a time when a living being is without a mind, for the potential that is required to be living exists at the same time that the being is alive. Life cannot have one without the other. The mind is realized in *energeia*, which is to say that the mind is realized while it is at work. The problem raised by Shields is found in the inadequacy of the analogy of an inanimate statue to the animate living being. Bronze does not decay. All living bodies lose their forms upon death. To put it another way, the living body loses its motion and potential. The bronze material does not lose its potential to change into another statue or a coin.

#### THE MIND-BODY PROBLEM

Aristotle's investigation into the soul makes no sense without the body. For him it is essential to understand why the soul is in the body and what conditions make this possible. The soul is not a harmony and it does not move in a circle. The soul is the principle movement by which man thinks and learns. The body receives the soul and must be the correct type of matter for the particular kind of soul as, "each craft must employ its own tools, and each soul its own body."<sup>17</sup> The body is material cause of the soul's actualization of its final cause. "So one need no more ask whether body and soul are one than whether the wax and the impression it receives are one, or in general whether the matter of each thing is the same as that of which it is the matter; for admitting that the terms unity and being are used in many senses, the paramount sense is that of actuality."<sup>18</sup> This passage gives us a starting-point from which to discover the ultimate place of the mind in the form-matter composite. It also allows us to set aside the mind-



body problem, for the purposes of this work, as this is not the same problem for Aristotle as it is for Descartes. A substance that is subject to hylomorphic change is actualized in the movement by that which has potential in matter and the passive mind.

## THE ARISTOTELIAN SOUL

For Aristotle, the soul is the first actualization of that which is potentially living. This is to say that the motion of change provides the potential for life and is life in itself. Living is what distinguishes things with souls from those without and being alive is the internal potential by which we have the power of self-sustenance, growth and decay.

The soul is defined by its relation to matter and is the form of the particular body. There is no one common soul, but particular kinds of souls. The soul has the different capacities of nutrition, perception and mind; it can also have the faculties of reasoning, thought, locomotion and sensation. An “account of each of these faculties is also the most relevant account that can be given of the soul.”<sup>19</sup> In general, the soul is the essence of the body, or “substance in the sense of formula.”<sup>20</sup> The soul is a vital constituent in the unity of a living organism. The soul is “one in actuality but many in potentiality,” and Aristotle tells us that the faculties of nutrition, sensation, thought and movement originate in the soul and the soul is defined by them.<sup>21</sup>

Aristotle appears to use the word decay in two ways. First he tells us that there are four kinds of movement: change of position, change of state, growth and decay.<sup>22</sup> It is clear here that he does not consider decay to be a change of state. Life of a natural body is the capacities of nourishment, growth and decay.<sup>23</sup> This means that decay is a natural function of any living being and the individual being has not undergone any change of state in the process of decay. He also seems to use decay in relation to the contemporary notion of decay as related to decomposition. In Book I chapter 5, it is stated that, “[s]ome say that the soul has parts, and thinks with one part, and desires with another. In this case what is it which holds the soul together, if it naturally consists of parts? Certainly not the body: on the contrary the soul seems rather to hold the body

together; at any rate when the soul is gone the body dissolves into air and decays. If then some other thing gives the soul unity, this would really be the soul."<sup>24</sup> But the soul's movement of decay is not the decomposition of the corpse of a once living being. Shields states that, "...a body which has lost its soul is not a body at all, 'except homonymously' ...Aristotle means to suggest that a body without a soul is no more a body than an eye in a sculpture of a human being is an eye. We do call it an eye, but only by an extension of the term."<sup>25</sup> Therefore the decay of form is not the body's decomposition after death, but rather the old age of the body's material substance. Aristotle states that, "...old age is due to an affection, not of the soul, but only of that in which the soul resides, as in the case in drunkenness and disease."<sup>26</sup> In this passage as a whole Aristotle is talking about the mind as an independent substance, which is imperishable.

It is Aristotelian to say that when the mind is the highest capacity of the soul, the kind of soul peculiar to humans is best defined by the mind. All other capacities serve to actualize the thinking that is the *entelécheia* of the mind. Some examples of actualization include the activity of imagination, the recollection of a memory, or the exercise of attained knowledge.

The life activity of plant life is the work of the nutritive soul that can grow and reproduce. The nutritive is the most natural of all the functions of the soul. "[T]he nutritive soul belongs to all other living creatures...and is the first and most widely shared faculty of the soul, in virtue of which they all have life."<sup>27</sup> Aristotle rejects mechanical accounts of growth, "...for growth is a constrained pattern of development," the source of which Aristotle ascribes to the soul and he takes it as evident that growth in organisms proceeds along structured paths, in end-directed ways.<sup>28</sup> Nutrition along with the capacity of perception and touch are found in the animals. Touch is a universal sense-faculty that every animal possesses. The ensouled human being is a

rational soul and the intellect is what differentiates humans from the animals. The body is potentially alive only when it is actually alive, for one cannot actualize anything without the potential to do so.

## PERCEPTION

Perception is directed towards “sensible qualities rather than intelligible forms” and is best understood by Aristotle's hylomorphic model of change.<sup>29</sup> Perception comes from the organ capable of receiving the information and being changed or affected by alteration. “Sensation consists...in being moved and acted upon; for it is held to be a sort of change of state.”<sup>30</sup> The change is when the organ proper to the particular type of perception acquires the form of what is perceived. “The sentient subject... is potentially such as the object of sense is actually. Thus during the process of being acted upon it is unlike, but at the end of the process it has become like that object, and shares its quality.”<sup>31</sup> It is important to note that the subject becomes like the object of sensation, and that it shares in the qualities of that which is perceived.

Only the proper organ can perceive the object of sense. A literal interpretation of the likeness, in the passage above, of the proper organ is the one with “an ability to share *by coming to exemplify* the sensible qualities which they are structured to receive.”<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, an intentionalist interpretation takes the likeness of the sense organs to mean that, “the sense organs become like their objects without actually coming to exemplify the sensible qualities perceived. Instead, they become like them by coming to *symbolize* them in one way or another...the likeness involved in perception [is] akin to the likeness obtaining between a house and its blue print.”<sup>33</sup> Saint Thomas Aquinas, and Franz Brentano both suggest that Aristotle does not mean that the

eyes and nose actually take on the qualities of the object of perception, but rather one becomes aware of some color or smell.<sup>34</sup> What the explanation of a literal interpretation is missing is that we do not perceive one single characteristic at a time but many different, and at times conflicting sensations. As Aristotle states that the soul's thinking capacity is occupied by the forms only potentially.<sup>35</sup> The movement of the soul is what animates the matter of the body. Perception, memory and imagination all require the body; it is the body that remembers and perceives.

Aristotle states:

Thus the power of thought and speculation decays because something else within perishes, but itself it is unaffected. Thinking, loving and hating, are affections not of the mind, but rather of the individual which possesses the mind, in so far as it does so. Memory and love fail when this perishes; for they were never part of the mind, but of the whole entity which has perished. Presumably the mind is something more divine, and is unaffected.<sup>36</sup>

Aristotle tells us that practical thinking and perceiving are not identical because all animals share in perceiving, but thinking only involves a few of them.<sup>37</sup> At this point one might infer that only humans think. This may not be a logical inference as this is not what the text actually says. No translation of Aristotle used for this paper uses the terms human thinking or human mind. When there is an existential instantiation of a specific example of thinking, a particular kind of human is given, such as a scientist. But there is room for animals to participate in thinking. Thinking can be found in more than just the kind proper to the human being. For instance, imagination is said to be a part of thinking and it is also a capacity of the animals.

## THE IMAGINATION

Imagination is a sort of thinking, but is to be differentiated from rational thinking. The imagination is not one of the faculties of the soul that are incapable of error, "...such as knowledge or intelligence; for imagination may be false."<sup>38</sup> For Aristotle, imagination is a blending of direct perception with opinion. The ontological status of the imagination, for Guttenplan, is in between perception and thought. He states that:

[T]he treatment of *phantasia* (usually translated as 'imagination') in Aristotle's *De Anima* III.3, seems to regard the imagination as a sort of half-way house between perception and thought, but in a way which makes it cover appearances in general, so that the chapter in question has as much to do with perceptual appearances, including illusions, as it has to do with, say, imagery. Yet Aristotle also emphasizes that imagining is in some sense voluntary, and that when we imagine a terrifying scene we are not necessarily terrified, any more than we need be when we see terrible things in a picture.<sup>39</sup>

Opinion involves the object of perception and belief. "[N]o animal has belief, but many have imagination...every opinion is accompanied by belief...but although some creatures have imagination, they have no reasoning power."<sup>40</sup> Imagination is not treated, as Guttenplan says, as though it appears between perception and thought, it is a form of thinking. Aristotle tells us that thought is distinct from perception, and is composed of imagination and judgment.<sup>41</sup> The discursive thinking of the rational mind is what separates us from the animals. Contemporary understanding of intelligent animals such as whales and dolphins may prove to be examples of other minds that are only different in the kind of thinking it is capable of. As Aristotle tells us, the universality of soul, which is form, only differs in kind.

## THINKING

Chapter four of Book III of *De Anima* is concerned with the part of the soul that knows and understands. Aristotle has stated before this point that the soul is the origin of movement, but in Book III he states that, “thinking seems more like a state of rest or a halting than a movement; and the same thing is true of the syllogism.”<sup>42</sup> If the mind is nothing until it thinks and the soul is the source of movement in the matter of the body, then the highest capacity of the soul, actualized in thinking, is both at rest and the ultimate source of movement in the ensouled and rational being. It is in this way that the active mind is of the same essence as the Prime Mover. The mind knows because it is unmixed and contains potentiality. For Aristotle, all thinking has limits and, “speculation is bounded like the verbal formulae which express it. Every such formula is a definition or a demonstration.”<sup>43</sup> The act of demonstrating knowledge is limited by the material form. Wedin tells us that for Aristotle the mind thinks itself in the relation between the mind and its objects, “...whenever one actually thinks (when the mind is identical with the object of thought) then the mind thinks itself.”<sup>44</sup> When the mind is identical with the object of thought, the mind has actual knowledge of the form of the object. “Actual Knowledge is identical with its object. Potential is prior in time to actual knowledge in the individual, but in general it is not prior in time.”<sup>45</sup> Potential must be present at the same time the movement of the efficient cause is in actualization.

## THE MIND

The highest order of soul is the mind, where thought and understanding are held by knowledge of universals, whereas sensation is of particulars. It is certain that for Aristotle, the human mind is an exceptional capacity of the soul. It is how we can reason and develop ethical behavior. “[I]t is impossible that anything should be superior to and control the soul, or (a fortiori) the mind; for it is reasonable to suppose that the mind is by nature original and dominant, but they say that the elements are the first of all existing things.”<sup>46</sup> Yet the mind does not always think and it has no nature proper to it.<sup>47</sup> The mind has no characteristics of its own, “except its capacity to receive.”<sup>48</sup> This is the reception of potential. The Aristotelian mind is unmixed and impassive. Aristotle tells us that:

“[I]n the case of the mind and the thinking faculty nothing is yet clear; it seems to be a distinct kind of soul, and it alone admits of being separated, as the immortal from the perishable... other parts of the soul are not separable, as some say; though it is obvious that they are theoretically different; for there is a difference between the abstract faculties of sensation and opinion, just as feeling is different from opining.”<sup>49</sup>

“The mind is not defined as the actualization of any set of physical structures (like other faculties' natures) [this] explains why it is nothing until it thinks...the mind may well depend on a complex of physical structures... without being the actualization of any such structures.”<sup>50</sup> This statement defuses arguments that the mind, for Aristotle, may exemplify the qualities of the objects of consciousness. “It is necessary then that mind, since it thinks all things, should be uncontaminated...in order that it may be in control, that is, that it may know; for the intrusion of anything foreign hinders and obstructs it. Hence the mind, too, can have no characteristic except its capacity to receive. That part of the soul, then, which we call mind (by mind I mean that part



by which the soul thinks and forms judgments) has no actual existence until it thinks.”<sup>51</sup> The idea that the mind does not exist until it thinks means it is nothing other than its actualization in the thoughts or judgments of the rational being.

## THE MIND THINKS ITSELF

Aristotle believes that the mind is itself an object of thought, just as other objects are. This is a rather esoteric idea, and at first the transcendental phenomenological reduction enters into the horizon of inquiry. But does he mean that the mind can be abstracted from and considered as an object of consciousness? I think that Aristotle is trying to understand how it is that the mind exists before it thinks some bit of information. As the faculty proper to Knowledge, it must contain the potential for it before it can know. “For in the case of things without matter that which thinks and that which is thought are the same; for speculative knowledge is the same as its object.”<sup>52</sup> Aristotle questions the act of thinking as an actualization by the mind that is separate and not acted upon. Aristotle also speaks of the mind as not being dependent on the body and indeed some part of it continues on after death. This transcendental capacity of the mind may have influenced Descartes' turn inward to the self, in which, by the act of *cogito*, he is certain that while thinking, he is a thing that exists.

## FUNCTIONALISM

Some believe that Aristotle's concept of the soul is a form of, or precursor to, functionalism. Cohen defines functionalism as, “...the theory that mental states are defined in

terms of their relations to causal inputs, behavioral outputs, and other mental states. It holds that several different physical states or processes may realize the same mental state. Mental states cannot, therefore, be reduced to physical states. They are, rather, functional states of the physical systems that realize them.”<sup>53</sup> Aristotle tells us that its relation to matter defines the mind and therefore matter can be assigned as a causal input, which is to say it is the material cause. The plausibility of applying functionalism does not necessarily hinge on the argument for multiple realizability of a single mental state or process because Aristotle is clear that the mind is dominant and the active mind is separate and unmixed with the material cause. The mind can be taken as irreducible to the physical state of the material cause.

The main objection to functionalism is in agreement with the conclusion reached above in the interpretation of the likeness of the proper organ's ability to exemplify the sensible qualities that they are able to receive, rather than actually changing the matter of the organ. Perception is of accidental forms and then only potentially, not actually.<sup>54</sup> This is related to Aristotle's idea about actual knowledge, which is identical to its object. Knowledge and sensation correspond to reality. Burnyeat believes that we cannot escape the Cartesian concept of our physical existence by looking to Aristotle. Burnyeat states that:

“To be truly Aristotelian, we would have to stop believing that the emergence of life or mind requires explanation. We owe it above all to Descartes that that option is no longer open to us. Hence all we can do with the Aristotelian philosophy of mind and its theory of perception as the receiving of sensible forms without matter is what the seventeenth century did: junk it. Having junked it, we are stuck with the mind-body problem as Descartes created it, inevitably and rightly so. The modern functionalist should be grateful to Descartes for having set him the problem to which functionalism is supposed to be a more satisfactory solution than Cartesian dualism. For the moral of this paper's history is that new functionalist minds do not fit into old Aristotelian bodies.”<sup>55</sup>

It is not necessary to choose between functionalism and dualism, if we take the thinking activity of the mind, and thereby the actuality of the mind, as a property of what I call *active and passive mind property dualism*. In this sense, the two properties of the mind, the impassive activity and the destructible potentiality are two radically different properties, which are within a frame of non-reductive functionalism. The distinct characteristic of the active mind is its infinite Being. This Being is fundamental to the actualization of Socrates as a discrete substance; the active mind in this sense enables a human to be the subject, upon which things are predicated. These are the dual properties of the mind. White speaks of a similar notion of property dualism in his essay, where he looks for the metaphysical location of mathematics in Aristotle. White sees Aristotle as rejecting substance dualism, for a “property triad-ism.” White's piece is a highly technical work of analytic philosophy, but I believe that the following passage allows for the possibility of property dualism in Aristotle's metaphysics. He states:

Aristotle is rejecting what may be termed a version of 'substance dualism' or 'substance triad-ism'. We may want to distinguish and, indeed, in some sense 'separate' (i) sensible properties of a thing, (ii) physical properties...of that thing, and (iii) the thing's mathematical properties. We may even want to deny that any of these three groups of properties is 'ontologically reducible' to any of the others. But we are not thereby committed to three co-existing substances or three types of substance occupying the same spatial locus. Such a distinction between substance triad-ism and property triad-ism seems sufficient to allow Aristotle ...to maintain that the metaphysical locus of the objects which mathematicians study is the sensible, physical world.<sup>56</sup>

The sensible property of the mind would be its activity and the physical property would be its material cause, and the mind's mathematical property would be the functioning of its actuality. Furthermore, this *mind property dualism* theory allows for the study of the soul to remain in the order of a physicalistic functionalism. The emergent property of the dualism of the two

properties of the mind, the active mental state and the passive mental state, would be ethics and discursive thinking. The mind's dual properties are two fundamentally different properties that are fully integrated with the material cause. The passive mind contains the potential needed to actualize the emergent properties, which are to be the final cause.

## THE ACTIVE AND PASSIVE MIND

The fifth chapter of Book III of *De Anima* considers the active and the passive mind. There Aristotle tells us that in the soul, just as in the entire universe and all of the classes of objects, the distinct elements of matter and the soul's cause or agent are related just as art is related to its media and tools. The passive mind becomes all things and the active mind makes all things. Aristotle explains the mind by the analogy to light, saying "...this is a kind of positive state like light; for in a sense light makes potential into actual colors. The active mind in this sense is separable, impassive and unmixed, since it is essentially an activity; for the agent is always superior to the patient, and the originating cause to the matter."<sup>57</sup> If the mind is essentially an activity and is separate from and cannot be acted upon by anything, then what is everlasting is the activity it has initiated and participated in. It is a force that is itself unmoved.

Aristotle clearly states that the mind does not think intermittently. The mind, when isolated to its true self, is immortal and everlasting, and without the active mind nothing thinks.<sup>58</sup> The passive mind is perishable and the active mind does not remember any previous activity. The passive mind presents its potentiality for aid in the entelechy of a substance's final cause. But what is the ontological status of the active mind, once isolated to its true self? Aristotle thinks of it as being of the same nature as the Prime Mover,<sup>59</sup> but this does not necessarily place it outside of the physical universe. To understand just what the active mind is, we should focus on the ways it is compared to light.

Aristotle also uses an analogy to light when speaking about imagination. He states that, "[s]ince sight is the chief sense, the name *Phantasia* (imagination) is derived from *phaos* (light), because without light it is impossible to see."<sup>60</sup> If the active mind is nothing more than its

activity, which is a positive, experienced state like light, and the imagination is a derivative of such activity, then the everlasting, imperishable active mind is nothing more than a physical property of the whole of nature, *id est*, energy. Viewed in this way, the active mind is a form of energy that is defined in a way similar to energy, as we know it, that obeys the first law of thermodynamics. Farabee states a great explanation of the law of thermodynamics as: “The total amount of energy and matter in the Universe remains constant, merely changing from one form to another. The First Law of Thermodynamics (Conservation) states that energy is always conserved, it cannot be created or destroyed. In essence, energy can be converted from one form into another.”<sup>61</sup> The change referred to in this statement must have a beginning, for Aristotle rightly rejects infinite regress on the grounds that nothing is in a state of becoming in the infinite. Anything that exists in the infinite, necessarily always exists there. Therefore, the change that is a constant in the Universe must have an efficient cause. That cause is the Prime Mover and is of the same nature as the active mind, which is the cause of the change from what is potential into actuality. As stated above, something that is in the state of actualizing potentiality is said to be in *energeia*, or actively existing. When the active mind is actually a thinking mind it is the soul movement of a living being. A plant, which is without a thinking mind, is the form (soul or movement) of nutrition and is actualized in various materials. The active mind is superior to the nutritive soul and is therefore the primary energy of the living being which possesses it. As Aristotle is quoted earlier to say, the mind is dominant. Perhaps we do not participate in the nutritive soul in any other way than the fact that we eat plants.

## PHYSICALISM

A weak form of physicalism can be supported by the text. Aristotle does not speak about allegorical tales of the afterlife, as does Plato's Socrates. His thesis on the active mind is clear in that the mind does not remember after death. It is a force that serves to actualize the potential that is found in the material cause of a being. An individual person's final cause is to think and reason. Aristotle places much emphasis on ethics and logic as the ultimate good.

Aristotle uses “topic-neutral” language when speaking about the mind as opposed to when he speaks of the physical phenomenon.<sup>62</sup> This may be because of his limited knowledge of the physical universe, or it may be because change and motion are central to his metaphysics and the four causes of the physical world are most important to the understanding of the mind. As a modern day reader, I am free to impose a non-reductionist physicalism to his philosophy of mind. The mind cannot be reduced to a physical property of the material cause, and is clearly thought to be superior. This leads us to the conclusion that a minimal form of physicalism is a better fit. In the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Stolijar states that the “Argument from Causal Closure” is the idea that “every event that has a cause has a physical cause.”<sup>63</sup> This fits into the idea that the efficient and final causes must have a material cause in order to be realized. Stolijar writes, “ non-reductive physicalism is a form of *emergentism*, the view that supervenience provides a way to interpret the relation between the psychological and the physical in such a way that the psychological is *genuinely novel*.”<sup>64</sup> The property of supervenience proper to the mind is found to be the dominant capacity over the physical body. This is not substance dualism because the human is a composite substance and to lose either the formal or material cause is to cease to be human. The active mind implies the potential

contained in the passive mind. The emergent property of this dualism is discursive thinking and rational discourse; those features of the mind that only appear when the formal cause of the being is dominated by the active mind.



## CONCLUSION

There are parallels to be found in the ideas of contemporary philosophy of mind to the works of Aristotle. In applying terms to his work, great care is taken. The possibility of misinterpretation and categorical mistakes is real. There is much of value to be found in his work on the subject of the mind. The idea that the mind's essential nature is its activity should remain in any philosophy of mind. The philosopher of mind should be mindful of the forms of movement and the four causes of change.

Careful consideration should be made when reading Aristotle as no one part can be taken on its own. Although there are problems with transliteration, the truth can still be found in the whole of his works. Aristotle does not believe in the Platonic world of Forms. The form is always with its material cause and the movement of the physical universe is best defined by the change from potential to actual. This change can be different in different forms, but the universal principle of movement is the same. The form without the material cause is knowledge. The similarities between Plato and Aristotle are not a failure to move beyond the teachings of the master to student, but rather these similarities display the truth of human existence. The commonality between the two philosophers is a sort of intersubjectivity, as the truth reveals itself in the other. The universe moves as a sort of symphony of parts for each of them. It is the final cause that is so different.

The Aristotelian mind is best viewed as a form of functionalism that is a non-reductionist physicalism. As a result of *active and passive mind property dualism*, human reason and rational thinking emerge as an actualization of its form. This is not reducible to its material cause; it is

rather a form of emergentism. At the same time, the mind cannot realize its final cause without the physical body.

The *mind property dualism* of the human soul is a distinct theory from other forms of dualism. It is not the dual nature found in Plato, as Aristotle does not believe that the Platonic Forms can exist independently. It is not substance dualism because the composite form and matter substance is a single substance. It is not dualism of mind and body as Descartes understood it to be, because for Aristotle the body is a necessary component for the composite substance of the individual natural body to be realized. This is related to the four causes, in which the final cause is the ultimate goal of reality. For Aristotle, the most important sense that unity and being are used is in that of actuality. In the actuality of the human mind there is a unity of body and form, and a unity of potential with the active mind. *Mind property dualism* is not the same as traditional property dualism because it is not the consciousness that is the emergent property. Logic, rational discourse and ethical behavior are the emergent properties of the composite substance. These properties are not reducible to any organ. Sense perception is achieved by the organ proper to the perception of the object of sense. The absence of a proper organ for the active mind eliminates the possibility of predicate dualism.

What we are left with is two, radically distinct properties of the mind. The active mind, which is unmixed and eternal, that actualizes the potential found in the passive mind. The passive mind contains all the potentiality that is necessary to realize the human capacity for reason and the potential needed to be a human substance. Contemporary notions of embodiment and situated cognition are supported by hylomorphism and the active and passive mind of Aristotle's philosophy of mind.

Aristotle believes that nothing thinks without the active mind. Above, arguments for the possibility for animals to participate in particular kinds of thinking were made in connection to the capacity of imagination. In connecting these two ideas, one might reasonably suggest that Aristotle views the mind of all animals to contain the *active and passive mind property dualism*. The difference between the different kinds of souls would be realized in the composite form, according to the potential found in the material cause. Only when the material cause is the human form does the rational mind emerge.

This is the mind as Aristotle describes it in *De Anima*. Sir Isaac Newton once wrote in a letter, “If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.”<sup>65</sup> Aristotle is such a giant. Although Aristotle may not have all the answers to the philosophy of mind in his work, I firmly object to the suggestion to junk it. There is much more to be learned, and this essay is my *eikos mythos*.

## NOTES

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