

Preface

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This volume explores the history of the closely related concepts of form (*eidōs, morphē*), kind (*genos*), and essence (*to ti ēn einai*). These concepts have been the subject of considerable recent research, in particular within metaphysics and philosophy of science. Yet much of the historical background remains under-researched. The papers accepted for this special issue—as well as the other submissions which will hopefully, with sufficient revisions, appear in other outlets—cover a fair selection of this history.

The first paper, by Dorothea Frede, argues that Plato's forms are best understood as what we now call functions, and moreover that these functions rely on harmonious structures. The next two papers discuss the *locus classicus* of these topics, namely Aristotle. Boris Hennig argues that in Aristotle form should be distinguished from function, and that natural things should ultimately be understood in terms of their function rather than their form. The second paper on Aristotle, by Zeyu Chi, presents Aristotle's account of essence, especially building on the notion of *propria*, and contrasts the resulting account with the accounts of Kit Fine and Kathrin Koslicki. The next paper, by Benjamin Wilck, is on Euclid. It argues that Euclid's *Elements* is committed to several metaphysical distinctions, namely distinctions first captured by Aristotle, and that there are different types of definitions which Euclid uses to implicitly make these distinctions. This is followed by a paper on the late-ancient commentators on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, namely on Alexander of Aphrodisias, Asclepius of Tralles, and Michael of Ephesus. In the paper, Marilù Papandreou focuses on forms of artefacts, and argues that Alexander developed an interpretation of artefactual forms as qualities and artefacts as accidental beings. This interpretation was highly influential, and through Asclepius and Michael it influenced Thomas Aquinas, and with him much of medieval and modern philosophy. The next paper, by Sylvain Roudaut, covers the Middle Ages, focusing on the history of the scholastic axiom '*forma dat esse*': that form gives being. The author covers the different variations of this loose axiom, including the fall of the axiom in the late Middle Ages. The next paper moves on to the Early Modern period, focusing on a philosopher with deep ties to the Scholastics, namely Leibniz. Ralf Busse provides a logical reconstruction of Leibniz's argument on the complete concept definition of substance in his *Discours* §8. His reading suggests a Platonic rather than an Aristotelian interpretation, where substances are, rather than have, natures, forms, and individual essences. The final paper leaps forward to the late 20th and early 21st century, to an issue from the philosophy of biology: what is the metaphysical status of biological species? Giulio Sciacca argues against the view that talk of biological species should be deflated into talk of individuals, since this thesis leads to falsities. As a result, the paper argues that talk of kind is indispensable in biology.

While these eight papers cover a fair portion of the history of the notions of forms, kinds, and essences, many parts of the story remain untold. Of course, many other early modern philosophers are highly relevant for this history, such as Bacon, Bruno, Descartes, Locke, and Spinoza – to repeat some of the names mentioned in our original call for papers. The 20th century also contains much diversity on these notions, ranging from the work in Husserl's school on essence (*Wesen*), to Peter Geach's sortal-relative identity essentialism, and the modal treatment of essence by Kripke and Putnam, and the non-modal reaction by Fine and Lowe. These parts of the story must be told elsewhere.

Needless to say, all papers have been through double-blind peer-review. We are greatly indebted to all reviewers, both for the accepted and the rejected paper. The reports were in-depth and to the point, and

were of great help for improving the papers. We also received much support from our managing editor, Philipp Steinkrüger, and his assistant, Joshua Lemm. Lastly, we are very grateful to the German Research Foundation (DFG) for funding us, under the auspices of the project 'Formal Causation in Aristotle and Analytic Metaphysics and Philosophy of Science' (JA 1904/4-1).