

**PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY:
AN INTRODUCTORY STUDY ON THE NATURE OF THE HUMAN PERSON**

Class 5: The Soul in General; The Vegetative Soul

I. The Soul

- A. The soul is the *substantial form* of the body.
 - 1. Body is the soul as matter is to form.
 - 2. Body – the determined element
 - 3. Soul – the determining element
 - 4. The body is not the being. The soul is not the being. The living, physical being is a *substantial unity* of body and soul.
- B. Powers of the Soul
 - 1. In the reading for today, a *power* “of the soul is defined as the proximate and immediate principle by which the soul operates. A power is thus distinguished:
 - a. From the soul itself, which is the remote principle of operation; and
 - b. From the subject *which* acts, i.e., the composite, man.”
 - 2. The soul is *not* identical with its actions. These powers of the soul are “in potentiality to their actions.” These actions (such as seeing, hearing, understanding, willing) are *accidents*. The soul itself is a substance.
- C. Method for coming to know the *powers* of the soul
 - 1. Activities manifested in the body point to the power of the soul which is their cause which in turn indicate the nature of the being.
 - 2. The second way in which we can know the powers of the soul is through *introspection*. Introspection is the looking into one’s own thoughts, feelings, mental states, and acts; it is self-observation and self-reflection.¹
- D. Defining the *activities* of the soul
 - 1. Object → Activity → Power
 Color → sensing color → ability to sense color
 - 2. Once we thus know the *powers* of a soul, we can determine the *essence or nature* of a soul
- E. Differences between kinds of souls

Kind of Being	Kind of Soul	Powers of the Soul		
		Vegetative	Sensitive	Rational
Human	Rational	X	X	X
Animal	Sensitive	X	X	
Plant	Vegetative	X		

- 1. We have only *one* soul but with three sets of powers.
- 2. The higher the soul, the greater the quantity of being the creature has.
- 3. Vegetative Soul: acts upon itself only
- 4. Sensitive Soul: acts upon itself *and* upon bodies outside of itself
- 5. Rational Soul: acts upon itself and upon bodies outside of itself, *and* can recognize the universality of bodies and can understand the immaterial

¹ Cf. Wuellner, S.J., *A Dictionary of Scholastic Philosophy*

II. The Vegetative Soul

A. Tables taken in substance from those in *Philosophy of Man* (Father Sebastian Walshe, O. Praem.)

→ **POWER OF NUTRITION:**

Living Being (i.e., Plant)	Fire	Stalagmite
Nutrition is necessary to preserve its substance in being	Fuel is necessary to preserve its substance in being	Nutrition is not necessary to preserve its substance in being
Assimilates food into its own substance	Assimilates fuel into its own substance	Does not assimilate or transform external matter into its substance
Uses organs to assimilate food into its own substance	Does not use organs to assimilate fuel	Does not have organs
When damaged, the living substance heals: parts act for the sake of the whole	Parts do not act for the sake of the whole	Parts do not act for the sake of the whole

→ **POWER OF GROWTH:**

Living Being (i.e., Plant)	Fire	Stalagmite
Growth proceeds from an intrinsic principle (grows from the inside out) and by transforming another substance into its own substance	Growth happens by contact with fuel next to the fire. Growth is more by addition than by bringing external matter within itself and transforming it	Growth happens by addition to the outside of the surface
Living things always have some natural limit to their growth	No natural limit	No natural limit

→ **POWER OF REPRODUCTION:**

Living Being (i.e., Plant)	Fire	Stalagmite
Always reproduces same kind of thing in a determinate form	Sometimes produces fire, sometimes another effect, and not in determinate form	Does not reproduce; only breaks into parts
Reproduces from within its own substance by way of a procession or “pushing out” of some part of itself	Produces fire in other things, but not always from within and not always by direct contact	Does not reproduce
Clearly defined generations from one individual to another	No clearly defined generations: “offspring” does not preserve individual or substantial unity	No generations

B. Nutrition and Growth:

1. Nutrition: the power of the soul which enables the body to take in nutrients from the environment.
2. Growth: the nutrition that is assimilated enables the creature to grow and develop, to increase in bodily size and strength—and to tend towards its end.

C. Reproduction: the being is able to transmit life, that is, to generate new members of the species. In rational creatures, we call this *procreation* since there is a rational and volitional element.