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The task of the Neoplatonic commentators of Aristotle's works, mostly in what has to do with dialectical passages, is usually "taken for granted instead of explained" (Baltussen 2008 22)[1]. I'm borrowing these words employed by Han Baltussen in a different context to talk about the appreciation that the commentaries on the first book of the *De Anima*, in general, but 'Simplicius''[2], in particular, have received from the contemporary scholarship. The reason I feel entitled to make such an amplification of the scope of Baltussen's judgment has to do, in fact, with the traditional way in which the commentator's exegetical effort is seen. Their role is often considered in light of their doctrinal commitment to Neoplatonic doctrine and, notably, with their "harmonization" project of Plato's and Aristotle's thought. Because of that, these readings are held to distort Aristotle's philosophical aims more than explaining them[3].

In the following lines I aim to study one of those cases in which the exegetical labour of a Neoplatonic commentator is seen as carrying a doctrinal element that entails a certain distortion of Aristotle's thought. The case that I propose to analyze is 'Simplicius'' commentary on the soul-harmony theory, for the commentator runs his interpretation with the aid of certain Neoplatonic theories that are alien to Aristotle's

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[1] On the discrete reception of 'Simplicius' commentary on the *De Anima* by the contemporary criticism, see Blumenthal (1976 306).

[2] I will always refer to the author of the commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima* as 'Simplicius'. I will do so, because the tradition that has lent us the text first identified the author with Simplicius, the Neoplatonic philosopher and celebrated commentator on Aristotle's *Physiscs*, *Categories* and *On Heavens*. Nevertheless, there are some doubts concerning this authorship, which have made specialist to ascribe this work to Pryscian of Lydia (Bossier & Steel 1972; Perkams 2005 511). For this debate, where several of the most authorized voices have changed of position, see Urmson (1995 2), Blumenthal (1987[a] 93), Hadot (1978 29; 1987 23).

[3] On the distortion in general, but in particular for the *DA's* case, see Sorabji, who gives as evidence of this effect the Iamblichean interpretation of Aristotle, which is going to be important for 'Simplicius' aims (1976 3 and 15). See also Gerson (2006 199).

thought. My aim is to track how the hermeneutical device that the commentator applies to the Aristotelian text is built up from the elements provided in the text itself, how the foreign doctrine is introduced, and how this elicits a global comprehension and a philosophical appropriation of the text. In order to do so, I will first present the passage and the alien theory that is being employed by 'Simplicius' to perform his exegesis; then I will show how the commentator chains two passages of the text and produce an explanation for the refutation of the soul harmony theory. Finally, I will describe what kind of interpretation is produced and how it serves to explain Aristotle's challenge in using the hylomorphic model applied to psychology. By doing this I hope that I could explain how is that the commentator feels himself authorized to introduce the alien theory, how he builds up his exegesis around a problem that he needs to solve, and consequently what is the philosophical product of such an interpretation.

1

The only case where 'Simplicius'' commentary on the first book of the *De Anima* does not target the first line of what we nowadays know as a chapter is when Aristotle brings up the soul-harmony opinion[4]. The introduction to the exegesis on this theory occurs in the explanation of one of the last sentences of chapter three: "for it seems that each thing has a particular form and structure[5]" ("δοκεῖ γὰρ ἕκαστον ἴδιον ἔχειν εἶδος καὶ μορφήν."; *DA* 407b23-24).

This sentence can be taken as one of the conclusions of, or part of a single one, the refutative procedure that took place throughout chapter three. Most of the dialectical process[6] in that chapter of the *De Anima*

[4] There are other cases in which 'Simplicius' chains chapters in his exegetical procedure, like what occurs at the end of chapter 2 and the beginning of chapter 3 of Book II. In that case, something similar to this case is going on.

[5] The translation of 'μορφή' by 'structure', although accurate, corresponds more to the customary way of translating the occurrences of the term in the Aristotelian treatises. In the case of the commentators, this choice finds a justification in the necessity to reserve the term 'shape" for 'σχήμα', which is the word that 'Simplicius' uses more familiarly to refer to that very concept.

[6] By dialectical process I understand the utilization of the logical tool that aims to submit to examination the available endoxic material for a particular investigation in order to sift out false contents. This use of dialectic seemed to be stated by Aristotle in the *Topics*, when referring to dialectic's utility for philosophical purposes (*Top.* 101a34). On this use of dialectic, see Baltussen (2000 33) and Sánchez (2016 76).

was devoted to criticizing any theory (although special attention to Plato and the Platonists can be noticed) that could ever conceive of the soul as a mobile entity to explain its motor capacity. One of the funest consequences of attributing motion to the soul as a definitional feature is that it becomes somehow "localized" and, therefore, gets the status of a body (*DA* 406a20). So it is important to proceed in this research with a clear notion of what a body is as well, in order to dodge any possible ambiguity, and to keep in mind an important distinction, at least conceptually speaking.

At the end of the chapter, Aristotle reveals what seems to be his biggest concern about the theory of an automotive soul (which is operative for any other theory), namely, that it focuses too much on the soul and never says anything about the body (*DA* 407b20). Thus, a theory as such fails to produce the contrast needed to explain the asymmetric relation of dependence between both soul and body. Moreover, this lack of interest in the body leads to the absurd consequence that any soul could enter into any body, like Pythagoreans believed it was the case according to Aristotle's report at the very same passage where he expresses the aforementioned concern. Consequently, all these ancient theorists omitted the common element (κοινωνία) that must exist in order to explain the action of the soul on the body. At the end, by pointing out all these failures, Aristotle is actually asking for an analysis that could run from hylomorphic presuppositions.

Under that line of reasoning, it becomes clear why for Aristotle the core of the criticism at that point of the dialectical survey is that it is mandatory to establish what kind of body can receive a soul, can be acted upon it and changed by it, and what exactly the soul that changes the body without being itself subject of change is. This procedure must ultimately result in establishing of what is common to soul and body. Then, for the commentator it has to be important that Aristotle is engaged in a conceptualization process effectuated upon the criticism of ancient theories, and that he is not endorsing any theory, but criticizing and problematizing others'. That explains why this section, which includes the soul-harmony theory (that in the Aristotelian text is treated as "ἄλλη τις δόξα"), occurs as a whole under the lemma already quoted (*DA* 407b23).

2

That particular sentence constituting the lemma under study, that is going to be one of the main elements of this reading, has attracted very little of scholar's attention. Although it seems to be a consensus that there is not a strong distinction to consider at this very line of the Aristotelian text, still there are a few interpreters that acknowledge that both εἶδος and μορφή could contribute a conceptual subtlety to the text [7]. It could be the case of 'Simplicius' too, who, even if is not explicitly saying so, seems to read at this very point an important distinction[8]:

> [1] For the body that is to be changed vitally by the soul must already be alive, and live determined by the form of the soul that changes it. [1a] And that is, as he requires in this passage, to distinguish the life in the body derived from the soul that has the function of using it (ὡς κατὰ τὸ χρώμενον ἱσταμένης) from that which gives the body a form as an instrument and as changing vitally (τῆς ὡς ὄργανον τὸ σῶμα καὶ ὡς ζωτικῶς κινούμενον εἰδοποιούσης), [1b] and to posit that that which gives form to the instrument is always like that which uses it. [9]

In this passage 'Simplicius' provides both an account of what the body and soul are under his own understanding and exegesis of the Aristotelian theory. On the one hand, the body cannot be just any random body, for it needs to be perfectly clothed by its soul and, for

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[7] Most of the contemporary interpreters think that the καὶ has epexegetical value (Hicks 1907 262). Ackrill, in fact, explains the necessity of this explanation on the possible ambiguity carried by the term εἶδος to be read as meaning "species" in some particular contexts (1973 122). Polansky, in turn, thinks that this conceptual splitting is meant to prevent the reader from reading εἶδος in a Platonic way (2007 101 n. 36)

[8] For the texts of 'Simplicius' commentary on the *De Anima*, I will use Urmson's translation (1995). However, this translation has been modified slightly by me, given that in some cases the particular choice of texts that I did require to call back some former referents present in form of anaphors. In very few cases I tried to make the vocabulary uniform, This translation is based on the edition of Hayduck (1882), which is the text I am employing for the Greek.

[9] 'Simplicius', *In De an.* 51.28-33: "Καὶ γὰρ ζῆν ἤδη χρὴ τὸ ζωτικῶς ὑπὸ τῆς ψυχῆς κινηθησόμενον | σῶμα, καὶ ζῆν κατὰ τὸ τῆς κινούσης εἶδος ὁριζόμενον. καὶ τοῦτό ἐστιν, | ὃ ἐν τούτοις ἀξιοῖ, διακρίνειν τε τὴν ἐν τῷ σώματι ζωὴν ἀπὸ τῆς ψυχῆς | ὡς κατὰ τὸ χρώμενον ἱσταμένης, τῆς ὡς ὄργανον τὸ σῶμα καὶ ὡς ζωτικῶς | κινούμενον εἰδοποιούσης, καὶ ὁμοίαν τῇ χρωμένῃ ἀεὶ τὴν εἰδοποιὸν τοῦ | ὀργάνου ὑποτίθεσθαι."

that it has to be "already alive". In like manner, life comes from the agreement between the soul and its body [1]. Now, this life is not determined by soul *simpliciter*; for, on the other hand, soul is a twofold "entity" [1a] whose duplicity stands in a relation of likeness [1b].

Element [1a] is, actually, the one that seems to be more alien to Aristotle. Henry Blumenthal included this item among what he called the "somehow strange interpretations" that, Neoplatonic commentaries in general, but in particular 'Simplicius'' harbors, namely, a theory that attributes layers to the soul, together with a distinction of two kinds of psychic life (1987[b] 91 and 97) [10]. According to this theory, the soul is unfolded in at least two layers:

> [2] But first he gives in common the formal cause of the bodies for all the souls (τὴν εἰδητικὴν αἰτίαν), not as bodies, but as living tools. [2*] For nature, not soul, is the formal cause of bodies (φύσις γὰρ ἡ ὡς σωμάτων εἰδητικὴ αἰτία, οὐ ψυχή), [2a] but that which informs them as living tools is either soul or a part of soul or not without soul. This is the formal cause, through which that which is vitally informed with life is able to move. [2b] That by which it is moved is something else.[11]

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[10] "He asserts that Aristotle first gives us what is common to all kind of soul, that it is the formal cause not just of bodies but of bodies qua ὄργανα ζωτικά: the formal cause of the former is φύσις. Here we have a distinction already found in Plotinus between two layers of soul, one which makes matter into body and another which makes mere body into living body at the lowest level, which Simplicius frequently introduces into the De Anima. Further distinctions follow (cf. 4.14 ff). What makes and informs the living organism – if that is an acceptable translation of ὡς ὄργανον ζωτικὸν εἰδοποιοῦσα – is either soul or part of soul or something not devoid of soul: the last of Simplicius' three possibilities would admit φύσις, or indeed any further level of soul one might care to define which might be regarded as not-soul in so far as is lower that whatever level one might specify as soul in the strict sense – as the Neoplatonists' rational soul is often specified. Whatever it is, it is this informing soul which gives the thing that is informed life by giving the capacity to move: it is moved by another and superior kind." (Blumenthal 1987[b] 97).

[11] 'Simplicius', *In De an.* 4.14-19: "ἀλλὰ πρῶτον μὲν κοινῇ πάσαις τὴν εἰδητικὴν τῶν σωμάτων ἀποδίδωσιν | αἰτίαν, οὐχ ὡς σωμάτων ἀλλ' ὡς ὀργάνων ζωτικῶν. φύσις γὰρ ἡ ὡς σω-|μάτων εἰδητικὴ αἰτία, οὐ ψυχή· ἡ δὲ ὡς ὄργανον ζωτικὸν εἰδοποιοῦσα ἢ | ψυχὴ ἢ μέρος ψυχῆς ἢ οὐκ ἄνευ ψυχῆς. καὶ αὕτη μὲν αἰτία εἰδητική, | καθ' ἣν τὸ εἰδοποιηθὲν ζωτικῶς οἷόν τε κινεῖσθαι. ἑτέρα δὲ ἡ ὑφ' ἧς | κινεῖται·"

The information that we get from this passage is, in short, the following: the soul is the formal cause of living beings, but what makes matter a body, in general, is not soul but 'nature' (for there are natural bodies that are not meant to be living ones) [2*]. Then, Blumenthal says, 'Simplicius' continues to make distinctions, namely, one between two types of soul that corresponds with the distinctions encountered in [1a] and [1b].

However, there is something that it is not clear about that identification: the place and meaning of 'nature' (φύσις) in the psychological context, as understood by the commentator. The term could evoke some Aristotelian doctrine that it is possible to trace back to the *Physics* and the *Metaphysics*. In *Physics* ii.1 Aristotle, in fact, deals with the notion of nature and its scope. In that context, he gave his definition of 'nature' as a certain principle of motion and rest[12], residing in those things that we call substances[13]. However, as he explains it in this customary dialectical way, for some people 'nature' needs to be understood as the primary constituent of such substances, namely, matter (*Phys.* 193a9-13). Aristotle agrees in that in a certain way we rightly call 'nature' to the primary matter of things having such a principle above mentioned; however in another sense, 'nature' is the form and specie (ἡ μορφὴ καὶ τὸ εἶδος τὸ κατὰ τὸν λόγον)[14]. Notice that the same terminological duplication is being used and, again, contemporary readers have understood it as a mere explanatory reiteration[15]. Be as it may be, on what concerns to the philosophical

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[12] Aristotle, *Physica* 192b20-23: "ὡς | οὔσης τῆς φύσεως ἀρχῆς τινὸς καὶ αἰτίας τοῦ κινεῖσθαι καὶ | ἠρεμεῖν ἐν ᾧ ὑπάρχει πρώτως καθ' αὑτὸ καὶ μὴ κατὰ | συμβεβηκός" ([…] nature is a certain principle and cause of being moved and of being at rest in that to which it belongs primarily by itself and not by accident);

[13] Aristotle, *Physica* 192b32-34: "φύσιν δὲ | ἔχει ὅσα τοιαύτην ἔχει ἀρχήν. καὶ ἔστιν πάντα ταῦτα οὐσία· | ὑποκείμενον γάρ τι, καὶ ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ ἐστὶν ἡ φύσις ἀεί." (The things that have such a principle are said to have nature. Each one of these things is a substance, because it is a substrate and nature is always in a substrate).

[14] Aristotle, *Physica* 193a28-31: "ἕνα μὲν οὖν τρόπον οὕτως ἡ φύσις λέγεται, ἡ πρώτη ἑκάστῳ ὑποκειμένη ὕλη τῶν ἐχόντων ἐν αὑτοῖς ἀρχὴν κινήσεως καὶ μεταβολῆς, ἄλλον δὲ τρόπον ἡ μορφὴ καὶ τὸ εἶδος τὸ κατὰ τὸν λόγον." (Then, "nature' is said in this one way, the first material subtract en each thing of which have in their selves the principle of motion and change, but in another way is the structure and form according to the definition).

[15] But ancient commentators do not. Simplicius' commentary on this passage of the *Physics* (*In Phys.* 276.26-27) explains the duplicity of account and shape

anchor that a commentator could be looking at in Aristotelian texts', under a hylomorphic perspective, there is no reason to avoid calling 'nature' both to the material and the formal elements of a given composite. So then, it is obvious that 'nature' is a concept that can mean 'soul' for Aristotle (*cf*. *Met*. 1015a13[16]), and there is textual evidence supporting the fact that a commentator could point in the case of the *De Anima* towards such a direction.

However, 'Simplicius'' aim could be to avoid providing a classic hylomorphic reading in the psychological context. This could be because he sees that direct identification between matter and body is not possible, since the body has something specific that makes it akin to the soul. This is the reason why 'Simplicius' said that this body already has a type of psychic life [1]. Following the line of reasoning stated before, there is an informing-soul that is responsible for the living form that a body needs in order to be commanded by the soul. So, if this is right, this kind of soul cannot be identifiable with the layer of the soul to which Blumenthal points with the term φύσις, for 'nature' may be a formal cause, but it is not a formal cause responsible for the kind of life to which we attribute the soul to be the cause of.

The text seems to point towards our explanation. However, this is the very same text that stirred up Blumenthal's question. For there is a sort of characterization of that type of soul that we called before the informing-soul, but at this moment there is a certain hesitation in calling it a 'soul' [2a]. Now, given that 'Simplicius' gave us possibilities for characterizing the informing-soul as "soul, a part of the

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explaining that "we render the character that is unique to the shape in terms of the surface configuration, the colour and the size" (ἀποδίδομεν τὸ μὲν κατὰ τὴν μορφὴν μόνην τὸ κατὰ τὸ ἐπιπολῆς σχῆμα καὶ χρῶμα καὶ μέγεθος), which seems very similar to 'Simplicius'' terms in the *In DA*. I do not recur to Simplicius' text to avoid suggesting that they are the same author on the grounds of this similarity. On the question of the two Simplicius related to their divergences and agreements, Blumenthal (1996 73).

[16] Aristotle, *Metaphysica* 1015a13-17: "ἐκ δὴ τῶν εἰρημένων ἡ πρώτη | φύσις καὶ κυρίως λεγομένη ἐστὶν ἡ οὐσία ἡ τῶν ἐχόντων | ἀρχὴν κινήσεως ἐν αὑτοῖς ᾗ αὐτά· ἡ γὰρ ὕλη τῷ ταύτης | δεκτικὴ εἶναι λέγεται φύσις, καὶ αἱ γενέσεις καὶ τὸ φύε-|σθαι τῷ ἀπὸ ταύτης εἶναι κινήσεις." (From what have been said, prime nature and in its primary sense is the substance of what have the principle of motion as such in itself. For matter is called nature for being susceptible of receiving such a principle, and becoming and growing for being movements proceeding from it).

soul or something not without soul", Blumenthal explains that the third possibility could admit 'nature' (1987[b] 97).

Nevertheless, this suggestion does not seem very accurate or completely necessary. In the first place, 'nature' is not "something not without soul", for it actually can be equivalent to the formal cause in inanimate objects. Besides, the text on which Blumenthal is based, belongs to a very early and programmatic stage of 'Simplicius' commentary, from which we can deduce that the hesitation can be explained by the introductory purposes of such a passage. Secondly, there is maybe a reason for needing to obscure somehow the concept of 'nature' in the account that is meant to be specific for living-beings. That is to say, as anticipated, that an hylomorphic account looking to explain the relationship between matter and its formal cause need to be adjusted to the context of ensouled beings. That supposes, of course, to incorporate into the account bodies that are "already living" [1], but also to explain how is that the formal cause that is soul comes to be. In order to do so, we need to introduce the other distinctions or 'layers' of the soul that were present in the first text quoted [1a].

The soul, then, exhibits a twofold character corresponding to two kinds of life: on the one hand, there is a soul that is the user of the body (τῆς ψυχῆς ὡς κατὰ τὸ χρώμενον ἱσταμένης) and another that gives it its form (τῆς ὡς ὄργανον τὸ σῶμα καὶ ὡς ζωτικῶς κινούμενον εἰδοποιούσης). The theory could be alien to Aristotle, but it does not seem to be an entirely strange or ludicrous interpretation. In fact, 'Simplicius' himself says that this distinction is required in the passage in order to explain the necessity of a particular and very special body in the case of ensouled beings. But the fact that the commentator says that the distinction is needed does not mean that he is introducing it by force. It seems that he has already found in the Aristotelian text something that could justify it or evoke it, and he is merely performing a sort of terminological "translation" totally licit in dialectical contexts[17]: for the user-soul could stand for εἶδος, and the informing-soul for μορφή.

Furthermore, that the user-soul stands for εἶδος seems to be indicated by the very hermeneutical strategies that Aristotle has employed in the

[17] Aristotle himself performs some of these "terminological" translations in his criticisms to ancient opinions. One of the most celebrated ones was effectuated upon Democritus theories in the *Metaphysics* (983b12). On this point, see Sánchez (2016 149).

course of the criticism of chapter iii. In the frame of the refutation of the conception that made of the soul a self-moving entity, he employed the analogy (i) of the sailor and the boat (*DA* 406a4-11). The function of that analogy is to provide a tool in order to analyze the opinion that the soul is a self-moving entity in the same terms of the holder of such a theory, that is, by describing the soul-body relationship in terms of user-instrument[18]. Besides, he also refers back to a second analogy (ii), which follows the same principle, but specifies more by pointing to the "technical" aspect of the relation when using the examples of carpentry and music (*DA* 407b24-27).

Although the relationship of εἶδος with the user-soul seems more familiar and authorized on the basis of the analogies, the case of μορφή is not less interesting. In the first place, it seems that this term required a "translation" for the commentator. As a matter of fact, it is a word that we may suppose that he consciously avoids or is not natural for him to use, given the very few occurrences in his vocabulary. In fact, when there is a question of applying the exegesis to μορφή, it seems that 'Simplicius' prefers the word σχήμα (*In De an.* 52.18). So it seems that the Aristotelian word, in itself, looks odd to the commentator or entails some oddness. The difficulty that such a term may be hiding has to do with the challenge that Aristotle's own "psychological hylomorphism" supposes for the commentator. As already seen, for a soul to inform a body, that body must already be alive (must already be informed somehow). Maybe, then, the term μορφή is philosophically too compromised for being useful in a psychological context with exegetical aims. That is why it is my belief that there was a deliberate attempt for eliminating 'nature' (φύσις) as a formal cause, which in a plain hylomorphic context adjoins with μορφή. In a psychological context, though, the story needs to be different; this seems to be also the reason to endorse that the concept replacing μορφή is not 'nature', but a type or layer of the soul. This kind of soul must be the real target of this analysis, for the soul is responsible for the body's organization that allows it to be the subject of the soul's control [1], that is, the one that informs it as a tool, and thus make of the body an appropriate instrument for the other soul to act upon.

[18] On the Platonic background of the sailor-ship analogy with the soul, see Olshewsky (1976 396).

This last issue adds a further point to the inquiry for the "community" of soul and body, which is what is the relationship between εἶδος and μορφή, or between their correlate 'souls'. At this very moment, the only thing that we have from the commentator is that this relationship is one of resemblance between the informing-soul and the user-soul [1b]; a few lines further, this relation of resemblance is going to be qualified as a "derived likeness" (ὁμοιότητα ἐκβεβηκυῖαν) or "descended likeness" (ὁμοιότητα ὑποβᾶσαν)[19]. If this reading is right, then, it is not just that the εἶδος/μορφή couple introduces a slight terminological hue that the commentator is going to exploit; it is more that the kinds of soul to which those terms refer are different, even if they remain linked under the description of what they produce, namely, life[20].

3

Until now, we have just talked about the preliminary passages to the introduction of the soul-harmony opinion. However, as it was stated before, the soul-harmony opinion is going to be analyzed under a rubric that, at least for modern interpreters, belongs to a different discussion. So, it is mandatory to disclose how the soul-harmony theory is connected with the analysis of chapter 3, and to what purpose it serves.

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[19] 'Simplicius', *In De an*. 52.2-7: "καί μοι δοκεῖ | διὰ τοῦ θεωρήματος ἀξιοῦν καθ' ὁμοιότητα τὴν πρὸς τὸ χρώμενον ἀφο-|ρίζειν τὸ ὄργανον, ἀλλ' ὁμοιότητα ἐκβεβηκυῖαν. τὸ γὰρ ἔμψυχον τῇ ψυχῇ | ἐκβεβηκότως ὅμοιον, οὐ κατ' αὐτὴν τὴν κινοῦσαν χαρακτηριζόμενον ψυχήν, | ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν ἐκεῖθεν μὲν ὑποβᾶσαν τῷ μὴ κινητικὴν ἔτι ἀλλὰ τοῦ κι-|νουμένου εἶναι ὁριστικήν, καθ' ὁμοιότητα δὲ ὑποβᾶσαν·" (He seems to me, by this insight, to require that the tool be determined by its likeness to its user, but a derivate likeness. For the animate is like the soul derivatively, and has a character not like that of the soul that changes it, but like that which has descended from it by being no longer an originator of change but as determining the thing changed, and it is a descended likeness).

[20] This is a subject that we are not going to be able to explore, even if it is actually the real reason of the whole procedure 'Simplicius' is performing. The reason is going to be found in the second book, in the frame of the discussion on Aristotle's *definitions* of the soul and the doctrine of the two *entelechiai*, as was correctly pointed by Blumenthal (1976 68). Nevertheless, the present analysis just focuses on understanding how 'Simplicius' built up for those passages of Book II a hermeneutical device that is being anticipated from this very moment, in order to give an explanation of how the elements that seem strange or alien to the Aristotelian *De Anima* obey to a conscious plan.

Aristotle, as stated before, introduces the soul-harmony opinion under the discussion of one of the last sentences of chapter 3, and he does so establishing a certain continuity between the discussions:

> [3] Following on this, he proves also that the soul is not a harmony of the parts of the body, neither that which gives its character to that which is changed vitally nor, still less, that which originates change. [3a] For certainly the body that is to receive life must be completely harmonized, and harmonized to chime in with the life that enters it, in order to be suitable for its participation in that life. [3b] But that which is suitable for participation differs completely from what is participated, and is a support as matter to form and of form both as what determines the instrument and also that which make use of it. [3*] As an illustration, a certain joining together of timbers is suitable for the shape of the ship, but it is not the same as the shape, and, still less, as seamanship. [3[1]] Nor, then is the life of the soul the joining together of the bodily elements, whether the mixture of qualities or the plan of the interrelation of the parts joined or mixed, but they, like matter, stand beneath that which determines the instrument.[21]

In this passage we find, properly speaking, the commentary on the soul-harmony theory. However, we can notice from the very beginning that the analysis of this opinion depends on the first passage quoted, at least in light of two elements: first, the soul-types theory, and second, the reference to the 'life' of the soul. Both of them will continue to be present as the ultimate target of the investigation [3a].

That sentence [3a] is probably the one stating in a most clear way the connection between the soul-harmony opinion and the εἶδος/μορφή

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[21] 'Simplicius', *In De an.* 52.10-22: "ἀκολούθως δὴ οὖν | τούτοις, ὅτι μηδὲ ἁρμονία τῶν τοῦ σώματος μορίων ἐστὶ δείκνυσι, μήτε | ὡς ζωτικῶς κινουμένου χαρακτηριστική, μήτε ἔτι μᾶλλον ἡ κινοῦσα. δεῖ | μὲν γὰρ ἡρμόσθαι πάντως τὸ δεκτικὸν τῆς ζωῆς σῶμα, καὶ συμφώνως ἠρ-|μόσθαι πρὸς τὴν ἐγγινομένην ζωήν, ἵνα ἐπιτήδειον ᾖ πρὸς τὴν ταύτης μέ-|θεξιν· διαφέρει δὲ πάντως τὸ πρὸς μετοχὴν ἐπιτήδειον τοῦ μετεχομένου, | καὶ ὡς ὕλη πρὸς εἶδος ὑπέστρωται καὶ πρὸς εἶδος τὸ μὲν ὡς πρὸς ὀργάνου | ὁριστικόν, τὸ δὲ ὡς πρὸς χρώμενον· οἷον ἡ τοία τῶν ξύλων σύνθεσις ἐπι-|τηδεία μὲν πρὸς τὸ σχῆμα τῆς νεώς, οὐχ ἡ αὐτὴ δὲ τῷ σχήματι οὐδὲ | ἔτι μᾶλλον τῇ κυβερνητικῇ. οὔτε ἡ σύνθεσις τοίνυν τῶν σωματικῶν στοι-|χείων ἢ ἡ τῶν ποιοτήτων κρᾶσις ἢ ὁ πρὸς ἄλληλα τῶν συντιθεμένων ἢ | κιρνωμένων λόγος ἐστὶν ἡ ψυχικὴ ζωή, ἀλλ' ὡς ὕλη ὑπέστρωται τῇ τοῦ | ὀργάνου ὁριστικῇ."

distinction. First of all, the opinion here presented is not accurate, for the soul cannot be a harmony. Certainly, the fact that the body hosting a soul must be completely 'harmonized' does not imply it being a harmony. That means that, if the confusion between harmony and soul is possible, it has to be explained beyond of what Aristotle explicitly stated in the *De Anima's* text. So, which are the elements that the discussion of this theory could contribute to the exegetical task of the commentator?

The bulk of the Aristotelian criticism addressed to the soul-harmony opinion is based on a linguistic feature (*DA* 408a5-18). For 'harmony' is said in two ways: the most proper sense, synthesis or combination (σύνθεσις, also κρᾶσις), names the perfect fit of the components or parts in a body; the other sense is used to designate the proportion that governs the mixture of those parts (λόγος). Both of them were taken to be candidates to explain the soul, the εἶδος of a body. The purpose of the distinction is to show that no matter what sense is used or understood, soul cannot be an harmony: neither the latter, for there are many proportions governing the constitution of parts in a body; the concept is too large to denote the specific operation of the soul, for its use could entail that it would be many souls in one body (*DA* 408a13). But the former sense does not fit either, because the multiple combinations of the body are useless to explain the psychic faculties: it will entail that intellection is a sort of epiphenomenon of the material constitution of the body (*DA* 408a11). In sum, in both of the cases, the outcome is the same, for the soul could not be explained in terms of any harmony whatsoever, given that the scope of the concept of harmony covers better the body, not the soul. Or at least, that is Aristotle's diagnosis of the scope that such a theory could have.

Even if 'Simplicius' proves to be aware of those distinctions employed to refute the soul-harmony opinion, he gave them a discrete importance[22]. This could be indicative that the commentator does not completely agree with Aristotle in the reasons why that opinion is misleading. In fact, 'Simplicius' seems to prefer to work on the soul-

[22] 'Simplicius', *In De an.* 54.31-33: "<ἐντεῦθεν δὲ καὶ τὸν τῶν μεμιγμένων λόγον> | ἐκ τῆς κυρίως εἰρημένης συνθέσεως καὶ τὴν κατὰ λόγον μῖξίν τε καὶ | κρᾶσιν σύνθεσιν καλοῦμεν κοινότερον." (Derivatively from strict fitting together, we more colloquially call fitting together the ratio of the mixed constituents and their proportional mixing and blending).

harmony opinion diluting the Aristotelian distinctions[23] in the concept of 'suitability' (ἐπιτηδειότης)[24]:

> [4] So why, then, is the opinion that makes the soul a harmony plausible to many? [4a] Because as the form suddenly supervenes on the immediate matter as it gains a perfect suitability, it appears to be the same thing as the suitability (ἐπειδὴ τῇ προσεχεῖ ὕλῃ τελείαν ἀπολαβούσῃ τὴν ἐπιτηδειότητα ἀθρόως ἐπιγινόμενον τὸ εἶδος ὡς ταὐτὸν ὂν ἐκείνῃ φαντάζεται). [4a*] In the same way the shape of the ship seems to be in no way different from such and such a fitting together of the timbers. [4b] Also the majority does not distinguish the soul that uses it as an instrument from the life that gives the instrument its form as an instrument.[25]

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[23] The substitution of the terms does not seem to be systematic, though. In most of the cases the concept is accompanied with that of 'harmony', but also with those of 'arrangement' (θέσις), 'fitting together' (σύνθεσις), or even 'outward appearance' (ἔμφασις).

[24] The concept of 'suitability' (ἐπιτηδειότης) is still a very little explored terrain. Sambursky opened the debate, by claiing that the concept of ἐπιτηδειότης started to be used in the second century in a technical way to refer the sufficient conditions for a potentiality to be actualized (1962 106). That idea was further expanded in three different technical usages by Dodds (1963 344). Sambursky proposal and consequently Dodds' distinctions were criticized by Todd, who does not accept a technical usage of the concept, even if he gives to the concept the importance and relevance that it seems to have (1972). From that point, several scholars have fed the discussion by exploring the value of the concept in different Neoplatonic authors (for a reconstruction of the polemic, see Hauer 2016 65). The role of 'Simplicius' is very discrete in this discussion, however. That may be due to the controversial authorship of the commentary in the *De Anima*. A proof of that is that one of the most recent and interesting papers exploring the concept in Simplicius, avoids dealing with the *De Anima* for that very reason (Hauer 2016 73 n. 24). I will not take position in this debate, first of all, because my analysis is limited to a very specific passage where the concept is embedded. Nevertheless, I think this is a matter worthy of attention, considering the echoes of the passage of my analysis with the definitional attempts of the *De Anima* II, as Blumenthal correctly points (1976 68).

[25] 'Simplicius', *In De an*. 52.22-27: "διὰ τί οὖν πιθανὴ τοῖς πολλοῖς ἡ ἁρμονίαν τὴν ψυχὴν | τιθεμένη δόξα; ἐπειδὴ τῇ προσεχεῖ ὕλῃ τελείαν ἀπολαβούσῃ τὴν ἐπιτη-|δειότητα ἀθρόως ἐπιγινόμενον τὸ εἶδος ὡς ταὐτὸν ὂν ἐκείνῃ φαντάζεται | (οὕτω γοῦν τὸ σχῆμα τῆς νεὼς οὐδέν τι διαφέρειν δοκεῖ τῆς τῶν ξύλων | τοιᾶσδε ἁρμονίας), καὶ ἐπειδὴ οὐ διακρίνουσιν οἱ πολλοὶ τὴν ὡς ὀργάνῳ | χρωμένην τῆς τὸ ὄργανον ὡς ὄργανον εἰδοποιούσης ζωῆς·"

So, where Aristotle sees a distinction important to perform the refutation, 'Simplicius' only finds semantics: the distinction that matters is stated before, and the soul-harmony opinion is just a mistaken way of seeing it. The fact that the ambiguity of the term 'harmony' is not exploited by 'Simplicius' does not mean that the Aristotelian hermeneutical device is completely useless. Indeed, the commentator is actually exploiting the dialectical examination on the soul-harmony theory, together with the εἶδος/μορφή passage, and the Aristotelian analogies. However, he is using all of these elements differently. Then, 'Simplicius' provides an explanation of why some people considered the soul-harmony theory as plausible in his own terms, in order to introduce his solution for the vexed question of the community between soul and body.

As a matter of fact, despite the rejection of the soul-harmony opinion, the basic idea behind the concept of harmony seems to be necessary for the study of the *De Anima*, and it seems to be equally needed for the philosophical aim of the commentary. This is so because the "community" between the soul and the body can only occur if the body is suitable to receive the soul, which was stated as the condition for the body of "already being alive". This "community", at the end, is a harmonization of body and soul, which is completely different to state that one of the components is a harmony. The subtlety of this distinction, together with the twofold character of the soul, may give room to confusion. That is why, from the analogy, it appears that is somehow less likely to take the harmony to be the user-soul. As a matter of fact, what usually happens is that the informing-soul, the shape, is taken as "what is suitable for participation" [3b]. Nevertheless, even if taking the informing-soul as identical to the body is an error, there is an important relationship between those elements. At least, it seems to be exactly what is stated when 'Simplicius' says that harmony "stands beneath that which determines the instrument" [3[1]].

The confirmation of this reading may be a little further in the text. For, after this, it is question of giving one of the reasons why the soul-harmony opinion is plausible, namely, the fact that when the soul leaves the body, the cadaver, looses not only its life, but also its 'harmony':

> [5a] The ratio of the mixture contributes to the presence of the soul, for there must be a suitable nature to receive it (ἐπιτηδείαν γὰρ εἶναι δεῖ τὴν ὑποδεξομένην φύσιν), [5b] but this is not the

> soul. [5] But, since the suitability of the matter comes from the soul (ἐπεὶ δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ ἡ ἐν τῇ ὕλῃ ἐπιτηδειότης), being its outward appearance (ἔμφασις), in accordance with which exists the ratio of the mixture (καθ' ἣν ὁ τῆς μίξεως λόγος), it is reasonable that when it departs both the outward appearance and the ratio of the mixture should perish.[26]

The diagnosis is clear. People do not make the distinction between the two types of soul and, given that, the informing-soul can be easily confused with the suitability of the body (a cause with its effect); consequently they say that this suitability is to be identified with the whole of the soul. It is not that the soul is an epiphenomenon of the bodily constitution, but rather that the bodily constitution is a reflection of the informing-soul organizing power. A pair of elements distinguished by Aristotle was taken in exchange of another pair of elements that are not equivalent to the first ones. This is the reason why the soul-harmony opinion needs to be rejected, because a harmony cannot be identified with any of the types of soul: nor with the user-soul at all, neither with the informing soul. This is so, because the soul-harmony opinion is based on the idea of a certain material arrangement or, better, certain suitability. And it happens that suitability corresponds, not with the cause of having a given aspect, but with the outward appearance of a being (ἔμφασις).

The occurrence of this term, ἔμφασις, is anything but a lexical preciosity. In fact it is echoing of an old explanation for the confusion of the informing-soul with 'suitability': the fact that we think that the form supervenes on the matter as it is informed [4a]. That idea is not also brought into the discussion from the soul-harmony theory. It is also possible to reach that interpretation from a hylomorphic account, because of the vicinity of this concept with that of μορφή.

The vicinity, however, is not an identity. And that is exactly why the basic concept of φύσις must be excluded from the equation [2*], both by replacing it by a type of form that does not compromise its condition of source of psychic activities, and by characterizing its function not as 'informing' *tout-court*, but as giving life. The

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[26] 'Simplicius', *In De an.* 56.22-26: "καὶ συντελεῖ μὲν ὁ λόγος τῆς μίξεως πρὸς τὴν | τῆς ψυχῆς παρουσίαν (ἐπιτηδείαν γὰρ εἶναι δεῖ τὴν ὑποδεξομένην φύσιν), | οὐκ αὐτὸς δέ ἐστιν ἡ ψυχή. ἐπεὶ δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ ἡ ἐν τῇ ὕλῃ | ἐπιτηδειότης, ἔμφασις οὖσα ἐκείνης, καθ' ἣν ὁ τῆς μίξεως λόγος, εἰκότως | ἀπολειπούσης καὶ ἡ ἔμφασις καὶ ὁ τῆς μίξεως φθείρεται λόγος."

informing-soul, then, which we argued could be extracted from 'Simplicius' reading of μορφή, is what gives the body its organic form and, consequently, provides the prior animation required for the user-soul to perform their activities.

The commentator's task here has also been read as an exhibition of the harmonization project that Neoplatonics writers are supposed to have as a main purpose. This case, for example, can be considered one of these attempts of reconciliation of Aristotle's hylomorphism with Platonic dualism (Blumenthal 1996 11). Even if this could be true, nevertheless, what should be taken in account is that it does not seem that the objective of the commentator was to introduce by force his own doctrine. It appears that what his aim is to avoid a plain hylomorphic reading to the pscychological context. The reasons could be easily seen, for a basic hylomorphic reading could lead to a materialistic conception of the soul, or an extreme physicalism, which is something of which Aristotle was aware. This is, in fact, the motivation for Aristotle to criticize the soul-harmony theory. But somehow, some of Aristotle's followers opted for that position he was trying to avoid[27], and 'Simplicius' is aware of that. His commentary, then, is not just a Neoplatonization of Aristotle or a reconciliation of the *De Anima* with Plato *tout court*. It seems that 'Simplicius' is playing on Aristotle's side by trying to interpret the 'community' of body and soul in a way that avoids physicalism.

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[27] The physicalists interpretations of Aristotle's psychology are supposed to be held by Strato, Andronicus and Alexander. For this idea in the peripatetic tradition, see Blumenthal (1996 11).

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