



Grades of the Soul Aristotle — Psychology 2.3

Some organisms possess all the capacities of the soul mentioned, as we have said, others possess some only, and some possess one alone. These capacities we mentioned as the nutritive, the appetitive, the locomotive, and the intellective. The nutritive alone belongs to plants; this and the sensitive to other organisms. But if any organism has sensation it also has appetite, for desire, anger, and volition are phases of appetite; and all animals have one of the senses — touch; but those which have any sensation know pleasure and pain, the sweet and the bitter, and whatever has these has desire also; for this is a longing for the pleasant. In addition they have the nutritive sense; for touch is the sense involved in nutrition, and all animals are nourished by what is dry or moist, warm or cold; and touch is the sense for perceiving these, and of other things incidentally. Sound, color, and smell do not contribute anything to nourishment. But taste is a variety of touch. Hunger and thirst are forms of desire: hunger — for the dry and warm, thirst — for the cold and moist. And taste is a kind of relish to these. We shall have to go into more detail regarding these later, but now let it suffice to say that appetite belongs to animals having the sense of touch. As to mental imagery the situation is not clear, and will have to be investigated later. To some in addition belongs the power to move from place to place, and to others also understanding and reason, — as to men, and to other species on the same level or of higher rank, if such there be.

Evidently one might formulate a single conception of soul in the same manner as of ‘form’. For as in the one case there is no form beside the triangle, etc., so there is no ‘soul in general’ beyond those mentioned. And as there would be a common definition in the case of the forms, one which would fit all, but not peculiar to any one form, so in the case of the types of soul mentioned. Wherefore it would be ridiculous both in this case and in other similar cases to seek a common conception which would be an appropriate description of no real thing nor accord with anything of any particular and specific kind, but would ignore all such. There is an analogy between the properties of ‘forms’ and the facts regarding the soul. For the more elemental is involved in the derivative in the case both of forms and of living beings, as the triangle in the square, and the nutritive capacity in the sensitive. So we must examine in each separate case what is the nature of the soul of each, as of the plant, and of man, or of an animal. We must consider why they stand in this succession. For without the nutritive the sensitive does not exist. But the nutritive is separate from the sensitive in plants. Again none of the other senses exists without that of touch, but touch does exist without the others. For many animals have neither sight nor hearing nor sense of smell. And of those which have the senses some have the ability to move from place to place, and some have not. And finally a very few have reasoning power and understanding. Those mortal creatures which possess reasoning power possess also all the rest, but reasoning power does not belong to all those which have each of the others. Some have not even mental imagery, though others live by means of this alone. Concerning the theoretical reason a special account must be given. It is evident therefore that this sort of

account, distinct for each particular form is most fitting in the case of the soul.

Aristotle. "Psychology" 2.3. *Readings in Philosophy*. Ed. Albert Edwin Avey. Columbus, OH: R.G. Adams and Company, 1921.

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