

# Philosophy of the Human Person

## Lecture #21

### Aristotle on Man

Man as a composite of body & soul

Aristotle differs from Democritus—since these are different kinds of things  
he also differs from Plato—since these are not independently existing things  
(substances)

this composition is not...

unique to human beings (as some contemporary Christians might think)  
nor is it shared only with animals or living things (as Plato would have held)  
rather it is an instance of the general principle that all natural beings are  
composites

body-soul composition as an instance of matter-form composition  
the composite is the real person

contrast Plato, for whom the soul is the real person

The soul

definition—the substantial form of an organic body  
or, the first act of a living being

it is non-material, since form is different from matter  
but it is not a non-material *thing* in the sense of a non-material substance  
nor is the human soul, by itself, a human person

general kinds

since the soul is the substantial form of an organic body and there are lots of  
kinds of organic body, there are lots of kinds of soul

vegetative souls in plants

bringing the powers of  
nutrition & reproduction  
growth

animal souls in animals

bringing (in addition to the vegetative powers) the powers of  
sensation (external & internal)  
appetite (or desire or emotion)  
locomotion (i.e., the ability to move oneself)

human souls

bringing (in addition to the vegetative and animal powers) the powers of  
intellect  
will

(the claim that these are really distinct from the animal powers is the subject of the next block of the course)

### The body

not a prison or an instrument of the person

the material component of the person

not a substance separate from the soul, but with the soul, a principle of the human person

### Death

separation of body & soul

not a mere dispersal of atoms as for Democritus

but, since body & soul do not exist as substances, not just a separation of previously joined things either

a substantive change

what persists through a substantive change is just the matter

most forms (including plant & animal souls) can only exist as the form of a particular body

when such a thing undergoes the substantial change of ceasing to exist, the form no longer “informs” the matter & itself ceases to exist

the human soul (Aristotle suggests & Aquinas argues) is different

because of the kind of powers it has, it can exist even separate from a body

the arguments for this will be examined in the next block of the course