

How and Why Alexander's theory of the soul deviates from Aristotle: A reexamination of the criticisms presented by Moraux and Donini

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Near the beginning of his treatise *De anima* (2.10-25), Alexander of Aphrodisias contends that one who investigates the soul should first appreciate ‘the extraordinary magnificence of nature (τὸ τῆς φύσεως ἀμήχανόν τε καὶ περιττόν)’. According to him, Aristotle teaches both in the last part of *Meteorologica* (390b15-22) and in *De anima* 403a27-b9 that the investigation should start from the structure of the body and its organs so that it will no more be incredible that the soul, which has the principles of change, is something that belongs to the body, which is constructed so magnificently. Against Simmias' anxiety in Plato's *Phaedo* (91C8-D2), Alexander insists on the compatibility of the soul's being ‘more divine and greater (than the body)’ and a kind of naturalistic investigation of the soul which starts from the body. Thus, the naturalistic investigation of the soul is represented by Alexander as a typically Aristotelian way of inquiry.

The later commentators blamed, however, for his alleged deviation from Aristotle, and the modern scholarship has been discussing his faithfulness to the Aristotelian theory of soul. The aim of this paper does not consist in judging whether or not Alexander's theory of soul is Aristotelian; rather, I shall reveal what is at issue when we disagree on that matter, and, specifically, the ideas to which we are forced to commit when we say his theory of soul is Aristotelian or not.

**1.**

According to Alexander, the natural body which has soul is the substance, the parts of which, i.e. the form and the matter, are also substances; and the soul is the form of that natural substance. This is indubitably Aristotelian (cf. *An.* 412a6-21). But Alexander comes to deviate from Aristotle, according to the critics, when he explicates the relationship between the soul and body in terms of the following global theory of natural substances.

**T1 Alexander, *An.* 8.5-13**

Consequently, if there is to be a compound natural body, over and above the simple bodies, then it must have several simple bodies as its underlying subjects, where the number is one corresponding to the difference between the forms in them. This is the reason why things of this sort are compound bodies. The [body], then, which has many differing forms conjoined with matter as its underlying subjects, has a nature and form that is of necessity more complex and more advanced, since each nature in the bodies underlying it makes a contribution [συντελοῦσης τι] to the form that stands over them all and is common to them. For this sort of form is in a way a form of forms and a kind of culmination of culminations. (tr. Caston)

Here Alexander gives explanation to the fact that some forms of the natural substances are ‘more complex and more advanced (ποικιλώτερον τε καὶ τελειότερον)’: the forms in the underlying bodies ‘contribute’ to that form.

**T2 Alexander, *An.* 10.24-11.5**

So it makes sense that the difference in forms that supervene on differences in the proximate matter follows from them. For not all matter can receive the same culmination. So in things at the ground level, which do not yet have a body underlying them, the form is simpler too; whereas in things in which a compound body with distinctive parts useful for different activities underlies them, the form is conjoined with many powers, since it is a form and culmination of a complex and organic body. For just this reason, then, the soul is a form of this sort of body. The soul that has a simpler organic body is simpler, while the soul comprising many powers is more advanced and its underlying body, of which this particular sort of soul is a form, is more complex and more organic [ὀργανικώτερον]. (tr. Caston)

When the form of a natural body is the soul, the contribution to the soul's complexity occurs in virtue of the body's being complex and ὀργανικόν, i.e. the fact that the body has ‘distinctive parts useful for different activities’ (sc. anomoeomerous parts). We find in these

texts, T1 and T2, a kind of systematized bottom-up explanation for the forms of the natural bodies in general, which we do not find in Aristotle.

Moreover, Alexander adds a physical description to this bottom-up explanation, the description which is criticized as a definite deviation from the authentic Aristotelian theory of the soul.

### **T3 Alexander, *Mant.* 104.21-34**

The soul, being actuality, [extends] throughout the whole body, for every part of what has soul has soul. And soul is actuality not in the way that shape is [the actuality] of things that have been shaped, nor as position and arrangement [is the actuality] of things that have been put together, nor as some disposition and being affected, nor as mixture or blending (for pleasure and pain are being affected or disposition, but soul is none of these). Certainly these come to *be present* [παράγινεται] in the body, for it is through these that [there exist] the organs which soul uses; but [soul] itself is some capacity and substance which supervenes on these [δύναμις τις καὶ οὐσία ἐπὶ τούτοις γινομένη]. The body and its blending are the cause of the soul's coming-to-be in the first place. 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 [ἐπηκολούθησαν] on the constitution of these being of a certain sort, and change with [συμμεταβάλλουσιν] them. For the actuality and that of which it is the actuality are related reciprocally [ἔστι...ἀλλήλων]. And that difference in soul follows [ἔπεται] on a certain sort of blending in the body is shown also by wild animals, which have an [even] more different sort of soul deriving from the blending in their body being of a certain sort. (tr. Sharples, my italics)

Alexander gives here the physical description to the fact that the body's accidental features (shape, position, mixture etc.) contribute to the differences of the soul while the soul itself is the form as a *substance*: the soul is a *capacity* which *supervenes on* (γίγνεσθαι...ἐπὶ/ἐπιγίγνεσθαι) the accidental features (cf. *An.* 24.4-5, 22-23; 25.2-4; 26.26-7, 29-30). As Caston rightly resumes, the soul is a 'distinct new power that arises necessarily

from the ‘tuning’ of material bodies, *without* being reducible to it’ (Caston 1997:349, his italics).

Two thoughts of Alexander seen above are surely Aristotelian: the soul is some *δύναμις* (*power/capacity*) for the variety of activities, and the soul has some close connection with the body, whereas the physical description of the soul and body along with the global bottom-up systematization of the natural world is post-Aristotelian. We find the similar physical description both in the fragments of the antecedent Aristotelian philosophers and in the works of Galen (cf. Moraux 2001: 356-57 n.172), and when Alexander stresses the difference between soul's being bodily mixture itself and soul's being a capacity which supervenes on it (e.g. *An.* 25.2-9), he is clearly trying to distinguish the latter, which he regards as the authentic Aristotelian theory, from the former, which some of his antecedents regard as the Aristotelian theory (e.g. Galenus *Quod an. mor.* 36.21-37.24 Müller, Dicaearchus fr. 11 Wehrli = Nemesius *De nat. hom.* 2, 17.5-9 Morani). The modern critics point out, however, that Alexander made mistake when he explains the body-soul relationship by giving it the physical description.

Thus according to Moraux, both Alexander cannot answer the question ‘how, given that the soul is emitted from the body, i.e. that it is a result of the mixture which gives birth to the body, the soul plays the role of the formal, efficient, and final cause for the body?’ (Moraux 1942:34) <sup>1</sup>; and therefore Alexander's theory of the soul deviates from Aristotle.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Moraux 1942:33-34 La causalité du mélange corporel est bien mise en lumière dans la critique qu'Alexandre fait de la théorie de l'âme-harmonie: «Il ne faut pas croire qu'en disant que l'âme est la forme née lors du mélange et de la composition déterminée des corps qui lui servent de sujets, on veut dire qu'elle est une harmonie; ce n'est pas tel mélange déterminé des corps, comme ce serait le cas pour une harmonie, mais elle est la force engendrée lors de telle combinaison déterminée (ἡ ἐπὶ τοιαύτῃ κράσει δύναμις γεννωμένη).» Dans un mélange de produits pharmaceutiques, la vertu curative que possède le mélange est autre chose que la proportion de ce mélange; l'âme n'est donc pas la proportion (λόγος) du mélange, mais elle est la force ou la forme issue d'un mélange fait dans des proportions déterminées (κατὰ τὸν τοιόνδε λόγον). Aristote avait déjà critiqué la théorie de l'âme-harmonie, sans indiquer quels en étaient les partisans; nous savons que plusieurs de disciples immédiats d'Aristote (surtout Aristoxène et Dicaërque) défendaient la théorie de l'âme-harmonie. La mise au point d'Alexandre était donc nécessaire. Cela n'implique pas qu'elle soit orthodoxe au point de vue aristotélicien. Plusieurs commentateurs du *de Anima* d'Aristote renvoient à la critique alexandriste de l'âme-harmonie, comme si elle était parfaitement aristotélicienne; et pourtant, le Stagiritte ne souligne-t-il pas à maintes reprises que l'âme joue pour le corps le rôle de cause formelle, motrice et finale? C'est à cause d'elle que les tissus et le corps tout entier sont ce qu'ils sont. Comment l'âme, si elle est issue du corps, pourra-t-elle encore jouer ce rôle causal qu'Aristote lui attribue? Les commentateurs qui acceptent les interprétations de l'Exégète n'en soufflent mot. Cette opposition entre les doctrines du Commentateur et celles du Maître s'installera au coeur même de l'alexandriste sous forme d'une véritable contradiction, quand Alexandre admettra—et comment pourrait-il faire autrement?—que l'âme est principe des différentes opérations vitales du composé vivant: la matière se

Although Caston seems to answer the question by showing the soul for Alexander is ‘a distinct new power’ (Caston 1997:350), Moraux would not be contented with this answer, because Moraux's point does not rest on whether or not the soul is reducible to the mixture of material body, but on the Alexander's insistence that the soul *follows* the bodily mixture, the idea which Caston admits (cf. ‘distinct new power that arises *necessarily* from the ‘tuning’ of material bodies, *without* being reducible to it’ (Caston 1997:349 with additional italics)). Hence Moraux states that ‘if the soul results from the mixture, the soul is constituted *mechanically* by the reactions of the ingredients’, because ‘the *physico–chemical* forces determine the connections and the interactions of the melangeables, and the form of the mixture is nothing but the *almost accidental coronation* of that mechanical process’, which is distinguished from the substantial soul that ‘is the cause that determines the *organic* evolution of the being wherein the soul keeps potentially residing’ (Moraux 1942:43, my italics).

Donini, who refines Moraux's interpretation, identifies the reason why the un-Aristotelian ‘mechanical’ or ‘physico–chemical’ explanation of the soul invades into Alexander's theory of the soul. According to Donini, although (1) Alexander is familiar with the distinction between the cause of the generation of the homoeomerous and anomoemorous parts which is stated in Aristotle's *Meteorologica* 390b2-14, and understands that whereas in the former case the cause is ‘the hot, the cold, and the mixed movements’ (*Meteor.* 390b8-9), in the latter the cause is ‘the nature or some other cause [sc. human being, horse, etc.]’ (ibid. 14) (Donini 1971:80-81), nevertheless, (2) since Alexander, based on text of the last part of Aristotle's criticism against the *harmonia*–theory in 408a24-6<sup>2</sup>, thinks Aristotle admits that there is a ‘one mixture of all the bodily parts’ (Philop. *In An.* 152.5-6) (Donini 1971:89-92), (3) Alexander dares to walk the ‘physical–chemical (*fisico–chimica*)’ way to the effect that the soul is generated from ‘one mixture of all the bodily parts’, with full conscience that this way is different from, and contrary to the ‘biological’ way suggested by Aristotle in *Meteorologica* 390b2-14 (Donini 1971:82). Thus Donini writes: ‘although this second,

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donne à elle-même un principe vital, elle s'actualise elle-même: rien n'est plus illogique, plus inconcevable du point de vue aristotélicien.

<sup>2</sup> εἰ δ’ ἐστὶν ἕτερον ἢ ψυχὴ τῆς μίξεως, τί δὴ ποτε ἅμα τῷ σαρκὶ εἶναι ἀναιρεῖται καὶ τῷ τοῖς ἄλλοις μορίοις τοῦ ζώου; (Philop. *In An.* 151.7-9). cf. Donini 1971:89.

Hicks reads ‘εἰ δ’ ἐστὶν ἕτερον ἢ ψυχὴ τῆς μίξεως, τί δὴ ποτε ἅμα τῷ σαρκὶ εἶναι ἀναιρεῖται καὶ τῷ τοῖς ἄλλοις μορίοις τοῦ ζώου;’ so that the subject of the sentence is ἡ ψυχὴ. Smith's Oxford Translation follows this reading.

chemical–physical way which Alexander actually proceeds is definitely not the way of Aristotle, in *de Anima* of Aristotle there is at least one text which can suggest, or justify, the construction of Alexander [of the second, chemical–physical way]’ (ibid.). In short, Donini reveals the possibility that Alexander's ‘physical–chemical’ (or ‘mechanical’) way of generating the soul, which Moraux thinks is introduced by Alexander because of Alexander's ‘not being true metaphysician’ (Moraux 1942:48), is in fact the way whose inspiration comes *from Aristotle*.

The point of these criticisms against Alexander's theory of the soul by the outstanding scholars is whether the soul which *follows* (ἔπεσθαι/ἐπακολουθεῖν) from the soul's mixture can be said as a *substance* (οὐσία). Caston answers yes, and rightly points out that Moraux's premise of the contrast between ‘mechanical (or physico–chemical)’ and the ‘organic (or biological)’, the premise which grounds Moraux's interpretation that Alexander falls into his un-Aristotelian theory to the effect that the ‘mechanical’ process (the mixture of the body) generates the substantial soul which can only be generated in the ‘organic’ process, in fact is not shared by Alexander (Caston 1997:349 n.97). In the following, I shall show Alexander's ground for not positing the mechanical–organic dichotomy, and the fundamental difference between Alexander and Moraux (and Donini) in terms of the view of the soul and body.

## 2.

Without doubt, Alexander contrasts his theory of the soul with some antecedent Aristotelians. We should see another contrast, however, with the *Platonists* in order to understand fully the implication of his insistence that the soul is a power that supervenes on the bodily mixture.

### **T4 Alexander, *An.* 23.24-24.4**

The view that these particular activities [ἐνέργεια] belong to the soul because it uses the body as an organ [προσχωμένης ὡς ὀργάνῳ τῷ σώματι] is simply not true. For this case is like that of other powers and dispositions. No power or disposition engages in activity by using that of which it is a disposition. Rather, it is the other way around: *the things* that possess the powers and dispositions engage in activity [ἐνεργεῖ] *in virtue of* [κατὰ]

*these powers* and dispositions. For heaviness is not carried downwards by making use of earth, of which it is a power. Rather, *earth* is carried downwards *in virtue of heaviness*, which is its power and form, its culmination and completion. The same holds for the soul as well, because [ἐπεὶ] it is likewise a power and form and completion of the body that has it, since [γὰρ] it comes into being from a certain mixture and blend of the primary bodies, as has been shown. (tr. Caston slightly modified)

Here, Alexander criticizes the a interpretation of Aristotle to the effect that (1) the activities such as feeling of pleasure, learning, and recollection belong to *the soul* which (2) uses the body as its instrument; and, for this criticism, Alexander presents his theory that the soul comes from the bodily mixture. The idea that the soul rather than human being is the subject of the human activities comes from Plato's *First Alcibiades* 129E-130C, and Aristotle suggests his disagreement in his *De anima*: ‘It is doubtless better to avoid saying that *the soul* pities or learns or thinks, and rather to say that it is *the human being* who does this *with his soul* (τὸν ἄνθρωπον τῇ ψυχῇ)’ (408b13-15 tr. Smith, slightly modified).

Alexander does not, however, simply reject the Platonist view: he is criticizing the Platonist *interpretation of Aristotle*. He needs to do this in order to evade a misinterpretation which could be deduced from his own thesis that the soul is some kind of power which is the source (ἀρχή) of human activities. Philoponus attests that there are people who interpret a passage from Aristotle's *De anima* 413b11-13<sup>3</sup> in the following way.

### **T5 Philoponus, *In An.* 237.11-16**

Those who want to make all soul immortal say that that which nourishes, that which augments [τὸ μὲν θρεπτικὸν καὶ αὐξητικὸν] 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 [προέρχονται], these are separable. They claim, then, that he [sc. Aristotle] says [in 413b11-13], that the soul is cause and source of these activities, the

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<sup>3</sup> At present we must confine ourselves to saying that soul is the source of these phenomena and is characterized by them, viz. by the powers of self-nutrition, sensation, thinking, and movement. (tr. Smith)

νῦν δ' ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον εἰρήσθω μόνον, ὅτι ἐστὶν ἡ ψυχὴ τῶν εἰρημένων τούτων ἀρχὴ καὶ τούτοις ὄρισται, θρεπτικῶ, αἰσθητικῶ, διανοητικῶ, κινήσει.

nourishing, the perceiving [τῆς θρεπτικῆς καὶ αἰσθητικῆς] and the rest. (tr. Charlton with additional italics)

As has been shown by Kupreeva (2012:125-26), people referred to here as ‘who want to make all soul immortal’ are those who are referred to in the earlier part of the commentary as some Platonists who ‘said that the whole soul is separable, both the rational and the non-rational and the vegetative soul, such as Numenius, who was led astray by some of the aphorisms of Plato, who says in the *Phaedrus* [at 245C5], ‘All soul is immortal’ (Philop. *In An.* 9.36-8). Thus, Numenius and the other Platonists find the justification for their own view about the soul in Aristotle's wording ἐστὶν ἡ ψυχὴ τῶν εἰρημένων τούτων ἀρχὴ at 413b11-12: since the soul is a *source* of τὸ θρεπτικόν, τὸ αἰσθητικόν and the other activities, which are in need of the body, the soul itself, as the *power* from which these activities ‘proceed’, is independent from the body. Alexander rejects this Platonist interpretation:

#### **T6 Philoponus, *In An.* 237.16-23**

But that Aristotle does not think this has been stated many times. Alexander interprets in a more natural and true way [when he says] that the soul is source and cause of nourishing, augmenting and perceiving [τοῦ τρέφεσθαι, τοῦ αὔξεσθαι, τοῦ αἰσθάνεσθαι], 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* [τοῦ θρεπτικοῦ καὶ αἰσθητικοῦ] he [sc. Aristotle] has made clear by his adding ‘τούτοις ὄρισται, θρεπτικῶ, αἰσθητικῶ καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς [the soul 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 [περιώρισται] in these, and has its being in these’. (tr. Charlton, modified with additional italics)

Here Alexander contends that τούτων in ἐστὶν ἡ ψυχὴ τῶν εἰρημένων τούτων ἀρχὴ at 413b11-2 refers, strictly speaking, τὸ τρέφεσθαι, τὸ αὔξεσθαι, which are ‘in reality (τῶ ὄντι)’<sup>4</sup> the activities, rather than τὸ θρεπτικόν, τὸ αὔξητικόν, which are the powers that constitute the soul. The point is that these powers, which are inseparable from the body,

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<sup>4</sup> I disagree on the meaning of τῶ ὄντι with Kupreeva who interprets it ‘to be concessive, meaning ‘indeed’’ (Kupreeva 2012:127).



*themselves* constitute the soul, rather than that they presuppose another power which is separable soul. In order to evade the misunderstanding, or, in other words, against the Platonist interpretation of Aristotle, Alexander have to insist that his idea that the soul is a power does not imply the presupposition of the soul that has independence *in the Platonic way*, i.e. independence in *separability and antecedence* in relation to the body.

Clearly, the Platonist interpretation of that passage of Aristotle's *De anima* is motivated by their effort to import Platonic idea into the interpretation of Aristotle: Aristotle's saying of the soul as the source of inseparable activities implies, according to those Platonists, approval of Plato's idea that what uses the body is nothing but the soul which is the ruler of the body and *is* the human being (*Alc. I.* 129E7-130A4<sup>5</sup>). On the other hand, the fact that Alexander rejects that Platonist interpretation is not a matter of course, since one can find in Aristotle the texts which can be used to support the idea of the soul as the user of the body: in his *Protrepticus* Aristotle states that ‘the soul rules the body whereas the body is ruled by the soul, and the soul uses the body whereas the body submit to the soul as its instrument [ὑπόκειται ὡς ὄργανον]’ (Iambl. *Protr.* 71.23-4 Des Places, cf. *E. E.* 1241b22), and even in *De anima*, though, as I said, in one place Aristotle says that it is more appropriate to say that it is the human being who does this with his soul, we can find another line which can justify the Platonist reading (407b25-6: δεῖ γὰρ τὴν μὲν τέχνην χρῆσθαι τοῖς ὀργάνοις, τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν τῷ σώματι.). In T4, therefore, Alexander *dares to* detach himself from a Platonist interpretation which is in itself a possible reading in terms of the interpretation of Aristotelian view the soul. (Indeed, we know even modern interpretations sometimes read in a similar vein. cf. Menn 2002.)

We can by now see where, according to Alexander, the misunderstanding of the Platonist interpretation rests on: even if it is possible to regard the soul as the user of the body—and Alexander's formula that the soul is a kind of *power* could be, in itself, seen as approving that view—, it should not imply the indubitably un-Aristotelian idea to the effect that the soul is independent in that it is separable from and antecedent to the body. Hence his insistence that ‘the same holds for the soul as well [as other natural bodies in general], because it is likewise a power and form and completion of the body that has it’ (24.1-3). And

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<sup>5</sup> Τί ποτ' οὖν ὁ ἄνθρωπος; Οὐκ ἔχω λέγειν. Ἔχεις μὲν οὖν, ὅτι γε τὸ τῷ σώματι χρώμενον. Ναί. Ἡ οὖν ἄλλο τι χρῆται αὐτῷ ἢ ψυχῇ; Οὐκ ἄλλο. Οὐκοῦν ἄρχουσα; Ναί.

he grounds this by that problematic idea: ‘since the soul comes into being from a certain mixture and blend of the primary bodies (ἡ γὰρ γένεσις αὐτῆς ἐκ τῆς ποιᾶς μίξεως τε καὶ κράσεως τῶν πρώτων σωμάτων [...] 24.3-4)). Thus the crucial point of his claim in T4 is that the soul, which is the power and the substance, must be something *dependent* on the body, and this is not a straightforward claim at all in terms of the interpretation of Aristotle.

We can pierce more fully the idea which Alexander resists from the following text.

### **T7 Alexander, *Mant.* 104.11-17**

When we say that soul is of a natural body which potentially has life [σώματος φυσικοῦ **δυνάμει ζωὴν ἔχοντος**], we are not then applying ‘δυνάμει [potentially]’ to the body in the way that we are accustomed to apply it to things that do not yet have something but are suitable to receive it [ἐπιτηδείων πρὸς τὸ δέξασθαι]. For it is not that this body first exists without soul, and subsequently receives it, but ‘τὸ δυνάμει ζωὴν ἔχον [what potentially has life]’ is ‘τὸ δυνάμενον ζῆν [what is able to live]’, that is ‘what possesses organs for the activities in life [ἔχον ὄργανα πρὸς τὰς κατὰ τὸ ζῆν ἐνεργείας]’, and [therefore] ‘δυνάμει ζωὴν ἔχον [potentially having life]’ is equivalent to ‘**ὀργανικόν**’. (tr. Sharples, modified)

This is Alexander's interpretation both of Aristotle's formula at 412a27-8 (διὸ ἡ ψυχὴ ἐστὶν ἐντελέχεια ἢ πρώτη **σώματος φυσικοῦ δυνάμει ζωὴν ἔχοντος**), especially the meaning of δυνάμει there, and of Aristotle's immediately following paraphrase at a29-b1 (τοιούτων δὲ ὁ ἄν ἢ **ὀργανικόν**). T7 suggests the existence of the antecedent interpretation to the effect that Aristotle's ‘ὀργανικόν’ body is (1) the body which *can be used* by the soul as *its instrument* [**ὀργανικόν**], and it is (2) the body which *can have* [**δυνάμει...ἔχον**] life in that it is *suitable* (ἐπιτήδειος) to receive the soul *without having it*. According to this interpretation, the body itself is grasped as an *independent* material which is prepared *on its own* to receive the soul, just as the musical instrument which is constructed on its own and waits to be used by the player<sup>6</sup>. Indeed, when Simplicius, in his commentary on *De anima* (52.22-35), accuses

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<sup>6</sup> The similar analogy is used by the Neoplatonic interpreters.

E.g. Philoponus, *In Phys.* 191.11-25: ‘[E]ven according to Aristotle himself it is not from existing outside of the mixtures that the forms supervene upon the mixtures. For it is not the case that the mixture of the elements *makes* the irrational soul, or animals as a whole, when it does not do that in the other forms either (I mean the form of flesh and that of bone and things like that). Rather they

Alexander for his falling in the same thought as the soul-as-*harmonia* theory in spite of Alexander's effort to detaching himself from that theory, Simplicius is appealing to the Platonist interpretation of 412a29-b1 to the effect that 'Aristotle added 'instrumental' to 'body' and confirms that the soul uses it and changes it' (52.32-3). According to this Platonist reading, Aristotle distinguishes the form (εἶδος) and the suitability (ἐπιτηδειότης) in such a way that whereas the form, which is the soul, is the subject which uses the ὄργανικόν body, the suitability is the result of the generation of this ὄργανικόν body<sup>7</sup>. Thus, there were

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supervene on the mixtures from outside of the entire creation, not having existed before. It is clear, therefore, that there is indeed *superveing* out of absolute and utter non-being, meaning not as out of the material cause. For it is not that some pre-underlying material cause, changed thus and so, made the irrational soul. Rather the appropriate mixture merely makes the body ready to receive it. The mixture is not the soul, however. For **just as the person who sets us the strings of the lyre makes them ready to receive the form of the tuning, and the strings are not themselves tunings, but the tunings are added to the strings from without by the technician**, so it is also in the case of the mixture of animals' bodies. For the lives are added from without to the suitability of the mixture, by the creation. For worse would not be cause the better and soulless of soul and lifeless of life. (tr. Osborne)

καὶ γὰρ κατ' αὐτὸν τὸν Ἀριστοτέλην τὰ εἶδη οὐκ ἐκ τῶν κράσεων ὄντα ἔξωθεν ἐπιγίνεται ταῖς κράσεσιν· οὐ γὰρ ἢ τῶν στοιχείων κρᾶσις ποιεῖ τὴν ἄλογον ψυχὴν ἢ ὅλως τὰς ζώας, ὅποτε οὐδὲ τὰ λοιπὰ εἶδη, τὸ τῆς σαρκὸς λέγω καὶ τὸ τοῦ ὄστος καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα, ἀλλ' ἔξωθεν ἐκ τῆς ὅλης δημιουργίας ἐπιγίνεται ταῖς κράσεσιν οὐκ ὄντα πρότερον. δῆλον δὴπου ὅτι καὶ ἐκ τοῦ μηδαμῆ μηδαμῶς ὄντος ἐπιγίνεται, οὐχ ὡς ἐξ ὑλικοῦ λέγω αἰτίου· οὐ γὰρ προὑποκειμένον τι ὑλικὸν αἴτιον οὕτω τραπέν ἐποίησε τὴν ἄλογον ψυχὴν, ἢ δὲ κρᾶσις ἐπιτῆδειον μόνον ποιεῖ τὸ σῶμα εἰς τὸ δέξασθαι αὐτήν, οὐ μέντοι ἢ κρᾶσις ψυχὴ ἐστίν. ὥσπερ γὰρ ὁ τὰς χορδὰς τῆς λύρας κατασκευάζων ἐπιτηδεῖας αὐτὰς ποιεῖ εἰς τὸ καταδέξασθαι τὸ εἶδος τῆς ἁρμονίας, καὶ οὐχ αἱ χορδαὶ ἁρμονίαι εἰσίν, ἀλλ' ἔξωθεν ὑπὸ τοῦ τεχνίτου ἢ ἁρμονία ταῖς χορδαῖς ἐπιτίθεται, οὕτως καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς τῶν σωμάτων τῶν ζώων κράσεως ἔχει· τῆ γὰρ ἐπιτηδειότητι τῆς κράσεως ἔξωθεν αἱ ζῶαι ἐπιτίθενται ὑπὸ τῆς δημιουργίας· οὐ γὰρ δὴ τὸ χεῖρον τοῦ κρείττονος εἴη ἂν αἴτιον καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς τὸ ἄψυχον καὶ τῆς ζωῆς τὸ ἄζωον. Cf. also his *In GC* 169.4-27, *In An.* 51.13-52.1.

<sup>7</sup> Simplicius, *In An.* 52.22-35: 'So why, then, is the opinion that makes the soul a harmony plausible to many? Because, **as the form suddenly supervenes on the immediate matter as it gains a perfect suitability, it appears to be the same thing as the suitability.** In the same way the shape of the ship seems to be in no way different from such and such a fitting together of the timbers. Also the majority do not distinguish the soul that uses it as an instrument from the life that gives the instrument its form as an instrument. For here even Alexander, the Aristotelian commentator, has made this mistake, and holds that the soul does not use it as an instrument; for, he says, a unity does not arise from a user and an instrument. For that reason he would not even allow it power to cause change, but makes it the form of the changed as such. and in that way alone understands it as the actualisation of the body. But Aristotle **added 'instrument' to 'body' and confirms that the soul uses it and changes it,** and in that way he dissociates it from nature, since nature is the principle of undergoing change and of passivity, while the soul originates change.' (tr. Urmson)

διὰ τί οὖν πιθανὴ τοῖς πολλοῖς ἢ ἁρμονίαν τὴν ψυχὴν τιθεμένη δόξα; ἐπειδὴ τῆ προσεχεί ὕλη τελείαν ἀπολαβούση τὴν ἐπιτηδειότητα ἀθρώως ἐπιγινόμενον τὸ εἶδος ὡς ταῦτὸν ὃν ἐκείνη φαντάζεται (οὕτω γοῦν τὸ σχῆμα τῆς νεῶς οὐδέν τι διαφέρειν δοκεῖ τῆς τῶν ξύλων τοιαύδε ἁρμονίας), καὶ ἐπειδὴ οὐ διακρίνουσιν οἱ πολλοὶ τὴν ὡς ὄργανω χρωμένην τῆς τὸ ὄργανον ὡς ὄργανον εἰδοποιούσης ζωῆς· ὅπου γε καὶ ὁ τοῦ Ἀριστοτέλους ἐξηγητῆς Ἀλέξανδρος τοῦτο πέπονθε καὶ ἀξιοῖ μὴ ὡς ὄργανω χρῆσθαι τὴν ψυχὴν· μὴ

Platonist tradition of the interpretation of Aristotle's 412a29-b1 to the effect that his paraphrase of φυσικοῦ δυνάμει ζωὴν ἔχοντος by ὀργανικόν there implies his approval of a kind of the relationship of the 'unequal' independence between the soul and body, so to speak, such that the body is constructed on its own as a submitting instrument to be used by the soul.

Alexander strongly rejects this line of interpretation of Aristotle in T7, insisting that the ὀργανικόν must not imply any independence of the body; on the contrary, 'the ὀργανικόν body in which the soul is present gets what it is to be ὀργανικόν from the soul [τῷ δὲ ὀργανικῷ σώματι, ἐν ᾧ ἔστιν ἡ ψυχή, τὸ εἶναι ὀργανικῷ παρὰ τῆς ψυχῆς]' (*An.* 15.4-5). The ground for his insistence is, of course, what Aristotle says near the end of his *Meteorologica* 390b8-14: the cause of the anomoeomerous parts' generation must not be 'the hot, the cold, and the mixed movements' (*ibid.* 8-9), the idea Donini designates as the 'biological' contrasted with the 'physico-chemical' idea (1971:80-82).

If I am correct in the analysis of the context against a backdrop of which Alexander posits his theory of the soul, two things may be pointed out: firstly, his formula of the soul as the power which is generated from the bodily mixture is contrasted to the Platonist interpretation of Aristotle to the effect that the soul has the antecedence to the body which is constructed independently of the soul; secondly, Alexander sees no contradiction between the ὀργανικόν body's being always already ensouled and the soul's generation from the bodily mixture.

As has been argued by Kupreeva (2004:85ff.) the ground for this compatibility is supplied by Alexander in the last chapter of his *De mixtione*, where he explicates Aristotelian theory of the growth (αὔξησις). From his argument there, we can see his unitary understanding of the so-called 'mechanical (or physico-chemical)' and 'organic (or biological)' process.

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γὰρ γίνεσθαι ἓν τι ἐκ τοῦ χρωμένου καὶ τοῦ ὀργάνου. ὅθεν οὐδὲ τὸ κινητικὸν ἂν αὐτῇ δοίη, τοῦ κινουμένου ὡς κινουμένου εἶδος αὐτὴν τιθέμενος καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο μόνον αὐτὴν ἀκούων ἐντελέχειαν σώματος, τοῦ Ἀριστοτέλους **καὶ τὸ ὀργανικοῦ προσθέντος καὶ ὡς αὐτῆς οὐσίας τῆς χρωμένης καὶ κινούσης** διαβεβαιουμένου καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τῆς φύσεως ἐξαιρουμένου, ὅτι ἐκείνη μὲν τοῦ κινεῖσθαι καὶ πάσχειν ἀρχή, κινητικὴ δὲ ἡ ψυχή.

**T8 Alexander, *Mixt.* 238.10-17**

The absorption [πρόσκρισις] of nutriment by bodies that are nourished surely occurs by a process of alteration since the nutriment is assimilated [ἐξομοιουμένης] to the nourished body, but it does not proceed in a way that the nutriment *firstly becomes identical to the nourished body and then is absorbed into the nourished body* (for in that case there occurs the generation of the flesh, not nutrition). Rather, when the ultimate nutriment [ἐσχάτη τροφή], blood in red-blooded creatures, and its analogue in other things, by passing through the vessels that reach to each part of the nourished body, is moved and flows to each part, the ultimate nutriment is at the same time changed [μεταβάλλεται] by the power of each part and assimilated [ἐξομοιοῦται] to the nourished body. (Text: Groisard 2013)

Here, Alexander insists on the simultaneousness of the absorption (πρόσκρισις) and the assimilation (ἐξομοιοῦσθαι) of the nutriment to the nourished body in the process of the growth, in a process whereby ‘the shapes of the anomoeomerous parts [of the nourished body] are preserved’ (237.22-3). Absorption of the nutriment is not ‘mechanical’ process independent from the assimilation of it whereby the shape of the nourished body is preserved. The ‘organic’ process in virtue of the formal cause forms the unity with the ‘mechanical’ or ‘physico–chemical’ process.

**3.**

We now see that Moraux misrepresents Alexander's idea. Moraux accuses Alexander of contending that the soul which follows the bodily mixture is substance, and of ignoring the fact that ‘physico–chemical’ or ‘mechanical’ process such as the bodily mixture cannot produce the substance. When Alexander states that the soul is the power which is generated from the bodily mixture, however, he does not assume that some bodily material which does not have soul, being constructed in a certain way, becomes the body which is prepared to receive the soul. But without assuming so, we cannot accuse Alexander in Moraux's fashion. Thus, we are forced to commit to the particular view on the bodily material, the view which Alexander thinks should be evaded in order to stick to the ‘organic’

view to the effect that the ὀργανικόν body cannot be explained without recourse to the soul as a formal cause.

So, can we say Alexander's theory of the soul equipped with the physical description is authentic Aristotelian position? Caston seems to go in that direction, though not giving last word<sup>8</sup>. In the following, I shall point out one difficulty of seeing Aristotelian orthodoxy in Alexander's system. The problem concerns the famous aporia concerning the Aristotelianhylomorphic view of the soul and body. In a seminal article Ackrill identifies the tension between Aristotle's homonymy principle and hishylomorphism. While in the case of artificial things such as the axe with iron and wood as its matter, we can 'pick up' the matter as itself, i.e. 'refer to some material whose identity as that material does not depend on its being *so* shaped or *in-formed*' (Ackrill 1972-73:125), in the case of the natural substances potentially having life such as the human beings, on the other hand, on account of Aristotle's homonymy principle (*An.* 412b10-17), the matter 'is *not* capable of existing *except* as the material of an animal, as matter *so in-formed*', i.e. the 'body we are told to pick out as the material 'constituent' of the animal depends for its very identity on its being alive, *in-formed* by *psuche*' (Ackrill 1972-73:125-26). Hence we cannot identify the substratum of the change in case of the living beings, in contrast to the case of the artificial things where we find the independent substrata such as the bronze which can both become and not become spherical.

Alexander indubitably falls into this aporia, in contrast to Aristotle, where we find modern scholars make effort to save from it. Shields, by explicitly rejecting Alexander's interpretation in T7 on Aristotle's paraphrase at *De anima* 412a28-b1 (Shields 1993:10 n.20), evades the identification of φυσικοῦ δυνάμει ζῶν ἔχοντος with ὀργανικόν and proposes the interpretation to the effect that the adjective ὀργανικόν limits φυσικοῦ δυνάμει ζῶν ἔχοντος (rather than explaining it), i.e. there are 'non-organic' natural bodies which have life in potentiality. Thus, according to Shields, the homonymy principle, whereby there is no ὀργανικόν body before there exists living beings, does not imply—as Ackrill thinks does—that there is no body *which has life in potentiality*: we can identify the independent substratum as the 'non-organic' body which has life in potentiality (Shields 1993:15). 'Non-organic bodies, like the clay of which bricks are compounded, constitute organic bodies,

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<sup>8</sup> Caston seems to admit Alexander's 'subtle departures' from orthodoxy. Although he denies Moraux's interpretation, he seems to admit the other possibilities of Alexander's 'subtle departures'.

which in turn serve as the proximate matter of individual souls. But the further relationship between a particular organic body and an individual soul, as that between so many bricks and the form of a certain house, is not given by the relationship between the grades of proximate and non-proximate matter, and must be settled *on independent grounds*' (ibid. 29-30, my italics). Following this interpretation in terms of Aristotelian theory of the soul, Caston saves Aristotle from Ackrill's aporia by assuming the 'independently identifiable bodily changes' in the matter that pre-exists the animal's living body (Caston 1997:336 & n.61).

As I said, Shields refers to Alexander's T7 and rejects his interpretation on 412a28-b1 since it is obviously vulnerable to the Ackrill's aporia. Alexander's ground for his interpretation is stated in the following text.

### **T9 Alexander, *Mant.* 120.5-17**

The form which comes to be by craft is in a subject, in virtue of the subject's being a 'this-something [τὸδε τι]' and having a form; it is in this that the craftsman produces and applies the form relating to the craft. But it is not possible also to say that the *natural* form is in the matter in this way; for the matter is not *in itself* a 'this-something' or a subject in actuality. If then the natural form is not in a subject, and the soul is a natural form, neither will the soul be in a subject. For the soul does not come to be in body *without qualification*, since it would [then] come to be in every body, and so also in the simple [bodies], fire, air, water, earth; and this is impossible. Rather, what is its subject and is its matter is the *ὀργανικόν* body, which cannot be *ὀργανικόν* before it possesses a soul, nor, when it has lost the soul, is it *ὀργανικόν* any more. For no body without soul [ἄψυχον] is *ὀργανικόν*. So it is, for this reason, *not possible to apprehend* [λαβεῖν] [sc. without reference to soul itself] *what the soul is in*. For it is [by] being along with [the soul] that [the body that soul is in] is *ὀργανικόν*, as lead [is lead by being] along with weight. (tr. Sharples, modified)

Here Alexander decisively denies that the natural substances have matter other than the *ὀργανικόν* body, which cannot be identified in itself. The reason for his insistence is his conviction that the proximate matter for the soul (*ὀργανικόν* body) is not something which is constructed *independently* of the soul, in other words, by the 'physico-chemical' process in

the more basic material. Thus he thinks that the effort to ‘apprehend’ the ὀργανικόν body in itself makes a serious mistake from the first: it treats the natural substances as if their matter did exist *independently*, i.e. as ‘this-something’—that is, as it were, as something constructed by the raw material, e.g. the iron and the bricks—, and in turn was in-formed or structured by the soul *independently* of the construction that the matter itself has.

## Conclusion

Both of two lines of interpretations of Alexander's idea of the soul as the power generated from the bodily mixture have different difficulties. On the one hand, (1) as for the accusation against Alexander of being un-Aristotelian in that Alexander insists that the ‘physico–chemical’ process yields the substantial soul, it reflects the accuser's misrepresentation of Alexander's theory. Alexander thinks that the process of the bodily mixture is organized by the substantial soul. His view can be characterized as at once bottom–up and teleological. On the other hand, (2) as for the tendency of seeing in Alexander a systematization of an authentic Aristotelian theory, it ignores an unfavorable commitment done by Alexander. By arranging the global explanation of the natural substances, he ends up with revealing the difficulty that arises when the bottom–up physical description and the teleological view of the world are connected. There may remain two ways: whether to, (3) by regarding Alexander's theory authentic Aristotelian, admit that Aristotle is vulnerable to the aporia pointed out by Ackrill, or to (4) see some substantial departure from Aristotle in Alexander's global system, wherein his theory of the soul is placed and which may be designated as a system of the teleological naturalism.

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