

De Anima



Hylomorphism as a Middle Way

Two Approaches to Soul and Body

- ❖ Presocratic Materialism: the soul is identical with the elements which constitute the body; the soul is a body.
- ❖ Platonic Dualism: the soul is an immaterial substance, distinct from the body and imprisoned within it.

Against Materialism

- ❖ The elements and their properties cannot explain the observed facts regarding living substances.
- ❖ So, materialism is explanatorily inadequate.
- ❖ Further, it is possible to have just the elements of the body, without their being alive.
- ❖ So, again, materialism is explanatorily inadequate.

Against Platonic Dualism

- ❖ The falsity of materialism is insufficient to establish Platonic dualism.
- ❖ So, while Plato was right to reject Presocratic materialism, he was wrong to infer on the basis of its falsity that souls are immortal and capable of an independent existence.
- ❖ In a sense, Plato overemphasizes the formal cause.

Hylomorphism

- ❖ “The soul, then, must be a substance inasmuch as it is the form of a natural body that potentially possesses life; and such substance is in fact the realization, so that the soul is the realization of a body of this kind.”

Aristotle's General View

Soul : Body :: Form : Matter

or again

Soul : Body :: Statue Shape : Bronze

Two Consequences

- ❖ It is not necessary to ask whether the soul and body are one.

There is no reason to suppose that the soul can exist without the body.

A Middle Way?

- ❖ Presocratic materialism is indefensible.
 - ❖ Plato was right about that.
- ❖ But the falsity of Presocratic materialism does not establish the truth of Platonic dualism.
 - ❖ Plato was wrong about that.
- ❖ Hylomorphism acknowledges the indefensibility of materialism without embracing the extravagance of dualism.