

The Psychological dimensions in the writings of Aristotle

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Abstract

Aristotle had such a scientific penetrating mind into various psychological subjects that remind one of modern theories.

A fundamental belief of his (which is generally accepted today) is the psychosomatic unity, and not the dualism of *psyche* and *soma* of previous philosophers. As a result he mentions various conditions which today we call Neurovegetative.

The classification of the mental functions is done by the philosopher basically in the same way as we do today. The description of 'orexeis' (appetites) is interesting, since it coincides with the psychoanalytic notion of instinctual drives, - they are intense wishes, very vehement, they demand immediate satisfaction and act against any reason. As a consequence they often bring about an endopsychic conflict with the result of various types of personalities.

A parallelism with the psychodynamic theories is obvious in the philosopher's description of the three phases of memory: imprinting, retention and recollection. Reference is made of 'repression of images ...in depth', i.e. today's subconscious. In the same text there is an example which points directly to the Freudian free association, used today in psychoanalytic therapy. Similar notions can be found in the description of dreams, regarding the manifest and latent content. Aristotle divides dreams into two types: «Straight» dreams in which latent thoughts and images come directly to the manifest dream and «Distorted» which cannot be understood as they make no sense.

In the aristotelian texts regarding the formation of human personality, one can see a resemblance with today's Bio-psycho-social model: Nature provides the biological functions, mental functions follow forming a psychic profile and society intervenes through laws and education. One can find long descriptions of the characteristics of adolescents, of old people etc.