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**Alexander on Soul P. Accattino, P. Donini (edd.):  
*Alessandro di Afrodisia: L'Anima: traduzione,  
introduzione e commento.* (Biblioteca Universale  
Laterza, 447.) Pp. xxxvi + 324. Rome, Bari:  
Laterza, 1996. Paper, L. 58,000. ISBN:  
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is a running list of parallel Sextian passages at the bottom of the page. In many ways this is a useful book; but it is not the book to get if it is answers you want.

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## ALEXANDER ON SOUL

P. ACCATTINO, P. DONINI (edd.): *Alessandro di Afrodisia: L'Anima: traduzione, introduzione e commento*. (Biblioteca Universale Laterza, 447.) Pp. xxxvi + 324. Rome, Bari: Laterza, 1996. Paper, L. 58,000. ISBN: 88-420-4843-7.

In the monograph with which modern study of the treatise *On Soul* by Alexander of Aphrodisias (fl. c. 200 A.D.; henceforth 'Al.') began,<sup>1</sup> Paul Moraux argued that Al.'s interpretation of Aristotle's doctrine of soul was unfaithful to Aristotle in making form, and hence soul, posterior to matter. In a highly significant paper published in 1971 D. argued that, on the contrary, Al. stresses the distinction between soul and body more than some earlier interpreters had done. To say that a certain arrangement of bodily parts is a necessary condition for the existence of soul is not in conflict with Aristotle's general doctrine of form and matter. It certainly rules out the individual's soul surviving death, but Al. had always been notorious for denying personal immortality, whatever the truth about Aristotle's own position.

Since then D., and more recently A. too, have made many contributions to our understanding of Al.'s thought in general and of the treatise *On Soul* in particular. Their joint (henceforth referred to as 'AD') translation of and commentary on the treatise was naturally awaited with eagerness; and now that it has attained actuality it is clear that it will be fundamental for future study not only of this treatise but of Al.'s thought and writings generally.

AD argue for a close relation between the treatise and Al.'s commentary (lost, apart from quotations in later sources) on Aristotle's own *On Soul*. Much of the arrangement of the treatise follows that of the Aristotelian work, and AD suggest that it is in fact largely an abridgement of Al.'s commentary, omitting detailed discussion of particular passages where these do not contribute to the general picture. Al.'s introductory section, which sets the theory of soul in its general physical and metaphysical context, is indeed at first sight very different from Aristotle's first book, which reviews earlier opinions; but AD show, through links with passages in that book, that here too Al. is probably following his own commentary. The relation between the treatise and the commentary is likely to have been so close that some awkwardnesses in the former can be explained by the process of abridgement from the latter (pp. 262–3).

AD further show how the treatise develops a systematic Aristotelian position by drawing—as they suggest the commentary did too—on a wide range of Aristotelian writings: not only on Aristotle's *On Soul* itself and *On Sensation*, the *Meteorology* and the *Metaphysics* (Al.'s commentaries on which survive) but also on the *Ethics*, on other parts of the *Parva Naturalia*, and above all on the biological works, on which as far as we know Al. never produced formal commentaries at all. (Interestingly, the

<sup>1</sup>Paul Moraux, *Alexandre d'Aphrodise: Exégète de la noétique d'Aristote* (Liège and Paris, 1942).

pseudo-Aristotelian *Problems* are also used: p. 198.) The influence of the biological works can be seen particularly in Al.'s emphasis on the heart as the location of the faculty of sensation, to which information is conveyed from the peripheral sense-organs. There is a useful classification at p. xxxii of Al.'s different reactions to inconsistencies in the Aristotelian corpus.

The value for establishing Al.'s text of the mostly unpublished medieval Hebrew translation, extracts from which were quoted in German translation by Bruns, is, AD show, slight, whatever its interest as a document in the history of medieval thought. At p. xxvii n. 77 AD support, against Schroeder and Todd, Moraux's view that the reference to 'Aristotle' at *mantissa* 110.4 is to the second-century A.D. Peripatetic Aristoteles of Mytilene, arguing that if the reference were to Aristotle of Stagira he would not have been mentioned by name again in the next line. But 110.4 is in effect a subheading,<sup>2</sup> while 110.5 begins the subsequent exposition; this perhaps reduces the oddity, and it is not just redundant but positively misleading (even if not impossible, if the subheading was thoughtlessly added) for two *different* Aristotles to be referred to by name in successive lines with no indication of the difference between them.<sup>3</sup>

When AD provide so much, it would be unreasonable to ask for more. But it can only emphasize the value of their work to point out how often the text of Al. recalls contemporary debates about the interpretation of Aristotle's own view on the relation between soul and body. If a living being is not to be regarded as a soul animating a corpse, and if indeed a dead animal body is not, for Aristotle, an animal body at all except in name, how can soul and body really be distinguished? Bernard Williams's distinction in this context<sup>4</sup> between two senses of 'body', one including life and the other not, finds an echo in AD's own discussion at p. 133. David Charles<sup>5</sup> can undertake an analysis of material constituents which ascends from simple to complex without thereby intending a reductionist position any more than does the similar account in Al., on which AD rightly comment that it is 'a sort of illusion of perspective that gives the impression that Al.'s position is a materialist one. And Victor Caston<sup>6</sup> stresses the importance of the question of whether soul has a causative rôle in its own right for distinguishing between different types of supervenience theory adopted by members of the Peripatetic tradition. This was one of the crucial issues for Aristotle's own rejection of soul as harmony (Aristotle, *On Soul* 1.4 407b34; cf. AD, p. 147). AD rightly emphasize, against Moraux's materialistic 1942 interpretation, the importance for Al. of soul as efficient cause in animal generation (p. 115);<sup>7</sup> 24.11ff. shows that soul for Al. functions as efficient, formal, and final cause. Alexander, in other words, is at the centre of contemporary debate about the correct interpretation of Aristotle.

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<sup>2</sup>F. M. Schroeder and R. B. Todd, *Two Aristotelian Greek Commentators on the Intellect* (Toronto, 1990) p. 30.

<sup>3</sup>cf. Schroeder-Todd, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>4</sup>B. Williams, 'Hylomorphism', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 4 (1986), 189-99.

<sup>5</sup>D. Charles, 'Matter and Form: Unity, Persistence and Identity', in T. Scaltsas, D. Charles, and M. L. Gill (eds.), *Unity, Identity and Explanation in Aristotle's Metaphysics* (Oxford, 1994), 75-105, at 100ff.

<sup>6</sup>V. Caston, 'Epiphenomenalisms, Ancient and Modern', *Philosophical Review* 106 (1997).

<sup>7</sup>They also show (pp. 115-17) that he says nothing about the generation of form that conflicts with Aristotle, *Metaph.* Z 8 1033b5ff., provided that text is correctly interpreted.