

CHAPTER 8

Two conceptions of soul in Aristotle

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Aristotle appears to employ two methods when he investigates the soul. What is striking about these two methods is that they yield importantly different, and *prima facie* incompatible, views about what souls are.

Method 1: To understand life is to understand the various vital capacities (*δυνάμεις τῆς ψυχῆς*) that are exercised within and by living organisms. In general, to understand a capacity one must first look to the activity that is the capacity's actualization and to understand an activity one must first look to the proper class of objects upon which the activity is directed.

Soul as Capacities (via Method 1): The soul is a multiplicity of independently specifiable and (in some cases) separable capacities that are, in advanced organisms, related to one another in a manner that effects a unity of soul over and above the multiplicity.

Method 2: To understand life is to understand its principle (*ἀρχή*). Living organisms are natural unities; the principle of their vital movements and activities is a single, unitary nature (*φύσις*). In general, to understand a nature is to understand the single formal end for the sake of which the activities that have this nature as their principle occur.

Soul as Nature (via Method 2): The soul, a living organism's form, is a nature. This single, unitary nature is the principle and end of all of a living organism's vital activities.

How these conceptions of soul follow from the two methods, the precise ways in which these conceptions of soul differ from one another, and the consequences these differences have for achieving that most fine and prized knowledge that an inquiry into soul promises will become clear as we proceed. But it is important to note right from the beginning that how one

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reconciles these two conceptions will determine to a large extent what it is for a living organism to be a substance.

The first method emphasizes the complexity of living organisms but has difficulty accounting for their substantial unity. If one begins with each of the capacities individually, it is difficult to see how, once the inquiry is complete, one is left with anything more than a mere collection. Whatever it is that effects a unity among these capacities will be posterior to the capacities themselves and this posteriority appears to preclude living organisms from being proper substances.

The second method emphasizes the unity of living organisms but has difficulty accounting for their complexity. According to the second conception of soul, the various activities that occur in the coming to be and continuation of a life arise from a single, unitary, internal principle of movement and rest and occur for the sake of a single formal end. But how, on this conception, are we to countenance capacities that can be specified in a form-independent manner, a manner that would make it legitimate to describe two kinds of organism, say dogs and humans, as possessing the same part or capacity of soul (e.g. perception)? And more generally, how are we to legitimize talk about vital capacities, parts of soul, and organic complexity at all if souls are unitary?

We can view these two methods as presenting us with an *aporia*. It is a familiar *aporia* in which the demands of unity and multiplicity are at odds. My goal is to diffuse the *aporia* in the typical Aristotelian fashion by reconciling the competing accounts of soul these methods yield.

Most contemporary interpreters of Aristotle emphasize the first method. Indeed, Aristotle seems to follow it himself in *de Anima*. He first discusses nutrition, then perception, then thought, and these discussions, as we will see, appear to be largely independent. But the virtues of the second method, in my opinion, have not received the attention they deserve. I aim to show that taking the second conception of soul to be primary puts one in a position to reconcile these opposing views. To defend the priority of the second conception in a manner that serves as a reconciliation rather than the acceptance of one horn of a dilemma over its rival, at least two things must be done. First, I have to show why Aristotle proceeds in the way he does in *de Anima*.

(Q1) Why does Aristotle treat the nutritive, perceptive, and rational capacities in a sequence and provide accounts of these parts of soul that are separable in account?

Second, I have to show how a unitary soul can manifest the complexity Aristotle attributes to it.

(Q2) What is it for a unitary soul to comprise various parts and capacities?

I will first develop these two methods and their corresponding conceptions of soul in turn (sections two and three). These discussions are largely expository; my goal in these sections is simply to present and motivate the opposing conceptions of soul. The heavy lifting occurs in section four, where I defend the second conception's centrality.

I first answer Q1 (in the first part of section four). In *de Anima*, Aristotle is not simply giving accounts of the vital capacities. He is trying to explain what it is *to be* a vital capacity. I will show why it is important to distinguish two questions – (i) For a particular vital capacity, what is it? and (ii) What is it for any capacity, given what it is, to be vital? – and will argue that the second question is central to Aristotle's project. In short, Aristotle aims to reveal what unites the various ways life manifests itself. To do so is to understand what makes them instances of living at all. And without this understanding, neither the soul nor life could be the subject of a single and properly scientific inquiry. I then answer Q2 (in the second part of section four). Aristotle approaches the unity of the ways life manifests itself across species by considering how the hierarchically ordered capacities that underlie these vital activities are united in (relatively advanced) individuals. This individual unity consists in one or more lower souls being present potentially (*dunamai*) in the single, higher soul that is the individual organism's nature. I analyze what it is for a soul to be present *dunamai* in this way. It is this final section that contains the most sustained argument for the conception of soul as unitary nature.

The soul as capacities

The passages that lead interpreters to prioritize capacities in their accounts of the soul begin in *de Anima* 11.2. Aristotle says,

We say, then, making a beginning of our inquiry, that that which has soul is distinguished from that which has not by life. But life is so spoken of in many ways (πλεοναχῶς δὲ τοῦ ζῆν λεγομένου), and we say that a thing lives if but one of the following is present. (413a20–23)¹

¹ Translations, with occasional minor changes, are taken from Hamlyn (2002) and Barnes (1984).

This is a familiar sort of inquiry. We begin with what is most obvious (φανερώτερος) and proceed to what is ultimately more intelligible and can ground satisfactory explanations (κατὰ τὸν λόγον γνωριμώτερος, 413a11–13). Aristotle takes at least two things to be obvious. First, an inquiry into soul is an inquiry into life, since he simply introduces the soul as the principle of living beings (I.1, 402a6–7; II.2, 413b11–13). Second, we attribute life (and therefore souls) to numerous entities on the basis of what initially appear to be wildly different activities.

Aristotle identifies four different types of activity that we readily recognize as ways life is expressed (413a23–25):

- (1) intellect/thought (νοῦς),
- (2) perception (αἴσθησις),
- (3) movement and rest in respect of place (κίνησις καὶ στάσις ἢ κατὰ τόπον), and
- (4) nutrition, decay, and growth (κίνησις ἢ κατὰ τροφήν καὶ φθίσις τε καὶ αὔξησις).

We take something to be alive, says Aristotle, if it displays one of these types of activity.²

Each of the four types of life activity is then said to be the exercise of an underlying capacity or power of soul. Aristotle says that “for the present let it be enough to say only that the soul is the principle of the [activities] mentioned above and is divided into these” –

- (1) the nutritive capacity (τὸ θρεπτικόν),
- (2) the perceptual capacity (τὸ αἰσθητικόν),
- (3) the capacity for thinking (τὸ διανοητικόν), and
- (4) movement (κίνησις) (413b11–13).

Though ordered differently, the capacities mentioned here correspond to the previous list of activities that capture the basic ways life is said. The basic life activities are the exercises of these capacities of soul.

At this point, many commentators think Aristotle has settled on thinking of the soul as somehow a collection of capacities for the activities we all recognize as modes of living. Indeed, it is not difficult to find many passages like this:

² This is not establishing what life is (or means) but is giving an empirical test. On the basis of what marks could you divide what there is into the living and the non-living? Answer: If something manifests any of these four types of activity, then one can conclude that it is alive. Cf. Matthews (1992).

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Aristotle's statement that the most appropriate account of the soul is the one which picks out these capacities, already suggests the thought that perhaps the soul just *is* these capacities. This thought is confirmed when we notice that Aristotle speaks of the capacities as *parts* of the soul. (Sorabji 1974, 64)

The transition from speaking of capacities as parts of the soul to the claim that the soul simply is these capacities is too quick. Its validity depends on what it is to be a part (μέρος/μέριον) of soul.

One problem with Sorabji's claim is that it does not take into account the fact that Aristotle's use of 'part' is more restrictive than his use of 'capacity' (δύναμις). Aristotle is clear that we must distinguish vital capacities that are parts of soul from vital capacities that are not.

For those who divide the soul into parts, if they divide and separate them according to capacities, they [sc. the parts of the soul] will become very numerous (πέμππολλα) – the nutritive capacity, the perceptual capacity, the capacity to understand, the capacity to deliberate, and, furthermore, the capacity to desire. (III.10, 433b1–4)

These are not the only vital capacities Aristotle mentions. There is also the capacity to imagine, to remember, to feel pleasure and pain, to dream, and to form opinions (III.9, 432a22–b7). Why not add others still, like the capacity to perform arithmetic, or to skip, or to curl one's tongue, or to pass gas? Without some prioritization, without taking some of these capacities to be more fundamental than others, systematic inquiry into the soul would be impossible and the soul could not serve as a living organism's principle of unity.

But even if we recognize that not every vital capacity is a part of soul, it is still unclear whether Aristotle's willingness to speak of souls as having parts supports the view that the soul is somehow a collection of those fundamental capacities that possess the elevated status of parthood. Some recent attempts to distinguish the soul's parts from its capacities do support this conclusion. And it is important to see how these interpretations of the part/capacity distinction lead to the view that the soul is, in a sense, its parts. I will use the recent and representative account that Corcilius and Gregoric (2010) offer as a concrete example.

According to Corcilius and Gregoric, the soul's parts are "the fundamental aspects of the soul which cannot be explained with reference to one another or to any other capacity of the soul whereas all other capacities can be explained with reference to one or several of them" (*ibid.*, 89). That is, the parts of the soul are those vital capacities that are separable in account

from all other vital capacities, where separability in account is defined as follows.

separability in account: x is definitionally independent of y , i.e. x has an account or definition which makes no reference to y . (*ibid.*, 114)

The nutritive, the perceptual, and the thinking capacities satisfy this criterion. The nutritive capacity is a capacity to maintain its possessor as such while food prepares it for its activity (11.4, 416b17–19). The perceptual capacity is a capacity to receive sensible forms without matter (11.12, 424a17–19). The thinking capacity is a capacity to receive intelligible forms or to grasp essential features (11.4, 429a13–17). These definitions do not refer to any other vital capacity. But the accounts of all other vital capacities must refer to at least one of these three.³

So, according to this criterion, the number of basic capacities is manageable. But how are we to view their copresence in an individual as more than a mere collection? Aristotle insists that the soul is not a collection; the soul is a unity. How are we to account for this unity?

There are several ways to respond to this question. I will discuss two proposals. The first grounds the soul's unity in the physical overlap of an organism's physiological systems. The second grounds the soul's unity in relations of teleological subordination.

Unity of soul as the physical overlap of physiological systems

In the following passage, Jennifer Whiting suggests that the soul's unity is due, at least in part, to the partial physical overlap of physiological systems that are, with relevant qualifications, functionally modular and thereby separable in place.

The nutritive and reproductive capacities are embodied in one physiological system . . . while the capacities of perception, imagination, and desire are embodied in a different physiological system. Each of these physiological

³ For example, the locomotive capacity is not a part of the soul, according to Corcilius and Gregoric, because its account must refer to the perceptual capacity. Aristotle employs other notions of difference and separability in *de Anima*. Corcilius and Gregoric discuss three of these: difference in account, separability in place, and existential separability (*ibid.*, 114). Jennifer Whiting (2002) uses separability in place (which she construes slightly differently than Corcilius and Gregoric do) to determine whether a capacity is a part. On her interpretation, the parts of soul are the nutritive, the locomotive, and the thinking. What is important for our purposes, however, is not which capacities are parts, but an appreciation of the sorts of general considerations that are used to identify the parts and the general picture of the soul that results.

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systems is centered in one and the same organ (namely the heart), which helps to explain their unity with one another. But each can (at least in some circumstances) *function* relatively independently of the other. (Whiting 2002, 152)⁴

Cardiocentrism is not the only way in which an organism's physiological systems can overlap physically. For example, Aristotle observes that we can cut some insects into segments in such a way that each segment continues to live. Moreover, each segment keeps all the vital capacities that the insect had prior to being divided (*DA* 11.2, 413b16–24; 1.4, 409a9–10). Aristotle admits that the physical overlap of an insect's physiological systems is not complete; the segments may not persist for long because the division may exclude some organs that are necessary for self-preservation (1.5, 411b19–27). But the fact that the segments continue to live and are able to exercise all of their vital capacities for any significant duration is evidence that their physiological systems exhibit more physical overlap than our systems do.

But why can't there be organisms with physiological systems that exhibit less or even no physical overlap? Plato, at least in the *Timaeus* (44d; 69c–72d), thinks that *we* are such organisms. The rational part of the soul is located in the head, the spirited in the chest, and the appetitive in the abdomen with no physical overlap.

Perhaps Plato's description of our physiological systems is not really possible. Perhaps cardiocentrism, or some other significant physical overlap, is a minimal condition for any animal's vital capacities to be embodied. But even if the souls of animals and humans require this sort of physical overlap, there is nothing about the notion of physical overlap itself that would explain the soul's unity. Aristotle says explicitly that the only explanation of unity in the vicinity occurs in the opposite direction.

If, then, its [sc. the soul's] nature admits of its being divided, what can it be that holds the parts together? Surely not the body; on the contrary it seems rather to be the soul that holds the body together. (1.5, 411b6–8)

In fact, if the body (or anything else other than the soul) were “that which makes the soul one, this would have the best right to the name of soul” (411b9–10). There must be something about the soul itself that makes it a unity and there must be something about being ensouled itself that makes an ensouled organism a unity. Even if our physiological systems overlap

⁴ To be fair, it is unclear from the passage whether this cardiocentrism explains the unity of the soul's capacities or whether it simply explains a systemic unity that obtains among the embodied physiological systems. It is nevertheless useful for present purposes to view the passage's concern to be the former, i.e. the unity of soul.

physically, to use this fact to explain the soul's unity is to reverse the proper order of explanation.

Unity of soul as teleological subordination

A more promising proposal is that the capacities of soul are a unity because they form a series ordered by the relation 'being for the sake of'. For example, according to Mariska Leunissen, the unity of an organism's vital capacities consists in a bottom-up ontological nesting and top-down teleological subordination. She says "the ontological hierarchy of nested capacities is . . . a 'taxonomical' hierarchy in which the more basic capacities constitute a necessary prerequisite for the existence of the higher and in which the realization of the more complex capacities contributes to the goals pursued by the basic ones" (Leunissen 2010, 59). It is the second condition, the claim that the operations of the ontologically higher capacities occur for the sake of the ontologically lower capacities, that is supposed to effect a unity of soul.⁵

What does it mean for a higher capacity's exercises to be for the sake of those of a lower capacity? Aristotle makes a distinction between two senses in which something can be for the sake of something else. He says, "that for the sake of which is twofold – the purpose for which and the beneficiary for whom (τὸ μὲν οὖ, τὸ δὲ ὅ)'' (II.4, 415b2–3).⁶ In its original context, a discussion of the nutritive soul, the application of this distinction is fairly straightforward: the nutritive soul is for the sake of reproduction, its aim and purpose are participation in the divine and eternal, and its beneficiary is the living organism.⁷ But we can employ the second sense of being for the sake of, the sense that involves a beneficiary, to relate an organism's vital capacities.

Perceptual capacities in general, and touch in particular, serve as good examples. The possession of perceptual capacities enables one to do more than simply take on perceptible forms. Locomotive animals also exercise these capacities in a way that allows them to gather food more easily and

⁵ Relations of teleological subordination can be ordered either top-down, as Leunissen orders them, or bottom-up. Monte Johnson maintains the bottom-up ordering. He says, "[a]lthough the more complex parts and capacities come into being after the simpler, the simpler exist for the sake of the more complex. Thus there is an inversion of the genetic and explanatory orders in the case of organisms" Johnson (2005, 9). For our purposes, it doesn't matter in which direction the teleological subordination occurs. The very appeal to teleological subordination as a source of unity is what concerns us. To simplify matters, I will focus on the top-down ordering only.

⁶ Cf. *Phys.* II.2, 194a35–36; *DA* II.4, 415b20–21; *Metaph.* Λ 7, 1072b1–3; *EE* VII.15, 1249b15; and Johansen (this volume).

⁷ See Johnson (2005, 64–80) and Henry (this volume).

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thereby preserve themselves (III.12, 434b1–8). So “sense perception . . . is thus ultimately present for the sake of enabling locomotive animals to gather food after birth” (Leunissen 2010, 66). And the capacity of touch is not only a capacity to perceive tactile properties. Animals also exercise this capacity in a way that enables them to seize that which is advantageous and flee from that which is deleterious when they come into contact with these objects (434b10–18). This, too, helps animals to preserve themselves, especially since taste is a variety of touch (434b19–21). So “[t]he presence of the capacity of touch is equally explained teleologically as being ultimately necessary for the sake of the self-preservation of *each* kind of animal” (Leunissen 2010, 66). In each of these cases, the exercises of an organism’s perceptual capacities benefit the organism insofar as it possesses nutritive capacities.

According to the capacity view of soul, if a higher capacity is for the sake of a lower capacity, this relation will not be contained in either capacity’s account. But the teleological subordination of an organism’s higher capacities to its lower capacities binds them together and effects a sort of unity. To perceive is to manifest a form of life that is essential to what it is to be an animal. But this is because perception is necessary if an animal is to live (or live a better) nutritive life. Perception is for the sake of nutrition in the sense that it enables or facilitates this basic life activity and ultimately enables an organism to (better) preserve itself as the kind of being it is.

Now surely it is correct that an organism’s higher powers aid the activities of the lower (and vice versa). But life is said in many ways; the life of nutrition is but one among several ways life manifests itself (II.2, 413a20–26). Though I will not argue for this in detail until section four, it is important to note right away that when Aristotle says that to perceive is to live in a distinctive way he is not making the claim that to live a perceptual life is among the ways to live a nutritive life. Indeed, Aristotle objects to the univocal definition of life in terms of nutritive activity that Dionysius of Chalcedon proposes by invoking life’s homonymy.⁸ Aristotle is clear that in animals “there must be a single identical part in virtue of which it is alive and in virtue of which we call it an animal” (*de Iuv.* 467b21–23).

⁸ [I]f, then, the definition applies in a like manner to the whole range of the homonym, it does not define any one of the objects described by the term. This is what happens to Dionysius’ definition of life when stated as a movement of a creature sustained by nutriment, naturally present within it; for this is found in plants as much as in animals, whereas life does not seem to be predicated in virtue of a single form, but is one thing in animals and another in plants. (*Top.* VI.10, 148a25–30)

This is not the nutritive part of the soul. To live as an animal is to live a fundamentally perceptual life; it is not to live a nutritive life with the additional benefits that come from being able to perceive. Or so I will soon argue.

Still, there is something important in the suggestion that the soul's unity lies in something like teleological subordination. In order to view an organism's perceptual and rational activities as being for the sake of its nutritive activities, it is useful to think of the nutritive capacity in a way that goes beyond what the capacity view strictly allows. According to the capacity view, the account of nutrition will be like that of perception. Just as perception has a proper object, the perceptible, nutrition has a proper object, namely, food. But a complete characterization of the nutritive capacity includes more than a description of the way its exercises are directed upon its proper objects. The nutritive capacity is present for the sake of maintaining a living organism as the kind of being it is. For the nutritive capacity is a "capacity such as to maintain its possessor as such" (*DA* II.4, 416b18–19). And if all other vital capacities are present ultimately for the sake of nutrition, it is because they ultimately enable an organism to better preserve itself as the kind of being it is.

In the next section, I develop the view that activity for the sake of form is central to understanding the soul's unity. This account, however, does not employ any relation of teleological subordination. It is wrong, according to this second conception, to think of an animal's perceptual activity as ultimately being for the sake of its nutritive activity. Nevertheless, we can view an animal's perceptual activity as an activity that maintains its possessor as the sort of being it is, a natural unity whose form is a perceptual soul. The account of the soul's unity that this view leaves us with is, we will see, fundamentally different than the capacity view's account.

The soul as nature

According to the second conception of soul, when you gaze upon a living organism, what stands before you is not a multiplicity of capacities each performing an autonomous function. Nor is it a holistic complex built up from these basic activities. An organism's living is a single activity. A living organism is a form being realized.

One arrives at this view if one takes two claims to be central to Aristotle's account: (i) the soul is life's principle, and (ii) living organisms are natural unities. It follows from the conjunction of these two claims that explanations of vital activities must take a general form – these activities

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must be viewed as aspects or manifestations of a single, unfolding, end-directed activity. The end of this activity is an organism's form. To specify an organism's form is to characterize a mature or perfect specimen of the kind of organism in question. This form is prior to an organism's vital activities. That is, an organism's parts and tissues come to be as they are and act as they do for the sake of the organism's form, for the sake of bringing into being, as completely as can be, a perfect exemplar of a specific kind of life. I will show why these two claims and the method of inquiry they demand yields this conception of soul. This will require a brief discussion of what a nature is and what it is for the soul to be a nature.

A living organism's soul is its form (*DA* 11.1, 412a19–20; *PA* 1.1, 641a17–18; *Metaph.* Z 10, 1035b14–16), and while it is sometimes appropriate to speak of a natural entity as having both formal and material natures, it is, even in these contexts, nature as form that is fundamental. For “the form indeed is nature more than [or rather than, μάλλον] the matter.”⁹ So a living organism's soul is its form and this form is a nature.¹⁰

A nature is an internal principle of movement and rest. It is a natural being's form as well as the end for the sake of which its natural movements occur (11.7, 198a24–26). Everything that occurs by nature occurs for the sake of some end.¹¹ More precisely, it is natures themselves that Aristotle says are for the sake of an end (11.7, 198b4–5; 11.8, 199a11–12). The formal and final causes of a natural body's movements are one because “the essence of a thing, i.e. the form for this [τὸ τί ἐστίν καὶ ἡ μορφή] is the end or that for the sake of which” (198b2–3; cf. 11.8, 199a30–34). So if a nature is directed toward an end and this end, a form, is something's nature, then a nature is directed toward itself. For something to possess a nature is for that nature to be both the beginning and end of its natural movements. This is why it is appropriate to think of a nature as a “road towards nature (ὁδὸς εἰς φύσιν)” (11.1, 193b12–18). Natural movement is therefore a kind of formal perfection;

⁹ *Phys.* 11.1, 193b6–7; cf. 11.8, 198b8–19, 199a30–32; *PA* 1.1, 640b29; *GC* 11.9, 335b35–336a1; and; *Metaph.* Δ 4, 1015a13–15.

¹⁰ Though Aristotle never explicitly says that the soul is an organism's nature, it is overwhelmingly clear that he maintains this view. For the soul is life's principle (*DA* 1.1, 402a6–7; 11.2, 413b11–13; 11.4, 415b8–14; *Metaph.* Δ 8, 1017b15–16). That is, the soul is an internal principle of movement and rest that, as with all things that possess natures (*Phys.* 11.7, 198a25–26), is these movements' formal, final, and efficient cause (*DA* 11.4, 415b8–11). The soul is the form of a natural body (11.1, 412b4–6) and its functions and movements are repeatedly referred to as being natural or as occurring in accordance with nature (11.4, 415a22–b3, 415b15–20, and 11.5, 430a10–17). Moreover, the soul is, with some qualifications (*Metaph.* E 1, 1026a5–6 and *PA* 1.1, 641a32–b10), to be studied by the student of nature (*DA* 1.1, 402a4–7; 403a27–28, and *PA* 1.1, 641a17–33).

¹¹ Cf. *Phys.* 11.5, 196b21; 11.7, 198b4–5; 11.8, 199a7–34, 199b9–26; *DA* 11.12, 434a31–32; *PA* 1.1, 641b11–642a1; and *Somm.* 2, 455b16–17.

it is movement that constitutes the (further) realization or perpetuation of something as the kind of being it is. The exercise of a natural capacity, when nothing interferes with it, results in that for the sake of which the exercise occurs, namely, the (further) realization or perpetuation of the nature qua form itself (11.8, 199b9–26; *PA* 1.1, 641b23–642a1; *Metaph.* Z 7, 1032a23–25).

If an organism's form, its soul, is a nature, this analysis of natures should apply to them. And Aristotle is clear that it does. The soul is the internal principle and cause of those movements that are the manifestation of a living organism being what it is (*DA* 11.4 415b12–14). Since “for living beings, to be is to live” (415b13), the soul is the principle of those activities that are the exercises of an organism's vital capacities. And as it is with all natural unities, the final, formal, and efficient causes of a living organism's vital movements coincide. For, “the soul is the cause and first principle of the living body . . . the soul is cause as being that from which the movement is itself derived, as that for the sake of which it occurs, and as the essence of bodies which are ensouled” (415b9–12). So insofar as a soul is a nature, one can't understand the soul's activities without understanding them as occurring for the sake of a form, namely, the soul itself.

This is especially clear if we restrict our focus to an organism's nutritive activities and consider what it is for them to have a soul as a natural principle, form, and end. Nutritive activities are activities of an organism's “ensouled body *qua* ensouled.”¹² “The cause of nutrition and growth . . . is the soul,” says Aristotle, “for in all things which are naturally constituted there is a limit and a proportion both for size and for growth; and these belong to soul, but not to fire, and to its account rather than to matter” (416a14–18). As we noted earlier, the activity of the nutritive soul qua threptic faculty is the exercise of a “capacity such as to maintain its possessor as such” (416b18–19). It performs this function insofar as it sustains the soul's continuous exemplification in the same individual organism. The activity of the nutritive soul qua reproductive faculty has the same function. However, given that terrestrial organisms are not eternal, it performs it insofar as it sustains the soul's continuous exemplification in a numerically distinct organism by duplicating the soul as best as it can in that organism.

So the movements that occur when an organism is engaged in nutritive activity, the movements whereby nutriment is processed and ultimately

¹² τὸ ἐμψυχὸν ἀν εἶη σῶμα τὸ τρεφόμενον, ἡ ἐμψυχὸν (416b9–10). The soul is the cause and principle of the movements but the ensouled being is that which moves since it is the living organism that does what it does in virtue of (or with) its soul (ἄνθρωπον τῆ ψυχῆ, I.4, 408a34–b18).

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becomes living tissue, have a single, unitary nature as their principle and end. Nutriment and blood are moved in the order and ratio necessary for an organism to come to be or persist as such by a unitary nature and this nutritive activity is irreducibly for the sake of the organism's continuous formal exemplification.¹³

But it is not only an organism's nutritive movements that occur for the sake of the organism's form. *All* activities that arise from soul have an organism's form as their end. For Aristotle, the determination of an organ's function depends on the role the organ's coming to be serves in the coming to be of the whole organism to which it belongs (*PA* 1.1, 640a33–b4). The capacity whose exercise constitutes proper functioning for an organ is a capacity whose existence is explained by the role it plays in the development of a unitary organism, where the latter development is itself due to an internal principle of movement and rest whose end is the exemplification of a form.¹⁴ That is, an organ comes to be for the sake of ϕ ing only if the coming to be of the organ is part of the coming to be of an individual with a form that requires an organ that ϕ s.

So, according to this second conception of soul, to perceive is not just to take on perceptible forms without matter. When one perceives, one is partially realizing the form for the sake of which one's capacity to perceive came to be in the first place. To perceive is to realize more completely the kind of being one is qua perceiver.

Reconciling the two conceptions

It is my contention that the second conception of the soul according to which it is a unitary nature is primary for Aristotle and can serve as the basis of a reconciliation of both conceptions. That is, if we take the second conception to be primary, we can better understand the method Aristotle employs in *de Anima* and can accommodate those aspects of the first conception that we must if we are to understand the complexity of individual organisms and the commonalities among organisms of different species. I will first tackle the program of *de Anima* and then outline what it is for a unitary soul to comprise various parts.

¹³ I expand upon the details of these nutritive activities and the sense in which their principle is soul in Frey (forthcoming) "From Blood to Flesh: Homonymy, Unity, and Ways of Being in Aristotle," *Ancient Philosophy*.

¹⁴ An influential interpretation along these lines is Gotthelf (1976).

The program of de Anima

It is easy to view *de Anima* in the following way.¹⁵ Aristotle first provides an appropriate definition of the soul in *DA* 11.1. The soul is the form, in the sense of first actuality, of a natural organic body that has life potentially.¹⁶ Then, having properly defined the substance that is soul, Aristotle goes on to study the soul's attributes, that is, the soul's various capacities. The method he employs is the method appropriate to the study of capacities in general: one inquires into the proper objects of the activities that are the exercises of these capacities (11.4, 415a14–21).

But this is *not*, I contend, what Aristotle is doing. When Aristotle remarks that life is said in many ways, this affects the standing of the supposed definition he provides in *DA* 11.1. He opens *DA* 11.2 with the following complaint.

Since it is from things which are obscure but more obvious that we arrive at that which is clear and more intelligible in respect of the principle involved, we must try again in this way to treat of the soul; for a defining statement should not only make clear the fact, as the majority of definitions do, but it should also contain and reveal the reason for it. (413a11–16)¹⁷

This criticism of many definitions is being levied here against his own attempt to define the soul in *DA* 11.1. That is why, in the very next passage that proclaims the homonymy of life, Aristotle describes himself as “making a fresh beginning of our inquiry” (413a20).¹⁸ For the fact that life is said in many ways shows that the definition of *DA* 11.1 is just a schema. And no mere schema can capture the unity of a subject matter.¹⁹ For if ‘life’ is said in many ways, this will affect any definition that contains ‘life,’ including Aristotle’s definition of soul, viz. ‘the first actuality of an organic body capable of life.’ The soul is the first actuality of an organic body capable of feeding, *or* perceiving, *or* thinking. But what, if anything, unites these disjuncts?

¹⁵ (i) Interpretations roughly along these lines include Barnes (1971), Irwin (1988), Hicks (1907), Polansky (2007), and Johansen (2012). (ii) This section picks up on several themes in Rödl (unpublished) “Threptikon and Aisthetikon” and Ward (1996), though my positive picture differs significantly from that of each of these papers.

¹⁶ This is supposed to capture what is central to the three formulations of the definition Aristotle provides in 11.1 at 412a19–21, 412a27–28, and 412b4–6.

¹⁷ Cf. *Post. An.* 11.8, 93a4–5; 11.10, 93b36; and *Top.* 1.8, 103b8–12.

¹⁸ Aristotle also describes his original definition as one that provides only “a rough account and sketch of the soul in outline (τύπων μὲν οὖν ταύτη διωρίσθω καὶ ὑπογεγραφθῶ περὶ ψυχῆς)” (413a9–10). Cf. *Top.* 1.1, 101a18–24; *HA* 1.6, 491a7–14, and Bolton (1978, 259).

¹⁹ So I disagree with Barnes (1971, 103) when he claims that being disjunctive is no impediment to serving as an explanatory middle term.

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Perhaps Aristotle's earlier attempt to define the soul is still informative. It puts forward the view that the souls are forms, that they are forms of natural bodies, and that these natural bodies are organic.²⁰ I will not here discuss whether any or all of these claims survive further scrutiny. But one thing is clear. Aristotle's initial attempt to define the soul does not provide the starting point of a science of life – it does not show that life, that of which the soul is principle, is a single subject.

So when the common man says that feeding is a way of living or that perceiving is a way of living, he doesn't yet have a proper grasp of what life is. As things stand at this point of the inquiry, 'life' may not designate a single thing at all. There may be a science of feeding, a science of perceiving, and a science of thinking. What is it about these three sorts of activity that makes them all cases of living rather than three distinct things that happen to share a single name?

We can see, now, why Aristotle adopts a sequential inquiry. When he investigates the nutritive, perceptual, and rational capacities in turn, he is not (only) attempting to understand the living or vital capacities. He is not just providing us with their accounts. He is attempting to understand why any of these capacities *are* living or vital capacities. He is trying to reveal the unity among them in virtue of which they are to be considered instances of living at all.

This fits well with Aristotle's earlier methodological remarks. Aristotle wonders how general an inquiry about soul will be.

We must be careful not to ignore the question whether there is one definition [of the soul], as of animal, or whether there is a different one for each [species], as of horse, dog, man, and god, the universal, animal, being either nothing or secondary; and it would be similar for any other common predicate. (I.I, 402b5–9)

The scientific investigation of soul may begin with a definition that is as general as that of living beings. It may, however, begin with definitions as specific as horse, dog, man, and god. If the latter, there will be irreducibly different principles that govern horse life, dog life, human life, and divine life. We can call all of these things living; we can say that they all possess principles of life, viz. souls. But the words 'soul' and 'life' either (i) will pick out a collection of homonyms and provide no common understanding of why each of them receives these names – they will be nothing – or (ii) will

²⁰ On the suggestion that the definitions of soul in I.I are provisional, see Bolton (1978), Matthews (1992), and Ward (1996).

pick out a single thing but only after one has come to understand more specific instances – they will be secondary.

Aristotle rejects the idea that there can be a single, general definition of soul. Indeed, he says “it is foolish (γελοῖον) to seek both in these cases and in others for a common definition (κοινὸν λόγος) which will be a definition peculiar (ἴδιος λόγος) to no actually existing thing and will not correspond to the proper indivisible species (τὸ οἰκεῖον καὶ ἄτομον εἶδος), to the neglect of one which will” (11.3, 414b25–27). By Aristotle’s own lights, his attempt to give a definition of soul in *DA* 11.1 is foolish. So if there is to be a single science of soul, if ‘soul’ is not to designate nothing, then it must be secondary; it must be something that we can understand only after a thorough inquiry takes place at a lower level of generality.

What level of generality is appropriate, then, to an investigation of soul? We cannot begin at the level of dog, horse, man, and god. Even now, we haven’t been able to survey the vast number of species given at this level of generality. And without such a survey, we could not discover what unifies all of these ways of being as instances of living. And we have already seen that a univocal definition of life that does not arise from an investigation at a lower level of generality is unavailable. But there is a level of generality that may work between that of life in its broadest use and the sundry species we encounter. Aristotle believes that if we study what feeds, then what perceives, then finally what thinks, this will reveal the unity of soul that will enable it to be the proper subject of a science.

What kind of unity will there be at this level of generality? Consider the following parallel problem. *Metaphysics* Γ declares that there is a science of being qua being. But to be (τὸ εἶναι) is said in many ways (Γ 2, 1003a33). So, the question arises: How can there be a science of being qua being unless there is some unity to the various ways to say something *is*? Aristotle’s answer employs what has come to be called ‘focal meaning.’ Substance is prior in account (λόγῳ, *Metaph.* Z 1, 1028a31–32) to the other ways in which a thing is said to be, and the unity this priority in account effects enables a scientific investigation into being qua being despite the irreducible multiplicity of ways in which ‘to be’ is said (Γ 2, 1003b12–18).

Life and soul face a similar challenge. But the route to achieve unity available in the case of being, namely, focal meaning, is not similarly available for life. One might think that the nutritive soul could serve as the focal relatum of the other forms of life.²¹ For “the nutritive soul belongs

²¹ Proponents of the focal meaning analysis include Owen (1960), Lloyd (1962), Leszl (1970), and Simplicius (1882). Shields (2002, 176–93) emphasizes Aristotle’s claim that “the actuality of thought

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also to the other living things and is the first and most commonly possessed potentiality of the soul, in virtue of which they all have life” (II.4, 415a23–25; cf. III.12, 434a22–26). But even if we ignore the difficulties that arise when this claim is extended to celestial/divine life, this suggestion fails because whatever ontological priority the nutritive soul possesses does not entail that it is prior in account. As we have already seen, neither the capacity to perceive nor the capacity to think has an account that must refer to the nutritive capacity. And without this, there is no focal unity.

Perhaps the ways life is said possess an analogical unity.²² But this suggestion faces its own difficulties. For a first thing is related to a second by analogy when they are “related as a third thing is to a fourth” (*Metaph.* Δ 6, 1016b35). The analogy, if it is to be successful, must reveal an equality of proportions (either quantitative or qualitative) between the two pairs of relata (*EN* V.3, 1131a30–b4). But it is difficult to see what this proportional relation could be given how different the activities of the vital capacities are.²³

What is left if the basic ways life is said are not focally or analogically related? Aristotle’s answer is that they are hierarchically related (*DA* II.3, 414b28–415a13). I contend that being a member of a properly grounded hierarchy is a genuine source of unity that cannot be reduced to the unity that either focal meaning or analogy affords. If there is a science of the soul, there must be a principle of the sequence that begins with things that manifest nutritive activity, continues with things that manifest perceptual activity, and ends with things that manifest rational activity. Each of these activities must be investigated in turn. It is the principle that grounds this series that allows there to be a science of life and it is by coming to understand this hierarchy that one understands life itself. This is why the “reason they [sc. the capacities of soul] are so arranged in order of succession must be considered” (414b33–34).

This is not just an empirical question. It is not enough simply to say that when we investigate the living organisms around us, we find that the basic modes of life are ordered successively and hierarchically. We do find, when we investigate the terrestrial realm, that plants possess only nutritive capacities, that animals possess the capacities of plants as well as perceptual capacities, and that humans possess the capacities of plants and animals

is life” (*Metaph.* Λ 7, 1072b26–27) and suggests that god’s rational soul, not the nutritive soul, serves as the focal relatum.

²² Proponents of the analogical analysis include Alexander (1887) and Rodier (1900).

²³ Ward (1996, 126) expresses a similar pessimism. Ward, however, takes definition, focal meaning, and analogy to exhaust the available options.

plus the capacity to understand and think. But just as there is a difference between investigating vital capacities and trying to understand what it is for a capacity to be vital, there is a difference between investigating a hierarchy of capacities and trying to understand the principle by virtue of which the hierarchy is ordered in the way we find it to be. The very possibility of a science of life depends on a satisfactory answer to this last question.

So Corcilius and Gregoric are mistaken when they say “providing successive accounts for the four capacities amounts to a satisfactory account of the soul, an account which is explanatory of the souls that actually exist in the world, namely the souls of plants, animals (sensile and mobile), and humans” Corcilius and Gregoric (2010, 105). This assumes that we know what soul is before the investigation begins. There are three or four kinds of soul and the reason we need to investigate them all, they think, is simply to be thorough. But the reason we must study these capacities in turn is to make them intelligible *as* capacities of soul. And this requires that we focus not on the capacities as if they were autonomous subjects of empirical inquiry that fall under the genus ‘capacity of soul,’ but rather on the principle that grounds the series and allows us to understand them all as forms *of living*.

The unity of soul

What, then, is the principle that grounds the hierarchy of souls and enables us to understand life? My answer to this question will not be complete, but it will provide reasons for thinking that the second conception of soul, the soul as unitary nature, is primary for Aristotle.

When Aristotle introduces the series of souls, he compares the ordering of souls to the ordering of figures (σχήματος). He says,

it is clear, then, that it is in the same way as with figure that there will be one definition of soul; for in the former case there is no figure over and above (παρα) the triangle and the others which follow it in order, nor in the latter case is there soul over and above those mentioned. Even in the case of figures there could be produced a common definition (λόγος κοινός), which will fit all of them but which will not be peculiar (ἴδιος) to any one. Similarly too with the kinds of soul mentioned. (11.3, 414b20–24)

Aristotle then goes on to describe these series. He says,

The circumstances with regard to soul are similar to the situation over figures; for in the case both of figures and of things which have soul that which is prior always exists potentially (δυνάμει) in what follows in order,

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e.g. the triangle in the quadrilateral on the one hand, and the nutritive soul in the perceptual on the other. (414b28–32)

So to understand the unity of life that is secondary to an understanding of what feeds, what perceives, and what thinks is in part to understand the way in which the nutritive soul can exist potentially in the perceptual soul and the way in which the perceptual soul can exist potentially in the rational soul. That is, to understand the unity of life as it manifests itself across species of varying complexity, we must understand how the souls that are the principles of these forms of life are a unity within an individual organism.

To explicate exhaustively what it is for one thing to exist potentially (to be *dunamei*) within another is a difficult task. Aristotle is clear that neither what it is to be something *dunamei* nor what it is to be *in* something *dunamei* can be defined (*Metaph.* Θ 6, 1048a35–36). The way figures possess this manner of being is but one among several. To understand this manner of being requires that we survey the various cases in which it arises and, as Aristotle puts it, “be content to grasp the analogy” (1048a36). I cannot here provide a complete survey, but I will discuss two cases and draw out the consequences they have for understanding the soul’s unity: (i) what it is for a triangle to be *dunamei* in a quadrilateral, the case Aristotle mentions explicitly in *de Anima*, and (ii) what it is for a collection of simple bodies that undergo mixing to be *dunamei* within the mixture that results.

Two features of the series of figures are relevant to the series of souls. First, the series is ordered by relations of priority and posteriority. The triangle is present *dunamei* in the quadrilateral and not vice versa. Second, to be in something *dunamei* is to exclude the other manner in which something can be. The triangle is not in the quadrilateral actually (ἐνεργεία).

The first claim, that souls, like figures, form an ordered series (ἐφεξῆς), highlights a consequence for any class whose members are ordered by relations of priority and posteriority. Namely, for any ordered series, there is no genus prior to the species that are so related.²⁴ And if there is no prior,

²⁴ Cf. *Metaph.* B 3, 999a6–14; *Polit.* III.1, 1275a34–38, and especially *EE* 1.8, 1218a1–8. Aristotle’s reasoning is as follows. If there were a predicate common to all members of an ordered series, it would be prior to the members of the series (*EE* 1.8, 1218a4). This priority is cashed out in terms of asymmetrical existential dependence: if what the common predicate picks out were not, the members of the series would not be, though not vice versa. But an ordered series’ first member is prior to its subsequent members in the same sense (*Cat.* 12, 14a29–35; *Metaph.* M 8, 1083b32–34). If the first member were not, the subsequent members of the series would not be, though not vice versa. Further, a genus can be even if any one of the species that fall under it is not (*Cat.* 13, 15a4–7; *Top.* VI.4, 141b28–29; *Metaph.* K 1, 1059b38–1060a1), though a genus cannot be if all of the species that fall under it are not (*Cat.* 5, 2a35–b6). These commitments lead to a *reductio* of the assumption

common genus, then a science of soul is possible only if there is a single way to understand what it is for a prior member of the series to be present *dunamei* in a posterior member of the series.

The second claim about the series of figures that is relevant to the series of souls follows from the fact that being something *dunamei* and being something *energeiai* are mutually exclusive manners of being.²⁵ So if a prior figure (or soul) is present *dunamei* in a posterior figure (or soul), then the prior figure (or soul) is not what it is *energeiai*.²⁶ Though a quadrilateral has three angles and three sides (if it has four, then a fortiori it also has three), it is nevertheless a mistake to say that in addition to being a triangle, a quadrilateral is *also* a quadrilateral. Similarly, it is a mistake to say that in addition to leading a nutritive life, an animal *also* leads a perceptual life. Strictly speaking, there is no nutritive soul in a human or animal. At least it is not present in the way that the capacity conception suggests; it is not present *energeiai*. There is, in an animal, *only* a perceptual soul. The nutritive soul is present *dunamei*. To say that an animal not only perceives but *also* feeds suggests that perceiving is something the animal does *in addition to* feeding. But this is wrong. For an organism, to be is to live, and for an animal, to live is to perceive. So perceiving is not simply something that an animal does. An animal perceives and *that is all*. There is, of course, a secondary sense in which animals feed. It would be a mistake not to attribute nutritive *capacities* to animals. But when an animal exercises its nutritive capacity, this activity does not have a nutritive soul as its principle. *The principle of an animal's nutritive activities is a perceptual*

that the species in an ordered series fall under a common genus. For if there were such a genus, (i) the genus would be even if the first species in the series were not, (ii) if the first species were not, none of the species in the series would be, and (iii) if none of the species are, the genus would not be. Caston (unpublished) "Aristotle on the Unity of Psychology: How to Divide the Soul," contains a clear and thorough discussion of these arguments.

²⁵ Cf. *Phys.* III.1, 201a20–23, 201b6–15; *Metaph.* Θ 6, 1048a30 and Frey (forthcoming) "From Blood to Flesh."

²⁶ Johansen explicitly denies that this is true of the series of souls:

saying that the nutritive soul is potentially present within a living being with perception may suggest that it is not actually present. But this cannot be right: animals eat, drink, and procreate, so their nutritive soul must be present in activity . . . the claim is not that the nutritive soul as such is not actually present in an animal; the point is rather that it is implied in saying that the living being has perception that it also has nutrition. (2012, 69)

The impending discussion supports the claim that the nutritive soul is not present *energeiai* in animals. But one thing to note right away is that Johansen's view would serve as a serious impediment to the soul being a unity since "a substance cannot consist of substances present in it in actuality, for things that are thus actually two are never actually one, though if they are potentially two, they can be one" (*Metaph.* Z 13, 1039a4–6). As we will see, an animal can have nutritive capacities – it can eat, drink, and procreate – without this implying that the animal possesses a nutritive soul *energeiai*.

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soul. Everything an animal does has its one and only soul as its principle and end. So feeding is one of the ways in which the animal's single soul, a perceptual soul, is actualized.

So if one provides accounts for the various capacities that living organisms exercise and also gives a complete description of the numerous external relationships of teleological subordination in which these capacities stand to one another, one has not yet understood the soul's unity. Doing these things does not equip one with an understanding of what it is for a lower soul to be present *dunamei* within a higher soul. To understand what it is for a nutritive soul to be present *dunamei* in a perceptual soul is to understand how a perceptual form of life can manifest itself through feeding, and to understand what it is for a perceptual soul to be present *dunamei* in a rational soul, is to understand how a life of thought can manifest itself through both feeding and perceiving. It is only when we understand what it is for each of these souls to be united in this way within an individual that we come to understand the hierarchical ordering of the basic ways life is said; it is only then that we come to understand life itself.

What is it, then, for a lower soul to be present *dunamei* in a higher soul and what is it about this presence that enables the higher soul to be the principle of those vital activities that would have the lower soul as their principle if the lower soul were *energeiai*? It is comparatively easy to see what it is for a triangle to be *dunamei* within a quadrilateral. Aristotle says that "in potentiality the half line is prior to the whole line . . . but in actuality it is posterior; for it is only when the whole is dissolved that it will exist in actuality" (*Metaph.* Δ 11, 1019a8–11; cf. Θ 6, 1048a32–33). What Aristotle says about lines holds for figures as well. That is, neither lines nor complex figures are composed of actual half lines or actual triangles. They are not aggregates of simpler elements (*Z* 17, 1041b11–33). But a whole line can be divided into halves, and, when it is, the half lines transition from being what they are *dunamei* to being what they are *energeiai*. Similarly, a quadrilateral can be divided into two triangles, and, when it is, the triangles transition from being what they are *dunamei* to being what they are *energeiai*.²⁷

But this can't be a satisfactory account of the manner in which the nutritive soul is present *dunamei* in the perceptual soul. There is no means by

²⁷ This separation need not consist in a single act of division. One can separate triangles from quadrilaterals in this way, but not, say, quadrilaterals from pentagons. But more complex figures contain similar units, namely sides, from which one can construct simpler figures and, in this way, the simpler figures can be separated out from the more complex.

which an animal's single soul can be divided in such a way that the nutritive soul present in it *dunamei* comes to be what it is *energeiai*. Though there is a practice of calling the state of those with seriously impaired rational and perceptual capacities 'vegetative,' the soul, according to Aristotle, would not be changed under these conditions. We ought not describe such individuals as possessing only a nutritive soul. In fact, Aristotle is clear that these individuals still possess perceptual and rational capacities. The souls of these individuals are exactly the same as they were when they were healthy. Only the organs required to exercise these capacities have been affected and if the bodily damage were fixed, the capacities that the organism possesses before it is healed could be exercised once again (I.4, 408b21–24). And though Aristotle thinks that an organism gains its vital capacities sequentially – a developing animal embryo does not possess the capacity to perceive until the organs required for perception come to be (GA II.3, 736b21–26 and IV.1, 766a5–10) – it does not follow that an embryo first possesses a nutritive soul, and then only later possesses a perceptual soul. The soul that is an animal embryo's principle of life is, from the beginning, a perceptual soul. That is why animal embryos in their early developmental stages, unlike plants that only have a nutritive soul, are such that they can come to possess perceptual capacities *energeiai* (GA II.3, 736b13–15).

So the series of figures and the series of souls are not similar in all respects. This is to be expected given that the feature of these series that concerns us most, what it is for their prior members to be *dunamei* in their posterior members, can only be understood analogically. We can make headway, however, in understanding the way this relation applies to souls if we turn to our second analogical case, namely, mixtures (μικτόν).²⁸

A mixture is a homoeomerous natural body and therefore has a single, unitary nature. But this nature is not primitive. That is, when a mixture comes to be, none of the simple ingredients from which it comes to be cease to be; mixing is neither growth nor generation (GC I.10, 327b3–8). And when a mixture comes to be, the ingredients from which it comes to be cannot exist in the same way they did before they were mixed; a mixture is not an aggregate and mixing is not alteration (327a35–b3). But Aristotle has the resources to accommodate both the continued presence of the ingredients in a mixture and the fact that what it is for these ingredients to be when they are present in a mixture must differ from the way they are before they are mixed. Aristotle says that, "it is possible for things after they

²⁸ For a more thorough account of mixture, see Frey (2007, 187–90 and 194–97).

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have been mixed to be and not to be. Some other thing which comes to be from them is actually (ἐνεργεία), while each of the things which were, before they were mixed, still is, but potentially (δυνάμει), and has not been destroyed” (327b23–26). So the ingredients from which a mixture comes to be are present in it *dunamei*.

That a mixture’s ingredients are present in it *dunamei* is not an idle claim. We can’t understand a mixture’s nature if we don’t appreciate the role this presence plays in a mixture being what it is. A mixture’s unitary nature is the principle of all of its tangible movements. These movements are intermediate with respect to the natural movements of the ingredients that are present in it *dunamei* (11.7, 334b9–16). There is a continuum that has maximally hot movements and maximally cold movements as extremes. If a mixture comes to be from one ingredient that is hot, for example fire, and one that is cold, for example water, it will have a single thermal capacity whose exercise results in movements that are located somewhere in the middle of this continuum.²⁹ This capacity is not primitive. It is not a new capacity – warm – that has the same status as fire’s heat or water’s coldness. The mixture’s capacity is not only aetiologically dependent on the capacities of its ingredients, but ontologically dependent too. That is, the mixture could not possess its natural capacity, hot-cold, if the ingredients from which it came to be were not present in it *dunamei*. To possess this capacity just is for these ingredients to be present in this manner of being. So mixtures have a single, unitary principle of movement and rest, but this principle is a principle of movements that it could not undergo without the ingredients from which it came to be being present in it *dunamei*.

Given that living organisms are also natural unities, we can draw several parallels between the natures of mixtures and souls. (i) Just as a mixture’s ingredients are not present in it *energeiai*, an animal’s nutritive soul is not present in it *energeiai*. (ii) Just as the movements of mixtures have a unitary nature as their principle and end, a living organism’s vital activities have a unitary nature as their principle and end, namely, a soul. (iii) Just as a mixture could neither possess the tangible capacities it does nor have a nature that is the principle of its tangible movements unless its ingredients were present in it *dunamei*, an animal could neither possess the nutritive capacities it does nor could its perceptual soul be the principle of its nutritive activities unless a nutritive soul were present *dunamei* in the

²⁹ There are three continua that capture the capacities natural bodies possess insofar as they are tangible. The extremes of these continua are fixed by three pairs of contraries: hot/cold, wet/dry, and heavy/light. What is said here about thermal capacities applies to the hygric and locomotive capacities as well.

animal's perceptual soul. And (iv) just as the natural unity of mixtures neither prevents them from possessing various capacities for movement nor prevents these capacities from having definitions that are separable in account in such a way that bodies with different natures can possess them, the natural unity of living organisms neither prevents them from possessing various vital capacities nor prevents some of these capacities from having definitions that are separable in account in such a way that organisms of different species can possess them.

Again, as should be expected in any analogical enterprise, the case of souls does not map onto that of mixtures perfectly. For example, the natural movements of the simple bodies and mixtures are located on continua. Moreover, there is an effective rule of composition that one can employ to derive a mixture's intermediary capacities from those of its ingredients. Neither of these is true for the basic ways life is said. There is no continuum on which to place both nutritive and perceptual activities. And there is no simple rule to which one can appeal in order to understand the principle of their hierarchical ordering. Without this understanding, we have not fully understood what life is. So the present study is, in an important sense, incomplete. Indeed, to provide a complete explanation of what it is for a prior soul to be present *dunamai* in a posterior soul is, I contend, among the principal tasks of *de Anima* as a whole. But what has been put forward already suggests that whatever answer is forthcoming, it will not be consistent with the capacity conception of the soul. What we need is a notion of soul that sees its activities as arising from a single, unitary principle of movement and rest and as occurring for the sake of a single, formal end. This is exactly what the conception of soul as nature provides.