

Oral presentation

## Brain (encephalos) in the writings of Aristotle, the Macedonian philosopher

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Aristotle's concept of the soul-body entity is astonishingly similar to today's psychosomatic approach in medicine. His consistently expressed view that "the soul is within the body and cannot exist without it", as well as his conviction that the mental functions manifest themselves through the body demonstrate such an approach. In spite of that, brain as a bodily organ is not considered by the taking part in those processes, but only as "the coldest of all organs keeping the blood's temperature mild". The anatomical description of the brain hemispheres with the surrounding meninges, vessels and skull is for the most part correct and the terminology almost identical with today's Greek medical terms. His physiological theories nevertheless, follow the ancient views of the importance of "hot-cold", "moist-dry" etc and of the role of evaporations ("anathymiases"). The arguments about the substances out of which the brain is composed are very interesting. Mind ("nous") in Aristotle's writings is extensively elaborated on, with many subdivisions, and the term is mostly used to point to the function of thought, is never connected to the brain as a bodily organ. The philosopher's inquisitive tendency, though, in his work "On the soul" ("De anima") leaves no doubt that he always searching for the "one (organ)" which is responsible for the coordination of all mental functions, especially judgement.