

ALEXANDER OF APHRODISIAS AND ARISTOTLE'S *DE ANIMA*: WHAT'S IN A COMMENTARY?

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This paper is a report on work in progress which will hopefully lead to a collection of testimonia for Alexander's lost commentary on *De anima*. A reconstruction of this commentary was once contemplated by Paul Moraux, who printed a partial collection of fragments as an appendix to his dissertation based monograph on the intellect.¹ Later on, Moraux outlined some problems and prospects of a more comprehensive study, in an essay published as a section devoted to Alexander's *De anima* commentary in the posthumous volume iii of *Aristotelismus bei den Griechen* devoted to Alexander, published by J. Wiesner and R. W. Sharples in 2001.² I would like to address some preliminary questions concerning the scope and tasks of such a study, including, in particular, the questions of the sources available for the reconstruction of this commentary and of the potential interest of such a study for the understanding of Alexander's views on the soul. I shall begin with a brief survey of sources which should make it clear that there is room for both kinds of questions, and then discuss two samples of Alexander's argument in the commentary which hopefully will provide some moderately reassuring answers.

I.

The sources for Alexander's lost commentary include two main groups of texts: those coming from Alexander and his circle and those coming from the later Greek tradition of *De anima* commentaries.³ Secondary tradition generally can provide good grounds for a reconstruction of a lost early commentary, because of its conservatism due to the focus provided by the text commented upon, and also because of its access to the erudite later exegetical sources which can often supply additional information missing in the earlier

¹ P. Moraux, *Alexandre d'Aphrodise: Exégète de la noétique d'Aristote* (Liège; Paris 1942) 205-21.

² According to J. Wiesner's introduction, the section on *De anima* dates back to the 1960s (P. Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen Von Andronikos bis Alexander von Aphrodisias III: Alexander von Aphrodisias*, ed. J. G. Wiesner (Berlin 2001) v).

³ The Arabic biobibliographers do not seem to know Alexander's commentary, but Alexander's treatise *De anima* was translated into Arabic, possibly by Hunain b. Ishaq and known to many writers (al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Ibn Bajja, Ibn Rushd), as well as many school treatises (most importantly, the *De intellectu*). See F. E. Peters, *Aristoteles Arabus* (Leiden 1968), s.v.; H. Gätje, *Studien zur Überlieferung der aristotelischen Psychologie im Islam*, *Annales Universitatis Saraviensis*, Reihe Philosophische Fakultät 11 (Heidelberg 1971) 69.

commentaries. We have the following later Greek commentaries on *De anima* which explicitly mention Alexander:

<i>Source</i>	<i>Times Alexander cited by name</i>
Themistius's paraphrase of Aristotle's <i>De anima</i> , fourth century	3
Philoponus' commentary on books 1-2 of <i>De anima</i> , sixth century	36
Philoponus in <i>An.</i> 3.4-8 (extant in Latin translation by William Moerbeke)	14
[Philoponus] in <i>An.</i> 3 (Stephanus?) ⁴	45/23 with Plut. Ath.
[Simplicius] (Priscian?) ⁵ in <i>An.</i>	25/7 with Plut. Ath.
Sophonias's paraphrase (thirteenth century)	1

If each reference is taken to constitute a fragment, there are about 120 fragments, certainly enough textual material to work with. Indeed, some recent work on Alexander's lost commentaries, such as A. Rescigno's reconstruction of fragments of his *De caelo* commentary, might inspire cautious optimism with regard to this kind of project.⁶ Bob Sharples points out that the same kind of work should be done for Alexander's lost *Physics* commentary, a suggestion based on a very similar structure of the sources for *Physics* commentary.⁷ But unfortunately, for the *De anima* not one of our sources is as rich in explicit verbatim quotations from Alexander as Simplicius's commentaries on *Physics* and *De caelo*.

The problems have to do not just with the amount of quoted material but also with the reliability of Neoplatonic reports about Alexander, often coloured by polemical or otherwise interpretive overtones. This latter circumstance makes the concept of a 'fragment' particularly vague. The working principle formulated by Ian Kidd, that only those texts where the author is mentioned by name have proper evidential value, excludes any parallel texts that do not have a clear reference.⁸ This rigorous approach proved to be

⁴ Stephanus's authorship was tentatively suggested by Michael Hayduck, the editor of the Greek commentary. It was supported by H. J. Blumenthal, 'John Philoponus and Stephanus of Alexandria: Two Neoplatonic Christian commentators?', in *Neoplatonism and Christian thought*, ed. D. J. O'Meara (Albany 1982) 56-63; cf. W. Wolska-Conus, 'Stéphanos d'Athènes et Stéphanos d'Alexandrie: Essai d'identification et de biographie', *Revue des Études Byzantines* 47 (1989) 5-89; the identification with Stephanus criticised by P. Lautner, 'Philoponus, in *De anima* III: Quest for an author', *Classical Quarterly* 42 (1992) 510-22, cf. W. Charlton, *Philoponus: On Aristotle 'On the soul 3.9-13' with Stephanus: On Aristotle 'On interpretation'* (London 1999).

⁵ On the problems with this attribution, see F. Bossier, C. Steel, 'Priscianus Lydus en de *In De Anima* van Pseudo(?) – Simplicius', *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 34 (1972) 761-822 (repr. in *Priscian: On Theophrastus 'On sense-perception' with Simplicius: On Aristotle 'On the soul 2.5-12'*, trans. P. Huby, C. Steel (London 1997) 106-37), but cf. I. Hadot, 'Simplicius or Priscianus? On the author of the commentary on Aristotle's *De anima* (CAG XI): A methodological study', *Mnemosyne* 55.2 (2002) 159-99. In fact, the quotation style of the author of *De anima* commentary is out of line with the style of Simplicius's commentaries on *De caelo* and *Physics*.

⁶ A. Rescigno, *Alessandro di Afrodizia: Commentario al De caelo di Aristotele, frammenti del primo libro* (Amsterdam 2004); A. Rescigno, *Alessandro di Afrodizia: Commentario al De caelo di Aristotele, frammenti del secondo, terzo e quarto libro* (Amsterdam 2008).

⁷ See the introduction of his contribution to the present volume.

⁸ I. G. Kidd, 'What is a Posidonian fragment?', in *Collecting fragments / Fragmente Sammeln*, ed. G. W. Most (Göttingen 1997) 225-36.

sound in the study of Posidonius, and will probably work with any similar material, where the context of quotation does not provide enough controls for the attribution of textual parallels. With Aristotelian commentaries, however, things might be different because of the specific context of quotation. The principle of direct naming here may turn out to be both weaker and stronger than needed. Weaker, because the name can be mentioned without any specific context, as a description of Alexander's overall position on some issue.⁹ Stronger, because Alexander is often cited in later commentaries *sine nomine*.

This can be shown for his already mentioned lost commentaries on *Physics* and *De caelo*. In both cases we have, on the one hand, Simplicius's commentaries with multiple verbatim quotations from Alexander and, on the other hand, Themistius's paraphrases with multiple textual parallels in which Alexander is not mentioned. Simplicius's explicit citations from Alexander in both cases provide controls when this material is quoted anonymously in Themistius and elsewhere. In the case of the *De caelo* paraphrase, this has been well shown in the recent edition by Andrea Rescigno: the majority of fragments recovered from Themistius, originally anonymous, were established only on the basis of textual parallels with Simplicius's commentary, where Alexander is mentioned by name.¹⁰ In Themistius's *Physics* paraphrase Alexander is mentioned by name only four times, but Schenkl's note at the end of the index entry 'Alexander', *celato nomine saepissime exscribitur*, is supported by multiple cross-references to Simplicius in his apparatus. In his *De anima* paraphrase, Themistius is also making more ample use of Alexander's commentary than he acknowledges. The fact that there are no such good parallel witnesses as with *Physics* and *De caelo* does make the case more difficult, but does not, I think, allow us simply to assume that there is no material from Alexander in later commentaries: we should be able to recover at least some of it using available sources, which are, in brief, as follows.

The main sources include, first of all, verbatim quotations in later commentaries, but there are not too many of them. Alexander's interpretations are paraphrased more often than quoted, and it is often not easy to establish the boundary between the material that goes back to Alexander and the additions made by later commentators. Controlling guidance should come, primarily, from the writings of Alexander and his circle. This corpus includes commentaries on Aristotle,¹¹ original treatises, and several collections of school treatises (*Mantissa* and two collections of problems: three books of *Quaestiones* and one book of *Ethical problems*).¹²

⁹ Cf. Philoponus, in *An*, 10, 1-3 (Alexander mentioned as one of those who argued for the inseparability of soul from body); 101, 35-102, 3 (Alexander is mentioned as one of those Peripatetic exegetes who think that heavenly bodies are moved not by nature, but by a stronger power, i. e. their soul; this is most probably a description not based on the text: Alexander thinks that the soul of heavenly bodies is their nature).

¹⁰ The actual picture is more complex because of the intervention of the Arabic translator/editor of the Arabic *Vorlage* of the extant version of Themistius's paraphrase. Furthermore, one should not get the impression that Simplicius's reports provide us with an exhaustive picture of Alexander's commentary: on the limitations of Simplicius's method of citation from Alexander's *Physics* commentary, see M. Rashed, *Essentialisme: Alexandre d'Aphrodise entre logique, physique et cosmologie* (Berlin; New York 2007) 270-74.

¹¹ Particularly relevant are the commentaries on *De sensu* and *Meteorology*, but there is some relevant material also in the other extant commentaries (on *Metaph.* I-V, *An.Pr.* I, *Top.*).

¹² J. Freudenthal, *Die durch Averroes erhaltene Fragmente Alexanders zur Metaphysik des Aristoteles* (Berlin 1884) 13; I. Bruns, 'Praefatio', in *Alexandri Aphrodisiensis praeter commentaria scripta minora: quaestiones, de fato, de mixtione* (Berlin 1892) v-xlvi (v).

Of all these works, only commentaries belong to a literary genre that has clearly defined formal features due to the uniformity of tasks and method of composition: Aristotle's text is presented in the lemmata and the discussion of each lemma covers both doctrinal content and diction (style, ambiguities of expression, different manuscript readings). Alexander's commentaries have no division into *theoria* and *lexis* of the kind that becomes standard in later Neoplatonic commentaries of Alexandrian school. The explanation of the text of the lemma has no consistent pattern: it may take the form of a re-statement of convoluted expression, or a brief summary of the larger argument, indicating how the passage being explained fits into this larger argument, or sometimes it can include a more extensive discussion of a particular difficulty, a mini-treatise within the commentary. Some Aristotelian passages are occasionally left without detailed discussion.

This style of commenting is reflected in the variety of genres in the school collections of problems, of which Bruns distinguished the following types: problems proper (statement and solution, often with discussion of variants); expositions of Aristotle's text; expository summaries of Aristotle's arguments; fragments of Alexander's own opuscula; lists of arguments for or against a particular thesis.¹³ As Bob Sharples has pointed out in his studies of the *Quaestiones*, the boundaries between the types can occasionally be fluid, but most of these texts have a common function as school texts, and so reflect teaching activity,¹⁴ with a clear focus on philosophical exegesis. All these characteristics can be found in the psychological part of the *Quaestiones*: practically every short discussion of psychological questions is based on an exegesis of Aristotle's *De anima*, of one type or another.¹⁵ The same, with a number of qualifications, is true of a collection of school treatises known as *Mantissa*.¹⁶

Alexander's treatise *De anima* has a special place among the sources. The order of exposition follows closely the topics of Aristotle's *De anima* (with a couple of exceptions), so it is reasonable to expect it to relate to the standpoint of Alexander's commentary on all the important issues.¹⁷ In fact, however, preliminary surveys register discrepancies.¹⁸ The

¹³ Bruns, 'Praefatio' (n.12, above) v-xiii; R. W. Sharples, *Alexander of Aphrodisias: 'Quaestiones' 1.1-2.15* (London 1992), cf. 10n337.

¹⁴ Sharples, 'Quaestiones' 1.1-2.15 (n.13, above) 4.

¹⁵ The following *quaestiones* are related to the subject of *De anima: quaest.* 1.2 (NB the reference at the end); 1.11; 2.2 (1.3, 406b11); 2.8; 2.9; 2.10; 2.24-27; 3.1-3; 3.6-9; and *Mantissa* 1-17.

¹⁶ The term (probably taken from logarithmic calculus) goes back to Freudenthal, *Die durch Averroes* (n.12, above) and is used by I. Bruns, *Alexandri Aphrodisiensis praeter commentaria scripta minora I: De anima libri mantissa* (Berlin 1887). On the content and structure of *Mantissa* treatises, see R. W. Sharples, *Alexander of Aphrodisias: Supplement to 'On the soul'* (London 2004); R. W. Sharples, 'Alexander of Aphrodisias: What is a mantissa?', in *Philosophy, science & exegesis: In Greek, Arabic & Latin commentaries*, BICS Supplement 83.1, ed. P. Adamson, H. Baltussen, M. W. F. Stone, (London 2004) 51-69; and P. Accattino, *Alessandro di Afrodisia: De anima II (Mantissa)* (Alessandria 2005).

¹⁷ The question whether the commentary predates or postdates the treatise was raised by both Moraux and Donini and resolved by each of the scholars in favour of pre-dating, on the basis of the same considerations (Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus III* (n.2, above) 336-38; P. L. Donini, 'Testi e commenti, manuali e insegnamento: la forma sistematica e i metodi della filosofia in eta postellenistica', in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt II.36.7 (ANRW)*, ed. W. Haase, H. Temporini (Berlin 1994) 5027-100; R. W. Sharples, 'Alexander of Aphrodisias: Scholasticism and innovation', in *ANRW II.36.2*, ed. W. Haase, H. Temporini (Berlin 1987) 1176-1243). Most recently, Dufour has argued that the question is worth revisiting (*Alexandre d'Aphrodise: De l'âme*, ed. M. Bergeron, R. Dufour (Paris 2008) 13-14).

¹⁸ Cf. Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus III* (n.2, above) 319: 'So günstig die Quellenlage auf der ersten Blick erscheinen mag, wirft die Verwertung dieses Materials beträchtliche Schwierigkeiten auf. Vergleicht man die

problem is compounded by the fact that both Alexander's treatise *De anima* and the reports of his commentary contain some material which goes beyond plain exposition of Aristotle's doctrines. In what follows, I take a look at two instances of this kind. The first occurs in Alexander's commentary on *De anima* and has to do with his interpretation of Aristotle's view on the soul of heavenly bodies. The second has to do with Alexander's controversial definition of soul as a power supervenient on elemental mixture that he gives in his own treatise *De anima*.

2.

One of the difficulties in understanding the remains of Alexander's commentary quoted by later commentators has to do with the fact (seen from the table above) that practically all these later commentators are Platonists, and operate within their own, different, exegetical frameworks.¹⁹ Alexander's views are often paraphrased rather than quoted verbatim. Such paraphrases go back to further intermediary sources: lost commentaries or seminar notes, reflecting the school agenda. Themistius wrote a paraphrase for his own school in Constantinople where he taught Aristotle's philosophy. Philoponus often cites directly from Alexander, but his *De anima* commentary is also based on seminars with Ammonius, and some of his references to Alexander originate in Ammonius's lectures. Philoponus and/or Ammonius have access to Alexander's own treatise *De anima*, and possibly also the school treatises.²⁰ The author of the Greek commentary on book iii attributed to Philoponus uses, among other sources, the lost commentary of Plutarch of Athens, who also drew on Alexander's commentary. As shown in the table above, in [Philoponus]' commentary, Alexander's name is mentioned next to Plutarch 23 times (out of 45 references). Although the identity of the author of [Simplicius]' commentary is uncertain, he most likely also belongs to the school of Athens and also has access to Plutarch's commentary. For [Simplicius] the figure for joint Plutarch cum Alexander quotations is 7/25.

Obviously, in this kind of tradition, presentations of Alexander's views can become extremely convoluted or tendentious, something that may raise a question of the evidential value of these reports. Yet, the fact that there are several commentaries from several different schools, and that Alexander is often cited on textual matters, can make the exercise more promising than it might seem. I would like to illustrate this with a brief case study of the reports and evidence for Alexander's interpretation of a passage from Aristotle's *De anima* 3.12. The text is as follows:

einzelnen Abhandlungen Alexanders miteinander und mit den Fragmenten des Kommentars zu *De anima*, so stellt man nicht selten fest, daß die Lehre nicht überall dasselbe ist.'

¹⁹ For a discussion of Neoplatonist commentators, see H. Blumenthal, *Aristotle and Neoplatonism in late antiquity: Interpretations of the 'De anima'* (Ithaca 1996); R. K. Sorabji, *The philosophy of the commentators, 200-600 AD: A sourcebook*, 3 vols (London; Ithaca 2004-05); most recent survey of the main commentaries in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, ed. L. P. Gerson, 2 vols (Cambridge 2010).

²⁰ See Philoponus in *An.* 159, 18-23.

(T1) Aristotle, *De anima* 3.12, 434b3-8

It is impossible for a body which has soul and discerning intellect not to have sense perception, as long as it is not stationary, and generated [but not [for] ungenerated]. For why should it have [it that way]? Presumably, for the advantage either of the soul or of the body. But as things stand, neither [would benefit from it]. For the soul would be no better able to think, and the body will be no better off, for the absence of sensation. Therefore no moving body has soul without being endowed with sensation’.

Οὐχ οἶόν τε δὲ σῶμα ἔχειν μὲν ψυχὴν καὶ νοῦν κριτικόν, αἴσθησιν δὲ μὴ ἔχειν, μὴ μόνιμον ὄν, γεννητὸν δέ· [ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδὲ ἀγέννητον·] διὰ τί γὰρ ἔξει; ἢ γὰρ τῇ ψυχῇ βέλτιον ἢ τῷ σώματι. Νῦν δ’ οὐδέτερον· ἢ μὲν γὰρ οὐ μᾶλλον νοήσει, τὸ δ’ οὐθὲν ἔσται μᾶλλον δι’ ἐκεῖνο· οὐθὲν ἄρα ἔχει ψυχὴν σῶμα κινούμενον ἄνευ αἰσθήσεως.²¹

Aristotle’s point is fairly clear: he is giving an illustration, by way of counterexample, of his principle stated several lines above, according to which ‘all natural phenomena either exist for the sake of something or will be an accident of things that are for the sake of something’ (434a31-32).²² A living body which has a power of progression but is deprived of sensation will die of the lack of nourishment (434a32-434b1). A body which is not stationary and generated cannot have soul and intellect without having also the power of perception. (434b1-4 = **T1** [part]).

The following lines are difficult, both doctrinally and textually. The phrase ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδὲ ἀγέννητον is secluded by most modern editors following Torstrik. [Simplicius] tells us that it occurs in ‘some manuscripts,’ a remark that probably goes back to Alexander (although Alexander himself seems to take it as an integral part of the text).²³ Its meaning and grammatical construal are disputed, and so is the meaning of the question that follows: ‘For why should it have it [that way]?’ Originally the argument seems to target the class of rational animals. The two descriptions: ‘having judging intellect and soul’ and ‘moving rather than stationary’ are introduced to account for the way the joint work of sensation and reason should benefit not just the soul, but also the body. It is not easy to see the natural way in which reference to the ungenerated living being might suggest itself. Perhaps we could develop a proposal made by R. Bodéüs, to the effect that even if the phrase is an early gloss, it has its *raison d’être* as a reference to the celestial bodies of the *Timaeus*.²⁴ Given Aristotle’s criticisms of the world-soul of the *Timaeus* in *De anima* 1.3, the *Timaeus* model of cosmic soul itself could be a likely candidate for a critical remark in the context of the discussion of teleological hierarchy of soul’s faculties. Plato’s living cosmos is entirely rational, with sense perception coming at a later stage of intracosmic generation as an aid to the sublunary animals.²⁵ The object of criticism would

²¹ The Greek text as in Jannone’s edition of Aristotle’s *De anima*. The English translation is made in a neutral, and therefore deliberately ambiguous way, to be disambiguated below.

²² Ἔνεκά του γὰρ ἅπαντα ὑπάρχει τὰ φύσει, ἢ συμπτώματα ἔσται τῶν ἔνεκά του.

²³ [Simplic.] in *An.* 320, 28: Ἐν τισὶ δὲ ἀντιγράφοις πρόσκειται τὸ ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδὲ ἀγέννητον.

²⁴ *Aristote: De l’âme*, ed. R. Bodéüs (Paris 1993) 252, n.7.

²⁵ Sense perception is first mentioned in connection with heavenly bodies (*Tim.* 31B4-9, 40A2-7), but these latter taken as the objects of perception, namely vision, rather than perceiving entities. Plato’s main discussion of sense perception does not start until 42A5.

be the very idea that a perfect living being should be thought of as just a combination of the most perfect faculties that might characterise any living being, without any special provision for the mutual order of dependence between those faculties.²⁶ The argument on this reading is saying: just as a sublunary animal cannot have thinking without sense perception, in the same way neither can any hypothetical ungenerated living being have one of these faculties (*viz.* the intellect) without the other (*i.e.* sense perception).²⁷ The 'teleological' refutation showing that this hypothetical arrangement benefits neither soul nor body is then supposed to work for both cases: the sublunary animal and a cosmic construct, admittedly, very clearly in the former and very controversially in the latter case. The controversial point would be that since there has to be a teleological nexus between soul's higher and lower faculties, the cosmological model of a rational living being without sensation is not viable. It will be particularly controversial for those Platonists who deny perception to heavenly bodies and also for the Aristotelians who want to see Aristotle's view that heavenly bodies are moved by souls as being in agreement with the conception of the soul in the *De anima*.

Alexander belongs to this latter group. Ensouled heavens are a living theoretical option for him. His teacher Herminus, and probably also earlier Peripatetics, use soul as the principle to explain some of the features of heavenly motions.²⁸ Alexander's concern in the commentary on this passage is to make sure that Aristotle's teleological refutation should not refute his case. Therefore he construes the argument in a completely different and somewhat tortuous way. In the opening sentence, where Aristotle speaks of living things that are 'stationary and generated', most commentators understand a distinction between animals and plants, since the term *μόνιμος* has been used by Aristotle in the immediately preceding lines with clear reference to plants.²⁹ Alexander here, according to [Simplicius], understands a contrast between animals and heavenly bodies, taking *μόνιμους* as the description of these latter.

(T2a) [Simplicius], *in An.* 320, 17-25

Therefore [Aristotle] concludes in general that the body which is not stationary does not have soul without sense perception, where 'not stationary' is mentioned because of plants, which do have soul, albeit without sensation, or indeed because of the stars, as is the interpretation of Alexander, since they are ensouled but stationary because being planted in their proper spheres they do not move by themselves, as he argues. And it seems that Alexander explains in this way, because of what has just been said, the words 'It is

²⁶ The target reference might be the discussion of the discourse (*λογισμός*) of the world soul at *Tim.* 36D8-37C5.

²⁷ On this reading, 'ungenerated' must be meant to refer to the Aristotelian polemical interpretation of Platonic world soul as an ungenerated entity. Plato himself in the passage referred to in the previous note speaks of the world soul as 'the best of things brought into being' (*ἀρίστη γενομένη τῶν γεννηθέντων*) (37A2).

²⁸ See R. W. Sharples, *Peripatetic philosophy from 200 BC to 200 AD: An introduction and collection of sources in translation* (Cambridge 2010) 191-92.

²⁹ And generally, this term is used in Aristotle's zoology to draw a contrast with animals going on foot (*πορευτικά*). All plants are stationary (*PA* 2.10, 656a1), and some kinds of animals: sponges, some fishes (*HA* 10.37, 621b23); and testacea (*PA* 4.4, 681b34), some oysters (*HA* 11.1, 487b6-9); (*cf.* also *De an.* 1.5, 410b19; 3.9, 432a20; *GA* 2.1, 732a22). The term is never used to describe the characteristics of heavenly bodies, so the interpretation is Alexander's own invention.

impossible for a body which has soul and discerning intellect not to have sense perception, as long as it is not stationary and generated'.³⁰

The phrase ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδὲ ἀγέννητον Alexander understands as elliptical of ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδὲ ἀγέννητον ἔχει αἴσθησιν, and the following question therefore reads without the negative particle οὐχ. The argument, according to him, is that generated bodies necessarily must have sense perception, but ungenerated bodies necessarily mustn't. The teleological refutation supports this latter point and applies only to the case of heavenly bodies. Why should they have sense perception?³¹

[Philoponus] gives some further details about Alexander's commentary on this passage:

(T2b) [Philoponus] in An. 595,37-597,14

Having said this about heavenly bodies, [Aristotle] goes on to say: 'For why will it [sc. what is not generated, 434b5] have a non-rational [soul]? Alexander interprets this gobblet in one way and Plutarch in another. Alexander says: 'For why will the heavenly bodies have sense?' Neither for the body of these things is it better to have sense, nor for the soul. Not for the body, because sense would be helpful to bodies that are affected, keeping them away from what is destructive, but it is no help to heavenly bodies because they are unaffected – and also things that perceive do so through being affected, but these are unaffected and immortal.

But neither will it help their soul, because those that have sense have obtained it in order to recollect universals, so that from the things they find through the senses in particulars they may be led back to the universal accounts present in them; but the heavenly bodies have no need of sense. They always act intellectually and never desert universals. But sense is a thing that lays hold of particulars. Being distracted concerning these and entangled in them it does not allow intellect to be engrossed in universals, but is like a garrulous neighbour that keeps consorting with a reader and distracting him.' So Alexander, and according to him the passage does not have the negative 'not', but is 'For why will it have it?' and he interprets it as a question. (trans. W. Charlton)³²

³⁰ διὸ καθόλου λοιπὸν συμπεραίνεται, ὡς οὐδὲν ἔχει ψυχὴν σῶμα μὴ μόνιμον ἄνευ αἰσθήσεως, ἔνθα τὸ μὴ μόνιμον πρόσκειται διὰ τὰ φυτὰ, ἃ ἔχει μὲν ψυχὴν ἄνευ δὲ αἰσθήσεως, ἢ καὶ διὰ τὰ ἄστρα, ὡς ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος βούλεται, ἔμψυχα μὲν ὄντα, μόνιμα δὲ διὰ τὸ ἐρριζωμένα ταῖς οἰκείαις σφαιραῖς μὴ καθ' αὐτὰ κινεῖσθαι, ὡς ὁ ἐκείνου λόγος. καὶ ἔοικεν ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος οὕτως ἐξηγήσασθαι διὰ τὸ προσεχῶς προειρημένον, τὸ οὐχ οἷόν τε σῶμα ἔχειν μὲν ψυχὴν καὶ νοῦν κριτικόν, αἴσθησιν δὲ μὴ ἔχειν, μὴ μόνιμον ὄν, γενητὸν δέ.

³¹ Plutarch understands the phrase as construing with the preceding, and so saying that neither do ungenerated bodies have intellect without perception. He reads the question with negation, 'For why will it *not* have it?', διὰ τί γὰρ οὐχ ἔξει; All ancient commentators except Plutarch seem to have followed Alexander's reading.

³² ταῦτα περὶ τῶν οὐρανίων εἰπὼν ἐπιφέρει λέγων 'διὰ τί γὰρ ἔξει ἄλογον; τοῦτο δὲ τὸ ῥησιδίον ἄλλως μὲν ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος, ἄλλως δὲ ὁ Πλούταρχος ἐξηγήσατο. Ἀλέξανδρος μὲν γὰρ ἔφη 'διὰ τί γὰρ ἔξει τὰ οὐράνια αἴσθησιν'; οὕτε γὰρ τῷ σώματι τούτων ἄμεινον αἴσθησιν ἔχειν οὕτε τῇ ψυχῇ, τῷ μὲν σώματι, διότι τοῖς παθητοῖς σώμασι συμβάλλοιτ' ἂν ἡ αἴσθησις, τῶν φθαρτικῶν αὐτὰ διείργουσα, τοῖς δὲ οὐρανίοις ἀπαθέσιν οὐδὲν συμβάλλεται, καὶ ὅτι τὰ αἰσθανόμενα πάσχοντα αἰσθάνονται, ταῦτα δὲ ἀπαθὴ καὶ ἀθάνατά ἐστιν.

ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τῇ ψυχῇ αὐτῶν συνοίσει, διότι τὰ τὴν αἴσθησιν ἔχοντα πρὸς ἀνάμνησιν τῶν καθόλου ταύτην ἐκτίσαντο, ἵνα ἐξ ὧν ἐν τοῖς καθ' ἕκαστα διὰ τῶν αἰσθήσεων εὐρίσκουσιν, ἐπὶ τοὺς ἐνυπάρχοντας καθολικοὺς λόγους ἀνάγωται, τὰ δὲ οὐράνια τῆς αἰσθήσεως οὐ δεῖται· αἰεὶ γὰρ νοερώς ἐνεργεῖ καὶ οὐδέποτε τῶν καθόλου

Moraux suspects this report because of the interpretation of the role of sense perception in recollection, ἀνάμνησις τῶν καθόλου, which he thinks is a Platonist concept incompatible with Alexander's position.³³ Charlton in his translation also makes a note at the phrase 'universal accounts present in them': 'i.e. in themselves: on this interpretation knowledge of universals is innate in us'.³⁴ Thus it may seem that the only reliable part of this report is its last two lines which tell us about Alexander's reading in a disputed case.

But the text does not say that universal accounts are innate in us.³⁵ And although ἀνάμνησις τῶν καθόλου is indeed unambiguous on a Platonist reading, this is not the only reading available in our case. Both terms ἀνάμνησις and τὰ καθόλου have different respective technical meanings in the Aristotelian tradition, differences of which Alexander is certainly aware. Thus, in *quaest.* 3.1, Alexander defines recollection as 'the discovery by searching of an impression which once came about in the body which has the soul capable of sensation' (81, 2-3).³⁶ Such impressions can come about as a result of perceiving or thinking activity. In the *De anima*, Alexander describes concept formation as involving two stages: (i) the acquisition and storage of the impressions; (ii) the transition from memory and the continuous activity of the senses, through experience, from particulars to the grasp of universals.³⁷ In **T2b**, Alexander's view that the thinking of heavenly bodies does not involve this intermediary stage of grasping the universals is paraphrased in Platonic idiom. The graphic simile of a garrulous neighbour for the sense

ἀρίσταται. ἡ δὲ αἴσθησις μερικῶν ἐστὶν ἀντιληπτική· περὶ ταῦτα οὖν ἐκκρουομένη καὶ ἐνειλουμένη οὐκ ἔα τὸν νοῦν ἀπασχολεῖσθαι τοῖς καθόλου, ἀλλ' ἔοικε φλυάρῳ γείτοني ὁμιλοῦντι πολλὰ καὶ ἐκκρούοντι τὸν ἀναγνώσκοντα. οὕτω μὲν οὖν ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος, καὶ κατ' αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔχει τὸ ῥητὸν τὴν οὐ ἄρνησιν, ἀλλ' οὕτως ἐστὶ 'διὰ τί γὰρ ἔξει', καὶ ἐξηγεῖται αὐτὸ ἐρωτηματικῶς.

³³ Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus III* (n.2, above) 322.

³⁴ W. Charlton, *Philoponus, on Aristotle 'On the soul 3.9-13'* with *Stephanus, on Aristotle 'On interpretation'*, *Ancient Commentators on Aristotle* (London 2000) 49, 66, n. 89.

³⁵ Strictly speaking, it does not even mention us, although this is what it almost certainly means, by way of comparison.

³⁶ ἀνάμνησις ἐστὶν εὔρεσις διὰ ζητήσεως φαντάσματος ὃ ἐγένετό ποτε ἐν τῷ σώματι ἐν ᾧ ἡ αἰσθητικὴ ψυχὴ. It is rather striking that this brief definition is recorded as a separate *quaestio*: conceivably, this may have to do with the specific meaning this term has in the Aristotelian as distinct from the much more familiar Platonic usage, and in that case we might have a piece of evidence that this term was frequently used in the school discussions in its Aristotelian meaning.

³⁷ 'Man is born possessing senses, acting by which he acquires impressions. Thus, seeing all around him and hearing and perceiving with other senses and being impressed upon by them he first, in retaining those imprints, gets used to remember, and then, from memory and the continuous activity of senses with relation to the sense objects he undergoes a certain transition, through experience, from 'this and particular' to 'such and universal'. For when sense has perceived this and this white, he, from these perceptions, grasps that such [a thing] is colour white, and similarly with each of the other senses. And this comprehension and grasp of the universal through the likeness of the particular objects of sense is thinking.' Γεννᾶται γὰρ ὁ ἄνθρωπος αἰσθήσεις ἔχων, καθ' ἃς ἐνεργῶν φαντασίας λαμβάνει. ὁρῶν οὖν ἐκάστοτε καὶ ἀκούων καὶ κατὰ τὰς ἄλλας αἰσθήσεις αἰσθανόμενος καὶ τυπούμενος ὑπ' αὐτῶν πρώτον μὲν ἐν τῇ τῶν τύπων τούτων τηρήσει μνημονεύειν ἐθίζεται, ἔπειτα δὲ ἔκ τε μνήμης καὶ τῆς συνεχοῦς κατὰ τὰς αἰσθήσεις ἐνεργείας περὶ τὰ αἰσθητὰ γίνεται τις αὐτῷ ἀπὸ τοῦ 'τόδε τε καὶ καθεκάστον' ἐπὶ τὸ 'τοιόνδε καὶ καθόλου' μετάβασις δι' ἐμπειρίας. Τοῦδε γὰρ τοῦ λευκοῦ καὶ τοῦδε τοῦ τῆς αἰσθήσεως ἀντιλαμβανομένης ἐκ τῶν τοιούτων ἀντιλήψεων ἔλαβεν τὸ εἶναι τὸ τοιόνδε χρῶμα λευκόν. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων αἰσθητῶν ἐκάστο. ἦτις περίληψις τε καὶ διὰ τῆς τῶν καθ' ἕκαστα αἰσθητῶν ὁμοιότητος τοῦ καθόλου λήψις νόησις ἐστίν. (Alexander, *De anima*, 83, 2-12 Bruns)

perception may have been supplied by the paraphrast. The same point seems to be made in a less elaborate way in Themistius's paraphrase.

(T2c) Themistius on Aristotle *De anima*, 321, 24-29

But eternal and ungenerated animals have no need of sense perception, either directly or as an 'adjunct', because they do not need nutriment. More specifically, if they had sense perception, they would have it as an improvement either to the soul or to the body. But in fact neither [is the case]: their soul will not think more [effectively], but less so if it is troubled (ἐνοχλουμένη) by sense perception. (trans. Todd, lightly modified)

Themistius does not name Alexander, but adopts his reading of the controversial passage and probably reproduces also some of his argument. It is clear that Alexander did have an argument that sense perception would be superfluous for the thought process in heavenly bodies and probably contrasted the latter with human thinking where sense perception does play a role.

Thus, although we do not have a proper 'fragment' of Alexander's commentary on this passage, we have enough textual material to get a fairly good idea of his explanation of the text in question. This has to do not just with the construal of the text: in fact, we have seen that this construal is defined by Alexander's doctrinal position, and not the other way around. He makes an effort to produce a reading which would reconcile the view he takes to mainstream Aristotelianism, *viz.* that heavenly bodies have thinking souls but not sense perception, with the teleological principle as stated by Aristotle in T1.³⁸

It is even more important that he attributes to Aristotle the view according to which the soul of heavenly bodies is subject to the same teleological principle that applies to all kinds of sublunary soul. On this point there appears to be a difference between the commentary and Alexander's own treatise *De anima*. In the treatise, when discussing the principle according to which lower faculties can exist separately from the higher ones, but not vice versa, Alexander makes only a brief comment with regard to the soul of the heavens, to the effect that this is a completely different, possibly even unrelated, case. The soul of the gods, he says, is called 'soul' only homonymously.³⁹ This suggests that heavenly soul should be excluded from the scope of discussion. In the commentary, his position seems different: although he recognises the difference between sublunary and heavenly souls, he seems to assume that they belong to the same natural kind, and must be subject to some common principles. This view is in line with what he says about heavenly soul elsewhere. In the commentary on *De caelo*, he apparently says that the soul of heavenly bodies is their form and nature manifest in their regular circular motion, not involving any faculties of the sublunary souls.⁴⁰ Teleological argument similar to the one underlying his reading of our text T1 is found in the treatise *De principiis omnium*,

³⁸ Aristotle certainly says that heavenly bodies have thinking souls; but, as Ross points out, he never actually says they do not have sense perception. Aristotle probably does believe it, and Alexander is justified in inferring this from his discussions, but it should be noted that Plutarch of Athens argues against Alexander that stars do have sense perception, and in [Philoponus] we find this position spelled out in an imaginary debate against the 'Peripatetics', *i.e.* Alexander.

³⁹ 28, 26-28: ἡ γὰρ τῶν θεῶν ψυχή, εἰ καὶ ταύτην δεῖ ψυχὴν καλεῖν, ὁμονύμως ἂν ταύτη ψυχὴ λέγοιτο.

⁴⁰ An important text is apud. Simplic. *in Cael.* 379,18-81,2 (=fr. 129d Rescigno (n.6, above)), especially 181, 43-52.

preserved in Arabic.⁴¹ So, it seems that the interpretation of T1 in the commentary reflected Alexander's considered view. The *De anima* remark need not necessarily be understood as registering a deep doctrinal difference, although of course the term 'homonymous' can suggest that if understood strongly. But it is more likely that in the treatise, Alexander wanted to concentrate on the presentation of the key features of Aristotle's theory of sublunary soul without going too far into the questions of soul's place within the whole of the cosmos. But it is important to note that the commentary in this case possibly gives us a more accurate idea of Alexander's concept of soul than the treatise, even though the treatise may prove invaluable on many other points.⁴² In my next section, I am going to consider a case where the commentary might shed some light on the less clear pronouncements made in the *De anima* and school treatises and thus vindicate the presentation of Aristotelian doctrine there.

3.

Alexander's definition of the soul in the *De anima* has been a centre of well-deserved controversy since the first Platonist commentators who rightly spotted its similarities with the 'harmony' theory of the soul criticized by Aristotle in *De anima* 1.4, despite all the efforts Alexander makes to distance himself from this latter theory.⁴³ Alexander says, in a nutshell, that soul is the form of a living body, just as the ensemble of primary qualities {hot +dry (+ light)} is the form of fire, and the ensemble of the qualities produced by an elemental mixture in a natural compound constitutes the form of that compound. The form of a compound is thus 'the form of forms' of all the underlying lower-level ingredients.⁴⁴ The soul does not shape a body, but instead follows upon bodily mixture. And this is what Aristotle means when he says in *De anima* 2.1 that soul is the form of the body.

Many Aristotelian scholars found this explanation a bit jarring. It has remained controversial since Paul Moraux put it on his list of Alexander's misinterpretations of Aristotle in 1942.⁴⁵ Several scholars attempted to mitigate the damaging force of Moraux's objections by offering more charitable readings of the section (e.g. P. L. Donini and R. W. Sharples).⁴⁶ Victor Caston argued that Alexander here follows in the steps of Andronicus and his circle in revising the materialist psychology of the early Peripatetics such as Dicaearchus and introduces his own non-reductionist version of physicalism which

⁴¹ Cf. Ch. Genequand, *Alexander of Aphrodisias: On the cosmos* (Leiden 2001) 48-50 (sections (10), (13), (14)).

⁴² Here I find myself in agreement with Marwan Rashed whom I cautioned against underestimating the introductory treatises such as *De anima* – that warning of course fully applies to my own argument here. (See Rashed, *Essentialisme: Alexandre d'Aphrodise* (n.10, above) 36-42, I. Kupreeva, 'Alexander of Aphrodisias on form: A discussion of Marwan Rashed, *Essentialisme*', *OSAP* 38 (2010) 211-49 (245).

⁴³ Cf. Alexander, *De anima* 24, 18-20.

⁴⁴ Alexander, *De anima* 8, 12-13.

⁴⁵ Moraux, *Alexandre d'Aphrodise: Exégète* (n.1, above) 29-34; cf. H. B. Gottschalk, 'Soul as harmonia', *Phronesis* 16 (1971) 179-98; Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus III* (n.2, above) 356 ('Es braucht kaum hervorgehoben werden, wie stark der Exeget mit seiner Theorie der Form von Geiste des echten Aristotelismus abweicht.')

⁴⁶ P. L. Donini, 'L'anima e gli elementi nel De anima di Alessandro di Afrodisia', *Atti dell'Accademia delle Scienze di Torino, classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche* 105 (1971) 61-107; R. W. Sharples, 'On body, soul and generation in Alexander of Aphrodisias', *Apeiron* 27 (1994) 163-70.

anticipates the British emergentism of the nineteenth to early twentieth century.⁴⁷ On the other hand, Marwan Rashed has recently argued that Alexander develops his version of Aristotelian metaphysics of substance in polemic with the circle of Andronicus, where form is regarded as a non-substantial category, *viz.* quality.⁴⁸ So even the broad non-reductionist reading apparently does not remove a tension between Alexander's essentialist metaphysics, where soul is primary substance, and his philosophy of mind, where his commitment to this latter thesis becomes questionable. Rashed has claimed that some arguments in the *De anima* are merely pedagogical devices and do not reflect Alexander's considered view, the true milieu of his own thinking being, paradoxically, the genre of Aristotelian commentary, which might at the first sight suggest rather less room for the commentator's original thoughts about the subject of the work he comments upon.⁴⁹ As we have seen in the previous section, this suggestion can get some circumstantial support from Alexander himself.⁵⁰ However, it is not sufficient to explain all the specific anomalies of the *De anima* argument, because what matters in our case is not what Alexander omits to say, but what he actually does say about the nature of the soul, and that is highly puzzling. This is a complex problem, and I am going to discuss just one aspect of it to which Paolo Accattino drew attention in his response to the problem raised by Moraux. It has to do with the importance of polemical agenda as a motivating force behind Alexander's argument in the *De anima*.⁵¹ I am going to discuss some more evidence supporting this idea.

There might be reasons to expect that the commentary could give us a clearer and more consistent explanation of how the perceived emergentist thesis agrees with the metaphysics of substance. One *prima facie* difference between the treatise and the commentary is the structure of the exposition. Aristotle begins his *De anima* with the list of difficulties to be considered in the study of the soul. This list is important because it sets a certain methodological framework to which Aristotle continuously refers in the course of the treatise and without which some of the methodological standards may be lost. This list includes questions: (i) To what category does the soul belong?; (ii) Is it something potential or an actuality?; (iii) Is it divided into parts or partless?; (iv) Is it of one kind, and if not, do souls differ in genus or in species?; (v) Does it have a unified account (such as that of 'animal'), or is it rather different for each soul (as it is different for horse, dog, man, god, 'animal' being either posterior or nothing at all)?; (vi) Assuming

⁴⁷ V. Caston, 'Epiphenomenalisms: Ancient and modern', *Philosophical Review* 106 (1997) 309-63 (347-54).

⁴⁸ Rashed, *Essentialisme: Alexandre d'Aphrodise* (n.10, above); P. Moraux attributed this view of form to Alexander himself (*cf.* Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus III* (n.2, above) 1-15).

⁴⁹ See n.42, above.

⁵⁰ On another occasion, he warns the reader that he is cutting out many details relating to soul's powers in order to keep the main exposition simple and clear. *De anima* 30, 20-26: ἔσται δὲ ἡμῖν ὁ περὶ αὐτῶν [sc. τῆς ψυχῆς δυνάμεων] λόγος μέχρι τοῦ τὴν τε φύσιν ἐκάστης αὐτῶν ἐνδείξασθαι καὶ τὰς διαφορὰς τῶν δυνάμεων. τὰ γὰρ περὶ ἐκάστης αὐτῶν ἀπορεῖσθαι τε καὶ ζητεῖσθαι πλείονος σχολῆς δεόμενα οὐκ ἂν εἴη τῆς προκειμένης οἰκεία πραγματείας: πρὸς γὰρ τὸ γνωρίμως παραστήσαι τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς φύσιν ἐμποδῶν ἢ τῶν περὶ ἐκάστης δυνάμεως αὐτῆς εἰρημένων τε καὶ ἠπορημένων ἐπικύκλῃσις. 'Our account of the powers of soul will go as far as indicating the nature of each of them and the differentiae of powers. Raising difficulties and inquiring about the matters to do with each power that need more leisure would not be a proper remit of the present treatise. For bringing in discussions and problems concerning each of its powers will be in the way of a clear presentation of its nature.'

⁵¹ P. Accattino, 'Generazione dell'anima in Alessandro di Afrodisia, *De anima* 2.10-11.13?', *Phronesis* 40 (1995) 192-201.

there are not several souls, but parts of one soul, should one begin by studying the whole soul or its parts?⁵² Alexander surely must have discussed this list of questions in the commentary, and he obviously skips this discussion in the treatise, replacing it with what is usually regarded as protreptic and introductory material.⁵³ But as we shall see, matters are not so simple.

Alexander opens his exposition in *De anima*, by mentioning just one source of major difficulties concerning the soul.

(T3) Alexander, *De anima*, 2, 15-18

Nothing is the cause of persistent perplexities concerning the soul to such an extent as the fact that it is not easy to match what is said about it with its powers and effects, which are more divine and more remarkable than any bodily power.⁵⁴

Paolo Accattino has suggested that both the formulation of the source of perplexities and the whole argument that works towards the Aristotelian definition of soul from the bottom up reflect Alexander's polemic against contemporary Platonist writers such as Atticus, who argued, among other things, that we get to know the concept of the soul from the activities which are proper to the soul and not shared by the body.⁵⁵

(T4) Atticus, Fr. 7, 57-64 des Places (= Eusebius, *Prep. Ev.* XV, 11,4)

For everyone seems to understand that these things belong to the soul: deliberation, contemplation and any sort of thought. For when we see the body and its powers and consider such activities as not belonging to the body, we grant that there is in us something else that deliberates, and this is the soul. For where else would we get evidence concerning the soul? (fr. 7, ll. 57-64 des Places)⁵⁶

Alexander responds that soul is nothing but bodily power, and moreover, that the concept of body is needed in order to explain all of the soul's functions. The *De anima* 2.10-11.3 thus forms a single relatively uniform argument designed to resolve the 'Platonic' difficulty.

Alexander's proposed method of overcoming this difficulty is to show how these divine powers and functions can still be the work of nature. The plan is to lead the reader to a better grasp of the Aristotelian definition of the soul. The starting point is *enargeia*: the main principles of this introductory account, namely form and matter, should be manifest to anyone, just as they are manifest in the case of artefacts.

⁵² Aristotle, *De anima* 1.1, 402a23-b16.

⁵³ In Alexander *De anima* 1,1-2,25.

⁵⁴ τοῦ γὰρ μένειν ἐν ταῖς περὶ τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπορίαις οὐδὲν οὕτως αἴτιον ὡς τὸ μὴ ῥάδιον εἶναι τὰς δυνάμεις τε αὐτῆς καὶ τὰ ἔργα ἐφαρμόζειν τοῖς περὶ αὐτῆς λεγομένοις ὡς ὄντα θεϊοτέρα τε καὶ μείζω πάσης σωματικῆς δυνάμεως.

⁵⁵ Accattino, 'Generazione dell'anima' (n.51, above) 186-88.

⁵⁶ ταῦτα γὰρ ἅπας τις συνιέναι δοκεῖ τῆς ψυχῆς ὄντα, τὸ βουλευέσθαι καὶ σκοπεῖσθαι καὶ καθ' ὀνήποτε τρόπον διανοεῖσθαι· ὅταν γὰρ ἴδωμεν τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὰς τοῦτου ἐνεργείας ὡς οὐ σώματος, δίδομεν εἶναι τι ἐν ἡμῖν ἕτερον τὸ βουλευόμενον, τοῦτο δ' εἶναι τὴν ψυχὴν; ἐπεὶ πόθεν ἀλλαχόθεν ἐπιστεύσαμεν ὑπὲρ ψυχῆς;

(T5) Alexander, *De anima* 2,25-3,2

The most true and manifest fact to those who set out to grasp things like this seems to be that every bodily and sensible substance is composed of some underlying substrate which we call matter and of the nature which shapes and defines this matter, which we call by the name of form.⁵⁷

Subsequent analysis extends these basic intuitions to the whole realm of natural bodies, including living beings. The student will find out about the structure and functions of form (acting, being acted upon, being the principle of motion). Even the form of a most basic unit of analysis, a simple body, has a composite structure: it is constituted by two elemental qualities whose conjunction possesses a primitive dynamic tendency, upwards or downwards.⁵⁸ In more complex bodies, both qualitative and dynamic characteristics are even more complex. But some basic features discovered by hylomorphic analysis at the lowest level of nature are preserved at any level of complexity. These include the incorporeality of formal constituents, their inseparability from body, and their special role in causing motion, while not being themselves subject to motion/change.⁵⁹

We may notice that despite a number of less familiar features, the general structure of Alexander's main argument follows that of Aristotle's derivation of the definition of soul as the form of the natural body that has life potentially, in *De anima* 2.1. Aristotle begins by introducing the concept of substance, distinguishing matter, form and the composite. He goes on to say that bodies are substances par excellence, and among these, natural bodies, because they are the principles of all other bodies.

(T6) Aristotle, *De anima* 2.1, 412a4-16

(1) Let us now make as it were a completely fresh start, endeavouring to give a precise answer to the question, what is soul? *i.e.* to formulate the most general possible definition of it.

(2) We are in the habit of recognizing, as one determinate kind of what is, substance, and that in several senses, (a) in the sense of matter or that which in itself is not 'a this', and (b) in the sense of form or essence, which is that precisely in virtue of which a thing is called 'a this', and thirdly (c) in the sense of that which is compounded of both (a) and (b). Now matter is potentiality, form actuality; of the latter there are two grades related to one another as *e.g.* knowledge to the exercise of knowledge. (3) Among substances are by general consent reckoned bodies and especially natural bodies; for they are the principles of all other bodies. Of natural bodies some have life in them, others not; by life we mean

⁵⁷ Alexander *De anima* 2,25-3,2: δοκεῖ δὴ παντὸς μᾶλλον ἀληθές τε καὶ ἐναργές εἶναι τοῖς περὶ τῶν τοιούτων διαλαμβάνειν ἔργον ποιούμενοις τὸ πᾶσαν οὐσίαν σωματικὴν τε καὶ αἰσθητὴν σύνθετον εἶναι ἕκ τε ὑποκειμένου τινός, ὃ ὕλην καλοῦμεν, καὶ ἐκ τῆς ταύτης τὴν ὕλην σχηματίζουσης τε καὶ ὀρίζουσης φύσεως, ἣν εἶδος ὀνομάζομεν.

⁵⁸ Alexander, *De anima*, 5,4-12.

⁵⁹ I have discussed the arguments for incorporeality in I. Kupreeva, 'Qualities and bodies: Alexander against the Stoics', *OSAP* 25 (2003) 297-344.

self-nutrition and growth (with its correlative decay). It follows that every natural body which has life in it is a substance in the sense of a composite. (trans. Hicks, modified) ⁶⁰

Alexander follows this outline, at each step filling out many illustrative details, often drawing on other parts of Aristotelian doctrine. The initial script is Aristotelian, as promised in the proem, and thus in a way, Alexander does pay heed to the difficulties of Aristotle's opening chapter, even if he does not go into a full-scale methodological discussion.⁶¹ The same close parallel with Aristotle's text can be seen even more clearly in the school treatise *Mantissa* 1, where the exposition can be matched with that of Aristotle.⁶² If we look at the corresponding sections in Themistius's paraphrase and Philoponus' commentary on 2.1, we shall see the same amount and kind of detail supplied by these commentators.⁶³

The most obvious 'anomalies' in Alexander's *De anima* and *Mant.* 1 have to do with the suggestion that soul as form somehow follows upon the bodily material constitution. The *De anima* passage is as follows:

(T7) Alexander, *De anima*, 23,24-24,7.

(1) Nor is that [view] true, according to which these activities belong to the soul, which uses the body as an instrument. (2) For just as in the case of other powers and states no power and no state acts using that of which it is a state, but *vice-versa*, the things that have powers and states act in accordance with these powers and states (for it is not heaviness that is carried downwards using the earth of which it is the power, but the earth is carried downwards in accordance with heaviness which is its power, form, perfection and actuality), in the same way it is with soul, since it too is the power, form and actuality of the body which has it. (3) For, as has been shown, its coming to be is from a certain kind of mixture and blending of the first bodies. (4) And what acts in accordance with the soul is that in which the ruling part of the soul is (for that is ensouled both in a primary way and *per se*); and for its activities in accordance with the soul it uses the instrumental parts of the body. ⁶⁴

⁶⁰ (1) πάλιν δ' ὡσπερ ἐξ ὑπαρχῆς ἐπανίωμεν, πειρώμενοι διορίσαι τί ἐστι ψυχή καὶ τίς ἂν εἴη κοινότατος λόγος αὐτῆς. (2) λέγομεν δὴ γένος ἐν τι τῶν ὄντων τὴν οὐσίαν, ταύτης δὲ (a) τὸ μὲν, ὡς ὕλην, ὃ καθ' αὐτὸ οὐκ ἔστι τόδε τι, (b) ἕτερον δὲ μορφήν καὶ εἶδος, καθ' ἣν ἡδὴ λέγεται τόδε τι, (c) καὶ τρίτον τὸ ἐκ τούτων. ἔστι δ' ἡ μὲν ὕλη δύναμις, τὸ δ' εἶδος ἐντελέχεια, καὶ τοῦτο διχῶς, τὸ μὲν ὡς ἐπιστήμη, τὸ δ' ὡς τὸ θεωρεῖν. (3) οὐσίαι δὲ μάλιστα εἶναι δοκοῦσι τὰ σώματα, καὶ τούτων τὰ φυσικά· ταῦτα γὰρ τῶν ἄλλων ἀρχαί. τῶν δὲ φυσικῶν τὰ μὲν ἔχει ζωὴν, τὰ δ' οὐκ ἔχει ζωὴν δὲ λέγομεν τὴν δι' αὐτοῦ τροφήν τε καὶ αὐξήσιν καὶ φθίσιν. ὥστε πᾶν σῶμα φυσικὸν μετέχον ζωῆς οὐσία ἂν εἴη, οὐσία δ' οὕτως ὡς συνθέτη.

⁶¹ I agree with concerns stated in Rashed, *Essentialisme: Alexandre d'Aphrodise* (n.10, above) 36-42 and P. Accattino, P. L. Donini, *Alessandro d'Afrodisia, L'anima* (Rome; Bari 1996) xi concerning a number of simplifications in Alexander's presentation.

⁶² See Sharples, *Supplement to 'On the soul'* (n.16, above) 13.

⁶³ Philoponus in *An.* 205,18-207,15; 207,18-210,22; 210,28-211,9, Themistius in *An.* 39,24-41,1.

⁶⁴ (1) οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδὲ ἐκεῖνο ἀληθὲς τὸ ὅτι τῆς ψυχῆς εἰσὶν αἶδε αἱ ἐνέργειαι προσχρωμένης ὡς ὀργάνῳ τῷ σώματι. (2) ὡς γὰρ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων δυνάμεων καὶ ἕξεων οὐδεμία δύναμις οὐδὲ ἕξις ἐνεργεῖ χρωμένη τούτῳ οὐ ἔστιν ἕξις, ἀλλ' ἐμβαλὶν τὰς δυνάμεις τε καὶ τὰς ἕξεις ἔχοντα κατὰ τὰς δυνάμεις τε καὶ τὰς ἕξεις ἐνεργεῖ (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἡ βαρύτης κάτω φέρεται προσχρωμένη τῇ γῆ, ἥς δύναμις ἐστίν, ἀλλ' ἡ γῆ φέρεται κάτω κατὰ τὴν βαρύτητα δυνάμιν οὐσαν αὐτῆς καὶ εἶδος καὶ τελειότητά τε καὶ ἐντελέχειαν), οὕτως καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς ψυχῆς ἔχει, ἐπεὶ καὶ αὐτὴ δύναμις τε καὶ εἶδος καὶ ἐντελέχεια ἐστὶ τοῦ ἔχοντος αὐτὴν σώματος. (3) ἡ γὰρ γένεσις αὐτῆς ἐκ τῆς ποιᾶς μίξεώς τε καὶ κράσεως τῶν πρώτων σωμάτων, ὡς ἐδείχθη. (4) καὶ τὸ μὲν ἐνεργοῦν κατὰ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐκεῖνο, ἐν ᾧ

The *Mantissa I* has some parallels:

(T8) Alexander, *Mantissa* 1, 104,28-105,2

(1) The body and its blending are the cause of the soul's coming to be in the first place. (2) This is clear from the difference between living creatures in respect of their parts. For it is not the souls that fashion their shapes, but rather the different souls follow on the constitution of these being of a certain sort; and shapes and souls change together. For the actuality and that of which it is the actuality are related reciprocally. (3) And that difference in soul follows on a certain sort of blending in the body is shown also by wild animals, which have an [even] more different sort of the soul alongside the blending in the body being of a certain sort.

(4) What we call the activities of soul are not [activities] of soul in itself, but of what has it. For just as it is not the soul itself that walks or wrestles, but the person having it, just so what is pained and desires and rejoices and grows angry is what possesses soul, not the soul [itself]. For all the so-called movements of the soul are actually of the compound, that which is alive. (trans. R. W. Sharples, lightly modified)⁶⁵

These are both well-known passages, much discussed in the literature.⁶⁶ In what follows, I want to consider a possible further context in which to read them, for which the evidence may ultimately be coming from Alexander's commentary. The context is apparently polemical, against Platonists. Philoponus reports the following discussion of the passage in *De anima* 2.2, 413b11-13:

τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ἡγεμονικόν (ἐκεῖνο γὰρ καὶ τὸ πρῶτως τε ἔμψυχον καὶ καθ' αὐτό), πρὸς δὲ τὰς κατὰ ταύτην ἐνεργείας χρῆται τοῖς ὀργανικοῖς μέρεσιν τοῦ σώματος.

⁶⁵ (1) καὶ ἔστι τὸ σῶμα καὶ ἡ τοῦτου κρᾶσις αἰτία τῆ ψυχῆ τῆς ἐξ ἀρχῆς γενέσεως. (2) τοῦτο δὲ δῆλον ἐκ τῆς τῶν ζώων διαφορᾶς κατὰ τὰ μέρη. οὐ γὰρ ψυχαὶ διαπλάσσουσι τὰς μορφάς, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τῇ τούτων ποιᾷ συστάσει ἐπηκολούθησαν αἱ διάφοροι ψυχαί, συμμεταβάλλουσιν δὲ ἀλλήλοις· ἔστι γὰρ ἀλλήλων ἢ τε ἐντελέχεια καὶ τὸ οὐδ' ἐντελέχεια. (3) ὅτι δὲ τῇ ποιᾷ κρᾶσει τοῦ σώματος καὶ ἡ τῆς ψυχῆς ἔπεται διαφορά, δηλοῖ καὶ τὰ θηρία παρὰ τὴν ποιᾶν κρᾶσιν τοῦ σώματος ἀλλοιοτέραν ἴσχοντα τὴν ψυχὴν.

(4) ἂς δὲ φαμεν τῆς ψυχῆς ἐνεργείας εἶναι, οὐκ εἰσὶν τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτῆς καθ' αὐτήν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ ἔχοντος αὐτήν. ὡς γὰρ οὐ βαδίζει ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτὴ οὐδὲ παλαίει, ἀλλ' ὁ ἔχων αὐτήν ἄνθρωπος, οὕτω καὶ λυπεῖται καὶ ὀρέγεται καὶ χαίρει καὶ ὀργίζεται τὸ τὴν ψυχὴν ἔχον, ἀλλ' οὐχὶ ἡ ψυχὴ· πάσαι γὰρ αἱ λεγόμεναι τῆς ψυχῆς κινήσεις τοῦ συναμφοτέρου τοῦ ζῶντος εἰσιν.

⁶⁶ Moraux, *Alexandre d'Aphrodise: Exégète* (n.1, above) 29-62; Donini, 'L'anima e gli elementi' (n.46, above) 61-107; P. Thillet, 'Matérialisme et théorie de l'âme et de l'intellect chez Alexandre d'Aphrodise', *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger* 106 (1981) 5-24; H. M. Robinson, 'Form and the immateriality of the intellect from Aristotle to Aquinas', in *Aristotle and the later tradition, OSAP Suppl. Vol. 7*, ed. H. Blumenthal, H. M. Robinson (Oxford 1991) 207-26; Sharples, 'On body, soul and generation' (n.46, above); Accattino, 'Generazione dell'anima' (n.51, above) 182-201; Accattino, Donini, *Alessandro d'Afrodizia* (n.61, above); V. Caston, 'Epiphenomenalisms, ancient and modern', *Philosophical Review* 106.3 (1997) 309-63; Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen III* (n.2, above) 355-58; R. W. Sharples, *Alexander of Aphrodisias: Supplement to 'On the soul'* (London 2004) 13-23, esp. 20, n.34; Accattino, *Alessandro: De anima II* (n.16, above); Bergeron, Dufour, *Alexandre: De l'âme* (n.17, above) 26-34.

(T9) Philoponus (*in An.* 237, 7-24)

413b10 *For the present it may suffice to say that the soul is the origin of the functions above enumerated and is determined by them, namely by capacities of nutrition, sensation, thought, and by motion.*

(a) Those who want to make all soul immortal say that that which nourishes, that which augments and the like are activities of soul, which, they say, Aristotle too says are inseparable, but the soul and the powers from which these activities proceed, these are separable. They claim, then, that he says that the soul is cause and source of these activities, the nourishing, the perceiving, and the rest. But that Aristotle does not think this has been stated many times.

(b) Alexander interprets in a more natural and true way [when he says] that the soul is source and cause of nourishing, augmenting and perceiving, which are *in reality* activities of soul. But that he [Aristotle] does not say the soul is the source of that which nourishes and perceives he has made clear by his adding that it 'is defined by these, that which nourishes, that which perceives' and the rest – ['defined by these'] in place of 'the soul is given its boundaries in these, and has its being in these' (trans. W. Charlton).⁶⁷

Now, the proem ascribes to Numenius the view that conflicts with Alexander's interpretation.⁶⁸

(T10) Philoponus, *in An.* 9, 35-38 (= Numenius, fr. 47 des Places (T. 39 L.))

Of those who have said that the soul is separable from the body, some have said that the whole soul is separable, both the rational and the irrational and the vegetative soul, such as Numenius, who was led astray by some of the aphorisms of Plato, who says in the *Phaedrus*, 'All soul is immortal', clearly speaking about the human soul; for, that he is aware that the soul of non-rational beings is mortal, we shall show clearly when we shall quote what he actually says.⁶⁹

Strictly speaking, Philoponus' proem does not say, as (T9a) does, that Numenius immortalized the whole soul, only that he treated it as separable, 'being misled by Plato's

⁶⁷ 413b10 *Nῦν δὲ τοσοῦτον εἰρήσθω μόνον, ὅτι ἐστὶν ἡ ψυχὴ πάντων τῶν εἰρημένων ἀρχὴ καὶ τούτοις ὄρισται, θρεπτικῶ, αἰσθητικῶ, διανοητικῶ, κινήσει.*

Οἱ μὲν πᾶσαν ψυχὴν ἀπαθανατίζειν βουλόμενοι λέγουσι τὸ μὲν θρεπτικὸν καὶ αὐξητικὸν καὶ τὰ ὅμοια ἐνεργείας εἶναι ψυχῆς, ἃς φασὶ καὶ τὸν Ἀριστοτέλη ἀχωρίστους εἶναι λέγειν, τὴν μέντοι ψυχὴν καὶ τὰς δυνάμεις, ἀφ' ὧν αἱ ἐνεργεῖαι αὐτὰ προέρχονται, ταύτας εἶναι χωριστάς τὴν ψυχὴν οὐδ' αἰτίαν καὶ ἀρχὴν τούτων τῶν ἐνεργειῶν φασὶ λέγειν αὐτόν, τῆς θρεπτικῆς καὶ αἰσθητικῆς καὶ τῶν ἄλλων. ὅτι δὲ οὐ τοῦτο οἴεται ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης, πολλακίς εἴρηται. Προσφυέστερον δὲ καὶ ἀληθέστερον ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος ἐξηγεῖται ἀρχὴν καὶ αἰτίαν εἶναι λέγων τὴν ψυχὴν τοῦ τρέφεσθαι, τοῦ αὔξεσθαι, τοῦ αἰσθάνεσθαι, ἅπερ εἰσὶ τῶ ὄντι ἐνεργεῖαι ψυχῆς. ὅτι δὲ οὐκ ἀρχὴν τοῦ θρεπτικοῦ καὶ αἰσθητικοῦ τὴν ψυχὴν λέγει, ἐδήλωσεν ἐξ ὧν ἐπάγει ὅτι τούτοις ὄρισται, θρεπτικῶ, αἰσθητικῶ καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς, ἀντὶ τοῦ περιώρισται ἐν τούτοις ἡ ψυχὴ, καὶ ἐν τούτοις τὸ εἶναι τῆ ψυχῆ.

⁶⁸ Cf. M. Frede, 'Numenius', in *ANRW* II.36.2, ed. W. Haase (Berlin 1987) 1034-75 (1070-74).

⁶⁹ τῶν δὲ χωριστὴν εἰρηκότων οἱ μὲν πᾶσαν ψυχὴν χωριστὴν σώματος εἰρήκασι, καὶ τὴν λογικὴν καὶ τὴν ἄλογον καὶ τὴν φυτικὴν, οἷος ἦν Νουμῆνιος πλανηθεὶς ἀπὸ τινῶν ῥησειδίων Πλάτωνος εἰπόντος ἐν Φαίδρῳ "πᾶσα ψυχὴ ἀθάνατος", σαφῶς ἐκεῖ περὶ τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης τὸν λόγον ποιουμένου· ὅτι γὰρ θνητὴν οἶδε τὴν τῶν ἄλλῶν σαφῶς δείξομεν αὐτὰς τὰς χρήσεις αὐτοῦ παρατιθέμενοι· οἱ δὲ πᾶσαν ἀχωρίστην καὶ διὰ τοῦτο θνητὴν, ὧν ἐστὶν Ἀλέξανδρος ὁ Ἀφροδισιεύς, δεῖ καὶ τὸν Ἀριστοτέλην πειράται εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ δόξαν συγκατασπᾶν.

wording'. This is perhaps a more accurate description. But it does seem that in the tradition concerning immortality, Numenius's position was sometimes inaccurately described as claiming *immortality* rather than separability for the whole soul.⁷⁰ So Damascius:

(T11) Damascius in *Phaed.* 124, 13-18 N. (= Numenius, fr. 46a des Places)

Some philosophers extend immortality from rational soul to the animate condition of the body, *e.g.* Numenius; others as far as nature, *e.g.* Plotinus in certain passages; others, again, as far as irrational life, *e.g.* of the ancients Xenocrates and Speusippus and, of more recent authorities, Iamblichus and Plutarch; others confine it to rational soul, such as Proclus and Porphyry; others limit it further to intelligence alone, making the opinative function perishable, as many Peripatetics do; others to the universal soul, by which they think individual souls are absorbed. (trans. Westerink)⁷¹

Thus the proem (T10) is more precise – either because in (T9) Philoponus writes more carelessly, or because he has a different source. Nonetheless, the report in (T9a) is specific enough in attributing the immortality (or separability) not just to the soul, but to soul's powers, including 'lower', vegetative powers. Among the theories presented in the two lists, of Philoponus' proem (T10) and Damascius (T11), this position seems closest to that of Numenius.

On Numenius's account, the individual rational soul is transcendent and resides beyond the heaven.⁷² As it descends into the human body, it passes through heavens and acquires, as an external accretion, the irrational soul constituted by vital powers. Once this composite soul is descended into the body, these vital powers give rise to the operations, or activities, of discursive reasoning, imagination, sense perception, and the movements of vegetative soul. All these are the activities of the soul; the body manifests them when the soul resides in it. When the soul departs, bodily activities cease to be manifest *qua* bodily, and therefore the text (T9a) says that the activities are inseparable; but the soul's powers continue to exist outside the body. The ascending soul is cleansed of all its vital powers when passing through heavenly spheres (at the Capricorn gate, as Proclus tells us).⁷³

If Numenius is indeed the author of the interpretation presented by Philoponus in (T9a), this may be rare evidence of his engagement in a direct discussion of Aristotle's psychology.⁷⁴ Elsewhere we do seem to have some circumstantial evidence that Alexander could have been familiar with Numenius's doctrines. In *Mantissa* 7, he criticizes the view according to which none of the four elements can exist on its own. This view, based on

⁷⁰ Frede, 'Numenius' (n.68, above) 1072, who cites fr. 46a des Places as by Olympiodorus.

⁷¹ Ὅτι οἱ μὲν ἀπὸ τῆς λογικῆς ψυχῆς ἄχρι τῆς ἐμψύχου ἕξεως ἀπαθανατίζουσιν, ὡς Νουμήνιος· οἱ δὲ μέχρι τῆς φύσεως, ὡς Πλωτῖνος ἐν ἴσῳ· οἱ δὲ μέχρι τῆς ἀλογίας, ὡς τῶν μὲν παλαιῶν Ξενοκράτης καὶ Σπεύσιππος, τῶν δὲ νεωτέρων Ἰάμβλιχος καὶ Πλούταρχος· οἱ δὲ μέχρι μόνης τῆς λογικῆς, ὡς Πρόκλος καὶ Πορφύριος· οἱ δὲ μέχρι μόνου τοῦ νοῦ, φθείρουσι γὰρ τὴν δόξαν, ὡς πολλοὶ τῶν Περιπατητικῶν· οἱ δὲ μέχρι τῆς ὅλης ψυχῆς, φθείρουσι γὰρ τὰς μερικὰς εἰς τὴν ὅλην.

⁷² Here I am indebted to the accounts of J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* (London 1977) 374-78 and Frede, 'Numenius' (n.68, above) 1071-74.

⁷³ Cf. in *Platonis rem publ.* II, 128,26-130,14 (see fr. 35, 21-23 des Places).

⁷⁴ See G. Karamanolis, *Plato and Aristotle in agreement? Platonists on Aristotle from Antiochus to Porphyry* (Oxford 2006) 145, on the dearth of such evidence (this passage not discussed).

Plato's claim in *Tim.* 31B that visibility derives from fire and tangibility from earth, is attributed by Proclus to Numenius (fr. 51 des Places). Alexander offers several arguments against it.⁷⁵ A criticism of the same view reported in Philoponus' commentary on Aristotle's treatise *On Generation and Corruption* could also go back to Alexander.⁷⁶

(**T9b**) seems to profess agreement with Aristotle on this one point: that the activities of the soul with regard to the body are inseparable from the body. The difference between this position (**T9a**) and Alexander's (**T9b**) is that the source of these activities is the separable soul armed with body-related powers, which are also separable, but do not seem to be immortal (at least not in the same way as the soul). These powers are thus construed as distinct from (a) the activities and powers of the body and (b) the transcendent soul's own being.⁷⁷ Alexander apparently objects to this view and gives a standard interpretation of the passage with which Philoponus agrees, as he often does with Alexander's advice on the *lexis*.

The structure of Philoponus' passage suggests that Alexander is responding to an interpretation of (**T9a**). It seems that the whole passage (**T9b**) comes from Alexander. In the first sentence, 'the soul is source and cause of nourishing, augmenting and perceiving, which are in reality activities of soul', 'in reality' seems to be concessive, meaning 'indeed': Alexander and his Platonic opponent (**T9a**) agree that the listed activities are the activities of the soul. But then it looks as though they have a different understanding of what this means. The Platonist thinks it means the activities are produced and brought about by the transcendent soul, but Alexander points out that the soul is not the source of these activities because Aristotle says it is defined by them.

Alexander's insistence on the formula that the soul 'follows the constitution of the body' in the *De anima* could be a polemical reaction to the view like that of (**T9b**). The idea that soul has some causal autonomy in the formation of a living body might seem to him precariously close to the view like that of Numenius, according to which individual soul pre-exists the body, informs it with assorted ready-to-use activities, and survives it as a whole, including the specific powers which produce the activities in question.⁷⁸ In order to avoid some such reading of Aristotle, Alexander opts for the stronger statement of his commitment to physicalism, drawing on the earlier Peripatetic tradition, namely that soul follows upon the constitution of the body.

If we now look back at the passages from *De anima* and *Mantissa* 1 (**T7**) and (**T8**), it may seem likely that the view criticized there is the same as the view criticized by Alexander in Philoponus' report. In the *De anima* passage (**T7**), the whole question is about the proper subject of activities. **T7(1)**, the opening sentence, refers to a certain

⁷⁵ See Sharples, *Supplement to 'On the soul'* (n.16, above) 80-85.

⁷⁶ Philoponus in *GC* 228,8ff. See Sharples, *Supplement to 'On the soul'* (n.16, above) 80.

⁷⁷ The exact way in which the soul comes to produce these faculties in a body is complex and somewhat obscure, involving a story of soul's descent which includes much astrological detail (see Dillon, *Middle Platonists* (n.72, above) 374-78).

⁷⁸ In fact, there may be evidence in Themistius's paraphrase that this view could be read in a reconciliatory way as a middle ground between Aristotle and Plato (Themistius, in *An.* 25,33-27,7), cf. particularly the passage on transcendent soul: 'Whatever soul it is, it will make no difference to Aristotle's theory at least. For he says that in the present work he is not inquiring into that soul that is single, nor is he defining it, but he is inquiring into the [soul] of a human being, and that of a horse and a cow, and whether they want to give it the name "ensoulment" or "soul" he will not object.' (26,8-12, trans. Todd).

particular thesis (*ekeino, to*), rather than an abstract dialectical position. The thesis is that these vital activities are soul's, and the body is only an instrument which the soul uses. The analysis of *dunameis* and *hexeis* in **T7(2)**, which refers back to Alexander's own discussion of natural substances, might be also a response to the claim in Philoponus (**T9a**) which makes powers of the soul into real agencies. **T7(3)**, the most problematic, may have exactly the same force: the origin of the soul is firmly anchored in a mixture and not in the transcendent realm. It is strong physicalist language, but Alexander's goal is primarily polemical. The context allows him to omit those details of Aristotelian theory of generation that might obscure the exposition or prompt some Platonist compromise. Finally, the last sentence **T7(4)** claims that the first agent in accordance with the soul is the seat of the ruling part of the soul, the first ensouled entity, as it were. Although Aristotle does speak about the heart as being like a living creature,⁷⁹ he never uses it as an example of an agent in the *De anima*. Alexander may again be countering the view according to which the source of bodily activities is the incorporeal soul. In the *De anima* he mounts an attack against the view of soul's presence in a body as a steersman's presence on a ship, where steersman is understood not metaphorically but literally as a real entity existing independently from ship/body.⁸⁰

In the passage from *Mant.* 1 (**T8**), the opening claim **T8(1)**, that body and its blending is the cause of the soul, is also made within the polemical framework outlined in **T8(2)** as a contrast between two views on the soul. On the first, separate souls mould the structures of living beings, perhaps by deploying the powers acquired in descent, as described in the reports on Numenius. On the second, the bodies of animals are shaped in the proper processes of animal generations, with which particular types of soul are permanently associated. The claim **T8(1)** that bodily mixture is the cause of soul's coming to be in the first place, should not be contrasted with Aristotelian theory of animal generation, but perhaps with one of the Platonist theories of soul's descent. The wording in **T8(2)** seems to be very careful: souls do not mould structures, but the formation of each kind of structure is accompanied by a different kind of soul.

The bodily structure and the soul change together because the entelechy and that which has the entelechy belong to each other. The relation of belonging is reciprocal, and seems to presuppose some sort of ontological parity, on Alexander's view, informed by his reading of the *Categories*.⁸¹ 'Changing together' can refer to the process of embryogenesis, when the individual soul has not yet been formed, but is an incomplete life-principle undergoing formative changes together with the bodily structure. Perhaps we should not underestimate the significance of Alexander's claim that soul and body change together and belong together: they do so because they are different aspects of the same

⁷⁹ Cf. *PA* 3.4, 666a20-23.

⁸⁰ Alexander, *De anima* 15, 9-26. M. Frede pointed out a number of similarities between Numenius's descended (rational) soul and the Stoic *hegemonikon* (Frede, 'Numenius' (n.68, above) 1071).

⁸¹ On reciprocity, there is a brief discussion in *Quaest.* 2.9, 'How the soul is not relative to something, if it is the actuality of a body of a certain sort'. The author (who may not be Alexander) explains there that soul is not a relative: For things that are relative to something are those whose [very] being is the same as being in a certain state in relation to something; but, while the soul is indeed the actuality of a body of a certain sort, its being does not consist in being in a certain state in relation to something. For it is 'of' the body, [but] is [already] something [in itself], just as a head, too, is something and then is the head of something with a head. (54, 24-27, trans. R. W. Sharples).

natural kind. Alexander does not say this. He says instead that soul follows upon a certain blending, as is clear from the correspondence between blending and soul in some wild animals (in **T8(3)**).⁸² But given the polemical context, the force of this argument is probably not very different from that of Aristotle's remark about the thinkers who have nothing to say about the body that is to receive the soul, so that the art of carpentry might enter flutes (*De anima* 1.3, 407b20-26).

The reference to 'what we call the activities of the soul' (in **T8(4)**) could be treated as another instance of objection to a Platonist interpretation of ἐνέργειαι τῆς ψυχῆς as the activities of separate soul by itself. But the argument itself is very familiar from Aristotle, *De anima* 1.1, 403a2-25, except that in that discussion Aristotle never speaks about ἐνέργειαι, but always about affections (πάθη) of the soul which he described as λόγοι ἐν ὕλῃ. ἐνέργειαι τῆς ψυχῆς seems to be a preferred term from the lexicon of Alexander's opponents, as it occurs in all three of our main texts (**T7**), (**T8**), (**T9**).

Thus, many features of Alexander's vocabulary and argument in (**T7**) and (**T8**) can be explained by his polemic against Platonist interpretations of Aristotle's soul. Philoponus' report provides us with another possible perspective on this polemic, in which Alexander has to counter the view that soul and its powers exist independently from a living body. This probably makes him insist that a vital power of a living body is not separate from this body, but rather comes about together with it. Notably, on this point at least there seems to be no discrepancy between the treatise and the commentary: both have a similar polemical agenda, even if they occasionally put it to different uses.

But there are other features of Alexander's account that are not easy to explain by polemical constraints and which have more to do with the constraints of the genre. Many scholars asked the question why Alexander prefers the elements as the examples of hylomorphic compound, instead of taking a living being, Aristotle's paradigm of substance.⁸³ As we have seen, Alexander's taxonomy of ensouled beings in the *De anima* is not complete: he does not discuss the soul of heavenly bodies, and many questions of soul's place in the cosmos are also omitted, although he does discuss them in the commentaries. Therefore commentaries, even the ones that are lost and only preserved in quotations, are important for understanding the system of ideas forming the background of Alexander's school treatises.

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⁸² The relation expressed by παρὰ τὴν κρᾶσιν at 104, 34 is that of correspondence. I modified Bob Sharples's translation at this point: 'deriving from' seems too strong for the accusative.

⁸³ Donini, 'L'anima e gli elementi' (n.46, above); Rashed, *Essentialisme: Alexandre d'Aphrodise* (n.10, above).