DE ANIMA (ON THE SOUL)
Aristotle
Trans. J. A. Smith

BOOK I

402a1-402a9 p. 641
1 · Holding as we do that, while knowledge of any kind is a thing to be honoured and prized, one kind of it may, either by reason of its greater exactness or of a higher dignity and greater wonderfulness in its objects, be more honourable and precious than another, on both accounts we should naturally be led to place in the front rank the study of the soul. The knowledge of the soul admittedly contributes greatly to the advance of truth in general, and, above all, to our understanding of Nature, for the soul is in some sense the principle of animal life. Our aim is to grasp and understand, first its essential nature, and secondly its properties; of these some are thought to be affections proper to the soul itself, while others are considered to attach to the animal owing to the presence of soul.

[...]

402b1-402b18 p. 641
We must consider also whether soul is divisible or is without parts, and whether it is everywhere homogeneous or not; and if not homogeneous, whether its various forms are different specifically or generically: up to the present time those who have discussed and investigated soul seem to have confined themselves to the human soul. We must be careful not to ignore the question whether soul can be defined in a single account, as is the case with animal, or whether we must not give a separate account for each sort of it, as we do for horse, dog, man, god (in the latter case the universal, animal—and so too every other common predicate—is either nothing or posterior). Further, if what exists is not a plurality of souls, but a plurality of parts of one soul, which ought we to investigate first, the whole soul or its parts? It is also a difficult problem to decide which of these parts are in nature distinct from one another. Again, which ought we to investigate first, these parts or their functions, mind or thinking, the faculty or the act of sensation, and so on? If the investigation of the functions precedes that of the parts, the further question suggests itself: ought we not before either to consider the correlative objects, e.g. of sense or thought?

[...]

403a3-403a25 p. 642
A further problem presented by the affections of soul is this: are they all affections of the complex of body and soul, or is there any one among them peculiar to the soul by itself? To determine this is indispensable but difficult. If we consider the majority of them, there seems to be no case in which the soul can act or be acted upon without involving the body; e.g. anger, courage, appetite, and sensation generally. Thinking seems the most probable exception; but if this too proves to be a form of imagination or to be impossible without imagination, it too requires a body as a condition of its existence. If there is any way of acting or being acted upon proper to soul, soul will be capable of separate existence; if there is none, its separate existence is impossible. In the latter case, it will be like what is straight, which has many properties arising
from the straightness in it, e.g. that of touching a bronze sphere at a point, though straightness
divorced from the other constituents of the straight thing cannot touch it in this way; it cannot be
so divorced at all, since it is always found in a body. It seems that all the affections of soul
involve a body—passion, gentleness, fear, pity, courage, joy, loving, and hating; in all these
there is a concurrent affection of the body. In support of this we may point to the fact that, while
sometimes on the occasion of violent and striking occurrences there is no excitement or fear felt,
on others faint and feeble stimulations produce these emotions, viz. when the body is already in a
state of tension resembling its condition when we are angry. Here is a still clearer case: in the
absence of any external cause of terror we find ourselves experiencing the feelings of a man in
terror. From all this it is obvious that the affections of soul are enmattered accounts.

[... selections from chapter 4 follow ...]

408a30-408a33 p. 650
That the soul cannot either be a harmony, or be moved in a circle, is clear from what we have
said. Yet that it can be moved incidentally is, as we said above, possible, and even that it can
move itself, i.e. in the sense that the vehicle in which it is can be moved, and moved by it; in no
other sense can the soul be moved in space.

408a34-408b17 p. 651
More legitimate doubts might remain as to its movement in view of the following facts. We
speak of the soul as being pained or pleased, being bold or fearful, being angry, perceiving,
thinking. All these are regarded as modes of movement, and hence it might be inferred that the
soul is moved. This, however, does not necessarily follow. We may admit to the full that being
pained or pleased, or thinking, are movements (each of them a being moved), and that the
movement is originated by the soul. For example we may regard anger or fear as such and such
movements of the heart, and thinking as such and such another movement of that organ, or of
some other; these modifications may arise either from changes of place in certain parts or from
qualitative alterations (the special nature of the parts and the special modes of their changes
being for our present purpose irrelevant). Yet to say that it is the soul which is angry is as if we
were to say that it is the soul that weaves or builds houses. It is doubtless better to avoid saying
that the soul pities or learns or thinks, and rather to say that it is the man who does this with his
soul. What we mean is not that the movement is in the soul, but that sometimes it terminates in
the soul and sometimes starts from it, sensation e.g. coming from without, and reminiscence
starting from the soul and terminating with the movements or states of rest in the sense organs.

408b18-408b32 p. 651
But thought seems to be an independent substance implanted within us and to be incapable of
being destroyed. If it could be destroyed at all, it would be under the blunting influence of old
age. What really happens is, however, exactly parallel to what happens in the case of the sense
organs; if the old man could recover the proper kind of eye, he would see just as well as the
young man. The incapacity of old age is due to an affection not of the soul but of its vehicle, as
occurs in drunkenness or disease. Thus it is that thinking and reflecting decline through the decay
of some other inward part and are themselves impassible. Thinking, loving, and hating are
affections not of thought, but of that which has thought, so far as it has it. That is why, when this vehicle decays, memory and love cease; they were activities not of thought, but of the composite which has perished; thought is, no doubt, something more divine and impassible. That the soul cannot be moved is therefore clear from what we have said, and if it cannot be moved at all, manifestly it cannot be moved by itself.

**412a1-412a5** p. 656

BOOK II

1 · Let the foregoing suffice as our account of the views concerning the soul which have been handed on by our predecessors; let us now make as it were a completely fresh start, endeavouring to answer the question, What is soul? i.e. to formulate the most general possible account of it.

**412a6-412a11** p. 656

We say that substance is one kind of what is, and that in several senses: in the sense of matter or that which in itself is not a this, and in the sense of form or essence, which is that precisely in virtue of which a thing is called a this, and thirdly in the sense of that which is compounded of both. Now matter is potentiality, form actuality; and actuality is of two kinds, one as e.g. knowledge, the other as e.g. reflecting.

**412a12-412a17** p. 656

Among substances are by general consent reckoned bodies and especially natural bodies; for they are the principles of all other bodies. Of natural bodies some have life in them, others not; by life we mean self-nutrition and growth and decay. It follows that every natural body which has life in it is a substance in the sense of a composite.

**412a18-412a26** p. 656

Now given that there are bodies of such and such a kind, viz. having life, the soul cannot be a body; for the body is the subject or matter, not what is attributed to it. Hence the soul must be a substance in the sense of the form of a natural body having life potentially within it. But substance is actuality, and thus soul is the actuality of a body as above characterized. Now there are two kinds of actuality corresponding to knowledge and to reflecting. It is obvious that the soul is an actuality like knowledge; for both sleeping and waking presuppose the existence of soul, and of these waking corresponds to reflecting, sleeping to knowledge possessed but not employed, and knowledge of something is temporally prior.

**412a27-412b9** p. 656

That is why the soul is an actuality of the first kind of a natural body having life potentially in it. The body so described is a body which is organized. The parts of plants in spite of their extreme simplicity are organs; e.g. the leaf serves to shelter the pericarp, the pericarp to shelter the fruit, while the roots of plants are analogous to the mouth of animals, both serving for the absorption of food. If, then, we have to give a general formula applicable to all kinds of soul, we must describe it as an actuality of the first kind of a natural organized body. That is why we can dismiss as unnecessary the question whether the soul and the body are one: it is as though we
were to ask whether the wax and its shape are one, or generally the matter of a thing and that of which it is the matter. Unity has many senses (as many as 'is' has), but the proper one is that of actuality.

**412b10-412b24 p. 657**
We have now given a general answer to the question, What is soul? It is substance in the sense which corresponds to the account of a thing. That means that it is what it is to be a body of the character just assigned. Suppose that a tool, e.g. an axe, were a natural body, then being an axe would have been its essence, and so its soul; if this disappeared from it, it would have ceased to be an axe, except in name. As it is, it is an axe; for it is not of a body of that sort that what it is to be, i.e. its account, is a soul, but of a natural body of a particular kind, viz. one having in itself the power of setting itself in movement and arresting itself. Next, apply this doctrine in the case of the parts of the living body. Suppose that the eye were an animal—sight would have been its soul, for sight is the substance of the eye which corresponds to the account, the eye being merely the matter of seeing; when seeing is removed the eye is no longer an eye, except in name—no more than the eye of a statue or of a painted figure. We must now extend our consideration from the parts to the whole living body; for what the part is to the part, that the whole faculty of sense is to the whole sensitive body as such.

**412b25-413a3 p. 657**
We must not understand by that which is potentially capable of living what has lost the soul it had, but only what still retains it; but seeds and fruits are bodies which are potentially of that sort. Consequently, while waking is actuality in a sense corresponding to the cutting and the seeing, the soul is actuality in the sense corresponding to sight and the power in the tool; the body corresponds to what is in potentiality; as the pupil plus the power of sight constitutes the eye, so the soul plus the body constitutes the animal.

**413a4-413a10 p. 657**
From this it is clear that the soul is inseparable from its body, or at any rate that certain parts of it are (if it has parts)—for the actuality of some of them is the actuality of the parts themselves. Yet some may be separable because they are not the actualities of any body at all. Further, we have no light on the problem whether the soul may not be the actuality of its body in the sense in which the sailor is the actuality of the ship. This must suffice as our sketch or outline of the nature of soul.

[... chapter 2 omitted ...]

**414a29-415a12 p. 659**
3 · Of the psychic powers above enumerated some kinds of living things, as we have said, possess all, some less than all, others one only. Those we have mentioned are the nutritive, the appetitive, the sensory, the locomotive, and the power of thinking. Plants have none but the first, the nutritive, while another order of living things has this plus the sensory. If any order of living things has the sensory, it must also have the appetitive; for appetite is the genus of which desire, passion, and wish are the species; now all animals have one sense at least, viz. touch, and
whatever has a sense has the capacity for pleasure and pain and therefore has pleasant and painful objects present to it, and wherever these are present, there is desire, for desire is appetite of what is pleasant. Further, all animals have the sense for food (for touch is the sense for food; the food of all living things consists of what is dry, moist, hot, cold, and these are the qualities apprehended by touch) all other sensible qualities are apprehended by touch only indirectly. Sounds, colours, and odours contribute nothing to nutriment; flavours fall within the field of tangible qualities. Hunger and thirst are forms of desire, hunger a desire for what is dry and hot, thirst a desire for what is cold and moist; flavour is a sort of seasoning added to both. We must later clear up these points, but at present it may be enough to say that all animals that possess the sense of touch have also appetite. The case of imagination is obscure; we must examine it later. Certain kinds of animals possess in addition the power of locomotion, and still others, i.e. man and possibly another order like man or superior to him, the power of thinking and thought. It is now evident that a single definition can be given of soul only in the same sense as one can be given of figure. For, as in that case there is no figure apart from triangle and those that follow in order, so here there is no soul apart from the forms of soul just enumerated. It is true that a common definition can be given for figure which will fit all figures without expressing the peculiar nature of any figure. So here in the case of soul and its specific forms. Hence it is absurd in this and similar cases to look for a common definition which will not express the peculiar nature of anything that is and will not apply to the appropriate indivisible species, while at the same time omitting to look for an account which will. The cases of figure and soul are exactly parallel; for the particulars subsumed under the common name in both cases—figures and living beings—constitute a series, each successive term of which potentially contains its predecessor, e.g. the square the triangle, the sensory power the self-nutritive. Hence we must ask in the case of each order of living things, What is its soul, i.e. What is the soul of plant, man, beast? Why the terms are related in this serial way must form the subject of examination. For the power of perception is never found apart from the power of self-nutrition, while—in plants—the latter is found isolated from the former. Again, no sense is found apart from that of touch, while touch is found by itself; many animals have neither sight, hearing, nor smell. Again, among living things that possess sense some have the power of locomotion, some not. Lastly, certain living beings—a small minority—possess calculation and thought, for (among mortal beings) those which possess calculation have all the other powers above mentioned, while the converse does not hold—indeed some live by imagination alone, while others have not even imagination. Reflective thought presents a different problem.

415a13-415a13 p. 660
It is evident that the way to give the most adequate definition of soul is to seek in the case of each of its forms for the most appropriate definition.

415a14-415a22 p. 660
4 · It is necessary for the student of these forms of soul first to find a definition of each, expressive of what it is, and then to investigate its derivative properties, &c. But if we are to express what each is, viz. what the thinking power is, or the perceptive, or the nutritive, we must go farther back and first give an account of thinking or perceiving; for activities and actions are prior in definition to potentialities. If so, and if, still prior to them, we should have reflected on
their correlative objects, then for the same reason we must first determine about them, i.e. about food and the objects of perception and thought.

415a23-415b8 p. 661
It follows that first of all we must treat of nutrition and reproduction, for the nutritive soul is found along with all the others and is the most primitive and widely distributed power of soul, being indeed that one in virtue of which all are said to have life. The acts in which it manifests itself are reproduction and the use of food, because for any living thing that has reached its normal development and which is unmitigated, and whose mode of generation is not spontaneous, the most natural act is the production of another like itself, an animal producing an animal, a plant a plant, in order that, as far as its nature allows, it may partake in the eternal and divine. That is the goal towards which all things strive, that for the sake of which they do whatsoever their nature renders possible. The phrase 'for the sake of which' is ambiguous; it may mean either the end to achieve which, or the being in whose interest, the act is done. Since then no living thing is able to partake in what is eternal and divine by uninterrupted continuance (for nothing perishable can for ever remain one and the same), it tries to achieve that end in the only way possible to it, and success is possible in varying degrees; so it remains not indeed as the self-same individual but continues its existence in something like itself—not numerically but specifically one.

415b9-415b11 p. 661
The soul is the cause or source of the living body. The terms cause and source have many senses. But the soul is the cause of its body alike in all three senses which we explicitly recognize. It is the source of movement, it is the end, it is the essence of the whole living body.

415b12-415b14 p. 661
That it is the last, is clear; for in everything the essence is identical with the cause of its being, and here, in the case of living things, their being is to live, and of their being and their living the soul in them is the cause or source. Further, the actuality of whatever is potential is identical with its account.

415b15-415b21 p. 661
It is manifest that the soul is also the final cause. For nature, like thought, always does whatever it does for the sake of something, which something is its end. To that something corresponds in the case of animals the soul and in this it follows the order of nature; all natural bodies are organs of the soul. This is true of those that enter into the constitution of plants as well as of those which enter into that of animals. This shows that that for the sake of which they are is soul. That for the sake of which has two senses, viz. the end to achieve which, and the being in whose interest, anything is or is done.

415b22-415b27 p. 661
The soul is also the cause of the living body as the original source of local movement. The power of locomotion is not found, however, in all living things. But change of quality and change of quantity are also due to the soul. Sensation is held to be a qualitative alteration, and nothing
except what has soul in it is capable of sensation. The same holds of growth and decay; nothing grows or decays naturally except what feeds itself, and nothing feeds itself except what has a share of life in it.

[… remainder of ch. 4 and ch. 5 omitted …]

418a7-418a16 p. 665
6 · In dealing with each of the senses we shall have first to speak of the objects which are perceptible by each. The term 'object of sense' covers three kinds of objects, two kinds of which we call perceptible in themselves, while the remaining one is only incidentally perceptible. Of the first two kinds one consists of what is special to a single sense, the other of what is common to any and all of the senses. I call by the name of special object of this or that sense that which cannot be perceived by any other sense than that one and in respect of which no error is possible; in this sense colour is the special object of sight, sound of hearing, flavour of taste. Touch, indeed, discriminates more than one set of different qualities. Each sense has one kind of object which it discerns, and never errs in reporting that what is before it is colour or sound (though it may err as to what it is that is coloured or where that is, or what it is that is sounding or where that is). Such objects are what we call the special objects of this or that sense.

418a17-418a19 p. 665
Common sensibles are movement, rest, number, figure, magnitude; these are not special to any one sense, but are common to all. There are at any rate certain kinds of movement which are perceptible both by touch and by sight.

[… chapters 7-11 on specifics of senses omitted …]

424a18-424a23 p. 674
12 · Generally, about all perception, we can say that a sense is what has the power of receiving into itself the sensible forms of things without the matter, in the way in which a piece of wax takes on the impress of a signet-ring without the iron or gold; what produces the impression is a signet of bronze or gold, but not qua bronze or gold: in a similar way the sense is affected by what is coloured or flavoured or sounding not insofar as each is what it is, but insofar as it is of such and such a sort and according to its form.

424a24-424b19 p. 675
A primary sense-organ is that in which such a power is seated. The sense and its organ are the same in fact, but their essence is not the same. What perceives is, of course, a spatial magnitude, but we must not admit that either the having the power to perceive or the sense itself is a magnitude; what they are is a certain form or power in a magnitude. This enables us to explain why excesses in objects of sense destroy the organs of sense; if the movement set up by an object is too strong for the organ, the form which is its sensory power is disturbed; it is precisely as concord and tone are destroyed by too violently twanging the strings of a lyre. This explains also why plants cannot perceive, in spite of their having a portion of soul in them and being affected by tangible objects themselves; for their temperature can be lowered or raised. The explanation is
that they have no mean, and so no principle in them capable of taking on the forms of sensible objects but are affected together with their matter. The problem might be raised: Can what cannot smell be said to be affected by smells or what cannot see by colours, and so on? Now a smell is just what can be smelt, and if it produces any effect it can only be so as to make something smell it, and it might be argued that what cannot smell cannot be affected by smells and further that what can smell can be affected by it only in so far as it has in it the power to smell (similarly with the proper objects of all the other senses). Indeed that this is so seems clear as follows. Light or darkness, sounds and smells leave bodies quite unaffected; what does affect bodies is not these but the bodies which are their vehicles, e.g. what splits the trunk of a tree is the air which accompanies thunder. But bodies are affected by what is tangible and by flavours. If not, by what are things that are without soul affected, i.e. altered in quality? Must we not, then, admit that the objects of the other senses also may affect them? Is not the true account this, that all bodies are capable of being affected by smells and sounds, but that some on being acted upon, having no boundaries of their own, disintegrate, as in the instance of air, which does become odorous, showing that some effect is produced on it by what is odorous? What is smelling more than such an affection by what is odorous? Is it that air, when affected quickly, becomes perceptible, but that smelling is actually perceiving?

BOOK III

[… chapters 1 and 2 omitted …]

427a17-427b5 p. 679
3 · There are two distinctive peculiarities by reference to which we characterize the soul—(1) local movement and (2) thinking, understanding, and perceiving. Thinking and understanding are regarded as akin to a form of perceiving; for in the one as well as the other the soul discriminates and is cognizant of something which is. Indeed the ancients go so far as to identify thinking and perceiving; e.g. Empedocles says 'For 'tis in respect of what is present that man's wit is increased', and again 'Whence it befalls them from time to time to think diverse thoughts', and Homer's phrase 'For suchlike is man's mind' means the same. They all look upon thinking as a bodily process like perceiving, and hold that like is understood as well as perceived by like, as I explained at the beginning of our discussion. Yet they ought at the same time to have accounted for error also; for it is more intimately connected with animal existence and the soul continues longer in the state of error. They cannot escape the dilemma: either whatever seems is true (and there are some who accept this) or error is contact with the unlike: for that is the opposite of the knowing of like by like.

427b6-427b6 p. 680
But it seems that error as well as knowledge in respect to contraries is one and the same.

427b7-427b27 p. 680
That perceiving and understanding are not identical is therefore obvious; for the former is universal in the animal world, the latter is found in only a small division of it. Further, thinking is also distinct from perceiving—I mean that in which we find rightness and wrongness—rightness in understanding, knowledge, true opinion, wrongness in their opposites; for perception of the
special objects of sense is always free from error, and is found in all animals, while it is possible to think falsely as well as truly, and thought is found only where there is discourse of reason. For imagination is different from either perceiving or discursive thinking, though it is not found without sensation, or judgement without it. That this activity is not the same kind of thinking as judgement is obvious. For imagining lies within our own power whenever we wish (e.g. we can call up a picture, as in the practice of mnemonics by the use of mental images), but in forming opinions we are not free: we cannot escape the alternative of falsehood or truth. Further, when we think something to be fearful or threatening, emotion is immediately produced, and so too with what is encouraging; but when we merely imagine we remain as unaffected as persons who are looking at a painting of some dreadful or encouraging scene. Again within the field of judgement itself we find varieties—knowledge, opinion, understanding, and their opposites; of the differences between these I must speak elsewhere.

427b28-428a4 p. 680
Thinking is different from perceiving and is held to be in part imagination, in part judgement: we must therefore first mark off the sphere of imagination and then speak of judgement. If then imagination is that in virtue of which an image arises for us, excluding metaphorical uses of the term, is it a single faculty or disposition relative to images, in virtue of which we discriminate and are either in error or not? The faculties in virtue of which we do this are sense, opinion, knowledge, thought.

428a5-428a18 p. 680
That imagination is not sense is clear from the following considerations: Sense is either a faculty or an activity, e.g. sight or seeing: imagination takes place in the absence of both, as e.g. in dreams. Again, sense is always present, imagination not. If actual imagination and actual sensation were the same, imagination would be found in all the brutes: this is held not to be the case; e.g. it is not found in ants or bees or grubs. Again, sensations are always true, imaginations are for the most part false. Once more, we do not, when sense functions precisely with regard to its object, say that we imagine it to be a man, but rather when there is some failure of accuracy in its exercise—then it is either true or false. And, as we were saying before, visions appear to us even when our eyes are shut. Neither is imagination any of the things that are never in error: e.g. knowledge or intelligence; for imagination may be false.

428a19-428a19 p. 681
It remains therefore to see if it is opinion, for opinion may be either true or false.

428a19-428b7 p. 681
But opinion involves belief (for without belief in what we opine we cannot have an opinion), and in the brutes though we often find imagination we never find belief. Further, every opinion is accompanied by belief, belief by conviction, and conviction by discourse of reason, while there are some of the brutes in which we find imagination, without discourse of reason. It is clear then that imagination cannot, again, be opinion plus sensation, or opinion mediated by sensation, or a blend of opinion and sensation; this is impossible both for these reasons and because the content of the supposed opinion cannot be different from that of the sensation (I mean that imagination
must be the blending of the perception of white with the opinion that it is white: it could scarcely be a blend of the opinion that it is good with the perception that it is white: to imagine is therefore (on this view) identical with the thinking of exactly the same as what one perceives non-incidentally. But what we imagine is sometimes false though our contemporaneous judgement about it is true: e.g. we imagine the sun to be a foot in diameter though we are convinced that it is larger than the inhabited part of the earth. Thus either while the fact has not changed and the observer has neither forgotten nor lost belief in the true opinion which he had, that opinion has disappeared, or if he retains it then his opinion is at once true and false. A true opinion, however, becomes false only when the fact alters without being noticed.

428b8-428b9 p. 681
Imagination is therefore neither any one of the states enumerated, nor compounded out of them.

428b10-428b16 p. 681
But since when one thing has been set in motion another thing may be moved by it, and imagination is held to be a movement and to be impossible without sensation, i.e. to occur in beings that are percipient and to have for its content what can be perceived, and since movement may be produced by actual sensation and that movement is necessarily similar in character to the sensation itself, this movement cannot exist apart from sensation or in creatures that do not perceive, and its possessor does and undergoes many things in virtue of it, and it is true and false.

428b17-428b26 p. 681
The reason is as follows. Perception of the special objects of sense is never in error or admits the least possible amount of falsehood. Next comes perception that what is incidental to the objects of perception is incidental to them: in this case certainly we may be deceived; for while the perception that there is white before us cannot be false, the perception that what is white is this or that may be false. Third comes the perception of the common attributes which accompany the incidental objects to which the special sensibles attach (I mean e.g. of movement and magnitude); it is in respect of these that the greatest amount of sense-illusion is possible.

428b27-429a2 p. 682
The motion which is due to the activity of sense in these three modes of its exercise will differ; the first kind of derived motion is free from error while the sensation is present; the others may be erroneous whether it is present or absent, especially when the object of perception is far off. If then imagination presents no other features than those enumerated and is what we have described, then imagination must be a movement resulting from an actual exercise of a power of sense.

429a3-429a4 p. 682
As sight is the most highly developed sense, the name phantasia (imagination) has been formed from phaos (light) because it is not possible to see without light.

429a5-429a8 p. 682
And because imaginations remain in the organs of sense and resemble sensations, animals in their actions are largely guided by them, some (i.e. the brutes) because of the non-existence in
them of thought, others (i.e. men) because of the temporary eclipse in them of thought by feeling or disease or sleep.

429a9-429a9 p. 682
About imagination, what it is and why it exists, let so much suffice.

429a10-429a12 p. 682
4 · Turning now to the part of the soul with which the soul knows and (whether this is separable from the others in definition only, or spatially as well) we have to inquire what differentiates this part, and how thinking can take place.

429a13-429a17 p. 682
If thinking is like perceiving, it must be either a process in which the soul is acted upon by what is capable of being thought, or a process different from but analogous to that. The thinking part of the soul must therefore be, while impassible, capable of receiving the form of an object; that is, must be potentially identical in character with its object without being the object. Thought must be related to what is thinkable, as sense is to what is sensible.

429a18-429a28 p. 682
Therefore, since everything is a possible object of thought, mind in order, as Anaxagoras says, to dominate, that is, to know, must be pure from all admixture; for the co-presence of what is alien to its nature is a hindrance and a block: it follows that it can have no nature of its own, other than that of having a certain capacity. Thus that in the soul which is called thought (by thought I mean that whereby the soul thinks and judges) is, before it thinks, not actually any real thing. For this reason it cannot reasonably be regarded as blended with the body: if so, it would acquire some quality, e.g. warmth or cold, or even have an organ like the sensitive faculty: as it is, it has none. It was a good idea to call the soul 'the place of forms', though this description holds only of the thinking soul, and even this is the forms only potentially, not actually.

429a29-429b5 p. 682
Observation of the sense-organs and their employment reveals a distinction between the impassibility of the sensitive faculty and that of the faculty of thought. After strong stimulation of a sense we are less able to exercise it than before, as e.g. in the case of a loud sound we cannot hear easily immediately after, or in the case of a bright colour or a powerful odour we cannot see or smell, but in the case of thought thinking about an object that is highly thinkable renders it more and not less able afterwards to think of objects that are less thinkable: the reason is that while the faculty of sensation is dependent upon the body, thought is separable from it.

429b6-429b9 p. 682
When thought has become each thing in the way in which a man who actually knows is said to do so (this happens when he is now able to exercise the power on his own initiative), its condition is still one of potentiality, but in a different sense from the potentiality which preceded the acquisition of knowledge by learning or discovery; and thought is then able to think of itself.
Since we can distinguish between a magnitude and what it is to be a magnitude, and between water and what it is to be water, and so in many other cases (though not in all; for in certain cases the thing and its form are identical), flesh and what it is to be flesh are discriminated either by different faculties, or by the same faculty in two different states; for flesh necessarily involves matter and is like what is snub-nosed, a this in a this. Now it is by means of the sensitive faculty that we discriminate the hot and the cold, i.e. the factors which combined in a certain ratio constitute flesh: the essential character of flesh is apprehended by something different either wholly separate from the sensitive faculty or related to it as a bent line to the same line when it has been straightened out.

Again in the case of abstract objects what is straight is analogous to what is snub-nosed; for it necessarily implies a continuum: its constitutive essence is different, if we may distinguish between straightness and what is straight: let us take it to be two-ness. It must be apprehended, therefore, by a different power or by the same power in a different state. To sum up, in so far as the realities it knows are capable of being separated from their matter, so it is also with the powers of thought.

The problem might be suggested: if thinking is a passive affection, then if thought is simple and impassible and has nothing in common with anything else, as Anaxagoras says, how can it come to think at all? For interaction between two factors is held to require a precedent community of nature between the factors. Again it might be asked, is thought a possible object of thought to itself? For if thought is thinkable per se and what is thinkable is in kind one and the same, then either thought will belong to everything, or it will contain some element common to it with all other realities which makes them all thinkable.

Thought is itself thinkable in exactly the same way as its objects are. For in the case of objects which involve no matter, what thinks and what is thought are identical; for speculative knowledge and its object are identical. (Why thought is not always thinking we must consider later.) In the case of those which contain matter each of the objects of thought is only potentially present. It follows that while they will not have thought in them (for thought is a potentiality of them only in so far as they are capable of being disengaged from matter) thought may yet be thinkable.
430a10-430a13 p. 684
5· Since in every class of things, as in nature as a whole, we find two factors involved, a matter which is potentially all the particulars included in the class, a cause which is productive in the sense that it makes them all (the latter standing to the former, as e.g. an art to its material), these distinct elements must likewise be found within the soul.

430a14-430a16 p. 684
And in fact thought, as we have described it, is what it is by virtue of becoming all things, while there is another which is what it is by virtue of making all things: this is a sort of positive state like light; for in a sense light makes potential colours into actual colours.

430a17-430a19 p. 684
Thought in this sense of it is separable, impassible, unmixed, since it is in its essential nature activity (for always the active is superior to the passive factor, the originating force to the matter).

430a20-430a26 p. 684
Actual knowledge is identical with its object: in the individual, potential knowledge is in time prior to actual knowledge, but absolutely it is not prior even in time. It does not sometimes think and sometimes not think. When separated it is alone just what it is, and this above is immortal and eternal (we do not remember because, while this is impossible, passive thought is perishable); and without this nothing thinks.