Introduction to Chapter 9

Having shown in Ch. 8 that only circular locomotion can be unlimitedly continuous, Aristotle now argues in Part A of Ch. 9 (265a13–b16) that this rotation is prior to other kinds of locomotion, using its unique continuity as a premiss at 265a27–28, although providing another demonstration of this (see 265a32–b8).

In the slightly shorter Part B (265b17–266a6) he argues it is commonly accepted that locomotion in general is prior to other forms of movement (confirming the result of Ch. 7, 260a26–261a26). Although it follows, he does not explicitly draw the overall conclusion from Ch. 9, Parts A and B, that circular locomotion (identified with a sphere’s rotation, 265b1–8), is universally prior to all other movements (stated by Simplicius 1313.29–30). The chapter concludes in Part C with an extremely brief summary of the results of the whole of Bk 8 to this point (266a6–9).

The argument of Part A for the priority of rotation to other forms of locomotion (asserted initially at 265a13) thus takes up most of this short chapter. The argument first establishes in Section A.1, as in Ch. 8, that rectilinear and circular locomotion are the two primary candidates (265a13–16), then gives five separate arguments in Section A.2 that circular locomotion is prior to the alternative (265a16–b16), (I) that it alone is simple and complete (265a16–24), (II) that it alone can be everlasting (265a24–27), (III) that it alone can be continuously one (265a27–b8), (IV) that it is the measure of all other movements (265b8–11), and (V) that it alone moves at a constant speed (265b11–16).

### Ch. 9, 265a13–16: (A.1) Reduction of all Locomotion to Straight or Circular

It is clear that transportation in a circle is the first form of transportation. For every form of transportation, as we stated previously,¹ is either in a circle or on a straight line, or mixed. But the former kinds must be prior

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¹ Ph. 8.8, 261b28–29; with 265a15–16 here cf. 261b29–31.
to the latter, for it is constituted from them. And that in a circle is prior to that on a straight line, ...

**Analysis**

The overall conclusion A stated here, that locomotion in a circle is the first form of locomotion (265a13), follows since (A.1) rectilinear and circular locomotion are prior to other forms (supplied), because (i.a) locomotion is either circular, rectilinear, or a combination of these (265a13–15; cf. Ph. 8.8, 261b28–29; Cael. 1.3, 270b29–31); and (i.b) circular and rectilinear locomotion must be prior to a combination of these (265a15), since (i.b.i) a combination is constituted from circular and rectilinear locomotion (265a16) – while (A.2) circular is prior to rectilinear locomotion (265a16, the conclusion of the following section).

**Commentary**

Aristotle here divides locomotion into three kinds, as at Ph. 8.8, 261b27–31; see the Commentary there (p. 228) on the treatment of all other lines as combinations of straight and circular, and the obscurity in the sense of the term ‘combination’ (μίξις). Then he argues again that the simple kinds are prior to combinations, before arguing that circular locomotion is prior to straight. Below Aristotle distinguishes three relevant senses of priority (265a22–24): in nature, account and time. Zekl (p. 291 n. 156), identifies these with the senses distinguished at Ph. 8.7, 260b17–19 (but see the Note on 265a22–24 below, pp. 288–289), and claims the present sense is priority both in account and substantiality (completeness of form: cf. 261a13–23); but Apostle (p. 337 n. 2) states more plausibly that the priority of the simple forms of locomotion is in account and existence (i.e. order of being).

**Ch. 9, 265a16–24: (A.2.I) Argument from Simplicity and Completeness**

This is the first of Aristotle’s five arguments for the priority of rotation to locomotion in a straight line: see further the Introduction to the chapter (p. 284).

And that in a circle is prior to that on a straight line, for it is, by contrast, simple and complete. For on the one hand, it is not possible to be transported in an infinite straight line, for there cannot be what is infinite in this sense; and it is jointly true that even if there could be, nothing could be moved (over an infinite straight line), for what is impossible does not come to be, and it is impossible to traverse an infinite (line). And on the