A number of features of the doctrine of Alexander of Aphrodisias on heavenly motions are beyond reasonable doubt. First and foremost of these is that he identified the nature of the heavenly spheres with their soul,\(^1\) thereby he could entirely collapse natural motion with voluntary motion into one in their case.\(^2\) Moreover the celestial element, which Alexander tends to call \(\theta\varepsilon\iota\sigma\nu\sigma\omicron\mu\alpha\), divine body is removed from the components of the everchanging sublunary world to the extent that it can be a legitimate question whether the substrate of celestial bodies can be called matter,\(^3\)

\(^1\) For this Alexander had to criticise and reject proposals of his predecessors. See Simplicius \textit{in De caelo} 380.5ff. and 29ff.

\(^2\) Living beings move \textit{by nature} on Aristotle’s account, too. Nevertheless, the natural motion of the animal is not natural to all (nor even to \textit{any} of) its bodily parts. On account of their material composition the bodily parts possess separate natural motions which can be different or can even run in the face of the natural motion of the animal (\textit{Physics} 8.4 254b14-20, cf. \textit{De philosophia} fr. 19b Ross (part of 916 Gigon) = Philo \textit{De aeternitate mundi} 6.28-7.34). On Alexander’s identification of the nature of the celestial spheres with their souls these natural motions are not \textit{subordinated} the one to the other in the case of the heavens, as in the case of other living beings, but they are just identical.

\(^3\) \textit{Quaestio} 1.10 argues for both horns of the dilemma: if matter is what is receptive of opposites in turn, the divine bodies will lack a material principle. On the other hand if matter is also defined as the ultimate inarticulate substrate, this way of speaking about matter would include the substrate of the divine body as well. What Alexander stresses here and also in \textit{quaestio} 1.15 is that provided there is a special celestial \textit{matter}, there is no overarching concept of matter encompassing both domains
and Alexander can refer to perishable entities as ἕνυλα, material in contrast to this sublime element.\footnote{See De mixtione 229.6-9, where the context suggests that even if the divine body is not among material entities (ἕνυλα), it may possess some matter different from theirs.} After identifying the contribution of the nature of the celestial spheres with that of their soul, Alexander follows Aristotle in setting out a celestial hierarchy, on top of which there is or there are the separate unmoved mover(s), which move(s) by being object(s) of striving and desire for the less perfect entities of the heavens.

This much seems to be firmly settled. A number of further issues, however, call for detailed examination. In this paper first I set out to clarify the contributions of the striving of the different celestial spheres, then I turn to describing the interaction between the various motions of the celestial system, and I discuss whether the theory Alexander propounded could have been a fundamental revision, or rather an alternative exposition of the original, Aristotelian celestial theory deploying homocentric spheres.

1. Planetary motions in quaestio 1.25

For a satisfactory interpretation of the interrelationship between celestial motions the single most important task is to clear the apparently aberrant evidence of quaestio 1.25. For this I will propose an alternative articulation of the translation for a key passage of this text. As I hope to show this alternative articulation draws with it an interpretation of the text which is sufficiently different to avoid the problems mentioned by Sharples [1982] and [1992].

First I would like to set out the text as it is in the standard edition of Bruns in the Supplementum Aristotelicum, with the two modifications proposed in the Appendix of Sharples [1982], for which see nn. 8 and 12, moreover I introduce a full stop in 1.27, instead of the comma of previous editors:

40.23: πλειών
dὲ σφαιρῶν υόσῶν τῶν τοῦ θείου σώματος ἢ μὲν πρώτῃ τε καὶ ἐξω-
25 τῶν ἀπλήν τε καὶ μίαν κινεῖται κίνησιν ἑκείνην ἐφέσει τῆς υόσίας, ἢ ὅ ὅ τε μετὰ ταύτα ἐπίκαινον καὶ τούτον ἑκάστη ἑφέσει τε καὶ ὑρέξει
tινὸς υόσίας, ὡσοὶ καὶ ἢ πρὸ αὐτῶν. οὐ μὴν μόνην τὴν ἑκεῖν, ἀλλὰ ἐξ ἐαυτῶν κινεῖται ἑκάστη, ἣν κινεῖται καὶ περιφέρεται ἀνάσπαλιν ἑκείνην
tῷ τὴν θέσιν τε καὶ τάξιν τοιαύτῃν ἐχειν, κινεῖται δὲ καὶ δευτέραν κίνησιν
30 ὑπὸ τῆς πρώτῃς περιφερομένη τὴν αὐτὴν ἑκείνην.

of corporeal existents, and so celestial and sublunar matter differ without being composed of a putative more basic entity plus some specific difference.