

# **The Substance Idea In The Philosophical Greek Thought - A Comparative Study -**

## **Abstract of the paper :**

The paper deals with "The idea of substance in the philosophical greek thought" and discusses the idea of substance for the importance it has - For it occupied the interest of many thinkers and philosophers across the thinking ages since the past and till our present time.

The concept of the idea of substance differs with the difference of ages and philosophers. The philosophers who came before socrates, who are called "The Natural philosophers" related God to Nature as they perceived that Nature was God, and God was Nature. This is what is known as "The doctrine of unity of existence".

God or Nature is everything and is the essence. Thus, we find those philosophers searched for this substance and represented it in natural matters.

Thales, for example, considered that substance is water and considered it the first substance that produces everything.

Anaximander, on the other hand, believed that water is not appropriate to be substance for things but the first matter and substance of things is the unlimited apeiron.

Anaximenes, a third Milesian philosopher, said that substance is unlimited air. From it all the existing things resulted from it due to the

extreme importance of air to every being and as it involves the whole world.

Pythagorism, yet differs in its thinking of substance from the previous philosophers. Thus, it could be considered the first attempt to life from the matter on which Aionia philosophers had stopped. It tried to interpret the world with clear laws due to its concern with mathematics and music. Thus, it believed that numbers are the substance of things due to the existence of a system or order and harmony among things which were because of the existence of the numbers that regulate the relations or proportions among things and achieved harmony among them.

Then Parmenides rejected the simple previous theories of the first substance. He believed that the first substance should be agod whose function was keeping the general order for the whole universe whose substance represented the basic and only positive attribute which is the existence. Parmenides distinguished between existence and non-existence. He argued that the only thing that could be thought of was existence, and that non-existence, on the other hand, could not be thought of because it did not exist. This existence or the first substance of things was intangible and could be reached by mind only. Thus the distinction between the sense and mind resulted for the first time.

The importance of the role of mind in acquiring knowledge became prominent.

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The first substance or the origin of matters, according to Anaxagoras, was the small seeds that the existing things appeared or concealed from them by mixing or separation. These seeds were found in every body with different proportions and determined according to that difference the type of every body. From this, the difference between thing resulted.

According to Anaxagoras, these small seeds which constituted the universe were not perceived unless they accumulated.

They contained all the known attributes - as hot, cold, dry, moisture, sweet, bitter.... etc. They were similar in the sense that each of them include a proportion of attributes that differed from the proportion of the same attributes in another seed, As in every thing, there was a part from every other thing.

Then Empedocles considered that the two opposites, hot and cold, were two substance of the universe. He argued about four substances or elements : Fire, air, water, and dust. Yet he considered them two substances only - hot and cold - Hot contained fire and the cold contained air, water and dust. These elements were called roots or the elements. They are water, air, fire, and dust. These four principles, equally, did not mix each other and did not lead each other. Matters were formed by the inclusion or separation of these things in different proportions. These elements were gathered and separate by two big laws which are love and hatred.

After Empedocles, the atomists - Leucippus and Democritus - came. They argued that the atoms were of indefinite number and moved in the

unlimited space, By their fall on each other some things appeared and by their separation somethings spoiled.

Heraclitus, on the other hand noticed that everything changed permanently, but according to a fixed unchanged law - Logos - This logos was the substance of things and was represented in the divine fire which Heraclitus Considered the first principle or substance which produced everything in the world.

This for the philosophers who came before Socrates. Socrates differed from those natural philosophers who preceded him. He did not consider Nature as the substance of things because he imagined that the Natural world was made by gods only. So, he saw that the first substance was the god of this universe.

This god was Zeus whom the Greeks placed in a rank superior to other gods. They considered the rest of gods mere tools that Zeus made help of in creating the existence.

Then Plato came, and he was a student of Socrates. He considered the substance to be specific entities such as an existing mind or reason in the world of morals.

These morals or substances were like gods for Plato. These substances were fixed and unchanged, old, and permanent. Above those gods there was the superior god or creator who shaped things with his speculation to the various higher concepts.

The theory of self of Plato was related closely to the theory of morals as he considered the self to be the connecting point between two worlds. The world of morals and the world of body or senses

which it tried to salvage from, as it was considered a soul substance from the reality of things. Thus, it sought to release itself from the prison of the body to return to its first world. Aristotle differed from Plato in this concern. Science, for Aristotle applied to concepts as science was a conscious knowledge with what was general and total - Yet, Aristotle tended a contracted tendency for Plato we reached the total through the partial.

The general according to Aristotle had no existence except through the specific by this Aristotle declined the doctrine of Plato's substance - the Platonic example - from the sky to the earth and descended from the world of morals and put it in the partial things, the Platonic example, in the eyes of Aristotle, was the general nearing in which several partial subjects participated.

Thus, the concept of substance differed between Aristotle and Plato. Aristotle's substance in the first place was from the entity and image together. It was the felt individual, the real existence was the image, the matter for Aristotle was the basis that measured something and on which change took place. The image, on the other hand, is the attributes that made the change in the matter when mixed with it when the matter met its image, the image of the thing would be its reality.

Aristotle argued that the self had various potentialities in man : the vegetable, animal, and reasonable potentialities. The speaking mind or self was in its beginning a sheer strength. The effective mind was that came out by force to be a mind. Aristotle gave that effective mind the same attributes which he gave to what we might call God, or the first mover.

Aristotle placed the divine substance on the top of existence which was a moving substance. It was a sheer image and action. That first mover moved the world without being moved.

Things or matters moved after it related closely to that first mover, the movement took place. Consequently, the Universe was produced and the other kinds of movements. That first mover or God could not be finite. He is permanent and fixed. He moved the world without being moved. Thus, Aristotle differed from Plato in the substance concept.

But the Zeno believed that the first substance was the absolute mind or God, and that he is tangible. They believed he existed everywhere in the whole world to move each part of its parts, and their belief in the theory of unity of existence which made God and the world one thing.

Epicurus believed that gods lived for themselves only in an orb outside the universe. The idea of substance was represented in the atoms. The atoms did not differ from the other unless the shape and the amount and the weight. Through this difference, the different atoms were combined together with some bodies. These atoms moved to birth continuously.

The paper includes an introduction, conclusion and four sections :

- 1 - The First Chapter is entitled : The Concept of substance of some philosophers before Socrates :