Defence against Three Objections

Introduction to Chapter 2

Ch. 2 contains statements of and responses to three objections to Aristotle’s substantive position in Ch. 1 (independent of the objections to his form of reasoning implied by the views of Anaxagoras, Empedocles and Democritus, and his treatment of them, that end Ch. 1; see 252a5–b5 above). The objections in Part A of Ch. 2 divide into two categories, one (252b9–12) based on Aristotle’s account of change in Ph. 1 as necessarily occurring between termini, and the other (252b12–28) proposing two putative instances of a contradictory paradigm, that movement can begin from nothing (the origination of movement in lifeless, and living, things); Zekl (p. xxxviii) categorises these similarly. In Part B Aristotle answers each in turn (252b28–253a2, 253a2–7, and 253a7–21). Aristotle’s responses foreshadow the major topics in the rest of Ph. 8: the everlastingness of rotation (8.7–9); the role of the cause of movement (8.4–6, 10); and the explanation of self-moving beings (8.5–6).

Ch. 2, 252b7–28: (A) Three Substantive Objections

It is not difficult to refute objections to this. It might seem most possible that movement exists, having once not been at all, to those who start from the following considerations in their investigation: first, that there is no everlasting change; for every change is naturally from something into something, so that necessarily as a boundary for each change there is the opposite condition into which it comes to be, and nothing is moved boundlessly.

Next, we see that it is possible for something to be moved that is neither in movement nor has any movement within itself, for instance in the case of lifeless beings: although neither any part nor the whole of these is in movement, but rather at rest, at some moment it is moved. But it would have been fitting for it either always to be in movement or never, if in fact movement does not come to be after having not existed. And it is most particularly clear that this kind of thing is so in the case of living beings. For sometimes when there has been no movement in us, and we were quiet, nevertheless at a certain moment we are moved, and a principle of
movement comes to be within us from ourselves, even if nothing outside moves us. For we do not see this happening the same way in the case of lifeless beings, but on each occasion something else outside moves them. But we say an animal is that which moves itself. Consequently if it is ever at complete rest, movement could come to be in something motionless from itself and not from outside. But if this can come to be in an animal, what prevents the same thing from also happening with respect to the whole of things? For if it occurs in a small structure (κόσμῳ), it also does in a large one. And if in the cosmos, also in the infinite, if in fact it is possible for the infinite as a whole to be moved and to rest.

**Analysis**
Aristotle anticipates two potential objections to the doctrine of Ch. 1, (I) from his own analysis of movement, (I.a) that change is not everlasting (252b9–10, b12), because (I.a.i) every change must occur between opposed boundaries (252b11–12), since (I.a.i.i) every change is from some one to another condition (252b10) – and (II) from the origination of movements, (II.a) that the movement of the cosmos as a whole might have begun from rest (supplied), for two separate reasons, (II.a.I), from the case of lifeless things (252b12–16); and (II.a.II), from the case of living things (252b17–28). By Argument II.a.I all movement might have once begun from rest, because (II.a.I.i) what happens in an individual case might happen in the cosmos as a whole (supplied); and (II.a.I.ii) it is possible for something entirely motionless in its parts and as a whole to be set in movement at some time (252b13–15), for two separate reasons, (II.a.I.ii.I) that we see this in the case of lifeless things at rest, that at some moment are moved (252b12–15); and (II.a.I.ii.II) if it were not so, everything would have to be always at rest or always in movement (252b15–16). By Argument II.a.II, from the case of living things, the movement of the cosmos might have begun from rest, because (II.a.II.i) what happens in an individual living thing might happen in the cosmos as a whole (252b24–26), since (II.a.II.i.i) what happens in a small structure (κόσμῳ) also happens in a large one (252b26–27) – and (II.a.II.ii) movement can begin in an animal at rest entirely from an internal principle of movement without any external cause (252b18–21, 23–24), for two separate reasons, (II.a.II.ii.I) that this is obvious in our own case (252b17–21); and (II.a.II.ii.II) that we say animals move themselves (252b22–23).

**Commentary**
Compare the first objection (252b9–12), that no change is everlasting because change must occur between opposed boundaries, since every change is from one to another condition, with Ph. 1.7 (also 1.9), and 5.1–2: the objection rests on