De mixtione XI–XII: the Encounter of Two Ontologies

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Chapter 7

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Abstract

Chapters XI and XII of *De mixtione* have been read as a digression from the main argument of the treatise. In the following, I will show that what takes place in IX–XII is not secondary regarding the issue of blending, or, more generally, regarding Alexander's opposition to Stoic philosophy. In my view, chapters IX–XII aim to produce a more fine-grained account of blending. They set the stage for the first requirement of blending in chapter XIII: that there is blending only of corporeal substances, i.e. of independently subsisting entities. To accomplish this, chapters XI–XII must bring their investigation up to the nature of the Stoic principles and criticize the Stoic notion of body. This is why Alexander must examine the fundamentals of Stoic ontology. It also explains why these chapters, despite being essentially refutative, make explicit some of the main claims of Alexander's own ontology. In these chapters, Alexander makes us pivot smoothly from a Stoic ontology to an Aristotelian one.

1 Introduction

Scholarly interest in Alexander of Aphrodisias's *De mixtione* XI–XII has produced contrasting results. On the one hand, these chapters are one of our most important textual sources on some crucial aspects of Stoic philosophy—on their account of blending, of course, but also on the two principles of Stoic physics: god and matter. In the *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, von Arnim excerpts half of the two chapters[1] and specialists of Stoic philosophy routinely submit these testimonies to thorough investigation. As we will see, some of these texts are even our

[1] References are: SVF 2.310 (*Mixt.* 21.16–22.11); 2.1044 (*Mixt.* 22.14–26); 2.1047 (*Mixt.* 23.22–24.10); 2.1048 (*Mixt.* 24.15–22); 2.475 (*Mixt.* 25.3–26.2).

sole source on a fundamental Stoic claim, *i.e.* that "total blending" also includes the blending of god and matter.

On the other hand, the (less numerous) scholars studying the treatise for its own sake usually regard chapters XI–XII with circumspection. Indeed, on a first read, chapters IX to XII seem to diverge from the treatise's argumentative arc. R.B. Todd thus takes the study of *pneuma* in chapters X–XI to be a "digression",[2] even though Alexander uses them to discuss "central Stoic doctrines". Naturally, he tempers, the issues covered in X–XI—the *pneuma* and the principles—distantly relate to the treatise's main argument, since they depend on the "notion of body going through body". But the connection remains indirect. J. Groisard also speaks of chapters IX–XII as a "digression"[3] and reads them as a self-contained study about some "odd cases" and a few peculiar "applications".[4] Other elements seem to corroborate their diagnosis. For instance, Alexander no doubt takes the discussion of aether in X–XI to be capital, but the connection of this issue with blending is thin. He seems to admit this himself at the start of chapter XII: "I was provoked into this argument by denials of Aristotle's theory of the fifth body" (25.3–4)—as if some external source had motivated the development on aether, leading Alexander to apologize for the contingent detour it imposed on his argument. The rest of chapter XII apparently confirms this interpretation: after a brief deviation, Alexander would now rejoin his previous path, *i.e.* the refutation of the Stoic claim of "body going through body" (25.18).[5] The final blow would come from the opening of chapter XIII, when Alexander says: "Let us return to our original statement (τὸν ἐξ ἀρχῆς λόγον)" (27.1).

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[2] Todd (1976), 211–212; cf. the same claim, introduced as soon as p. 194. Also see F. Baghdassarian's contribution in this volume, 131, n. 33.

[3] Groisard (2013), 97.

[4] Groisard (2013), respectively XCI and LXXI. Todd and Groisard differ on the extent of the "digression": for Todd, it starts mainly in chapter X (cf. Todd (1976), 194), but Groisard finds it beginning at chapter IX.

[5] Cf. Todd (1976), 194.

In the following, I will show that chapters XI–XII do not conclude a "digression". I do agree that the IX–XII ensemble works as a distinct part within Alexander's refutation, and that it differs from its main, central part in chapters V–VIII. But what takes place in IX–XII is not at all secondary regarding the issue of blending, or, more generally, regarding Alexander's opposition to Stoic philosophy. To put it plainly—chapters IX–XII aim to produce a more fine-grained account of blending. They set the stage for the first requirement of blending from chapter XIII: that there is blending only of corporeal substances, *i.e.* of independently subsisting entities (27.9–28.2).[6] To accomplish this, chapters XI–XII must bring their investigation up to the nature of the Stoic principles and criticize the Stoic notion of body. This is why Alexander must examine the fundamentals of Stoic ontology. It also explains why these chapters, despite being essentially refutative, make explicit some of the main claims of Alexander's own ontology.

2 Chapter XI: the Principles

Chapter XI contains 5 sections: 21.8–21; 21.21–22.13; 22.14–23.21; 23.22–24.14; 24.14–25.2. It starts with a transition (21.8–15)[7] which focuses on the matter-form pair, introduced earlier at 19.15–17.[8] Unlike what Alexander says, he has not yet explicitly criticized the Stoics for their insufficient distinction of matter and form (διαλαβεῖν τῷ λόγῳ τῆς ὕλης τὸ εἶδος, 21.9). What the Stoics have been criticized for previously (if quite elusively) is their misunderstanding of form. But Alexander does specify his criticism in this opening passage (as he will again later concerning the pseudo-formal status of god, at 23.22–24.14): the Stoics attribute to matter functions that it cannot perform on its own, functions which must belong to an *eidos*. It then becomes clear that the Stoic ignorance of form has been more specifically caused by their ignorance of the *difference* between form and matter. According to

[6] On this definition, see also Simplicius, *In De caelo*, 8.4–6; Cordonier (2008), 354–357.

[7] F. Baghdassarian has discussed the role of this passage in her contribution above.

[8] Alexander also mentions it at 18.1–2, but not in connection with *pneuma*.

Alexander, one finds in Stoic philosophy the intuitive need for a formal function, but this function is mixed up with matter, to the point of becoming indistinguishable from it. Hence, our transition passage is more than a mere refutation: it already points to some Aristotelian claims which we will encounter later, grounding the theory of blending.[9] Chapter X announced these claims with 'more reasonable' (εὐλογώτερον), a comparative also used at the beginning of the treatise to refer to the Aristotelian doctrine of blending about to be expounded (3.10). Lines 21.16–21 then introduce the chapter's proper aim:

> Entering the argument at this point one might reasonably charge those who also claim (i) the existence of two principles of everything, matter and god, of which the latter is active, the former passive, with saying that (ii) god is mixed with matter, (iii) pervading the whole of it, and shaping and forming it and making the universe in this way. (21.16–21, transl. Todd modified)[10]

The Stoic concept of *pneuma*, just described as "pervading *everything*" (διὰ πάντων διήκοντι, 21.13), leads to a careful examination of the "two principles of *everything*". Right after, Alexander identifies god with *pneuma* (21.22). His main concern will be the Stoic claim that the two principles blend. Although the passage only states that god and matter are "mixed" (μεμῖχθαι), the way this mixture is described confirms that the type of mixture at play is indeed that of total blending (κρᾶσις), since it implies a total coextension and interpenetration of god and matter to produce the universe, while retaining their own natures.[11] That is why, a little further on, when describing the relationship between god and matter, Alexandre clarifies the meaning of the verb μεμῖχθαί by adding "τε καὶ κεκρᾶσθαι" (23.18–19).

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[9] See F. Baghdassarian's remarks on this, p. 142.

[10] αἰτιάσαιτο δ' ἄν τις εὐλόγως αὐτῶν ἐνταῦθα τοῦ λόγου γενόμενος καὶ τὸ δύο ἀρχὰς τῶν πάντων λέγοντας εἶναι ὕλην τε καὶ θεόν, ὧν τὸν μὲν ποιοῦντα εἶναι τὴν δὲ πάσχουσαν, μεμῖχθαι τῇ ὕλῃ λέγειν τὸν θεόν, διὰ πάσης αὐτῆς διήκοντα καὶ σχηματίζοντα αὐτήν, καὶ μορφοῦντα καὶ κοσμοποιοῦντα τούτῳ τῷ τρόπῳ.

[11] Such is at least the viewpoint of the Stoics. As we will see below, Alexander, on the other hand, doubts that god retains its own nature.

According to our sources, *De mixtione* XI appears to be the first text attributing this claim to the Stoics.[12] Reading the following participles (διήκοντα, σχηματίζοντα, etc.) as implying causality, one could be inclined to think that Alexander is making an inference here—an inference which the Stoics had not themselves made.[13] The claim that the two principles blend (ii) would thus be framed by two premises with which the Stoics *did* agree: the identity of the two principles (at i) and the relation of god to matter and its action in it (at iii). Alexander could feel legitimate to infer blending, most obviously because of the coextension (διὰ πάσης αὐτῆς διήκοντα) of god and matter. And he has indeed pointed out, at the start of the treatise, that the Stoic notion of blending depended first and foremost on coextension.[14] Later in our chapter, Alexander will again infer blending from the coextension and causal interaction of god and matter (24.23–28). Many other texts also confirm that god goes through matter and pervades it in its entirety.15[15] But there may be a problem: if the Stoics have not gone as far as claiming that their two principles blended, criticizing them for expanding blending groundlessly would be perversely unjustified.

However, let us note two things before endorsing such a conclusion. Firstly, the blending principles claim (ii) is introduced by λέγειν, like premise (i) with λέγοντας, which is a standard Stoic view. Alexander is not saying what the Stoics think but do not explicitly assert, or what they should assert if they understood their premises correctly—he rather

[12] That is, if we take into account the way in which one dates the *De Qualitatibus Incorporeis* (*i.e.* the source for *SVF* 2.323a). Plutarch's *Comm. not.* 1085b ("οὐ γὰρ στοιχεῖον οὐδ' ἀρχὴ τὸ μεμιγμένον ἀλλ' ἐξ ὧν μέμικται") is also a contender, provided we read it like Lapidge (1973), 246. B. Collette and S. Delcomminette (2006), 24–25 similarly conclude that, with the exception of Alexander, no textual sources state clearly that the two principles blend. See Mikeš in this volume for the observation that Alexander avoids this statement earlier in *Mixt.*

[13] I do not take the optative of αἰτιάσαιτο to be significant: since Alexander uses it commonly when he wants to cautiously make a claim that he otherwise fully supports, one could not deduce much from it. On the inference, see also Groisard (2013), 97.

[14] See 1.12–14 and its analysis by G. Betegh in this volume, p. 31–34.

[15] For instance: SVF 1.155; 1.158; 2.1027 (LS 46A); 2.1035; 2.1036; 2.1039; 2.1040; 2.1042. See also the poetic accounts of Virgil and Wordsworth cited in Sharples (1996), 43–45.

seems to report what the Stoics said and what can be criticized about what they said. Secondly, even if λέγειν were not compelling evidence, there are robust reasons within the Stoic system to call the relation of god to matter a "blending". This is why claim (ii) is commonly considered to be authentic in Stoicism scholarship.[16] Given that principles are bodies and that they are in contact and coextensive, it is perfectly reasonable to describe their relation as a blending—with no need to resolve here the related issue of the separation of principles.[17] To these reasons, one can add the many passages where the relation of the two principles is likened to the one of body and soul.[18] The latter is clearly called a "blending", not only in Alexander himself, but also in other sources, commonly held to be trustworthy.[19]

The rest of chapter XI refutes precisely the claim that the two principles blend. It does so in four arguments: on the identity of god (21.21–22.13); on god's occupation and its function as a demiurge (22.14–23.21); on its quasi-formal status (23.22–24.14); and on the impious implications of the Stoic view (24.14–25.2). The four arguments relate closely to the four Aristotelian causes: material, productive, formal and final.

2.1 *God's Matter*

The first, elaborate argument sets up a destructive dilemma:

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[16] Among others, see Lapidge (1973), 246; Hahm (1977), 32; Long and Sedley (1987), 273; White (2003), 133; Gourinat (2009), 65–66; Cooper (2009), 98; Marmodoro (2017), 173; de Harven (2018); Hensley (2018). If we subscribe to the view of a Platonic or Academic origin to the Stoic theory of principles (Sedley (2002)), we will recall the μεμειγμένη from *Timaeus* 47e5. See also the μιγνύμενος in Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus* (1.12–13 = *SVF* 1.537, l. 9).

[17] If principles are blended, that such a blending should be reversible is implied (Hensley (2018)). I do, however, have some reservations on the eventuality of this separation ever actualizing. On *unseparated* principles (distinguished from *inseparable* principles), see Alexander, *In Met*. 178.15–21 (*SVF* 2.306), but also, for instance: *SVF* 2.307; 2.1042; LS 44E.

[18] *SVF* 2.634 (DL VII 138); 2.1047 (LS 44C3).

[19] Respectively at *Mixt.* 23.24 and in Hierocles at LS 53B5, on which see Helle (2018). On Alexander's possible knowledge of the *Elements of Ethics*, see Todd (1976), *e.g.* 192–193.

> For if god is on their view a body—an intelligent and eternal *pneuma*— and matter too is a body, (1) first there will again be body going through body; (2) then this *pneuma* will be (2.1) either one of the four uncompounded bodies which they say are also elements, (2.2) or a compound of them (as of course they themselves say; in fact, they suppose that *pneuma* has the substance of air and fire), (2.3) or, if it is something else, the divine body for them will be a fifth substance, presented without proof or support by opponents who claim that the philosopher who established this theory with appropriate [proofs][20] offered an incredible doctrine.
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> But if it were (2.1) one of the four bodies or (2.2) a compound of them, then the body that is generated from matter will have pervaded it before it comes to be and will generate itself too from it just like other things. Again, god would be posterior to matter since all enmattered body is posterior to matter; for what is derived from a principle is posterior to it, and god is such a body, for he is certainly not identical with matter. Were he so, he would be eternal for them in name alone; for if he has come to be and if he has come to be from matter, he is either one of the simple bodies or a compound of them. (21.21–22.13, transl. Todd modified)[21]

This kind of argument is probably far from original.[22] But Alexander's version stands out in two ways. On the one hand, he meticulously lists and details the premises involved. On the other hand, he uses a contrastingly small number of positive premises about god's identity

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[20] The wording is unclear, leading von Arnim to supply ἀποδείξεων. His suggestion benefits from the preceding χωρὶς ἀποδείξεώς τινος καὶ παραμυθίας. Groisard proposes to read "celui qui ajoute cet élément aux leurs".

[21] εἰ γὰρ θεὸς κατ' αὐτοὺς σῶμα, πνεῦμα ὂν νοερόν τε καὶ ἀίδιον, καὶ ἡ ὕλη δὲ σῶμα, πρῶτον μὲν ἔσται πάλιν διῆκον σῶμα διὰ σώματος, ἔπειτα τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦτο ἤτοι τι τῶν τεσσάρων τῶν ἁπλῶν ἔσται σωμάτων, ἃ καὶ στοιχεῖά φασιν, ἢ ἐκ τούτων σύγκριμα (ὥς που καὶ αὐτοὶ λέγουσιν· καὶ γὰρ ἀέρος καὶ πυρὸς ὑφίστανται τὴν οὐσίαν ἔχειν τὸ πνεῦμα), ἤ, <εἰ> ἄλλο τι εἴη, ἔσται τὸ θεῖον αὐτοῖς σῶμα πέμπτη τις οὐσία, χωρὶς ἀποδείξεώς τινος καὶ παραμυθίας λεγομένη τοῖς πρὸς τὸν μετὰ τῶν οἰκείων τιθέμενον τοῦτο ἀντιλέγουσιν ὡς λέγοντα παράδοξα. εἰ δὲ ἢ τῶν τεσσάρων τι εἴη ἤ τι ἐξ ἐκείνων σύγκριμα, ἔσται τὸ ἐκ τῆς ὕλης γεννώμενον σῶμα πρὸ τοῦ γενέσθαι πεφοιτηκὸς δι' αὐτῆς καὶ τεκνοῦν ἐξ ἐκείνης ὁμοίως τοῖς ἄλλοις καὶ ἑαυτό. ἔτι τε ὕστερον ἂν ὁ θεὸς τῆς ὕλης εἴη, εἴ γε πᾶν μὲν τὸ ἔνυλον σῶμα τῆς ὕλης ὕστερον. τὸ γὰρ ἐκ τῆς ἀρχῆς ὕστερον, ὁ δὲ θεὸς τοιοῦτον σῶμα· οὐ γὰρ δὴ τῇ ὕλῃ ὁ αὐτός. τοιοῦτος δὲ ὢν εἴη ἂν μέχρι φωνῆς ἀίδιος αὐτοῖς μόνης· εἰ γὰρ γέγονε (γέγονε δὲ ἐκ τῆς ὕλης), εἴτε τι τῶν ἁπλῶν ἐστι σωμάτων, εἴτε ἐκ τούτων σύγκριμα.

[22] See for instance Plutarch, *Comm. not.* 1085B; Sextus, *M.* IX, 180–181; Alcinous, *Didaskalikos* X, especially 166.5–10.

(Sextus's version, for instance, mentions that god is alive, possesses a soul and exercises reason). Alexander only mentions god's status as a principle, to then rely on the idea that what derives from a principle must be posterior to it.

Of the three auxiliary hypotheses (2.1, 2.2 and 2.3), the third immediately disappears— probably because Alexander has already pointed out the contradiction that the Stoics would fall into if they were to embrace a notion of aether while criticizing this notion in Aristotle. The second hypothesis seems to have been the most popular (as the ὥς που καὶ αὐτοὶ λέγουσιν note and the following καὶ γὰρ… ὑφίστανται show). It is also the one Alexander singles out in other texts.[23] One could then want to interpret the first hypothesis as a procedural requirement, *i.e.* as included only to make sure all options are covered. But in truth, as our other sources show, Alexander's trilemma—rather than simply providing a comprehensive list of theoretical options—testifies to the Stoics' hesitations regarding their own doctrine.[24] For textual sources give conflicting accounts of the composition of *pneuma*—said to be made in turn of one element, of many, or of a particular state of fire perhaps identified with aether.[25]

All three hypotheses depend on a prior and complete identification of god with *pneuma*. Since *pneuma* is made of matter, so god is too. Hence, god cannot be a principle, as its being depends on some other thing than itself. One will then have to admit to the existence of a material god, existing as such before its blend with matter (22.5–7). This admission would ultimately result in the distinction of two states of the

[23] As he does in this very text at *Mixt.* X, 20.17–18, but also in *DA* 26.16–17 (*SVF* 2.786). At *Mant.* 115.9–11, the contrast with fire implies that *pneuma* differs in nature. See also *Mant.* 116.32–34.

[24] Chrysippus himself seems to hesitate between a *pneuma* made solely of fire, or solely of air, or made of both air and water: compare *SVF* 2.443 (2) and 775 on the one hand, with 2.443 (1), and 2.786, 787 and 806 (4) on the other. On this issue, see among others Hahm (1977), 158–174; Lapidge (1978); Hensley (2020), 183–191.

[25] Concerning the last option and the issues surrounding it, see F. Baghdassarian's contribution in this volume. On *pneuma* as aether, see DL VII 139 (*SVF* 2.644) and Rist (1985).

material principle, one being the matter of which god is made, and the other being the matter with which god blends in order to produce all other bodies.

To preserve the consistency of the Stoic argument, one could feel the need to introduce a distinction in their argument. We would then have, first, god as a pure principle, considered in itself before it combines with matter— this "before" having at least a logical priority. And, second, we would have its first combination with matter.[26] In its first state, god would be a principle as "formless"[27] as matter, and, in its second state, it would take on different forms, which, according to a well-known text, are also the many faces of the gods of the pantheon.[28] But such a distinction is far from obvious. Other interpretations take the Stoic god to be immediately and thoroughly identical with an eternal, intelligent *pneuma*, or similarly identical with one of the elements.[29] In any case, Alexander himself does not seem to care much for this possible distinction—perhaps because he finds it shallow: since god is always already blended with matter, "god" as a pure principle would be merely an abstraction, a state of things which never physically actualizes.[30] In fact, his *Commentary on the Metaphysics* describes the Stoic god as a cause always "enmattered".[31] Furthermore, god's immanence is the target of the four arguments in chapter XI. Alexander certainly finds nothing wrong with positing an immanent principle—the hylomorphic form introduced at the beginning of the chapter is precisely that. But the manner in which the Stoics understand god itself and its immanence is problematic. The first argument shows that god's immanence leads to a

[26] Cf. Long and Sedley (1987), T. 1, 271 and 278; Gourinat (2009), 63, for whom "Alexander's criticism seems rather unfair"; see most recently the excellent clarification by R. Salles (2020), especially p. 94–95.

[27] DL VII 134 (*SVF* 2.299–300 = LS 44B) and, on this text, Goulet (2005).

[28] DL VII 147 (*SVF* 2.1021 = LS 54A). See also *SVF* 2.1027 = LS 46A. On the larger issues involved, see Gourinat (2009), 63–64.

[29] See Lapidge (1973); Sorabji (1988), 93; Duhot (1989), 73. Cf. *SVF* 1.154; 2.1009; 2.1027 (LS 46A); 2.1032; 2.1100.

[30] As Zeno himself says (*SVF* 1.88 = LS 44D, cf. the l. 15 *semper*).

[31] *In Met.* 178.15–21 (*SVF* 2.306). On this passage, see Guyomarc'h (2015), 42–45.

confusion of god's nature with matter and, thus, it shows that the Stoic god cannot legitimately claim the status of a principle.

2.2 *Productive Cause*

The second argument shows that an immanent god cannot act as a demiurge. The core of the argument derives from *On Generation and Corruption* II 9, and *Metaphysics* Λ 4—where the productive cause is called external (1070b23). To claim the status of a principle, god ought to be "separate" in all senses of the word, *i.e.* distinct from what it moves and capable of independent existence. What is at stake here is chiefly the nature of principles. But the argument also relates directly to the issue of blending: if god and matter are blended, then one must figure out whether this blend can "generate" (the verb occurs several times) other beings and how it would do so. This brings to mind Aristotle's distinction between mixture and substantial generation in *GC* I 10, which Alexander himself mentions at the beginning of chapter XIV.[32]

Following the two criteria Alexander frequently uses,[33] the second argument no longer aims to simply establish a contradiction between *endoxa*—it rather wants to ground its reasoning in facts (τοῖς γινομένοις, 22.27). It starts with the claim to be refuted (22.14–26):

> Again, one might enquire if it is possible to describe the god that has gone through matter and exists in it as a craftsman of what comes to be from matter. (22.14–17, transl. Todd)[34]

Then Alexander gives a general presentation of the facts which refute it (22.27–23.3)[35] and specifies this general account by listing three cases:

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[32] The Stoic blending of principles must result in a generation which takes place within, rather than simply *on the surface* (ἐπιπολῆς, 22.19–20), as is the case with technical production. But a blending can only ever bring about superficial generation (ἐπιπόλαιος, XV, 35.10–11).

[33] For instance, *Mixt.* II, 5.17–19. See below p. 155.

[34] πρὸς δὲ τούτοις ἐπιζητήσαι τις ἄν, εἰ τῶν ἐκ τῆς ὕλης γενομένων οἷόν τε δημιουργὸν λέγειν τὸν διαπεφοιτηκότα τῆς ὕλης καὶ ὄντα ἐν αὐτῇ θεόν.

[35] I think it necessary here to maintain a strong punctuation after the αὐτά at 22.26—following Bruns rather than Groisard. The refutation begins at 22.27 with "Ταῦτα δὲ οὐχ ὁρῶμεν τοῖς γινομένοις συνᾴδοντα" ("However, we do not see that this agrees with facts").

simple bodies (23.3–8), composite bodies along with living beings (23.8–11) and inanimate beings (23.11–15). And finally, it focuses once more on living beings:

> But also with things generated from semen, what generates them through the emission of semen is outside. (23.15–16, transl. Todd modified)[36]

However, what seems to be a final redundancy in the argument can easily be explained: as J. Groisard points out, Alexander may well want to show that even the case of embryogenesis, which at first sight seems to be completely immanent, requires an external productive cause.[37] Semen is a productive cause of its own, but it also depends on a prior productive cause. We must especially remember at this point, that *Phys.* II 3, 195a21–22 lists semen as a productive cause. But Alexander, precisely on this point, says in his commentary, that "the seed is, in a way, intermediate between the productive and the material cause" and that here too, "the true agent (τοῦ κυρίως ποιοῦντος) (…) must be distinguished from the product".[38] Far from a repetitive coda, semen is a pivotal case: drawing on the Stoic analogy between the action of god and the one of semen, it allows the argument to shift back to the case of god.[39] Hence, like semen, which can act as a productive cause but always requires some prior agent, an immanent god blended with matter would also require a distinct, prior agent—and thus, it could not, once more, legitimately claim to be a principle.

2.3 *Form and Matter*

Once he has distinguished god from the material cause, then confronted the Stoic immanent god with the necessities of its productive function, Alexander attacks the pseudo-formal status of such a god. Maintaining that god is like a form in matter does not contradict the beginning of the chapter: as we have seen before, Alexander's criticism of the Stoics does not target their total ignorance of formal causality, but rather their confusion of formal with material

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[36] ἀλλὰ καὶ οἷς ἡ γέννησις ἀπὸ σπέρματος, ἔξωθεν τὸ γεννῶν διὰ τῆς προέσεως τοῦ σπέρματος.

[37] Groisard (2013), 93.

[38] Simplicius, *In Phys.* 321.10–11, transl. Fleet.

[39] *SVF* 1.87; 1.98; 1.102 (LS 46B); 1.107 (2.596).

causality and their attribution to matter of functions for which another principle is required.

> The implication of their statements seems to be that god is the form of matter; for if, according to them, god is mixed with matter just as the soul is with the body among animals, and god is the power of matter (for they say that matter is qualified[40] by the power in it), they would in a sense mean that god is its form, as the soul is of the body and the power of what is in potentiality. But if this is so, how could matter still be formless in its definition, if its being and stability is derived from the power present in it? Particularly in the conflagration does god appear, according to them, to be the form of matter, since matter and god are the only things preserved in the fire which at that time is, on their view, the only thing existing; for god would then be the form [supervening][41] on the matter of fire. But if this is so, and if fire changes into some other bodies altering its form, god would be destroyed at that time, since change into another body occurs for matter by the destruction of the preexistent form. And if god is the cause of such change he would, according to them, be self-destructive—and what view could be more absurd than this? (23.22–24.14, transl. Todd modified)[42]

I will detail just below what this text tells us of Alexander's relation to Stoic doctrine. But, to better understand the context in which the argument is formulated, let us note beforehand how closely it parallels the first objection. [43] According to my interpretation of the

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[40] Reading the ποιὸν printed in Groisard's text based on Marwan Rashed's suggestion, instead of the manuscripts' ποιεῖ, Ideler's ποεῖν and the ποιὰν Todd argues for in Todd (1973).

[41] This seems to me to be the only way to translate the ἐπί properly (cf., among other passages, *DA* 5.5–6). See Hahm (1977), 33.

[42] ἐοίκασι δὲ δι' ὧν λέγουσιν εἶδος τῆς ὕλης λέγειν τὸν θεόν. εἰ γὰρ οὕτως ὁ θεὸς μέμικται τῇ ὕλῃ κατ' αὐτούς, ὡς ἐν τοῖς ζῴοις ἡ ψυχὴ τῷ σώματι, καὶ ἡ δύναμις τῆς ὕλης ἐστὶ ὁ θεὸς (φασὶ γὰρ τὴν ὕλην ποιὸν τῇ ἐν αὐτῇ δυνάμει), εἶδός πως ἂν λέγοιεν αὐτῆς τὸν θεόν, ὡς τὴν ψυχὴν τοῦ σώματος καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ δυνάμει. ἀλλ' εἰ τοῦτο, πῶς ἂν ἔτι ἡ ὕλη ἀνείδεος εἴη κατὰ τὸν αὐτῆς λόγον, εἴ γε τὸ συμμένειν αὐτῇ καὶ εἶναι ὕλῃ παρὰ τῆς οὔσης ἐν αὐτῇ δυνάμεως; μάλιστα δ' ἐν τῇ ἐκπυρώσει φαίνεται κατ' αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς τῆς ὕλης εἶδος ὤν, εἴ γε ἐν τῷ πυρί, ὃ μόνον ἐστὶ κατ' αὐτοὺς τότε, ἡ ὕλη καὶ ὁ θεὸς [τῆς ὕλης] σώζονται μόνοι. εἴη γὰρ ἂν ὁ θεὸς τότε εἶδος τὸ ἐπὶ τῇ ὕλῃ τοῦ πυρός. εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, μεταβάλλει δὲ τὸ πῦρ εἰς ἄλλα τινὰ σώματα, τὸ εἶδος ἀλλάσσον εἴη ἂν ὁ θεὸς φθειρόμενος τότε, εἴ γε κατὰ φθορὰν τοῦ προυπάρχοντος εἴδους ἡ μεταβολὴ εἰς ἄλλο σῶμα τῇ ὕλῃ γίνεται. καὶ εἰ τῆς τοιαύτης μεταβολῆς ὁ θεὸς αἴτιος, εἴη ἂν ὁ θεὸς κατ' αὐτοὺς φθείρων ἑαυτόν, οὗ τί ἂν ἀτοπώτερον ῥηθείη ποτ' ἄν;

[43] Todd (1976), 225.

argumentative structure in chapter XI, this must be due to the connection between material and formal causes. The text's main claim effectively works in reciprocity with the first objection: in both cases, the two principles are inseparable in such a way that the nature of the one will be mistaken for the nature of the other. On this view, Stoic matter can never be "formless"—while the Stoics hold such formlessness to be one of matter's defining characteristics.[44] And god as a transitory form supervening on matter[45] will never survive the material changes it triggers, which conflicts with the blending requirement as well as with god's alleged divine status.[46]

Differently from the first objection, our passage refers to another moment of cosmic history. Alexander distinguishes between god's state during διακόσμησις, and its state during conflagration. In the latter, god is fire and thus, for Alexander, it is still one with matter (24.4–8). This confirms *a posteriori* that Alexander's sources do not include the notion of a Stoic god which would not be in matter, or which could be, at some moment, without matter.[47] One of his sources on this point could be a document circulated within the Peripatos: our fragment of Aristocles of Messene's *On Philosophy* claims that the two principles are corporeal in nature, and describes god as a "primary fire" and "the element of the things that are".[48] We can suppose that Alexander could access Aristocles' text more easily than other sources which distinguished

[44] On formlessness, see also Cordonier (2008), 365.

[45] Cf. 24.7–8. Supervenience terminology shows how a form conceived in such a way depends on matter for its existence.

[46] The previous passage (23.23) reminds the reader of the blending of principles. On this requirement, cf. *Mixt*. III, 7.5–8 (SVF 2.473 = LS 48C).

[47] The case of conflagration is of particular importance for this issue since Plutarch suggests (at SVF 2.604 and 605 = LS 46E and F) that, during the blaze, the world is only a soul without body, having "used up its matter on itself". Alexander stands in direct opposition to this claim, saying clearly that "matter and god are the only things preserved in the fire". On this issue, see among others Bénatouïl (2009), 31 and Hensley (2018), 211–212 n. 70.

[48] Cf. Aristocles, Fr. 3 Chiesara, p. 17–19, and the commentary p. 76–85.

cleanly between principles and elements[49] (without being required to give credit to the legend according to which Aristocles had been Alexander's teacher[50]).

2.4 *Final Cause*

The last argument takes on a more axiological tone. It could seem weaker on account of being more common.

> Is it not unworthy of our preconception of the deity to say that god pervades the whole of the matter underlying everything and remains[51] in it, whatever it may be like, and has as his principal task the perpetual generation and moulding of anything that can come to be from it; and for them to make god a craftsman of grubs and gnats, like a modeler simply devoting himself to clay, and making everything that can be made from it? (24.15–22, transl. Todd modified)[52]

Certainly, accusations of impiety were commonplace, and the Stoics were not exempt from them.[53] But this argument draws its force from two sources. On the one hand, it derives directly from the double truth criterion, frequently featured in Alexander's works, albeit in various formulations: a true doctrine must agree with preconceptions as well as with the evidence or facts (ἐναργά).[54] One can specify the first

[49] DL VII.134. But, even then, the distinction is not quite stable and has likely changed from one Stoic to another, as Chrysippus's discussion of the meanings of στοιχεῖον shows (*SVF* 2.413 = LS 47A).

[50] Thillet (1984), xi–xiii summarizes the whole affair.

[51] We must read this claim to have a strong meaning, if we want it to be consistent with what precedes: for Alexander, god (always) remains in matter.

[52] Πῶς δ' οὐκ ἀνάξια τῆς θείας προλήψεως τό τε τὸν θεὸν διὰ πάσης τῆς ὑποκειμένης πᾶσιν ὕλης κεχωρηκέναι λέγειν καὶ μένειν ἐν αὐτῇ, ὁποία ποτ' ἂν ᾖ, καὶ τὸ προηγούμενον ἔχειν ἔργον, τὸ ἀεί τι γεννᾶν τε καὶ διαπλάσσειν τῶν ἐξ αὐτῆς γενέσθαι δυναμένων, καὶ ποιεῖν τὸν θεὸν δημιουργὸν σκωλήκων τε καὶ ἐμπίδων, ἀτέχνως ὥσπερ κορόπλαθόν τινα τῷ πηλῷ σχολάζοντα καὶ πᾶν τὸ δυνάμενον ἐξ αὐτοῦ γενέσθαι τοῦτο ποιοῦντα;

[53] See for example Plutarch, *De Iside* 369A or 377C, and Calcidius, *In Tim.* 294, 296.19–297. 3 (*SVF* 1. 87), which is very close to Alexander's accusation. For the criticism against the Stoic conception of an industrious god in particular, see *e.g.* Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* 1.52. Cf. Todd (1976), 226; Bénatouïl (2009).

[54] *Mixt.* II, 5.17–19; XV, 36.15–17; *Prov.* 10 and 31 Ruland; *Fat.* 212.5–7; *Princ.* §§2 and 145. Cf. Adamson (2018); Koch (2019), 33–34; and G. Betegh's contribution in this volume.

requirement to better fit the context: here it includes piety.[55] Alexander will repeat it on the next page: only Aristotle's philosophy is "worthy of divine things" (25.5). But, if piety does belong with preconceptions, there is more at stake in the converse, barely-veiled accusation of impiety directed at the Stoics than a mere conventional issue.[56] It also reiterates the flawed character of Stoic claims, which do not conform to common notions, even though their own theology claims to be based on preconceptions.

The argument also draws significantly on a metaphysical issue. Although the connection may not be of the most obvious kind, I understand this argument to be in relation with final causality, mainly due to its proximity with other texts by Alexander on the same topic. In his criticism of Stoic total providentialism, Alexander maintains that what is for the sake of something else is by necessity inferior to that for the sake of which it is. To say that divine action would be undertaken for the sake of mortals would then amount to a reversal of the priority and perfection of the end regarding the means, or of the principle regarding what it is the principle of.[57] If the first principle of the world is indeed a principle, it cannot be for the sake of something else. As the *De providentia* says, the head of the family does not care for "mice, ants, and everything else alike",[58] these mere "details"[59] being unworthy of god's prior status.

In this text—as T. Bénatouïl has rightfully pointed out [60] —the attention the Stoic god gives to even the smallest particular matters is the last characteristic in a list of traits pertaining to divine activity: the

[55] The topic is more prominent in the *De fato*. See especially 202.26 (where piety is listed with preconceptions) and 203.10–12.

[56] I must here correct what I had myself written on this subject in Guyomarc'h (2017).

[57] *Prov*. 21 Ruland; *Quaestio* II.21, 69.3–5 and 28–31.

[58] *Prov.* 25 Ruland.

[59] Along with the *De providentia* passage cited above, see *De mundo* 6, 398b4–6 and the remarks from Betegh and Gregorić (2020), 199. See also *Mant.* 113.12 (*SVF* 2.1038) and Plutarch, *SVF* 2.1045.

[60] Bénatouïl (2009), 24.

Stoic god (i) "pervades the whole of the matter", so that (ii) its activity is aimed at producing all things, as is (iii) its main and perpetual task, which then (iv) concerns particulars. T. Bénatouïl mentions that these four traits are targeted differently by rival philosophical schools. Thus, (i) is mostly a target for Platonists, (ii) is singled out by Alexander, (iii) by the Epicureans, with (iv) being targeted by all schools equally. That (ii) be a target specifically important to Alexander supports the idea that this argument involves the finality of divine activity.[61]

The last paragraph of Chapter XI is unstable in the manuscript tradition.[62] The initial "πρὸς δὲ τούτοις" can let one believe they are about to read a new argument. On the contrary, I take this paragraph to add to the previous listing of various impious consequences of Stoic theology. However, this ultimate impiety (v) does deserve a special place—for here god is not even an agent, but rather a passive, suffering god:

> and if the bodies that go through one another are blended together, then god too will be blended with matter, and thereby also reciprocally acted on by matter, from which it follows that god is acted on and matter acts. But all of that is absurd. (24.26–25.2, transl. Todd modified and completed)[63]

I thus concur with Todd, who suggests that this passage continues the discussion of providence.[64] A god extending its divine oversight to particulars would jeopardize its own felicity. As the *De fato* explains, since cosmic order does not extend to the particulars and accidents, a particular violation of the divine order is not sufficient to destroy it or the happy state of the universe (τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν τοῦ κόσμου), "just as <the happy state> of the house and its master is not <altogether destroyed> by some negligence or other on the part of the servants".[65] The argument now makes use of the more general categories of action and passion,

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[61] Bénatouïl cites *Prov.* 21 Ruland on exactly this matter (Bénatouïl (2009), 24 n. 6).

[62] *I.e.* 24.28–25.2. See Groisard's notes and commentary.

[63] τὰ δὲ δι' ἀλλήλων χωροῦντα σώματα κιρνᾶται ἀλλήλοις, εἴη τ' ἂν [ἄλληλα] <καὶ ὁ θεὸς κιρνάμενος τῇ ὕλῃ· εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, καὶ ἀντιπάσχων ὑπ' αὐτῆς· οἷς ἕπεται τό τε τὸν θεὸν πάσχειν καὶ τὸ τὴν ὕλην ποιεῖν, ἀλλὰ ταῦτα> <ἄτοπα>.

[64] Todd (1976), 227.

[65] *Fat.* 196.11–12, transl. Sharples. On this text, see also Guyomarc'h (2017), 162–163.

seen through the perspective of blending. The chapter thus ends with a very last denial of the blending of principles, which would lead to a paradoxical reversal of their proper function. Sextus Empiricus uses a similar argument,[66] making it look perhaps a bit commonplace here. But one can wonder whether Alexander's striking "τό τε τὸν θεὸν πάσχειν καὶ τὸ τὴν ὕλην ποιεῖν" is not also an echo of another refutation aimed at the dualism of principles—the refutation of Empedocles by Aristotle.[67]

Chapter XI as a whole strives to show that the world cannot depend on two contrary, blended principles. Throughout, it took god as its more specific target, showing that the Stoic god could not be a principle in any of the meanings of the four Aristotelian causes. The four arguments work together toward the chapter's goal: the Stoic god cannot produce anything while being immanent as a hylomorphic form would be; it cannot be a form if it is material; nor can it be an end in itself if it must superintend worms and bugs.

3 Causal Corporealism and Hylomorphism

The scope of these chapters goes beyond the issue of blending. In his discussion of Stoic principles, Alexander appeals to a number of general requirements that a cosmic principle must meet: priority, ontological independence, incorruptibility and causality.[68] But since the Stoic principles are immanent in any sensible body, Alexander also uses his hylomorphism to attack them. This strategy is problematic. Indeed, one could well suspect that it originates in a significant misunderstanding of

[66] *AM* IX.254 and, on this text, Bronowski (2019), 139.

[67] For instance, *Metaphysics* A 4, 985a23–25. The discussion of blending would provide good justification for a reference to Empedocles, cf. *GC* I 1, 314b7–8, as well as Alexander's use of συναναχιρνᾶται in his commentary to *Metaphysics* A 4, at *In Met.* 35.21–22.

[68] Aristotle discusses these requirements in *Metaphysics* B. On how Alexander's attacks on Stoic principles allow him to develop and test his own conception of the prime mover, see Guyomarc'h (2017).

Stoic ontology:[69] biased by his own hylomorphism, Alexander would have mistakenly turned Stoic corporealism into a material monism. This interpretation portrays the exchange between Alexander and the Stoics as a missed encounter, where two philosophies, led astray by theoretical differences, fail to have a fruitful debate.[70] Alexander would have proven unable to understand Stoic ontology, or—worse—would have twisted it up on purpose to make it more easily refutable, "inventing" or "making up" a "fiction" of "Stoic materialism".[71] He would take Stoic ontology for a "defective"[72] hylomorphism that lacks form, somewhat like Plutarch who considered Stoic physics to be mutilated, taking into account only half of things.[73]

I fully subscribe to the view that, if we are to understand Stoic ontology properly, we must refrain from contaminating it with elements of a foreign doctrine. And I am thoroughly convinced that Stoic ontology is quite different from any version of hylomorphism.[74] Yet, as far as our interpretation of Alexander is concerned, we must distinguish between misunderstanding and refutation. In the previous pages, I have done my best to specify which premises are those which Alexander attributes to the Stoics, and which are those he reformulates. It is two different things to say that we can criticize the Stoics for claiming that god is blended with matter (21.19–20), and to say that what Stoics claim *seems* to mean that god is the form of matter, or—a more accurate translation—that everything is as if they had said so: ἐοίκασι δὲ δι' ὧν λέγουσιν εἶδος τῆς ὕλης λέγειν τὸν θεόν (23.22–23). The repetition of λέγειν and the use of ἔοικα explicitly signal reformulation. Alexander does not take the Stoics to be monists—rather, he credits them for their intuition of what was to be

[69] On there being no such thing as Stoic materialism: Besnier (2003), Gourinat (2009), Sedley (2011). On the issue of Stoic "dualism": Gourinat (2015). On Alexander's distorted reading of Stoicism, see Todd (1976), *e.g.* 26, and other references in notes below.

[70] V. Cordonier ((2009), 357) thus speaks of a "fictional" debate.

[71] Citations are respectively from Cordonier (2007), 102 and Cordonier (2008), 357 and 376.

[72] Cordonier (2008), 366–367.

[73] Plutarch, *Comm. not.*, 1085F–1086A (*SVF* 2.380).

[74] See the convincing plea of V. de Harven (2018).

discovered: hylomorphic form. The doctrine of *pneuma* expresses this intuition: Alexander points out at the beginning of the chapter that *pneuma* has functions similar to those of form—and other sources confirm these functions.[75]

In other words, Alexander's method here appears to me to follow quite closely the dialectical method used in major Aristotelian texts like *Physics* I, *Metaphysics* A or *De anima* I. Certainly, Alexander's case differs to some extant from Aristotle's due to historical reasons: for Alexander, refutation is more significant than reappropriation. For him, the discussion of other philosophies does not primarily serve a heuristic purpose, since the truth is already laid out in Aristotelian texts.[76] Alexander is not fixing his predecessors' mistakes to discover a new theory of blending, but to better defend Aristotle's theory.[77] The refutation of Stoicism can then not be exclusively internal. It will involve the rectification and expansion of the undeveloped Stoic intuition, and it will do so based on the Aristotelian doctrine which Alexander takes to be plainly true.

Given his present circumstances, Alexander undertakes this refutation by focusing on the body.[78] The Stoic ontology of natural bodies may have appeared to be more economical than Aristotelian hylomorphism, and perhaps even twice more economical: (i) the two principles are bodies, which blend to produce other bodies, this being done (ii) via a single type of cause, the efficient cause.[79] It is then crucial

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[75] See Helle (2018), 105, n. 44 who cites especially LS 47: G, J, M and S.

[76] Alexander, *De anima* 2.4–6.

[77] It is worth quoting *De fato* 165.1–5: "But since some doctrines become more clearly established by argument against those who do not hold a similar position (…), I will argue against those who have adopted a different position from <Aristotle> on these matters, so that in the comparison of the positions, the truth becomes clearer to you" (transl. Sharples).

[78] On this point, I thoroughly agree with V. Cordonier (2007) and (2008).

[79] In his Letter 65, Seneca famously opposes the "*turba causarum*" in Plato and Aristotle (65.14), to the single type of cause defended by the Stoics ("*Stoicis placet unam causam esse, id, quod facit*." 65.4). Alexander's charge against the Stoics' "swarm of causes" must be understood in this context (*Fat.* 192.18, "σμῆνος… αἰτίων"). See Vogt (2018).

for Alexander to show that introducing an incorporeal form, on the one hand, and four distinct causes, on the other, in an account of natural bodies, will not result in costly, undue complications. To this end, he must show that the Stoic ontological uniformisation must be rejected because of the confusion it creates. He will have to show (i) that a body cannot be a principle, or some fundamental entity, since all bodies are by nature compounds. Then, he will need to show (ii) that causation cannot be primitive,[80] but rather that a body can only act like a cause due to the nature of its constitutive parts.[81]

As I take it, *De mixtione* XI does a part of this work.[82] The chapter does not settle for the trivial claim that all bodies must be material. Its power grab results from a more refined strategy: the introduction of a composition and constitution framework. Chapter XI lays bodies open to reveal the need to posit distinct constituents in them, heterogeneous regarding each other and the body they compose. Composition is mentioned in the first objection. Let us cite the text:

> But if it were (2.1) one of the four bodies or (2.2) a compound of them, then the body that is generated from matter will have pervaded it before it comes to be and will generate itself too from it just like other things. Again, god would be posterior to matter since all enmattered body is posterior to matter; for what is derived from a principle is posterior to it, and god is such a body, for he is certainly not identical with matter. (22.4–10)

However, taken in itself, the body that is the Stoic god is precisely not "made of …" anything: it is simple, basic[83] and an agent in itself.[84] Alexander's argument begins with an implicit denial of this claim, making it impossible for a body to not be "generated *from* matter" (*ἐκ* τῆς ὕλης) or enmattered. Likewise, the final clause "god is such a body, for he is certainly not identical with matter" echoes Alexander's refusal of god's simplicity. It contains an implicit premise, which is explicated in the *De*

[80] I take this formulation from de Harven (2018), 9.

[81] *In De sens.* 73, 18–21 (where the Stoics are mentioned); *DA* 7, 9–14. Kupreeva (2003), 307–315.

[82] The rest is done in the *De anima*; cf. Kupreeva (2003); Guyomarc'h (2015), 228 *sq.*

[83] De Harven (2018), 6.

[84] See also Bronowski (2019), 146–148.

anima and attributed to the Stoics as "every body is either matter or composed from matter (ἐξ ὕλης)."[85] Another version—about the soul—provides an even more specific formulation: "every body other than matter is such (*i.e.* composed from matter and form) on their view."[86] But here—as in the *De mixtione*—Alexander cannot reasonably ignore that the Stoics are not truly hylomorphists: he is criticizing them expressly for their lack of a fully developed concept of form.[87] The premise "every body is either mat ter or from matter" is part of the refutation: it is the way Alexander imposes on the Stoics the perspective of composition, that is, his own refusal to consider body as a basic and primitive entity.[88] Alexander is not reporting here what the Stoics say, but what, according to him, follows from their doctrine. It is just as if Alexander said to the Stoics: You have this idea that we need two distinct principles to create sensible bodies (or, in the *De anima*: You want to preserve the notion of soul), but then bring your idea to its last consequences and accept that there are incorporeal forms and that bodies are compounds of heterogeneous constituents. In the *De mixtione*, Alexander's argument becomes robust since it implies a total identification of god with *pneuma* by the Stoics. At this point, a Stoic ought to reply that the divine body is a *tertium quid* in the "either matter or composed from matter" dilemma, which applies exclusively to ordinary bodies and to only one of the two principles. But this *tertium quid* is precisely what Alexander rejects or ignores.

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[85] *DA* 17.15–16 = *SVF* 2.394. On the punctuation in this passage, see Caston (2012), 100 n. 162. On whether this claim can be legitimately attributed to the Stoics, Cordonier (2008).

[86] *DA* 19.3–5: καὶ γὰρ εἰ σῶμα ἡ ψυχή, καὶ σῶμα οὐχ ὡς ἡ ὕλη, ἔσται ἐξ ὕλης καὶ εἴδους, εἴ γε πᾶν σῶμα κατ' αὐτοὺς τῷ παρὰ τὴν ὕλην τοιοῦτον; "For if the soul is a body, and a body not in the way that matter is, it will be composed from matter and form, given that every body other than matter is such on their view" (transl. Caston).

[87] See again Kupreeva (2003), especially 316–320.

[88] See *DA* 5.18–6.20, which starts by stating that "Neither of the simple body's basic components, then, is a body." (σῶμα μὲν οὖν οὐδέτερόν ἐστιν, ἐξ ὧν πρώτων τὸ ἁπλοῦν ἐστι σῶμα) and goes on to show that neither matter nor form are bodies.

However, the Stoics would still not escape Alexander's refutation if they were to admit some incorporeal form in their ontology. The problem for Stoicism is not caused by an incomplete hylomorphism: their notion of matter itself is flawed. For Alexander, matter properly understood is not a body any more than form is.[89] We have seen this in the third argument of chapter XI: the uniformisation resulting from the Stoic extension of the notion of body leads to a confusion of the two principles' nature, and this impacts matter just as well as god. It is impossible for matter to be a body since it does not exist by itself just on its own: its "stability is derived from the power present in it" (24.3–4). Here again, Alexander sifts through the Stoic claims in order to obtain a more fine-grained account of the non-corporeal constituents of bodies—for bodies are compounds, *i.e.* entities ontologically posterior to their principles.

True to Aristotelian ontology, Alexander's argumentative strategy gives us a typical example of "constituent ontology",[90] *i.e.* an ontology in which sensible particulars are what they are thanks to their immanent constituents, rather than thanks to their relation (by participation or instantiation) to some thing other than themselves. Stoic ontology, on the other hand, is neither a constituent ontology, nor a relational ontology. One may well call it a causal corporealism, where the building blocks of reality are bodies immediately defined by their causal role: to be is to be a body, and to be a body is to be able to act and/or to be acted upon. Alexander's attempt to refute the Stoic doctrine of principles requires him to introduce the framework of bodily composition. Because only composition can act as a sieve for the concept of blending, allowing Alexander to extract and remove from it the coarse-grained, overextended Stoic concept of body.

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[89] *DA* 5.19, with explanations at 4.4–9 and 4.22–27. Matter "properly understood" is here the matter of the simple bodies, which is 'matter' in the proper sense. Alexander states at 4.4–6 that matter in compound bodies "is not matter simply (οὐχ ἁπλῶς) as such, because it is conjoined with a form", while in simple bodies "their matter is matter in the fundamental sense and simply (κυρίως καὶ ἁπλῶς) as such" (4.6–8, transl. Caston).

[90] The term is originally Nicholas Wolterstorff's. On its application to Aristotelian ontology, see especially Loux (2006), and van Inwagen (2011).

However different these ontologies may be, they still meet on common ground: both aim to explain the nature of concrete bodily particulars and to account for the empirical phenomenon of blending. The careful and considerate manner in which Alexander conducts his refutation shows that, despite his criticism of the Stoics for their "paradoxes", he takes their theory of blending and their conception of principles very seriously. Do recall how, in Chapter II, those who take matter to be discrete are promptly sidelined because of their "theory of principles": since it has "nothing reasonable", we can dispense with further investigation into their account of blending.[91] The Stoic theory, however, does warrant further examination. I take chapters XI–XII to carry out such an examination. We now need to see how exactly it proceeds.

4 Is Chapter XII the End of a Digression?

As I have said above, the scope of these chapters goes beyond the issue of blending. But does this mean that they "digress" from the treatise's main arc? The beginning of chapter XII might lead us to think that:

> But [92] I was provoked into this argument because of those who deny Aristotle's theory of the fifth body, and who ambitiously attempt to resist the only theories worthy of divine things, while absolutely [93] failing to see the stupidity of their statements, when their central and major philosophical beliefs depend on and take their support from the remark able belief that body goes through body. (25.3–10, transl. Todd modified)[94]

[91] *Mixt.* II, 5.7–12.

[92] Following Todd, I preserve here the ἀλλὰ based on Brinkmann's (1902), 488–491 erudite argument.

[93] I am in full agreement with J. Groisard's translation of τὴν ἀρχὴν as an adverb: Alexander commonly uses the expression adverbially, cf. Groisard (2013), 96. The text does not support that idea that the Stoics would not really have committed to the "body going through body" doctrine, as Todd (1976), 228 claims in his commentary on this passage.

[94] <Ἀλλὰ> ταῦτα μὲν εἰπεῖν προήχθην διὰ τοὺς ἀντιλέγοντας μὲν Ἀριστοτέλει περὶ τοῦ πέμπτου σώματος καὶ τοῖς μόνοις κατ' ἀξίαν τῶν θείων εἰρημένοις ἐνίστασθαι πειρωμένους διὰ φιλοτιμίαν, τῆς δὲ ἀτοπίας τῶν ὑφ' αὑτῶν λεγομένων μηδὲ τὴν ἀρχὴν συνιέντας, οἷς καὶ

The passive start of the sentence appears to make the Stoics responsible for the previous development. The mention of aether—which does not seem to have anything to do with the issues covered in this treatise—furthers the impression that we have read an excursus. But, on the contrary, the reference to aether should alert us: chapter XI has mentioned aether only once—and quite fleetingly—in the first objection. Alexander rejects the possibility that divine *pneuma* may be made of aether so hastily that one could hardly see how this issue could have, on its own, justified the developments of chapter XI in its entirety, much less of chapters X–XI.

A straightforward alternative interpretation would be the following. The start of XII mentions a debate about the fifth body in reference to the more general discussion of the principles. As Fabienne Baghdassarian has shown,[95] the claim that aether is a fifth body entails a number of Alexander's most crucial claims, all incompatible with Stoicism.[96] For instance, the claim that it is a *fifth* body, rather than some state of fire[97] amounts to distinguishing the sublunary realm from the superlunary one, which leads to cosmic differentiation.[98] But chapter X has shown precisely that this differentiation is in fact a connection: as a constituent of the divine body, the fifth body is a cause. Specifically, it is a cause of the cyclical transformation of the other elements (18.16–22)—as chapter XI quickly points out (23.4–8)—and, more generally, a cause of the preservation of the unity of a differentiated cosmos (18.15–16). The debate of whether aether is a fifth body or some peculiar state of one of the four elements[99] must certainly have had serious implications for both Stoics and Peripatetics. The rest of the opening sentence of chapter

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τὰ κυριώτατα καὶ μέγιστα τῶν κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν δογμάτων ἤρτηται καὶ τὴν κατασκευὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ θαυμαστοῦ δόγματος ἔχει τοῦ 'σῶμα χωρεῖν διὰ σώματος'.

[95] See above, p. 138.

[96] Concerning Alexander's stance on aether, see Moraux's synthesis in Moraux (1963), 1238–1240; on its importance in Alexander's cosmology, see Rashed (2007), 288–289.

[97] DL VII 137–138; Cicero *ND* 1.37, 2.83 and 118; Lapidge (1973), 277–278.

[98] Cf. also Groisard's similar comment at Groisard (2013), 95.

[99] See the elements gathered in Kupreeva (2009), 151–156 and, above, Baghdassarian, 137 n.56.

XII—which broadens the discussion to include "divine things"—testifies to that.

This interpretation still allows for chapter XII to be a digression. The rest of the chapter even seems to further confirm that:

> For their theory of blending does not rely on something else, but their statements on the soul depend on it, and their notorious Fate and their universal Providence gain conviction from this, as well as their <theory> of principles and god, and the unification of the universe and its sympathy to itself; for the god that pervades matter is all of these things for them. (25.10–17, transl. Todd modified)[100]

The text distinguishes the Stoic theory of blending from other theories, some of which have been brought up in chapter IX (in truth, all except fate). These theories all depend on the main claim that body goes through body—as the previous line points out—but, here, they seem listed as if they were independent lines of inquiry within Stoic philosophy. If this were the case, the reference to soul in chapter IX, or the more allusive reference to providence in chapter X would indeed indicate digressions, these issues being distinct from the one of blending.

However, the passage then ends by connecting all these separate lines of inquiry to the god that pervades matter[101]—a radical, but accurate summary of Stoic philosophy. Chapter XI has precisely claimed that, for the Stoics, "god is mixed with matter just as the soul is with the body" (23.23–24), and that this blending is the one responsible for fate and providence.[102] This means that Alexander himself is the one who decides to introduce a distinction, here, between the Stoic claims about blending and their claims about principles—despite having previously accounted for why the Stoics spoke of a blending of principles. This is

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[100] ὅ τε γὰρ περὶ κράσεως αὐτοῖς λόγος οὐκ ἐν ἄλλῳ τινί, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ περὶ ψυχῆς ὑπ' αὐτῶν λεγόμενα ἐντεῦθεν ἤρτηται ἥ τε πολυθρύλλητος αὐτοῖς εἱμαρμένη καὶ ἡ τῶν πάντων πρόνοια δὲ τὴν πίστιν λαμβάνουσιν, ἔτι τε τὸ περὶ ἀρχῶν τε καὶ θεοῦ καὶ ἡ τοῦ παντὸς ἕνωσίς τε καὶ συμπάθεια πρὸς αὐτό. πάντα γὰρ αὐτοῖς ταῦτ' ἐστὶν ὁ διὰ τῆς ὕλης διήκων θεός.

[101] I take πάντα to refer to all the items listed since the beginning (25.10) of the text cited in the previous note.

[102] On the distinction of these two terms, see *SVF* 2.933 = LS 54U.

the first clue pointing to the result of the discussion led in chapters IX–XI, *i.e.* that blending applies solely to ordinary bodies and cannot apply to relations between the principles of such bodies.

We will find the last argument in favour of digression at the start of chapter XIII, where the exposé on Aristotelian doctrine begins: Ἐπανίωμεν δὲ ἐπὶ τὸν ἐξ ἀρχῆς λόγον (27.1).[103] But this does not indicate any digression. Alexander, as he frequently does, is here inaccurately quoting or paraphrasing Aristotle, at *De anima* II 1, 412a4: πάλιν δ' ὥσπερ ἐξ ὑπαρχῆς ἐπανίωμεν (in Shields' translation: "Let us start anew, as if from the beginning …"). The proposition in Alexander slightly differs in structure from the Aristotelian version, most likely because it is more of a reminiscence than an exact quotation. But the two occupy similar positions: the start of *De mixtione* XIII concludes a critical examination and opens way to a positive line of argument, which supports the idea of it referring implicitly to the *De anima* passage. Yet no one would ever consider *De anima* I to be a "digression". As is often the case in Aristotle, the formulation means that the investigation needs to be taken up again from its very basis.[104]

But now that we know that chapters IX–XII do not depart from the main argument, we must try and understand their purpose. To this end, let us simply go back to the cases listed at the start of chapter IX: tension, nature, body and soul, and light (IX, 17.15–18.2),[105] to which we can add *pneuma* and the principles. All these cases have something in common: they do not meet the first requirement for Aristotelian blending detailed in chapter XIII—they are not cases of blending between subsisting bodies, which means that they are not cases of blending *at all.*[106] None

[103] Todd (1976), 211–212; Groisard (2013), 97. Todd (see (1976), 180) thinks that this refers to a lost part of chapter I.

[104] *Phys.* I (192b3–4) is another occurrence. The formulation is different (πάλιν δ' ἄλλην ἀρχὴν ἀρξάμενοι λέγωμεν), but the idea is similar, and it also appears after the dialectical investigation of predecessors. See also *Phys.* VIII 3, 254a17; VIII 7, 260a20–21; *DA* I 1, 403b16 (with λόγος); *Metaphysics* Z 17, 1041a7.

[105] I will discuss the fire and iron case below.

[106] In the background of this discussion, there could also be an exegetical move on Alexander's part, namely to resolve a tension between *GC* I 10 and II 7 (the latter seems

of these entities possesses the independent existence which would lead to an authentic blending. Chapter XIII does not make this the first requirement for true blending by accident. In Alexander's mind, not only are the Stoics wrong when they speak of these cases as "blending"—they are so "paradoxical" on the matter that they even take these cases to be prime examples of blending, especially the case of god "pervading matter". To confront such claims—*a fortiori* the one that the two principles blend—cannot reasonably constitute a digression. From the Stoic perspective, the blending of god with matter is not a particular case, *i.e.* it does not instantiate a general rule—it is rather the archetype for it. Meanwhile, from the Aristotelian point of view, all the Stoic cases are either exceptions or examples that refute what they are held to illustrate—and it is crucial to deal with them before one starts the investigation into blending anew.

Thus, chapters IX–XII serve to refute blending as an explanation for the Stoic cases, in order to lead to the first requirement for Aristotelian blending. We have seen this refutation at work in the case of god and matter. Claiming that they are blended results, on the one hand, in a mistake about their nature as principles, and on the other hand, in a series of misunderstandings about the notion of blending itself—blending is mistaken for generation (second objection in chapter XI) and, consequently, it is a blending where one of the blended ingredients would not survive (third objection). These Stoic misunderstandings come from a profound error. For, properly speaking, there should not be any blending taking place between god and matter, since (against the Stoic claims and against their ontological uniformisation) god and matter cannot be bodies. If the entirety of Stoic physics rests on the god-matter pseudo-blending, then their physics entire is doomed from the start—which causes their general theory of blending to fall.

Alexander uses the final section of chapter XII (25.18–26.26) to discuss the case of the blending of fire and iron, having yet already

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to speak of qualities blending, not substances). See De Haas in this volume, 95, n.38 and Krizan (2018).

covered it in chapter IX.[107] We are now better equipped to understand this additional discussion. Alexander's investigation continues its ascent towards principles. It returns to one of its earliest motifs, as in a chiastic structure, and focuses on a fundamental premise for the Stoic account of blending: coextension (1.12–13). The blending of fire and iron appears to provide the Stoics with an excellent case of coextension (25.18–22). However, in the distinction between standard cases of blending (involving true bodies) and non-standard cases (involving things which may or may not be bodies), fire and iron seem to be a borderline case. For both Stoics and Aristotelians, fire and iron are bodies. But for Aristotelians, red-hot iron is neither a case of blending, nor a case of coextension. Chapter IX brought up red-hot iron to deny that it constitutes a blending—chapter XII now takes coextension as its target. What changed between IX and XII? The introduction of hylomorphic constitution in Alexander's argument has weakened the Stoic attempt to expand the notion of body.[108] Phenomenally, the case of fire and iron will appear convincing: they effectively seem coextensive and blended. But shifting the perspective from compounds to their hylomorphic constituents exposes the trumpery: there is no coextension and no blending, because the ingredients are not preserved. The fire burning in the hearth and the one burning in the iron are not the same fire, because their matter is not the same (26.11–20). But this logical and ontological gap—in I. Kupreeva's formulation[109]—appears only to one who has opened up bodies to find non-corporeal principles inside. As a result, the argument can place the red-hot iron case among non-standard cases.

The purpose of chapters IX–XII is to refine the concept of blending by limiting what counts as a body. To attack the Stoics for whom everything and anything blends, Alexander restates Aristotle's account of blending. In *On Generation and Corruption*, Aristotle also sought to

[107] F. Baghdassarian (p. 127–130 in this volume) has provided a detailed analysis of this case. See also Kupreeva (2004), 305–308.

[108] The change comes out even more clearly if one looks at the parallel case of incense (at VI, 3.13–20), which is analyzed without the concepts of matter or form.

[109] Kupreeva (2004), 308.

develop a narrower account of blending and to control its extension and intension—by opposing Empedocles' cosmic blending (for instance at I 1, 314b7–8)[110] and by distinguishing blending from absolute generation (I 10). But in his own strife against the Stoics, Alexander faces a more demanding task, for he also has to develop a more specific concept of body. This is exactly why he brings hylomorphism—without which no account of blending can be given—into the discussion. In these chapters, Alexander makes us pivot smoothly from a Stoic ontology to an Aristotelian one.[111]

[110] Groisard (2016), 69–72.

[111] Thanks to Jeanne Allard for translating my text. I owe warm thanks to Matyáš Havrda for sharing his English translation of *De mixtione* XI and XII with me: I am deeply indebted to his translation for my changes to Todd's translation. I also want to express my gratitude to Brill's anonymous reviewer for their invaluable suggestions.