Mind and World in Aristotle’s *De Anima*

Why is the human mind able to perceive and understand the truth about reality; that is, why does it seem to be the mind’s specific function to know the world? Sean Kelsey argues that both the question itself and the way Aristotle answers it are key to understanding his work *De Anima*, a systematic philosophical account of the soul and its powers. In this original reading of a familiar but highly compressed text, Kelsey shows how this question underpins Aristotle’s inquiry into the nature of soul, sensibility, and intelligence. He argues that, for Aristotle, the reason why it is in human nature to know beings is that “the soul in a way is all beings.” This new perspective on the *De Anima* throws fresh and interesting light on familiar Aristotelian doctrines: for example, that sensibility is a kind of ratio (*logos*), or that the intellect is simple, separate, and unmixed.

Sean Kelsey is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Notre Dame.
For Christel
Contents

Acknowledgments
List of Abbreviations
Introduction

PART I QUESTIONS

1 Objectives
1.1 To Define and Explain
1.2 To Know Beings (All Beings)
1.3 Kinds of Psuchē, Kinds of Knowledge
1.4 Subject and Attribute (Psuchē and Knowledge)
1.5 Conclusions

2 Problems
2.1 Two Key Issues: Similarity and Alteration
2.2 The Shadow of Protagoras (De Anima III 3)
2.3 Knowledge and Similarity: Homer et al.
2.4 Knowledge and Alteration: Empedocles
2.5 Alien and Impassible: Anaxagoras Contra Mundum

3 Solutions
3.1 Perception and Similarity (De Anima II 5)
3.2 Perception and Alteration (De Anima II 5)
3.3 Conclusions
3.4 Appendix (De Anima II 5, 417a30–b16)
viii  Contents

PART II ANGLES

4  Affinities 67
  4.1 Preliminary Observations 68
  4.2 Friendship (φιλία) 69
  4.3 Nutrition (τροφή) 75
  4.4 Movement (φορά) 78
  4.5 Affection (πάσχειν) 80
  4.6 Conclusion 82

5  Measures 84
  5.1 Measures of Quantity 85
  5.2 Measures of Quality 90

PART III PROPOSALS

6  Sensibility 99
  6.1 Preliminaries 100
  6.2 Sensibility as Form (De Anima II 12) 103
  6.3 Receiving Forms without Matter 107
  6.4 Sensibility as “Ratio” 109
  6.5 Sensibility as “Measure” 112
  6.6 Objections and Replies 117
  6.7 Conclusion 120

7  Intelligibility 122
  7.1 Intelligibility and Essence 124
  7.2 Essence and Entelechy 128
  7.3 Essence and Energeia 130
  7.4 Intelligibility and Immateriality 132
  7.5 Immateriality and Intelligence 135
  7.6 Objection and Reply 142

8  Intelligence 145
  8.1 Understanding Everything 146
  8.2 Being Separate and Unmixed 149
  8.3 Separation as Measure 152
  8.4 Objection and Reply 157

Conclusion 159

References 165

Index 173

Index Locorum 176
Acknowledgments

A first draft of this book was written in 2017–2018, on a sabbatical leave funded by the University of Notre Dame and by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities; I thank both institutions for their generous support. I want also to thank my friends at L’Auberge du Port for allowing me to work on their patio overlooking the port and beyond it the sea.

The ideas in this book have benefited from trial runs both in graduate seminars at the Universities of Chicago and Notre Dame and in presentations at various colloquia, conferences, and workshops; I am very grateful for those opportunities and for the time and conversation of those present on those occasions. A very special thanks to my dear friend Gavin Lawrence for organizing and hosting a workshop on the typescript at UCLA; thanks also to Victor Caston, Panos Dimas, Jessica Gelber, David Lefebvre, Sara Magrin, Christian Pfeiffer, and Joel Yurdin for their time and trouble working up presentations on individual chapters. I want also to thank many other friends and colleagues for conversation, correspondence, and comments on some or all of earlier versions of this material, including Jonathan Beere, Sarah Broadie, Arnold Brooks, Jon Buttaci, John Carriero, Laura Castelli, David Charles, Tim Clarke, Caleb Cohoe, Klaus Corcilius, Carlo DaVia, Sylvain Delcomminette, David Ebrey, Mohammad Esmaeili, Andrea Falcon, Christopher Frey, Lloyd Gerson, Robert Howton, Thomas Johansen, Joseph Karbowski, Mark Kalderon, Sare Khaledi, Matthis Koschel, James Lennox, Jonathan Lear, Yannig Luthra, Alasdair MacIntyre, William Mattison, Allison Murphy, Sasha Newton, Daniel Nolan, David O’Connor, Marco Panza, Spyros Rangos, Robert Roreitner, Fred...
Acknowledgments

Rush, Christopher Shields, Stasinos Stavrianneas, Daniel Sutherland, Katherine Tillman, and Josh Trubowitz. I would also like to thank the readers for Cambridge University Press for their patience with my typescript and their thoughtful and helpful comments. Thanks too to Max Minicus for help with the bibliography and to Nat Brown for help with the proofreading. It goes without saying that the many shortcomings that remain are entirely my own.

Earlier versions of Chapters 2, 7, and 8, here reused with permission, were published (or will be) elsewhere as follows:

Abbreviations

Aristotle
APo Posterior Analytics
Cael. On the Heavens
Cat. Categories
DA On the Soul (De Anima)
EE Eudemian Ethics
EN Nicomachean Ethics
GA On the Generation of Animals
GC On Generation and Corruption
HA On the History of Animals
Insom. On Dreams
Iuv. On Youth and Old Age
Mem. On Memory
Met. Metaphysics
Meteor. Meteorology
PA On the Parts of Animals
Phys. Physics
Pol. Politics
[Prob.] [Problems]
Rhet. Rhetoric
SE On Sophistical Refutations
Sens. On Sense and Sense-Objects
Somn. On Sleep
Top. Topics
Plato
Phdr. Phaedrus
List of Abbreviations

Phil. Philebus
Prot. Protagoras
Rep. Republic
Stsmn. Statesman
Tht. Theaetetus
Tim. Timaeus