

Aristotle
On the Soul
(Translated by Dr. Glen Coughlin)

Book II
Chapter 1

113. Let what was handed down about the soul by our predecessors, then, have been said. Let us begin again as if from the beginning, trying to determine what the soul is and what would be the most common account of it.

114. We say, then, that substance is someone genus of being; [In the *Categories*, Aristotle distinguishes things into substances and accidents: a dog or a rock is substance, their color or size are accidents] of this, one is as matter, which according to itself is not a “this something,” while another is form and species, according to which, right away, “this something” is said, and a third is what is from these. But the matter is potency, the species actuality; and this latter is two-fold, the one as science, the other as considering.

[In the *Physics*, Aristotle uses the example of a statue to manifest the distinction between matter and form. The matter (or stuff out of which) a statue is made is bronze or wood, for example. The form is the shape, say the figure of Plato, and it is this form that makes the bronze to be a statue. The lump of bronze could become almost anything, because it could be molded into different shapes, with different usages. So matter not only is the stuff from which things are made, but it also has the nature of potency, since it can become different things. The form is what makes something be a determinate kind of thing. So, for example, if the wood has one shape it would be called a table, and if it had another it would be called a baseball bat. In addition to matter and form, then, there is what is composed from both, things: both natural and artificial.]

115. Bodies seem to be substances most of all, and of these, the natural ones, for these latter are the principles of the others. Of natural bodies, some have life, while some do not; we call life self-nutrition and growth and diminution.

116. Whence all natural bodies sharing in life will be substances; substance, however, thus, as composite {put together}. But since they are bodies of a certain sort, for they have life, the soul could not be body. For the body is not among things which are according to an underlying, but are rather as underlying and matter. Therefore, it is necessary that the soul be substance as the species of a natural body having life potentially. Substance, however, is actuality. Therefore, soul is the actuality of such a body.

117. But this [actuality] is said in two ways, one as science, the other as consideration. It is clear, therefore, that [the soul is] as science. For it is in the

soul's presence that there are both sleep and waking. But waking is analogous to considering, while sleep is analogous to having science and not using it. But in the same one, science is prior in generation. Whence, the soul is the first actuality of a natural body having life potentially.

118. But such [a body] is what would be organic {would possess tools}. The parts of plants are organs, too, but are very simple, e.g., the leaf is the covering of the pod, while the pod is of the fruit. And the roots are analogous to the mouth. For both take in food.

119. If, however, one must say something common about all souls, it would be the first actuality of an organic natural body.

120. Whence also one need not ask if the soul and the body are one, just as neither does one ask this about wax and its shape, nor, generally, about the matter of each thing and that of which it is the matter...

Chapter 2

125. But since from what is unclear but more apparent comes to be what is clear and more known according to account, one must try once more to approach the soul thus...

127. We say, therefore, taking the beginning of the inquiry, that the ensouled is to be divided from the unsouled by living. But living being spoken of in many ways, even should some one alone of these be present, we call the thing living, like understanding, sensation, motion and standing according to place, moreover, motion according to nutrition, and both diminution and growth.

128. Whence also, all plants seem to live. For there appears in them the having of such a power and principle, through which they receive growth and diminution according to opposite places. For they do not grow up but not down, but likewise in both and all ways; whatever always feeds also lives until the end, as long as they are able to take in food.

129. This power is able to be separated from the others, but it is impossible, in mortal things, that the others be separated from this one. This is apparent in plants. For not one other power of the soul is present in these. Living, therefore, is present in living things through such a principle.

130. But an animal lives first through sensation. For even things which do not move or switch place, but do have sensation, we call animals and not only living.

131. Of sense, touch is present in all first. Just as the nutritive power is able to be separated from touch and from all sensation, so touch [can be separated] from the other senses. We call the nutritive power that part of the soul in which even plants share. But all animals appear to have the sense of touch.

132. We will say later through what cause each of these [facts] occurs. Now, however, let this much alone be said, that the soul is the principle of the things named, and is defined by these: by the powers of nutrition, sensation, thinking, and motion...

138. Since, however, that by which we live and sense is said in two ways, just as that by which we know (we say it is science and the soul, for we speak of knowing by each of these), likewise also that by which we are healthy is, one, by health and, the other, by some part of the body or even by the whole. Of these, science and health are form and some species and account and as the act of the receptive, one of the scientific power, the other of the healable. For it seems the act of doers is present in what suffers and is disposed. But the soul is this, that by which first we live and sense and think; whence, it would be some account and species, but not matter and underlying. For, substance being said in three ways, as we said, of which ways one is species, one matter, and one what is from both, and of these, the matter is potency, while the species is actuality, since what is from both is the ensouled, the body is not the actuality of the soul, but the latter is [the actuality] of some body.

139. And because of this fact those assume well to whom it seems that the soul is neither without body nor is some body. For it is not a body, but something of a body...

Chapter 3

141. Of the aforesaid powers of the soul, all are present in some, as was said, some of them are in some, and one alone in some. We call powers the nutritive, sensitive, appetitive, motive according to place, and the thinking power.

142. The nutritive alone is present in plants, but in others both this and the sensitive. But if the sensitive, also the appetitive. For appetite is desire and anger and will. All animals, however, have one of the senses, touch. But in whatever sensation is present, in this pleasure and pain and the pleasant and the painful [are present], while in whatever these things are, desire is also. For this is appetite for the pleasant...

145. Whence one must ask about each, what is the soul of each, as what is the soul of the plant and what of man or of beast...

Chapter 4

147. It is necessary, however, for one intending to make an inquiry about these

sorts of soul, to grasp what each of these is, and then to seek out thus the things following and the others [connected with them].

148. Yet one needs to say what each of these is, as what the intellectual power or the sensitive power or the nutritive is; moreover, one must first say what understanding is and what sensing is. For the works and the deeds are prior to the powers in account. If so, however, one must first have considered the things corresponding to these [the works and deeds]; due to the same cause, one ought to determine first about these, as about food and the sensible and the intelligible.

149. Whence, one must speak first about food and generation. For the nutritive soul is even in the other [living things], and is the first and most common power of the soul, according to which living is in all living things, and the works of which soul are generating and using food...

161. However, since the same power of the soul is nutritive and generative, it is necessary to determine about food first, for by this work it is separated from the other powers of the soul.

162. It seems that the contrary is food for the contrary, not, however, all for all, but whichever of the contraries not only have generation from each other, but also growth. For many things come to be from each other, but not all are amounts, as health [comes] from illness...

164. Whether the food is what is finally added or what is first makes a difference. If both, the one undigested, the other digested, in both ways it might be called food. For as undigested, contrary is fed by contrary, while as digested, like by like. Whence it appears that in some way both [parties] speak rightly and not rightly.

165. Since no thing that does not share in life feeds, the ensouled body, as ensouled, would be what is fed. Whence also food is relative to the ensouled, and not accidentally...

168. Whence such a principle of the soul is a power such as to conserve the one having it, as such, while food helps it to be at work. Whence, deprived of food, it is not able to exist.

169. Since there are three things, what is fed, that by which it is fed, and the one feeding, the one feeding is the first soul, what is fed is the body having this soul, that by which it is fed is the food...

171. In outline, therefore, what food is has been said. Later, it must be more certainly treated in the proper work.

Chapter 5

172. These things being determined, let us speak in common about every sense. Sense occurs in being moved and suffering, as was said. For it seems to be a sort of alteration....

180. Neither is suffering simple, [that is, there is more than one meaning of suffering or alteration] but one sort is a certain destruction due to the contrary, while another sort is rather the preserving of a being in potency by a being in actuality and by something similar in the way that potency is related to actuality. [When cold water is heated it changes from being cold to being hot, and that change necessarily results in a kind of ‘destruction’ because the coldness of the water must cease to be if water is to become hot. However, when a house builder begins to build something at the start of the day, a change has occurred, but is there a ‘destruction’?]

181. For the one who has knowledge comes to be considering, which change is either not altering (for the progress is into itself and into actuality) or is a different kind of alteration. Whence, it is not well to say that the one judging, when he judges, is altered, as neither is the house builder when he builds. Therefore, it is right that leading one who understands and judges into actuality from being in potency not have [the name] “teaching” but a different name.

182. One must say either that one who, from being in potency, learns and grasps knowledge by means of one who is in actuality and capable of teaching does not suffer, as was said, or that there are two modes of alteration, the one a change to the privative disposition and the other to the state and nature...

Chapter 12

254. One must grasp, generally, about all sense, that sense is what is receptive of the sensible species without the matter, as wax receives the sign of the signet ring without the iron and the gold. However, it takes the golden or the brazen sign, but not as gold or bronze. Likewise, each sense suffers by what has color or flavor or sound, but not insofar as each of those things is named, but insofar as it is of such a sort, and according to its account.

255. The first sensitive thing is that in which there is such a power. They are therefore the same, but their being is different. For what is sensing would be a certain magnitude; not, indeed, that to be sensitive nor the sense [itself] is a magnitude, but this is a certain account and power of that magnitude.

256. It is apparent, however, from these [considerations], why the excesses of the sensibles sometimes destroy the sense organs. For if the motion be more powerful than the sense organ, it dissolves the ratio, but this was the sense, just as, striking the chords strongly, the concord and tone [are destroyed]. And [it is apparent] why plants, having some part of soul and suffering something by the tangible, do not sense. For they are cooled and heated. For the cause is that they do not have a mean, nor such a principle as to receive the species of the sensibles, but they suffer with the matter.

257. However, one will be at a loss as to whether what is unable to smell could suffer something by an odor, or what is not able to see by color, and likewise in the other cases.

258. If an odor is what can be smelt, if it brings something about, an odor brings about the sensation of smell. Whence, none of the things which cannot smell can suffer something by an odor. The same argument [applies] also in the other cases. Nor in the case of what is able, except insofar as each is sensitive.

259. At the same time this is clear thus: for neither light and darkness nor sound nor odor brings about anything in bodies, but that in which these are brings about something, as air with thunder splits wood.

260. But the tangible and flavors bring something about. For if not, by what would the unsouled suffer and be altered?

261. Will others also, therefore, bring something about? Or is it that not all bodies can suffer by odor and sound, and those that suffer are indeterminate and do not remain, such as air, for it smells as if suffering something.

262. What, therefore, is smelling except suffering something? Or is not smelling also sensing, while the air, suffering quickly, becomes sensible?