****** 4 Instances of 'Atomists' in Line by Line Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima Vol. 1 Books I & II © 2012 Eugene T. Gendlin**
https://focusing.org/sites/default/files/upload/2022-11/Book%201%20and%202%20-%20Line%20By%20Line%20Commentary%20On%20Aristotle%27s%20De%20Anima.pdf

4 Instance of 'Atomists' (emphasis in the original are in black) (emphasis added in brown and green KH)

1st Instance of 'Atomists'Introduction Page 9 / Page 13 PDF

1. **Space and time** can be variously understood. With a Western outlook one assumes that anything real must appear in the empty kind of space that seems to spread out before us, and in the kind of time that consists of determined moments and would move on even if everything else stood still. But for Aristotle, empty space and absolute time do not exist.

Some commentators say that Aristotle didn't "yet" have our concept of "space." The concept of space preceded Aristotle and was well known in his time. Aristotle argues explicitly against it. The Greek "Atomists" with whom Aristotle contends, assumed the existence of empty space (the "void" in which the atoms move).

We also have to recognize that Aristotle is not assuming determined moments, but rather **deriving** how a determined moment of time comes about. 2.

2, Relativism is fashionable today. The alternative is presumed to be naive realism, the assumption that sensations and concepts are copies of things. Since Aristotle is not a relativist, one easily assumes that his assertions are those of a **naive** realist. But he was quite familiar with relativism. In his Athens many approaches competed. The Sophists taught that one could argue equally well for or against anything. Aristotle wrote a collection of ways to undercut **any** definition (Topics).

We have to see why (he thinks) his own approach goes beyond both naive realism and relativism.

3 The familiar philosophical positions are not exhaustive. We tend to assume that an intelligible view must fall on one side or the other of the familiar philosophical issues. Even when we appreciate both sides, we usually assume that we must choose between the familiar alternatives, when we try to define something. Either view would make sense, but not both.

Aristotle typically doesn't choose. He goes further into each and finds new distinctions that are more precise. Then he often concludes: "In a certain specific sense this and this, but in a different equally specific sense not this and this, but rather that and that." He spells out each of the two senses, but the single result can be odd and more complex than any familiar concept. We must often let him take us to an unfamiliar position.

4. **Matter**: We tend to assume -- but Aristotle denies -- that living things have the same kind of matter as inanimate things. We divide matter down into its ultimate particles, and these can be the same in living and inanimate bodies. Aristotle denies any particles that are not further divisible. Matter does not exist alone, just either in this form or in that form. Only living activity makes the kind of matter that is alive. The De Anima defines the concepts and strategies for Aristotle's science of living things.

2nd Instance of 'Atomists' Book 1 Chapter 2 Page 2 PDF Page 38 (Book 1 Chapter 2 Page 2 PDF Page 38)

GENDLIN : Aristotle devotes distinct parts of the De Anima to movement (III-9-11), and to the senses (II-5 - III-2). He retains these two characteristics of the soul, but adds nutrition and nous.

ARISTOTLE
403b29-31
. . . believing that what is not itself moved cannot originate
Book 2 Chapter I-Page 2
movement in another, **they arrived at the view that soul belongs to the class of things that move.**

GENDLIN : Aristotle will argue that the soul cannot be moved at all. It moves the animal and other things, but it does not move and cannot be moved. Here he points out that most people think that something must itself be moving in order to impart motion to anything else. Aristotle denies this.

ARISTOTLE
403b31-404a5
This is what led Democritus to say that soul is a sort of **fire** and hot; his forms (σχῆμα) and atoms are infinite in number; those which are **spherical** he calls fire and soul, and compares

them to the motes in the air which we see in shafts of light coming through windows; together, these seeds of all sorts he calls the **elements** of the whole of nature. . .

GENDLIN : One major philosophy in Aristotle's time was this early version of the atomist reductionism which has been so successful in our recent centuries (and then left behind by the further development of modern physics). Like our Newtonian classical physics, Democritus proposed rendering everything in the universe as combinations of inanimate **atoms in motion**, and **elements** with certain **geometric** characteristics. But don't take sides. Methods and approaches are not true or false. Each can open a whole realm of avenues that otherwise stay hidden. Aristotle is arguing that something need not move in order to cause motion. He has another way of thinking.

In the next passage notice the word "**nous**" and try to say what it means here.

ARISTOTLE
Similarly also **Anaxagoras** (and whoever agrees with him in saying that **nous set the whole in movement**) declares the moving cause of things to be soul.

GENDLIN : Nous was held to impart motion to the universe. So the word "nous" cannot quite mean what the English words "intellect" or "mind" mean, since those words connote a process that happens only in us. For Anaxagoras (and for Aristotle) "nous" is not only in us. It is not even
Book I Chapter 2 Page 3
primarily in us. Nous originates and is the order of the universe, and exists also in a certain way in us. Aristotle will later give the word "nous" his special, well differentiated meaning, but he will not change the meaning which this ancient word long had in Greek philosophy: something that exists in the whole universe and also in the human soul.

3rd Instance of 'atomists' Book II, Endnote 9. On "Matter" and "Substance" PDF Page 234-235

GENDLIN : But can we identify what Aristotle calls "matter" when the wood does not remain but burns and is turned into fire? What is the matter of wood which is potentially fire? Aristotle

denies the existence of unchanging particles like our carbon or hydrogen atoms that would remain and only be rearranged. For him the "underlying" changeable substratum, which is potentially either wood or fire, has **no characteristics of its own**, and cannot exist separately. It can exist only **either** as wood **or** as fire or in still another form. Alone it is not any existing "this."

What is conserved when the matter changes essentially? For Aristotle, only certain quantitative proportions and relations: So much wood can be turned into just so much fire (De Gen et Cor. II-6, 333a23).

We are accustomed to think of "matter" as particles, identifiable little bodies that retain their own characteristics like electrons, protons, or neutrons. For Aristotle these would not be just matter but rather matter-and-form. What makes something identifiable is its form.

Aristotle denies that there are unchangeable bodies, atoms, or particles. He argues consistently against the Greek Atomists. He says that the most basic elements can change into each other. For him, "matter" in its essential and controlling sense means just changeability, just certain proportional relations when the elements mix, or when they change into each other. When one element changes into another, Aristotle calls it the "destruction" (Latin: "corruptio") of the one element and the "generation" of the other.

ARISTOTLE
"Matter in the chief and controlling sense of the word is the substratum of generation and corruption." Εστὶ δὲ ὕλη μάλιστα μὲν καὶ κυρίως τὸ ὑποκείμελον γενέσεω και φλορᾶς δεκτικόν (DeGen et Cor I-4, 320a2). "Matter qua matter is the capacity to be affected" ἡ δ' ὕλη ᾗ ὕλη παθητικόν (De Gen et Cor I-7, 324b18).

GENDLIN : Aristotle's concept of "just matter" (matter in itself, sometimes referred to as "prime matter," πρώτη ὕλη) can be disturbing to anyone accustomed to the classical Western concept of "matter" even though modern physics has long ago rejected this classical concept. Currently in physics there is no identifiable unchanging matter, only the relationships of equations in which (some of) the basic particles can change. This is more like Aristotle's physics than like Newton's. But one should not read either classical or modern physics into Aristotle. Instead we have to grasp his concept of "matter" as he defines it. There is no inherent reason why change cannot be conceived in terms of quantitative proportional relations rather than in terms of identifiable "stuff" or particles which are only rearranged.

For Aristotle matter fills the cosmos, there being no separable "space" **in** which matter
- Endnotes Page 18 - Book II, Endnote 10. On the "Proof" at 12a16
could exist as separably identifiable; only some form gives matter any identity such that one could speak of "this matter" or "that matter." Matter as such is preserved only as proportional change-relations; so much water can turn into only so much steam.

Aristotle's statement here is important for understanding him throughout, so it needs to be remembered. **He is explicit that matter just as itself is "not a this," i.e., not something that can exist without form.**

Metaphysics VII-3 (1029a1-30) has a more elaborate version of our passage:

ARISTOTLE
Now in one sense we call the substrate matter, in another the shape, and in a third what comes from both. (1029a3).
(τοιοῦτον δὲ τρόπον μέν τινα ἡ ὕλη λέγεται, ἄλλον δὲ τρόπον ἡ μορφή, τρίτον δὲ τὸ ἐκ τούτων.)
... all other things are predicated of substance, but this is predicated of matter. Thus the ultimate substrate is in itself neither a particular thing nor a quantity nor anything else. ... γὰρ ἄλλα τῆς οὐσίας κατηγορεῖται, αὕτη δὲ τῆς ὕλης, ὥστε τὸ ἔσχατον καθ' αὐτὸ οὔτε τὶ οὔτε ποσὸν οὔτε ἄλλο οὐδέν ἐστιν· (1019a23).
"If we adopt this point of view, then, it follows that matter is substance. **But this is impossible**; for both separability [existing on its own] and `thisness' are thought to belong chiefly to substance. ἐκ μὲν οὖν τούτων θεωροῦσι συμβαίνει οὐσίαν εἶναι τὴν ὕλην· ἀδύνατον δέ· καὶ γὰρ τὸ χωριστὸν καὶ τὸ τόδε τι ὑπάρχειν δοκεῖ μάλιστα τῇ οὐσίᾳ, (1029a.26-28).

GENDLIN : See also Appendix, my article "Aristotle on Prime Matter and Mixture.") (See also ENDNOTE 17 below.)

4th Instance of 'Atomists Endnote 40. On Holding the Elements Together (15 B 28) PDF Page 267

GENDLIN : Aristotle rejects the theory of the atomists according to which the atoms of the elements are actually present in a mixture. Aristotle argues that the elements change completely when they join in a "mixture" such as bronze, flesh, or bone. "Mixture" is his concept of the material side of **a further organization** beyond the elements. He argues that even the smallest particle of a mixture is mixture, so that the elements are **not actually present**. To get an element back, one has either to heat or to cool the mixture, and either to liquify or to dry it. Bronze, wood, or a living body **does not consist of actual** fire, air, water, and earth. Each mixture is a new kind of matter. Living matter does not consist of inanimate particles. The living nutritive function determines the making of the matter. Aristotle rejects how Empedocles defines compounds so that the particles retain their identity "like stones in a wall" (De Gen III-7, 334a26).

Aristotle defines bodies by how they move, so that if particles of earth and fire were present in a living body, they would move in opposite directions and it would come apart. But, while a mixture is **a proportion of** the elements going into the mixture, the mixture itself is a unique form of matter in which the elements change utterly and are only potentially (not actually) present.

For Aristotle any natural **body** that has dimensions and limits (for example, a stone) is held together by the continually ongoing activity of its internal heat. A natural body has an internal "nature" which is something "**aside from**" the elements (Meta VIII-3). SEE ALSO ENDNOTE 2 ON SUBSTANCE

Living bodies are generated and maintained not just by heat, but by a soul, i.e., a more complex organization with different powers.