

# Separability of Intellect in Aristotle

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While there has been much debate over the last few decades whether we can regard Aristotle's concept of the soul as one of prototype of contemporary philosophy of mind, he offers distinctly a claim which is hardly acceptable for modern science, namely, intellect, a part of the human's soul, is separable from the body. This essay aims to clarify the structure of the argument on the separability of intellect in *De Anima* III 4-5 and verify its theoretical basis. In *De Anima*, as well as in his *Corpus*, Aristotle distinguishes the meaning of "separability" (*choristos*), and there are two things from which intellect is separable: body, and other abilities of the soul such as nutrition and sensation. From this viewpoint, we may say that the introductory part of *De Anima* III 4 certainly shows that Aristotle believes that intellect is separable from other abilities of the soul in definition, and *De Anima* III 5 shows active intellect can exist without passive intellect. This structure of the argument may suggest that the role of the rest of *De Anima* III 4 is to prove intellect (including both active and passive) is separable from bodies in place and can exist without bodies. Indeed, one passage in *De Anima* III 4 demonstrates separability of intellect in place by appealing to (his own) biological observation; there is no organ for intellect. Although this observation may be sufficient evidence for the separability of intellect in place, it is still insufficient to prove that intellect can exist without bodies. But at 429a24-b5 Aristotle seems to offer another reason for separability of intellect; intellect is potentially all intellectual objects such as abstract concepts and mathematical ideas, or intellect can become all intellectual objects. The intellectual objects are different from sensational objects because the latter is reducible to the fundamental properties which natural bodies have, whereas the former is independent of the natural bodies. If so, Aristotle's base of the separability of intellect in place is not only the observation, but also his belief on the characteristics of intellectual objects and his psychological idea that intellect accepts all intellectual objects. Further, we can guess the reason why intellect can exist without bodies is that intellect has the ability to accept every property which intellectual objects have, including eternity and imperishability.