

PHILOSOPHY 115  
PHILOSOPHY OF THE HUMAN PERSON  
HANDOUT #5

PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE SUMMARY

(Problem)	Democritus	Aristotle	Plato
Reality—what kinds of thing exist	Atoms & the Void (=occupied space & empty space)	all kinds of natural objects (substances) —minerals, plants, animals, man each substance a matter-form composite	things & forms (ideas) (=sensible things & intelligible things) forms are more real than sensible objects.
Existence as a particular kind of thing or with a particular feature	particular arrangements of atoms (atoms vary in shape & rotation, but not in kind) features of perceptible world explained in terms of interaction of atoms	substantial or accidental form in appropriate matter	participation in particular forms
Motion & Change	motion into empty space all change is local motion of atoms qualitative change is rearrangement of atoms generation & corruption is congregation & dispersal of atoms	four kinds of change—substantial & accidental (quantitative, qualitative, locomotion) principles of change—matter, form, privation four kinds of cause—matter, form, agent, end	motion—not seen as separate problem change— ceasing to participate in one form coming to participate in another hence, intelligible forms are causally responsible for what happens in the sensible world
The composition of man; the soul & death; immortality	man as a collection of atoms body—collection of atoms soul—collection of a particular kind of atoms (highly mobile, located throughout the body) death is dispersal of the soul atoms immortality not possible	(like any other substance) composite of matter & form the body = matter the soul = form of the living thing	man as composite of ... body—in realm of sensible since it has access to sensible soul—in realm of intelligible since it has access to intelligible death as separation of body & soul soul itself does not cease to exist
Human activities & capacities: Physiological Processes Sensation Knowledge	incipiently mechanistic account of physiological processes sensible qualities are a matter of convention; knowledge of them is obscure properties of the atoms are real; knowledge of them is genuine knowledge grounded in senses but must transcend them	nutritive powers (growth & reproduction) sensitive powers (internal & external) desiderative powers (sense appetites [emotions] & rational appetites [will]) locomotion intellectual powers (active intellect, passive intellect)	no discussion of physiological senses as obstacle to true knowledge they present reality obscurely they distract us from the pursuit of knowledge forms are the (only) proper object of knowledge they are known before this life forgotten at birth learning as recollection (possible, but difficult) access easier after separation from body

