

PHILOPONUS ON THE DUAL CHARACTER OF THE SOUL AS ENTELECHEIA OF THE BODY

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SUMMARY: 1. Introduction. 2. *The Sailor and the Ship* (*De an.* 11.1, 413a8-9). 3. *The Dual Character of the Soul as Entelecheia of the Body*. 4. *The Inseparability of the Rational Soul from the Body*. 5. *The Knowledge of the Soul*. 6. Conclusion.

1. INTRODUCTION

ARISTOTLE'S remark at the end of *De an.* 11.1 (413a8-9) contemplating the possibility of the soul being like a sailor of a ship has justifiably puzzled his commentators since antiquity.¹ The image, which has clear dualistic tones (a sailor is indeed separable from the ship), comes right after a careful articulation of Aristotle's hylomorphic account of the soul as the *entelecheia*² of the body (412a19-b6). How can Aristotle claim that the soul is like the sailor of the ship without compromising his hylomorphic view that the soul is intrinsically united to the body?

In this paper I will present Philoponus' interpretation of this passage as an enlightening solution to this problem. Along the lines of Simplicius' and Themistius' accounts of the dual character of the soul as *entelecheia* of the body, Philoponus explains that the soul is an *entelecheia* that is *both* separable and inseparable from the body in different respects. Among contemporary interpretations of Aristotle's puzzling remark on the sailor and the ship, there has been no serious consideration of Philoponus' solution. Some commentators do not even mention his account at all,³ while others simply

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¹ See, for example: SIMPLICIUS, *On Aristotle On the Soul 1.1-2.4*, J. O. Urmson (transl.), Bloomsbury, New York 2014, p. 129; R. D. HICKS, *Aristotle's De Anima*, CUP, Cambridge 1907, p. 319; H. J. EASTERLING, *A Note on De Anima 413a8-9*, «Phronesis», 11 (1966), pp. 159-162, 160; C. SHIELDS, *Aristotle. De Anima*, OUP, New York 2016, p. 79.

² The term ἐντελέχεια is sometimes translated into English as "actuality" or "fulfillment". Given the complexity of this term, throughout the paper I simply transliterate it, leaving it untranslated.

³ Cf., for example: D. ROSS, *Aristotle: De Anima*, OUP, New York 1961 (1999), pp. 214-215; D. W. HAMLYN, *Aristotle: De Anima. Books II and III*, OUP, New York 1968 (2002), p. 87; P. SIWEK, *Aristotelis Tractatus De Anima: Graece et Latine*, Desclée, Roma 1965, p. 279; ARISTOTELES,

dismiss his account, and that of Themistius, as inconsistent and unsatisfactory.⁴

The paper is divided into four sections. In Section I, I will present the passage of *De an.* II.1, 413a8-9, the problem it raises, and its main contemporary interpretations. In Section II, I will introduce Simplicius' and Themistius' account of the soul as a dual *entelecheia*. In Section III, I will explain Philoponus' account of the rational soul as both separable and inseparable from the body in different respects. Finally, in Section IV, I will discuss the phenomenological way in which we come to know the soul, which cannot be said to exhaust all that the soul is. Considering the dual character of the soul and the way we come to know the soul, it appears reasonable to ask, as Aristotle does using the analogy of the sailor and the ship, whether the soul, which is inseparable from the body in one respect (as its *entelecheia*) might also be separable from the body in another respect (by having its being in itself).⁵

2. THE SAILOR AND THE SHIP (*DE AN.* II.1, 413A8-9)

In *De an.* II.1, Aristotle argues that the soul is the *entelecheia* of an organic body. The soul and the body are one and inseparable from one another, as the pupil is one with the eye and as the form of the axe is one with the axe (412b10-413a3). The next chapter, *De an.* II.2, is a new beginning (413a11-13). What is puzzling is that, in closing *De an.* II.1, Aristotle makes a brief remark contemplating the possibility of the soul being like the sailor of a ship. He says [divisions and emphasis added]:

As the pupil and sight is the eye, so the soul and the body is the living being. (413a2-3)

[1] *On the one hand*, therefore [μὲν οὖν], it is not unclear [οὐκ ἄδηλον] that the soul – or, rather, certain parts [μέρη] of it, if it has parts by nature – is not separable [οὐκ... χωριστή] from the body. For the *entelecheia* of some of the parts is the *entelecheia* of the parts themselves. (413a3-6)

[2] However, nothing prevents at least some [parts of the soul from being separable] on account of their *entelecheiai* being not [*entelecheiai*] of any body. (413a6-7)

Über die Seele, hg. von H. Seidl, Felix Meiner, Hamburg, 1995, p. 234; R. POLANSKY, *Aristotle's De Anima*, CUP, New York 2007, pp. 167-170; A. HAHMANN, *Aristoteles' "Über die Seele": Ein systematischer Kommentar*, Reclam, Stuttgart 2016, pp. 82-83; C. D. C. REEVE, *Aristotle: De Anima*, Hackett, Indianapolis 2017, pp. 113-114; ARISTOTELES, *Über die Seele*, hg. von K. Corcilus, Felix Meiner, Hamburg 2017, pp. l-li; and ARISTOTELES, *De Anima-Über die Seele*, neu übersetzt und kommentiert von T. Buchheim, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 2017, p. 242.

⁵ I am grateful to Jonathan Buttaci, Stephen Ogden, and Michael Pakaluk for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper.

[3] *On the other hand*, it is still unclear [ἔτι δὲ ἀδηλον] whether the soul, [being] *entelecheia* of the body in this way [οὕτως], is like [ὡσπερ] the sailor [πλωτήρ] of the ship. (413a8-9)

Let that much general description be laid down and sketched regarding the soul (413a9-10).⁶

The main theme of the passage is the unity of soul and body as one composite, from which it clearly follows (cf. *oun*) that [1] the soul – or at least some part of it – is *not* separable from the body. In fact, some powers of the soul (e.g. sight, nutrition) are an *entelecheia* of the bodily parts themselves. Aristotle then suggests that [2] some parts of the soul might be separable. He is thinking of the rational part of the soul, which is not the *entelecheia* of a bodily part. Next follows [3] the puzzling claim about the sailor and the ship. While [1] is clearly in line with the hylomorphic account of the soul in *De an.* II.1, by contrast, both [2] and [3] point towards some sort of dualism.

Easterling and Tetzlaff have rightly pointed out that Sections [1] and [3] are coordinated. This is clear from the use of the correlative Greek particles (*men, de*) and by the repetition of the adverb “unclear” (*adêlon*): [1] *hoti men ouk adêlon* / [3] *eti de adêlon*.⁷ Given this coordination, there is no basis in the text to argue that Section [2] is merely parenthetical and has no bearing on the interpretation of Section [3].⁸ To the contrary, I think that [2] is key to introduce and understand [3], because the main theme through the end of the chapter continues to be the separability or inseparability of the soul: *since* some parts of the soul might be separable from the body, this raises the question of whether the soul is perhaps like a sailor of a ship, namely, something separable from the body although currently united to it.

Ross has proposed a textual emendation in Section [3]. He adds the disjunctive particle *hê*, so that the passage would be read as Aristotle considering two alternatives: “*whether* the soul is an actuality *or* [ἢ] is like the sailor of the ship”.⁹ This emendation, however, lacks any textual basis and, understandably, has not been endorsed by later commentators.¹⁰ Moreover, as Tracy has convincingly argued, in this particular passage *houtôs* and *hôsper* in Section

⁶ All translations from Aristotle’s *De anima* are my own. I follow P. Siwek’s 1965 edition of the text.

⁷ Cf. H. J. EASTERLING, o.c., p. 160; and M. E. TETZLAFF, *An Alternative Reading of De Anima 413a8-9*, «Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association», 87 (2014), pp. 115-125, 118 and 122. Polansky notes that there is an echo of [3] in [1] by means of the adverb “unclear”. Cf. R. Polansky, o.c., p. 168.

⁸ Pace M. E. TETZLAFF, o.c., p. 119 and 122.

⁹ Cf. D. Ross, o.c.

¹⁰ A. JANNONE, E. BARBOTIN, *Aristote: De l’Âme*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1966, p. 31; D. W. HAMLYN, o.c., p. 10; R. POLANSKY, o.c., p. 168 n. 37; M. E. TETZLAFF, o.c., p. 125 n. 1; and C. SHIELDS, o.c., p. 75.

[3] should *not* be read as correlatives.¹¹ Accordingly, we should not translate “whether the soul is an *entelecheia* in the way the sailor is an *entelecheia* of the ship”, but rather “whether the soul, being *entelecheia* of the body *in this way* [namely, with some parts separable], is like the sailor of the ship”.

So much for the text itself. Let us now turn to the analogy of the sailor and the ship. What is the analogy meant to illustrate in this passage? Tracy helpfully recalls Plotinus’ distinction between three different uses of the analogy. According to Plotinus, the analogy can illustrate the following points:

- (i) the separability of the soul from the body;
- (ii) the soul’s mode of presence in the body as its *formal*, and hence inseparable, cause;
- (iii) the soul’s control over bodily changes as its *efficient* cause – hence with no direct bearing on the question of whether the soul is separable or not.¹²

Tracy argues that the analogy is used in the Presocratics and in Plato to illustrate the way in which the cosmos and the human being are directed by the soul.¹³ This use concerns (iii) the efficient causality of the soul, and not (ii) formal causality. Tracy concludes that the analogy was fairly common already before Aristotle.¹⁴ Tracy goes on to show that the analogy was commonplace also in Aristotle, who uses it in connection with the soul being accidentally moved (by being present in the body that moves) and with the soul moving the body as (iii) its efficient cause.¹⁵ Tracy is responding to Ross’ claim that, apart from *De an.* II.1, 413a8-9, Aristotle nowhere else uses the analogy of the sailor and the ship.¹⁶ Tracy concedes to Ross that Aristotle nowhere uses the analogy to illustrate (ii) the mode of presence of the soul in the body as its formal cause and that Aristotle does not refer to the sailor in the analogy as the *entelecheia* of the ship.¹⁷ But Tracy still claims that Aristotle is using the analogy in 413a8-9 to illustrate (iii) the efficient causality of the soul.

For Tracy’s interpretation it is key that he implicitly assumes that “sailor” (*plôtêr*) and “boatman” or “steersman” (*kubernêtês*) are interchangeable terms.¹⁸ I will come back to Tracy’s interpretation later, arguing that the identification of the sailor with the steersman is not warranted in this passage. In

¹¹ T. TRACY, *The Soul/Boatman Analogy in Aristotle’s De Anima*, «Classical Philology», 77/2 (1982), pp. 97-112, 97-102 and 111-112.

¹² Cf. *ibidem*, p. 99.

¹³ Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 99-102.

¹⁴ Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 101-102.

¹⁵ Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 102-108. Tracy considers an earlier passage in the *De anima* (cf. I.3, 405b31-406a11) as well as passages from the *Physics* (cf. VI.10, 240b8-241a26; VIII.4, 254b28-32; and VI-II.6, 259b20) and *De Motu* (cf. 7, 701b15ff.).

¹⁶ Cf. D. ROSS, o.c., p. 214. See also C. SHIELDS, o.c., p. 180.

¹⁷ Cf. T. TRACY, o.c., p. 108. See also p. 99 and 102.

¹⁸ See T. TRACY, o.c., p. 102 n. 16. Tracy’s claim that the soul/boatman analogy is present in Presocratics and Plato is primarily based in their use of the verb “to steer” (*kubernâô*), rather than in the use of the cognates of “sailor” (*plôtêr*).

fact, when Aristotle uses the word *plôtêr* elsewhere in the *De anima*, he does so to illustrate the way in which the soul is accidentally moved in virtue of its being in a body that moves, and not to illustrate (iii) the efficient causality of the soul.¹⁹

Bearing in mind these preliminary points, let us turn to the contemporary interpretations of the analogy of the sailor and the ship in this passage. We can distinguish four different interpretations:²⁰

(A) The analogy is a dualistic remark that contradicts Aristotle's hylomorphic account of the soul. It is considered a remnant of Platonism (Hicks);²¹ a claim that Aristotle is obviously not committed to because he is just wondering between two alternatives – hence the emendation of the text adding the disjunctive particle *hê* (Ross);²² a lecture's aside, not Aristotle's (Hamlyn);²³ a claim that, if accepted, will demolish Aristotle's immediately preceding hylomorphic account of the soul (Nuyens).²⁴

(B) The analogy applies only to *the rational part* of the soul, which part alone is separable from the body. At this point, then, Aristotle is hinting at his later discussion of intellect in Book III of the *De anima* (Jannone,²⁵ Polansky²⁶).

(C) The analogy introduces a new topic: Aristotle is making a claim about (iii) the soul as *efficient causality* or final cause. What is at stake is not whether the soul is separable or not, but how the soul guides and moves the body (Easterling,²⁷ Tracy²⁸).

(D) The remark is a way to insist that the soul is *inseparable*. Aristotle is not really considering the separability of the soul (Tetzlaff²⁹).

Interestingly, none of these interpretations contemplates the possibility that the *same* soul, or the same part of the soul (e.g. intellect), be *both* separable and inseparable from the body in different respects – which, as we will soon see, is Philoponus' view. I will now briefly note why these interpretations are unsatisfactory.

Interpretation (A) is the easy way out to address the challenge posed by Aristotle's remark. This interpretation would only be acceptable if there were no other way to interpret the text.

¹⁹ Cf. *De an.* I.3, 406a4-10. Interestingly, Aristotle mentions "sailors" in the plural. Accordingly, in this passage, "sailor" seems to refer to the passengers of the ship rather than to sailors who are maneuvering the ship.

²⁰ Cf. M. E. TETZLAFF, o.c., pp. 116-119.

²¹ Cf. R. D. HICKS, o.c., p. 320.

²² Cf. D. ROSS, o.c., pp. 214-215.

²³ Cf. D. W. HAMLYN, o.c., p. 87.

²⁴ Cf. F. NUYNEN, *L'Évolution de la Psychologie d'Aristote*, Éditions de l'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, Louvain 1948, p. 241.

²⁵ Cf. A. JANNONE, o.c., p. 31 n. 2.

²⁶ Cf. R. POLANSKY, o.c., p. 168.

²⁷ Cf. H. J. EASTERLING, o.c., p. 162.

²⁸ Tracy argues that Aristotle introduces the analogy not as an alternative or parallel to the notion of soul as *form* and entelechy of the body, but as symbolizing the soul's function as *efficient cause* (cf. o.c., p. 98). See also pp. 107-108 and 111-112.

²⁹ Cf. M. E. TETZLAFF, o.c., p. 123.

Interpretation (D) is ingenious. Tetzlaff rightly argues for the need to coordinate Section [3] with Section [1], as well as for the interpretation of *houtôs* and *hôsper* as *non*-correlatives in this passage, following Tracy. However, her interpretation rules out – as merely parenthetical – Section [2], which clearly has bearing on Section [3]. Since at least some part of the soul is the *entel-echeia* of no bodily part, it is reasonable to ask whether the soul might be like the sailor of the ship. Further, the coordination between Sections [1] and [3] points more to the significance of Section [2], which lies in between, than to its merely parenthetical character. Finally, Tetzlaff's interpretation cannot explain why elsewhere in the *De anima* Aristotle considers some sort of separability of the soul.³⁰

As regards Interpretation (C), there is no basis in the text to think that Aristotle has *already* moved on to a different topic.³¹ To the contrary, separability, and not efficient or final causality, continues to be the main theme until the next chapter (*De an.* II.2), which Aristotle presents explicitly as a new beginning. Moreover, the remark about the sailor and the ship (413a8-9) comes *before* Aristotle says, at the closing of the chapter, that he has given an account of the soul in outline (413a9-10). While Tracy's analysis successfully shows that the analogy of the sailor – or more accurately, the analogy of the boatman or steersman – can be used to illustrate (iii) the efficient causality of the soul, it fails to show that Aristotle is actually using the analogy in this sense *at* 413a8-9.

Further, Tracy says nothing about the coordination of Section [3], where the analogy of the sailor appears, with Section [1], nor of the bearings of Section [2] on the interpretation of the analogy, isolating the remark from its context.³² This explains why Ross and Shields say, correctly, that we have no precedence of Aristotle's use of the analogy of the sailor and the ship, because they are thinking of the use of the analogy to illustrate (ii) the formal causality of the soul, and not (iii) its efficient causality. Finally, Tracy does not explain why Aristotle uses the word "sailor" (*plôtêr*) instead of "boatman" or "steersman" (*kubernêtês*) in this passage.

Interpretation (B) is the best among the contemporary interpretations we have. In interpreting the analogy in Section [3], it takes into consideration Aristotle's remarks in Sections [1] and [2] about *parts* of the soul. However, this interpretation still leaves unaddressed some important problems. First of all, it does not explain why Aristotle does not refer to the rational *part* of the soul

³⁰ Cf. *De an.* III.5, 430a 17-18.

³¹ It could be argued that Aristotle's use of the conjunction *eti*, which introduces the analogy, signals the introduction of a new topic. However, the clear coordination of Section (3) with Section (1) by means of the particles *men* and *de*, as well as the repetition of the adverb *adêlon*, blocks any separation of Section (3) from the two other sections of the passage.

³² Cf. M. E. TETZLAFF, o.c., p. 120.

when he uses the analogy of the ship in Section [3], but rather uses the general word “the (whole) soul”. In fact, Aristotle does not say that it is unclear “whether *the rational part* of the soul is like the sailor of the ship”, but rather “whether *the soul* is like the sailor of the ship”. The abandonment of the language of parts in Section [3], which is coordinated with the previous two sections, requires explanation.

Secondly, Interpretation (B) does not address the problem of the unity of soul. Is it possible that one and the same soul has some of its parts separable from the body while others are not? Finally, this interpretation does not explain how the hylomorphic definition of the soul, which Aristotle presents as common to *all* kinds of soul, may apply also to the human soul or to its rational part.

The interpretation of the passage among Aristotle’s Greek commentators is also disputed.³³ Alexander (*On the Soul* 15,10-26) openly rejects the view of the soul as the sailor of the ship, unless we substitute “helmsman” (*ho kubernêtês*) with “the art of sailing” (*hôs tèn technên tèn kubernêtikên*). By this substitution, the soul becomes a disposition and *form* of the body (*hôs hexis tis kai eidos*), inseparable from the body (*achôristos*).³⁴

In the following two sections I will consider the interpretations of Themistius, Simplicius, and Philoponus. Their interpretations address the problems that I have noted for Interpretation (B). In particular, they articulate the *dual* character of the soul as *entelecheia* of the body (Section II). Philoponus explains this duality in more detail and even claims that the *rational* soul too is inseparable from the body (Section III).

3. THE DUAL CHARACTER OF THE SOUL AS ENTELECHEIA OF THE BODY

Both Simplicius and Themistius discuss the dual character of the soul as *entelecheia* of the body when they comment on Aristotle’s analogy of the sailor and the ship at the end of *De an.* II.1. The soul, an *entelecheia* that uses the body, is *both* separable and inseparable from the body in different respects. Simplicius explains:

In this way Aristotle views the dual character [τὸ συναμφοτέρον] of the soul. For the *entelecheia* as user [ἡ ὡς χρωμένη ἐντελέχεια] is both unseparated in a way [καὶ ἀχώριστός πη] (through its use of the body *as a whole* [ὅλως χρῆσθαι]) and separate in a way [καὶ χωριστή πη] as transcendently using [ὡς ἐξηρημένως] the body to serve as an instrument. If it both uses the body in a way, but in a way *not as a whole* [μηδ’ ὅλως], as the illustration of the sailor [τοῦ πλωτῆρος] shows, that part of it that does not use the body is altogether separate [πάντη ἐστὶ χωριστόν]. Why does he still

³³ Cf. P. SIWEK, o.c., p. 279 n. 271.

³⁴ Cf. ALEXANDER OF APHRODISIAS, *On the Soul: Part 1*, V. Caston (transl.), Bloomsbury, New York 2014, pp. 42-43.

say that it is unclear, if it is hard even to imagine it? For obviously the contemplative power [ἡ θεωρητικὴ] *too* does not use the body as a tool. (96, 6-12)³⁵

Simplicius distinguishes two senses of separation when we consider the relationship between an *entelecheia*-as-user and its instrument. If the *entelecheia* uses the instrument *as a whole*, then the *entelecheia* is inseparable, even if there is some sort of “transcendental separation” (*exêirêmenôs*) to the extent that a user and its instrument are distinct. The second sense of separation, which is illustrated by the analogy of the sailor and the ship, occurs when the *entelecheia* uses the instrument, but *not as a whole*. In this case, Simplicius explains, *that part* of the user that is not using the body is “altogether separate” (*pan-têi chôriston*). This latter sense of separation corresponds to the contemplative part of the human soul. The human soul, then, uses the instrument (the body), but not as a whole, because its rational part is altogether separate from the body. In other words, there is a whole soul which is both separable and inseparable with respect to different parts.

Simplicius is then puzzled by Aristotle’s remark about the analogy, because for Simplicius it seems obvious (and not unclear) that the rational *part* of the soul is altogether separable, while the other parts are not. Simplicius is thus interpreting “soul” in the analogy of Section [3] as referring to the rational part of the soul, as (B) interpreters also do. I agree with Simplicius that *if* we interpret “soul” in the analogy as referring to the rational part of the soul, then Aristotle’s claim that it is “unclear” whether the (rational) soul is separate is puzzling. But why should we take Aristotle to be referring to the rational part of the soul, and not to the whole soul, in the analogy of Section [3]? If Aristotle has here in mind the whole soul, then it makes sense to ask whether the (whole) soul is separable when one of its parts (but not others) are separable. In fact, as I have pointed out, it is telling that after repeatedly using the language of parts in Sections [1] and [2] Aristotle does not mention parts of the soul in using the analogy in Section [3], but rather uses simply the noun “soul”.

While I disagree with Simplicius’ reading of the analogy as referring to the rational *part* of the soul (rather than to the whole soul), I find his account enlightening. The soul, Simplicius explains, is a dual *entelecheia*, both when it uses the body as a whole and when it does not, as in the case of human beings where the rational soul seems separate from the body in its activity. There is no contradiction in the claim that one same thing (in this case the soul, an *entelecheia* as user) is both separable and inseparable *in different respects* (cf. “*kai achôristos pêi...kai chôristôs pêi*”). The same occurs with the sailor: he uses the ship, but not as a whole. In one way, *qua* using the ship, he is inseparable

³⁵ Translation, with some emendations, from SIMPLICIUS, o.c., p. 129.

from the ship; in another way, *qua non* using the ship, he is separable. Since the sailor is not using the ship as a whole, it makes sense to ask whether he is *also* separable. Similarly, noticing that one part of the soul is not using the body as an instrument, Aristotle can reasonably ask whether the soul might not perhaps be *also* separable like the sailor from the ship. Aristotle is not denying at all the inseparability in one respect; he is considering the separability in *another* respect.

One famous character of *The Adventures of Tintin* by Hergé illustrates this point. Captain Haddock, Tintin's friend, is a sailor, but he *also* smokes a pipe. *Qua* smoker, he does not use the ship: the activity of smoking is altogether separable from the ship. Thus, Captain Haddock is not using the ship as a whole; he is thus separable at least in this particular regard. He, who is both sailor and smoker, and the human soul, which is both a principle of life and of thought, are thus dual *entelecheiai* that are using instruments (the ship, the body), but not as a whole. Therefore, they are both separable and inseparable from their instruments in different respects. The sailor, we know, is separable from the ship. Whether the human soul is separable in this way, we do not know, "it is still unclear". Thus, it is perfectly reasonable for Aristotle to ask the question.

For Themistius too, the question is not whether the soul is separable *or* inseparable: at least some parts of the soul are obviously inseparable from the body. The question is rather whether the soul, which is inseparable from the body in this way, may *also* have the capacity to separate from the body in another way (note the emphasis of the *kai* in "*dunasthai kai chōrisdsesthai*"). He says:

So it is obvious that the soul is not separated from the body, either *as a whole* (if as a whole it is a form [ὅλη ἐἶδος], as the shape of the iron in the saw), or *in some of its parts* [μέρη] (if it is naturally divided into parts). For some parts of the soul are clearly the *entelecheia* and perfection [ἐντελέχεια καὶ τελειότης] of some parts of the body, as sight is of the eye; yet this does not stop those parts of the soul that (unlike the shape and the form) are not an *entelecheia* of either the whole body, or of some of its parts, from *also* having the capacity to separate [δύνασθαι καὶ χωρίζεσθαι] from the body. (43, 21-27)³⁶

Themistius explains that a form can be inseparable in two different ways: because the *whole* form is inseparable (e.g. the saw-shape is inseparable from the iron of which the saw is made) or because some of the *parts* of the soul are an *entelecheia* and perfection of one part of the body, e.g. the power of sight, which is that part of the soul that perfects the eye and is inseparable from it.

³⁶ All translations of Themistius, with some emendations and emphasis, are taken from THEMISTIUS, *On Aristotle On the Soul*, R. B. Todd (transl.), Duckworth, London 1996, p. 61.

Themistius then signals a distinction between an *entelecheia* that is a perfection (*entelecheia kai teleiotês*) and an *entelecheia* that is *not* a perfection of the whole body nor of some of its parts. The latter, he says emphatically, can *also* separate from the body. The analogy of the helmsman of the ship is meant to illustrate the kind of *entelecheia* that is separable. He explains:

The intellect [ὁ νοῦς] too seems to be like this, for it is not yet clear whether it is an *entelecheia* of a body in such a way as to be inseparable [ὥστε ἀχώριστος εἶναι], or an *entelecheia* of a body in such a way as to separate [ὥστε χωρίζεσθαι], as the helmsman from his ship [ὥσπερ ὁ κυβερνήτης]. For the helmsman is an *entelecheia*, but a separate one. (43, 27-30)

Themistius focuses on intellect, one of the parts of the human soul. Interestingly, he is not questioning at all *whether* the intellect is an *entelecheia* of the body. To the contrary, he does say that the intellect *is* an *entelecheia* of the body. What is unclear, he says, is *what kind* of *entelecheia* of the body intellect is, namely, whether intellect is an *entelecheia* that is *also* separable from the body. Themistius then concludes:

So a definition of *all kinds* of soul [περὶ πάσης τῆς ψυχῆς] may by now have been given in outline, but not in detail. Instead, the definition is like a sketch until we deal with all the capacities of the soul. That will make it clear [δῆλον] whether the soul *as a whole* is a form that is separate from the body [ἄλλη χωριστὸν εἶδος], or whether *some parts* of it are separate, others not [τὰ μὲν τινα μέρη χωριστὰ αὐτῆς, τὰ δὲ οὐ]. (43, 30-34)

The definition of the soul as the inseparable *entelecheia* of the body, Themistius concludes, applies, at least in outline, to *all kinds* of soul. In all cases there is some inseparability from the body. In fact, even if some parts of the soul appear to be separable (i.e. intellect), the soul is still inseparable from the body, at least to the extent that other parts of *the same soul* are inseparable from the body, that is, those parts which are perfections of some parts of the body. Thus, Themistius does not contemplate the separability and the inseparability of the soul as incompatible claims, as if the soul must be *either* separable *or* inseparable. The human soul is clearly *both* inseparable *and* separable, because some of its parts are inseparable and some others are separable. What is unclear then is whether the human soul *as a whole*, or just some of its parts (i.e. intellect), is separable from the body.

Simplicius' and Themistius' interpretations of the analogy take seriously Aristotle's language of *parts* in Sections [1] and [2], as Interpretation (B) does. They also consider how the distinction between parts of the soul that are separable and parts that are not may affect the separability or inseparability of the soul *as a whole*: Is this dual soul, with some of its parts being separable while others inseparable, separable from the body as a whole? Further, Themistius raises the question of whether Aristotle's *common* hylomorphic definition of

soul also applies to the rational soul, one of the problems that (B) interpreters usually leave unaddressed. In the next section I will discuss Philoponus' interpretation of the analogy of the sailor and the ship, which elaborates in more detail the duality of the soul as *entelecheia* of the body and explains how the rational soul too is inseparable from the body.

4. THE INSEPARABILITY OF THE RATIONAL SOUL FROM THE BODY

In this section I will present and discuss Philoponus' commentary on the analogy of the sailor and the ship within its context (*De an.* II.1, 413a2-9). He says:

Having given the definition of the soul, he deduces, as a conclusion following necessarily upon the definition, the inseparability [τὸ ἀχώριστον] of the soul from the body. For if the soul is form and perfection [εἶδος καὶ τελειότης] of the animate body, and it is impossible that the perfection of anything should be separate from that thing, it follows clearly that the soul too is inseparable from the body. For these, form and perfection, are relatives [πρὸς τι] (for the form is form and perfection of matter), and relatives either are or are not at the same time [ἄμα]. (xv 223.21-27)³⁷

Philoponus explains why from Aristotle's definition of the soul as the form and first *entelecheia* of the living body it follows that the soul is inseparable (*achôristos*) from the body. The soul is the form and perfection (*teleiôtês*) of the body. The link between perfection and inseparability is key to Philoponus' analysis: forms that are perfections cannot be separated from that of which they are perfections. A perfection is always a *relative* notion (*pros ti*); perfection and that of which it is a perfection go together (*hama*). Consequently, to the extent that the soul is a perfection of the body the soul is inseparable from it and they both exist together. Having explained these preliminary points, Philoponus continues:

So far, then, as the given definition of soul goes, *all soul* [πᾶσα] would be inseparable [ἀχώριστος] from the body of which it is the *entelecheia*, if, indeed, the definition fits all soul. And even if not all soul should be inseparable, at any rate *some parts* [ἕνια μέρη] of the soul are manifestly inseparable from the body, and these the definition does fit, since they are *entelecheiai* of parts of the animate being. For the power to nourish is a perfection [τελειότης] of the body itself that is nourished, and similarly the augmenting and generative powers, and further, that part of the soul which is appetitive makes-to-have-form [εἰδοποιεῖ] the part of the body in which it is. If these, then, are perfections of bodies and to do with bodies, it is impossible that these parts of the soul should be separable from body. For of what will they be perfections? Concerning what will they act when separated from bodies? What will nourishment nourish or augmentation augment when separated from bodies? (xv 223.27-37)

³⁷ All translations of Philoponus, with some emendations and emphasis, are taken from PHILOPONUS, *On Aristotle's On the Soul 2.1-6*, W. Charlton (transl.), Cornell University Press, New York 2005, pp. 24-27.

According to the definition of the soul as the *entelecheia* of the body, Philoponus explains, all soul (*pasa psuchê*) would be an *entelecheia* inseparable from the body if the definition in fact applies to all soul. He will come back to answer this question later. Presently, Philoponus focuses on the parts of the soul (*merê tês psuchês*). He argues that the definition of soul applies at least to those parts of the soul that are *entelecheia* of some part of the living being. For this argument, he links *entelecheia* with perfection (*teleiotês*), which is inseparable from the body, and he gives examples of non-rational parts of the soul (nutritive, generative, appetitive). These powers “make-to-have-form” (*eidopoiei*) the respective parts of the body. Having explained that these parts of the soul are inseparable from the body, Philoponus then moves to consider those parts of the soul which might be separable. He says:

But even if these parts of the soul, he says, are necessarily inseparable from the body, “nothing prevents some” from being separable “because of their not being *entelecheiai* of any body”. Manifestly, therefore, he does not wish the rational soul [*ἡ λογικὴ ψυχὴ*] to be *entelecheia* of the body, and for this reason he declares it to be separable from the body. (xv 223.37-224.4)

Philoponus says that Aristotle does not want to consider the rational soul (*hê logikê psuchê*) as an *entelecheia* of the body, because this soul is separable. In this context, *entelecheia* means a perfection (*teleiotês*), which is always relative to the body and inseparable from it. (Later in his commentary, we will see that Philoponus does not hesitate to say that the rational soul *too* is an *entelecheia* of the body; what Aristotle is then denying, according to Philoponus, is that the rational soul is an *entelecheia* of the body *in the way a perfection is*, namely, as inseparable).

The especial status of the rational soul as separable makes more pressing the question of whether the common definition of the soul as a form and *entelecheia* inseparable from the body applies to the rational soul as well. If it does not, we should not say that the definition applies to *all* souls. With this problem in mind, Philoponus continues:

Then, since here he has seemed to make the given definition of the soul one that partitions it [*ἔδδοκει μερικὸν ποιεῖν*], when he says that some parts of the soul are separable because of their not being *entelecheiai* of any body, even though he has said “if we are to say something common to *all* soul”, attending to this and showing that even so the definition can no less be common to *all* soul, *even* the rational itself [*κοινός εἶναι πάσης ψυχῆς καὶ τῆς λογικῆς αὐτῆς*], he adds: [413a8-9] “Also it is unclear whether the soul is *entelecheia* of the body in the way as a sailor of a ship”. (xv 224.4-11)

Philoponus has just said that the rational soul is separable from the body because the rational soul is not an *entelecheia* of any part of the body. Since *some* parts of the soul are separable while *others* are inseparable, the definition of the soul seems to be partitioned. According to Philoponus, Aristotle addresses

this problem by showing that the definition is common to all souls, *including* – note the emphatic “*kai*” – *the rational soul* itself (*kai tês logikês autês*). The purpose of the analogy of the sailor and the ship, Philoponus claims, is precisely to illustrate this point. But how can the definition be *common* to all souls when the definition concerns *entelecheiai* that are perfections, and hence inseparable from the body, while the rational soul is not a perfection of the body, but rather separable from it? Philoponus explains:

Why, he says, are we afraid to extend the account even to *all* soul; why do we say that some *parts* of the soul, being separable, are *entelecheia* of no body, and therefore the definition does not fit every psychic power? For from what has been said it will not yet be clear [οὐπω δῆλον] to us in what way we say the soul is *entelecheia* [πῶς εἴπομεν τὴν ψυχὴν ἐντελέχειαν εἶναι], whether as inseparable, which is how the form of the axe stands to the axe, or as separable, which is how the steersman stands to the ship [ὁ κυβερνήτης πρὸς τὴν ναῦν]. For the steersman perfects the form [τελειοῖ γὰρ τὸ εἶδος] of the ship while being separable [χωριστὸς ὢν]. If it is possible, then, for *the same thing* [τὸ αὐτό] to be *entelecheia* in one respect [κατὰ τι μὲν ἐντελέχειαν εἶναι] and in another to be separable [κατὰ τι δὲ χωριστὸν], in that it is not *entelecheia* in that respect [ὡς μὴ ὄν κατ’ ἐκεῖνο ἐντελέχειαν], it follows that it is possible to fit the definition to every power of soul [ἐπι πάσης ψυχικῆς δυνάμεως]. (xv 224.12-21)

Philoponus focuses on the powers of the soul (*dunameis*). It is possible, he argues, that the definition fits every power of the soul. Along the lines of Themistius’ and Simplicius’ distinctions, Philoponus explains that there are two kinds of *entelecheia*: the one that is simply inseparable, which is the case of the form of the axe in relation to (*pros*) the axe; and the *entelecheia* that is separable, which is the case of the steersman in relation to (*pros*) the ship. The latter *entelecheia* is dual, *both* separable and inseparable in two different respects. *The same thing* (*to auto*), Philoponus explains, may be an *entelecheia* that is inseparable in one respect (*kata ti men*) while being a separable *entelecheia* in another respect (*kata ti de*).

This dual character of the soul as *entelecheia* makes it possible to fit all powers of the soul under the common definition of soul as the inseparable *entelecheia* of the body. In all cases there is at least some respect in which each of the powers of the soul is inseparable: some powers are simply inseparable, others are both separable and inseparable in different respects. These, however, are two different sorts of inseparable *entelecheia*: the former is inseparable *simpliciter* (there is no way in which it is separable), while the latter is inseparable *secundum quid*, because it is at the same time separable in another respect.

Let us focus on the distinction between these two kinds of *entelecheia*. The examples given by Aristotle are, respectively, the axe and the steersman of the ship. Here is the distinction in outline, including what Philoponus has explained earlier regarding forms that are perfections of the body:

Simple <i>Entelecheia</i>	Dual <i>Entelecheia</i>
(e.g. the form of an axe) Inseparable <i>simpliciter</i>	(e.g. the sailor of the ship) Inseparable <i>secundum quid</i> (inseparable in one respect, separable in another)
Relative to (<i>pros</i>) the axe Form (<i>eidos</i>) and perfection (<i>teleiotês</i>) of the axe	Relative to (<i>pros</i>) the ship Not a perfection, but that which perfects the form of the ship (<i>teleioi to eidos</i>)

After distinguishing between these two kinds of *entelecheia*, Philoponus reconsiders the distinction between those parts of the soul that are inseparable from the body and those that are separable. He explains:

So that when we said that some parts of the soul are inseparable because of being *entelecheiai* of the parts themselves, we spoke thus because the *entelecheia* is inseparable (for of what will the nourishing power [*ἡ θρεπτικὴ δύναμις*] be perfection [*τελειότης*] if it is separated from the body?); and again, when I said that nothing prevents some parts of the soul from being separable because of their being *entelecheiai* of no body, I meant that they are not *entelecheiai* in this way, that their substance does not have its being in the body [*οὕτως ἔλεγον μὴ εἶναι ἐντελεχείας ὡς μὴ ἐν τῷ σώματι τῆς οὐσίας αὐτῶν ἐχούσης τὸ εἶναι*]; since they too [*καὶ αὐτά*] are *entelecheia* of the animal, but as the steersman of the ship. (xv 224.21-28)

Earlier in his commentary, Philoponus has said that Aristotle “does not wish the rational soul (*hê logikê psuchê*) to be *entelecheia* of the body” (xv 224.2-3) because it is the *entelecheia* of no body and thus separable. And Philoponus has also said that some parts of the soul are inseparable because they are *entelecheia* of the bodily parts themselves. Now Philoponus qualifies both statements. As regards inseparable parts, he clarifies that what is inseparable is *their power* (*dunamis*), which is an *entelecheia* and perfection (*teleiotês*) of the body and hence inseparable from it. Parts of the soul are thus inseparable because *their powers* are *entelecheiai* inseparable from the body.

Regarding those parts of the soul that are separable from the body, Philoponus clarifies that they are still *entelecheia* of the body, albeit in a different way, that is, *not* as perfections of the body. He is thinking of the rational part of the soul. This kind of *entelecheia* is illustrated by the analogy of the steersman and the ship, and Philoponus carefully explains in which sense (*houtôs... hôs*) it is *entelecheia* of the body: this kind of *entelecheia* does *not* have its being in the body (*hôs mê en tōi sōmati tês ousias echousês to einai*), but rather in itself. It is important to note that Philoponus does *not* see the substantiality of the rational part of the soul as excluding some relation to the body: the rational part of the soul is still an *entelecheia* of the animal, even if it is not an *entelecheia* of a particular part of the body.

Philoponus is now ready to make the striking claim that he has been carefully preparing, namely, that the rational soul *too* (*kai hê logikê psuchê*) is inseparable from the body! He explains:

For as I have already said, it is also possible in a way [κατά τινα τρόπον] for the rational soul *too* [καὶ ἡ λογικὴ ψυχὴ] to be called inseparable from the body, insofar as it is *entelecheia* [καθὸ ἐστὶν ἐντελέχεια]. For the activities [ἐνεργείας] by which the rational soul perfects the animal [καθ' ἃς τελειοῖ τὸ ζῷον], changing it in this way or that, these activities the rational soul has inseparable from the body. For when the rational soul has gone out, it will no longer be active in them [οὐκέτι ταύτας ἐνεργήσει], for the rational soul has these activities *from* “the holding” relative to the body [ἔσχει γὰρ αὐτάς ἐκ τῆς σχέσεως τῆς πρὸς τὸ σῶμα]. So in this way [ταύτη], insofar as the rational soul is *entelecheia*, I mean in respect of these activities [καθὸ ἐντελέχεια ἐστὶ, λέγω δὴ κατὰ τὰςδε τὰς ἐνεργείας], the rational soul would be inseparable from the body, just as also the activities of the steersman as steersman [ὡς κυβερνήτου] are inseparable from the ship, and he is separated as a man [ὡς ἀνθρώπου], but as a steersman in act [ὡς μέντοι κυβερνήτης ὄν ἐνεργεία], at the same time as he has been separated from the ship these activities have perished for him. (xv 224.28-37)

Philoponus argues that the rational soul *too* is *inseparable* from the body. He explains in which sense (*kata tina tropon*) the rational soul is inseparable from the body as its *entelecheia* (*katho estin entelecheia*). The rational soul is not an *entelecheia*-perfection of the body. Rather, it is an *entelecheia* that perfects (*teleioi*) the animal by means of the activities (*energeiai*), which are inseparable from the body.

The rational soul has (*ischei*) these activities from “the holding” relative to the body (*ek tês scheseôs tês pros to sôma*). This is a remarkable phrase that Philoponus uses again later: from its relation *to* the body, a relation of “holding”, the soul has these activities. And the rational soul loses these activities, and no longer exercises them, when it leaves the body, that is, when the soul ceases to hold the body together. The rational soul, therefore, is *inseparable* from the body in this particular respect (*tautêi*), namely, “insofar as the rational soul is *entelecheia*, I mean in respect of these activities” (*katho entelecheia esti, legô dê kata tasde tas energeias*).

Philoponus uses the analogy of the steersman and the ship to illustrate this dual character (separable *and* inseparable) of the rational soul. The activities of the steersman qua steersman (*hôs kubernêtou*) are inseparable from the ship. Thus, even if, *as a man*, the steersman separates from the ship (*choridsetai hôs anthrôpos*), he is nevertheless *inseparable* from the ship insofar as, and as long as, he is a steersman in act (*hôs kubernêtês ôn energeiai*). The reason of this inseparability is that the activities of the steersman qua steersman (*hai hôs kubernêtou energeiai*) are inseparable from the ship. When the steersman separates from the ship, ceasing thus to be a steersman in act, the activities simultaneously (*hama*) perish.

Interestingly, while most commentators take the analogy of the sailor and the ship to illustrate the separability of the soul, Philoponus interprets the analogy in the opposite direction, namely, as illustrating the *inseparability* of the rational soul while it energizes the body. When the man leaves the ship, as when the rational soul leaves the body at death, these activities perish, because they are inseparable, existing only while the sailor is in the ship and the rational soul is in the body. By contrast, the man and the rational soul do not perish when they leave, respectively, the ship and the body. Philoponus continues:

In this way, the rational soul too [καὶ ἡ λογικὴ ψυχὴ], inasmuch as it has a separable substance [ὡς μὲν χωριστὴν ἔχουσα οὐσίαν], is not *entelecheia* of a body; but inasmuch as the rational soul acquires such “holding” relative to the body [ὡς μέντοι τοιάνδε σχέσιν ἀναλαμβάνουσα πρὸς τὸ σῶμα], by virtue of which also it can be called “soul” (for it is called soul relative to the body [πρὸς τὸ σῶμα]), the rational soul is *both entelecheia* of the body *and* inseparable from it [ἐντελέχειά τ’ ἐστὶ τοῦ σώματος καὶ ἀχώριστος αὐτοῦ]. For when the rational soul is separated it loses all those activities which it had acquired from “the holding” relative to the body [ἐκ τῆς πρὸς αὐτὸ σχέσεως], such as to make alive [ζωοποιεῖν], to change the body with all the natural changes [τὸ κινεῖν αὐτὸ πάσας τὰς φυσικὰς κινήσεις], and anything else like that. For what will the rational soul change naturally or make alive it if is outside of any body? (xv 225.1-8)

In this section of the passage, Philoponus summarizes his view on the dual character of the rational soul (*hê logikê psuchê*). In so far as it has a separable substance (*hôs men chôristên echousa ousian*), the rational soul is not an *entelecheia* of the body and hence it is separable from it. Nevertheless, in so far as the rational soul acquires such a holding relative to the body (*hôs mentoi toiande schesin analambanousa pros to sôma*), the rational soul is an *entelecheia* of the body and inseparable from it. This, we must recall, is a special kind of inseparability (i.e. *secundum quid*), illustrated by the analogy of the sailor and the ship and different from the inseparability *simpliciter* of the axe-form from the axe. The rational soul is inseparable at the level of activities, but separable at the level of substance, because the rational soul does not have its being (*ousia*) in the body.

Besides summarizing his view, Philoponus also specifies which are the activities that the rational soul has acquired from the holding relative to the body: “to make live” (*to dsôioipoiên*) and “to change the body with all the natural changes” (*to kinein auto pasas tas phusikas kinêseis*). Clearly, these are not rational activities, such as thinking, but rather activities of the lower powers of the soul. These non-rational activities, Philoponus explains, are the activities of the rational soul, activities inseparable from the body and, therefore, activities in respect of which the rational soul is inseparable.

In the next section of the passage (cf. 225.7-11), Philoponus explains that the parts of the soul are not divided in a bodily way or in place, but “according

to substance” (*kat’ousian*). He also explains that these parts are “perfective” (*teleiôtika*) of the respective parts of the body and inseparable from it, manifesting his surprise as to why Aristotle would then criticize Plato’s account in the *Timaeus* as dividing the soul (cf. 225.12-20). Philoponus then criticizes Alexander for saying that Aristotle is being “of two minds” with the analogy of the sailor and the ship (cf. 225.20-31). Philoponus concludes by restating his view that the rational soul too is, in some respect, *entelecheia* of the body. He says:

But “nothing prevents” are not the words of one in two minds. Rather since he has declared that all soul [*πᾶσαν ψυχήν*] is *entelecheia*, it is for this reason he says that even so nothing prevents some parts of the soul being separable (for they can be *entelecheiai* like the steersman [*ὡς ὁ κυβερνήτης*] of the ship) – and perhaps also because he has not yet demonstrated this. For he has not given any discussion of the rational powers [*περὶ τῶν λογικῶν δυνάμεων*]. (xv 225.26-31)

This is the last section of Philoponus’ commentary on Aristotle’s analogy of the sailor and the ship. The rational soul too, Philoponus concludes, is *entelecheia*; not however as a perfection of the body, but rather as the steersman is the *entelecheia* of the ship. This kind of *entelecheia* is dual, both separable and inseparable in different respects.

Philoponus’ interpretation of Aristotle’s analogy of the sailor and the ship is superior to other interpretations. First of all, it fits well the text as it has been handed to us.³⁸ The main theme of the analogy is not efficient causality, but separability, as signaled by the coordination between Sections [1] and [3] of the passage. Philoponus’ interpretation also fits the reading of *houtos* and *hosper* in Section [3] as non-correlative terms: it is unclear whether a soul that is inseparable from the body in a way (as its *entelecheia* and perfection), is also separable from the body in the way the sailor is separable from the ship. Further, on Philoponus’ interpretation, Section [2] makes perfect sense and has a direct bearing on the analogy: the separability of the rational part of the soul naturally raises the question in Section [3] of whether also the soul as a whole is separable from the body as a sailor is from the ship.

Secondly, Philoponus’ interpretation openly addresses the problem of the applicability of Aristotle’s common definition of the soul – as the inseparable *entelecheia* of the body – to all kinds of soul. As we have seen, for Philoponus, all souls, including the rational soul, are at least in some respect inseparable from the body.

Finally, Philoponus’ interpretation does not leave Aristotle “with an embarrassing dualistic account that leaves behind hylomorphism”, as Charlton

³⁸ Except for Philoponus’ use of the word “steerman” (*kubernêtês*) instead of “sailor” (*plôtêr*). This distinction, however, is not relevant because Aristotle is not concerned with efficient causality, but with separability.

claims.³⁹ Philoponus is arguing that the rational soul is both separable and inseparable from the body *under two different respects*. Although Philoponus does not make a positive argument for the substantiality of the soul (he takes it for granted), he is not arguing the separability of the soul at the expense of hylomorphism.

According to Philoponus, all the parts of the soul (including the rational part in some sense) are *inseparable* from the body. In this light, it is natural that at the closing of *De an.* II.1, after claiming that clearly some parts of the soul are separable, Aristotle says that it is still unclear whether the soul is like the sailor of the ship: if one of its parts (i.e. the rational part) is separable from the body, this raises the question of whether also the soul as a whole may be *separable* from the body. As we will see in the next and final section, the way we come to know the soul makes room for this possibility.

5. THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SOUL

At one point of his analysis of *De an.* II.1, 413a2-10, Philoponus says in passing that the soul is called “soul” by virtue of its relation to the body (*pros to sôma*).⁴⁰ “Soul” is the name we give to *that* which is related to the body as its formal cause. Let us consider the way we come to know the soul and what are its implications for our knowledge of *what* the soul is.

The three main ways in which we know about the soul’s existence and being are (i) phenomenology (moving from the phenomenon of life to the soul as its cause), (ii) contrast or division (saying what the soul is *not* – e.g. the soul is not matter), and (iii) analogy (e.g. the soul is to the living body as non-living forms are to their matter; the soul is analogous to having knowledge). All three ways yield true knowledge about the soul. Aristotle uses all three in the *De anima*.

(i) We do not know the soul directly, but only through its effects in the living bodies. The soul is not an empirical phenomenon, while the body is. Comparing bodies that are alive (e.g. a squirrel) with those that are not (e.g. a stone), we conclude that the living body has something that the inert body lacks, something that is the cause of its being alive. That “something”, which belongs to each living body and explains its living activities (nourishment, growth, perception, moving around, etc.), we call “soul”. The existence of the soul is not an object of perception, but the conclusion of our speech (*logos*) on the *phenomenon* of life, namely, of what manifests to us empirically. To use Aristotle’s own words, we are moving from what is more known to us to what is more known in itself.⁴¹ We *see* a squirrel moving around and we *say*

³⁹ Cf. PHILOPONUS, o.c., p. 133 n. 88.

⁴⁰ Cf. PHILOPONUS, xv 225.2-4.

⁴¹ Cf. *Phys.* I.1, 184a16-21.

that it has a soul, that is, an internal natural principle which is the cause of its movement. The fact that the soul exists is thus disclosed by our own rational speech about the phenomena of life (phenomenology).

Phenomenology not only discloses the existence of the soul (*that* the soul is) but also its being the cause of the phenomenon of life (*what* the soul is).⁴² We thus know what the soul is *as* the cause of life, *relative to* the living activities of the body. Such knowledge is true and positive: the soul exists and is the cause of life. However, this knowledge need not be complete, but might be *partial*. Phenomenology is disclosing a true aspect of the being of the soul (the cause of life), but only as related to some particular phenomena, namely, those of life. Haddock, for example, is not just a captain of a ship, but also Tintin's friend and a pipe-smoker. If no one would reasonably claim that Haddock cannot be anything else except a captain, do we have grounds to say that the soul is *only* the cause of life?

By its very relational nature, what is known phenomenologically is always known *as* something belonging to the phenomenon in some particular way: the *what-it-is* is inseparable from being-that-qua-related-to-the-phenomenon. What it is, when we call it "soul", is what "it" is *in relation to the living body*. Phenomenology has both a prize and a price: it is the way to know what "it" is, yielding true knowledge ("it" is the soul-form-*entelecheia* of the living body); but we cannot presume a priori that what "it" is in relation to the body exhaust all that "it" is.

(ii) We can add to our knowledge of the soul by saying what the soul is *not*, that is, by contrast and division. This *via negativa* is also a true speech of the soul, another sort of phenomenology: we get closer to what the soul is by dividing it from what the soul is not. Thus, in *De an.* II. 1, Aristotle claims that the soul is *not* matter, but form; and that the soul is *not* an intermittent activity like actually being-awake and actually exercising knowledge ("the other *entelecheia*"), but rather a first *entelecheia* like having knowledge. (iii) Something similar occurs with analogies, where there is always some *pars diversa* at stake. Like in phenomenology, both in contrasts and in analogies we speak truly of the soul, but relative to the term(s) contrasted. As a result, such knowledge, though true, falls short of proving that what has been disclosed is all that *it*, which we call "soul", is.

Accordingly, to say that the soul is the form of the body does not necessarily exclude the possibility of the soul being, in another respect, a form in itself. As Berti says, referring to Aristotle's hylomorphic definition of the soul, how are we sure that this definition expresses exhaustively the nature of the soul? The definition, he explains, does not imply that the soul cannot be also a subsistent

⁴² Cf. *Po. An.* II.1.

form.⁴³ The *onus probandi* that the soul is only the form of the body falls on those who argue that the soul is just the form of the body.

6. CONCLUSION

Aristotle's puzzling remark at the end of *De an.* II.1 that it is still unclear whether the soul is separable from the body like the sailor and the ship makes sense when we realize that the soul may be a dual *entelecheia*, separable and inseparable from the body in different respects, as Philoponus explains. The analogy illustrates the possibility of the soul being *also* separable from the body without compromising Aristotle's hylomorphic account of the soul as the inseparable form of the body. The phenomenological way in which we come to know the soul in relation to the living body makes room for this possibility.

In the *De anima*, Aristotle approaches the soul primarily as a natural philosopher, considering the soul as the form of the living body. Plato, by contrast, approaches the soul in the *Phaedo* as a metaphysician, considering the soul itself-by-itself. Aristotle, at the end of *De an.* II.1, acknowledges the legitimacy of a metaphysical path that he will nevertheless *not* follow in the ensuing chapters of the *De anima*; and he does so precisely by means of the analogy of the sailor and the ship.

ABSTRACT · Commentators are puzzled by Aristotle's remark about the possibility of the soul being in the body like a sailor in a ship at the end of *De an.* II.1, a chapter where the soul is described as the inseparable *entelecheia* of the body. Based on Philoponus' account of the soul as a dual *entelecheia* and considering the phenomenological way in which we come to know the soul, I explain that the soul may be both inseparable from the body as its *entelecheia* and yet separable in another respect.

KEYWORDS · Aristotle, Philoponus, Soul, *Entelecheia*, Separation.

⁴³ E. BERTI, *Aristote: était-il un penseur dualist?*, «Theta-Pi», 2 (1973), pp. 73-111, p. 100.