

Aristotle's *De Anima*, PHL 416.201
M, 6-9 pm
Arts & Letters 211

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Topic

This class will proceed as a straightforward reading of Aristotle's text on ψυχή, or 'soul.' However, we will first prepare for that reading by considering a few crucial passages from the *Organon*, *Physics*, and *Metaphysics*, so that we have some familiarity with Aristotle's methodology (primarily *dialektikē*), as well as with some of his most fundamental philosophical concepts. After this, we will simply read the text of the *De Anima*, taking up and returning often to such specific themes as form and matter, change/movement as the mode of being of the living thing, potency and actuality/being-at-work, temporality, and the relation between the Aristotelian soul and its world. Every session we will deepen and illuminate *De Anima*'s discussion by comparison to other, pertinent Aristotelian texts.

We will be taking a 'phenomenological' approach, which means nothing terribly technical, abstruse, or mysterious. Indeed, it means simply that we will take Aristotle at his word, which is to say, as a practitioner of *dialektikē* and thus as a student of *endoxa*, these being understood as the *phainomena* or 'appearances' of a given subject matter to everyone, to most, or to the wise. Indeed, Aristotle's confidence in this method indicates that these are taken as always the appearances of *something*. In other words, there are no 'mere appearances,' and no quasi-Cartesian subject/object relation that brings with it the possibility of radical subjective deception or isolation from 'what is.' For Aristotle, the site of appearance is where we begin when we seek to understand our world, and this alone shows him to be a thinker of a (to us) unfamiliar stripe—a distinctly pre-modern thinker. As we read and attempt to think along with him, we will remind ourselves of this fact, and thus of the intellectual distance that both separates us from and (via the tradition we inherit) still binds us to Aristotle today. We will hope to avoid thereby the anachronism of those interpretations that presume to find Cartesian and post-Cartesian problems in Aristotelian philosophizing. To be sure, it is precisely by getting back to an original and emphatically ancient Aristotle that we will discover a thinker with some illuminating contributions to make to contemporary philosophical discussion.

Required Text: Aristotle. *De Anima*, tr. J. Sachs (Santa Fe: Green Lion Press, 2001, 2004).

Recommended Text: M. Nussbaum and A.O. Rorty ed., *Essays on Aristotle's De anima* (Oxford: OUP, 1992).

Schedule (subject to change)

1.9 : Introduction, On Method

1.16 : On Method

1.23 : On Method

1.30 : *De Anima* I

2..6 : *De Anima* II

2.13 : *De Anima* II

2.20 : *De Anima* II

2.27 : *De Anima* III

3. 5: *De Anima* III

3.12 : *De Anima* III

Grade

Class Presentation (15 min. or 2000 words—NO LONGER) 20%

The student should make sure his or her presentation has these three elements: A. Contextualization of the passage being presented, B. Summary of the central argument or discussion, and then C. Focused treatment of the most salient points, the themes most central to Aristotle's thinking, the aspects that bear most on our main reading from *De Anima*, and/or any moments that resonate interestingly with any contemporary philosophical discussions.

Paper (12-15 pages or 3000-3750 words)

60% (DUE Friday 3.16, 5 pm)

These papers should be textually based studies of the *De Anima* (and other Aristotelian texts if necessary), focused on a central issue in Aristotelian "psychology." They should also have Standard Essay Format (an introduction, a body, and a conclusion, or as I was taught, "Tell 'em what you are going to say, say it, and tell 'em what you said."). They should employ standard MLA citation formatting (look it up if you don't know what this means.)

Attendance and Participation

20%

If any student has any condition that might interfere with his or her timely completion of the assignments, please let me know and I will be happy to make arrangements.