**On the Rationality of Soul in Plato and Aristotle**

Nouns for desire: *orexis* (‘appetite’; stretching out toward; generic term for desire in Aristotle)

*epithumia* (‘appetite,’ ‘longing’; having *thumos* toward… ; pleasure-based;

generic term for desire in Plato)

*boulēsis* (‘wish’; oriented by the [apparent] good)

*thumos* (‘spiritedness’; retaliatory or honor-based) – diff. in Plato and Aristotle

*pothos* (‘longing,’ ‘yearning’) – mostly in Plato

*penia* (‘want,’ ‘lack,’ ‘poverty’) – mostly in Plato

*pro(h)airesis* (‘choice’; deliberated desire, infused with thought) – Aristotle

*erōs* (self-transcending desire; intense friendship?) – mostly in Plato, but in

Aristotle the divine moves us through our erotic desire

*philia* (love that unites by similarity; *philein* [v.] = friendship)

*pleonexia* (greediness, excess, advantage) – most famous in *Republic* II

Soul divisions (as shown by internal conflict + the principle of non-contradiction)

**Plato (*Republic* IV and IX):**

Calculative/reasoning (*logistikon*) | loves learning and wisdom [*philosophos*] | human being

Irrational (*alogiston*) = desiring | loves money and gain [*philokerdes*] | snake/hydra

Spirited (*thumos*) | loves victory and honor [*philonikos*] | lion

\*seems allied with desire, but in fact is allied with reason, unless it lacks training (as in a corrupted adult, a child, or another kind of animal)

**Aristotle (political view; NE 1.13):**

Reasoning (*logon ekhon*) – subject of intellectual virtue

Knowing (*epistēmē*) the unchanging

Calculating (*logistikon*) what changes (this distinction from NE 6.1)

Irrational nutritive (*threptikon*)

Irrational desiring (*epithumētikon*, *orektikon*) – subject of character virtue

\*desiring can also be called rational, in the sense that it can listen to reason/be trained

\**thumos* is something else – like courage but not because not aimed at the beautiful; closer to reason than desire, but overly hasty in its reasoning; reactive rather than (like desire) scheming (see NE 3.8, 7.6)

Soul divisions (biological view) in Aristotle

Irrational nutritive (all living things)

Semi-rational perceptive (all animals; coextensive with desiring; often includes locomotion)

Intellective (human; divine)

Deliberative? Appetitive?

attend to the warning at *On the Soul* 3.9.432b5!

**Definition of soul** (Aristotle, *On the Soul* 2.1): the first-level being-at-work-staying-itself of a natural, organized body

(where “first-level” means: what’s involved in simply having knowledge vs. actively considering what one knows)

Alternate translations: “the first actuality of a natural body which has organs” (D.W. Hamlyn); “an actuality of the first kind of a natural organized body” (J.A. Smith, in the *Complete Works*)

Distinct capacities that discriminate (*krinein*) and recognize (*gnorizein*)[[1]](#footnote-1)

Thinking (*noein*)

Conceiving (*hupolēpsis*) – governed by truth and falsity

\*Contemplative intellect (*nous*) – somehow active, somehow receptive

\*Knowing (*epistēmē*)

\*Understanding (*phronein*; *phronēsis* is often translated as ‘prudence’)

Opining (*doxazein*)

Thinking things through (*dianoia*)

Rational imagining (*phantasia logistikē*) – relatively under our control

Perceiving (*aisthēsis*)

Sensory imagining (*phantasia aisthetikē*)

Common sense (*koinē* *aisthēsis*) – for motion, rest, shape, magnitude, number, time

Proper senses (hearing is of sound, sight of color, etc.)

Responses to pleasures and pains, ranked by proximity to the good

(Aristotle, NE VII)

Godlikeness (sainthood?)

1. Virtue (temperance/moderation/self-control: *sōphrosunē*) – enjoy what is right/beautiful and choose it for that reason

*Standing by one’s reasoning, despite inappropriate desire:*

1. Self-restraint (moral strength/self-control/continence: *enkrateia*) – victory over pleasures
2. Endurance (tenacity/resistance: *karteria*) – withstanding pains

*Standing aside from one’s reasoning, due to inappropriate desire:*

1. Softness (*malakia*) – fleeing pains
2. Unrestraint (moral weakness/un-self-controlled/incontinence: *akrasia*) – yielding to pleasures

\*Impetuous/impulsive type: knows in general what is right but responds without first deliberating

\*Weak type: deliberates and reaches the right conclusion but fails to carry it out

1. Vice (dissipation/self-indulgence: *akolasia*) – enjoy what is wrong/ugly and choose it because you think it is right

Animal-likeness (brutishness)

\*Caused by disease

\*Caused by habit (*ethos*) rather than by character (*ēthos*)[[2]](#footnote-2)

1. Items lower on the list are prerequisites for items higher, except within “conceiving.” Taken from *On the Soul* 3.1 and 3.3. Those that also appear in NE VI are starred; from that list, missing here are art [*tekhnē*] and wisdom [*sophia*]; memory [*mnēmē*] and experience [*empeiria*] from *Metaphysics* 1.1 also go unmentioned here. In *On Memory and Recollection*, we find that memory falls under perception (and only incidentally under thinking). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Just as animal-like conditions (i.e., loss or lack of reason) are not simply vice (i.e., perversion of reason) but can resemble it, so disease and habit can cause behavior that resembles unrestraint but is so only by extension of the meaning, since such behavior is not morally blameworthy. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)