

Compare Aristotle and Plato's concept of the body and soul.

The two philosophers Plato and Aristotle both had theories concerning the body and soul. Plato was a dualist believing the body and soul were two separate parts to a person. Aristotle however did not. Plato believed that the soul was the single most important part of a person and believed in the importance of moral concepts, ideas and the afterlife. Aristotle however, was more interested in the physical world and the forces adopted within this. He was interested in observation and his theories unlike Plato's were based on the functions of physical things and how well they perform.

Plato, a dualist, believed the body and soul to be two separate entities. The soul he considered immaterial and belonging to the "world of the forms" as part of the "form of the good". He believed that the soul was implanted within a human longing to return back to the "forms". The soul in the opinion of Plato is immortal and unchanging and the only link between a person and full understanding or knowledge. The second part of a person, the body Plato suggests was the physical part enabling us to perform actions such as communication. Forming the outer appearance the body uses senses to make opinions about the physical world in which it belongs. However in Plato's opinion it could not reach the "world of the forms" in any way. The body is constantly changing and therefore not truly real.

Aristotle believed, however that the body and soul are two interdependent parts to a human as they support and rely on each other. One example used by Aristotle would be movement. He would say that only the body can move, however it needs the soul to be able to move or tell the body what to do, unless accidentally. In this way he implies that without one the other would not be able to perform the tasks it needs. They rely on each other. Therefore Aristotle is saying the two entities are intertwined and belong together and cannot exist optimally without the other. Therefore unlike Plato's ideas suggesting that the "perfect" or morally good part of a person is within the soul or connection to the "form of the good" Aristotle would in fact say that in order to be a morally good person you would have to function in the best way that a human would be intended which would need both the body and the soul.

As with Plato's understanding of the soul Aristotle's understanding is placed in the mind. Although separate and contradicting theories they both agree that the mind is the connection between the body and the soul. Plato believed that the mind was the connection within the physical part of a person that could be used to understand the concepts contained within the soul concerning the "forms". Aristotle believed that the mind connected the soul and body as if the soul itself is divided into separate parts. The section connecting the soul and body would be the "irrational" part. This is where according to Aristotle the material desires and wants would be contained. Plato would disagree with this as he believed the soul had no connection with the physical world whatsoever and that physical wants were merely a distraction from what is really important. Aristotle's explanation of the soul is more detailed than that of Plato's.

Ultimately, the ideas of the body and soul differ between Plato and Aristotle as that they believe the soul have different roles and that Aristotle unlike Plato believes they are more or less inseparable. The similarities lie in the mind being the connection between soul and body.

