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Aristotle's Criticism of the Soul's Self-Motion in *DA I*

La crítica de Aristóteles al automovimiento del alma en *DA I*

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Abstract

In this paper, I examine Aristotle's position on the theory of the soul as a self-moving entity in the light of a less negative conception of his discussion with his predecessors. For this purpose, I discuss the hypothesis according to which Aristotle is producing the concepts necessary for his own research through a critique of Plato's claims. I show that, more than a criticism, what we are witnessing is a process of conceptual appropriation where Aristotle filters an opinion to make a better use of it. I support my argument by showing how Aristotle's exegetical device works and how it could be connected to his own definitional procedures in *De Anima's* book II.

Keywords: Aristotle; *De Anima*; soul motion; Plato; self-motion; body; commonality between body and soul.

Resumen

Este artículo examina la posición de Aristóteles frente a la teoría del alma como entidad automotriz a la luz de una concepción menos negativa de la discusión de Aristóteles con sus predecesores. Para ello, exploro la hipótesis de que Aristóteles está produciendo los conceptos necesarios para su propia investigación a través de una crítica de la tesis de Platón. Muestro que, más que a una crítica, a lo que asistimos es a un proceso de apropiación conceptual en el que Aristóteles filtra la opinión para hacer un mejor uso de ella. Para fundamentar mi argumento, muestro cómo funciona el dispositivo exegetico de Aristóteles y cómo podría conectarse en su propio procedimiento definicional del libro II del *De Anima*.

Palabras clave: Aristóteles; *De Anima*; movimiento del alma; Platón; automovimiento; cuerpo; comunidad entre el alma y el cuerpo.

The status of the content of book I of Aristotle's *De Anima* has always been a matter of discussion. Although it is one of the most famous examples of Aristotle's critical approach to the ideas of his predecessors, until some time ago, it was not given greater relevance by scholars or was evaluated from a hostile point of view.¹ But more than that, the discreet relevance that this book had for a long time has to do with the fact that its dialectical passages are evaluated under different conceptions of what "dialectic" could mean for Aristotle.² Although this situation has changed thanks to a different look at the role of dialectical passages (and dialectic, in general) in Aristotelian treatises, in the case of the *De Anima*, it is still common to hear the general opinion that the only philosophically interesting thing that the first book contains are the methodological and programmatic passages in chapters 1 and 5; the rest is considered a historical review, an antiquarian curiosity, whose historiographic value is also constantly questioned.

This situation has changed in recent years. While it is true that there have been some concrete examples of valuing book I of *De Anima*,³ it is only with the monographic studies of Sánchez Castro (2016) and Carter (2019) that an attempt has been made to explain the value of this dialectical procedure for the rest of the philosophical project that Aristotle carries out in his exploration of the soul. However, a clarification is necessary. This paper is not devoted to the notion of dialectic in Aristotle's work nor to the debate of its relationship to science, but only to explain the

¹ Clear examples of this are, for instance, Hamlyn's classic study in which he did not include the entirety of book I, but only what he calls "passages from book I relevant to the argument in books II and III" (in Aristotle, 1968, p. 1), and Cherniss's (1935) monumental work in which he defends the theory that Aristotle deliberately distorts (or tries to reconcile with) the ideas of his predecessors. For a diagnosis of the importance of *DA I*, see Boeri (2010, p. xci).

² On the different ways of conceiving dialectical procedures in Aristotelian treatises, see Baltussen (1996, p. 333) and Bolton (1994, pp. 57 and 69).

³ Various analyzes of the dialectical procedure in *DA I* can be found in Witt (1992, p. 169), Viano (1996, p. 51), Menn (2002, p. 84), Polansky (2007, p. 62), Sánchez Castro (2016, p. 89) and King (2021, p. 15). Recently, Carter (2019, p. 5) has argued for the importance of taking a developmental perspective that maintains that Aristotle developed his theses about the soul "during or after—and at least in part *in response to*" pre-Socratic theories.

way in which Aristotle proceeds in his exploration of ancient views on the soul. In that sense, I agree with King (2021, p. 15) when he calls attention to the fact that the focus on the debate on the dialectical method overshadows our understanding of the application of elements brought from dialectical argument to concrete Aristotelian investigations. Although this may be a fact beyond controversy among scholars today, it is difficult to find a detailed explanation of how this device operates in the case of the *De Anima* and, as King already noted, it is still necessary to show how Aristotle works, specifically, in his “dialectical” discussions.

On this occasion, I want to continue joining efforts in that direction to try to show the connections between book I of *De Anima* and the rest of the treatise considering one of the essential and patent results for Aristotle in his explanation: what is common to body and soul. I want to focus exclusively on this notion because I consider that Aristotle’s specific way of understanding “what is common to soul and body” is product of the discussion he carried out with his predecessors.⁴ I want to maintain that this discussion brings Aristotle to a privileged position in this regard, which is the result of a conscious work of evaluating ancient theories to filter and appropriate positive results for research.

1

After certain preparatory discussions related to the opinions of the predecessors, and the arrangement of them in a kind of “catalog,”⁵ Aristotle focuses on movement, which is one of the properties attributed to the soul, but that also happens in bodies. To do this, he formulates the working hypothesis with which he will proceed:

[1]⁶ Ἐπισκεπτέον δὲ πρῶτον μὲν περὶ κινήσεως·
ἴσως γὰρ οὐ μόνον ψευδὸς ἐστὶ τὸ τὴν οὐσίαν αὐτῆς
τοιούτην εἶναι οἷαν φασὶν οἱ λέγοντες ψυχὴν εἶναι

⁴ For the case of Plato, see Boeri (2018).

⁵ This list is a quick review of opinions made by Aristotle at the end of chapter 2 in the manner almost of an enumeration (*DA* 404b8 and 404b30). These opinions, presented in a “compressed” way, can also be considered an initial map of the elements rescued and discarded from the idea that the soul is a principle of movement.

⁶ These numbers are intended to be a navigation tool that operates from a syntactic division. I do not attempt to imply any logical hierarchy.

τὸ κινεῖν ἑαυτὸ ἢ δυνάμενον κινεῖν (Leg 898a), ἀλλ' ἐν τι τῶν ἀδυνάτων τὸ ὑπάρχειν αὐτῇ κίνησιν. [2] ὅτι μὲν οὖν οὐκ ἀναγκαῖον τὸ κινεῖν καὶ αὐτὸ κινεῖσθαι, πρότερον εἰρηται. [3] διχῶς δὲ κινουμένου παντός – [3^a] ἢ γὰρ καθ' ἕτερον ἢ καθ' αὐτό· καθ' ἕτερον δὲ λέγομεν ὅσα κινεῖται τῷ ἐν κινουμένῳ εἶναι, οἷον πλωτῆρες· οὐ γὰρ ὁμοίως κινεῖνται τῷ πλοίῳ· τὸ μὲν γὰρ καθ' αὐτὸ κινεῖται, οἱ δὲ τῷ ἐν κινουμένῳ εἶναι, [3b] δῆλον δ' ἐπὶ τῶν μορίων· οἰκεία μὲν γὰρ ἐστὶ κίνησις ποδῶν βάδισις, αὕτη δὲ καὶ ἀνθρώπων· οὐχ ὑπάρχει δὲ τοῖς πλωτῆρσι τόδε – [*3*] διχῶς δὲ λεγομένου τοῦ κινεῖσθαι νῦν ἐπισκοποῦμεν περὶ τῆς ψυχῆς εἰ καθ' αὐτὴν κινεῖται καὶ μετέχει κινήσεως (*DA*, 405b31-406a10).

[1]⁷ Motion must be examined first because perhaps it is not only false that the essence of the soul is such as those who maintain that the soul is what moves itself or can move, but it is one of the impossibilities that motion belongs to it. [2] In any case, we have already said that it is not necessary that what moves also moves itself. [3] However, since everything that is moved [can be moved] in two ways—either by another or by itself, we say “by another” to things that are moved by being in something that is moving, like sailors, because they do not move in the same way as the ship, since the ship is moved by itself and they are in something that is moving. This is evident in the bodily parts since the proper motion of the feet is walking, which is also the case for men. However, this is not what happens to sailors. [*3*] Since “being moved” is said in two ways, let us now examine in relation to the soul whether it is moved by itself and participates in motion.

The passage exhibits a ring structure promoted, in part, by the anacoluthon in sentence [3]. By “ring structure” I mean that the same statement, or at least statements that appear logically equivalent, opens

⁷ The translations are all my own.

and closes the passage. These two equivalent ideas are that “the soul is what moves itself” and that “the soul is moved by itself.” The variation in the formulation may be an important indicator of the refinement that Aristotle gradually operates on the *endoxon* in question. Therefore, in this dialectical context, it seems that the ring structure captures the *endoxon* that will be examined, along with the elements of analysis that will be applied to it and the possible result that Aristotle produces from it. A reconstruction of the structure of the passage may be as follows:

- The soul is something capable of moving; therefore, it can move itself [1].
- The previous inference is unnecessary [2].
- There are two ways in which something is moved [3].
- The soul is moved by itself and participates in the motion [*3*].

The *endoxon* from which this investigation originates is that “the soul moves because it is itself in motion” [1]. One can be sure of this because the opinion is introduced employing an explicit mark of endoxic attribution: “those who say X”. We also have a disjunctive conjunction that we must read as hiding an inference, with the sole purpose of preserving the opinion’s content. This seems to be authorized, on the one hand, by the content of [2], but, on the other hand, by the presence of the verb κινεῖν in the active form.⁸

Most translators choose to understand the text as if ἐαυτὸ is valid for the two terms that are being joined by the disjunctive conjunction, namely, τὸ κινουῦν and κινεῖν. If read in this way, it would have to be understood that, in this sentence, Aristotle only emphasizes an idea in

⁸ Translators usually do not make this fact explicit. Just to give some examples, notice that Smith (in Aristotle, 1991, p. 2) opts for “it is that which moves (or is capable of moving) itself”; Corcilius (in Aristotle, 2017, p. 27), for “die Seele sei das sich selbst Bewegende bzw. das, was fähig ist, (sich selbst) zu bewegen.” A little more paraphrased, but carrying the same idea, is Calvo’s (in Aristotle, 1988, p. 144) choice for “aquellos que se mueve a sí mismo — o bien aquellos que tienen la capacidad de moverse a sí mismos.”

an almost tautological way. However, accepting this (grammatically licit) reading carries the disadvantage of mutilating the *endoxon* because, if we look at the end of [1], the impossibility that appears is not that to the soul belongs its own motion, but that motion belongs to it as a definitional feature *tout court* (ἀλλ' ἐν τι τῶν ἀδυνάτων τὸ ὑπάρχειν αὐτῇ κίνησιν).⁹

The content of the opinion is not just that the soul moves itself, but rather that the soul is a mover because it moves itself (this is the *endoxon* that motivates the research). But Aristotle's focus at this point also seems to be the conjunction between "what is perhaps false," namely, that the soul moves itself, and "what is one of the impossibilities," that motion belongs to the soul (οὐ μόνον... ἀλλ'... [1]).¹⁰ In other words, the subject of investigation is the part of the *endoxon* that Aristotle cannot accept, added to an element that does not exhibit a clear endoxic origin but whose epistemological value is beyond dispute: the fact that this is an impossibility. Confirmation of this is what I called the ring structure promoted by the anacoluthon: as the first sentence is the same or logically equivalent to the last one, this same idea, both at the beginning and the end of the hermeneutical device created for this analysis, captures what is being analyzed.

If I am right about the need to uncover the inference and about how the conjunction must be reconstructed, then the equivalence, which already carries a hermeneutical effort, must be examined to understand what Aristotle's modification is and why this is relevant: ψυχὴν εἶναι τὸ κινεῖν ἑαυτὸ καὶ τὸ ὑπάρχειν αὐτῇ κίνησιν [1] ("the soul is what moves itself, and motion belongs to it") and καθ' αὐτὴν κινεῖται καὶ μετέχει κινήσεως [*3*] ("it is moved by itself and participates in motion"). The formulas could be equivalent, but that does not mean they are identical. This question is relevant because, even when arguing for the existence of the ring structure, there is not a complete equivalence between the two terms, given that Aristotle is applying his hermeneutical effort to at least one of the formulas. To this, we should add that, if there is an equivalence, it must also fall on their conjunction.

⁹ Carter (2019, p. 61, n. 12), for example, seems surprised that Aristotle did not add here that the movement was proper or *per se*. If my reading is correct, this would no longer be strange or problematic.

¹⁰ See Hicks (in Aristotle, 1907, p. 240).

One may ask what exactly the terms of the formulas mean. In fact, it seems clear that the first terms of both formulas carry the *endoxic* element since they have been introduced into structures that seek to report other people's opinions. However, it does not seem that the second terms are equally endoxic. Therefore, in the third place, to know whether these second elements are endoxic, it is necessary to specify their relationship with the formulas' first terms: are they perhaps adding a supplementary element, or are they there to be expletive?¹¹

Considering how the ring structure is constructed and the fact that the two terms of the first formula are not found together, it seems to me that this is not just a mere repetition. On the contrary, these formulas prove that the hermeneutical device is precisely constructed to filter a particular opinion and rescue certain notions of it. The procedure showcased in the passage, as its concluding sentence shows, is to highlight the equivalence between "moving oneself" and "motion belongs to it" to be able to discard the elements that cannot be used from the *endoxon*.

Another element that must be considered is the nature of the content that is embedded in the occurrence of these formulas. It was said before that it is precisely this element that the anacoluthon favors. However, I also maintained that this content embraces the elements of analysis required for the following hermeneutical task. In fact, to put the dialectical device into operation, Aristotle needs distinctions introduced through the analogy of the ship and the navigators, which he includes even while sacrificing the syntactic neatness of his text.

However, the analogy of the ship and the navigators entails a certain difficulty; a vestige of Platonism in Aristotle is to be seen in this analogy. While it is true that one of the important elements of the analogy is the directive and passive role that each of the parties eventually has, the sailor in our example is not there because of his ability to control the ship. To the contrary, his role seems to be secondary because the emphasis in the analogy is not on the relationship between the sailors and their boat, but on the motion that each one has. The analogy, then, puts on the table a dualistic model in which what is at stake is precisely the motion that is common to both the soul and the body.

¹¹ Hicks (in Aristotle, 1907, p. 242), for example, thinks that in the last formula the *καὶ* is simply explanatory.

Furthermore, the theoretical apparatus that Aristotle is looking for with the analogy is supported by his theory of movement from the *Physics*, although it will also be used later in the arguments against the conception of the soul as a motive entity.¹² This conceptual apparatus related to movement has the function of taking the thesis of the soul as a mover to the uncomfortable point of making the soul a localized body (see 406a30-b4): the initial focus is not motion in general, but the idea of an entity to “move / be moved”. There are two ways of being moved: when one is moved by something else (καθ' ἑτερον) and when one moves *motu proprio* (καθ' αὐτό). The analogy provides another important element: the case that Aristotle is interested in testing is not the contrast between being moved by oneself and all the possible instances of being moved by another, but only one of them: being moved by another by being inside of it. This is a good reason not to borrow another famous Platonic analogy, such as that of the chariot. The reference had to be carefully crafted to make explicit that, for Plato, the soul resides within the body, and to make this explicit is to show the main card that will be played: one of the false claims resulting from understanding the soul as a self-moving entity is that we will eventually be forced to give it the status of a body.¹³

But if Aristotle is so sure of the falsity that this opinion entails, why does he bother examining it?¹⁴ There are three aspects to the answer: (i) each *endoxon* has dialectical importance since the persuasive effect that a particular opinion may have is, in a certain way, linked to the

¹² After the passage that I am analyzing here, Aristotle provides seven arguments against the idea of the soul as a self-moving entity. The theoretical apparatus of the *Physics* is present in all of them since they use, for example, the notions of the four types of movement (see *DA*, 406a12, a27, b1), place (406a16), and natural and forced movement and rest (406a22 and b22). For this argumentative move, see Boeri (in Aristotle, 2010, p. 28, n. 72).

¹³ This will be specifically developed in the arguments refuting that the soul has a place (see *DA*, 406a12-22) and that because it moves it must have a direction (406a27-30). On the corporeal notion of the soul as the cornerstone of Aristotle's dialectical discussion, see Bodéüs (in Aristotle, 1993, p. 29) and Menn (2002, p. 84).

¹⁴ On the dialectical importance of examining sets of theses, among which there may be some false or absurd, see Bolton (1994, p. 68), Boeri (2010, p. xciv), Sánchez Castro (2016, p. 261), and Rapp (2018, p. 125 ff.).

truth (see *Rhet.*, 1355a4). The opinion, understood as a whole, is false or contains falsities; however, that does not imply that it cannot contain useful elements at all. These elements, for example, can be recycled, modified, or refined, and then used in a much more positive way. (ii) For Aristotle, in fact, the soul is a mover. He does not condemn that part of the *endoxon*, but only that it holds that the soul moves because it moves itself, considering this to be based on an unnecessary inference. It is important to emphasize this fact since denying the latter does not imply at all rejecting that the soul can be eventually moved, but only that moving itself is an essential and exclusive feature of the soul.¹⁵ Furthermore, it could be that the implication that follows from holding that the soul moves itself is not only inexistent but unnecessary, even undesirable. However, the notion of movement cannot be rejected entirely. In fact, this element needs to be rescued. After all, (iii) Aristotle is not committed to the absolute impassibility of the soul.¹⁶

2

If we return to the distinction introduced by the analogy, we will see that the contribution made by the disambiguation of the expression “move / be moved” has yet to be explored. Going back to the comparison between the formula that is being explored, it is evident that some terms of the *endoxon* were replaced: *ἑαυτὸ* was changed to *καθ’ αὐτήν* and *τὸ ὑπάρχειν αὐτῇ κίνησιν* mutated from *μετέχει κινήσεως*.

What reasons might Aristotle have had for needing this terminological translation? First, disambiguating terms is a standard dialectical procedure, the second tool as described in the *Topics* (105a20): distinguishing in how many ways something can be said. The first tool—namely, collating the propositions to be examined—can be identified with what we observe in the ring structure and also with the way in which Aristotle himself declares that he is going to proceed

¹⁵ On this point, see the excellent analysis provided by Carter (2019, p. 75).

¹⁶ Aristotle, in the context of the *DA*, not only admits that the soul can be moved accidentally in the passage that is being analyzed. He also suggests that she engages in some kind of movement—or he at least employs loose vocabulary in that sense—when referring to the effect that the sensible object has on her (see 406b10, 416b33, 418a31, 419a10 and 420a3), or in the much-discussed passages in which he refers to the soul’s own affections (403a3). On this last point, see Carter (2018).

(403b20; see King, 2021, p. 26).¹⁷ But it is possible that there is also an additional hidden element that needs to be brought to light: the purpose of unifying the *endoxa* by, to put it one way, “dressing the distinctions in the same clothes”.

Let me start with the first pair of terms: καθ'αυτήν instead of ἐαυτό. The first thing that stands out is that, if καθ'αυτήν is the Aristotelian translation for ἐαυτό, where does ἐαυτό come from? We already know that the *endoxon* is platonic. In the famous proof of the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedrus*, Plato says:

[4] Ψυχὴ πᾶσα ἀθάνατος. [5] τὸ γὰρ ἀεικίνητον ἀθάνατον· τὸ δ' ἄλλο κινεῖν καὶ ὑπ' ἄλλου κινούμενον, παύλαν ἔχον κινήσεως, παύλαν ἔχει ζωῆς. [6] μόνον δὲ τὸ αὐτὸ κινεῖν, ἅτε οὐκ ἀπολείπον ἐαυτό, οὐποτε λήγει κινούμενον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὅσα κινεῖται τοῦτο πηγὴ καὶ ἀρχὴ κινήσεως (245c5-9).

[4] Every soul is immortal. [5] For that which is always in motion is immortal, while that which moves something else and is moved by another thing, when the motion ceases, its life ceases. [6] Then only that which moves itself, by not leaving itself, never ceases to be moved but is the source and principle of motion for all the other things it moves.

This proof will find, a few lines later (in 245d6-7), its conclusive version: “Then the principle of motion is that which itself moves itself” (οὕτω δὲ κινήσεως μὲν ἀρχὴ τὸ αὐτὸ αὐτὸ κινεῖν). The exotic translation I am providing is only intended to draw attention to the specific formula used by Plato; the rest of the vocabulary we are looking for is there. Aristotle avoids the topic of divinity and immortality (4), but, drawing from the Platonic *endoxon*, he emphasizes the soul's own motion and its causal power.

Causality directs our attention to another terminological issue. Plato talks about motion transmitted to another entity with the formula ὑπ'

¹⁷ On these tools, see Brunschwig (in Aristotle, 1967b, p. 19) and Smith (in Aristotle, 1991, p. 87). On the use of the tools described in the *Topics*, specifically in the first book of the *DA*, see King (2021, p. 18 ff.).

ἄλλου, which is the most basic way of expressing agency (5). Aristotle, on the other hand, translates the Platonic vocabulary with the preposition κατά which has a more widespread use with the accusative, among which is the one that serves to express locative notions when they occur in contexts where the subject is motion, as well as the general causal and efficient sense. So here we have a first explanation for Aristotle's terminological modifications to the *endoxon*: by obscuring the notion of causal agency with another, much more general term, he seems to be dragging in an element he does not intend to refute. In fact, for Aristotle, the soul has causal agency, so he must work on the Platonic thesis to force it into a setting where he can see what falsity it contains.

The other terminological translation has to do with the replacement of the verb μετέχειν with ὑπάρχειν. Aristotle uses both terms in several passages in his work, although μετέχειν usually evokes Plato. In fact, Plato uses the idea of participation to explain the relationship between domains of reality for which the dualist model was created. The link between the Ideas (holders of causal power) and the physical world is expressed in terms of participation. However, this explanation was never sufficient, to the point that it was easily attacked for obscuring the causal relationship it was supposed to clarify.

This is, furthermore, the most significant difficulty that Aristotle detects in Plato's thought (see *Met.*, 991a19-22 and 1079b13-18). Part of the problem seems to be related to the fact that the concept of participation suggests at first glance that something is being shared, that something is common. This idea carries a notion of community that the ontologically categorical separation of Ideas makes impossible to explain. Aristotle, however, is genuinely interested in this notion since his hylomorphic model, applied to psychology, seeks to explain the community (κοινωνία) between soul and body (see *DA*, 407b17). That is, Aristotle recognizes that the Platonic model is insufficient, explanatorily speaking, but he rescues some of its notions that can play a determining role in constructing an explanation that, paradoxically, Plato would have wanted to avoid.

One might think, then, that Aristotle is going to keep the concept of participation. Yet, as in the previous case of agential causality, he obscures the notion to convert it into a different one that serves his hermeneutical purposes better. Aristotle replaces μετέχειν with ὑπάρχειν aided by the comparison of propositions found at the beginning and the end of the passage exhibiting the ring structure. More than just "spatial" evidence

can be provided to prove that this is the case. In fact, Plato's vocabulary of comparison was aimed at the relationship of Ideas with the physical world on an ontological level. But such an explanation must be provided with the help of a semantic apparatus, a theory of predication. This is not a discussion foreign to Plato, so it is the area in which Aristotle is going to play his cards, that is, on a definitional ground.

Indeed, Aristotle already uses the term *μετέχειν* in that domain. In the *Topics* (121a11), for example, he explicitly defines what it means to participate in something: "Now, the definition of 'participating' is to admit the definition of what is a participant" (*ὁρος δὲ τοῦ μετέχειν τὸ ἐπιδέχεσθαι τὸν τοῦ μετεχομένου λόγον*). The fact that something admits the explanation of something else is the type of relationship that species have to genera (but not vice versa). Likewise, Plato seeks to designate the relationship between essences and their properties with the vocabulary of participation. Thus, the fact that the soul participates in movement means that one of its properties is to be mobile.

From this perspective, it makes sense that Aristotle replaces *μετέχειν* with *ὑπάρχειν*, given that *ὑπάρχειν* with the dative case is one of his formulas to express the belonging of a property to a certain thing. Even so, Aristotle continues to use both terms, as in the first argument provided to refute the *endoxon*:

[7] τεσσάρων δὲ κινήσεων οὐσῶν, φορᾶς ἀλλοιώσεως φθίσεως αὐξήσεως, ἢ μίαν τούτων κινεῖτ' ἢ ἅπαντας. [8] εἰ δὲ κινεῖται μὴ κατὰ συμβεβηκός, φύσει ἂν ὑπάρχοι κίνησις αὐτῇ· εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, καὶ τόπος· πᾶσαι γὰρ αἱ λεχθεῖσαι κινήσεις ἐν τόπῳ. [9] εἰ δ' ἐστὶν ἡ οὐσία τῆς ψυχῆς τὸ κινεῖν ἑαυτήν, οὐ κατὰ συμβεβηκός αὐτῇ τὸ κινεῖσθαι ὑπάρξει, ὥσπερ τῷ λευκῷ ἢ τῷ τριπλήχει· κινεῖται γὰρ καὶ ταῦτα, ἀλλὰ κατὰ συμβεβηκός· ὥ γὰρ ὑπάρχουσιν, ἐκεῖνο κινεῖται, τὸ σῶμα. [10] διὸ καὶ οὐκ ἔστι τόπος αὐτῶν· τῆς δὲ ψυχῆς ἔσται, εἴπερ φύσει κινήσεως μετέχει (406a12-22).

[7] Since there are four motions—locomotion, alteration, decrease, and growth—it either moves with one, or with several, or with all of them. [8] But if its motion is not accidental, the motion must belong to it by nature,

and if so, place must also belong to it since all the above motions occur in a place. [9] But if the essence of the soul is to move itself, motion cannot belong to it by accident, as is being white or three cubits long. In fact, they can be moved, but only by accident, for it is the body to which they belong that is moved. [10] Therefore, they have no place, but the soul will have one if it participates in motion by nature.

This passage confirms two things that were previously said. On the one hand, Aristotle emphasizes “having properties” by changing μετέχειν for ὑπάρχειν, and by illustrating this move with examples involving qualities (8). There also seems to be another terminological translation: the pair καθ' ἑτερον / καθ' αὐτό introduced by the analogy appear to be replaced by κατὰ συμβεβηκός / φύσει (9).

What exactly does the introduction of this new pair of concepts mean? It makes evident that Aristotle needs to corner the Platonic opinion in a definitional field to carry out the filtering process. The problem with the *endoxon* is not that it attributes motion to the soul, as was shown with the analogy of the ship and the sailors. The difficulty resides, instead, in making motion an essential attribute of the soul. By playing with the pair κατὰ συμβεβηκός / φύσει, Aristotle detaches himself from the excessively mechanical terms in which the analogy is presented to attack the only thing he is interested in discarding. In fact, the possibility that the soul could be accidentally moved has to be rescued.¹⁸

3

There is a very widespread reading according to which Aristotle fiercely attacked the Platonic conception of the soul as a self-moving entity because he wanted to make the soul a kind of unmoved mover, or at least something analogous. With this idea in mind, certain scholars read the examination of chapter III of the first book of *DA* as a *reductio ad absurdum* of any version of soul motion. I have tried to show how the terminological modifications made in the passage were carefully designed to corner Plato in a definitional context. For this reason, I

¹⁸ I believe it is in this same vein that Carter states that Aristotle “adopts and modifies [...] the Platonic principle that the essence of the soul is the efficient cause of the movements of living beings” (2019, p. 10).

maintained that the objective of the dialectical examination was to purify the opinion that made the soul a self-moving entity to rescue the useful elements it might contain. I argued that the harmful element was just attributing motion to the soul as an essential property. However, it is still not clear why.

From the seven arguments used by Aristotle in *DA, I, 3* to refute the opinion that the soul is a self-moving entity, we can extract some regularities: in one way or another, they all tried to connect movement to corporeality. Thus, attributing motion to the soul as an essential attribute would result in the establishment of a place for it (see *DA, 406a12*), in the existence of rests for the soul (*406a22*), in making the soul a certain type of body (*406a30*) or even in it being able to abandon the body in which it resides (*406a30*).¹⁹

Entertaining the possibility of the soul leaving and entering the body is inconceivable in the hylomorphic model due to the scope of the notion of community between soul and body up to that of codependence.²⁰ The soul is, in fact, a form that provides a figure to a certain body, as well as its purpose and, above all, its functions. However, for that to happen, the bodily matter must be adequate in a specific, organic way, so that the soul can develop its capacities. For Aristotle, there is no doubt that the soul is responsible for the operations that make a living being suitable for relating to the world that surrounds it (*DA 414a29*). When we talk about the natural world, we focus the discussion on movement. This seems clear from the conclusive elements of the refutations in *DA, I, 3*: “[11] τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν μάλιστα φαίη τις ἂν ὑπὸ τῶν αἰσθητῶν κινεῖσθαι, εἴπερ κινεῖται” (*406b10-11*) (“[11] Someone might say that the soul is primarily moved by sensible objects if it moves at all”) and “[12] ὅλως δ’ οὐχ οὕτω φαίνεται κινεῖν ἢ ψυχὴ τὸ ζῶον, ἀλλὰ διὰ προαιρέσεως τινος καὶ νοήσεως” (*406b21-25*) (“[12] It seems that the soul does not move the animal in this way at all but through decision and thought”). So, it seems that Aristotle needed to rescue motion from the Platonic opinion, clean it of any definitional intention, because the soul is in fact a principle of motion, but it is not a pure mechanical principle of motion.

¹⁹ On these consequences, see Bodéüs (in Aristotle, 1993, p. 102), Boeri (in Aristotle, 2010, p. 28, n. 73 ff.), and King (2021, p. 32).

²⁰ On the importance of the notion of codependence to distinguish the Aristotelian model from a pure dualism, see Boeri (2018, p. 159 ff.).

The fact that Aristotle used his physical conceptual apparatus to carry out the refutation, progressively changing the terms to reach a definitional ground (helpful, in turn, to then reach the ontological ground necessary for his psychological project), highlights another result obtained from examining this *endoxon*: a purely mechanical explanation of motion is not sufficient to account for the various activities of the soul. Plato's only disadvantage is not to make the soul a body or of a nature foreign to the body, but to believe that it was enough for the soul to move to animate the body—in the words of Aristotle—through a kind of mechanic transference.²¹ So, even if accidental motion is rescued, it is not a fully satisfactory explanation for Aristotle's purposes.

Aristotle needs to preserve somehow the possibility of the soul being moved to explain some of its capacities, such as sensory perception and other forms of cognition. Indeed, the soul is a principle of sense-perception and, under a tentative approach, it is said that sense-perception is a type of movement, a kind of alteration (see *DA*, 416b33). Aristotle, of course, had to refine his conceptual apparatus much more to provide a satisfactory explanation of that process (see Boeri, 2010, p. xc). However, the possibility of the soul moving is an element he must work with. The soul must be set in motion in some way to produce sensory perception;²² it cannot be understood as a magic trick. The same applies to more sophisticated cognitive operations, such as decision-making and thought, postulated here as the motivational elements of action, which seems to be the answer Aristotle is going to give for the community between soul and body.

The study of the unnecessary inference becomes, then, completely relevant: it is unnecessary to understand the soul as a self-moving entity to explain animal movement as a sort of mechanical transitivity. Indeed, the soul moves the animal; however, the soul also seems to be moved in some cases. The only thing that seems false without a doubt is that the

²¹ See Cherniss (1944, p. 391). As Carter (2019, p. 66) rightly notes, this reading of Plato may seem deliberately simplistic and even unfair since Plato talks about the soul's movements in non-mechanical terms (see *Leges*, 897a1).

²² Boeri discusses another case in which the body moves the soul: virtue and vice: "they come into existence when the perceptive part of the soul is altered by perceptible objects, since 'all virtue is concerned with *bodily* pleasures and pains' (*Ph.*, 247a8)" (2018, p. 161).

soul moves itself. So, Aristotle needs to work on a different explanation to account for the community between body and soul:

[13] τοῦτο δὲ μὴ ὡς ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῆς κινήσεως οὔσης, ἀλλ' ὅτε μὲν μέχρ' ἐκείνης, ὅτε δ' ἀπ' ἐκείνης, οἶον ἢ μὲν αἰσθησίς ἀπὸ τωνδὶ, ἢ δ' ἀνάμνησις ἀπὸ ἐκείνης ἐπὶ τὰς ἐν τοῖς αἰσθητηρίοις κινήσεις ἢ μονάς (408b15-18).

[13] In any case, this is not insofar as motion is in it, but rather sometimes it ends in the soul, and sometimes it originates in the soul like sense-perception originates in these objects, and recollection originates in the soul ending in the motions or vestiges in the senses.

The dialectical procedure, then, reached some conclusions. The refutation of Plato's view that the soul was a self-moving entity allowed Aristotle to (i) eliminate a mechanical explanation that would eventually result in making the soul a body and (ii) locate the discussion in the realm of the natural world so that the soul as a principle can be explanatory of bodily movements; this same way, the community between soul and body is emphasized; it also allows Aristotle to (iii) defend the possibility that there is a certain type of movement of the soul that plays a role in capacities of a cognitive nature. None of these results would have been possible without discussing the *endoxon*. After all, both Aristotle and Plato agree on one essential thing: the soul is a principle of motion. The soul's causal agency over the body was never at risk. The only disagreement lies in the way in which the soul can effectuate its power over the body and how the soul itself also depends on the body to function: the emphasis is placed on how something affects and something gets affected in the body-soul relationship. So, motion cannot be a proper and exclusive characteristic of the soul but is one of the things common to the soul and the body.

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