What is Peculiar to Aristotle’s and Plato’s Psychologies?
What is Common to Them Both?

I.
Aristotle opens his study of the soul with much fanfare (de Anima I.1, 402a1-4):

Holding knowledge of any kind to be fine and honourable, still one kind of it may be more so than another, either by reason of its precision or because it concerns superior and more wonderful things; on both accounts we should reasonably set in first rank the study of the soul.

While these lines may be familiar, it is not often remarked how unusual they are – and how out of place. It is unusual for Aristotle to open a treatise with general praise for the work to be done, especially with such high praise. The terms of praise he chooses are unusual; and the soul does not seem obviously the right occasion for highest praise.

These opening words are not at all, as Hamlyn would have it, ‘a typical Aristotelian beginning’; nor in what follows is ‘the plan of the de Anima’, as Ross claims, set out as an especially ‘clear and well-thought-out one’. The first sentence, in fact, betrays already a notably unAristotelian feature. In it, we see Aristotle distinguishing kinds of knowledge – not just distinguishing them, but in fact ranking them – according to criteria of ‘precision’ (ἀκρίβεια), and superiority and greater wonderfulness of its objects (βελτιόνων τε καὶ θαυμασιωτέρων), and ending up with knowledge of the soul on top. This is no ordinary division and ranking, just as it is no ordinary praise. Aristotle may be, as Hicks remarks ‘fond of arranging kinds of knowledge in a scale of increasing dignity or intrinsic worth’; but when we turn to the many passages Hicks cites, we see that Aristotle usually divides kinds of knowledge into, say, theoretical, practical and productive (e.g. Metaphysics 1025b8). One exception to this is Topics VIII.1, 157a8, where Aristotle uses the division found in the de Anima to illustrate distinctions which are merely ornamental, and unnecessary.

These criteria here, and their conclusion – that psychology, and not metaphysics or ethics, is the finest study – are in fact so anomalous that Alexander wanted to excise the phrase entirely. Hicks conjectures this may be because this claim for the objects of psychological study would put them, and the science, above metaphysics, contrary to e.g. Nicomachean Ethics VI.7 (1141a20 ff.), where wisdom, the ‘most precise of knowledges’ (ἡ ἀκριβεστάτη ἄντων ἐπιστημῶν, 1141a16) must be ‘knowledge of the finest objects’ (ἐπιστήμη τῶν τιμιωτάτων, 1141a19):

For it would be strange to think that the art of politics, or φρονήσις, is the best knowledge, since man is not the best thing in the world... But if the argument be that man is the best of the animals, this makes no difference; for there are other things much more divine in their...


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1 He calls the first chapter ‘a typical Aristotelian beginning, setting out the importance of an inquiry into the nature of the soul. Such an inquiry is, in effect, a branch of biology....’ (D. W. Hamlyn, Aristotle: de Anima Books II and III. Translation and Commentary (Oxford 1968) 77; note on 402a1ff.)
3 R. D. Hicks, Aristotle, de Anima. Text, Translation and Commentary (Cambridge 1907) 174
4 ‘Ornament is attained by induction and distinction of things closely akin... As for distinction, an instance of the kind of thing meant is the distinction of one form of knowledge as better than another by being either more precise, or concerned with better objects; or the distinction of sciences into speculative, practical, and productive. For everything of this kind lends additional ornament to the argument, though there is no necessity to say them, so far as the conclusion goes.’
5 ‘μᾶλλον δ’ ἐτέρας ἢ κατ’ ἀκρίβειαν ἢ τῶν βελτιώνων τε καὶ θαυμασιωτέρων εἶναι’ is the objectionable text (according to Hicks, de Anima, 173).
nature even than man, e.g., most conspicuously, the bodies of which the heavens are framed. From what has been said it is plain, then, that σοφία is ἐπιστήμη combined with νοῦς, of things that are highest by nature (τιμιωτάτον τῇ φύσει).

(EN 1141a20, a34-b4; trans. Ross)

In the face of such declarations of what the most precise knowledge of the finest objects is, Hicks concludes that ‘the only conceivable ground on which absolutely first rank can be claimed for psychology is the doctrine of νοῦς χωρίστος 430a17, but I cannot see that A. makes the claim.’ Certainly it does not seem as if disembodied νοῦς is uppermost in Aristotle’s mind, when he commends to us the study of the psyche. For he follows his high praise for psychology almost immediately with the explanation that psychology ‘makes a great contribution to truth as a whole, and especially to the study of nature; for the soul is as it were the first principle of animal life’ (402a6). It is, then, first principles of animal life which are being honoured as the wondrous objects in virtue of which psychology is a finer, more honourable sort of knowledge than any other.

In the opening laudatory remarks, ‘precision’ is particularly awkward. While Ross did not agree with the excision of the clause as a whole, he clearly faced difficulties in understanding what it would mean for psychology to be more precise than other studies, and why that would make it superior. In his introduction to his edition of the de Anima, Ross says that ‘it is not very certain what the reference to ἀκρίβεια means, but it probably means, not that this study attains greater accuracy than most others, but that it demands it’; he offers rather a different explanation of precision in his notes: ‘it is not very clear why A. assigns a high degree of ἀκρίβεια to psychology; Philoponus is probably right in thinking that it is because soul is a pure form, not a complex of form and matter.’

The uncertainty is not helped by the fact that Aristotle has a clearly formulated definition of what makes a science ‘precise’, and mathematics, as he sees, fits that definition. According to the Posterior Analytics,

‘One science is more precise than another and prior to it both if it is at the same time of the fact and of the reason why and not of the fact separately from the science of the reason why; and if it is not said of an underlying subject and the other is said of an underlying subject (e.g. arithmetic and harmonics); and if it depends on fewer items and the other on an additional posit (e.g. arithmetic and geometry).’ (Anal. Po. I.27, 87a31)

And at de Caelo III.7, 306a27 it is mathematics that is styled αἱ ἀκριβέσταται ἐπιστήμαι.

Given where the study of soul leads in Book III – that is, to Aristotle’s striking treatment of intellect in Chapters 4 and 5 – perhaps we should not be so quick to dismiss that psychology is, in a way, the finest field of knowledge; Aristotle does not need here fully to unfold his conception of intellectual soul in order for him to have that in mind when heaping praise on the study of psychology, although the immediate reference to animal life is still misleading. But even granting that possibility to explain how ‘greater wonderfulness of objects’ justifies psychology, it is difficult to see any way in which the science is going to be more precise, in Aristotle’s sense.

But the particular language used in Aristotle’s laudatory opening, and his motivation for praise, might reflect concerns that are more dialogical than doctrinal. Consider Plato’s criteria for classifying kinds of knowledge, and then elevating the highest sort from the rest in the Philebus:

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6 Hicks, de Anima, 176
7 Ross, de Anima, 14
8 Ross, de Anima, 165
9 If so, it is also worth noting that when Aristotle uses τιμίων, at Metaphysics 1074b21, it is to characterize νοῦς.
'What I want to discover at present was not which τέχνη or which ἐπιστήμη differs by being the greatest [μεγίστη] or best [ἀρίστη] or most beneficial [πλεῖστα ὑφελούσα] to us, but which finds out clarity [σαφὲς] and precision [ἀκριβὲς] and most truthfulness [ἀληθέστατον]' (Philebus 58b5-c3)

This is the end of a longer exercise in ranking knowledges, where the precision of various disciplines has been weighed. At 56b6, the use of measures grant building a greater accuracy (ἀκρίβειαν) than other crafts, and then ἀκρίβεια becomes the fault-line along which two sorts of skills are distinguished (Philebus 56c5; ἀκριβεστάτας, 56c8); it acts similarly to discriminate applied from theoretical sciences (ἀκριβεστάτας, Philebus 57c3; ἀκριβεία, 57d1).

Already in the consideration of what made theoretical arithmetic and geometry different from their applied varieties, Socrates appeals to the different sorts of objects they deal with. In the conclusion of the ranking of kinds of knowledge, he explicitly says that better objects entail a better sort of knowledge.

'Anyone with any share of reason at all would consider the discipline concerned with being and with what is really and forever in every way eternally self-same by far the truest of all kinds of knowledge' (Philebus 58a2-5).

While Plato does not say that the wonderfulness of objects grounds the quality of their study, he does specify special objects of study than which all others are inferior:

'[So] that we find fixity, purity, truth and what we have called perfect clarity either in those things that are always, unchanged, unaltered and free of all admixture, or in what is most akin to them; everything else must be called inferior and of secondary importance.' (Philebus 59a5-c6)

If Aristotle has this Philebus passage in mind, his declaration that all knowledge is valuable (though some more so than others); his unusual division of knowledges including the peculiar choice of criteria for ranking them; and in particular his unAristotelian use of 'precision', are not so out of place and unmotivated. His unusually hyperbolic praise has a specific background to which it is responding – namely, Socrates' hyperbolic praise of dialectic as the finest imaginable intellectual discipline.

It might seem strange, on the face of it, to claim that the Philebus is on Aristotle's mind when he turns to discussing the soul. Plato's dialogue concerns the human good; and that is a topic which Aristotle handles in his Ethics, not in his psychology. On reflection, however, it is not so surprising that Aristotle should, here in the de Anima, have the Philebus in view as an agenda-setting interlocutor. For, while the explicit trope of the Philebus is the competition between pleasure and knowledge for superior claim in making a life good, the contest itself, as it turns out, involves extensive analysis of the soul, its powers and its affects – so that it ends up being in fact one of Plato's richest explorations of moral psychology. Aristotle, choosing ἀκριβεία as his starting point, in the context of ranking knowledge according to the worth of its object, acknowledges the significance of the Philebus's treatment of knowledge and pleasure for any account of the soul.

If Aristotle does have the Philebus in mind in framing the opening chapter of his de Anima,

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10 Compare Socrates' allowance, after his elaborate ranking, that all knowledges may fit into a good life; even the inferior ones are worth having (Philebus 63c-d).

11 'The power of dialectic would repudiate us if we put any other knowledge ahead of her,' says Socrates (Philebus 57e5-6). Such an ἐπιστήμη 'is by its nature a capacity in our soul to love the truth and to do everything for its sake... it is most likely to possess purity of mind and reason' (Philebus 58d5-10).
this is not of course because he intends simply to endorse Plato’s views on the soul. But neither are his intentions wholly negative. In particular, we should not suppose that Aristotle’s primary aim in engaging with Platonic psychology is to reject Platonic dualism. His concerns, as I shall try to show, lie elsewhere.

The assumption that dualism is at issue can be a difficult one to shake. Christopher Shields, for example, remarks on this: ‘Most commentators presume that Aristotle’s hylomorphism must amount to some form of materialism since it is precisely calculated to avoid Platonic dualism and explicitly affirms the non-separability of soul and body (dA 413a3-b6). A clear example of this sort of reasoning is provided by Barnes (1971–2/1979)...’ But while suggesting that such presumptions are not warranted, Shields does not quite escape them himself. Thus he remarks shortly afterwards: ‘In light of the anti-Platonic sentiment abundant in Aristotle’s philosophy of mind, Charles is surely justified in seeking to reduce hylomorphism to a form of materialism.’

In fact, on the question of dualism, the final views of the two philosophers on this matter are not so widely divergent as it may at first seem. Both agree that the finest νοῦς or intelligence will be disembodied; and both agree to the principle that the finest instance of a thing is also indicative of what that thing really or most truly is. This means they also agree that intelligence as such does not require a body for its characteristic activity. Both Plato and Aristotle agree that this finest sort of intellect is immortal, while we composite humans are not. And they agree that in spite of this we, in some sense, share in such divine intellect, and that it is the finest thing in us.

But the ‘in some sense’ is telling – telling, in this case, of subtle but perhaps significant disagreements on the details. Exactly how we have a share in the finest sort of intellect, what this means, and what its implications are, is not an easy story to tell. This is related to the separability question Aristotle raises in De Anima I.1, but not in the way we might suppose. As we shall see, the sort of phenomena Aristotle points to as requiring body are not phenomena that Plato asserts can occur absolutely without body – but what the two mean by ‘the soul alone’ or ‘the soul by itself’ may be somewhat different. Their disagreement, that is, is over what it means for something to be ‘of the soul’, as much as it is over which things, if any, might belong to the soul. Rather than simply

12 Stephen Menn, in ‘Aristotle’s Definition of Soul and the Programme of the De Anima’ (Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy XXII (2002) 83–139) argues against this assumption directly: whether soul is something different from body, and a different kind of thing, is not the point. According to Menn, Aristotle is concerned rather to argue against an ‘inter-actionist’ (91) model of body and soul, in particular in De Anima I arguing against Plato’s conception of the soul as in motion (92).
13 Shields in Hamlyn, de Anima, 161; see also 158.
14 Shields in Hamlyn, de Anima, 164; see also 165–166.
15 Thus I think Hicks is nearer the mark: ‘With the conscious or half-conscious materialism of his predecessors Aristotle has no more sympathy than Plato and, as compared with this point of agreement, the differences between them count for little, however much Aristotle may exaggerate them.’ (Hicks, de Anima, xxxvi)
16 In addition to the paradigm instance of νοῦς being without matter in Metaphysics XII, even νοῦς as it manifest in human beings does not use the body, or any part of it, as its organ. Sarah Broadie’s discussion in ‘Nous and Nature in De Anima III’ (Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy 12 (1996) 163–76 (167)) is instructive. She argues, however, that Aristotle is interested in distinctively human νοῦς, which – for all that it has, and can have, no organ – is inseparable from the material conditions of the rest of human life.
17 For a nearby expression of Aristotle’s commitment: ‘The case of mind is different; it seems to be an independent substance implanted within the soul and to be incapable of being destroyed.... mind is, no doubt, something more divine and impassible.’ (de Anima I.4, 408b18–19, b29)
18 Or perhaps cannot even be coherently told: See Sarah Broadie’s pessimistic conclusions about Aristotle’s attempts to reconcile the non-naturalness of the highest intellect, and our having a share in this with a naturalistic account of human beings (‘Nous and Nature in De Anima III’).
rejecting Plato's account, Aristotle reorders the terms of the discussion of human psychology introduced by Plato, in part to avoid what he perhaps takes to be inevitable consequences of Plato's own exposition of mental phenomena such as desire. These consequences are not centrally a matter of separability of soul, but of joyless gods and rational animals. In general, in the first chapter of the *de Anima*, I shall argue, Aristotle is wrestling with Plato over the place and extent of intellect, particularly as Plato describes it in the *Philebus*.

II. One of the clearest places we encounter this concern with Plato's account of the place and extent of intelligence is not actually a reference to the *Philebus*, but rather to the *Timaeus*, to which the *Philebus* is in many ways closely related. At 402b3-5, Aristotle makes a startling claim in passing that 'Those speaking about and investigating the soul up to now seem to have examined only human soul.' What is surprising about this sweeping claim is that Plato rather unforgettably describes the character of various animal souls in the *Timaeus*, where he grants that even plants have a kind of soul (*Timaeus* 76e-77c). Indeed Alexander insists that it is precisely the *Timaeus* that Aristotle has in his sights here.

One might try to resist this. Surely Aristotle's claim – that his predecessors in the examination of soul had confined themselves merely to human soul – could not have been meant to include Plato. For it is one of the prominent features of Timaeus's tale that different sorts of animals are descended from different sorts of humans, each according to the changes effected in the soul by the life that had been led. Not only animal souls, but their respective characters are vividly described and distinguished. For example (and there are several such passages):

Land animals in the wild, moreover, came from men who had no use for philosophy and who made no study of the universe whatsoever, because they no longer made use of the revolutions in their heads but instead followed the lead of the parts of the soul that reside in the chest. As a consequence of these ways of theirs, they carried their forelimbs and their heads dragging towards the ground, like towards like. (*Timaeus* 91e2-9)

This looks like what could credibly be described as giving a Platonic version of 'a definition for each different one, as we do for horse, dog, man, god' (*de Anima* 402b6-7) – the very task Aristotle says his predecessors have left undone by their exclusive focus on human soul. It is picks out what makes each creature the distinctive creature it is – causally, to be sure, but also thereby identifying its distinguishing characteristics and activities. How, in the face of this, could Aristotle imply Plato was unconcerned with various types of soul? He must mean 'everyone else, except Plato'. And yet it is inconceivable that such a prominent exception to Aristotle's broad claim should have been left unmentioned – especially since it is only shortly afterwards, in *de Anima* II.2, that Aristotle is

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19 It may thus be seen as a part of the larger critique, by Aristotle in *De Anima* I, of Plato's conception of soul, as described by Menn, in 'Aristotle's Definition of Soul'.

20 Both Ross and Hicks tend in this direction: Ross, *de Anima*, 167, νῦν...ἐπισκοπεῖν 'The reference may be, as Alex. ap. Philop. 36.15 and Simpl. 12.31 think, to the *Timaeus*. But in fact Plato takes account of the lower animals (*Timaeus* 91d6-92c9), and of plants (*Timaeus* 76e7-77c5), and the reference is more probably to other members of the Academy.' And Hicks, *de Anima*, 184, 'Obviously the solution of the present problem presupposes a comparative study of all species of animals and (cf. 411b27 sq.) plants. For A.'s own procedure the precept given 414b32 is ὡστε καθ’ ἕκαστον ζητητέον, τίς ἐκάστου ψυχή, οἷον τίς φυτοῦ καὶ τίς ἄνθρωπος καὶ θηρίου... Alex. Aphr. apud Philop. 36.13 and Simpl. 12.31 sqq. think the criticism is aimed at Plato, especially in the *Timaeus*, where, however, the soul even of the plant is distinctly recognized (77a, b), and everything which partakes of life is declared to be a ζῷον and to have some sort of soul.'

21 See Ross, *de Anima*, 167, quoted in the preceding note.
explicitly concerned with the *Timaeus* (*De Anima* I.2, 404b16).

Since the *Timaeus* offers such an outstanding *prima facie* exception to Aristotle’s sweeping claim, we might well suppose with Alexander that it is in fact precisely the *Timaeus* above all that Aristotle has in mind here. Aristotle’s passing comment then becomes pointed: *Not even the Timaeus* has taken non-human soul seriously. Could we make sense of such a complaint?

Consider again the sort of animal souls described in the *Timaeus*. While they suggest, and thereby explain, the suitability of different sorts of body, according to differences in the soul – as we saw in the account of four-legged animals, above – the sort of differences which make for different animal bodies are, upon closer examination, characteristically human differences. Consider the origin of birds (*Timaeus* 91d9-e3):

As for birds... they descended from innocent but simple-minded men, men who studied the heavenly bodies but in their naiveté believed that the most reliable proofs concerning them could be based upon visual observation.

It is by men leading the various sorts of lives that a man might lead that a human soul becomes disfigured in specific ways. These specific distortions might recommend bodies more suited to the activities of different sorts of animal lives; but the souls themselves, and the standard according to which they are distorted, are characteristically human souls. Even if the souls had some previous, extra-terrestrial existence, it is as human souls in human lives that the treacherous waters of sensation and perception must be navigated; and it is these very souls which, according to their success in living a human life, are reborn in various animal bodies. If Plato does not exactly grant *human* souls to animals, it would be fair to complain that he makes no real distinction between the two – indeed, that he allows no real distinction between the two. The tripartite souls of animals are not just numerically identical to their human predecessors, but they are even the same in kind. And the tripartite psychology they share was one originally modelled on, and used to explain, human psychology and human life.

So in an important sense, Aristotle is right to include Plato, and even the *Timaeus* in particular, among those ‘psychologists’ who were concerned primarily with human soul, without consideration for whether there were such essential differences between animal souls that no general account of animal soul and functions could be given. In his account of animals’ souls, Plato presses into service without substantial alteration the same sort of psychic complexity originally designed to describe human action and motivation. Moreover, in granting animals (formerly) human souls, *Timaeus* specifically grants them the highest sort of soul, the kind of intellect whose good functioning restores a soul to its original and true nature. Animals may not use νοῦς well, but sorting out the circles of the Same and the Different is their end and good just as it is ours. This in

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22 There is some debate about whether human souls are necessary only for animal proto-types in the *Timaeus* account, leaving subsequent animals – and their souls, if they have them – to be generated in some other way, from animals alone. I don’t see any indication of such a bifurcated account of animal generation, or distinction between ‘originally’ and ‘now’. Moreover, such a distinction would seriously undermine the moral force of *Timaeus*’ description of the order of the universe. Thus I have argued that Plato sees and accepts these implications in the *Timaeus* (*‘Embodying Intelligence: Animals in Plato’s Philebus’, in Platonism and Forms of Intelligence, ed. Marie-Elise Zovko (Berlin 2008)).

23 The sentence in full: ‘We must be careful not to overlook whether there is one formula for it, as with animal, or whether there is a different one for each, for instance horse, dog, man, god – where, in the latter case, the universal ‘animal’ is either nothing at all or is posterior’ (*De Anima* 402b5-8).

24 ‘And if he still could not refrain from wickedness, he would be changed once again, this time into some wild animal that resembled the wicked character he had acquired. And he would have no rest from these toilsome transformations until he had dragged that massive accretion of fire-water-air-
effect spreads divine νοῦς far beyond its original constituency. Asserting that even the Timaeus really only considers human soul, whatever it may say about animals, is in effect a rebuke also on this score: The Timaeus' account is inappropriately supposing animals to have the rational soul that we humans have.

Moreover, this extension of intellect to animals seems not to be detachable from Plato's more detailed psychological views. Intellect does not just happen to be present alongside everything else in animal souls; it is fully integrated into human and animal experience. We will see this in the details of Philebus psychology, to which I turn below. But it crops up also in the Timaeus, at 64b3-6 for example, where Timaeus tells us that all perception requires a φρόνιμον:

When even a minor disturbance affects that which is easily moved by nature, the disturbance is passed on in a chain reaction, with some parts affecting others in the same way as they were affected, until it reaches τὸ φρόνιμον and reports the property that produced the reaction.

Timaeus' φρόνιμον might not be Aristotle's νοῦς; nevertheless, the line of thought underlying Timaeus' description of perception as such seems to lead ineluctably to the following view: if our perceiving requires intelligence (and it does), then all perceiving requires intelligence, and indeed requires the same intelligence, not some pseudo-intelligence substitute. And in general, if explaining our orderly activity requires that our perceptions be informed by intelligence, then so must it be in explaining any orderly activity, including that of animals. But this, Aristotle might object, gives intellect – particularly the highest sort of intellect – too much to do, and the wrong sort of thing to do. While some uniform account of perception should be given, it cannot be one which grounds perception and its consequent affections of the soul primarily in intelligence.

III.

The question of how properly to conceive perception, and so its attendant affections, arises explicitly in de Anima I.1. And just as it is the Philebus that provides the arguments and details of the Timaeus' psychology in this respect, so it is the Philebus which guides Aristotle's careful navigating of these issues of intelligence and perception, priority and responsibility. The heart of this thorny nest of questions appears in the middle of De Anima I.1 (403a2-12), organized around the question of 'separate existence', but introduced by a Phileban trope:

A further problem presented by the affections [πάθη] of soul is this: are they all affections common [κοινὰ] to body and soul, or is there any one among them peculiar [ἴδιον] to the soul by itself? To determine this is indispensable but not easy. While it seems that most of them are not done or suffered without the body – for instance, anger, courage, appetite, and sensation generally – still the most likely to be peculiar to the soul is thinking [τὸ νοεῖν]. If, however, this is some sort of imagination or is not without imagination, then it would not be possible for it to be without body. If then there is some activity or affection earth into conformity with the revolution of the same and uniform within him, and so subdued that turbulent, irrational mass by means of reason. This would return him to his original condition of excellence (πρώτης καὶ ἀρίστης ἀφίκοιτο εἶδος ἕξεως).’ Timaeus 42b3-d2, trans. Zeyl.

25 There is recent controversy, in fact, about what τὸ φρόνιμον at Timaeus 64b is, on which see note xxx [‘for this very reason’], below.

26 John Heil describes Aristotle’s complaint against Platonic psychology as ‘challeng[ing] a fundamental commitment of Plato’s psychology, namely, that the nonrational parts of the soul can, like the rational part, hold beliefs’ (John F. Heil, ‘Aristotle’s Objection to Plato’s Appearance’: De Anima 428A24-B9’, Ancient Philosophy 23 (2003) 319-35 (319)). I would by contrast describe Aristotle’s concern here as a doubt about whether Plato admits properly non-rational parts of the soul at all. I will be unfolding this aspect of Aristotle’s dialectic with Platonic psychology in what follows.
peculiar [ἴδιον] to the soul, soul will be capable of separate existence; if there is nothing peculiar to the soul, then it would not be separable.

The paragraph marks a new point in a series of aporiai that Aristotle has been raising throughout the chapter, concerning the proper method of investigation, the right questions and the right order for these questions about the soul. This new point opens with a description of perception familiar also from De Sensu, where perception, and so the other pathē of the soul, are ‘common to body and soul’. This distinctive phrase seems clearly borrowed from the Philebus, a borrowing made particularly clear by the contrasting of κοινόν with a correlative ἴδιον. When Aristotle asks whether all affections (pathē) are ‘common to body and soul, or is there any one among them peculiar to the soul by itself?’, the contrast of ‘common’ (κοινόν) and ‘peculiar’ (ἴδιον) to body and soul recalls Socrates’ definition of sensation (or perception, αἰσθήσις) in the Philebus;

‘You must realize that some of the various affections (παθημάτων) of the body are extinguished within the body before they reach the soul, leaving it unaffected. Others penetrate through both body and soul and provoke a kind of upheaval that is peculiar to each but also common to both of them [ἴδιον τε καὶ κοινὸν ἑκατέρῳ].’ (Philebus 33d2-6)

And he concludes:

‘when the soul and body jointly [κοινῇ] arise and are jointly [κοινῇ] moved by one affection, if you call this motion perception, you would say nothing out of the way’ (Philebus 34a3-5).

The Philebus and de Anima I.1 can be drawn together more precisely, around the ‘common’ and ‘peculiar’ which Aristotle both picks up and reworks. For there are different senses of κοινόν and ἴδιον, and so of the contrast between them. In particular, κοινόν can have two very different senses: it can mean common, as in ‘widespread’; or it can mean common, as in ‘joint’ – the activity or product jointly created by more than one party, for instance. In the first case, the very same

27 Aristotle first offers a list of pathē ‘common to soul and body [κοινὰ τῆς ψυχῆς ὄντα καὶ τοῦ σώματος], e.g. sensation, memory, passion, appetite and desire in general, and, in addition pleasure and pain’ (de Sensu 1.1, 436a8-11); and then says of sleeping/waking and the other phenomena treated in the Parva Naturalia: ‘That all the attributes mentioned above are common to soul and body, is obvious; for they all occur either with sensation or through sensation [μὲν μετ’ αἰσθήσεως συμβαίνει, τὰ δὲ δ’ αἰσθήσεως]’ (de Sensu 1.1, 436b2-4)

28 I am not the first to suggest this: See, e.g., Pierre-Marie Morel. ‘Common to Soul and Body’ in the Parva Naturalia’, in Common to Body and Soul, ed. R. A. H King (Berlin 2006), 130n46; Thomas Johansen, ‘What’s New in De Sensu? The Place of the De Sensu in Aristotle’s Psychology’ in Common to Body and Soul, ed. R. A. H. King, 147. R. A. H. King, Aristotle on Life and Death (London 2001) 36n22. The Timaeus discussion of perception implies the same model – for bodily motions which do not reach the soul do not become perceptions or affections of the whole body in common (Timaeus 64a-b); but the distinctive language found in the de Anima is absent in the Timaeus. Stephen Menn, ‘Aristotle’s Definition of Soul’, 100-101 takes up this connection between Philebus 34a and de Anima I.1 in slightly more detail. Menn says that when ‘Aristotle is taking up, but also deliberately modifying, the idea of the Philebus... obviously his aim is to avoid positing motions to the soul’. I argue below that there is more to Aristotle’s criticism than this.

29 This distinction is also noted by Pierre-Marie Morel, “Common to Soul and Body”, 122, discussing the de Sensu, where both senses of ‘common’ are used in close proximity: ‘It is clear that the most important attributes of animals, whether common [τὰ κοινά] among animals or peculiar to some [τὰ ἴδια], are those common [κοινά], e.g. sensation, memory, passion, appetite and desire in general,
feature might be had by several distinct objects—they share this feature in common. But if any one of those several objects should cease to have that feature, this would not in any way affect those other objects having that common feature. So, in this sense, for example, sleep is common to all mammals—and any mammal will provide, all on its own, a sufficient example of what sleep is as such. But sleep is not the joint result of their collective activity—so that if, let us say, giraffes simply stopped sleeping and learned to function without sleep, this would not in any way interrupt the hibernation of bears.30 True, the insomniac giraffes and the somnolent bears could no longer be said to have that feature in common; but the bears should be expected to sleep right on through this change, undisturbed.

With the second sense of ‘common’—‘common’ as ‘joint (activity)’—it is otherwise. If an orchestra works together to produce a symphony, then we say the music is their joint creation, on which they work in common. But the cellos and the horns do not make interchangeable contributions to this joint effort; their activities could not each be held up independently as equally good examples of ‘playing a symphony’. And if the strings drop out, or go on strike, the symphony does not happen. The woodwinds might carry on playing their parts, but there is no symphony—and indeed, while the winds might be doing exactly what they would otherwise have done with a full orchestra, we probably should no longer describe this activity as ‘playing a symphony’. In this latter sense of ‘common’, each of the partners is necessary for the phenomenon at issue; in the former case, each partner was sufficient on its own.

It is clear that in the Philebus Socrates has this second sense of κοινόν in view. In fact, the immediately preceding point could be read as explicitly spelling out this sense of ‘common’ as opposed to the other, so there could be no doubt. The movements of the body all on their own accomplish nothing that could be called perception. Only when body and soul both get involved—each in their own way [ἰδιόν], of course—can we begin to speak of perception. That there remains something ἴδιον to each in this joint activity indicates that there remains something distinctive and incommensurable about the respective contributions of body and soul, even as they together constitute perception.

Aristotle, in the corresponding passage in the de Anima also needs this second sense of κοινόν, if his argument is to work. While he might often enough use κοινόν simply to describe features found in several different individuals, or kinds of individuals,31 that is not what is going on here, nor would it suffice for his point. For, unlike Plato—who aims primarily to insist on the involvement of soul in perception—Aristotle wants to use this point about pathē being ‘common to body and soul’ in order to emphasize the necessity for both partners to the activity to be involved. The principle he immediately turns to, following his introduction of the question, is: If anything is κοινόν to two things (body and soul), then this first thing’s existence requires the existence of the other two. Such a principle is justified when ‘common’ is taken in the sense of ‘jointly’, and it is clearly implied by the description of perception offered by Socrates in the Philebus.

But Aristotle takes the point one step further, endeavouring to show that it then follows that the two components to this joint production themselves imply and require the existence of each other. That is, he turns the question of the joint productions of body and soul into a question of the separability of body and soul from each other. ‘If there is any way of acting or being acted upon proper to soul, soul will be capable of separate existence; if there is none, its separate existence is

and, in addition pleasure and pain’ (de Sensu 1.1, 436a7-9). The first common/peculiar distinction concerns distribution; the second use of ‘common’ concerns participants in a joint project.

30 To see Aristotle using κοινόν in this sense, consider the next sentence of the de Sensu (436a12-16): ‘Besides these, there are those [pathē] common [κοινόν] to all things partaking of life, others that only some living things have. The most important of these may be summed up in four pairs, viz. waking and sleeping, youth and old age, inhalation and exhalation, life and death.’ The point is not that all animals collectively sleep, but that each kind sleeps.

31 As in the de Sensu passage quoted above, note xxx [‘to see arist’]
impossible’. The idea now is, if there are no activities the soul can engage in on its own, then all its activities imply the existence of something else, the body, which is the joint partner in the production of the soul’s activities. ἴδιον here implies something like ‘independent’ or ‘sufficient’, and it does not have the same implications as Socrates’ original use of it in describing perception.

Aristotle’s line of thought seems to be as follows: if several partners are necessary in order for some phenomenon to arise, then each of these partners is inseparable not only from that phenomenon, but also from each other insofar as they are joint producers of that phenomenon. Without violins, the clarinet cannot ‘play a symphony’. At least, however, it can still be a clarinet. But if there is something, all of whose activities required the joint contribution of something else, then in isolation it cannot do anything at all. If one of the instruments in our orchestra cannot play solos, then in absence of any other instruments, this one can do nothing at all – and so, it seems, it cannot actually be at all, at least not qua musical instrument. So, similarly, if all the soul’s activities arise only on in concert with bodily activities, then the soul cannot be in any way separate from the body.

Whether this line of reasoning is legitimate rests a great deal, it is clear, on Aristotle’s conception and theory of existence, on the relation between doing and being, between activity and identity. But such a line of thought is a viable one, and seems to be what is underlying the movement from common/peculiar to separate existence.

It is interesting that this is the point Aristotle is trying to make here. For it is not at all obvious that on the Phileban model of perception ἴδια πάθη should or could show anything about separability. On Socrates’ account of perception in the Philebus, certain παθήματα ‘penetrate through both body and soul and provoke a kind of upheaval that is peculiar to each but also common to both of them [ἵνα τε καὶ κοινὸν ἐκατέρω].’ That is, any case of perception involves something ἴδεo happening to or in the body, and likewise something ἴδεo to the soul happening to or in the soul. While the perception is their joint creation, it is created through distinct events, occurring in body and in soul, in modes appropriate to each respectively. From what has been said so far, there is no reason to think in advance, as Aristotle seems to, that the psychic motions characteristic of perception could not also arise independently of corresponding bodily changes. In the absence of psychic movement, there are still these bodily movements; why should there not be these characteristic soul-movements in the absence of bodily movements? The Philebus’ point is only that neither of these cases would be instances of perception. To use our earlier example, while it takes several co-ordinated musicians to play a symphony, there is no reason to suppose each player could not get on with practicing her part without the others. Even when practicing alone, the horns have the distinctive tonal qualities of horns, bassoons retain their characteristic bassoon sound.

Of course, it might be that just these motions in the body, and just these motions in the soul, can only ever arise when the two arise together. The Phileban model does not necessarily imply separability, and the holistic epistemology and metaphysics of the Philebus might suggest that the particular changes only arise in concert. It is rather that this model of perception is strictly agnostic on the question. And it is able to be so agnostic because the ἴδεa πάθη of body and soul are ‘proper to’ each by being ‘appropriate to’ or ‘characteristic of’, not by soul or body being sufficient all on its own for their arising. Whether or not the various partners to a joint project could perform these identical acts on their own, still their respective contributions within the joint activity would be peculiar or characteristic of each, and not interchangeable.

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32 Note that in the first, distributive sense of κοινόν, its contrastive ἴδεo would not be necessary to ensure separable existence. Bears could share each one of their individual characteristics with some creature or another, so that no one feature was exclusive to bears – or to this particular bear – and this would not undermine the distinctness and separability of this bear from that one, and from each other animal.

33 Christof Rapp argues that Aristotle rejects just such conception of perception as ‘a complex phenomenon which consists of two separate components’, (‘Interaction of Body and Soul: What the
In appropriating the joint-activity account of perception from the *Philebus*, but turning talk of ἴδια πάθη towards questions of separability, Aristotle will be testing and pressing the notion of what it is for something to be ‘peculiar to’ the soul, and how it is we are to make attributions of ‘belonging to’. This probing, in fact, picks up on the direction that Plato takes his own discussion of perception in the *Philebus*.

IV.

In the *Philebus*, Socrates has introduced this description of perception in order to understand better the nature of pleasures and pains found in ‘the anticipation that the soul experiences by itself, without the body’ (*Philebus* 32c5-6). Whether there can be such experiences is the very question Aristotle raises. But this difference of opinion on the question of non-bodily experiences is not an isolated point of disagreement – indeed, it cannot be so isolated. As the surrounding *Philebus* context, and Aristotle’s echoing of it in *de Anima* I.1 shows, deciding such a question is a matter of one’s whole picture of human moral psychology, and one’s principles of attribution.

Setting the occasion for the discussion of perception, Socrates collects a variety of psychological phenomena:

But now as for the other kind of pleasure, of which we said that it belongs to the soul itself. It depends entirely on memory... It seems we have first to determine what kind of thing memory is; in fact I am afraid that we will have to determine the nature of perception even before that of memory, if the whole subject matter is to become at all clear to us in the right way. (*Philebus* 33c5-6, 8-11)

Defining memory as the ‘preservation of perception’ (*Philebus* 34a-b), Socrates then indicates that desire too is intimately connected to these:

The point for the sake of which all this has been said is... that we might grasp as fully as possible the pleasure that the soul experiences without the body, as well as the desire. For through a clarification of these states, the nature of both pleasure and desire will be revealed... It seems that we have to base our discussion on a thorough investigation of the arising of pleasure and all its forms. But before that it looks as if we will have to determine what desire is and on what occasion it arises. (*Philebus* 34c4, c6-8, 33e10-34d3)

As this context, and the subsequent examination of pleasure show, our conception of perception has implications for our whole moral psychology – hope, fear, laughter, love and all emotions, desires and evaluations, and even judgements, and their place in the whole complex soul. Thus perception is the foundation of Socrates’ wider account of the pathē in general. And Aristotle shows he appreciates by twice quoting – or rather, by carefully unquoting – a list of pathē twice given by Socrates in this context.34

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Hellenistic Philosophers Saw and Aristotle Avoided’, in *Common to Body and Soul*, ed. R. A. H King (Berlin 2006), 206; see 199-206 for fuller discussion). Compare also Stephen Everson’s discussion of the locution ‘common to body and soul’ in Aristotle in *Aristotle on Perception* (Oxford 1997) 231-36, where he argues that Aristotle cannot have conceived of the common affections as combinations of distinct processes, since the soul cannot change or be changed – though this raises considerable difficulties about what Aristotle could have meant by affections ‘common to body and soul’.  

34 For a more famous case of Aristotle’s deliberate unquotation of Plato, see *Nicomachean Ethics* I.7. Johansen (‘What’s New in de Sensu?’, 147-48) suggests that ‘Aristotle wants to use the agreement with Plato that perception is common to body and soul as a tool with which to establish that a much wider range of affections than might be thought, particularly by the Platonist, are common to body
Socrates, based on his discussion of perception, and then of memory and desire, feels entitled to draw conclusions about 'anger [ὀργήν], fear [φόβον], longing [πόθον], lamenting [θρῆνον], love [ἔρωτα], zeal [ζῆλον], malice [φθόνον] and so forth' (Philebus 47e1-2). This list is repeated almost verbatim a few pages later. Aristotle himself offers two different lists to indicate the scope and nature of the phenomena that interest us. In the first (de Anima 403a7, quoted above), anger becomes ὀργίζεσθαι instead of ὀργήν; this is drawn together with Aristotle’s own concern with the virtues (θαρρεῖν, courage), and these with their basis in desire and perception (ἐπιθυμεῖν, ὁλως ἀισθάνεσθαι). The second list, ten lines later, picks up on the emotional range of Socrates’ lists, without precisely repeating any of them, except fear (φόβος). Socrates’ ἔρωτα (love) becomes φιλεῖν; malice (φθόνον) becomes hating (μισεῖν), at de Anima 403a16-18:

For it is likely that all the πάθη of the soul are with body, spirit [θυμός], gentleness [πραότης], fear [φόβος], pity [ἔλεος], courage [θάρσος], and further joy [χαρά], loving [φιλεῖν], hating [μισεῖν].

But while both recognize the relevance of perception to a whole psychological theory, the two philosophers use it very differently, and see different implications. Socrates uses the description of perception to establish claims about what properly belongs to the soul, rather than the body. The investigation of perception, memory, desire and pleasure concludes that ‘desire is not a matter of the body’ (Philebus 35c7-8) and further, ‘our argument has established that every impulse, and desire, and the rule over the whole animal belongs to the soul’ (Philebus 35d2-3). Even when pleasures, pains, desires and so on are joint creations of body and soul, these phenomena are nevertheless considered to belong most properly to the soul.

It is precisely this further claim that Aristotle challenges. He does so not just because he thinks it unfounded, but more especially in order to avoid the implications of this attribution of desires and so on to the soul. In the Philebus, this determination of desire, memory, pleasure and pain as belonging properly to the soul proves to have profound implications for their rationality, that is, for their being able to have cognitive content and to be rationally assessable. It is no accident that the lengthy examination of pleasure takes place in terms of truth and falsity. In particular, Socrates uses an argument that pleasures involve φαντάσματα – regarding something as such-and-such – in order to emphasize the extent to which they are constituted by the cognitive context in which they arise (Philebus 38b-40a). While sharing Plato’s initial insight that pathē are the joint product of body and soul, Aristotle wants to resist this seeping of intellect into the proper nature of each and every sort of psychological phenomenon. He will do this by insisting, against Plato’s argument in the Philebus, that joint creations cannot be attributed to one contributor over and above the other. While Aristotle agrees that we should have, as the basis of our account of characteristics we share with animals, a single explanation, suitable to both, this should be achieved by focusing on the animality of human beings, not by making animals into degraded sorts of humans.

V.

How is it that Socrates begins with a picture of jointly-caused perception, and concludes by attributing desire to the soul?

On his way to concluding that ‘the soul and body [are] jointly affected and moved by one
and the same affection’, Socrates is at pains to point out that mere movements of the body alone are as nothing to us – he even coins a new word for it (ἀναισθησίαν). If a bodily alteration is not accompanied by a psychological one, then it is not even right to say we are oblivious or neglectful of something, for in truth nothing has yet arisen which could have been overlooked.

It would be absurd to say that there could be a process of losing something that neither is nor was in existence... [So] instead of saying that the soul is oblivious when it remains unaffected by the disturbances of the body, now change the name of what you so far called obliviousness to that of nonperception. (33e4-6, 33e10-34a1)

Perception, as a kind of responsiveness to the world around us, requires the joint contribution of body and soul, each affected in their distinctive ways. But the emphasis of the discussion is here thrown on the difference made by the soul’s engagement, or lack thereof. This insistence on the indispensability of the soul’s being affected brings to the fore perception’s aspect as a kind of experience which is part of our lives – that is, as the sort of event in a living thing’s life distinguished by awareness. However immediate and uncontrived it may seem, when we come to perception we are already beyond the realm of mere mechanical, physical interactions. Not only do new conditions apply, but new possibilities for connections open up. The physical motions encounter not only physical, but also now psychological facts – beliefs, judgement, evaluations, memories, and so on.

Because perception involves soul, it becomes possible, for example, to recognize this before me as like something else – and so to generate a great deal of thoughts, desires, decisions and memories accordingly. The new generative and connective capacity arises in virtue of the fact that perception is also an arising in a soul, not just in a body. Recognizing something as something is a more complex accomplishment than mere perception, and yet such recognitions are basic to our ability to formulate desires. In the first place, recognition requires memory at least. Memory is a preservation of a previous perception (Philebus 34a11) which can be retrieved by the soul itself (Philebus 34b6-8) in order to inform subsequent perceptions. It is because the soul is able to operate independently of current perceptions, that it is able to inform them, so that we can recognize this here as similar to or different from that then. More to the point, the independence of memory from current physical conditions enables us to recognize in the current situation something as falling short of some pleasant, but not present, situation.

Socrates focuses us on this point by asking about ‘initial lacks’ (35a6-9):

If there is at the first an emptying, then how could he be in touch, either through perception or through memory with being filled, since neither in the past nor present has he had any experience of it?

This is not a tantalizingly oblique reference to Recollection, or a deep puzzle mysteriously dropped. It is introduced simply in order to insist upon three points: first, desire is determinate, it is for something in particular (Philebus 35b1); second, it is for what one is not currently experiencing, and so it is through the soul – in particular, through memory – that we have any connection to the object fixing the determinate content of the desire; and third, without such a fixing of the content of desire, there is no desire. It is this pivotal role of memory on which turns the conclusion that it is soul, and not the body, which is responsible for any desire arising.

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37 Thus, Allen Silverman’s description of perception for Plato as ‘an autonomous, materially driven capacity of the irrational soul involving neither consciousness nor conceptualization’ (Plato on Perception and ‘Commons’, Classical Quarterly 40 (1990) 148-75 (157)), as autonomous and ‘impervious to cognition’ (174) is hard to square with Socrates’ explicit description of perception at Philebus 33d-34c.
By pointing out that it is memory that directs the desires, our argument has established that every impulse, desire and rule over the whole animal belongs to the soul.

(Philebus 35d1-3)

Through memory, the soul gives direction and shape to desire. This means that it is because of the way in which soul is involved in desire – and not because it alone is involved in desire – that desires are said to belong primarily to the soul. For, as the current discussion is designed to emphasize, the soul generally is not exclusively involved in desire. Desire as described here is a split phenomenon: the soul is in contact with something considered good (through memory) which the body is not currently experiencing (35b9). Desire requires simultaneously the recollection of a previous state and perception of the state one is currently in, joined by the evaluation of the recollected state as better than the current one. So described, desire requires equally both parts of the split experience – the physical absence, and the mental recollection, as well as the evaluation relating the two.

So if desires belong to the soul, this attribution does not rest on the claim that desire happens only in the soul. If we did not perceive what was missing to us, then recalling the missing thing would not be tinged with longing. But perception involves the body as much as the soul – it is a movement common to both, each being moved in its distinctive way. This is why perception can be informative about the world. Inasmuch as desire is the complex awareness of what is missing to one, and so involves perception as well as the recollection of preserved perceptions, desire too requires a bodily contribution.

So to attribute desire to soul is not to make an assertion about where the activity is exclusively located. It is rather, as the emphasis laid on recollection suggests, to make a claim about what determines the event as the specific event that it is. 'Belonging to the soul' is an assertion of the soul's responsibility for psycho-physical phenomena. The observation that desire necessarily has reference to an absent object, and so relies on memory to supply the object of the desire, grounds a claim about priority and possession. This concern is for the determiners of specific identity, rather than necessary conditions. Memory and recollection – which the soul does on its own – provide the object which at once enables a person to feel desire (by recognizing one's current state as deficient and improvable) and thereby also determines this event as the particular desire that is it (a desire for this very thing in particular). Since desire is immediately afterwards resolved into a conjunction of a pain and a pleasure, the point seems likewise intended to apply to pleasure and pain – though this is spelled out only later, in the exploration of the extent to which taking pleasure is always pleasure in something or another. The principle, then, is that whatever determines an event as a pain (and as this pain), or as a pleasure (and as this pleasure), deserves to be considered responsible for the pleasure or pain, or that to which the pleasure or pain properly belongs. More generally, that which determines the distinctive character or identity of a thing deserves to be held responsible as the cause for that thing.

It is this principle which grants priority to the soul in mixed body-soul events. But it

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38 This discussion of desire and pleasure does not explicitly say that there can be no desires or pleasures without bodily involvement; but the denial of pleasures to the gods (Philebus 33b-c), and the definition of desire by reference to perception, which is always part-bodily, indicates that the possibility of pleasures and desires for absolutely disembodied souls is not in consideration.

39 One might perhaps become aware of a psychic absence; but such cases are decidedly not in view here, for in this discussion even psychological pleasures are had by reference to bodily pleasures and pains (Philebus 32b-c). It may be that without a body, a soul could not have even psychological lacks – gods experience no pleasure or pain – or it may be that any such lacks are had in virtue of previous or prospective embodiment (admittedly, though, this would make pleasures and desires body-dependent in a different sort of way).
immediately becomes apparent that within the psyche some capacities and phenomena are more responsible than others for fixing the distinct nature of each event. Unsurprisingly, it is the cognitive capacities – ‘knowing, understanding, and remembering, and what belongs with them, right judgement and true calculations’ (Philebus 11b7-9) – or the cognition in our experiences, which serves to distinguish each event from the other, and determine the specific character of each. If, within the person, it is the soul which determines each psycho-physical event as a specific experience, it is likewise, within the soul, intelligence which is responsible for the soul’s characterizing each event in the way that it does.⁴⁰

This comes out most forcefully in Socrates’ argument for the first sort of falsity in pleasure that is distinguished in the Philebus. In this passage, Socrates aims to convince Protarchus that pleasures are similar to judgements, in being truth-apt. Just as a judgement can be true or false, and still be a judgement, a pleasure too can be true or false, and still be a pleasure. Protarchus’ first rejoinder is the obvious one: In cases of mistaken pleasure, we have a false judgement accompanied by a non-truth-apt pleasure; ‘it is the judgement we call false then, in such a case, Socrates; no one would dream of calling the pleasure itself false’ (Philebus 37e11-38a1). In order to persuade Protarchus otherwise, it is clear that Socrates has to show that pleasures cannot be so isolated from judgements as Protarchus’ rejoinder presumes.

Socrates attempts to do this by intimately associating a quasi-pictorial rendering of judgements with the judgements themselves.⁴¹ That is, while there might be a bald assertion or entertaining of a fact, there is also more often a way in which we entertain a thought, evaluating it as we think it, ‘colouring it in with expectations or recollections of what it is like for this fact to be so. This way of ‘colouring in’ a judgement, fleshing it out with qualitative content, just is a pleasure or pain: ‘There are, then, assertions in each of us that we call hopes?’ (Philebus 40a5). Although Socrates makes the argument with respect to pleasant hopes involved with future-regarding judgements, he is adamant that the same point should hold for present- and past-oriented judgements as well (Philebus 39c10-12). And while we might suppose that this leading role of cognition in pleasure counts only for certain pleasures, the insistence on the truth-aptness of all pleasures and pains suggests otherwise.⁴² For any perception at all to arise, it must arise in the soul, and the soul determines the psycho-physical event as perception. Within the soul these affections become determinate in virtue of the cognitive contribution of the judging, knowing, remembering soul. When we see something we must decide, sometimes explicitly, how we are going to see it;⁴³ and once we have, we fill in the missing details – we present it to ourselves as being such-and-such.⁴⁴

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⁴⁰ Cf. the cosmological discussion, Philebus 30a-c, where this body-soul/soul-intellect structure is found.


⁴² Philebus 40e8-10: ‘Nor, I presume, will we find any other way to account for badness in the case of pleasures unless they are false.’ Protarchus does not agree to this claim of Socrates’; but the remainder of the examination of pleasure is conducted in terms of truth and falsity.

⁴³ Cf. Michael Frede’s ‘Observations on Perception in Plato’s Later Dialogues’, Essays in Ancient Philosophy (Minneapolis 1987) 3-8, one main claim of which is that while Protagorean-type epistemologies assimilate all cases of belief-formation to just finding yourself with a belief, Plato tends rather to assimilate all cases of belief-formation to cases of coming to a decision.

⁴⁴ Such cognitively-led holism is the reverse side of the diminution of the powers or responsibilities granted to perception as such, as described by Michael Frede, discussing primarily the Theaetetus, in ‘Observations on Perception in Plato’s Later Dialogues’, 7-8: ‘All questions are settled by the mind, though for some it does rely on perception... Thus, strictly speaking, we do not even perceive the object of which we come to believe that it is red. And if this is so, it is even more difficult to see how we could be said to perceive that something is red, given this very narrow notion of perception.’
So, to take Socrates’ example, I discern a shape in the distance, and attempt to make my perception determinately this or that – I try to determine whether I am seeing a man, or a statue; if a man, I look at it in one way, with one set of attitudes and expectations; if a statue, then with another set. This ‘filling in’ is, in part, ‘seeing as’; and it affects and is affected by ‘surrounding’ judgements, by the cognitive context within which we try to make sense of it. Consider that, in the above case, I don’t ask ‘Is it man, statue, or octopus?’, because my beliefs about octopi automatically exclude that possibility. As for perceptions in general, so likewise for painful or pleasant experiences to arise in the soul, these are determined as such – and as the particular pleasures and pains that they are – by the cognitive context in which they arise, and the cognitive-evaluative content they represent. Just as the soul claims priority over the body in being responsible for perception and desire, the varieties of intelligence within the soul claim priority among psychic factors in determining experiences as pleasures, pains, and desires.

VI.

In a way, this account of the moral psychology of the *Philebus* is merely spelling out the human consequences of the cosmological argument at *Philebus* 29a-30e, where ψός governs soul, which in turn governs living bodies – the conclusion of which is that ψός is the cause of all order (*Philebus* 30c-d). But I have chosen this unusual way of telling the story of *Philebus* 31b-50e, focussing especially on 31b-41a, in order to bring to the fore those aspects of the *Philebus*’s discussion there that engage Aristotle’s attention when he introduces the pathê common to body and soul in the *de Anima*’s opening chapter.

The first thing to note is that, while Aristotle carries over the model of αἰσθήσις and so on being ‘common’ to body and soul, he casts doubt at the same time on the suggestion that this common event is composed of two distinctive events, proper to body and soul respectively.

A further problem presented by the affections of soul is this: are they all affections common to body and soul, or is there any one among them peculiar to the soul by itself?

It is noteworthy that Aristotle turns Plato’s point about the joint creations of body and soul into a question about the separate existence of the soul. For as we saw, Plato’s interest in describing αἰσθήσις as a motion common to body and soul, and peculiar to each, had very little to do with demonstrating the soul’s separability. If anything, the position in the *Philebus* seems to be that embodiment is indeed a condition on perception, as well as desire, pleasure and pain. In turning the joint activity of perception to a point about separability, Aristotle is implicitly rejecting Socrates’ suggestion that something may be ἰδιόν to the soul, for example, simply by being characteristic or distinctive of soul. If something really were ἰδιόν to the soul, the soul should certainly be able to

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45 Aristotle, by contrast – if, indeed, it is a contrast – leaves this sort of work to φάντασια (see Martha Nussbaum, Aristotle’s *De Motu Animalium*: Text with translation, commentary, and interpretive essays (Princeton 1978), essay V, esp. 230-31, 240-41, 245; see also Dorothea Frede, ‘The Cognitive Role of Phantasia in the Soul’s’, *Essays on Aristotle’s De Anima*, ed. M. Nussbaum and A. Rorty (Oxford 1992) 279-95, and R. J. Hankinson, ‘Perception and Evaluation: Aristotle on the Moral Imagination’, *Dialogue* 29 (1990) 41-63. Without presenting any theory, or even a distinct concept of φάντασια, in is interesting to note Socrates using cognate words in his discussion of perceptions or judgments as inflected with practical meaning (φαντασζόμενον, 38d1, 38d2; φαντασθέντα, 38d2); later the fleshed out ways of considering things are called φαντάσματα, *Philebus* 40a9.

46 So that Aristotle is not far wrong when he says, later in the *de Anima*, that ‘It is entirely clear that Plato wanted the [whole] soul to be the sort called ψός (and not the sensitive sort or the desiderative)’ (*de Anima* I.3, 407a3-6); for although Aristotle is responding specifically to the *Timaeus* here, it is to the *Timaeus*’ graphically represented implementation of the intellect-based moral psychology of the *Philebus*. 

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have this πάθος all on its own.

Challenging the implications Socrates allows regarding what it means for something to be ἰδιον, Aristotle is casting into doubt the further Socratic claim that every desire and impulse in a person belongs to the soul. Aristotle, insisting on necessary participants rather than explanatory priority, refuses to allow the attribution of affections to the soul alone. Or, to put it more precisely, Aristotle is rejecting the explanatory priority Plato tries to reserve for intellect, in spite of his own model of joint causation in perception.

We saw earlier that Aristotle insists that if there were any affections ἰδια to the soul, then the soul could exist alone. For the argument to work, ἰδιον must mean that nothing else is required – if the soul does or has something ἰδιον, then it can do or be this all on its own. But this does not seem to be what Socrates meant by ἰδιον, when he said that in perception there is something ἰδιον to body and soul respectively. At least, Socrates’ argument only needed a weaker sense of ἰδιον, according to which there were changes characteristic of, or proper to, the soul, while remaining silent about whether these characteristics might require other conditions in order to arise.

Aristotle, in insisting that ἰδια πάθη, if there were any, would enable the soul to exist without the body, is, I suggest, pointing out the strong sense of ‘proper to’ that would be required by Socrates in his argument, if his further point about the primacy of the soul were to go through. Even if the soul is the source of the distinctive identity of each pathos, even of its intelligibility in a certain sense, this does not by itself warrant a disregard of the bodily component in understanding perception, emotion, and even discursive thought (any thought which requires phantasias). Such a disregard for the physical could only be justified if the physical did not determine the nature of the psychological just as surely as the rest of the soul did. That is, it could only be justified if the soul were able to go about its business in exactly the same way, with exactly the same results, regardless of bodily input. If, on the other hand, this is not so then the soul does not have exclusive claim to be the source of the identity and intelligibility of our pathē, and pathē cannot be said to belong to the soul.

Thus the primary focus of the criticism is not dualism. For both philosophers, the utterly disembodied soul would be purely noetic. It would have no other functions except continually active, unimpeded intelligence. But when it comes to considering the consequences of embodying noetic soul, their views diverge, in two ways relevant here: First, although both Plato and Aristotle understand perception as fundamental to the experience of embodied souls, their understanding of what that experience consists in differs significantly. To put it baldly, while Plato may allow that having a body, and having had bodily experiences (perceptions) is necessary for the experiencing of other pathē, Aristotle wants to insist on the necessity of presently occurring physical changes in any human experiences (noetic activity possibly excepted) – and perhaps he even feels entitled to do this on the basis of the Phileban model of perception, which Socrates himself uses in explaining desire. Second, and more subtly: Phileban psychology, according to Aristotle, is mistaken in taking soul to be the source of the definitive element of any experience; and thus in subsequently taking intelligence to be the definitive element of the psychological contribution to experience. The consequences are unacceptable; the principle which gets us there must be rejected.

The principle, distilled, is as Socrates claims cryptically at Philebus 30d11-e1, that ‘intelligence [νοῦς] belongs to the kind which is the cause of everything’. Whatever formal holism in the epistemology of the Philebus, and whatever acknowledgement of the body as making the

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47 Compare Christof Rapp’s passing observation (‘Interaction of Body and Soul’, 199): ‘Hence the issue at stake is not whether phenomena that primarily belong to the soul are accompanied by bodily movements; rather, the point is that phenomena that are usually called “affections of the soul” belong to the body, too.’ If his further argument (204-08) is correct, then one reason the soul’s contribution to perception cannot claim priority is because it cannot be understood independently of the bodily context in which it arises.

48 plant souls excepted, for Aristotle, to which I return to below.
decisive difference in what happiness is for us and what we should aim at, still the only real source of identity and distinctiveness of things is intelligent activity. The consequences of this commitment come out most clearly in the discussion of pleasures – not only in the claim that they may be truth-apt, but even more in the treatment of emotions as mixed pleasures happening entirely in the soul (Timaeus 47d9–10), as if value judgements alone, and never the quickening of the blood, were sufficient to explain, identify and define emotions, their attractiveness and motive force. Plato need not deny that the blood indeed quickens – only that this is necessary to a consideration of what these emotions are, and what they mean for us.

What Aristotle notices is that, while perhaps Plato could not conceive of the causality of soul, and so of intelligence, on any other but a physical model, at the same time he could not grant the physical its own role in a complex causal process. One way and another, Plato does not acknowledge distinct kinds of causes, with their distinctive contributions to make to the reality and intelligibility of things. Indeed, even if he offers a suggestion of how this might look – for various things to be jointly responsible for the intelligibility of one thing – in the first part of the Philebus, Plato singularly fails to apply it to lived human experiences in the later part of the Philebus. While perception rightly offers a model of joint causation from distinctive principles, Plato’s immediate conversion of that model into an attribution of all desire and impulse to the soul belies that metaphysical generosity about causation, and serves to ground an overly rationalist moral psychology, one according to which it is really only the intelligence within something that could be held genuinely responsible for that thing.

This is why Aristotle feels entitled to claim that if indeed some πάθος is ἵδιον to the soul, then the soul might be separable. While the official epistemology of the Philebus would suggest that the peculiar psychic and psychical aspects of αἰθήσεις are inseparable, Plato’s own treatment of the pathē progresses as if the psychic element (being solely responsible) were the only part to be understood; and as if this aspect could be understood in isolation. Nor is this an accident – for the general claim about the causality of intelligence is represented specifically in the explicit claim that desire, for all that it arises only in embodied souls, belongs exclusively to the soul. Even for pleasure and pain, the soul’s contribution is the decisive factor. And this is because the soul alone supplies intelligible order, and does so in virtue of its own intelligence.

Aristotle recognizes this intellectualizing of experience in the Philebus, and its predictable consequences in the animal psychology of the Timaeus. Failing to recognize factors other than intelligence as responsible for the nature of things, and thus resorting to the presence of intelligence whenever something is intelligible, forces us to understand all animal experience relevant to healthy activity as a debased sort of human experience. If all desire belongs to the soul because the soul fixes the content, then whatever in the soul enables it to fix the content and nature of experience should be considered the true, more precise cause of that thing. In this way, intelligence is made necessary for, and integral to all desire – so it should be no surprise that animal souls in the Timaeus are just like ours, intelligence (however deformed) and all. In fact, we see the

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49 See Stephen Menn, ‘Aristotle’s Definition of Soul’, 85: ‘Aristotle takes these descriptions’, that is Timaeus 36d8–e5, 37a5–b8, 43b5–44c1; Philebus 33d2–34a5, ‘to show that the Platonists are conceiving the soul as body-like – that, although they formally deny that it is a body, they have no other model for conceiving its causality, and so fall back on descriptions which would in fact be appropriate only to bodies.’

50 For treatment of the role of the physical for Aristotle in the explanation of psycho-physical activities, see Everson’s Aristotle on Perception, especially Chapter 6.

51 Compare Thomas Johansen’s remark on another Platonic expression picked up by Aristotle to describe perception: ‘So at Timaeus 43c4–5 Timaeus refers to perception as a motion that arrives at the soul “through the body” (cf. also 45d2, 64c3–6). The implication of this idiom for Plato seems to be that the body is a conduit for what the soul perceives rather than an integral part or aspect of that which perceives.’ (‘What’s New in the de Sensu?’, 146)
consequences of the Philebus’ principle of explanation not only in the Timaeus’ all-too-human animals, but in the absurd but unavoidable conclusion that even plants must be intelligent; for plants have sensation, the lowest sort of soul Plato acknowledges, and sensation, as we saw above, requires the engagement of ‘the intelligent part’.

VII.

The implicit criticism is that Plato’s own Phileban epistemology of parts and wholes has singularly failed in addressing the soul – or rather, that Plato has failed to follow through its implications in his psychological examinations. This is expressed in Aristotle’s own grappling with the proper form of inquiry, and the relations between parts and wholes in understanding rightly what something is (de Anima I.1, 402b1-403a2). By then turning Plato’s conception of αἰσθήσις as something κοινόν and ἰδιον towards evidence for inseparability of soul, Aristotle at once acknowledges what is correct in the view, and criticizes how Plato himself saw its implications – namely, as compatible with attributing all causation in animals to soul, and reducing all real causation to intelligence.

This way of reading the separability passage in de Anima I.1 puts the programmatic remarks at the end of the chapter in a new light. In what look to be merely additional remarks, Aristotle observes (de Anima 403a27-30; b1-2, b6-9):

That is precisely why the study of the soul must fall within the science of Nature, at least so far as in its affections it manifests this double character. Hence a physicist would define an affection of soul differently from a dialectician;... the former assigns the material conditions, the latter the form or formulable essence; ... but there is a third possibility: it was that form in that material with that purpose or end. Which, then, among these is the physicist? The one who speaks of matter, ignorant of the logos, or the one who gives only the logos? Or is it not rather the one who combines both?

This apparent digression is concerned with getting right the nature of natural science; but it is building this correct conception of physics on a correct conception of the objects of study: living things are defined by the way matter is ordered, but not by the order in the matter alone.

But we must return from this digression. We said that the affections of the soul are inseparable from the natural matter of animals, to which we have seen that such affections, e.g. passion and fear, attach, and have not the same mode of being as a line or a plane.

(de Anima 403b16-19)

That is to say, pathē are not even separable in thought alone, in the way that mathematical objects are. And if that is so, then the psychic contribution to the complex cannot claim priority in determining the nature of perception or the pathē which are in various ways based on perception. Socrates is wrong, therefore to claim that ‘desire is a matter of soul alone’, and wrong to conclude that ‘every rule over the person is at matter of the soul alone’; perhaps he was even wrong to suppose that there may be pleasures which ‘belong to the soul by itself’ in the first place – though

52 For this very reason, there has been recent dispute about whether τὸ φρόνιμον at Timaeus 64b6 (quoted above) should be translated as ‘the intelligent part’ at all. Denis O’Brien (’Perception et intelligence dans le Timée de Platon’ in Interpreting the Timaeus-Critias: Proceedings of the IV Symposium Platonicanum, eds Tomás Calvo and Luc Brisson (Sankt Augustin 1997)) argues in favour of mere ‘consciousness’ instead, while Luc Brisson (’Plato’s Theory of Sense Perception in the Timaeus’, Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy 13 (1999) 147-176) defends the more traditional commitment to ‘intelligence’. I argue, though for different reasons, that τὸ φρόνιμον is inescapably meant to be ‘the intelligent part’ (’Embodying Intelligence?: Plants in Plato’s Timaeus’, manuscript).
this is rather complicated by the two philosophers’ very different conceptions of pleasure, as well as their different views about what it takes for something to ‘belong to’ the soul.

The point at issue here is that the source of intelligibility should not, in Aristotle’s view, be regarded as the real cause of the existence and identity of anything, at the expense of other necessary components. To do so, according to Aristotle, leads inevitably, as it leads Socrates in the Philebus, into supposing that not soul but intelligence within soul is the source of the specific reality of any lived experience. Phantasia becomes a kind of judgement (as the ἐκφάντασμα of Philebus 40a9)\(^5\); all pleasures and pains are sufficiently episodes of intellection to be able to judge them true or false. But if this indeed accurately captures the nature of the pathē – of memory, pleasure, pain, desire and ‘imagining’ – then either animals have none of those affections, or else they have intelligence, too. Both of these possibilities are unacceptable. But if animals have phantasia, desire, pleasure, pain, memory, perception; and if non-human animals do not have intelligence; then intelligence cannot be built into the very nature of these pathē.

Here we are concerned not with Plato’s failure of imagination in conceiving of the causality of soul, but with his refusal to recognize anything else but intelligence in a soul as ultimately responsible for the intelligible structure of the embodied and material world. Whatever sort of priority intelligence may have, it is not the only source of intelligibility and identity, of what makes each thing’s nature be just as it is. Indeed, when we are treating embodied souls, the causality of intelligence cannot even be properly grasped apart from the causality of the body – and Plato, by his own explanatory principles of Phileban holism, should have known this. The physical is as much a source of identity and individuation of pathē as the psychic in general, and intelligence in particular. This – not Plato’s – is the correct interpretation of the insight that αἴσθησις is ‘common to body and soul’.


\(^5\) See Aristotle’s criticism of this in de Anima III.3