

Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Λ

**Introduction, Translation, Commentary
A Speculative Sketch devoid God**

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Preface

This book – that’s a long story. It began during the 1993/94 winter term, when I held an introductory seminar at the University of Zurich on *Metaphysics* Λ . I had already been wondering for some time about how Aristotle’s *ousia* had come to be translated with the Latin *substantia*, what influences were at work and which of the passages in the *Corpus Aristotelicum* had provided the grounds for this interpretation. The first time I had the opportunity to present an outline of my ideas was in *Methexis* IX, in 1996. In 1997/8, I received a research grant from the *Swiss National Science Foundation* which allowed me to reduce my working hours as a grammar school teacher and to dedicate more time to my project. It was during this time that the foundation for this book was laid. After my application for another research grant was rejected, in 2004 I retired from my work as a teacher in order to finish this book.

Following this brief information on the genesis of this book, the *lector benevole* might rightly now expect and deserve a preliminary outline of its aims and conclusions, especially given the length and complexity of the material presented here. The following introduction will provide such an outline.

This book aims to present a completely new approach to Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* Λ . For the past two thousand years, this book has been considered the foundation of Aristotle’s theology, which is centered on an ‘Unmoved Mover’ – an expression never used by Aristotle – whose activity is said to be ‘Thinking of Thinking.’ Anyone who has ever actually read the original will be aware that *Met.* Λ has noth-

ing to do with theology and the word ‘god’ appears far less often than the translations would have us believe. Further, whenever it does appear (the first time being 1072b24), it is introduced as a benchmark for knowledge and for a form of life, to be compared with human knowledge and life.

Met. Λ does not aim to be a theology, but instead constitutes a speculative outline of ousia, being. This outline may be summarised with a formula which has, at its heart, the notion of noesis – whose meaning, however, is very different from what the tradition has lead us to think. That is, the meaning of noesis is far broader than ‘thinking’ alone, and primarily means ‘to perceive’ and ‘to be aware of.’ As Kant noted, “I can think whatever I like, as long as I do not contradict myself,” but I can only be aware of what is; awareness is never the prerogative of a god, but an opportunity for all of us. In the statement

...καὶ ἔστιν νόησις νοήσεως νόησις,
...and awareness₃ is awareness₂ of awareness₁

awareness₁ means the structure of a world in which each individual instance of being aware (awareness₃) realizes (awareness₂) a certain node in a net; the result of this process is that both the perceiving and die perceived *are*. *To be* in this way means to enter in a noetic framework (noesis₁ as awareness₁), and this provides the speculative answer to the question of what founds becoming.

As it stands, my interpretation of Aristotle’s speculative approach might seem ridiculous or improbable. Thus, to make it plausible will require going over a lot of background information. The reason for this need is partly grounded in the way *Met.* Λ has been received over the centuries. This book will address this reception, as well as its problems, in order to demonstrate that this alternative interpretation has been developed with full awareness of this tradition. The other reason for the scope of these preliminaries is due to the fact that I am determined to follow strictly a methodological principle that is generally accepted, but hardly ever applied in this particular case: an answer only becomes meaningful in the context of the question from which it arises. Within this context, the first sentence of *Met.* Λ picks up the essential questions that arose from the positions of the Presocratics, from Plato’s

Timaeus and *Sophist* and the problems of the Old Academy, and focuses them on one point, on the question about being, the *Frage nach dem Sein*; *Met. A* essentially constitutes a speculative sketch of ousia, being. For these reasons, the background information reviewed in this book is rather extensive.

Giving up the assumptions of the standard interpretation we gain in return an understanding that is not only historically more correct than the standard interpretation, which is guided by medieval principles, but also an insight that we can immediately make fruitful for ourselves: Being, *Sein*, means noesis, without subject and without substance, even without the Immovable Mover.

The Introduction is followed by the Translation of *Met. A* – this is Part I, and serves as the basis of this entire book. Part II begins by exposing the presuppositions of the traditional interpretation and contrasting them with our new premises. In the third chapter, I will give reasons for my choice of some sentences which I will use as key propositions in the commentary. Part III contains my Commentary on *Met. A*. Part IV is a short section consisting of a brief interpretation of Plotinus' *Ennead III 8, [30] On Nature, Contemplation, and the One*, where the concept of *theoria* corresponds in its function to Aristotle's concept of noesis. At the end of this book you will find Indices of Cited Literature, References, Names, and Subjects.

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1. Introduction

1.1. The Roots of the Standard Interpretation of *Met. A*

Usually, philosophical texts are only of interest to philosophers, and it is rare for philosophers to have an impact on public life. Some exceptions to this rule include some of the Presocratics, the reception of Confucius in the East, and the reception of Hegel in the West. *Met. A* is yet another one of the few philosophical texts that have had an incredible impact across several cultures and eras. Its effects, in breadth and depth, are absolutely astonishing, especially when one takes into account its brevity, i. e. the fact that it spans no more than approximatively 7 pages in I. Bekker's, and 17 pages in W. D. Ross's edition.

So, what is the reason for its significance?

Its impact cannot be explained on the basis of its content alone, because this is of a speculative nature; instead, it is grounded in the context of the times in which it was read, especially in its reception by the Church Fathers of late antiquity and during the theological disputes of the Medieval period (concerning issues as the nature of Jesus, or the problems with the Trinity). Some ideas developed in *Met. A* subsequently became integral to the Christian concept of God. This integration into the theological system of the Christian tradition gave rise to a very special interpretation of this text, which has survived across many centuries and up to this day. As part of the foundation of a theological system, *Met. A* has influenced religious practice and pastoral activities, and consequently has affected the daily lives of millions of people who have no awareness of this book. In turn, the text's close association with Christianity has affected how it was interpreted, with the result that even philosophers who do not have any interest in theology are believing

that *Met. A* is Aristotle's theology. Leading scholars of ancient philosophy and Aristotle also confirm this interpretation of the text again and again.¹ Thanks to its integration into Christianity and the corresponding philosophical interpretation, *Met. A* has served as a method and foundation for proving the existence of god from the time of the Church Fathers up to today. Further, it has given rise to several other consequences, as well as a host of questions which have provoked many original philosophical and theological theses. The most important systematical claims will be discussed in Part II, Chapter 2, in order to make explicit some of their inherent problems (metaphysics of substance, theology, etc.).

Although Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is still an object of dispute (sometimes even in a violent form),² none of the interpreters engaged in this dispute queries its traditional interpretation. One of the key points of this traditional interpretation is the claim that Aristotle's *Met. A* expounds a theology that is founded on a metaphysics of substance. While the impressive studies conducted by A. Zimmermann, 1998, show that God played various roles in the metaphysical debate during the 13th and 14th century, they also confirm that these debates never leaved the framework for the basic interpretation of this work (155).³ E. J. García de la Garza, 2011, wrote a new

¹ Take e.g. Stephen Menn, "Aristotle's Theology," in: Chr. Shields (ed.), *Oxford Handbook Of Aristotle*, OUP 2012, 422–464; the *New Essays*, 2016, edited by Horn. – The Introduction and Commentary in the present book is based on work produced by the following authors, although I do not necessarily mention them at every possible point: F. Brentano, 1886; P. Natorp, 1888; W. Jaeger, 1923; W. D. Ross, 1924; P. Merlan, 1953; V. Decarie, 1961; W. Wieland, 1970 and 1982; W. Bröcker, 1957; P. Aubenque, 1966; I. Düring, 1966; H. J. Krämer, 1967; L. Routil, 1969; E. Vollrath, 1969; L. Elders, 1972; W. Leszl, 1975; J. Owens, 1978; K. Brinkmann, 1979; M. Burnyeat, 1979; K.-H. Volkmann-Schluck, 1979; T. Kobusch, 1980; W. K. C. Guthrie, 1981; W. Viertel, 1982; H. Flashar, 1983; M.-T. Liske, 1985; H. Schmitz, 1985; D. W. Graham, 1987; M. Frede, G. Patzig, 1988; M. Furth, 1988; T. Irwin, 1990; M.-L. Gill, 1989; E. C. Halper, 1989; J. H. Königshausen, 1989; B. Manuwald, 1989; C. Witt, 1989; F. A. Lewis, 1991; M. J. Loux, 1991; J. Barnes, 1992; A. Preus, 1992; G. Fine, 1993; A. Graeser, 1993; G. Reale, 1993; D. Bostock, 1994; T. Scaltsas, 1994; J. Barnes, 1995; O. Höffe, 1996; C. Rapp, 1996; the contributions in M. Frede, D. Charles, 2000; D. Fonfara, 2003; M. Bordt, 2006; the contributions in C. Horn, 2016; S. Fazzo, 2012 and 2014. F. Baghdassarian, 2019.

² See e.g. how M.-T. Liske, 1988, has reviewed the book of W. Viertel, along with M. Viertel's response, 1989, and the review of both by K. Brinkmann, 1989. – Fundamental comments on criticism of metaphysics give W. Stegmaier, 1977, E. Schott, 1994 (both with bibliography), K. Baynes et al. (Hrsg.), 1987.

³ Cf. the Omnibus review by T. Dangel, 2014.

dissertation on the reception of *Met. A*, and, according to him, it is almost self-evident that this text is not about theology. However, like those before him, he also seems to believe that the only alternative to a theological interpretation is that of metaphysics of substance.

Most scholars agree that it is Aristotle's intention to develop a system of metaphysics including a God, the so-called 'Unmoved Mover,' which occupies the primary position in this system. What this interpretation still leaves open are only residual questions and concerns e. g. regarding the completeness or conclusiveness of this metaphysical system.

On the other side, modern scholarship is increasingly voicing hesitation and restraint. That is, many new writings are prefaced with considerations of the 'searching character' of Aristotle's philosophy and the difficulty of pinning him down, reflections which are easy to support by the text. To some, these matters simply indicate some flaws of his philosophy, while others go no further than paying lip service to them, or attributing them to Aristotle's development. Still, regardless of the attitude taken, without fail *Met. A* continues to be presented as a metaphysical system in the main bodies of this scholarship. This system can be divided into what was later called *Metaphysica generalis* and *specialis*, i. e. into ontology, cosmology, theology (with the subsequent onto-theology), and psychology or noology.

According to the standard interpretation, the concept at the centre of *metaphysica generalis* is *ousia*, a term, as is generally agreed, that is most appropriately and accurately translated as 'substance.' Further, it is claimed that the concept of substance was originally developed by Aristotle himself or, at least, is a legitimate interpretation of his theorizing. Even if somebody were of a mind to translate it differently, *ousia* would still refer first to some individual object, a thing that is separate from intellect and able to exist independently, that is, an entity, and, second, its essence. Aristotle is said to have made the fundamental distinction between first and second substances, and between substance and accidents, in order to create a system that accurately reflects the world as experienced by ordinary human beings. Further, this is exactly what is supposed to be so valuable and timeless about Aristotle's

philosophy, it is the very thing or concept that is still useful for us.⁴

Aristotle's original question of "What is ousia?" is turned into "Which of the things presented in *Met. Z* 3, namely to katholou, to ti en einai, to genos, to hypokeimenon, is the essential being, the first thing, the primary substance?"⁵ With regard to *metaphysica specialis*, Chapters 6–7 of *Met. A* are thought to pertain to theology, Chapters 7–8 to cosmology, Chapters 6–7 and 9 to (onto-)theology, and Chapters 7 and 9 to noology.

Another problem is the accepted view that there is a distinct difference in how Aristotle uses the term 'substance' in the *Categories*, in *Met. ZHΘ*, and in *A*. The standard view holds that in the *Categories*, substance primarily refers to the concrete particular ("this horse"), but in *Met. ZHΘ* substance refers to eidos. The reason why this is problematic is that Aristotle has made it as clear as possible that ousia cannot be a general form (that is why some speak of an 'individual form').⁶

If there are substances whose main characteristic is subsistence,⁷ then there must be a first substance fulfilling this condition. In the standard interpretation, this is the 'First Mover' (an expression that does not actually occur anywhere in the text), which is considered to be identical with God, and this is why *Met. A* is thought a book of theology – the view held by the majority of scholars in this field.⁸ The

⁴ T. Buchheim, H. Flashar, R. A. H. King (edd.), *Kann man heute noch etwas anfangen mit Aristoteles?* 2003.

⁵ Cf. M. Frede, G. Patzig, 1988; M. J. Loux, 1991, 2: "Which things are the primary ousiai? ...the primary ousiai are the ontologically basic entities. They are the things by reference to which we explain why other things exist ..."; cf. his exposition on the metaphysics of substance in id., 2002, 123–135; J. Barnes, 1995; C. Rapp, 1996.

⁶ The question of whether there are any individual forms or not is older than Frede-Patzig leads us to believe; Plotinus, *Enneades* V 9 (5) 8,2, asked this question, and after him Duns Scotus, and then F. Suarez, *Disputationes Metaphysicae*, V, Sectio IV, 175b *ergo forma est principium individuationis*, 176a on *Met. 7*, 13 *actus est, qui distinguit, ergo forma est, quae complet rationem individui*. For further predecessors see p. 80.

⁷ In its Medieval version.

⁸ J. Barnes, 1995, 101–108; most of the participants of the *Symposium Aristotelicum*, 2000, (contributions held on the occasion of the 14th *Symposium Aristotelicum*, August 1996 in Oxford, which had as his theme *Met. A*) and most of the contributions in *New Essays*, 2016 (Proceedings of the 13th Conference of the Karl and Gertrud-Abel Foundation, Bonn, November, 28th–December 1st, 2010); F. Baghdassarian, 2019.

generally accepted view is that the goal of *Met. A* is to prove that god is in some way the cause of our world. Many identify Aristotle's 'Unmoved Mover' with Plato's demiurge from the *Timaeus*. P. Merlan, 1953, even turned the question of how to interpret the term $\delta\upsilon\ \hat{\eta}\ \delta\upsilon\upsilon$ (being as being) into a theological question.

Too often, modern philosophers accept the standard interpretative accounts of philosophy and history of philosophy, found in handbooks, companions, guides etc. and have thereby good reasons to criticize Aristotle on this very point.⁹ An older example of these instances is N. Hartmann, 1965, 31f., who accuses the old ontologies of proceeding deductively. On the other hand, it is comforting to note that there also some philosophers expressing caution over the Medieval-inspired conceptualization of Aristotle, e. g. G. W. F. Hegel:¹⁰

...some ascribe to him views that completely contradict his philosophy ...¹¹

or as M. Heidegger expressed it:¹²

For the most part, the philosophy of today's situation moves inauthentically within the Greek conceptuality, and indeed within a conceptuality which has been pervaded by a chain of diverse interpretations.¹³

or H. Putnam, 1994, 50, who speaks about what Burnyeat called "the Christian view":

...if there is another interpretation that is both textually more sound and philosophically more powerful (...), then where does the rival interpretation come from, and why has it enjoyed such a long history? We find the history of this misreading so interesting that we cannot resist a brief digression.

⁹ E. g. A. J. Ayer, 1936, (in German 1970), 50–54: metaphysical statements result from grammatical illusion; W. Cramer, 1959; W. Quine, 1969 (in German 1975), 41: "There is no place for a first philosophy," 95: truth and ontology are part of a transcendental metaphysics; W. Quine here takes his position against essentialism, which for him is an Aristotelian feature; cf. W. Stegmaier, 1977; P. F. Strawson, 1992.

¹⁰ *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, Theorie Werkausgabe, 19, 133

¹¹ ...*Man schreibt ihm Ansichten zu, die gerade das Entgegengesetzte seiner Philosophie sind* ...;

¹² *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles* (1922), 1989, 249; cf. *Being and Time*, § 6.

¹³ *Die Philosophie der heutigen Situation bewegt sich zum grossen Teil uneigentlich in der griechischen Begrifflichkeit, und zwar in einer solche, die durch eine Kette von verschiedenartigen Interpretationen hindurchgegangen ist.*

Although they all admonish us not to be seduced by a traditional Aristotle, none of them had the power to affect any significant change, which means that scholasticism goes on unchecked.

1.2. The Current State of Research and its Strata

Apart from its immediate effect on everyday life, *Met. A* has had vast philosophical consequences, traces of which are still evident in the state of the research. The term *Forschungslage* (the research-situation) refers to a set of common convictions that are held to be necessary by a scientific community, that define the methods for addressing problems, and that even establish which kinds of questions are appropriate for investigation. The nature of research is to generate new insights every day, which means that the *Forschungslage* is constantly changing. Those who are directly involved often overlook this fact, despite they recognize that this kind of change is indispensable for scientific progress. This means that the research-situation is relative to some specific questions. Although the time we live in may have certain drawbacks, we certainly have an advantage in being aware of many earlier states of research. Further, we can also see that, even concerning fundamental philosophical questions, the research-situation has a tendency to change and become outdated at a relatively rapid pace.

But the concept of the research-situation involves yet another idea, too. For, just as in geological processes, changes of a certain state tend to create tangible sediments (strata), remainders of what has gone. These are fixed results, convictions, beliefs; the older they are, the more solid they seem to be true. *Met. A* has had such a long-lasting impact, and it was analyzed, debated, and commented on from a very early stage. In addition the book had, as already mentioned, an application in the religious domain. Thus, concerning *Met. A* with its long history and succession of research-situations, we probably will found most solid convictions. Examples of them are the belief that *Met. A* primarily deals with substances and, in particular, with God as ‘Unmoved Mover’; that the planets are additional, albeit secondary,

unmoved movers; that Aristotle's teleology, even if it was not primarily invented for this purpose, has an essential function in this theological context; and finally that this entire theoretical construct culminates in the formula of noesis noeseos, even if this expression has been given various interpretations. No handbook, no history of philosophy, no paper relevant to current research can miss these themes. A substantial amount of 20th century research has been dedicated to rearrange results within the above mentioned convictions, may be with minor or greater shifts.

Any approach to *Met. A* today must be aware of the hermeneutical fact that there are layers of interpretations that virtually obscure the text itself. This is not a provocative statement, but instead my object is to make explicit the sedimentations of the various prior research-situations, and, in doing so, to point to the fact, that behind the traces of these research-situations in the *communis opinio* about *Met. A* there is a text that can only be understood in the context of its own background. The main features of the *Forschungslage* will be presented in Part II, Chapter 2, but we will not go into any great detail here, as this is neither possible nor useful. Getting a basic outline will enable us to bracket them out of our own reading, with a kind of *epoche*, as Husserl did in relation to the *natural attitude*.

My project will be conducted in the spirit of a kind of "informed naivety" or second-order naivety. It must be done in full awareness of the difficulties associated with the conventional presuppositions; we must make them explicit and replace them with new premises. But we do not operate under the illusion that it is possible to read *Met. A* without any presuppositions – quite to the contrary. Instead, I differentiate between the hermeneutic situation of our *Forschungslage* and the actual text itself, and I will make every effort to make my presuppositions explicit. When pointing out the problems of the standard interpretation, by no means am I suggesting – which would be absurd – that my alternative interpretation will not have any problems. The choice here is not between problems and no problems – problems will remain – but is simply about finding the more meaningful and acceptable ones. Furthermore, I should note that I am not questioning the concepts of substance, purpose, or theology in themselves. The problems mentioned in Part I are not of the same kind as those Kant spoke of in the Preface of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1781. Rather, the issue

here are the difficulties that arise if someone contends that *Met. A* is a metaphysics of substance, a theology, etc. Part II, 2, “Traditional Reception...” is mainly the negative part of this work, while the positive is in the commentary where I will articulate Aristotle’s speculative approach to the question about being.

All of these questions also involve questions concerning the character of the Aristotelian philosophy. Metaphysics in general may have the character of an investigation about what the natural beings or the beings in the whole are. A metaphysics of substance has an answer to this, namely that being is substance. It is this thesis that it has to defend. So we must ask, if our text is stating and defending claims of this kind. The alternative would be of a more reflective and descriptive manner, without asserting its results as a new truth. Our answer depends on how we think Aristotle continues the Platonic way of organizing and asking questions, and what we think about the fact that Aristotle’s research always begins with endoxa, the examination of established opinions. Are these just a starting point in the path to some final truth or do they constitute an area that we can never get beyond, but whose principles can be made explicit? I call the Aristotelian form of thinking *unbehauptend* (non-assertive), it would be a misunderstanding to identify this with aporetic thought, because at its core, aporetic thought also makes assertions.¹⁴

1.3. My Intention

Thus there are sound reasons to review the traditional premises when reading and approaching *Met. A*, and to look for new premises. The purpose of doing this is not as much about examining the finer details of the standard interpretation, but to re-examine its basic assumptions. The examination of these assumptions in Part II shows that today it is even more urgent to question them, because they are currently so unalterably established as to completely obscure the text’s original intention. That is, given the importance of *Met. A*, we must find a new approach to examining

¹⁴ I think here of modern forms of aporetic thought (e. g. P. Aubenque) which contend that some problems are not solvable.

its subject. To that end, I propose replacing the old premises with new ones that I will develop in Part II, 3; on the one hand these allow us to read *Met. A* while taking into account its intellectual background, on the other hand the new reading leads to an understanding that has an impact on us at once. This motivation to re-read *Met. A* with new premises is inspired not only by the loss of philosophical relevance of Aristotle's writings today, or by the modern methods to correct text and thought if it does not fit the expectations, but even more by the result of philological and historical research. One of the major points that has arisen from this research is the issue of the dating of *Met. A* and of Theophrastus' *Metaphysics*. It has become evident that these are contemporaneous, and that they are both narrowly concerned with the problems of the Old Academy. In this context, Aristotle concentrates on the question about *ousia* (being, *Sein*), which is also directly related to our understanding of genesis (becoming). And, while Aristotle has the more speculative approach, Theophrastus' is rather a realistic reflection of the same.

The commentary in Part III follows the key propositions (KP; *Leitsätze*), which are listed in the last chapter of Part II. These key propositions express the direction of the thought at the heart of *Met. A*; thus Chapter 4 can be read as an outline of the text with a view to articulating its speculative approach. The speculative nature of Aristotle's project will be discussed in detail in the commentary of *Met. 6, 7* and *9* in Part III; here I provide a preview of the same.

From the start to the end the main question in *Met. A* is:

On which being (*Sein*) becoming does rest?¹⁵

This question is asked in two contexts, one cosmological the other speculative. The dual nature of this question arises from the fact that the thoughts expressed in *Met. A* arose to a large extent in reference to Plato's *Timaeus*. In the cosmological context, we already have the sun as an unmoved moving being. But the sun does not fully meet the criteria of an unmoved being, because it still has the potential for movement, even if that is circular motion. The real beginning which we are searching for

¹⁵ *Auf welchem Sein ruht das Werden?*

is totally unmoved and without any potentiality, i. e. pure actuality (*Met.* Λ 6.8).¹⁶ We must bear in mind that *energeia*, actuality, in this theoretical context, does not mean existence, but the actualization of the required characteristics that constitute the *eidos* of the respective being. A thing is actual or real when it has reached its *telos*, its end, in a stable form.

In *De Anima*, B 1, Aristotle tries to clarify what he means by “the soul is the *ousia* in the sense of the *eidos* of a natural body, which is potentially living” (412a19–21) with an example, saying that the soul is the *ousia* resp. *entelecheia* of the natural body in a similar way as the sight is the actuality of the eye (412b18–20, the sight is the *ousia* of the eye). This is applicable to the use of *energeia* in our case.

Based on the first speculative point of culmination, in *Met.* Λ 6.8

δεῖ ἄρα εἶναι ἀρχὴν τοιαύτην ἧς ἡ οὐσία ἐνέργεια,
therefore, there must be a principle such that its being (*ousia*, *Sein*) is actuality,

Aristotle arrives at the second point of culmination in *Met.* Λ 7.17–7.19, where he uses the metaphorical term ‘way of life’ (*διαγωγὴ*) in order to make clear that he is no longer talking about beings (beings, *onta*) but about being (*ousia*, *Sein*). At this point, it is becoming evident that, in the context of this speculation, it is no longer possible to maintain the otherwise valuable distinction between the being aware (*nous*) and that which it is aware of (*noeton*) because the *telos*, the end, of each being (*on*) is to get its characteristics and determinations in order *to be* actually in *noesis*. By saying that *to be* means ‘to be in *noesis*,’ where the being aware and that which it is aware of are indistinguishable, Aristotle does not suggest that this is primarily or exclusively the *noesis* of a god, but he takes the term *noesis* in a more general meaning.

Already at this early stage, anyway later in *Met.* Λ 9, it becomes evident that *to be* in its first and fundamental sense means ‘*to be* in the *noesis*’ (awareness), and that it is in the *noesis* that a being is properly actual. In our factual world, ‘to be aware of

¹⁶ ‘Pure’ is meant as in Kant’s *Critique of pure reason*, that is ‘not empirical, but the foundation of experience,’ ‘noetic.’

something' means to notice a thing (normally we restrict this possibility to humans, animals, to a lesser extent to plants). But here we are told that our possibility to be aware of something is based on another awareness which is not that of an consciousness of a subject, an awareness, which is not a possible counterpart of us, the aware-beings. The 'awareness without subject' is comparable to a encompassing system that unites both aware-beings and that of which they are aware. This understanding of the first and fundamental *to be* can be represented by a formula derived from *Met.* Λ 6, 7 and 9: {οὐσία ← νόησις → ἐνέργεια}.

And, since Aristotle grounds his investigation of *to be* on the endoxa using the method of *unbehauptendes* (non-assertive) thinking and as its argument range the basic views expressed by endoxa, the complete formula for *to be* is:

$$\left\{ \frac{\text{ousia} \leftarrow \text{noesis} \rightarrow \text{energeia}}{\text{DOXA}} \right\}$$

that is

$$\left\{ \frac{\text{being} \leftarrow \text{awareness} \rightarrow \text{actuality}}{\text{DOXA}} \right\}$$

The above material, which I have presented as a preview and without further justification, will be explained in detail in the commentary to the Chapters 6, 7 and 9.

1.4. Theory, Speculation

The terms ‘theory’ and ‘speculation’ appear very frequently in this book and play a major role in my argument, because I aim to show that *Met. A* is neither a metaphysics of substance nor a form of theology. *Met. A* does not make any attempt to prove the existence of god, or to explain what god is or that god has these or some other characteristics, but it primarily constitutes a speculative approach to *ousia* (being, *Sein*). For this reason, I should provide some explications about the use of these terms. First of all, I use them in their substantive and the adjectival form as synonyms; ‘theory’ should evoke more the Greek term, which appears not very often in the Greek text but at strategic points; ‘speculation’ should refer more to the methodical aspect of the text.

The adjectives ‘theoretical’ and ‘speculative’ contrast with several terms, such as ‘mundane’ or ‘physical’ or ‘cosmological,’ but also ‘theological,’ ‘religious,’ ‘historical,’ ‘realistic,’ and many others as well. All of these contrasts designate attitudes in our everyday life, when we pay attention to which is actually at hand, while the term ‘theory’ seeks to identify the non-empirical origin and basis of our everyday convictions.

In this book, the term ‘theory’ is never used in the modern sense. Both terms designate a special and unique form of knowledge and method. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, theory is considered the highest possible realization of a human being. Exercising theory is the best way for a particular human being to actualize its humanity. Theory is neither empirical nor a priori, neither deductive nor inductive, as all of these forms of knowledge deal with things in a definite and given world. What theory does, instead, is to inquire into the world in terms of a framework, and this inquiry must be of quite another form than any questions relating to things in that world. Otherwise, it would become an external question, the method that was rightly criticized by R. Carnap., Theory is first and foremost a method. It is the method for searching for the principles that determine the nature of being in a respective world (in the present case the Greek, pre-Christian world). And just as the question at

hand is unique, the method used to address is also unique in that it has only this application.

In *Met. A*, Aristotle proves not only that it is necessary but also possible to ask for the frame of a world. The starting-points for this inquiry are the prevailing beliefs about *to be* and the analysis of the actual use of *to be* (*pollachos legetai to on*). The first and principal beliefs, the origin of our everyday beliefs and ways of speaking, can only be found by means of theory, which has to be performed in topical attitude (a method that anticipates some of the modern analytical insights).¹⁷

Met. A is a speculative sketch. It is speculative because the question of *ousia* (being, *Sein*) is explored in a speculative manner, that is, not one that leads to new assertions about the whole, which is what the later traditional metaphysics does, but as information about the result of an inquiry and analysis about the *endoxa*. It is a sketch, because it leads to the baselines only. Aristotle arrives at his result in two phases. In the first one, the connection between *ousia* (being) and *energeia* (actuality) becomes evident; in the second, we see that *ousia* is founded on *noesis* (awareness). This structure of *ousia* – *noesis* – *energeia* (being – awareness – actuality), which is based on prevailing opinions, can be represented by the above formula. Normally I write the formula in the graphically easier form {οὐσία ← νόησις → ἐνέργεια / DOXA}.

1.5. Notes on the Use of this Book

1.5.1. List of terms

All Greek terms and phrases that are not in this list are translated at the place where they occur. To some translations which are a little bit more unusual I have added short explanations, in most cases more details and justifications can be found in my Commentary on *Met. Z*, 2012, in the chapter on quotations (*Anführungen*). Most words appear in transcription; in lengthy quotes I use the the Greek font.

¹⁷ For ‘topical attitude’ see E. Sonderegger, 2012, 3.1, “Topik.”

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The names of the categories and the types of causes are given in the more complicated form which corresponds to their Greek expression (hence usually ‘with-reference-to-something’ for πρὸς τι instead of ‘relation,’ or ‘the-for-the-sake-of-which’ for τὸ οὐ ἔνεκα instead of ‘end’ etc.)

– αἴσθησις	aisthesis	sense-perception
– αἴτιον, αἰτία	aition, aitia	cause, causes
– ἀκρίβεια	akribeia	exactness; to be principal
– ἀλλοίωσις	alloiosis	(qualitative) alteration
– ἀνάγκη	ananke	necessity
– ἀπορία	aporia	aporia, impasse
– ἀρχή	arche	origin, principle, rule
– γένεσις	genesis	becoming, coming-to-be, genesis
– γένος	genos	kind, class, genus
– γίγνομαι	gignomai	I come into being
– δεύτεραι οὐσίαι	deuterai ousiai	secondary beings (i. e. genera and species)
– δόξα	doxa	in colloquial speech: opinion, what we commonly believe; as a term: DOXA, as the meaning of ‘being’ in a particular world, for which no further explanation can be given
– δύναμις	dynamis	power, capability, potentiality
– εἶδος, εἶδη	eidon, eide	shape; the invisible, non-hyletic form; the noetic determination
– εἰκὼς λόγος	eikos logos	‘probable speech’ / ‘figurative speech’ probably speaking: to speak about probable or plausible things with only probable or plausible credibility

– ἐκ τούτων, τὸ	ek touton, to	the ‘from-these’; the ‘out-of-these’ (: out of hyle and morphe); the concrete particular
– ἓν	hen	one; unity
– ἔνδοξον, ἔνδοξα	endoxon, endoxa	generally admitted opinion, opinions
– ἐνεργεῖν	energein	in colloquial speech: to be in action, to act, to execute; as a term also: to be actual
– ἐνέργεια	energeia	in colloquial speech: activity; as term: actuality (= having arrived its eidos as result of a process)
– ἐντελέχεια	entelecheia	actuality (in its perfection)
– ἐξ ἀμφοῖν, τὸ	ex amphoin, to	the ‘from-both’; as to ek touton: the concrete particular being (composed of eidos and hyle)
– ἐξ οὗ, τὸ	ex hou, to	the ‘out-of-which’; as noun: hyle
– ἐπαγωγή	epagoge	guidance <by examples>; leading to the understanding of something by typical examples
– ἐπιστήμη	episteme	knowledge (<i>not</i> “science”)
– θεόλογοι	theologoi	theologians (e.g. Hesiodus)
– θεολογία, θεολογική <ἐπιστήμη>	theologia, the- ologike <epis- teme>	knowledge about gods; the first in ranking of the three theoretical forms of knowledge, which is about separate and unmoved being (<i>Sein</i>)
– θεωρία	theoria	theory; contemplation, the speculative project (see Introduction)
– καθ’ αὐτό	kath’ hautou	with respect to itself, in itself; <i>an sich</i>
– καθ’ αὐτό	λεγόμενον, τὸ	

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	kath' hauto	legomenon, to what is said with respect to itself
– κατ' ἄλλο	kat' allo	with respect to something else
– καθόλου	katholou	universal
– κατὰ συμβεβηκός	λεγόμενον, τὸ kata	symbebekos legomenon, to what is said incidentally
– κίνησις	kinesis	movement, motion (not only change of place, but also qualitative and quantitative change, and, if in paral- lel with metabole, also becoming)
– κινῶν, τὸ	kinoun, to	which sets in motion
– λόγος	logos	speech, statement, thought, reason
– μέγιστα γένη	megista gene	the highest kinds (Plato, <i>Sophist</i> : being, movement, rest, identity, dif- ference; for details see E. Sondereg- ger, 2012, 91–94.)
– μεταβολή	metabole	change
– μονή – πρόδος	– ἐπιστροφή mone – prohodos	– epistrophe staying in itself – proceeding forth – returning to itself (as the three mo- ments of <i>being</i> in Neoplatonism)
– νόησις	noesis	awareness, being aware, perception (<i>Bemerken, Gewahren</i>)
– νόησις ₃ νοήσεως ₁	νόησις ₂ ἐστίν noesis noeseos	noesis estin awareness ₃ is awareness ₂ of awareness ₁ (see commentary on KP 23 and Index Rerum)

– νοητόν	noeton	what is perceptible by the nous; that which the nous is aware of; perceived
– νοῦς, ὁ	nous, ho	what is aware of; the being aware of; the intellect
– ὅθεν ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς	μεταβολῆς hothen he arche	tes metaboles the origin of change; where the impulse to change comes from
– ὄν, τὸ	on, to	the being; the term, the word being
– ὄν ἦ ὄν	on he on	being as being
– ὄν, τὸ, λέγεται	πολλαχῶς on, to, legetai	pollachos the word ‘being’ is used in many ways
– ὄντως ὄν	ontos on	properly or really being (Plato)
– ὀρεκτός	orektos	what is desired, what is desirable, what is longed for
– ὄρεξις	orexis	desire
– ὀρισμός	horismos	in speculative context: the effort to articulate the ti en einai, which necessarily must fail; definition as a substitute ¹⁸
– οὐ ἔνεκα, τὸ	hou heneka, to	the for-the-sake-of-which; as noun: to telos, end, goal
– οὐρανός	ouranos	the heavens, the sky
– οὐσία	ousia	being (<i>Sein</i>); a being (<i>Seiendes</i>), a thing; proper being
– οὐσίαι	ousiai	beings, ways of being, classes or kinds of being

¹⁸ See my commentary on Z 4–6, 2012, Chapter 6.

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– οὐσία αἰσθητή	ousia aisthete	perceptible being
– οὐσία ἀκίνητος	ousia akinetos	unmoved being
– οὐσίαι φυσικαί	ousiai physikai	natural beings
–		
{οὐσία←νόησις→ἐνέργεια/DOXA}	{ousia←noesis→energeia/DOXA}	{being←awareness→actuality/DOXA}
– περὶ οὐσίας ἡ	θεωρία peri ousias	he theoria the theory (: the speculative project) is about being
– ποιόν / ποῖον, τὸ	poion, to,	the of-some-kind / the of-what-kind?
– πολλαχῶς	λεγόμενον, τὸ pollachos	legomenon, to what is said in multiple ways
– ποσόν / πόσον, τὸ	poson	the somehow-many; the how-many?
– ποτέ / πότε	pote	at some time / the When
– πρὸς ἓν	pros hen	with respect to one (: the form of unity of <i>focal meaning</i> compared with e. g. the unity of a genus)
– πρὸς ἓν	λέγεσθαι pros hen	legesthai to be said with respect to one
– πρὸς τι, τὸ	pros ti, to	the with-reference-to-something
– πρώτη ὕλη	prote hyle	what underlies, as the first of all perceptible things (in an absolute sense); what underlies directly a particular thing, that of which a thing is made (in a relative sense)

– πρώτη οὐσία	prote ousia	the first and one, with respect to which <i>to be</i> , which is said in manifold ways, has its unity
– πρώτη φιλοσοφία	prote philosophia	the philosophy that investigates what is primary
– πρώτον κινούν,	τὸ, (or: κινήσαν) proton kinoun,	to (or: kinesan) the first moving (note: never in a masculine form!)
– πρώτος οὐρανός	protos ouranos	the first heaven; the sphere of the fixed stars
– στάσις	stasis	rest
– στέρησις	steresis	privation, fault, lack; lacking some determinations
– συνεχές	syneches	continuous, constant
– αὐτόματον	tautomaton	chance, spontaneity
– τέλος	telos	end, goal; as noun for <i>to hou heneka</i>
– τί ἦν εἶναι, τὸ	ti en einai, to	<i>to be</i> as it is used in the question τουτί τί ἦν; (“What in the world is that?”) The way <i>prote ousia</i> is, in respect to which the manifold use of <i>to be</i> has its unity; the ‘What-in-the-World?-Being’
– τίς ἄνθρωπος, ὁ	tis anthropos, ho	the some-how-human; the human, insofar as she/he has accidental determinations, but it is not determined which of them are realized in the present case (cf. <i>τόδε τι</i>)
– τό...	to ...	with terms: “the word ...,” or: “the term ...”; otherwise the neuter article

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– τόδε τι, τὸ	tode ti, to	some-this, the ¹⁹
– τύχη	tyche	chance
– ὕλη	hyle	as a way of being: the appropriateness for ... (Heidegger); the stuff out of which a thing is made (Liddell-Scott)
– ὑποδοχή	hypodochē	receptacle of becoming, a characteristic of chora
– ὑποκείμενον	hypokeimenon	that what underlies; the subject; the about-what (<i>das Worüber</i>)
– ὑπόστασις	hypostasis	sediment in liquids; Stoicism: substance, reality; Neoplatonism: one of the ways to be one
– φορά	phora	movement in place
– φύσις	physis	nature
– χώρα	chora	place, field; where the noetic is realized (Pl. <i>Tim.</i>); that which takes in becoming; therefore = hypodochē; what is more elementary than the elements of the Presocratics
– χωριστόν	choriston	separate, separable

Table 1.1.: List of terms

1.5.2. Register

Plato, Aristotle, the characters of the Platonic dialogues are not listed in the Index of Names, nor the occurrences of Theophrastus in the respective chapters nor these of Plotinus in Part IV.

¹⁹ Something determined in principle whose actually realised determinations are disregarded (Meinong: *der unvollständige Gegenstand*), see E. Sonderegger, 2012, 170–174.

1.5.3. Some conventions of presentation

<being>	addition to the translated text
<: being>	comment
<: νοῦς>	translated text
KP 1	numbering of the key propositions
<i>Met.</i> Λ 1.1	“the first sentence of the first chapter of <i>Met.</i> Λ ” numbered following the edition of W. D. Ross, 1924

Table 1.2.: Some conventions of presentation

Part I.

Translation of *Met.* Α

This translation is the basis for the commentary. I have used the edition of W. D. Ross, *Aristotle's Metaphysics*, Vol. II, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1924. For this new edition, I compared his text with that of Silvia Fazzo, *Il libro Lambda della Metafisica di Aristoteles*, Elenchos LXI-1, Bibliopolis, Napoli 2012. In some cases I preferred her reading; S. Fazzo often returns to the manuscripts E and J, which she considers more reliable.²⁰

On some points I diverge: the intransitive understanding of μεταβάλλειν at 1071b15; the dative ἐνεργεία, at 1072b13 and 1072b4ff.; the change of the cases of ἐκείνου and τοῦτο at 1072b23; and at 1075b18 the difference in aspect seems to me more decisive than the lexical difference (μετίσχει). For the numbering of the phrases I follow W. D. Ross, even when Silvia Fazzo's punctuation differs.

In the following list, I enumerate the points in which I follow Silvia Fazzo. These changes to Ross' text are not mentioned again in my translation.

Stelle		W. D. Ross	Silvia Fazzo
1069a30f.	1.7, KP2	οὐσίαι δὲ τρεῖς μία μὲν αἰσθητή – ἧς ἡ μὲν αἰδῖος ἡ δὲ φθαρτή, ἦν πάντες ὁμολογοῦσιν, οἷον τὰ φυτὰ καὶ τὰ ξῶα [ἡ δ' αἰδῖος] – ἧς ἀνάγκη τὰ στοιχεῖα λαβεῖν, εἴτε ἔν εἴτε πολλά·	οὐσίαι δὲ τρεῖς· μία μὲν αἰσθητή, ἧς ἡ μὲν φθαρτή, ἦν πάντες ὁμολογοῦσιν, οἷον τὰ φυτὰ καὶ τὰ ξῶα ἡ δ' αἰδῖος, ἧς ἀνάγκη τὰ στοιχεῖα λαβεῖν, εἴτε ἔν εἴτε πολλά·
1069b9	2.2	ἡ κατὰ τὸ τί	ἡ κατὰ τί
1070a5	3.4	τὰ γὰρ φύσει οὐσίαι καὶ τὰ ἄλλα.	τὰ γὰρ φύσει οὐσίαι καὶ τὰ ἄλλα.
1070a11–12	3.7, KP5	ἡ δὲ φύσις τόδε τι καὶ ἕξις τις εἰς ἦν·	ἡ δὲ φύσις τόδε τι εἰς ἦν, καὶ ἕξις τις·

²⁰ Having written some articles to the theme she justifies her point in “Lo stemma codicum della Metafisica di Aristotele: Una proposta alternativa,” in: *Revue d'histoire des textes*, n.s., t. XII, 2017, 35-58.

1070a13	3.8	τὸ τόδε τι	τὸ τόδε
1070a16	3.8	οἰκία τε ἢ ἄνευ ὕλης	οἰκία ἢ ἄνευ ὕλης
1070a36	4.3	καὶ αἰ οὐσίαι.	καὶ οὐσίαι.
1070b7	4.7	οὐδὲ δὴ τῶν νοητῶν στοιχείον ἔστιν, οἷον τὸ ὄν ἢ τὸ ἔν·	οὐδὲ δὴ τῶν νοητῶν στοιχείων, οἷον τὸ ἐν ἢ τὸ ὄν·
1070b21	4.12	ἡμέρα καὶ νύξ	ἡμέρα, νύξ
1070b31	4.16	ἐν μὲν τοῖς φυσικοῖς ἀνθρώπων ἄνθρωπος	ἐν μὲν τοῖς φυσικοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἄνθρωπος
1070b34	4.17, KP 8	ἔτι παρὰ ταῦτα τὸ ὡς πρῶτον πάντων κινουῦν πάντα.	ἔτι παρὰ ταῦτα ὡς τὸ πρῶτον πάντων κινουῦν πάντα.
1071a12	5.5	ὦν <ἐνίων> οὐκ ἔστι τὸ αὐτὸ εἶδος ἄλλ' ἕτερον,	ὦν οὐκ ἔστι τὸ αὐτὸ εἶδος ἄλλ' ἕτερον·
1071a14–15	5.5	καὶ ἔτι τι ἄλλο ἕξω	καὶ εἴ τι ἄλλο ἕξω
1071a33	5.10	ἢ τὸ ἀνάλογον	ἢ τῷ ἀνάλογον
1071b1	5.11	τίνες μὲν οὖν αἰ ἀρχαί	τίνες μὲν οὖν ἀρχαί
1071b7	6.2	(ἀεὶ γὰρ ἦν)	ἀεὶ γὰρ ἦν
1071b12–13	6.5	εἰ ἔστι ...οὐκ ἔσται	εἰ ἔστι ...οὐκ ἔστι
1071b34	6.17	οὐδ', <εἰ> ὡδὶ ἢ ὡδί, τὴν αἰτίαν.	οὐδ' ὡδὶ <ἢ ὡδί>, οὐδὲ τὴν αἰτίαν.
1072a5	6.22	ὁ γὰρ νοῦς ἐνέργεια.	ὁ γὰρ νοῦς ἐνεργεία.
1072a15	6.26	αὐτῷ	αὐτῷ
1072a24	7.3, KP 13	ἐπεὶ δὲ τὸ κινούμενον καὶ κινουῦν [καὶ] μέσον, †τοίνυν† ἔστι τι ὃ οὐ κινούμενον κινεῖ, αἴδιον καὶ οὐσία καὶ ἐνέργεια οὔσα.	ἐπεὶ δὲ κινούμενον καὶ κινουῦν καὶ μέσον, τοίνυν ἔστι τι ὃ οὐ κινούμενον κινεῖ, αἴδιον καὶ οὐσία καὶ ἐνέργεια οὔσα.

1072b2	7.9	...ἔστι γὰρ τινὶ τὸ οὐ ἔνεκα <καὶ> τινός, ὧν τὸ μὲν ἔστι τὸ δ'οὐκ ἔστι.	(...ἔστι γὰρ τινὶ τὸ οὐ ἔνεκα ὧν τὸ μὲν ἔστι τὸ δ'οὐκ ἔστι).
1072b4	7.10	κινούμενα δὲ τᾶλλα κινεῖ.	κινουμένων δὲ τᾶλλα κινεῖ.
1072b4–6	7.11	εἰ μὲν οὖν τι κινεῖται, ἐνδέχεται καὶ ἄλλως ἔχειν, ὥστ' εἰ [ἡ] φορὰ πρώτη ἢ ἐνεργεῖα ἔστιν, ἢ κινεῖται ταύτη γε ἐνδέχεται ἄλλως ἔχειν, κατὰ τόποιν, καὶ εἰ μὴ κατ' οὐσίαν.	εἰ μὲν οὖν τι κινεῖται, ἐνδέχεται ἄλλως ἔχειν· ὥστ' ἡ φορὰ ἢ πρώτη αἰ ἐνεργεῖα ἔστιν ἢ κινεῖται ταύτη δὲ ἐνδέχεται ἄλλως ἔχειν, κατὰ τόπον, καὶ εἰ μὴ κατ' οὐσίαν. In contrast to Fazzo I take the ² εἰ καὶ from E and the nominative ἐνεργεῖα of the codd.: ...ὥστ' ἡ φορὰ ἢ πρώτη εἰ καὶ ἐνεργεῖα ἔστιν ἢ κινεῖται ταύτη δὲ ἐνδέχεται ἄλλως ἔχειν.
1072b27	7.22	ἐκεῖνος δὲ ἢ ἐνεργεῖα·	ἐκεῖνο δὲ ἢ ἐνεργεῖα·
1073b33	8.8	[τοῦτ' ἔστι τῶν ἀποστη- μάτων τὴν τάξιν]	τοῦτ' ἔστι τῶν ἀποστη- μάτων τὴν τάξιν
1074a16	8.12	[καὶ τὰς αἰσθητάς]	καὶ οὐκ αἰσθητάς
1074a38	8.20	ἀεὶ καὶ συνεχῶς	ἀεὶ καὶ συνεχῶς ἐν μόνον
1075a38	10.15	ὅτι ἀρχήν	ὅτι ἀρχή
1075b7	10.19	αὐτῷ	αὐτὸ
1075b14	10.24, KP 26	πάντα	πάντες

1075b18	10.27	ἔτι ἄλλη ἀρχὴ κυριω- τέρᾳ	ὅτι ἄλλη ἀρχὴ κυριω- τέρᾳ
1075b24	10.30, KP 29	εἴ τε μὴ ἔσται	ἔτι εἰ μὴ ἔσται

Table 1.3.: Alterations in the text of Ross motivated by Fazzo's text

Chapter 1

1069a18 KP 1 (1) *The present theory concerns being <: ousia, Sein>; for it is the beings <: ousiai, Seiendes> whose principles and causes are sought.*

a19 (2) For, if the all is like a total, the being <: ousia> is <its> first part; also if <the all> is part-by-part, in this way too the being <: ousia> is first, and only then <follow> the of-some-kind and the somehow-many.

a21 (3) At the same time these are hardly beings <: onta>, as it were, but qualities and movements; otherwise the not-white and not-straight <would be beings too>; for we say of these too that they are, e. g. “There is a not-white.”

a24 (4) Moreover nothing of the others <: i. e. of that which is not ousia> is separable.

a25 (5) The ancients too testify <for this> in fact,²¹ since what they were looking for were the principles and elements and causes of the proper being.

a26 (6) <Thinkers> of the present time instead rather take the universals as proper beings <: ousias, Pl.> (for the genera are universal, and they say that these are rather principles and proper beings because they inquire in a logical manner); but the ancients <took> the particulars <to be proper beings>, e. g. fire and earth, but not what they have in common: body.

1069a30 KP 2 (7) *<There are> three ways of being <: ousiai, Seinsweisen>: one <of them> is perceptible, and of this <way of being> one is perishable, on which all agree, e. g. plants and animals, and the other eternal; of this, <i.e. of the perceptible way of being in general,> it is necessary to search for the elements, whether <there is> one or many; another <way of being> is immovable, and of this some say that it is separable, some dividing <the immovable and separable ways> in two <types>, others putting the ideas and the mathematical in one nature, and others <accepting> only the mathematical <as separable>.*

²¹ ἔργῳ, “by what they did.”

a36 (8) The former <: the perceptible beings> belong to physics, because they are with motion, but the latter <: the immovable beings> belong to another <kind of knowledge>, unless they have a common principle.

1069b3 KP 3 (9) *The sensible way of being <: ousia> is changeable.*

b3 (10) If change arises from the opposites or from <beings> between them, but not from all and any opposites (even the voice is not-white) but from the <relevant> contrary, <then> it is necessary that some <being> underlies, which turns into the contrary, since the contraries <themselves> do not change.

Chapter 2

b7 (1) Further, something remains, but the contrary does not remain; therefore there is some third <being> beside the contraries: the hyle.

b9 (2) But if there are four <kinds of> change: with respect to ‘What?’ or the ‘Of-what-kind?’ or ‘How-many?’ or ‘Where?’, and if simple becoming and passing away <are changes> with respect to *this* <: the individual being>,²² augmentation and decrease with respect to ‘somehow-quantified,’ alteration with respect to the affection <: πάθος>, movement with respect to place, then every single change happens in the frame of <respective> contraries.

b14 (3) In fact it is necessary that the hyle changes, because it is potentially both <extremes>; since the term ‘being’ <: on> has a double use, every <being> changes from the possible being into the actual being <: τὸ ἐνεργεῖν ὄν> (e.g. from a possible white to the actual white, and similarly for augmentation and decrease), such that it is not only by chance that something can come into being from a not being, but also all <beings> come into being from a being, indeed from a potentially being but actually a not-being.

²² Bonitz, *Index*, 495b33: “τὸδε omnino id significat, quod sensibus percipitur τὸ αἰσθητόν,” b37: “itaque Aristoteles per pronomem τὸδε individuum distinguit a genere et notione universali.”

b20 (4) And this is the *One* of Anaxagoras (for this is better than <his saying> “All together”), and <it is in line with> the *Mixture* of Empedocles and <with what> Anaximander <says>, and <also> as Democritus says; <correctly one should say:> “All <beings> were <together> for us potentially but not actually”; and therefore it seems that they have grasped the hyle; all changing <beings> contain hyle, but each a different one; even of the eternal <beings> that have no becoming but are changeable <only> spatially <there is a hyle>, not one for <its> coming into being, but for <its possibility to move> from somewhere to somewhere.

b26 (5) One may ask from which non-being becoming could arise because the term ‘non-being’ <is used in> a threefold way <as with the term ‘being’>.²³

b27 (6) If there something is potentially <it may become actual out of this ‘non-being’>, but not out of any random <non-being>, but a <specific actual being comes> out of a <specific potential> other <being>; it is not enough <to say> that all things were together, for they <: the things> differ in hyle, since, why came into being infinite <beings> and not <only> one?

b31 (7) For the nous is one, so that, if hyle also were one, that would have come to be actually, of which the hyle was potentially <suited for>.

b32 (8) There are, in fact, three causes and three principles: two of these are the opposites, one of which is the notion <: logos> and the eidos, the other of which is the privation, and the third is the hyle.

Chapter 3

1069b35 KP 4 (1) *After that <we must say> that neither the hyle nor the eidos come into being – I mean the last ones.*

b36 (2) For each <thing> changes as something and by something and into something; ‘by something’ <means> by the immediate moving, ‘as something’ <means>

²³ Categorical, modal, veridical.

the hyle, ‘into something’ <means> the eidos.

1070a2 (3) Thus, it will go into infinity if, <when a round bronze comes to be,> not only the bronze comes to be round, but also the round or the bronze <come to be>; but it is necessary to stop. –

a4 (4) After that <we must say> that each proper being comes into being from something univocal <with it> (for <what is> by nature as well as the others are beings; <and this rule applies for all beings>).

a6 (5) For <the beings> come into being by productive know-how <: techne>, or by nature, or by chance, or spontaneously.

a7 (6) So the productive know-how is a principle <of the becoming of a thing> in an other <being>, the nature is a principle in <the growing being> itself, because a human begets a human, and the remaining causes <i. e. chance, spontaneity> are privations of these.

1070a9 KP 5 (7) *There are three ways of being <: ousiai>.²⁴ First the hyle, which is a some-this²⁵ by appearing concretely²⁶ (for, what is by contact <: by external connection only> and not by growing together <: not by natural and essential connection>, is hyle and hypokeimenon), then the nature, which is a principally determined being into which <the growing up evolves> and some state <: ἔξις τις>, further a third, the from-them <: i. e. the being realizing the previous ways of being>, namely the <being an> individual, e. g. Socrates or Kallias.*

a13 (8) For some <beings> there is no *this*²⁷ beyond the composed being (e. g. the eidos of a house <is not beyond the material and the factual house>, unless the pro-

²⁴ Paraphrase: If you are questioning what a certain thing properly is, then three answers are possible. Depending on what is at stake at the moment you can give three different answers about the same.

²⁵ For τὸδε τι in 1070a10, 11 and 13 see the commentary *ad loc.*, and the glossary; sense: a principally determined being; cf. E. Sonderegger, 2012, 171–174; Meinong calls this *unvollständige Gegenstände*.

²⁶ Paraphrase: If it appears it becomes a concrete thing. W. D. Ross, takes it negatively: “which is a ‘this’ in appearance.”

²⁷ Bonitz: often τὸ τὸδε corresponds to the αἰσθητόν and designates the individual; but here in a literal sense it may also mean ‘determination,’ *Bestimmtheit*; cf. the remarks on τὸδε τι and 1071a18.

ductive know-how <is the separate eidos of it>; nor is there becoming and passing away of these <: the eide>, but in a different manner are and are not the house without hyle <and the factual house>, and health <and the healthy man>, and all which is according to productive know-how), but, if it <: the eidos> is indeed <separate>, <then this is only the case with> natural <beings>; therefore Plato said not badly that there are as many eide as there are natural <kinds of beings>, if, at all, there are eide different from them <: from natural beings>, e. g. fire, flesh, head; for, all <such things> are hyle, and to the proper being in the strongest sense <: τῆς μάλιστα οὐσίας> belongs the last <hyle, which, together with the eidos makes up the individual being>.

1070a21 (9) KP 6 *The moving causes are beings <: onta> that are beforehand, while other <causes>, such as the notion <: logos>, are at the same time.*

a22 (10) For when a human is healthy, then there is health too; and the shape of a bronze sphere and the bronze sphere are at the same time; but we have to examine whether there remains something afterwards; for with some <beings> nothing prevents <this>, e.g. <we have to examine> whether the soul is such, indeed not the whole <soul remains> but the nous; since it is probably impossible for the whole.

a26 (11) Obviously, at least for this reason, there is no reason that there are ideas; for a <real> human begets a human, a single one <begets> any; it is the same in the field of productive know-how <: Pl.>, for the medical know-how is the notion of health.

Chapter 4

1070a31 (1) KP 7 *In some sense, the causes and principles of some beings are these, of other beings others; in another sense, if you speak generally and by analogy, they are the same for all.*

a33 (2) For one may ask whether there are different or the same principles and elements of the proper beings and of the with-reference-to-something, and for each

of the categories in the same way.

a35 (3) But <it would> be strange if the same <were principles and elements> of all <beings>; for then both the with-reference-to-something and proper beings would consist of the same <elements>.

1070b1 (4) What in fact would this be?

b1 (5) For beside the proper being and the other categories there is nothing in common <for all beings>; still, the element is prior to that of which it is an element, yet neither the proper being is an element of the with-reference-to-something nor is any of these <i. e. of the other categories, an element> of the proper being.

b4 (6) Further, how it is possible, that for all <beings> there are the same elements?

b5 (7) For it is not possible that any of the elements is identical to that which is composed of the elements, e. g. neither B nor A <can be identical> to BA; this is not <possible> even in the case of the noetic elements, actually the unity or the being <:τὸ ἐν ἡ τὸ ὄν>, for these belong to each even of the composites.

b8 (8) Therefore none of these <elements> will be either a proper being or an with-reference-to-something; but this would be necessary.

b9 (9) So, then, there are no identical elements of all <beings>. –

b10 (10) Or, as we say, in some sense there are <the same elements of all beings> in another sense not, as, e. g., the hot may be <an element> of perceptible bodies in the sense of eidos and otherwise the cold as privation while the hyle is the first <being> which in itself can be so <: hot or cold>, and these <: the things formed by eidos, steresis, hyle> as well as the <beings composed> of these of which these are the principles are proper beings, or <the same is the case>, whenever something grows into a unity out of hot and cold (e. g. as flesh or bone), for, what came to be, must be different from these <: from its elements>.

b16 (11) Thus the elements and principles of these <beings> are the same (<even

if> of some <particular beings there are> these <elements>, of other <beings> those <elements>), but it is impossible to talk about everything in this way, except by analogy, as if someone were to say that there are three principles, the eidos, the privation, and the hyle.

b19 (12) But each of these <three principles> is different following the domain <which is at issue>; e. g. in colour, white <as eidos>, black <as privation>, surface <as hyle>; or light, darkness, air, from which <are> day, night.

b22 (13) Since not only what is present in <a being> are causes, but there are also some external <causes> as e. g. the moving <cause>, it is clear that principle and element are different, although both <are> causes, and ‘principle’ can be divided into these <kinds of causes: internal and external>, and what moves or stops is some principle and being <: ousia>, so that by analogy there are three elements <: eidos, privation, hyle>, but four causes and principles, but in one <being> this <as cause>, in another that, also the first <: immediate> cause as the moving <cause> is for one this, for another that.

b28 (14) Health, disease, body; the moving <cause is> medical know-how.

b28 (15) Eidos, a certain disorder, bricks; the moving <cause is> architecture, and ‘principle’ is divided into these kinds.

b30 (16) But because the moving <cause>, in the case of natural beings, for humans is a human, and in those that are <made> following a thought <: cultural products> <the moving cause is> the eidos, or its opposite, in one way there would be three causes <: i. e. hyle, eidos, privation>, but an another way there are four <: the moving cause in addition>.

b33 (17) For the medical know-how is in some sense health, and the architecture is the eidos of the house, and a human begets a human;

1070b34 KP 8 *yet <there is a principle> beside those <above, namely a principle> being the first of all sets all in motion.*

Chapter 5

b36 (1) Since some <beings> are separable and others not separable, the former are proper beings.

1071a1 (2) And this is the reason why the causes for all <beings> are the same, because without the proper beings there are no affections and movements.

a2 (3) Then, these <: proper beings as the same causes of all beings> will be, say soul and body, or <expressed by the functions of the soul> intellect, desire, and body.

1071a3 KP 9 (4) *Yet <also> in another way, analogically, the principles are the same, namely as actuality and potentiality; but these too are <principles> for one thing this way for another that way and <in any case> differently.*

a6 (5) In some cases the same is at some time actual <: ἐνεργεία> at another potential <: δυνάμει>, e. g. wine or flesh or man (since these too belong to the aforementioned causes <: eidos, steresis, hyle>; for the eidos is actual whenever there is a separable <being>, that means the from-both, but privation is e. g. darkness or disease, but the hyle is potentially, for this <: the hyle> is the potential to become both <: form and privation>); again in another form to be actual and to be potential differ if these <causes> do not have the same hyle <as the caused being>, and from the last ones <those> which do not have the the same eidos but a different one, as e. g. one <kind of> cause of man are the elements fire and earth as hyle, and also its proper eidos; and also, if there is something else outside, e. g. the father, and beside these the sun and the ecliptic, which are neither hyle, nor eidos, nor privation, nor the same in eidos, but moving <causes>.

a17 (6) Further, one must consider, that it is possible to say some <terms> universally, others not.

1071a18 KP 10 (7) *In fact, the first principles of all <beings> are the first actual this and another <principle> which is potential.*

a19 (8) Thus those <Platonic> universals are not <principles>; for the principle of the individuals is the individual; indeed <the eidetic> man <is a cause> of the universal man, but there is no <‘universal man’ as a thing>, but Peleus <is the origin> of Achilles, and your father of you, and this B here <is cause> of this BA, and generally the B of the BA quite simply.

a24 (9) Further, if indeed in the range of beings <: ousiai> these are causes and elements of these <beings> and those <ares causes and elements> of those, as has been said, <especially> if the <causes> are not the same in kind <as the caused beings> – <as e. g. the causes> of colours, sounds, things, quantity – <then the causes are not the same> except by analogy; the <causes> are different even <for beings> in the same kind, although not <different> in kind, but because <the immediate causes> of the particulars differ, <say> your hyle and <your> eidos and <your> moving <cause> and mine; but due to the universal concept they are the same.

a29 (10) If you are searching for²⁸ what are the principles or elements of the proper beings <: ousiai>, of the with-reference-to-something, of the how-qualified, <and> whether these are the same or different, then it is clear, that, because <the terms ‘principle’ and ‘element’> are said in many ways <and if you neglect these distinctions, then> for each <being> they are <the same>, but if <the ways of speaking> are distinguished, they are not the same but different, except <that they are the same nevertheless> in a certain way and for all; in one way they are the same, namely by analogy, because hyle, eidos, privation, the moving <are causes for all beings>, and that way the causes of the proper beings as causes of all <other beings, i. e. of all other categories, are causes for all beings>, because these <: all categories besides the ousiai> are cancelled if these <: the ousiai> are cancelled; further, the actual first <is the one and same principle of all beings>; but in another way <, as immediate causes,> the firsts are different, <namely as causes> like the opposites and when they are said neither as genera nor in many ways; at last the <different> hylai <are different principles each time>.

1071b1 (11) So, which are the principles of perceptible beings, how many they are,

²⁸ For the *Nominativus pendens* τὸ ζῆτεῖν see E. Schwyzer, II, 1966, 66, and Kühner-Gerth, § 356, 6.

and in which ways they are the same and in which ways different, has been said.

Chapter 6

1071b3 KP 11 (1) *Since there are, as has been stated <in A 1.7>, three kinds of being <: ousiai>, two natural but one unmovable, one must say about the latter, that it is necessary that there is some eternal unmovable ousia.*

b5 (2) For the proper beings are the first of the beings <: ὄντων> and, if all <proper beings were> perishable, then everything <would be> perishable; it is not possible that movement came to be or perished, for it has always been, nor that time <came to be or perished>.

b8 (3) For the before and after can not be if there is no time; and then movement is continuous <: συνεχές> in the same way as time is; for <time> is either the same as, or an affection <: πάθος> of, movement.

b10 (4) But there is no continuous movement except in respect to place, and of this <kind, only that> in a circle.

b12 (5) But, if something is capable to set in motion or to produce, but does not execute anything, then there is no movement; for it is possible that that which has the power <to move something> is not effective.

b14 (6) Therefore it is of no use, even if we assume to be eternal beings <: ousiai>, like those who <assume to be> ideas, if there is no principle in them which is able to change; moreover, even this <principle> is not sufficient nor another being corresponding to the ideas <e. g. numbers>; for, if it did not act²⁹ there would be no movement.

b17 (7) Further, <this principle of movement would> not <be sufficient, even> if it was acting, if its being <: ousia, Sein> were potentiality, for then there would be no eternal movement; for it is possible that the potential being is not <in fact>.

²⁹ For this special use of future see Bonitz, Index, 754a55, ff.

1071b19 KP 12 (8) *Therefore there must be a principle such that its being <: ousia, Sein> is actuality.*

b20 (9) Still further, such beings <: ousiai, *Seiendes*> must be without hyle; for they must be eternal, if anything else is eternal.

b22 (10) Thus <their ousia is> actuality.

b22 (11) However, <there is> an aporia: for it seems that every acting being has also the power to act, but not every being with the power to act does act in fact, so that potentiality would be prior <to actuality>.

b25 (12) But if this were the case, there would be none of the beings; for it is possible to have the power to be potentially but not to be <in fact>.

b26 (13) But, if it is as the theologians say, who generate <all> from night, or as the natural philosophers say, “All things together,” there is the same impossibility.

b28 (14) For how <something> could set in motion, if there was no actual cause?

b29 (15) For the material could not set in motion itself but architecture, nor menstruation or earth <set in motion themselves> but seed and semen <can initiate movement>.

b31 (16) Therefore some assume an eternal activity, like Leucippus and Plato; for they say that there is always movement.

b33 (17) But why and what <this movement is>, they do not say, nor, whether <it sets in motion> this way or that way, nor the cause <of it>.

b34 (18) For nothing is in motion by chance, but it must be there always some <cause of movement>, as now <something moves> by nature this way, <then> that way by force or by reason or by another <cause>.

b36 (19) Further, which <principle of movement> is first?

b37 (20) For this makes an enormous difference.

b37 (21) But even Plato is unable to say what the self-moving is, which he sometimes supposes to be the principle <of movement>; for the soul is later <than the first cause of movement> and simultaneous with the heavens, as he says.

1072a3 (22) So to suppose that potentiality is prior to actuality is in one way correct, but in another way not (how has been said);³⁰ but that actuality is prior, Anaxagoras testifies (for the nous is actual), also Empedocles, <testifies the same mentioning> love and strife <as principles of movement>, and those who say that there is always movement, like Leucippus; therefore there was not Chaos or Night for an infinite time, but there was always the same either cyclically or another way, if indeed actuality is prior to possibility.

a9 (23) If indeed the same <moves> always cyclically, then something must always remain acting in the same way.

a10 (24) But if there should be coming to be and passing away, then there must be too something else acting differently in different cases.

a12 (25) Thus it is necessary that <it> acts in one way with respect to itself and in another way with respect to something else; that is, then, <it acts> in accordance with something else or in accordance with the first.

a14 (26) Indeed it is necessary <that it acts> with respect to the last <: the first which is active in relation to itself>; otherwise that would be cause of itself as well as of that.

a15 (27) Therefore it is better that the first <is the cause>; for that was a cause of <being> always in the same way; another <is a cause> of <being in> different ways; and, of what is always in different ways, clearly both together <are causes>.

a17 (28) Thus the movements behave this way.

a18 (29) So why must one search for other principles?

³⁰ W. D. Ross, *ad loc.*, with H. Bonitz, 1849, 492 sees that the reference is to 1071b22–26, rather than to Θ 8, and this is the more plausible when *Met.* Λ is an early text.

Chapter 7

a19 (1) Since it is possible <to explain becoming> this way, and, if not this way, <all beings> would come to be out of night and out of “All together” and out of non-being, that may be solved, and there is something eternally performing a never ending movement, which is that in a circle (and that is clear not only by argument but also by fact); therefore the first heaven would be eternal.

a23 (2) Hence there also is something that moves <the first heaven>.

a24 (3) Since <there is a> moved, a setting in motion, and an intermediate <type of being>,

1072a24 LS 13 *then there is also some <type> that sets in motion without being moved, which is eternal, being <: ousia> and actuality.*

a26 LS 14 (4) *But the longed for and the thought about move in this way; they move unmoved.*

a27 (5) The origin <: ta prota> of them <: of noeton and orekton, the longed for and the thought about> is the same.

a27 (6) For <also> what appears to be beautiful is desired, but what *is* beautiful is what is primarily wanted; we desire <something> because it seems <to be beautiful> rather than something seems <to be beautiful> because we desire <it>; for awareness <: noesis> is the origin.

1072a30 LS 15 (7) *The nous is moved by that of which it is aware; perceivable in itself is the one side of the series of coordinate pairs, and on this <side> ousia <is the> first, and of this the simple and actual (‘one’ and ‘simple’ are not the same, for, while ‘one’ indicates a measure, ‘simple’ <indicates> that it behaves in a certain way).*

a34 (8) But in fact also on the same side are both the beautiful and what is choosable for its own sake; and the first is always the best, or analogous <to the best>.

1072b1 (9) The <following> distinction makes clear that the for-the-sake-of-which is in the domain of the unmoved <beings>; for the for-the-sake-of-which is <good or an aim or a goal> for something <or for someone>; from these <two>, one is <unmoved, namely the aim itself> the other <namely that for which the aim is an aim> not.

b3 (10) In fact, it <: what sets in motion without being moved itself> sets in motion the same way as a beloved <being>, and by means of a moved <being> it sets in motion the rest.

b4 (11) So, if something is moving, it is possible that it is otherwise <than it is in fact>; therefore, <even> if the first movement <: that of the sphere of the fixed stars> is actuality, insofar it <: the sphere> is in motion, just in this respect it is possible that it is otherwise, according to place, if not according to being <: kat'ousian>; but since there is something setting it in motion, itself being unmoved and being actually, this last can in no way be otherwise.

b8 (12) For locomotion is the first of the <kinds of> changes, and, of this <kind>, the circular <is first>; it is this <circular motion> that this <: what sets in motion without being moved itself> sets in motion.

b10 (13) Therefore it is a necessarily being; and, insofar as <it is> necessarily, <it is> fine, and in this way an origin.

b11 (14) For 'necessary' <is said> in so many ways: the expression 'by violence,' <indicates> that it is against the <natural> impulse, further <it means> that without which the good cannot be, and that which cannot be otherwise than in one way.³¹

1072b13 LS 16 (15) <Even> *the heavens and the physis, therefore, depend on such a principle.*

b14 (16) We have a way of life, such as it is the best, for a short time,³² for that <origin> is this way forever, and indeed <that> is impossible for us, for its <: the

³¹ See *Met.* Δ 5.

³² Variant: <The origin's> way of life is such as it is the best for us for a short time. / Ross: And it is a life such as the best which we enjoy, and enjoy for but a short time...

origins> actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) is also a pleasure (and therefore being awake, perceiving, and being aware are the most pleasant <states>, while hopes and memories <are pleasant> on account of them).

1072b18 KP 17 (17) *Awareness in itself is of what is best in itself, and <awareness> in the highest degree is of <that in> the highest degree.*

1072b19 (18) *The nous is aware of itself, at the same time partaking in that of which it is aware; for <the nous> becomes an object of awareness by touching and being aware <of itself>, so that the nous and that of which it is aware are the same.*

1072b22 (19) *For that which can receive the noetically perceptible and the being (: ousia) is nous: <which> is actual by having <the noetically perceptible>; therefore it seems that nous is divine more from the latter <: its actuality> than the former <: its receptivity>, and theoria is the most pleasant and best.*

b24 (20) If, therefore, god is always well in such a way, as we are sometimes, that is wondrous; if even more <so>, it is even more wondrous.

b26 (21) But he behaves this way.

b26 (22) And indeed life belongs <to nous>; for the actuality of nous is life, and actuality is just this; and its actuality, in itself, is the best life and eternal.

b28 (23) Of course, we say that god is a living being, eternal and best, so that life and permanence, unbroken and eternal, belong to god; and precisely this is <what we mean with the word> ‘god.’

b30 (24) Those who assume, as the Pythagoreans and Speusippus do, that the most beautiful and best is not at the beginning (because the beginnings of both plants and animals are causes), but the beautiful and the complete are in what comes from these <beginnings>, do not think right.

b35 (25) For the seed comes from something else, which is prior and complete, what is first is not seed but the complete <being>; as one would say that a human is prior to the seed, not the one that is coming-into-being from this <seed>, but the other,

from whom the seed <comes>.

1073a3 KP 18 (26) *Thus, that there is some being <: ousia, Sein>, eternal, unmoved, and separate from the perceptible <beings> is clear from what has been said; it has also been shown that this ousia cannot have any magnitude, but is without parts and indivisible, for it sets in motion <other beings> for an infinite time but nothing finite has an infinite power; and, since every magnitude is either infinite or finite, on this account it would not have a finite magnitude, nor an infinite one, because there is utterly no infinite magnitude; but surely <it has been shown> also that it is unaffected and unalterable for all other motions are secondary with respect to change in place.*

a13 (27) So that is clear, why it is this way.

Chapter 8

1073a14 KP 19 (1) *It must not escape our notice whether we ought to take such an ousia as one or as many, and how many <they are>; but we also have to mention the assertions of the others, that they have said nothing about the quantity, which could be said quite clearly.*

a17 (2) The assumption about the ideas has no view of its own <about this theme>; those who say that there are ideas say that they are numbers, and with respect to the numbers sometimes they speak as if there were infinite, sometimes as if they were limited to ten; but why the amount of the numbers is such nothing is said with a serious intention to prove <it>; we ought to discuss <this> starting from our own premises and distinctions.

1073a23 KP 20 (3) *<The basis for our reasoning is as follows:> The origin and the first of the beings is immovable both in itself as well by accident, it sets in motion the first eternal and single motion;*

because necessarily a) (i) that which is moved is moved by something, (ii) and the

first moving <cause> is unmoved in itself, (iii) and the eternal movement is moved by an eternal <being>, (iv) and the single <movement> by a single <being>; b) but we see (i) that besides the simple movement of the whole, about which we say that the first and unmoved ousia initiates it, (ii) <there are> other eternal movements, namely that of the planets (since the body <moving> in a circle is eternal and never standing still; we have shown <proofs> concerning this in the *Physics*),³³ c) <then> it is necessary too that each of these movements is moved by an – in itself – unmoved and eternal ousia.

a34 (4) For the nature of the stars is some eternal being; and both, that which sets in motion is eternal and that which <was> prior to that which is moved, <then> that which is prior to the ousia must itself too be an ousia.

a36 (5) So it is manifest that there must be so many beings of this kind <as motions>, which are with respect to their nature eternal and unmoved in themselves and without magnitude, because of the reason stated previously.

1073b1 (6) That there are <such kinds> of beings, and that one of them is the first <and another> the second according to the same order as the motions of the stars, is manifest;

1073b3 KP 21 *but we must learn the number of the movements from the mathematical knowledge which is nearest to philosophy, namely from astrology; it is this <knowledge> which considers the being <: ousia>, which is perceptible but eternal; the others <in the range of the mathematical knowledge> do not deal with ousia at all, e. g. such as that which <deals> with numbers and geometry.*

b8 (7) Even for those who are concerned <with this issue> to a moderate degree only it is clear that the number of movements exceeds that of <beings> moved; for each of the planets executes more than one movement; but as to how many they may be, we refer now to what certain mathematicians say, <just> to have a certain idea, in order to retain a definite quantity in mind; by the way, partly it is necessary that we search ourselves partly that we obtain information from the searchers; if to those

³³ H. Bonitz, *ad loc.*: *Physik* Θ 8–9, *De Caelo* B 3ff.

who deal with that something contrary to what is said now seems <to be right>, <it is necessary> to esteem both <groups of mathematicians>, but to trust those who adhere more exactly to principles.

b17 (8) Eudoxus, then, placed the movements of sun and moon each in three spheres; the first of them is that of the fixed stars, the second <follows> the middle <circle> of the Zodiac, the third <follows> the latitudinally inclined <circle> of the Zodiac; <the sphere> on which the moon moves is inclined in a greater latitude than <that> on which the sun moves; <he placed the movement> of the wandering stars in four spheres for each, of which the first and second are the same as those <aforementioned>, the spheres for sun and moon > (because <the sphere> of the fixed stars is that which sets in motion all the <other spheres> and the <sphere> arranged below that <sphere> and having its movement <following the circle> on the middle <circle> of the zodiac, is common for all <spheres>); the poles of the third <sphere> of all <planets> are in the middle <circle> of the zodiac, the movement of the fourth <sphere follows the circle> which is inclined towards the middle<line> of that <: of the third sphere>; <he said that> the poles of the third sphere are their own for each of the other <planets>, but the same for Aphrodite and Hermes;³⁴ Callippus has made the same setting of the spheres as Eudoxus did (I mean the arrangement of their intervals), but for what concerns the number <of the spheres> he assigned the same <number> to Zeus and Kronos <: Jupiter and Saturn> as he <: Eudoxus>; but, he thought that two additional spheres must be added to the sun and the moon, if one wants to explain what one sees, and one <additional sphere> to each of the other planets.

b38 (9) But if all <spheres> put together should account for what we can observe, we need to add to each planet further spheres, <which contain> one <sphere> less <than the set we spoke about so far>, which causes to revolve <the first set of spheres> and sets back in the same place <as before> the first sphere of each star which is positioned below the star in question; only that way, it is possible wholly to produce the movement of the planets.

³⁴ For the geometry of this model see O. Neugebauer, 1969, 152–156, with instructive geometrical drawings.

1074a6 (10) Since, then, there are eight spheres <for Saturn and Jupiter> and twenty-five <for the other planets> in which they <: the planets> are moving, and from these only the <spheres> in which the lowest <planet> is moving must not be set back, the counteracting <spheres> of the first two <planets> will be six, those of the outer four will be sixteen; the total number of spheres moving forward and again backwards will be fifty-five.

a12 (11) If one did not add the movements, that we spoke of, which we have added to the sun and the moon, the total number of the spheres would be forty-seven.

a14 (12) Let, then, the number of the spheres, be so many, then it is reasonable to assume that there are also so many beings <: ousiai> and origins <of movement>, unmoved and not perceptible (the compelling may be left to say to the stronger <searchers>); if it is not possible that a movement <of a sphere> does not tend towards the movement of <its> star and if we must think, that every physis and every ousia, <which remains> unaffected and reaches its best in itself, must be considered as an end, then there would not be another physis beside them, but the number of the beings <: ousiai> would be just that.

a22 (13) If there were other <movements of other spheres> they would move <other beings> as the goal of the movement, but it is not possible that there be other movements besides the ones as mentioned.

a24 (14) It is reasonable to assume this based on the <visible> movements <of the heavenly bodies>.

a25 (15) For, if everything which sets in motion is for the sake of the moved and if every movement is <the movement> of something, then no motion could be for the sake of itself nor of another movement, but for the sake of the stars.

a28 (16) For, if a movement were for the sake of <another> movement, then this movement too should be for the sake of another movement; so that, since it is not possible to go on to infinity, one of the divine bodies in the heavens will be <the> end of every movement of the moved <beings>.

a31 (17) That there is only one heaven, is plain.

a31 (18) For, if there were many heavens as human beings, then the origin for every <heaven> would be eidetically one but numerically many.

a33 (19) But the numerically many has hyle (for there is one and the same notion for many <beings>, e. g. <that> of man, but Socrates is one); the first *ti en einai* has no hyle, because <it is> actuality <: entelecheia>.

a36 (20) Then the first which sets in motion is conceptually and numerically one, because it is unmoved; also the ever and continually moved is only one; so there is also one single heaven.

a38 (21) It has been handed down to <us> the posteriors from our ancestors and forefathers in the form of myth that they <: the stars> are gods and that the divine embraces the whole physis.

1074b3 (22) The rest is added in a mythical form to convince the crowd and for the expedience of the laws and the common interests; for, they say that they have human form and are similar to certain of the other animals and other things which follow from and are close to that which has been said; if one would differentiate it <: these mythical additions> and take only the primary point, namely that they believed that gods are first beings <: *protai ousai*>, that would seem divinely spoken; and, because, in all likelihood, every productive knowledge and philosophy has as far as possible been discovered many times and then they passed away again, so these opinions of them <: the ancestors> have survived <from then> until now.

b13 (23) The opinion of our ancestors and that of the first <humans> may be clear to us so far.

Chapter 9

1074b15 KP 22 (1) *Concerning the nous there are some aporias; <the nous> seems to be the most divine <being> in the range of the apparent <beings>, but the*

conditions under which it is such <: πῶς ἔχων> hold some difficulties.

b17 (2) For, if it is not aware of anything – what, then, would the wondrous <about it> be? – instead it would be just as if it were one asleep – ; or if it is aware of <something>, then something else is more powerful than it, because awareness <: noesis> is not its ousia but <no more than> a capacity, so it would not be the best ousia; for, from its being aware comes its worthiness.

b21 (3) Further, if it be that either nous or noesis <: the organ or the act> is its proper being, of what is it aware?

b22 (4) Is it <is aware> of itself or of something else? And, if of something else, then always of the same or ever of something else?

b23 (5) Does it make a difference or not to be aware of the beautiful or of any given thing?

b25 (6) Or is it even out of place to be aware of some things?

b25 (7) It is clear, in any case, that it is aware of the most divine and most worthy and <doing so> does not change; change would be to the worse and something like this would already be a movement.

b28 (8) First, then, if it is not an <actual> noesis but <just> an ability <to be aware>, it would be reasonable <to think> that to be continuously aware is tedious for it; further it is clear that something else would be worthier than the nous, namely that which <the nous is> aware of.

b31 (9) For, after all, to be aware in its actual performance <: τὸ νοεῖν, Inf. Praes.> and the awareness in general <: ἡ νόησις> would belong too to that which is aware of the worst, so that, if this is to be avoided (some things, indeed, are better to not see than to see), the noesis would not be the best.

1074b33 KP 23 (10) *So then it <: the nous> is aware of itself if indeed it is that which is the most excellent, and awareness₃ is awareness₂ of awareness₁.*

b35 (11) But it seems that knowledge and perception and the opinion and the think-

ing always refer to another <being> while to itself only secondarily.

b36 (12) Further, if being aware of and being perceived <: νοεῖν – νοεῖσθαι> are different, with respect to which of the two does it contain the good?

b38 (13) For the being-aware and the being-perceived are not the same.³⁵

1074b38 KP 24 (14) *Or, in some cases, the knowledge is the matter; <e.g.> in the cases of productive knowledge <which are> without hyle and the being <: ousia> and the what-at-all-is-that?-being <is the matter>; <and> in the case of the theoretical knowledge <where> the reasoning and the awareness <are> the matter.*

1075a3 (15) If then that which the nous is aware of and the nous are not different in the cases without hyle, they will be the same, that means that the awareness and that which the nous is aware of, are <numerically> one.

a5 (16) Further, there still remains an aporia: in the case that what <the nous> is aware of is composed; because then it <: the nous> could change <when it is aware of> the parts of the whole.

a6 (17) Or, is every <being> having no hyle indivisible – as the human nous <in general> or even³⁶ <the nous being aware> of composed³⁷ <beings> at a certain time behaves (while it <: the nous mentioned in phrase 10> does not possess the good at this time or that time, but <it possesses> the best as a whole, because it is something else <: i. e. without hyle and without parts>, – and does the awareness <being aware> of itself behave that way all the time?

Chapter 10

1075a11 KP 25 (1) *One has also to consider in which of the two ways the physis of the whole contains the good and the best: whether as something separated and <as*

³⁵ I use 'perceived' for νοητόν and νοούμενον because there is no passive of 'being aware' but the meaning should be the same.

³⁶ For ἡ see Kühner-Gerth, II, 2, § 538.3.

³⁷ composed of eidos and hyle.

a being> itself unto itself or as the arrangement <of its parts>.

1075a13 (2) Or <does it contain the good> in both ways, as an army?

a14 (3) Since, indeed, <for an army> the good <consists> in the order as well as the commander <is its good>, and the latter the more, for he is not thanks to the order, but the order is thanks to him.

a16 (4) But all <beings> are arranged together in some way, but not <all> in the same way, e. g. swimming and flying <beings> and plants; and it is not the case that one <being> has nothing to do with the other, but there is some <relation between them>.

a18 (5) For all <beings> are arranged together towards one <end>; but just as in a household the free are the least allowed <to do> anything but all or most <of their actions> are determined, while for the slaves and the animals little <is determined> with relation to the common interest but <they can act> mostly at random; for the nature of each is such a principle <to act>.

a23 (6) I mean: as it is necessary for all <beings> to come to differentiation, so there are another manners <of being> such that all partake in them for the <profit of> the whole. –

a25 (7) It must not escape our notice what impossible or strange <consequences> follow if one speaks otherwise, and what the more intelligent speaking say and about which there are the fewest aporias.

a28 (8) For all <thinkers> produce all <beings> out of opposites.

a28 (9) <But> neither the term ‘all’ nor ‘out of opposites’ <is said> correctly, nor <do they say> wherein the opposites consist, <and> they do not say how <beings> will come to be> out of opposites; because the opposites <themselves> are unaffected by each other.

a31 (10) But for us <that problem> is solved reasonably by <saying that> there is a third something <beside the opposites>.

a32 (11) But others construe the one part of the opposites as hyle, in just such a fashion as they who make the unequal <to be the hyle> for the equal, or the many <to be the hyle> for the unity.

a33 (12) But this too is solved in the same way: the numerically one³⁸ hyle <which underlies the opposites> is not opposite to anything.

a34 (13) Further, <by the reasoning of our opponents> all <beings> would partake in the bad, except the one; because the bad itself being one of the <two opposite> elements.

a36 (14) Some others <do not even think that> the good and the bad are principles; and yet the good most of all is principle in all <beings>.

a38 (15) Some do <say> rightly that this is a principle, but how the good is a principle they do not say, whether in the sense of an end or as a moving <principle> or as an eidos.

1075b1 (16) Even Empedocles <speaks about it> in a strange way: he makes love to be the good and this both in the sense of the moving <cause>, since it brings together, and as well in the sense of hyle; for it is part of the mixture.

b4 (17) But even if it should be the case, that the same <being> at one time is a principle as hyle and at another time as moving <cause>, the term 'to be' does not mean the same <in both cases>.

b6 (18) In which of the two respects, then, <is> love <a principle>?

b6 (19) And it is absurd that the strife should be indestructible; just this <: strife> is the nature of the bad.

b8 (20) Anaxagoras <thinks, that> the good is a principle in the sense of moving <cause>, since the nous sets in motion.

b9 (21) But it sets in motion for the sake of something <else>, so that something

³⁸ Codd. ἡ μία; W. Jaeger writes ἡμῖν, following Alexander.

else <must be the good>; except <we take it> as we say: for the medical knowledge is in some way the health.

b10 (22) Further, it is strange not to make something to be the opposite of the good and of the nous.

b11 (23) All who speak about opposites are not making any use of these opposites, if one does not arrange <their ideas oneself>.

1075b13 KP 26 (24) *And, no one says, why some <beings> are perishable and other imperishable; because they construe all beings from the same principles.*

b14 (25) Further, some derive the beings from the non-being; others, in order that they not be constrained to do this, make all <beings> one. –

1075b16 KP 27 (26) *Further, no one says why there will always be becoming and what the cause of becoming is.*

b17 (27) For those who make two principles another principle must be even more powerful <than these two>; and also for those who <make it> the eide, another principle <must be> more powerful; since, <they should explain,> why <something> has taken part <: μετέσχεν, Aorist> or is <now> actually taking part <: μετέχει, present tense; in the ideas>?

1075b20 KP 28 (28) *And, the others must accept that something is opposite to wisdom and to the most worthy <kind of> knowledge, but we <do> not <have to suppose such a thing>.*

b21 (29) Because nothing is ever opposite to the first; all that which is opposite has hyle and is potentially that <: one of the opposites>; the ignorance <which is> opposite <to knowledge> should refer <to that opposite> but nothing is opposite to the first.

1075b24 KP 29 (30) *Further, if there be nothing besides the perceptible <beings>, then there would be no principle and order and becoming and the heavenly beings, but <there would be> always a principle of a principle, as <it is in fact> for all*

theologians and physicists.

b27 (31) If there were *eide* or numbers <besides the perceptible beings>, these would be cause of nothing; if not <so, they would> certainly not <be the cause> of movement.

b28 (32) Further, how would magnitude and continuity result from <beings> without magnitude?

b29 (33) The number will not be able to produce continuous <beings>, neither as moving <cause> nor as *eidos*.

b30 (34) Indeed none of the opposites can produce or move in the proper sense, since it might be that it *is* not.

b32 (35) But in any case producing is secondary to <the> possibility <to produce something>.

b33 (36) Consequently no beings could be eternal.

b33 (37) But there are <such beings>; thus something must removed from these <cited presuppositions>.

b34 (38) How, it has been said.³⁹

1075b34 KP 30 (39) *Further, by what the numbers <are> a unit, or the soul and the body, and generally the *eidos* and the thing, no one tells us anything about that; nor is it possible to say <something about that>, unless one says as we <have said>, namely, that the moving cause produces <the unity>.*

b37 (40) Those who say that the mathematical number is primary and <let follow> in the same way one kind of *ousia* after another and who <set> for each <kind> other principles, make the *ousia* of the whole to be incoherent, because one <kind of *ousia*> does not contribute something to another <kind> whether it is or is not; and, <they assign> many principles, but the beings want not to be ruled badly.

³⁹ W. D. Ross, *ad loc.*: 1071b19–20.

1076a4 (41) "Rule by many is not good, <it shall be> only one ruler."

Part II.

Preparing the commentary

2. The Traditional Reception of *Met. A* and its Difficulties

2.1. *Met. A* as a Metaphysics of Substance

The modern literature on *Met. A* centers on two claims which enjoy broad approval. Although these are occasionally made with some slight qualifications, they nevertheless form the *communis opinio* simply because of a lack of meaningful alternatives. The first is that the term ‘substance’ translates fairly and accurately what Aristotle means by *ousia*.¹ The second claim is that the essence and aim of *Met. A* is to prove that God is the cause of our world in some way or another.² If there remains any controversy in the literature, it is only about the rigor or strength of this proof. These two claims are normally linked to a third, which states that the concept of *ousia* discussed in *Met. A* 6–10 has nothing to do with the corresponding concept discussed in *Met. ZHΘ* because the ‘middle books’ are about natural substances, while this text speaks about divine substance, and what can be said about the one is not applicable to the other.

What happens, if we give greater weight to the doubts about the equating of *ousia*

¹ This view is so widespread that it is almost unnecessary to give examples, but I will add a few anyway: E. Vollrath, 1969; U. Guzzoni, 1975; K. Brinkmann, 1979; H. Schmitz, 1985; J. H. Königshausen, 1989; M.-L. Gill, 1989; T. Irwin, 2. ed. 1990; M. J. Loux, 1991; F. A. Lewis, 1991; C. Rapp, 1996; W. Schneider, 2001; L. M. De Rijk, 2002; D. Fonfara, 2003; T. Trappe, 2004. Chr. Rapp / K. Corcilius, 2011; Chr. Horn, 2016. S. Fazzo, 2016, F. Boghassian, 2019. A. Brook begins his article “Substance and the Primary Sense of Being in Aristotle,” *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 68, No. 3 (March 2015), pp. 521-544, with the sentence: “Clearly, substance (*ousia*) is the primary sense in the *Metaphysics*.”

² H. Flashar, 1983, 262. On C. Horn, 2016, see fn. 76, p. 112. Over the last few years the doubts about this claim are slowly growing, e. g. S. Broadie, A. Kosman, B. Botter, S. Fazzo; those who reject a theological interpretation often determine as the theme of *Met. A* either substance or theory.

with substance than to the convenience of the *communis opinio*?³ The doubts will be strengthened when we trace back how this equating came about. To do this seems all the more justified given that the literature in question hardly ever explains what is meant by substance. The precise sense of this term is assumed as given for readers or as fundamentally unproblematic. When, ever, can ‘substance’ be said to have been a clear and distinct concept? How is it that *substantia* became accepted as the translation for *ousia*? What was the background and context that gave rise to this translation? Are there in Aristotle’s work already indications for understanding *ousia* as substance? Has the difference between the concept of *ousia* as discussed in *Met. ZHΘ* and in *Met. A* to do with this transformation?

This present chapter will be pursuing such and similar of questions. One of the conclusions of this inquiry is that the interpretation of *ousia* as substance did not emerge at one specific place or time, but instead it developed over a long period of time, in response to several independent questions, and was the result of accidental and uncoordinated interactions between heterogeneous interests, which are beyond the scope of this book.

It is not only the modern scholastic interpretation that assumes that *Met. A* develops a metaphysics of substance,⁴ philosophical historical research too shares this opinion.⁵ Both, those to whom metaphysics is amenable, and their opponents, maintain that the outstanding subject of *Met. A* is indeed substance.⁶ Further, despite the many changes, both in the appropriation of the Aristotelian *Metaphysics* and the polemics against it, nothing other than substance has ever been regarded as its main

³ There have been a range of thinkers who have expressed their doubts about this equating, e. g. C. Arpe, 1941; C. Rapp, 1996. Also T. A. Szlezák points to the problems of this translation but only to go on to translate *ousia* with ‘substance’ in any case. J. Owens translates *ousia* with entity, which unfortunately leads directly to theology, see footnote 90, p.116; Joe Sachs consciously and consistently avoids the Latin term in his translation of the *Metaphysics*, 2002. Some principles of translation which I tried to follow in my translations of and commentaries to book Zeta, 1993, revised edition 2012, and Lambda, 2008, are very close to his principles.

⁴ To name but a few examples, F. Inciarte, 1994; G. Reale, in all his books and articles, esp.1994; various books in the *editiones scholasticae*.— On the concept of the philosophy of substance see T. Trappe, 2004, 93–115.

⁵ Represented e. g. by H. J. Krämer; M. Frede, 1987; Rapp / Corcilius, 2011, C. Horn, 2016.

⁶ For the criticism of metaphysics, with bibliography, see W. Stegmaier, 1977, and E. Schott, 1994.

subject. Differences between the interpretations are restricted to more or less drastic shifts in the understanding of this concept.

Anyone wishing to show that the metaphysics as a whole is a mistake, a mere prejudice or deception through seduction by language, tradition, or whatever else, must also prove this in the case for substance, as the relevant proper being. Metaphysics and substance were at the centre of the polemic even in older analytic philosophy. While R. Carnap's take was polemical, metaphysics later received increasingly positive acceptance, e. g. by R. M. Chisholm.⁷ In classic expositions of metaphysics (and, not only for older ones like those of Chr. Wolff or A. G. Baumgarten), but also for newer ones (like those of G. Martin, D. W. Hamlyn, W. Stegmaier, M. J. Loux), it is held as self-evident that substance constitutes the core subject matter of that discipline.

I will forgo presenting the link between metaphysics and substance, for this is a common conviction and there are already several excellent historiographical and systematic accounts of it.⁸ Philosophically relevant treatments of this connection come down from by G. W. F. Hegel and M. Heidegger. It seems obvious from the very nature of the concepts that substance and metaphysics are intimately related to each other. If metaphysics is a science 'beyond' (μετά) physics and has some object – of whatever kind – then this object must be more stable and independent than any physical or natural objects. That is, for many interpreters, what is meant by substance. Although some praise Plato as the inventor of metaphysics, it is Aristotle who, according to tradition, is said to be the author of this discipline. Accordingly, the two above-mentioned claims of *ousia* dominate the modern scholarship on Aristotle. Any minor doubts these modern scholars may have are only ever mentioned in their forewords.

⁷ R. M. Chisholm, 1989, and *An Essay on Ontology*, 1996.

⁸ W. Cramer, 1959, W. Stegmaier, 1977, E. Schott, 1994.

2.1.1. What would ‘Substance’ Mean?

Since the time of the Church Fathers, at the latest, Aristotle has been said to have established the concept of substance, and Tertullianus already is using *substantia* quite commonly. Still today, many think, that the particular thing can serve as the pattern of substance, by which one was meant to have grasped the concept of substance in the *Categories*. On the other hand, substance is the *eidōs*, which concept is supposedly found in *Met. Z*.⁹ However, this leads to a problem: *eidōs* seems to be something like an universal, but Aristotle explicitly denies that *ousia* is universal. With the concept of individual form have some scholars tried to escape the dilemma.¹⁰

In this book I contest the assumption that substance is at the centre of Aristotle’s philosophy,¹¹ I do not, however, dispute that this assumption has indeed developed and become established over time. Prepared and developed in the Stoa, in the theory of rhetoric, and in the legal literature of Rome, the concept of substance comes to play an important role from the time of the Church Fathers, at least. Surprisingly, in the very large body of literature on Aristotle’s substance in the neo-scholastic as well as in the historiographical and philological party, the concept of substance itself is rarely addressed. As a rule, substance as translation of *ousia* is tacitly assumed, in a fuzzy sense. In any case it is understood as a given fact and assertion, hardly ever as itself subject to critical inquiry.

Substance is said to be that which actually and truly exists, it is thus the successor of Plato’s ὄντως ὄν (real being). It is that which bears the accidents, that which remains unchanged, it is autonomous and independent. What remains open to question and controversial in the standard interpretation, are the reasons why Aristotle

⁹ Cf. G. Martin, 1965; W. Stegmaier, 1977; W. Viertel, 1982; D. W. Hamlyn, 1984; G. Reale, 1993, who establishes a program of 5 points for the *Met*.

¹⁰ E. g. M. Frede, G. Patzig, 1988, following predecessors like R. Albitron, 1957; W. Sellars, 1957; E. D. Harter, 1975, 11, *the eidōs of an concrete individual, [...] it’s own particular shape, form, or structure*. However, the problem was already exposed by Duns Scotus and Suarez (for the principle of individuation see: *Disp. Met.*, Disp V, Sectio 6); bibliography by D. Fonfara, 2003, 10–11.

¹¹ For further arguments on this point see my commentary on Book Z, 2012.

apparently effects a change in the concept of substance, a transformation through which the single thing in the *Categories* is replaced with *eidos* in *Met. ZHΘ*, and finally with god in *Met. Λ*. The modern pattern of such an understanding of substance in Aristotle research can be found in the writings of M. Frede or M. V. Wedin.¹²

A glance at a few prominent statements about substance, beginning with F. Suarez, should make it possible to identify the main characteristics of the modern concept of substance. Many scholars assume that Aristotle has exactly this notion in mind when he speaks about *ousia*. At the same time we will see that the term ultimately disappears from the centre of philosophical occupation. In his *Disputationes Metaphysicae*, Disputatio XXXIII, Sectio 1 (vol. 2, 330), F. Suarez summarizes the scholastic tradition as follows:

This word 'substance' derives from two verbs, namely from 'to persist' or from 'to stand firm' [...] ¹³

He explains the first term with:

this word should mean the same as to exist or to persist being; ¹⁴

the second means:

that the thing is so solid and stable that it can bear another thing. ¹⁵

The main characteristics of substance, then, are permanence and the capacity to bear something, that is to be the foundation on which something subsists. In *Met. Z* *hypokeimenon*, subject, has this function.

Descartes first understood substance as *esse a se*.¹⁶ Of such a substance, however, there can be ultimately only one, no different substance could fulfill this criterion at the same time. Further, if existence is at the core of substance, but pure existence is unable to affect us (pure existence has no content; the content of a thing is given

¹² M. Frede, 1987, 72–80; M. V. Wedin, 2000.

¹³ *Duplex est etymologia huius vocis substantia, nimirum, vel a subsistendo, vel a substando [...]*

¹⁴ *derivatum est hoc verbum ad significandum idem, quod existere, seu supermanere in esse,*

¹⁵ *significat rem ita esse in se firmam et constantem ut possit aliam sustinere.*

¹⁶ Descartes, *Principia Philosophiae* I, 51, *quae ita existit, ut nulla alia re indiget ad existendum.*

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by its attributes which can affect us), then we cannot have knowledge of substance itself, but only of its attributes. They are the basis on which we infer the existence of substance. On this subject, Descartes further writes, *Principia Philosophiae*, I 51:

From the fact, that we perceive an attribute we conclude that there necessarily is also an existent thing, or a substance, to which we can ascribe the attribute.¹⁷

With a second consideration of substance, Descartes explains that there are two forms of substance, namely substance as *res extensa* and as *res cogitans*.

G. W. Leibniz, with Reference to Plato's *Sophist*, understood substance as that which has power.¹⁸ This was Leibniz' final and ultimate definition of the concept of substance, while previously he had formulated the concepts of the *ultimum subiectum*,¹⁹ as well as that of perseverance.²⁰

In A. G. Baumgarten, *Metaphysica*, §§ 191–2, we read:

A being either can not exist except as a determination of another thing, or it can. The first is the accidens [...] the latter the substance, a being per- sisting per se [...] and able to exist, i. e. it is not in another being, and not a determination of another thing. – § 192. The existence of the accidens as such is inherence, the existence of the substance as such is subsistence.²¹

In Kant's philosophy the concept of substance has lost its priority. As *ultimum subsistens*, substance is an empty term and we cannot have any intuition of it, because

¹⁷ *Ex hoc enim quod aliquod attributum adesse percipiamus concludimus aliquam rem existentem, sive substantiam, cui illud tribui possit, necessario etiam adesse.*

¹⁸ Plato, *Sophist* 247e δύναιμις; Leibniz also refers to Aristotle, e. g. in the *Specimen Dynamicum* but also in GP VI 588; *De Prima Philosophiae Emendatione, et de Notione Substantiae*: GP IV 468f., *De ipsa natura sive de vi insita actionibusque Creaturarum, pro Dynamicis suis conformandis illustrandisque*, GP IV 504ff, 508: *ipsam rerum substantiam in agendi patiendique vi consistere*, "the substance of things consists in the ability to act and to suffer."

¹⁹ See the letter to Des Bosses GP II 457, and *Discours de Met.* § 8, GP IV 432–433, as well.

²⁰ *Remarque sur la lettre de M. Arnauld*, GP II 43.

²¹ § 191 ...*Ens vel non potest existere, nisi ut determinatio alterius, (in alio), vel potest. Prius ACCIDENS, [...] posterius est SUBSTANTIA, ens per se subsistens [...] quod potest existere, licet non sit in alio, licet non sit determinatio alterius.* – § 192. *Existentia accidentis, qua talis, est INHAERENTIA, existentia substantiae, qua talis, est SUBSISTENTIA.*

all of the sensual determinations have been abstracted from it.²² Substance belongs to the category of relation, because substance exists only together with that which inheres in it.

The substance underlying accidents is the *ultimum subjectum*. Regardless of our starting point, our questions “Of which thing does this hold true?” or “Of what is this said of?” we must terminate somewhere. That point of termination will be the *ultimum subjectum*, the last about-what. This means that there has to be a final independent being to which we can attribute properties, qualities, and so on. Taking subsistence as a criterion of substance quickly leads to the conclusion of the uniqueness of substance, because an absolutely independent being does not tolerate any competition with, or limitation by, another absolutely independent being. The ultimate bearing and underlying all else, the substance that supports all other comparatively independent things and all other secondary substances, traditionally is called God.

Both, the *ultimum subsistens* as well as the *ultimum subiectum* can be conceived in either a strict or a freer way. Strictly speaking, they only designate one substance; in the free sense, there can be many. In general, ordinary things around us, such as trees, houses, dogs, rocks, and the like, are considered to be substances. Many think that they can rely on Aristotle’s texts, in particular on the examples given in the *Cat.* (“this horse”) and in the *Met.* One overlooks the fact that Aristotle uses these examples to articulate the common opinions of his time, and that they are starting points for the question about *ousia*, but by no means represent a ready solution to this question.

In summary, the scholarship traditionally ascribes three main characteristics to substance (mostly implicitly), each of which have some connection with Aristotle’s reflections. From the distinction between, on the one hand, the *hypokeimenon*, which is said according to itself and as itself and which is not predicated upon any another being, and, on the other hand, that which is said of other things,²³ derives

²² *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* B 186.

²³ *Kath' hauto – kat' allo legomenon.*

the concept of substance as *ultimum subiectum* in the reception history. From Aristotle's observation that becoming, movement, and change are comprehensible only if there is also something that does not change, together with the completely different distinction between the attributes that are essential for a thing and those that are not,²⁴ came about the concept of substance as *ultimum subsistens*. Aristotle's concept of nature as the origin of movement has led to the concept of substance as that which has force (G. W. Leibniz), and to the *esse a se* (R. Descartes). Since *ultimum subiectum* and *ultimum subsistens* are no more than formal ideas and without definite content, it becomes essential to know with which content they are filled. At different times and within different given contexts, the individual thing, the person, and God have been considered as content of substance.

2.1.2. 'Substance' in *Cat.*, *Met. Z* and *Met. A*

Within the scholarly community, there is a consensus that, although Aristotle invented the concept of substance, he held various views about this concept, at times even contradictory ones.²⁵ Aristotle is said to have stated in the *Cat.* that "this horse," i. e. the concrete singular thing is the model of substance. According to the standard interpretation, in the central books of the *Met.* as well as in *Met. A* 1–5 the substance of natural, moved things is thematic, which turns out to be *eidōs*, while in *Met. A* 6–10 the immovable substance, ultimately identified with divine substance, is thematic. Hence there is a need to explain this conflict between the *Categories*, the central books of the *Met.* and *Met. A* 6–10. Additionally, with the central books of the *Met.* the question arises as to whether *eidōs* should be understood as a general or a singular term. Neither of these two proposals satisfies because Aristotle explicitly rejects universals as *ousia* in *Met. Z* 13, and the concept of the individual form seems to be problematic.

²⁴ The permanent attributes being essential; to *kat' hauto* – to *kata symbebekos legomenon*

²⁵ J. Halfwassen, 1998, Sp. 507, with lit. – For the American dispute see D. W. Graham, 1987; E. D. Harter, 1988; M. Furth, 1988; M.-L. Gill, 1989; E. C. Halper, 1989; C. Witt, 1989; T. Irwin, 1990 2. ed.; F. A. Lewis, 1991; id., 2013; M. J. Loux, 1991 and many earlier authors. Further lit. in J. Barnes, 1995, 350f.; M. V. Wedin, 2000; D. Fonfara, 2003; Dae-Ho Cho, 2003, also starts with the question of the consistency between *Cat.* and *Met. Z*.

The form of a thing is constituted by a set of attributes, i. e. of predicates, which are always general; it follows that only a certain combination of attributes can be individual. An *eidos* has only a limited number of characteristics, while an individual thing has an unlimited number of determinations. So an ‘individual form’ would have to satisfy contradictory conditions, that of the form and that of the individual. In addition, it is not so clear as it is presupposed in the claims of M. Frede and G. Patzig what an individual may be. In a certain context an individual may be a part of an individual in another. Of course, I think of myself as an individual, but for my dentist it is not myself but rather my tooth that is the individual object during treatment. Moreover, if the form is not general, it would have to be some singular thing, a name or a description; none of these possibilities can be found in Aristotle’s texts.

To search for what makes something an individual, is to search for a principle of individuation. It was thought that the matter, space and time, and then again the individual form could function as a principle of individuation. With respect to the individual form F. Suarez, *Disputationes* V., Sectio IV, asks:

Is the *forma substantialis* [= *causa formalis* + *finalis*] the principle of individuation of the material substances? ²⁶

Suarez answers affirmatively, following Aristotle’s claim in *De Anima* B 1, that “something is called a *tode ti* with respect to the *eidos*,” which he paraphrased with:

it is the form which constitutes an any-this.²⁷

Indeed, well before Suarez, Plotinus has asked whether there can be individual forms (*Enn.* V 9 [5] 8,2). In the Middle Ages Duns Scotus said that the problem of individuation could only be resolved by supposing individual form: the *haecceitas*.

²⁶ *an forma substantialis [= causa formalis + finalis] sit principium individuationis substantiarum materialium.*

²⁷ *formam esse, quae constituit hoc aliquid* (175a).

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It is precisely because philosophers in the 20th century oriented themselves so much towards the seemingly absolute reality of the individual thing to understand *to be* that the question of identification was dealt with in such detail analytically and profoundly with a variety of proposals put forward, even if now the idea of substance has proved to be irrelevant or insufficiently sustainable.²⁸

Most interpreters see a contradiction between the statements on *prote ousia* in the *Cat.* and in *Met. Z.*²⁹ A large number of books and articles are concerned with overturning this contradiction. Among many others, is that of D. W. Graham, where he summarizes his ideas in the last chapter, “What Aristotle Should Have Said.” The following two quotes from the commentary on *Met. Z* by M. Frede and G. Patzig, illustrate well how the different concepts of substance in *Cat.* and *Met. Z* is seen today:

While Aristotle in the *Categories* says that concrete objects are the primary *ousiai*, here [: in *Met. Z*] he declares for the first time the form and the “What it means to be such a thing” to be the primary *ousia*;³⁰

and

[According to the general consensus] Aristotle himself, on the other hand, had

²⁸ In newer ontologies, *haecceitas* has been revived with new functions, e.g. G. S. Rosenkrantz, 1993, wanted to give a basis to an extreme realism concerning qualities by *haecceitas*.

²⁹ Examples for this supposition of difference or contradiction: Ch. H. Chen, 1957; H. J. Krämer, 1974; E. D. Harter, 1975, holds that (*prote ousia* in *Met.* means the individual form); M. Frede, 1978, now in *Essays* 1987; M. Frede, 1983, 27, says that in *Met. Z* there are no more *concrete objects* underlying all the rest but *substantial forms*, and he adds: “*The Categories are realistic and the Metaphysics nominalist.*” D. W. Graham, 1987; M. Frede, G. Patzig, 1988. – It seems that now there is a slowly growing resistance to the way D. W. Graham confronted the *Organon* and the *Metaphysics* with each other, cf. C. Wildberg, O. Goldin, 1989. – Cf. M. Furth, 1988 on the relation between *Cat.* and *Met.*: There is no contradiction insofar as *Cat.* is simply a didactical introduction whereas *Met. Z* is for advanced students. D. Fonfara, 2003, very plausibly, demonstrates that the difference is the result of a distinction of respects. – Chr. Rapp, in Rapp / Corcilius, 2011, 335–342. – M. V. Wedin, 2000, 157, gives strong arguments in favor of the compatibility of *Cat.* and *Met. Z*; he says that the former shows how the world must behave in order that our statements about it be true (because it begins with a definition of substance as individual things) the latter on the other hand, focuses on this very structure.

³⁰ M. Frede, G. Patzig, 1988, Bd. II, 114, zu *Met. Z* 7, 1032b2: *Während Aristoteles in der Kategorien-schrift von konkreten Gegenständen als primären ousiai spricht, bezeichnet er hier [: in Met. Z] zum ersten Mal die Form und das ‘Was es heisst, dies zu sein,’ als primäre ousia.*

initially (in the *Cat.*) stated that individual things are the ultimate basis of all the rest, and that everything else existed only in so far as it was based in some way or another, on such individual things. Likewise, opinions differ as to what should be regarded in an object as the ultimate being and the cause for the being of the object.³¹

D. W. Graham has discerned two contradictory metaphysical systems in Aristotle. The first is an “atomic substantialism,” and stands against a later developed system, “hylomorphic substantialism.”

For some interpreters, what seems to be contradictory is only a difference of the concept of *eidos*.³² *Eidos* in the *Cat.* seems to mean the universal rather, but since according to the *Met. Z* 13 the universal cannot be *ousia* in any form, *eidos* in *Met. Z* must mean a “particular form of a concrete individual” (E. D. Harter, 1975, 14). This would be the “most fundamental sort of being,” the first reality, that upon which change and genesis is based. E. D. Harter continues by saying that the unification of the *causa formalis* and the *causa finalis* is traditionally called “substantial form” (i. e. in scholasticism, 14), and that it is this primary reality that is at stake in the genesis of *ousia* as a singular thing, i. e. this is the *prote ousia*. This “substantial form,” however, is not universal but “individuated” (15).

When some say that in the *Cat.* *prote ousia* is instantiated by the concrete individual, but in *Met.* by the *eidos*, that is based on a particular understanding of the terms *ho tis anthropos* in the *Cat.* and *to ti en einai* and *eidos* in the *Met.* It is therefore necessary to verify, in these two points, the above assertion.³³ In doing so, we must differentiate between two questions. It is one matter to investigate whether the concrete individual thing is at all suitable for the function that Aristotle attributes to *ousia*, quite another, to investigate whether in the *Cat.* *ho tis anthropos* means the

³¹ M. Frede, G. Patzig, 1988, Bd. I, 37: *Aristoteles selbst hingegen habe zunächst (in der Kategorienschrift) die Auffassung vertreten, das letztlich Zugrundeliegende seien die Einzeldinge und alles andere gebe es nur, insofern ihm auf die eine oder andere Weise solche Einzeldinge zugrundeliegen. Ebenso gingen die Meinungen darüber auseinander, was denn bei einem Gegenstand als das letztlich Seiende und die Ursache für das Sein des Gegenstandes zu betrachten sei.*

³² See E. D. Harter, 1975, or A. C. Lloyd, 1981.

³³ The claim is presented in an especially concise way by D. W. Graham, 1987, and by M. Frede and G. Patzig 1988.

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concrete singular thing. Here follows an attempt to justify a negative reply to the second question. As for the first question, it must be said that, even if the question of primary being (prote ousia) is understood as the question about being (*Frage nach dem Sein*) as developed in *Met. Z*, we can still take beings (*Seiendes*) as that which is to be investigated (although not as an answer to the question of being).

If it turns out that it must be doubted that, in the *Cat.*, Aristotle with *ho tis anthropos* means the concrete individual thing, then the relationship between *Cat.* and *Met. Z* must be reconsidered in this respect; further, it will be necessary to ask what *ho tis anthropos* refers to, if not to a concrete individual thing. The linguistic arguments that the term cannot mean the concrete individual have already been put forward elsewhere.³⁴ These arguments are based on the fact that the phrase *ho tis anthropos* combines the meaning ‘determined,’ which is expressed by the definite article *ho*, with the meaning ‘not determined in the present case,’ which is expressed by the indefinite pronoun *tis*. The combination of both gives rise to the meaning ‘to be determined in principle but not in the present case.’ This means that the phrase does not refer to some present individual thing, because an individual thing is completely determined (and is referred to with *tode ti*), while *ho tis anthropos* is not thus fully determined.

This linguistic argument is supported by a number of other arguments. The first of these relates to the associated problem history (*Problemgeschichte*). Modern research has recently become more willing than before to accept a continuity of problems between Plato and Aristotle. The consensus exists both among philosophers³⁵ as well as in Aristotelian research.³⁶ One of the main controversies in this area is about the content of this continuity. If (i) Aristotle realized that Plato’s crucial question as exposed in the *Sophist* was about the meaning of being (*Frage nach dem Sein*) and that this was the very question that required further investigation, and if (ii) he subsequently set out to investigate this question once again, but using new

³⁴ Cf. E. Sonderegger, 2012, 169–171.

³⁵ Apart from various references by M. Heidegger, see e.g. the book by P. Ricœur, 1982, as well as the research on the Unwritten Doctrines of Plato, which must assume a continuity of problems.

³⁶ See the exposition on the current state of research by H. Flashar, 1983, or by Rapp / Corcilius, 2011.

means and at the level of his own understanding (therefore the speculative sketch in *Met. A* and the repetition of that question in *Met. ZHΘ*),

and if (iii) he has understood that Plato tried to articulate our unavoidable DOXA about being through the ‘five highest genera,’ and if (iv) he moreover agreed with Plato that the question of the meaning of being imperatively includes the question of speech (because *to be* is omnipresent in our logos and is used in many ways), then it would be an incomprehensible loss of awareness of the problem at hand to simply claim that ‘this real horse’ or ‘this real man’ is *prote ousia*, i. e. that ‘this real horse’ or ‘this real man’ are the *First and One* (*das Erste und Eine*) with respect to which our various ways of using *to be* have their unity. first, the If we persisted in contending something about *to be* without reflecting on language, we would fail to maintain the level of the question built up by Plato and we would be surrendering the insight of the guest from Elea that it is neither possible nor meaningful simply to oppose the old claims about *to be* with new ones.

Plato first showed in the *Sophist* that it is necessary to reflect on the logos. If, with the *Organon*, Aristotle truly carries out this project – possibly much further and in a somehow different way, with a broader scope and means other than Plato had at hand – then the *Categories*, too, would be involved in this pursuit. Thus it cannot be the objective of the *Categories* to claim that the concrete individual thing best realizes what it means *to be*. Nevertheless, one can very well proceed from the concrete, individual being as a suitable starting point for reflection on the nature of being since it is the generally recognized one. This concludes, for now, the argument concerning methodological issues.

If it we want to articulate the DOXA about being (*ousia, Sein*), then we must start from what people actually believe to be true. If somebody were to assert something other than what is actually believed, this assertion would be again no more than a new opinion of somebody and the task of examining it would begin anew. Plato exposes in the *Sophist* a kind of philosophizing according to which the reflection on and the analysis of prevailing opinions, of the self-evident (*das Selbstverständliche*), is the job of philosophers rather than proposing new opinions of their own even if

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they were acute and original. The starting point for this reflection must be what ‘we all’ consider to be true and real, and that is then as now the concrete single thing. This is the reason why Aristotle in the *Met.* speaks of the σῶμα φυσικόν, the natural body, in many places, it is used as the starting point for reflecting, it never constitutes – nor is it intended to constitute – the conclusion. Instead, Aristotle aims at transforming an endoxon into a thought or to find the fundamental justifying reason for a given endoxon.

Whether one argues that the individual and corporeal thing is the best example of being (*Sein*),³⁷ or one thinks that the individual thing is that which must be investigated in order to find an answer about the meaning of being (*Frage nach dem Sein*), in any case it is more important to see the two different respects under which the individual thing is examined in the *Cat.* and in the *Met.*³⁸ The first and fundamental opinion about being (*sein*) that Aristotle seems to identify is that it is a basis, a fundament, a subject (*hypokeimenon*). *Cat.* approaches being-a-subject from two different sides, that is, as ‘subject-for-being’ and as ‘subject-for-speaking.’ Aristotle combines the positive and negative instances and thus he has four positions, see table 2.1.

is in a subject	is said of a subject	examples
-	+	human being in general
+	-	a specific knowledge; a certain white
+	+	knowledge in general
-	-	ho tis anthropos; (not ident. with prote ousia)

Table 2.1.: *Categories*, 2

One could think that this table is made to get four classes of beings, in which all beings can be distributed, but that is not the case, at any rate it is not used that way in the subsequent text. The main purpose of this classification is simply to establish the

³⁷ Like those who think that the body is the proper being in Plato’s *Sophist*

³⁸ Good work about this has been done by Fonfara, 2003.

minimum criteria that allow us to identify and pinpoint the first instance of being, the prote ousia. With this catalogue of minimum criteria we can examine any statement, concerning any topic, with regard to whether the object of inquiry is a proper being. We may do so by simply checking whether it has at least the the character of a first (or last) about-what (*Worüber*) with respect both to its being (*Sein*) and its use in speech. If this is not the case, the alleged being (*Seiendes*) cannot be the first being, prote ousia, *Sein*.

Up to this point, the arguments against the identity of ho tis anthropos and prote ousia have been based on the environment of the problem and on method. Further arguments from the text, however, confirm the understanding gained so far. Aristotle distinguishes between an individual being and ho tis anthropos, the expression that is the example of prote ousia. At the end of *Cat. 2* Aristotle distinguishes τὰ ἄτομα καὶ ἐν ἀριθμῷ (“things that are individual and numerically one”) and ho tis anthropos, because the latter fulfills both conditions of ousia (it is neither *in* a subject nor said *of* a subject), while the former does not do that in every case (for it can be in a subject, e. g. a certain grammatical knowledge). If there is anything that is an individual being, then surely it must be what is numerically one.

In *Cat. 2*, 1a27f., τὸ τὶ λευκόν (“the expression ‘some white <being>’”), which has the same linguistic structure as ho tis anthropos is distinguished from the body which is its hypokeimenon. So τὸ τὶ λευκόν is surely not an independent individual. Therefore “τὸ τὶ x” is neither always nor necessarily a singular individual and a substance.

But is ho tis anthropos a singular individual nonetheless? Let us consider further evidence for a negative response. Prote ousia is the hypokeimenon for further determinations like quantity, quality, etc. (*Cat. 5*, 2a35). But a concrete, individual being already has all its categorical determinations as a matter of fact, which it should still receive as prote ousia. The meaning of the phrase ho tis anthropos is, therefore, most likely that which its linguistic form suggests: ‘determination in principle’ combined with ‘indeterminacy in the present case.’ The phrase designates the essence of the thing, along with the accidental determinations that it must

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have in principle, without taking into account the specific realization of those accidental determinations (e. g. ‘it must be colored’ but it is left undecided what color it is). R. M. Chisholm’s take on Meinong’s incomplete objects (*unvollständige Gegenstände*) perfectly matches this understanding of *ho tis anthropos*, although Chisholm himself connects incomplete objects to *deuterai ousiai*.³⁹

What is the use of thinking about such a being? Why, alongside the being that is concretely determined and the being without any accidents (the *eidos*), should we now wish to know anything about yet another being – the being that must be determined in principle, but whose concrete realization is left open? Is this not exactly the same as asking the question *τοὔτι τί ἦν τὸ πρῶγμα*, “What at all is this?” Those who ask this question have the thing before their eyes, they see it but have no idea what it could be.⁴⁰ They would like to know more than the bare *eidos*, but they do not need to know all the details. They are, in fact, aware of the details, but these make no sense because they are unable to contextualize it in a broader whole; this could be a possible meaning of the “individual form” (although not in the sense Frede-Patzig took it). If that is true, then *Cat.* and *Met. Z* are talking about the same thing under different titles (respectively, *ho tis anthropos* and *eidos*) and from different perspectives, in the first, with respect to ‘determination in principle,’ and in the second, with respect to a ‘set of eidetic determinations.’

In order to appreciate what *Cat.* and *Met. Z* contribute to the understanding of *ousia*, some additional considerations are necessary. Neither does it seem that *ho tis anthropos* is the concrete individual and thus the *prote ousia* as claimed by the standard interpretation (or this holds true only as an *endoxon* and as the starting point for the investigation), nor does it seem that the statement in the *Met.*, that *prote ousia* relies on *eidos*, is a simple retreat to the Platonic position.

Aristotle never gives up his claim that an essential statement about something should contain, as a minimum, also a statement about the *prote ousia*. Both the *Met.* and the *Cat.*, however, make it clear that it is impossible to make such essential statements,

³⁹ R. M. Chisholm, 1982, 49–50. The *deuterai ousiai* seem to be too general, they are without any accidents.

⁴⁰ For the material in Aristophanes’ comedies see E. Sonderegger, 1983.

since the prote ousia is inexpressible. That which is inexpressible (*das Unsagbare*) is not an occult, mystical thing, as some might assume, but simply that which cannot be expressed in language: the simple essence of a present thing.

The correct answer to the Greek question Τοὔτι τί ἦν τὸ πρῶγμα; – “What at all is this?” – must include the full range of features of the being in its concrete and individual givenness. Whoever tries to provide such an answer, can only answer the question Τι ἐστιν? and, as stated in *Cat.* 5, 2b8–10, simply specify the eidos and genos of the thing:

ἐὰν γὰρ ἀποδιδῶ τις τὴν πρώτην οὐσίαν τί ἐστι, γνωριμώτερον καὶ οἰκειότερον ἀποδώσει τὸ εἶδος ἀποδιδοῦς ἢ γένος,
For if someone tries to articulate what the prote ousia is, he will make it more recognizable and be more appropriate if he provides the species rather than the genos, <but neither of these is the prote ousia>.

In his discussions about horismos Aristotle tries to clarify the linguistic conditions under which the prote ousia would be comprehensible. They are meant to make clear why the prote ousia cannot be fully articulated in language. Instead we are forced to resort to statements about the eidos and genos. This is Aristotle’s primary intention in his speculative project, while the observations about definitions as such form part of his logical projects. Yet the more specific issue under discussion, here, is a type of sentence that must fulfill very specific requirements. It is made clear, both, in the *Cat.* and in the *Met.*, that, for us humans, our only option is to use genos and eidos in our speech as substitutes for prote ousia, we never can really answer to the question Τοὔτι τί ἦν τὸ πρῶγμα;⁴¹

Cat. and *Met.* represent different stages of the investigation into the meaning of being (*Sinn von Sein*). They deal with the same issue, i. e. both ask the same question, but they study their case differently. The *Cat.*, and indeed the *Organon* in general, examine the linguistic conditions of the question of the meaning of being. These texts continue the inquiry Plato began in the *Sophist*, and in them Aristotle makes distinctions through which “sophistical harassments” can be avoided.⁴² The use of

⁴¹ Cf. E. Sonderegger, 2012, III 8.

⁴² *De Interpretatione*, 6, 17a35ff. “...and all other <distinctions> like these which we have laid down

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to be (εἶναι) has come to be under threat not only with Gorgias' arguments, but just as much from people around Socrates (in the Platonic dialogues) who contend whatever they want, and which, doing so, represent the behavior in everyday life of all of us. This is the reason why Plato says that we need a completely new starting point for our discourse (*Soph.* 242b–243c). The first result of his investigation are the five megista gene, their goal is to make transparent the use of the verb *einai*, *to be*.

It is at this very point that Aristotle picks up the investigation. In *Met. ZHΘ* he is looking for the criteria that guide the endoxa about *ousia*. It is necessary and useful to know these criteria because *ousia* (*Sein*) is the first in every respect (*Met. Z 1*), but it is not a being besides other beings (ὄντα, *Seiendes*), not even God, as Heidegger very plausibly argued, but ultimately with little impact on the modern interpretation of Aristotle. There is no other way to find what *ousia* is than to analyze the given discourse itself, because there opinions and assumptions about *to be* are continuously being expressed. Even those who may wish to deny this, must use words and sentences in their arguments, and the meaning of these words and sentences must be clarified, above all the operative sense of *to be*.

Many think that there is a link between the chronology of the works and the amplification of the content of *prote ousia*.⁴³ While in the early *Cat.* the individual thing is meant (“this horse”), it is the *eidos* in *Met. ZHΘ*, and finally by *Met. Λ*: God. It should be noted, firstly, that the chronology required for this interpretation (with the late dating of *Met. Λ*) has become implausible. Secondly, *prote ousia* as a question-word means the same or refers to the same question here as in the other books. What we are looking for is according to the *Cat.* the first about-what and, together with *Met. Γ 2*, the hen in the *pros hen*-relation, so we can say, it is the first and one (*das Erste und Eine*), with reference to which *to be* is used in various ways. “Always knowledge is primarily about the first,” and, “this is in this case *ousia*”

against such sophistical harassments.”

⁴³ For the dating see the handbooks and the histories of philosophy as Zeller, Ueberweg, Guthrie; see my own remarks on the date of *Met. Λ* in the following Chapter ‘New Premises’; on the date of Theophrastus’ *Met.* see the section in the Commentary on the first KP.

(*Met. Γ*, 1003b16–18; see also *Z 1*). *Cat.* 5, 2b7–10, implies that we can only ever approximately approach the prote ousia through *genos* and *eidos*, but do not ever reach it itself. *Genos* and *eidos* apply to many things, but prote ousia is unique (5, 3b20). Further, *genos* and *eidos* do not describe the real being (*Sein*), but rather the how-it-is (*poion ti*). Moreover, Aristotle maintains this distinction between the first ousia and the second ousiai in *Met. Z* too.

Yet, this fact is easily overlooked if one interprets *horismos* simply with ‘definition.’ Aristotle always differentiates between the first, the prote ousia, and the ousia to which we refer by means of *genos* and *eidos*. To say something about prote ousia would require a statement under quite special conditions, to say something about something by means of *genos* and *eidos* is the definition, both forms of statements are called *horismos*. In some way we have an understanding of the prote ousia (for otherwise we could not even raise the question), but, we cannot express it in a clear conceptual way. The distinction made in the *Cat.* between that which *is* neither in a subject nor *is said of* a subject and that which we say about a subject, remains fundamental in *Met. Z* too, as is evident in Aristotle’s treatment of *hypokeimenon* as the first about-what (see *Met. Z 3*). *Met. ZHΘ* and *Met. Λ* complement each other through the different ways that they treat ousia as fundamental. Aristotle examines all four types of cause, including, of course, the cause initiating movement and genesis, as early as *Met. Λ*, while his later books *ZHΘ* emphasize the *eidos* and the *hyle*.⁴⁴

2.1.3. Problems Arising from the Standard Interpretation of *Met. Λ* as a Metaphysics of Substance

The Aporiai of the Concept of ‘Substance’

There are several arguments against the generally accepted assumption that the concept of ousia is equivalent to that of substance. Some of those have been discovered

⁴⁴ Cf. E. Berti, 1981, 247–250.

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within that tradition itself. When Boethius in Late Antiquity, for example, wants to explain his notion of God as a substance he says:

For, when we say 'God' it seems that we speak of a substance, but of one which is beyond substance⁴⁵

God here is that paradox 'a substance beyond substance.'⁴⁶ Marius Victorinus had already used a similar formula before and, towards the end of the Middle Ages, Cusanus, trying as precisely as possible to define the nature of God and in line with his tradition, says:

All theologians have seen that God is something greater than could be conceived, and, therefore they have stated about Him that He is 'beyond substance,' beyond 'every name' and the like; and they did not say different things by 'beyond,' by 'without,' by 'in,' by 'non,' by 'prior' with reference to God; for, it is the same that He is substance beyond substance, and substance without substance, and unsubstantial substance, and non-substantial substance and substance prior to substance.⁴⁷

This is comparable with Cusanus' criticism of Aristotle's concept of substance in the same text, directed towards Dionysius Areopagita. Evidently, all of these attempts to articulate the inarticulable may seem nonsensical at first, but quite the contrary is true: such attempts as Boethius and Cusanus made are the best possible manner in which to say what really is intended by the term 'substance,' and they show very clearly which problems arise, when we try to articulate this.

R. Descartes and B. Spinoza have made clear that the substance can only be understood through its attributes, never as itself. Substance is fundamental but unrecognizable. With Kant, we have reached a stage where substance has lost its primacy, it is merely included in the category of relation, because substance is something in

⁴⁵ *nam cum dicimus 'deus,' substantiam quidem significare videmur, sed eam quae sit ultra substantiam...*

⁴⁶ *Theologische Traktate* I, 4; 14–18, (ed. Elsässer).

⁴⁷ *De non aliud*, cap. 4: *Omnes enim theologi deum viderunt quid maius esse quam concipi posset, et idcirco 'supersubstantialem,' supra 'omne nomen,' et consimilia de ipso affirmarunt, neque aliud per 'super,' aliud per 'sine,' aliud per 'in,' aliud per 'non' et per 'ante' nobis in deo expresserunt; nam idem est ipsum esse substantiam supersubstantialem, et substantiam sine substantia, et substantiam insubstantialem, et substantiam non-substantialem, et substantiam ante substantiam.*

which another thing can inhere (see above, p. 82). For Kant substance is by no means the hidden *Ding an sich*, "thing in itself." The subject, in the modern sense, has replaced substance as the fundamental object of philosophical reflection.

In the *Vorwort* to his *Phänomenologie* G. W. F. Hegel identifies substance and subject:

According to my insight, which must be justified by the exposition of the system itself, everything depends on grasping and expressing the ultimate truth not only as substance but just as much as a subject.⁴⁸

In modern philosophy, then, substance is, on the one hand, not recognizable (R. Descartes, B. Spinoza) and, on the other, things are considered as substances because they supposed to be independent. Persons, in particular, must be substances which are accountable for their actions, even if it is, strictly speaking, only possible for *one* substance to fulfill the condition of independence. If, nonetheless, we wish to use the concept of substance, we are forced to apply two standards. This is exactly what W. Cramer very successfully demonstrates, he shows that the concept of substance collapses, because it is no longer possible to distinguish the autonomous substance which founds all things from the substances which are founded.⁴⁹

Substance as the Autonomous Individual Thing

If, as F. Suarez states, substance is that independent thing that does not require any other thing in order to exist, then the concept of existence is constitutive for the concept of substance. The concept of existence, however, is also a post-Aristotelian

⁴⁸ G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* ed. 1988, 13f.:

Es kömmt nach meiner Einsicht, welche sich durch die Darstellung des Systems selbst rechtfertigen muss, alles darauf an, das Wahre nicht als Substanz, sondern eben so sehr als Subjekt aufzufassen und auszudrücken.

⁴⁹ K. Cramer, H.-F. Fulda, R.-P. Horstmann, U. Posthast (Hrsg.), 1987; cf. E. Schott, 1994; various works by M. Frank, 1986, 1991, 1994. One can find other important contributions to the problem of the metaphysics of substance in: K. Baynes (Hrsg.), 1987; W. Carl, 1988; T. Buchheim, 1990.

development. It arose in the context of theological problems that did not confront Aristotle. Indeed, the concept of existence has also undergone many changes over time. Whereas in the Middle Ages, it had initially meant ‘to be part of creation,’ and ‘to be created by God,’ or ‘to be a creature,’⁵⁰ existence subsequently comes to mean only ‘to be at hand,’ ‘to be present’ in a materialistic and realistic sense, whether with or without the presence of God. Along with the concept of existence the concept of substance caused changes. Substance should indicate an independent thing, but we do not know anything independent in the necessary sense. We know of nothing that would not in some way require another thing to exist. All we know are insufficient substances. Such ‘relative substances’ must have their ground in an absolute substance. In this way, relative substances have lost the proper quality of being-a-substance. On the other side, a concept applicable to only thing, loses its usefulness.

The Person as a Model of Substance

For Boethius, beside the individual being, the person was a model of substance. Boethius began to reflect about person because the person of Christ was a much-debated theme in his time.⁵¹ Questions of the following kind were dealt with: How Christ’s human and the divine nature and person may be compatible with each other, how may the person of the son of God be integrated in the Trinity? Late in antiquity Boethius was rooted in different lines of tradition, of which he was aware and which he could clearly distinguish: the ecclesiastical tradition straddles the political, the political stands beside the philosophical, within the philosophical the Latin is adjacent with the Greek, the Neoplatonic with the Aristotelian. In the ecclesiastical and theological discourse mentioned, the term ‘person’ was simply employed (e. g. by Augustine, Marius Victorinus and others), but Boethius saw the need to reflect upon the concept of the person, which he did in the *Opuscula sacra*. The result of his reflections was the famous definition of person which should hold as point of

⁵⁰ The word ‘creature’ has itself shifted significantly from its origin over time.

⁵¹ See his *Theological Treatises*.

reference throughout the Middle Ages: *naturae rationabilis individua substantia*, the person is the “indivisible substance of a rational nature.” The Middle Ages and modern era have followed him on this point. Person remained a fundamental concept until today, indeed, even in P. F. Strawson’s *Individuals* persons are among the basic particulars. It is indispensable in ethical, juridical, anthropological, social and many other discourses.⁵²

Substance, as the core of the concept of person, vanished in modern times after Descartes and was replaced by subject. ‘Subject’ served originally as translation of Aristotle’s *hypokeimenon*, the about-what of speaking. Subject now is quite the opposite, it indicates the person, the *ego*, the thinking human, which is aware and conscious of the outer world, of the objects. The subject has replaced substance as the foundation of all things to such a degree that, as already mentioned, by the culmination of this development G. W. F. Hegel can say that “above all we must conceive truth not only as substance but as subject as well.”⁵³ We should see easily that all this has nothing to do with Aristotle’s *ousia*.

Which Problems can Substance Solve?

Above all, substance is useful to solve theological problems, because the heart of this concept is subsistence (i. e. to be self-grounded), a feature which is plausible for gods but not for things in our world. If all things are created out of nothing then there is reason to fear that all things may disappear without any reason (G. W. Leibniz). They need, therefore, a fundament that keeps them in being. That can only be God in the sense of *causa sui*. Aristotle and his world have not to reckon with a complete disappearance of the world because *physis* is not created out of nothing nor does *physis* itself act this way (i. e. *physis* does not create things out from nothing). He explicitly rejects this idea as an unreasonable alternative to his own views of the causes of becoming, e. g. in the first sentence of *Met. A 7* (comparable with *Physics A 4*, 187a34):

⁵² And more recently Kathleen Wilkes, Galen Strawson, Richard Wollheim, Derek Parfitt.

⁵³ G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Vorrede, p. 13 (ed. Wessels/Clairmont).

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Since it is possible <to explain becoming> this way, and, if not this way, <all beings> would come to be out of night and out of “All together” and out of non-being, that may be solved ...

Aristotle justifies the need to know something about ousia quite differently. *Met. E 2* contains the program for the text up to *Met. Θ*. It is his plan to go through the various ways of using *to be* (εἶναι), because “*to be* is used in many ways” (to on pollachos legetai). This variety is neither simply equivocal (Γ 2) nor has it the unity of a *genos*⁵⁴ Aristotle says:

τὸ δὲ ὄν λέγεται μὲν πολλαχῶς, ἀλλὰ πρὸς ἓν καὶ μίαν τινὰ φύσιν καὶ οὐχ ὁμώνυμος.

The term *being* is said in many ways, but with respect to some unique physis and not simply equivocally.

Thus *to be* must have a unity of its own kind. His task, thus, is now to understand what this ‘first and one’ which Aristotle calls *prote ousia* really is, and this is the reason why ousia becomes the theme and why we have to raise the question of being.

⁵⁴ For “being is not a genus” see: *Topics Z 6*, 144b4–11: “Similarly we have to consider whether the species or something beneath the species is said of the difference; but this is impossible because the difference is said of more beings than the species. It will result that the difference is a species if something of the species is said of it <: of the difference; e.g. ‘rational is man’>: so ‘man’ is under the difference ‘rational’ which is absurd>; if ‘human’ is predicated <of the difference, e.g. of ‘rational’> then it is clear, that the difference is ‘human.’ Further <we have to ask> whether the difference is prior in relation to the species; it is posterior in relation to the genus, but difference must be prior to the species.” (Transl. E.S.)

“Likewise you must inquire also if the species or any of the objects that come under it is predicated of the differentia: for this is impossible, seeing that the differentia is a term with a wider range than the various species. Moreover, if any of the species be predicated of it, the result will be that the differentia is a species: if, for instance, ‘man’ be predicated, the differentia is clearly the human race. Again, see if the differentia fails to be prior to the species: for the differentia ought to be posterior to the genus, but prior to the species.” (Transl. W. A. Pickard-Cambridge)

Met., B 2, 998b22–28, <7. Aporia: What is the first? Are gene the first? ‘Being’ (: ὄν) and Unity (: ἔν) are first anyway but cannot be gene of being.> “It is impossible that there is numerically one *genos* of being; neither unity nor being (: ὄν) <can be *genos*>. For it is necessary that differences of each *genos are* and that they are numerically one each, but it is impossible to state the *eide* of a *genos* of its own differences, or the gene without the *eide*, so that if unity or being were gene no difference would be neither unity nor being.”

In 1985 J. Habermas and D. Henrich opened a discussion about metaphysics.⁵⁵ D. Henrich thought that metaphysics is the true successor of religion by giving life an orientation. J. Habermas argued against this thesis, saying that today there is no use of metaphysics at all, because metaphysics is bound to the “*bewusstseinsphilosophische Grundfigur des Selbstbewusstseins*” and the subject (in the modern sense) of this philosophy cannot bear our modern problems. The controversy broadened (see J. Grondin, M. Lutz-Bachmann), but the notion of metaphysics presupposed has not changed. Aristotle could not be brought to intervene in this controversy at all, because in his later so-called *Metaphysics*, he neither conveys metaphysics nor life orientation – he does not even do this in the *Ethics* – nor does he make the subject (in its modern sense) the basis of being and thinking.

In conclusion, the concepts of substance and subject are not well designed to solve Aristotle’s problems.

Methodological Reflection

Met. A 1 as well as *Met. Z 1* (and 3) begin with the topic *ousia*. In both cases, *ousia* is the heading for that which is in question. The traditional reading enters an answer, namely ‘substance,’ at a moment when the word still stands for a question; Aristotle’s question “‘What is *ousia*? What is the first and one, with respect to which our speech or our use of *to be*, gets its unity?’” is transformed into an assertion. To replace a question with an answer is a methodological mistake.

When *ousia* in *Met. A 1.1* really would mean substance, then one of the remaining main questions in the *Met.* would be which substance could be the fundament of all the rest. Until recently it was standard view that *to ti en einai*, *to katholou*, *to genos*, and *to hypokeimenon* in *Met. Z 3* are ‘candidates’ for *ousia*.⁵⁶ The most fundamental *ousia* according to the standard view was said to be the ‘First Mover’

⁵⁵ J. Habermas, 1985a and 1985b; J. Habermas, 1987, 425–443; D. Henrich, 1982; id., 1986, 495–508. Cf. K. Cramer, H.-F. Fulda, R.-P. Horstmann, U. Posthast (Hrsg.), 1987; J. Grondin, 1987, 25–37. M. Lutz-Bachmann, 2002, 414–425. For further literature see E. Sonderegger, 2004.

⁵⁶ This is still Frede’s and Patzig’s understanding in their commentary on *Met. Z*.

in *Met. A* a term, we must note, never used by Aristotle. Concerning *Met. Z 3* the standard view has meanwhile changed so much that even the otherwise conservative handbook of Rapp and Corcilius, (2011, 338) speaks of ‘criteria’ instead of ‘candidates.’⁵⁷ In fact, a careful look at *Met. Z 3* shows that all these terms capture endoxa, articulated in Aristotle’s terminology, and that they form the basis for the search of criteria for being, ousia.

The Network of the Term ‘Substance’

The concept of substance forms a strand enmeshed with other basic concepts, together they establish an entangled world. This network is not the same for every world. This being the case, we ask whether or not the concept of substance belongs to the world of Aristotle. We have seen above that in some of the worlds wherein the concept of substance played a fundamental role, the other concepts of subject and existence were essential too. This nexus of substance–subject–existence is obviously not a fundamental part of the Greek world of the 4th century BCE. The concept of substance, at least in the sense of its modern interpreters, does not belong to the world of Aristotle.

Remarks on the History of the Concept of Substance

It is unlikely that any concepts, even first concepts or basic axioms, ‘fall from the sky.’ Instead, they can be said to grow out. The concept of substance too has history that may be reconstructed. Even though many would like it to be an Aristotelian invention, its history begins only after Aristotle. The period of its origin is very long and influences of very different kinds have to be taken into account, extending from Theophrastus up to the Church Fathers. Attention must be paid to the philosophical traditions of the Peripatos, the Stoa, Middle-Platonism, and Neoplatonism. Aside from these, religious lines (e. g. of Philo of Alexandria) and the latin rhetorical the-

⁵⁷ For more details, see my commentary on *Met. Z*, Sonderegger, 2012, II, 5.2. The older interpretation is still alive, see e. g. E. Berti, 2016, 72.

ory have exerted their influence. The last and decisive impulse probably emanated from the first Greek and Latin Church Fathers. These required a concept of substance in order to manage and explain theological problems like the Trinity, the person of Christ, and the existence of God. At the council of Nicaea in 325 CE, the development of this concept finds a certain dogmatic conclusion, then follows the reflection on this conclusion.

Here I can only afford to name the further stations in the history of substance. The linguistic background for the concept was the use of the Latin term *substantia* and the theory of *stasis* in the rhetoric. The Stoic concept of hypostasis had a decisive influence; indeed ‘substance’ is the correct translation of hypostasis, not of *ousia*. The Stoics identified *ousia* with their materialistic concept of hypostasis, and the result was *substantia*. Neoplatonism, later, had a more noetic understanding of hypostasis but this was hypostasized – in the modern sense of the word – and, in particular, *nous*, *psyche*, *physis*, and most especially the *One* became ‘super-things,’ so to speak. Even if the history of the origin of the concept of substance cannot be comprehensively treated of here, so much is clear that it only begins after Aristotle.

The Philosophical Type of Substance-Metaphysics Attributed to Aristotle

After these remarks about the problems which arise if Aristotle is attributed with the concept of substance I would like to ask after the type of philosophy of such a metaphysics of substance. The reconstructions of that are numerous and diverse. I, therefore, take up the main groups interested in the research on Aristotle: the historians of philosophy, the philologists, the neo-scholastics and the philosophers pure. Of course my choice of examples is to some extent arbitrary, but I hope it is nevertheless representative.

Historians and philologists seem to be the most objective of these categories, they are less interested in the content of the text than in its external conditions, its transmission, its constitution, its chronology, its historical context, its connection with

other texts etc. Nevertheless, we must not forget that even conjectures in the text are guided by assumptions about the content, and, that also behind the seemingly neutral sciences such interests are working in the background. We have learnt from hermeneutics that there is no knowledge without some background or some view of the whole *before* any particular knowledge, as well as there is no knowledge without an interest. Here we do not speak about the private interests and aims which a scholar pursues with his work such as to convince his colleagues or to win fame, money or other. It is about the impersonal interests inescapably, stemming out of the background of his tradition, his linguistic community, his society; it embraces all that which is apparently self-evident in his world, the *endoxa* as Aristotle called these, what with respect to the sciences Th. S. Kuhn has called the ‘paradigma.’ It was an illusion to believe that a knowledge is possible which is not guided by values and preconditions, not only in history and philology but even in natural science.⁵⁸ The ideals of historicism, positivism and objective science were bound to fail.

In the 19th century the study of Aristotle saw a revival, one of its results was I. Bekker’s new constitution of the text of the *Corpus Aristotelicum*, which made possible the new and intensive study of Aristotle’s work and thought. At the same time the scholastic wing reflected on its origins and tried to precipitate a renaissance. In these circles not only the study of Thomas Aquinas but also that of Aristotle was revived and remains active until today. Until the 19th century it was never doubted that Aristotle’s philosophy forms a system.⁵⁹ Only W. Jaeger’s studies showed that the systematic view of Aristotle’s philosophy is not plausible, his key argument relying on the type of text. However, the systematic view still lives, because it is possible that only the representation is unsystematic the content indeed forming a systematic whole. In his introduction to *Aristoteles, Metaphysik, Die Substanzbücher* C. Rapp writes: “Book Z presents all in all a consistent theory of substance ...:”⁶⁰

⁵⁸ See works of J. Habermas, *Erkenntnis und Interesse*, K. R. Popper, *Der Positivismusstreit in der deutschen Soziologie*, 1969; some works of P. Feyerabend and Th. S. Kuhn.

⁵⁹ In Ravaisson, 1837, vol. I, 347, a chapter is titled *Système métaphysique d’Aristote*; at several occasions E. Zeller speaks of a *System des Aristoteles*, see *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, II, 2; 78, 176, 797, Darmstadt 1963 [Leipzig 1921].

⁶⁰ *Buch Z stellt die Entfaltung einer im grossen und ganzen einheitlichen Theorie der Substanz dar ...*

while D. W. Graham has it in the title: *Aristotle's Two Systems*.⁶¹ Both say explicitly what many others implicitly think and what is the most widespread held opinion about Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.

In the second half of the 20th century a strong movement in Aristotelian research thought it possible and sensible to use Aristotelian and in general antique ideas and arguments for modern questions. That, perhaps, was an effect of existentialism. We must not forget that this too is Plato's way of philosophizing, which he showed to be exemplary through the character of the guest from Elea. Thomas Aquinas also practiced philosophy in this way. It would be a desirable approach even today, we must only consciously reflect upon our hermeneutic situation if we are to avoid anachronisms, but this current has been replaced by another, which favors neutral historical research.⁶² It seems that M. Frede has contributed significantly to that objectifying project. Those researchers have possibly tried to integrate quality and method of analytic philosophy with historical research in explaining Aristotle.

There is scarcely any philosophical, philological or historical book or article on Aristotle in the last hundred years that does not mention substance and the metaphysics of substance, even if that 'system' was reconstructed and redesigned differently by different scholars. Some treat it still as a system and a unitary theory in the modern sense, and they try to improve it. Others say that Aristotle had in mind to construe such a system but failed for different reasons. It seems that the alleged metaphysics of substance contains various claims that are not compatible with one another. It is seldom clear whether the science searched for only concerns first principles, the being *qua* being, the highest being or substance in general. Even with respect to substance Aristotle is ambiguous, it is said. First, he is reported to have said that that which underlies all determinations, i. e. the particular thing, is substance. Later he changed his mind and said that the form, the essence of the particular thing is substance. Because independence is the definitive feature of substance there must finally be one highest original substance, which fulfills this condition and which is

⁶¹ Rapp, 1996, 10; Graham, Clarendon, Oxford 1987.

⁶² See the article by M. L. Gill, "Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Reconsidered," in: *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Volume 43, Number 3, July 2005, pp. 223–241.

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the cause of all other secondary substances. That final substance is God and this is said to be the main subject of *Met. A*. Evidently, historical and philological research both find in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* a metaphysics of substance.⁶³

Even those who do not think that Aristotle aimed at the construction of a system and those who are fighting against metaphysics as a theory, suppose that Aristotle ultimately had in mind to make this assertion and to give reasons for that assertion, namely, that substance is the proper being. It is rather surprising that even philologists accept and continue to support the false translation of *ousia* with 'substance' without reservation. It is as hard to comprehend as the unchallenged repetition of the non-existent term 'First Mover.'⁶⁴ It seems that we are too much trained to do so because during centuries that was the doctrine. Such may be the general and vague frame of the standard interpretation of the *Metaphysics*, which the majority, though not all, historians of philosophy and philologists share.

In contrast to those the neo-scholastic scholars and philosophers have explicit interests guiding their choices and focuses. They do not strive to and need not to be 'objective' in the same way as historians do. But there might be a difference with the relevance of the background of a philologist, which inspires him to make this conjecture or another⁶⁵ and a professor in Rome, Leuven, Toronto or elsewhere who uses Aristotelian thoughts in order to provide a basis for Christian dogmas. A philologist could even deny that he has such interests because he is not aware of that background, but a neo-scholastic scholar has a long tradition in following interests and for him it is legitimate and even a duty incumbent upon him to do so through the encyclicals *Aeterni Patris* and *Fides et Ratio*. However, tracing the aim

⁶³ In his *Handbuch*, 123, C. Rapp says what enjoys broadest acceptance: *Bekannt ist die aristotelische Metaphysik vor allem für die Entfaltung der Ontologie als Wissenschaft des Seienden als Seienden, für die Darstellung einer philosophischen Theologie mit dem unbewegten Bewegten als göttlichem und vernünftigem Prinzip von allem sowie für die Theorie der Substanz (ousia)*.

⁶⁴ There are very few exceptions: Düring, 1966, 209; id., 1968, 253; M. Bordt, in: C. Rapp, 2011, 367, points out that this way of speaking is well established, but does not use it himself, although it is common in the other contributions; cf E. Sonderegger, 1996, 76ff; id., 2008, 96; also A. Aichele, *Ontologie des Nicht-Seienden*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009, 341, insists on the neutral form.

⁶⁵ Because even a conjecture finally has content-related reasons; a good example of this is the contribution of S. Fazzo in the *Omnibus* edited by C. Horn, 2016

of making use of Aristotelian knowledge, and not only saying what he meant, is not tantamount to discrediting that form of scholarship. It is a legitimate approach when the interest is made explicit.

For the religious wing Aristotle is to some degree a predecessor of Christian thought: he arrived at a certain point of insight about God but failed to make the last step. Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is essential for those because he offered material for the proof of the existence of God. To that degree this approach is anachronistic. The Church Fathers already began to include Aristotelian thoughts in their argumentation, another important step was made by Albertus Magnus who used the *Liber de Causis*, which he took to be an genuine Aristotelian work, to understand Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.⁶⁶ To be sure, here in Scholasticism we rediscover the earnest and existential commitment otherwise lost to the Aristotelian studies, but closely linked with claims that hardly any philosopher outside these circles would support. As philosophers we have to reflect on our opinions and on what seems to be evident and obvious. This reflection cannot however be geared towards aims and methods as presented in Church encyclicals such as that of Pope Leo, *Aeterni patris* of 4. August 1879, or that of Pope Johannes Paul II., *Fides et ratio* of 14. September 1998. If we take as authoritative the works on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* by G. Reale, De Filippo, H. Seidl and many others or the publications of the *editiones scholasticae*, then we must say that the neo-scholastic approach to Aristotle is systematic and dogmatic to a substantial extent, the discussions taking place within narrow dogmatic limits.

To what extent do modern philosophers deal with Aristotle's philosophy?⁶⁷ I. Kant deplored the state of metaphysics in his time, because metaphysics – despite the numerous attempts – never found the “sure course” of a science as e. g. logic or mathematics did, it never did more than “grope around” (*Kritik der reinen Ver-*

⁶⁶ See the draft Henryk Anzulewicz, *Der Metaphysik-Kommentar des Albertus Magnus und das Buch Lambda. Eine Einführung*.

⁶⁷ Much material in Berti Enrico, *Aristotele nel Novecento*, 1992, and Th. Gutschker, *Aristotelische Diskurse, Aristoteles in der politischen Philosophie des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Metzler, Stuttgart / Weimar 2002. The report about the impact of Aristotle's philosophy ends in C. Rapp's *Handbuch*, 2011, with the 19th century.

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nunft, B VII–XV). Kant’s conflict between the view that metaphysics belongs, as it were, to the natural equipment of mankind and the diagnosis that the metaphysics of his time is in no way adequate is notorious. As far as I know, G. W. F. Hegel is the first who pointed to the deformation of the Aristotelian philosophy by the long tradition and who tried to do something against that. In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* he says:

“A reason why it is necessary to speak about Aristotle more widely is that almost no other philosopher was treated more unjustly by thoughtless traditions, which are alive even today, ... He is said to hold opinions which are quite the contrary of his philosophy.”⁶⁸

In the same lectures he translates and comments on large parts of the chapters *Met. A* 7, 9 and 10 (162–168). We read (162): “It is the crucial point of Aristotle’s philosophy that thinking and what is thought of are the same – that the objective and the thinking (the *energeia*) are the same”;⁶⁹ and 164: “Aristotle thinks the objects and insofar as they are thoughts, they are in their verity; that is their *ousia*.”⁷⁰ The first reason to write the *Wissenschaft der Logik* that states G. W. F. Hegel, is, that metaphysics seems to disappear entirely in an educated nation, as the Germans are thought to be. He compares that nation with a “well adorned temple without a Holy of Holies.”⁷¹ His *Science of Logic* ought to compensate for the loss.

For some time Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* has not enjoyed much interest from philoso-

⁶⁸ *Ein Grund, von Aristoteles weitläufig zu sein, liegt darin, dass keinem Philosophen soviel Unrecht getan worden ist durch ganz gedankenlose Traditionen, die sich über seine Philosophie erhalten haben und noch an der Tagesordnung sind, ... Man schreibt ihm Ansichten zu, die gerade das Entgegengesetzte seiner Philosophie sind; see Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie, II, Theorie Werkausgabe Bd. 19, 133.*

⁶⁹ *Das Hauptmoment in der Aristotelischen Philosophie ist, dass das Denken und das Gedachte eins ist, – dass das Objektive und das Denken (die Energie) ein und dasselbe ist*

⁷⁰ *Aristoteles denkt die Gegenstände, und indem sie als Gedanken sind, sind sie in ihrer Wahrheit; das ist ihre οὐσία.*

⁷¹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, Erster Band, Vorrede, *Dasjenige, was vor diesem Zeitraum Metaphysik hiess, ist, sozusagen, mit Stumpf und Stiel ausgerottet worden...* (p. 3); *...so schien das sonderbare Schauspiel herbeigeführt zu werden, ein gebildetes Volk ohne Metaphysik zu sehen, – wie einen sonst mannigfaltig ausgeschmückten Tempel ohne Allerheiligstes; ... Ganz so schlimm als der Metaphysik ist es der Logik nicht ergangen* (p. 4), ed. Lasson. – “...there was seen the strange spectacle of a cultured nation without metaphysics – like a temple richly ornamented in other respects but without a holy of holies;” this page copyright © 2001 Blackmask Online.

phers. Only few deal with it or make use of it to any great extent (apart from the above mentioned exceptions). What is more, fewer and fewer philosophers are able to read the text in Greek. Because the (otherwise useful) translations of, say J. Tricot, G. Reale, D. Ross or others, add the word 'God' in the text without marking that addition and they write numerous words in capitals as *le Bien* or *Egli*, which at every instance mean God. They give the false impression that in *Met. A* Aristotle is speaking all the time about God. M. Heidegger shows in § 6. *Die Aufgabe einer Destruktion der Geschichte der Ontologie* in his *Sein und Zeit*, that it is necessary to reflect on some seemingly self-evident ideas and convictions which are due to the reception of Aristotelian thinking mainly in the Latin Middle Ages, which have entered the self-conception in our everyday life. How it was received and assimilated had a decisive impact on our *überkommene Daseinsauslegung* ("the inherited understanding of *Dasein*"; 20). Its very extent, its power, its content are scarcely noticeable today, only by reflection can we see it, therefore "*We need to reduce the traditional stock of the ancient ontology to the original experience.*"⁷² In order to get at the original intention of *Met. A* we must reverse what was deformed by entering in an other world and covered by other interests during the long time of reception, as we enter a different world. A particularly clear example of that process is that it is generally accepted that *ousia* means substance.

P.F. Strawson differentiated between 'descriptive metaphysics' and 'revisionary metaphysics' in the first phrase of his Introduction to *Individuals*, 1959, :

Metaphysics has been often revisionary, and less often descriptive. Descriptive metaphysics is content to describe the actual structure of our thought about the world, revisionary metaphysics is concerned to produce a better structure.

What he describes as descriptive metaphysics is exactly what Aristotle did with his analysis of and reflection on the *endoxa*, accordingly he mentions Aristotle and I. Kant as examples of descriptive metaphysics without going into any further details. This distinction is comparable with that between an assertive philosophy and a re-

⁷² *Diese Aufgabe verstehen wir als ...Destruktion des überlieferten Bestandes der antiken Ontologie auf die ursprünglichen Erfahrungen* (22).

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flecting philosophy, which does not assert the results of its reflection.⁷³ H. Putnam notes in the Introduction to *Words & Life* with respect to the historical parts of the book where Aristotle's philosophy too is one of the subjects:⁷⁴

I am convinced that the history of philosophy is not only a history of gaining insights – and I do think philosophers gain insights – but also a history of neglecting, and even actively repressing, previously gained insights.

Too many modern philosophers simply accept the presented findings and interpretations in the modern histories of philosophy and the point of view of modern research. Thus the 'substance' and the 'Unmoved Mover' will persist for a very long time even if the theological consequences are without any impact for anyone except the mentioned dogmatically bound institutions. There are not many scholars who think that Aristotle had speculative intentions because these come into sight only after having removed the sediments of the tradition. But almost all think that Aristotle has construed a metaphysics, even if a scholar as eminent as J. Barnes, 1995, 67, 108, exceptionally concludes his presentation of the Aristotelian *Metaphysics* with the words: that "there is (in a sense) no such thing as Aristotelian metaphysics." He adds that this is mainly due to the fact that in that book metaphysics is meant to cover four subjects too different to be compatible with each other. M. Burnyeat, 2001, has tried to avoid that inconsistency by taking the four 'subjects' as four starting points for one and same question: Which are the ousiai of the sensible ousiai? St. Menn too argues in his draft to the *Met.* for a unity in that book, even for Aristotle as only redactor. Indeed, though some details do not match up well it seems that the overall idea is consistent; some inconsistencies are due to the type of text, others to the revisions made over many years, many to the fact that the text was not intended to be published, and, as seems plausible (*pace* Menn), to the possible fact that the book as it now stands was put together by a later redactor.

But in what does its unity consist? There is M. Burnyeat's position on this, another that by St. Menn, but there are many further possibilities (not all of these views are

⁷³ Elsewhere I have called it '*unbehauptendes Denken*,' thinking without assertion.

⁷⁴ J. Conant (ed.), Harvard, Cambridge Mass., 1994, VI.

dogmatic, which I will ignore here anyway). For one of these possibilities especially I would plead: the unity of the *Met.* consists in the consequent focus on the question about being (*Frage nach dem Sein*). This will set out from different starting points, certainly, just as M. Burnyeat argued. In the whole of the *Metaphysics* book Λ is an early speculative draft, a program, which is executed in detail in $ZH\Theta$. Otherwise the text contains introductions (A, B), historical tests, i. e. Aristotle checks other programs for the same question in many places, some of them called doxographies, one especially with respect to Plato in MN ; there is also a list of issues (B), a vocabulary (Δ), an outline (E), a treatise about the question how this knowledge sought after may be uniform.

Different from the standard interpretation I take *ousia* to be the heading of a very global question and not an answer (especially not as substance). What I mean should not be understood as aporetic thinking as some have insinuated. Aporetic thinking is asserting something. In contrast, my aim is to show how Aristotle abstains from assertions, even from the assertion of the results of the analysis, at least as concerns the core of his thinking. To give the results of the analysis is not to assert the $DOXA$ as if it were the final truth. The un-assertive thinking remains conscious of the fact that it is not possible to leave its $DOXA$ -world. But, within any such world, we are able to differentiate very well between truth and error.

If *ousia* is the heading for the question about being then it can not be translated with substance, it must be understood in the many ways Aristotle registers. At the core of Aristotle's reflection is being, *Sein*, just as it has been the theme beginning with Parmenides and mediated by Plato's *Sophist*. In the *Metaphysics* this question does, of course, take many ramifications. That question includes one additional moment not addressed by Aristotle, one not even made explicit by Plato. Instead, Plato dramatized that moment in the character of the guest from Elea. The question about being is a question which is questioning the questioner himself.

The question forces him to reflect on the basic opinions of his world.

2.2. *Met. A* as Theology

The standard interpretation finds in *Met. A* a theology, in that sense that Aristotle wants to prove that god is the first substance, that he exists, and that he is essentially determined as *noesis noeseos* and *actus purus*.⁷⁵ Thus the standard interpretation moves towards an onto-theology, because the supposition of a first being involves the supposition of god.

The dispute between F. Brentano and E. Zeller is no longer ongoing; nevertheless, it is very instructive for understanding the theological use of *Met. A* in the reception. Their quarrel was about the origin of the human soul. As F. Brentano saw it, we must suppose that Aristotle conceived his God as the creator of the soul. E. Zeller objected that Aristotle wanted to say that the human mind is as eternal as the world, and neither of them can be created *ad hoc*. The debate between F. Brentano and E. Zeller, along with F. K. A. Schwegler, H. Bonitz, T. Gomperz and the other opponents against which F. Brentano engaged, presupposes a common frame: that there is a theology at stake in *Met. A*, that is, God plays a role and is the primary topic of *A*. The parties in this dispute share the common conviction that the text can correctly serve as an intellectual basis for a discussion of Christian themes. Even today it is a basic assumption of Aristotelian scholarship that *Met.* permits the very presupposition that God's existence can be proven.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ For the history of the term 'Theology' see the bibliography by O. Bayer, A. Peters, 1998, 1085; c.f. the remarks of A.-J. Festugière, 1949; for earlier concepts of Theology see W. Jaeger, 1947, and D. Babut, 1974.

⁷⁶ See H. Flashar, 1983, 378; W. Cramer, 1967; J. Lensik, 1991. D. Fonfara, 2003, 180, repeats that *A* 6 contains a proof of the existence of God. – Concerning the ontological proof of God's existence in general: D. Henrich, 1960; J. Rohls, 1987; M. Olivetti, 1990; F. Ricken, 1991; W. Röd, 1992; L. Herrschaft, 1993, 461–476; R. Löw, 1994; G. Oppy, 1995; A. W. Kucera, 1995; the proof of K. Gödel based on modal logic is rarely noticed and appreciated: 1995, 403. See also A. Plantinga, 1968; id., 1974 and 1975; to Anselm H. Weidemann, 2004, 1–20; once more he tries to show that the 'proof' of Anselm does not work. After so many 'proofs' of the insufficiency of the proof, it is time to ask whether Anselm's *Proslogion* is something other than an inadequate proof, especially as the form of the text stands near the meditations of Anselm. A review of the literature on *Met. A* from 2008 to 2013 (without mention of the present book, German edition 2008, which alone plays the role of the opposition) by Tobias Dangel, 2014, shows how evident the theological content is for the standard interpretation; even more reactionary are the *New Essays*, edited by C. Horn 2016.

In the introduction (p. 3) C. Horn gives seven reasons why *Met. A* as a matter of fact must be

Meanwhile we find timid objections.⁷⁷ M. Frede stresses in his introduction (2000) that *Met. A* does not pursue theological aims. Also, B. Botter (2005) supports the non-theological interpretation, pointing out that the term ‘god’ in the text only functions to designate a high grade of perfection. E. Berti (2008) dissociates his position from the theological interpretation, but later returns to it (2016). For E. J. García de la Garza (2011), the non-theological reading seems to be so obvious that he almost forgoes giving arguments against the standard interpretation. Silvia Fazzo, in the introduction of her commentary (2014), insists on the need to read the text anew and without bias. Considered more precisely, the different claims, that *Met. A* contains Aristotle’s theology are products of the history of the reception of the text, they are

regarded as a theological work.

Unfortunately they work only for those already convinced: ad 1. “Aristotle denominates the Prime Mover, the noetic principle of the universe, explicitly as ‘God (Λ 7, 1072b30)’”: The term ‘Prime’ or ‘Unmoved Mover’ is never used by Aristotle.

He uses only the neutral form, τὸ πρῶτον κινουῦν, never the masculine form ὁ πρῶτος κινουῦς. The moving cause is no more than one of the four causes. The cited place 1072b30 is not an argument but a presentation of common opinion.

ad 2. “He provides an argument for the existence of this God (6, 1071b12–22): in 1071b12–22 there is no mention of God, and the text contains in no way a proof of the existence of God; it is about the origin of movement which must be unmoved, and that the being (*Sein*) of this origin is actuality; the term God appears later, and in function of an example, 1072b23;

ad 3. “he develops an extensive list of ‘divine attributes’”: Horn lists ‘divine attributes’: they are citations from Parmenides with whom his own question is linked;

ad 4. “he explains how God, as an unmoved entity, moves the celestial bodies”: Horn cannot cite any place for his claim that his ‘Unmoved Mover’ moves the celestial bodies;

ad 5. “he describes the way of life lead by God (7, 1072b13–30)”: with the ‘way of life lead by God’ Aristotle cites his contemporaries’ opinion concerning Gods, he aims to give a point of reference for the understanding of *to be*;

ad 6. “he specifies the activity practised by God, i. e. thinking of his thinking (9, 1074b28–35)”: Horn’s citation is incorrect because not God but the nous is the subject of ‘thinking of *his* thinking’ in 1074b28–35;

ad 7. “he characterizes the universe as a well-ordered unity structured by God (10, 1075a11–25)”: his last citation, 1075a11–25, concerns order, not the claim that God made it. All of these ‘arguments’ are pious hopes.

⁷⁷ Including relatively new ones by H. Lang, 1993; R. Bodéüs, 1992.

Especially notable is H. Lang, 1993, 258, which points out that in chapters 9 and 10 there is simply no mention of God. If you want to interpret these as theology, you must presuppose this theme. Likewise, that chapters 1–5 are the preparation for this theology remains an assumption.

F. Baghdassarian, 2019, argues against the theological interpretation but retains the expression “Premier Moteur” nevertheless. L. Judson, 2019, favors the understanding as theology.

A. Ritschl, 1888, wants to separate theology and metaphysics on substantive grounds; P. Natorp, 1888, vehemently argues against the interpretation of *Met. A* as theology, but in vain.

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not supported by the text.

It is by no means about the pros and cons of the proofs of the existence of god. Thus it is irrelevant if some arguments and interpretations differ from one another, or whether they are conclusive or not. Instead, we must ask whether it is correct to take *Met. A* as a basis for proofs of the existence of god or for any other theological considerations. I do not contest that in some way or other Aristotle refers to gods, but I will dispute the value of the theological implications of these references. It seems that over the centuries this text was no longer really considered, because everybody read it from a theological point of view. Therefore we need to renew the old quarrel about it. Hence our theme here is not whether god acts in *Met. A* in this way or another, whether he must be thought of as a creator or not, whether he is *causa efficiens* or *causa finalis*, it is not about these or similar questions of traditional research. My aim is to call into question the suppositions that *Met. A* has anything to do with theology and that god has an important role to play in this text. Since there are some scholars who agree so far, I would also like to deny that this theology can be replaced by a metaphysics of the substance. Rather, I propose a reading of *Met. A* as a speculative sketch about the meaning of being (*ousia*, *Sein*). Sadly, this reading does not yet have followers, but, possibly that will change.

The standard theological interpretation of *Met. A* is presented in several variants. In the stronger form, it is said that the book contains one or more proofs of the existence of God.⁷⁸ Then we find the weaker thesis that a proof can be drawn from the material of *Met. A*.⁷⁹ Further, the class of scholars who take Aristotle's proofs to be inadequate or false also understand the text as theological.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ So e. g. G. Reale, 1993, *capitolo sesto*; J. G. De Filippo, 1994; earlier, W. D. Ross, 1924, CXXX–CLIV; K. Gloy, 1983; H. P. Cunningham, 1991; an overview on the literature concerning the ontological proof by J. Rohls, 1987; G. Oppy, 1995; further literature by H. J. Krämer, 1969; W. Röd, 1992. Adam Drozdek, 2007, 164, not only maintains that *Physics* and *Met. A* give proofs of the existence of God, but even contends that Plato and Aristotle prepared the ground for Christianity with their philosophy and theology. M. Bordt adds that Plato at least connected the metaphysical question with the theological one (2006 and 2011).

⁷⁹ H. Seidl, 1982, S. XXIV, says that the main sources of the proofs of Thomas Aquinas are *Physics* VII–VIII and *Metaphysics* II and XII.

⁸⁰ See e. g. H. Weidemann, 2004, 1–20.

Indeed we have to admit that the advocates of the standard interpretation are in old and good company. Some date this interpretation back to Theophrastus; although this is probably incorrect, at least if his *Metaphysics* is not the late work they suppose.⁸¹ We find sure signs of the theological interpretation in Epicurus,⁸² Cicero,⁸³ in the Prooemium of Ptolemy's *Syntaxis*, in the texts of the Church Fathers,⁸⁴ and in texts of the Middle-Platonic and Neo-Platonic periods.⁸⁵ The commentary on *Met. A* by Pseudo-Alexander⁸⁶ is absolutely clear in its theological orientation. Further, we can trace this theological lineage through the Middle Ages up to modern times without interruption. The most prominent citation of the text is by G. W. F. Hegel, who concludes his *Encyclopaedie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* with some phrases of *Met. A* in Greek without any comment (*Met. A* 1072b18–30). Concerning his concept of the onto-theological tendency of metaphysics, M. Heidegger primarily refers to G. W. F. Hegel; nevertheless much of what he says is applicable to *Met. A* too. Our contemporary historiography of philosophy speaks about Aristotle's alleged theology no less than those in the 19th century did.⁸⁷ Handbooks and anthologies referring to the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle display remnants of all this.⁸⁸ Several participants of the *Symposium Aristotelicum*

⁸¹ Cf. J. Owens, 1963, 43ff., esp. 49; L. Routila, 1969, 15; also of course G. Reale, 1994, 316; lit. to the *Metaphysics* of Theophrastus in the edition of A. Laks, G. W. Most (Budé) as well as in D. Gutas, 2010.

⁸² A. A. Long, D. N. Sedley, 1987, Epicurus 13, J.

⁸³ Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes* I, 28, 70 *possumusne dubitare quin eis praesit aliquis vel effector, si haec nata sunt, ut Platoni videtur, vel si semper fuerunt, ut Aristoteli placet, moderator tanti operis et muneris?*

⁸⁴ Minucius Felix, *Octavius* XIX 9, says: *Aristoteles variat et adsignat tamen unam potestatem: nam interim mentem, mundum interim deum dicit, interim mundo deum praeficit [...]*; Tertullianus comments in a similar way, and later Lactantius and Augustinus.

⁸⁵ Middle-platonists Apuleius, *De deo Socratis*, 2, *De dogmate Platonis*; for Albinus, Atticus cf. J. Whittaker, 1990; T. Göransson, 1995; B. Reis, 1999. Concerning Plotinus: A. H. Armstrong, 1970; D. O'Meara, 1993. – The success of the Neoplatonic *Theologia Aristotelis* is most instructive for appreciating the impact of the reception of *A*.

⁸⁶ See the extensive and profound study of M. Di Giovanni and O. Primavesi in: C. Horn, 2016, 11–66.

⁸⁷ Beginning with E. Zeller, 1963, II 2, 359–384 („Dualistischer Theismus“), though he had still the neutral title „Das erste Bewegende,“ then the old and the new Überweg (H. Flashar, 1983, 378–380), W. K. C. Guthrie, Vol. Six, 1981, Chapt. XIII, until A. Graeser, in W. Röd (ed.), *History of Philosophy*, vol. II, 1993, 241–243.

⁸⁸ A. Bausola, G. Reale, 1994, 589–609; in addition the bibliography of R. Radice and R. Davies concerning the *Met.* von Aristoteles, 1997 (lit. until 1994, later in selection); a fine overview on the

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on *Met. A* deliberately placed themselves in this tradition. The last statement on this case (see C. Horn, 2016) is even narrower in view. But other publications on Aristotle and his *Metaphysics* speak in the same tenor.⁸⁹ And even if J. Owens designates *Met. A* a “study of Entity,”⁹⁰ this does not contradict the theological reading, for this is just the name for theology, as he says in his preface:

[...] the whole of the *Metaphysics*... contains the genuine Aristotelian science of Being qua Being, a science that treats universally of all Beings. But this science is not an ontology. It has as its subject a definite nature. It is the science of separate Entity, a theology. (26)

Already P. Merlan understood *ens qua ens* this way. For J. Owens, Theophrastus is a proof of the theological reading of Aristotle’s *Met. A*.⁹¹ So he continues the tradition of interpreting ‘first philosophy’ as theology which has lasted from the Greek commentators and the Church Fathers up to today. Besides this, he seeks to prove that Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* is in the background of the thinking of the Middle Ages in general.⁹² The 19th century shares those convictions.⁹³ There are many other examples in the 20th century. The theological content is not called into question by W. Jaeger.⁹⁴ Instead, his questions concern the changes in the theology

numerous anthologies, commemorative publications etc. in A. Bausola, G. Reale, 1994, and in J. Barnes, 1995, 303–305. C. Rapp, 1996 and Rapp / Corcilius 2011; at last the contributions in the *Symposium Aristotelicum* on *Met. A*, from August 1996 in: Frede, 2000, and the *New Essays*, 2016, edited by C. Horn.

⁸⁹ E. g. the older monumental presentation of I. Düring, 1966, but no less the new edited by J. Barnes, 1995, 104, cf. 355, in which we read: “Theology is the subject of part of Book Lambda.”

A chronologically arranged overview of the most important literature on the *Met.* in the 20th century is made by A. Bausola, G. Reale, 1994, 548–589; cf. J. Barnes, 1995, 345–357, as well as the bibliography of R. Radice, R. Davies, 1997. Further literature on *Met. A* we find esp. in E. J. García de la Garza, 2011, and C. Horn, 2016, and the new commentaries by F. Baghdassarian and L. Judson.

⁹⁰ J. Owens, 1963, 543: “<*Met. A*> is a study of Entity, first in sensible Entity and then in immobile Entity. But it shows no interest in setting up a science of separate Entity that treats universally of all Beings. It is content with studying separate Entity in itself and as the final cause of all sensible Entities and of all movements.”

⁹¹ J. Owens, 1963, 43f., cf. G. Reale, 1994, 316, in the same sense.

⁹² J. Owens, 1963, 49, with reference to P. Natorp, 1888, 63f.; cf. A. Zimmermann 1965 and 1998.

⁹³ F. K. A. Schwegler, 1847, IV, 35: “*Die einzige wahrhafte ουσία, das wahre πρώτως καὶ ἀπλῶς ὄν ist die Gottheit*,” H. Bonitz, 1849, 494: *Simum principium movens deus est, aeterno actu se ipsum cogitans*, and E. Zeller, see above, 87, fn. 13; cf. J. Owens, 1963, 50f.

⁹⁴ W. Jaeger, 1912, 122–130, and 1923, 366ff.

over the course of Aristotle's development, and how theology fits his system, that is, whether *Met. A* belongs to the period when Aristotle was closer to or further from Plato. For W. D. Ross, *Met. A* is "the coping-stone of the *Metaphysics*," and he develops a cosmological proof out from the text, in this proof God plays the role of a *causa efficiens*.⁹⁵ Even for P. Aubenque (1962), who defends an aporetic interpretation, theology plays the role of a *Science retrouvée* (in the last chapter *Conclusion*), although only a negative one. His argument runs like this: ontology is compelled to put forward a double question (308), because the problem too is a double one: on the one side, the question whether our use of *to be* has a unity, on the other side, if there are further ousiai beside the perceptible ousiai (following *Met. B* 1, 995b14). What else than God could provide a unity to our use of *to be*, as well as guarantee the being of non-perceptible essences? Thus the question about god is necessary. Very typical are the considerations of G. Reale.⁹⁶ If the question about being involves the question of non-perceptible substances, namely substances that are "eternal, unmoved, and separate from the perceptible substances," then the question about being transforms to the question of whether there is a first being; therefore ontology and theology are inseparable. The opening phrase of his book on Aristotle reads like this: "*A è il libro 'teologico' per eccellenza*," and he repeats this phrase in his *Saggio introduttivo* to the *Metaphysics*.⁹⁷ H. J. Krämer opens his article "Grundfragen der aristotelischen Theologie" (1969) saying: *Die Theologie des Buchs Lambda der aristotelischen Metaphysik [...]* L. Routila tries to show that *Met. A* develops the programme of *Met. E* but that it unfortunately does not satisfy the expectations (1969, 129). In this respect, historians speak the same language as the scholastics. The anthology *La question de dieu selon Aristote et Hegel* (Paris 1991), edited by T. De Koninck and G. Planty-Bonjour can be regarded as representative. The contributions carry out by many different aspects of the programme of the title: whether and how the question of god is comparable in the cases of Aristotle and G. W. F. Hegel. Beside contributions on the core of the Aristotelian 'theology,' the famous

⁹⁵ W. D. Ross, 1924, I, CXXX.

⁹⁶ G. Reale, 1994, 272.

⁹⁷ G. Reale, 1994, 259; and G. Reale 1993, I, 62; G. Reale's remarks on the proof of the existence of God in *Met. A*: I 139–152 and III, 575ff., = further explanations to *Met. A* 6.

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phrase “thinking of thinking,” this volume contains papers on onto-theology and the god of the philosophers in general. The omnibus volume of the XIV. *Symposium Aristotelicum* on *Met. A* (ed. 2000) was eagerly awaited, but unfortunately it didn’t change anything of the style of the standard interpretation, and the aforementioned *New Essays*, 2016, reinforces even further the traditional frame. It looks as if the allowed questions in this field are decided in advance. D. W. Graham writes that God is only a subordinate theme; nevertheless he sees theology as the core of *Met. A*.⁹⁸ Like F. Brentano,⁹⁹ G. Reale, and many others K. Gloy thinks that *Met. A* contains the master plan and the coronation of Aristotle’s system.¹⁰⁰ The peak of this system is noesis noeseos, but here K. Gloy gives more importance to the subjective side than K. Oehler did (1973). Yet, because both identify the peak with God, the main target of *Met. A* remains theological.

A. Ritschl and P. Natorp are among the first to reject the theological reading of *Met. A*.¹⁰¹ A. Ritschl wanted to separate the theological from the metaphysical approach to the knowledge of god. Therefore he said that proofs of the existence of God only lead to the assertion of a supreme metaphysical principle which cannot be identified with the Christian God. P. Natorp refuses the theological interpretation of *Met. A* because he rightly points out that in this book there is no theology at all. Neither of them prevailed. One of the reasons their warnings were disregarded may be that many scholars had an interest or even the duty to prepare Aristotelian thought to ground central Christian dogmas. So the theological interpretation and its consequences become convictions, contents of beliefs, which serve more ways of living of believers than systematical or historical purposes.¹⁰² In this case it is much easier to find what one is looking for.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ D. W. Graham, 1987, 266; Graham is one example of the intensive American research on Aristotle.

⁹⁹ F. Brentano, 1986, 219.

¹⁰⁰ K. Gloy, 1983, 515; G. Reale, 1993, I, 181, designates *Met. A* as *il libro che risolve il problema dei problemi della metafisica aristotelica*. Its theology is the coronation of the Aristotelian system (1993, I, 64–65).

¹⁰¹ A. Ritschl, 1888; P. Natorp, 1888.

¹⁰² See the *Epistula encyclica de Philosophia christiana ad mentam sancti Thomae Aquinatis Doctoris Angelici in scholis catholicis instauranda*, 14. sept. 1998 and its predecessors.

¹⁰³ How far some go one can see e. g. in one of the last texts of Michael Pakaluk, Catholic University of America: “Aristotle on God as Creator,” Meeting of the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas, June

2.2.1. The Content of this Theology

Thus there is a major consensus that *Met. A* contains Aristotle's theology.¹⁰⁴ But just at this point the unanimity ends. There is controversy over Aristotle's concept of God, how he proves God's existence, the possibility of such proofs in general, and, finally it is disputed, whether a proof of God's existence has an effect or not on the belief. The supposed theological content of the text is self-contradictory; thus differences remain about the exact content of Aristotle's theology. Above all, the status of theology in the whole of knowledge remains unclear. Theology should be a fundamental discipline; but Aristotle typically calls his discipline 'the searched knowledge' or 'first philosophy' in the *Met.* The term *θεολογία* or *θεολογική <ἐπιστήμη>* does not occur in *Met. A*, but only in *Met. E* 1 (and *K* 7) and the *θεόλογοι* mentioned in *Met. A* serve to illustrate an opposing position.

Many think that in *Met. A* there is a proof *ex parte motus*, as e. g. W. D. Ross, and that the 'First Mover' is God because he is nous.¹⁰⁵ But J. G. De Filippo says, that Aristotle means that a pursued and loved thing cannot be the eternal ground of the world and movement, because it is a mere intentional object; therefore the cause of

2017, Vatican City; here M. Pakaluk mingles without any hesitation Aristotle, St. Thomas and an encyclical of Pope Francis.

¹⁰⁴ See the literature cited above, fn. 76. Thomas Aquinas serves as the model for the use of Aristotelian arguments in favour of the Christian faith; also in modern presentations of Christian dogmatism, the old patterns of argumentation are used partly as contrast, partly for confirmation. Examples: A. Ritschl, 1888, P. Tillich, 1956, K. Barth, 1958, id., 1975, W. Pannenberg, 1988. A very useful summary is given by T. De Koninck, 1991, 69ff., he arranges the literature in six groups:

a) the closure of metaphysics in general with G. W. F. Hegel (the end of the *Encyclopaedie*); see N. Hartmann, 1955–1958, II, 214–252 ("Aristoteles und Hegel"); cf. W. Wieland, 1970, 35, fn. 18);

b) "self-reflexion": A. N. Whitehead, 1978; H.-G. Gadamer, K. Oehler; c) concerning noesis noeseos: For what reason such a Narcissus? E. Zeller, (repr.) 1963; W. D. Ross, 1914;

d) *intelligendo se intelligit omnia* (Thomas Aquinas, in *Met.* XII, lect. 11, n. 2614): Alexander of Aphrodisias, I. Düring, Themistius, Maimonides, Thomas Aquinas, Trendelenburg, F. Brentano (cf. W. K. C. Guthrie VI, 261, Anm.);

e) finally, the position of T. De Koninck himself: noesis noeseos is neither pure self-reflexion nor a mere logical relation, but is the activity of highest level (150) which nevertheless avoids plurality and movement in god;

f) P. Gohlke, 1933, 69: *Met. A* proves that Aristotle developed "from materialism to idealism." Also H. von Arnim, 1931, and M. Wundt, 1953, 58, think that the "Unmoved Mover" is a "late discovery."

¹⁰⁵ W. D. Ross, 1924, I, CXLI. – Cf. J. Rohls, 1987, 15.

the actual eternal movement must be an intelligible object, that exists independently of the movement and reality caused by it (1994, 402–3). But even that does not suffice to show that the ‘First Mover’ is identical to God, De Filippo adds. As the last step we need the insight that “The First Mover is not only an object of thinking but he is itself the intellect who thinks this object.” Insofar as he thinks he is living; only the function of life transforms the thinking nous into the ‘First Mover’ and God.

For some scholars it is the main point of the theological interpretation that the action of the ‘First Mover’ is noesis noeseos. This form of thinking is said to be the pinnacle either of Aristotle’s system (D. Ross, K. Gloy) or of all ancient philosophy (K. Oehler). There are a variety of proposals for the content of God’s thinking of thinking, from absolutely nothing to the whole world. It depends on what a given reader takes to be divine. Following K. Oehler the being of the ‘Unmoved Mover’ is the thinking of thinking,¹⁰⁶ in which the divine nous thinks nothing other than himself, because – in the Greek antiquity – thinking cannot be without an object:

In contrast to modern thought, ancient thought does not understand itself from self-thinking, from the free spontaneity of the self and its autonomous, sovereign activity, but from being thought of.¹⁰⁷

K. Gloy, sees four proofs in the text, but supposes that their conclusiveness must be put in doubt (1983, 527); the mere postulate that the ‘Unmoved Mover’ *ist für sich* is not enough for a proof of existence (542). Some identify the ‘First Mover’ with *prote ousia*, which can be understood either as a single substance or as a range of beings.¹⁰⁸ *Prote ousia*, understood as a single substance, was declared as the traditional personal God or other religious manifestations, but also as *sich selbst tragendes Tun*, which does not need another subject.¹⁰⁹ But it seems that such claims

¹⁰⁶ This is an early form of pure reflection as K. Oehler, 1973, 54–59, thinks; cf. on this theme H.-G. Gadamer, 1966.

¹⁰⁷ *Im Unterschied zum neuzeitlichen Denken versteht sich das antike Denken nicht vom Sichselbstdenken, von der freien Spontaneität des Selbst und seiner autonomen, souveränen Aktivität her, sondern vom Gedachtwerden.*

¹⁰⁸ F. Inciarte, 1994, 19, and his tradition; H. J. Krämer, 1969, 369f. For quite another understanding of *prote ousia* see E. Sonderegger, 2012, *passim*.

¹⁰⁹ F. Inciarte, 1994, 20f; cf. W. K. C. Guthrie, 1981, VI, 262, “God, however, as the perfect being, is

are rather evocations than arguments. T. Irwin, saying that “the study of being qua being [...] requires the study of substance” (1988, 171), and being convinced that the question about being as being is a question about a certain class of beings (544, n. 42) repeats the reification (*Vergegenständlichung*) widespread in metaphysical literature. In his argument points of view are transformed into things. Through a Neoplatonic interpretation, P. Merlan came to the conclusion that being as being means the highest sphere of beings, thus God. Further, he takes the *Met.* of Aristotle as the theological part of the *Metaphysica specialis*. A. N. Whitehead, in *Process and Reality*, counters that it was false to think of God as a simple substance because god is itself becoming, a process.¹¹⁰

While some adopt a positive stance towards Aristotle’s work in theology,¹¹¹ others are annoyed that Aristotle wasted his time with such a desperate project – but both share the supposition that theology is the content of *Met. A*. To his remark “...a cruel critic will urge that it [Aristotle’s theology] is composed of five parts bad argument and five parts nonsense” J. Barnes adds, that he had to fear to lose his friends if he would admit *in propria persona* that “much of Zeta and Eta is rather good, and most of Lambda is embarrassingly bad” (1995, 108). Of course J. Barnes would simply be right – if theology were really at stake.

It is my goal to show that, in this text, there is no such thing as theology and that it does not contain such nonsense. The alleged theology is no more than an effect of the reception of the text, a tradition which is exceptionally forceful, indeed up to today, but *sine fundamento in scriptis*. Some may be afraid “to lose the aura,” but groundlessly.¹¹² If we lose heavyweights like substance, theology etc. we are paid back by the gain of more original questions.

pure actuality.”

¹¹⁰ A. N. Whitehead, 1979, 157f.; Part V, Chapter II; p. 342 he cites the ‘Unmoved Mover’: p. 615 *Met. A*, 1072a23–32.

¹¹¹ So especially with the neo-scholastic wing (e.g. J. Owens, G. Reale, H. Seidl etc.) but also the historical orientated (e.g. H. Flashar, K. Oehler), the contributors to the *Symposium Aristotelicum* on *Met. A*, the participants on the conference of the Karl und Gertrud-Abel Stiftung, Bonn, the contributions of which are edited by Chr. Horn, 2016, under the title *New Essays*. In the obituary on K. Abel W. Kullmann had praised his “*von den Eltern überkommene christliche Einstellung*.”

¹¹² A. Etienne, in the review of R. Bodéüs, 1995, 166.

R. Bodéüs (1992) and H. Lang (1993) have shown us that a theology in Aristotle's sense would not be a science of gods anyway.¹¹³ Both emphasize that the explicit theme of *Met. A* is *ousia*. Unfortunately, H. Lang understands *ousia* as substance in line with the tradition, so sooner or later we come back to theology. It would be an illusion to think that other authors such as J. Owens, who strengthens the *ousia*-theme share our non-theological reading, because for them the *ousia* is finally the divine *ousia*.

P. Natorp, (1888) is the most important (but not the only) predecessor of my effort to show the non-theological side of *Met. A*. Already in the Middle Ages there was a discussion about the possible implications of a theological use of the text. Avicenna says in his autobiography that he was not able to understand Aristotle's *Metaphysics* before he read the interpretation of Alfarabi, that Aristotle's book had nothing to do with theology.¹¹⁴ At the same time as P. Natorp, A. Ritschl also fended off the mixing of the two concepts, and before him so did W. Herrmann, (1876) who rightly favoured a concept of God based on historical revelation more than on Aristotle's text. Even M. Lutz-Bachmann (1988) adduced arguments against the opinion that God is the theme of *Met.*, and the research of B. Botter (2005) about the use of the words 'god' and 'divine' confirms very well the non-theological sense of these words in *Met. A*.

2.2.2. **Onto-Theologie**

The controversy over whether Aristotle's first philosophy is ontology or theology has lasted a long time, without any definitive result. Some considered the systematic side of the question, some focused on *Met. E 1*. The idea of onto-theology was a way to avoid the dilemma of the apparently contradictory conception of first philosophy as pursuing the question about being as being (insofar it is ontology) and as pursuing question about the first being (insofar it is theology). Onto-theology made it possible to escape the ambiguity and to transform 'either A or B' into 'A

¹¹³ R. Bodéüs, 1992, 334.

¹¹⁴ Cf. D. Gutas, 1988, 238ff.

as well as B.' W. Stegmaier says that L. Feuerbach was the first to use the concept of onto-theology.¹¹⁵ But Kant, *KrV* B 660, already used the term in the paragraph “*Kritik aller Theologie aus spekulativen Prinzipien der Vernunft*” in the course of the classification of theology in general. By this term he identifies the transcendental theology which “thinks to recognize its existence <sc. the existence of the original being> by means of mere concepts without any experience [...]”¹¹⁶ It seems that Kant used the term rather incidentally – either way, it plays no role in the *KrV* subsequently. The Kantian sense of onto-theology includes the proofs of the existence of God, especially the ontological proofs.

M. Heidegger understands the proofs of the existence of God in a narrower sense. Metaphysics in general, insofar as it supposes a first being and substance, searches for proofs of its existence, and connects the concept of the first substance with that of the cause. So the question about being necessarily leads to the question about God. In this sense onto-theology existed already *avant la lettre*. So, text VIII of the *Philosophische Abhandlungen* of Leibniz also exhibits an onto-theology.¹¹⁷ According to Leibniz from the principle *quod nihil fiat sine ratione [...]* follows the *ens necessarium* as *ultima ratio rerum*, which to name “God” is a mere formality. Of course, some tried to trace back the concept of onto-theology to Aristotle, while P. Aubenque stood up against this claim (1991). But only with M. Heidegger does the term come into general use.¹¹⁸

Since then, many books and articles on this topic are published, partly with respect to the contradictory statements in *Met. E* 1.¹¹⁹ They offer different solutions for

¹¹⁵ W. Stegmaier, 1977, 13, fn. 9. – L. Feuerbach, 1837, now in: 1910, 212.

¹¹⁶ “glaubt, durch blosser Begriffe ohne Beihilfe der mindesten Erfahrung, sein <sc. des Urwesens> Dasein zu erkennen [...]”

¹¹⁷ G. W. Leibniz, GP VII, 289–291, M. Heidegger named it “24 Thesen zur Metaphysik.”

¹¹⁸ M. Heidegger, 1957; id., 1961, II, 321, 348f.; id., *Antrittsvorlesung* 1929, in: 1967, 1–19; id., 1949, in: 1967, 195–211.

¹¹⁹ A. Ritschl, 1888; G. Patzig, 1960–61, 185–205; W. Class, 1974; K. Kremer (Hrsg.), 1980, (herein the speeches of K. Kremer, F.-P. Hager, J. Möller, B. Welte, F. Ricken SJ, on the occasion of a conference of the “*Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Fachvertreter für Philosophie innerhalb des Studiums Katholischer Theologie*”;

D. Melcic, 1986; M. Lutz-Bachmann (Hrsg.), 1988; in: H. Ruf (Hrsg.), 1989, is willing to defend onto-theology and thereby religion; H. Gripp-Hagelstange, 1990; P. Aubenque, 1991; J. Derrida,

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the problem of the topic of metaphysics – sometimes ontology, sometimes theology, sometimes both. Logic in the sense of G. W. F. Hegel is metaphysics, as M. Heidegger says, because it is “that form of thinking which everywhere explores and grounds the being as such and on the whole from the being as ground (Logos).”¹²⁰ Thus, insofar metaphysics “*ergründet*” (: explores), it is ontology and remains in the frame of the question about being. But insofar metaphysics “*begründet*” (: grounds, provides a basis) it is theology and becomes an assertion about beings. So metaphysics tries to found the existence of God. In Heidegger’s view it is a phase in the history of being (*Seinsgeschichte*), that being (*Sein*) reveals itself as basis, ground. Another important approach to the concept of onto-theology can be found in P. Aubenque, in E. Berti and Markus Gabriel.¹²¹ P. Aubenque, as well as E. Berti, resist tracing back onto-theology to Aristotle; nevertheless, they recognise an immanent theological trend in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*.

M. Heidegger’s argument that any metaphysics necessarily leads to a theology and any theory of substance to an onto-theology seems well-founded. The question remains, whether Aristotle indeed maintained such a metaphysics of substance. In this context, substance is what enables something to have qualities and to be determined. Substance is able to “stand in itself,” to subsist, and this way it is the core and essence of a particular thing. As witnesses for this reading of *Met. A* may suffice S. Broadie,¹²² T. De Koninck¹²³ and the literature cited in the review of L. Herrschaft.¹²⁴ F. Suarez summarizes the tradition of the Middle Ages by defining substance as *ultimum subiectum* or *ultimum subsistens*.¹²⁵ But because obviously no substance in our world is an *ultimum subiectum*, we have to ask for another substance with this quality, i. e. God. The same is true for subsistence. All substances which we know of have only a relative subsistence, their real existence

1992, 3–24; R. Theis, 1993, 315–336; E. Berti, 1994, 117–143; F. Inciarte, 1994, 1–20;.

¹²⁰ *dasjenige Denken, das überall das Seiende als solches im Ganzen vom Sein als dem Grund (Logos) her ergründet und begründet* (1957, 50).

¹²¹ P. Aubenque, 1991; E. Berti, 1994, 117–143; M. Gabriel, 2009.

¹²² S. Broadie, 1993, 365–411.

¹²³ T. De Koninck, G. Planty-Bonjour (Hrsg.), 1991.

¹²⁴ L. Herrschaft, 1993, 461–476.

¹²⁵ See S. 85.

must be granted by another substance whose subsistence is absolute and definitive. All things around us need for their being another thing. Indeed we find the *ultimum subiectum* in Aristotle's text, the hypokeimenon fulfills this function, the first about-what, be it of speech or of determinations of being.¹²⁶ But the concept of subsistence is found in no way in Aristotle's text.

2.2.3. Theology as a Form of Knowledge

The apologists of an Aristotelian theology can point to the fact that Aristotle occasionally speaks of theologians or of theology – more precisely of theologike <episteme> – so we must ask what he means by these words.¹²⁷ As a rule, he mentions theology while distinguishing forms of knowledge. Let us begin with a short list of some relevant texts, of which I will examine three in greater detail. Aristotle gives a division of knowledge in *Met. A* 1–3. The theme at this place is the difference between theoretical knowledge and the knowledge needed to produce something. Another place is *Met. Γ* 1–3 (and *K* 3); some have said that Aristotle in these chapters has presented his ontology. He treats the relation between different parts of philosophy and ousia, the relation between dialectic, sophistry, and philosophy, as well as the difference between first and second philosophy. In *Met. Z* 11 Aristotle mentions physics as second philosophy. *Met. E* 1 (together with *K* 7) is the most relevant chapter; here he discusses the differences between practical, productive, and theoretical knowledge; the last is divided into theologike (that is, first philosophy), physics, and mathematics. *Met. Z* 1 looks at the sort of knowledge that has always been sought, and ΖΗΘ at first philosophy in general, whose object is prote ousia. In *Physik B* 2, Aristotle takes a position on the difference between mathematics and physics. Finally he articulates the dianoetical aretai at *Nicomachean Ethics Z*, 3 (1139b14ff). To complement this list, we will see below (part III, chapter 5), in the commentary on the first sentence of *Met. Α*, what is meant when Aristotle says *περὶ οὐσίᾳς ἢ θεωρίας* (“the theory concerns being”).

¹²⁶ Cf. E. Sonderegger, 2012, III, 5.2, in the commentary to *Met. Z* 3, 291–303.

¹²⁷ For this theme cf P. Natorp, 1888, more current R. Bodéüs, 1992, and B. Botter, 2005.

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From this multitude of places let us focus on three, *Met. A* 1–2, Γ 1–3, and *E* 1, with the goal of clarifying the position of theology within knowledge as a whole.

In *Met. A* 1–2 Aristotle tries to work out the concept of the “first” knowledge by examining the current opinions (*endoxa*) about knowledge. This discussion is less about describing a hierarchy of knowledge, than about determining which knowledge is first, decisive, and fundamental. Which knowledge is necessarily involved in and presupposed by any sort of knowledge whatsoever? What must we already know in general, or in principle, before we are able to know something in detail? What must we know already if we want – or have – to justify or argue about some particular knowledge or opinion? Since we are seeking the origin of knowledge, our everyday forms and methods of knowing cannot be applied. We need a method that allows us to advance to the foundations of our opinions (*endoxa*); this method could be named ‘first philosophy.’¹²⁸ Aristotle summarizes his results in *Met. A* 2, 982b7–10: this knowledge concerns the first causes, and it must be a theoretical knowledge (in contrast to practical and productive knowledge). He comes to this conclusion through a critical review of the opinions about knowledge of his time, i. e. what common sense considers to be a characteristic of knowledge. Additionally, he introduces an analogy with practical knowledge at 982b10: καὶ γὰρ τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ οὐ ἕνεκεν ἐν τῶν αἰτίων ἐστίν, “the good and the for-the-sake-of is one of the causes too.” H. Bonitz and H. Seidl link this sentence to the sought knowledge (W. D. Ross does not comment on this phrase).¹²⁹ This is because they suppose that the sentence gives evidence for the two aforementioned characteristics of first knowledge. According to H. Bonitz and H. Seidl, Aristotle means that the supreme knowledge is precisely the knowledge which knows the for-the-sake-of for all things. – But H. Seidl confuses what is distinguished as practical and theoretical knowledge, crucial in *A* 1–2, and H. Bonitz overlooks the function of the analogy between practical and theoretical knowledge. Thus this passage does not

¹²⁸ Not to forget, that ‘first philosophy’ denotes the method to find the searched knowledge as well as the result of this research, the first knowledge with its contents.

¹²⁹ H. Bonitz, 1849, 51, with reference to *Met. A* 7; H. Seidl, 1980, I, 272, “...*Endzweck alles Handelns...*”

give a justification for the two mentioned characteristics, but it refers back to A 2, 982b3 and other passages, which deal with practical knowledge. Later, at 983a4–11, we can find a similar case for theology; but here, 982b3–7, Aristotle only reminds his listener or reader of a point of practical knowledge, which was evident to his contemporaries, with the purpose to link this with the searched first knowledge. With practical knowledge, it is evident that all singular aims must refer to some first aim. However, in the tradition it is already evident what this first is: the good, in Aristotelian terminology the for-the-sake-of. The sentence beginning with $\kappa\alpha\iota$ (at 982b10) implies that theoretical knowledge as well as practical knowledge must refer to a first cause; in Plato's language, the name for this is 'the good,' and in his own, it is the for-the-sake-of-something.

Philosophical tradition and Aristotle's contemporary opinions as well provide clear indications about what is held to be the first in theoretical knowledge: it is *ousia* (*Sein*). But what *to be* means is not yet decided. It is the job of the first knowledge which Aristotle is searching for to find just this meaning. Of course, the knowledge searched for is a not productive knowledge. Productive and theoretical knowledge differ in that productive knowledge has a defined purpose, it is practical in our modern sense. Aristotle compares the relation between theoretical and productive knowledge with that of a slave and a free man. As the free man – in Aristotle's time – is of a higher value than a slave, so the free knowledge is of a higher value; theoretical knowledge is for the sake of itself, as the free person is, and not for the sake of something else. The mention of wondering (*thaumazein*) also refers to this freedom. A wondering person desires to know, he or she is not conditioned by some necessity or some purpose to achieve. He or she wants to know, and nothing else. Continuing the comparison (A 2, 982b28), Aristotle says that it is doubtful whether such a knowledge is humanly possible. In comparison with the ideal of absolute freedom involved in first knowledge, human knowledge is limited and conditioned – most of all by common opinions. However, even within its limits and conditions, this form of knowledge is the best knowledge possible for us, "because the most divine knowledge is the most precious" (983a5). The reference to god is clearly made as a point of comparison, since the use of the superlative ("most divine") for

the knowledge of god *sensu proprio* would be strange.

Why does Aristotle speak of a “most divine knowledge”? According to the standard interpretation, this implies that Aristotle assumes the existence of the Gods, because this proposition be about the knowledge of the gods. Against this, we must say that the leading question of the text is not whether there are gods or not, but how free human knowledge can be. The outlined ideal of knowledge seems hardly achievable for humans; if anything, the gods could reach it. So Aristotle compares gods with humans, as was natural for Greeks since Homer. Plato, too, uses this sort of comparison of gods and humans at the beginning of the *Sophist*, using the same common opinions as Aristotle does here. There is nothing asserted about gods or their knowledge, they are not the subject now. We must not forget Plato’s cautious remarks in *Phaedrus* (246c–d) that our knowledge about gods is only very vague and uncertain. Should Aristotle be so much more ill-considered than Plato?

Aristotle here refers to a current belief (endoxon). The knowledge attributed to the gods illustrates the freedom of theory, the ideal form of a knowledge that is for the sake of itself. For us it may be impossible to achieve this state, but we suppose that it would be possible for gods. The “most divine” knowledge belongs to the field of endoxa and is for the purposes of comparison, therefore the use of the superlative. It is an image of an absolute demand for knowledge, which Aristotle knows cannot be fulfilled by humans; he does need to assert or believe anything about the existence of gods or their factual knowledge to make this statement. Besides, it would be notably inconsistent to contend such factual knowledge about gods immediately after having claimed that we humans are restricted to our DOXA.

Let us return to *Met. A* 1–2. In the phrase “the knowledge of gods” the genitive ‘of gods’ can be understood either as *gen. subiectivus* or as *gen. obiectivus*. Thus Aristotle continues at 983a5 – always in the context of his comparison – by saying that the phrase has a double meaning. On the one side it means that there is a knowledge about the gods (in this case it is a *gen. obiectivus*), because following our opinions about gods in some way they seem to be principles (δοκεῖ πάντων, a8–9, cf. a16). Either way, that god is a cause is an endoxon (as Aristotle explicitly says) that

must be taken into account (a7), if we are to speak about causes and grounds. But the expression can also refer to the knowledge that the gods have (in this case it is a *gen. subj.*), such that – if anything – they would realize the most free and unconditioned knowledge conceivable, just as we believe they do (a8). – Aristotle concludes with a remark on the inversion of wonder. One who knows would be wondering if things were otherwise than what he has understood with grounds (a11–21). So the essence and the aim of the knowledge searched for is determined.

Why does Aristotle mention gods in this context? By no means did he intend to assert anything about gods or about their knowledge – aside from other reasons, this is excluded because he recognized that mere assertions can no longer be the philosophical way of speaking. On the contrary, he uses common beliefs to show the characteristics of the searched knowledge. His readers or listeners have some common opinions about the differences between slaves and free individuals, also about the difference between humans and gods. Now we must apply these differences over the three forms of knowledge, the productive, practical, and theoretical knowledge. Through these comparisons, we arrive at the ideal of an absolutely free knowledge. It is a common belief that gods are causes and causes are at stake now.¹³⁰ That Aristotle speaks about gods does not mean, then, that this is a theological discourse; the question about *ousia* sufficiently provokes this theme.

Let us now examine *Met.* Γ 1–2, where Aristotle also studies the division of knowledge. Here Aristotle does not explicitly speak about theology, but about ‘being as being.’ Following a few remarks in *Met.* K this expression is regarded by some scholars as another term for god,¹³¹ such that *Met.* Γ too would essentially be about

¹³⁰ P. Natorp, 1888, 52:

Der Grundgedanke der Stelle erklärt sich vollständig aus der Parallele A 2. Dass nämlich ‘das Göttliche’ im Gebiete der fraglichen Wissenschaft liege, ist gewiss gut aristotelisch; ..also die Gottheit gehört in die Fundamentalphilosophie; aus welchem Grund aber? Nur, weil Gott eine der Ursachen, eines der Prinzipien ist, Ursachen und Prinzipien überhaupt aber den Gegenstand der fraglichen Wissenschaft bilden.

¹³¹ E. g. P. Merlan, 1953; F. Inciarte, 1994.

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God. F. Inciarte says that the reason for this is the connection of the principle of non-contradiction with the concept of divine substance.

We ask now what makes ‘first knowledge’ first. For the first knowledge it is essential

- that it includes in its consideration all beings (*Met.* Γ 2, 1004a34–b1);
- that it is able to distinguish between ‘Socrates’ and ‘sitting Socrates,’
- that its theme is ousia because ousia is something first (*etwas Erstes*),
- finally, that it can articulate the distinctions and criteria which are essential for the question about ousia.

Clarification is needed with regard to the last point, because scholars hardly ever acknowledge the fact that Aristotle here follows the programme of the *Sophist*. The text of *Met.* Γ, especially chapter 2, is full of references to the megista gene of the *Sophist*.¹³² Let’s have a glance at this dialogue. The first of the megista gene is being (to on). By this, Plato designates what is at issue now (: *Problemittel*). The first determinations of being, Plato says, are movement and rest (kinesis and stasis), derived from the opinions of the ‘earth-borne’ giants and the ‘friends of ideas’; number four and five are identity and difference (tauton and thateron), the concepts of reflexion (*Reflexionsbegriffe*), these concepts are necessary to speak about kinesis and stasis. In *Met.* Γ Aristotle proceeds exactly in the same manner and even using the same terms. Somewhat pointedly (but nevertheless in the spirit of the Aristotelian example with ‘Socrates’) we can say that it is not the one who knows something about god who has the first knowledge (which would then be a knowledge higher in degree than physical knowledge), but rather this one who is able to distinguish between ‘Socrates’ and ‘sitting Socrates.’¹³³ With such examples, Aristotle indicates that the first knowledge is about the distinctions of being (*sein*). Only in the reception of Aristotle this is transformed to the knowledge about substance, and as a consequence, to the knowledge about ‘absolute subsistence’ and

¹³² Cf. *Met.* Γ 2, 1003b30–1004a2, 1004a17–31; 1005a11–18; theologia, theologike: *Meteorologica* B 1 353a35: “what the ancients did”; *Met.* E 1, 1026a10ff., a19. K 7, 1064b3, a33.

¹³³ *Met.* Z 6, 1032a4–11: we must be able to counter the sophisms and to distinguish ‘Socrates’ and ‘being-Socrates’; cf. Z 11, 1037a5–10: ‘Socrates’ and ‘the soul of Socrates.’

God.

If we want to understand the sense of the question about the first knowledge, we have to take into account what is asked for at the beginning of *Met. Γ*. We should know whether the searched knowledge about first causes and principles of being and the knowledge about the features of being as such, is a single or homogeneous knowledge or not.¹³⁴ In *Met. Γ* 3 Aristotle combines this question with the further question (inspired by the second aporia in *Met. B*, 996b26–33) of whether the knowledge about principles also belongs to this same knowledge (τὰ ἐν τοῖς μαθήμασιν καλούμενα ἀξιώματα, “the so-called principles in knowledge”); the principle of contradiction is only an example of the type of principles in question, and is in no way the central theme of *Met. Γ*. To ask for the first principles is difficult because *to be* is said in many ways which at first seem to have no unity. Nevertheless, it is possible to give an answer although the diversity of our use of *to be* is not simply a linguistic diversity with an univocal meaning. It has the unity of the pro-sen-relation, as paronymous words differ in meaning but have a focus in one and the same being or meaning (thus G. E. L. Owen called it “focal meaning”).

However differently *to be* is meant in the particular cases (Aristotle distinguishes categorical, modal, and veridical uses; today we could add predicative, inclusive, and existential uses, and maybe others as well), in any case *to be* is said in relation to a first.¹³⁵ Looking for ‘the first’ in the multiple ways of using *to be* Aristotle has in mind the fundamental opinions about *ousia*, that is, the DOXA. Even if these fundamental opinions about *ousia* are the content of a fundamental knowledge, they remain opinions. We can generalize this structure beyond the Greek world, then a respective tradition defines what *to be* means in a given world. By referring particular perceptions, informations etc. to a first of this kind, i. e. to a respective DOXA, a consistent understanding in a given world is possible. That’s why the first plays a crucial role in *Met. Γ*. Anyway the first always is the theme of philosophers.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ *Met. Γ* 1–2; see the summary in the last phrase of chapter 2.

¹³⁵ This is the main difference with the modern conception of *to be*. For most modern philosophers, *to be* means primarily *to exist*, and the other meanings have no link with each other.

¹³⁶ *Met. Γ* 2, 1003b16f.; cf. *Met. A* and *Z* 1.

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This knowledge of the first is superior to the physical knowledge, which always presupposes a knowledge of an other kind, which is therefore a “second philosophy.”

The standard interpretation took this first to be a being, namely God. That is right if we seek for a first substance, but it is false, if the first we are searching for is the DOXA about being (*to be*; see *Met.* Γ 2, 1003b17 and *passim*). Whoever substitutes God for ousia in passages like 1005a35–b2 reaches his aim very fast and easily. But they must overlook that ‘the first’ is no more than a formal designation. The first ousia is determined by our DOXA and it is the first in relation to which we use *to be* in controlled diversity.

That all concerns are about being is supported by *Met.* Γ 2, 1004b17–26, where Aristotle distinguishes between sophistry, dialectic, and philosophy; all deal with *to on* but they do it differently and with different goals. Later on, at *Met.* Γ 2, 1004a31–b4 the discussion about the possible unity of knowledge reaches a certain conclusion. Following this argument, it is legitimate and sensible to search for a knowledge that concerns all beings. This knowledge must not be confused with the false sophistical claim ‘to know all things’ (see Plato, *Sophist* 233a), because it does not aim at propositions about generic, specific, or other determinations of a particular being, but it aims at the first in being and knowledge, which is general because every sentence (*logos*) – though in many different ways – makes use of it as its point of reference (*pros hen legetai*, “it is said with respect to one”). –

In our everyday life we do not deal with ‘beings’ but with this person, this table, this dog etc. Everything belongs to a range, depending on the pertinent interests, and each range has its proper knowledge. Now we change the horizon; it is no more this cat or this dog that we have in mind, nor the generic class of animals in general including dogs, cats, humans, gods. Instead, we stop considering beings as this or that following the specific needs or purposes (as we always do in everyday life) and we look for a universality of quite an other kind, that of being as being. The searched knowledge should cover being as being (as has been said *Met.* Γ 2, 1004a31–b4). In this sense it is a knowledge of all beings: it considers the features

which each being has as being (and not as cat, table etc.).¹³⁷ A knowledge which can make distinctions within this universality will be able to distinguish and to decide whether ‘Socrates’ and ‘sitting Socrates’ are the same or not, and it will also be able to reflect on determinations such as ‘identical,’ ‘different,’ ‘opposed,’ and so on. The sophists show how decisive this is. Their surprising and paradoxical claims work only if no distinction is made between the manifold uses of *to be* and if the possible diversity of references to *ousia* is not considered. They speak and argue and draw conclusions as if *to be* were univocal. Very quickly this leads to contradictions. Gorgias’ book *On Non-Being* may serve as an example. The surviving fragments of this book convincingly show how essential and necessary the project, common to Plato and Aristotle, is to protect the use of *to be* in the *logos*.

Through their approach, the sophists confirm the philosophical relevance of their practice (*Met.* Γ 2, 1004b17–22). They want to be able to speak about everything and to be competent on every theme (Plato, *Sophist* 233a). This seems to be the same move that Aristotle considers characteristic of wisdom in *Met.* A 2, ἐπίστασθαι πάντα, “to know all.” The sophists clearly must miss their purpose, (i) if they take ‘all’ in the sense of ‘all particular things’ instead of ‘beings as beings’ and (ii) if they do not have a point of reference to order the diversity of things.

Let us summarize the argument that physics is *sophia* but not the first one (*Met.* Γ 3, 1005a32–b2). Aristotle asks in *Met.* Γ 3 whether the same knowledge is competent for the question about being (*Sein*) and “for the so-called axioms in mathematics” (τὰ ἐν τοῖς μαθήμασιν καλούμενα ἀξιιώματα). The case of mathematics does not serve as a proof, but as an example to introduce the problem. Mathematical theorems are valid irrespective of the contents. Such theorems pertain to the searched knowledge too, an example of them is the principle of contradiction. This principle must be accepted if we want to speak with each other, no matter what is the topic. If a certain knowledge deals with some given type of beings, say with animals, plants, illnesses, numbers, etc., then certainly it is inadequate to take recourse to the principles of being as being. That is another case if one wants to think about being as

¹³⁷ *Met.* Γ 1, “Ἔστιν ἐπιστήμη τις ἡ θεωρεῖ τὸ ὄν ἢ ὄν καὶ τὰ τούτοις συμβεβηκότα καθ’ αὐτό, “there is a <type of> knowledge considering being as being and all its features.”

being. Obviously not many people do that (today as little as in Aristotle's time), nor do many deal with the principles now at stake, except some physicists, Aristotle says (*Met.* Γ 3, 1005a29–33). Anyway, the examples Aristotle cites confirm the general character of the searched knowledge. Because 'the ancients' thought they were discussing being as a whole and in general when they focused on physis, they choose this theme. They have the same intention as Aristotle, but they differ in their concept of physis. For them physis is 'all things,' while for Aristotle physical beings are only one portion of beings, namely the beings that have their principle of movement in themselves, opposed to other beings that have their principle of movement in other beings; beside them he takes into account also other areas of beings, e. g. beings which emerge by chance or our actions. Therefore physics cannot be the first knowledge we are searching for. Sure, physics is theoretical like the first knowledge, but it differs from that insofar as the searched knowledge should be universal, in the sense that its subject is being as being, and insofar it should be a knowledge of this first to which all our discourse refers and gets its unity, i.e. the *prote ousia*. The reason why physics is not first philosophy is not that it is not theology (which would be the case if *prote ousia* were understood as god), but because its subject is not the *hen in pros hen legetai*.

But one could counter that the texts we have been discussing are altogether ambiguous. The main text in favour of the theological interpretation has always been *Met.* E. Let us examine if our interpretation holds for this text, too. We have to take into account that the knowledge about which Aristotle speaks in Γ 1 might be no more than a programme which is not yet realized, and hence is called 'searched knowledge.'¹³⁸ It is possible that Aristotle is doing no more than drafting a concept in *Met.* Γ and E, then we should try to understand this draft. For the moment, it is not necessary to decide whether these texts refer to *Met.* A or not.

The riddle of the apparent contradiction between the conception of a first knowledge described in *Met.* E that should have as its theme – as many think – one singular

¹³⁸ Ἔστιν ἐπιστήμη τις... "there is a certain knowledge..."; see L. Routila, 1969; J. T. Desanti, 1988, 27, 35, only asks the question of whether the science in Γ 1 is a programme, but the whole of his considerations, and his claim that *theoria* passes *episteme* suggests that this is a rhetorical question.

being, one ousia, god, and the conception of a first knowledge that should be universal gave rise to never-ending questions. Certainly many scholars found ‘solutions.’ Their weakness is that they are many. Their strength is that these solutions very faithfully reflect the beliefs of their time. It is not my claim to solve that riddle, that would be much too pretentious and even not sensible. But I can try to show that in the text another issue is at stake.

The first knowledge that properly and primarily can be called philosophy and that is searched after in *Met. E* is supposed to satisfy incompatible conditions. In *Met. Z* 13 the idea is rejected, with good reasons, that the first knowledge which concerns prote ousia can be a knowledge about universals; we can add that neither it can be a knowledge about a singular thing (already in the Plato’s *Sophist* the ‘first’ to know was not a particular thing but the ‘five highest kinds’). The division of knowledge in *Met. E* 1 is developed in the context of the questions concerning which genos of ousia is first and which knowledge referring to it is the first knowledge. The answer clearly is: it is no genos at all, but rather it is the first that guides our manifold uses of *to be* and that is to be found when we ask after the fundamentals of our DOXA.

Given this background, we can proceed more quickly, even if *Met. E* 1 is a hotly contested battleground.¹³⁹ Physics, as well as other dianoetic knowledges, is in search of causes (*E* 1,1025b6–7). In *Met. E* 1, 1025b17–1026a7, Aristotle leads the reader to the statement “Physics is a theoretical knowledge” differing from productive knowledge (*techne*) and from practical knowledge (concerning our actions). The criterion for dividing these kinds of knowledge relates to the degree of freedom supposed by each, as we have seen in *A* 1–2. The next question concerns the ranking of the different forms of theoretical knowledge, and the status of physics in this hierarchy. This division follows the ranking of the treated subjects, the different ousiai. Differences in ousia lead to differences of knowledge. The more fundamental the ousia of a knowledge is, the more fundamental and primordial the knowledge must be. The subjects of physics and mathematics can be arranged by two criteria, i.e. by the separateness and the movement of the ousia they look at. Combining

¹³⁹ Cf. C. Kirwan, 1971, and J. Barnes, 1995, 345f., and 355f.

these criteria, we can conceive another ousia and, with it, a corresponding theoretical knowledge, that of a “separate and unmoved being” (E 1, 1026a10–18). This would be the first knowledge because it is the most free knowledge and its subject is the most fundamental. Any other knowledge must presuppose it. We might wonder whether the list given in *Met.* E 1, 1026a18–22, is complete or not: “[...] if the divine is anywhere then in any case it is in such a physis [...]” (Aristotle refers to the unseparated and unmoved ousia). Is the divine the unique being of this type of physis or not? Given the function of the divine in *Met.* Γ we must assume the later. Considerations on numbers (Z 11, 1037a10–13) or ideas which have comparable features as the divine show that other beings beside the gods in the same category are possible. The divine is named because there is a common opinion about it but they do not make up this type of being (*Seinsbereich*). By referring to the divine, Aristotle appeals to an everyday understanding with the aim to have an example for this category of beings that everybody knows. A knowledge that exclusively would refer to gods would be a knowledge about a certain genus of beings (*peri genos ti*, 1025b8) and not the required, universal knowledge, although its subject may be the most honored genus (τὸ τιμιώτατον γένος, 1026a21). 1026a24 Aristotle repeats the question whether the first philosophy is universal (that means about being as such) or only about a definite genus.

The first knowledge must be more than generic. It cannot be demonstrated by principles (E 1, 1025b14) because this knowledge itself is precisely in search of these principles as is said in the first sentence in E 1. In the last sentence of E 1, Aristotle contrasts physics and first philosophy by indicating the different ousiai they deal with: “If there were no other ousiai than the natural ones then physics would be the first knowledge [...]” If we do not have to speak about every ousia in the same manner as about τὸ σιμόν (E 1, 1025b32, “the flat-nosed,” an example of a natural being which includes the hyle), if we meaningfully can speak about a being (ousia) without hyle, then the class of perceptible ousiai is neither the unique nor the first. If, on the contrary, perceptible beings cannot *be* without an ousia prior to them and whose function is just that, that perceptible beings can *be*, then the knowledge about this ousia will be the first.

Some features of this ousia and the knowledge corresponding to it have parallels to topics in *Met. A*. When Aristotle speaks about an ousia akinetos, an “unmoved being,”¹⁴⁰ then this reminds us of the discussion of *Met. A*. Still, I want to emphasize that it is in no way necessary to take this ousia immediately as god, for Aristotle is seeking an understanding of *to be* which has yet to be discovered. As a result, we will see in the Commentary that this understanding, developed by Aristotle in *Met. A* 6–10, can be summarised in the formula {οὐσία← νόησις →ἐνέργεια / ΔΟΧΑ}.¹⁴¹ Rightly, and without false profundity, Aristotle can say at the end of E 1 that a knowledge dealing with this type of ousia (i. e. this first in reference to which our speech has the pros-hen-unity) is prior to all other knowledge and may be named ‘first philosophy.’ As a knowledge of the first it concerns all what is secondary *vis-à-vis* this first, and in this sense it is universal. We may take the relation between the first and the second categories as a model of this sort of priority. So it is the task of this knowledge to consider what belongs to being as being .

In *Met. A* neither the name nor the concept of theology plays a role. The term theologike is never used, but only theologos,¹⁴² and with this term Aristotle designates the ancient poets and thinkers who pursued a different project. We might think of poems of Hesiod or some of the other texts of the Presocratics.¹⁴³ If we pay attention to the text, the core of *Met. A* in fact is not about theology,¹⁴⁴ nor about god or gods, but it presents a speculative sketch of ousia (*Sein*). When J. Barnes alludes to “his friends”¹⁴⁵ then he gives us here (as he is probably well aware) an essential reason why many think, up to today, that *Met. A* is about theology. Nobody dares to look squarely in the eyes of his friends – that is, of the leading tradition – and to say what they really reads and understands; rather one prefers to sell the Emperor’s New Clothes.

¹⁴⁰ *Met. E* 1,1026a29, cf. *Met. Z* 11, 1037a13–17 οὐσία κατὰ τὸν λόγον.

¹⁴¹ For the details see the Commentary on the Chapters 6, 7 and 9.

¹⁴² *Met. A* 6, 1071b27, *A* 10, 1075b26, *N* 4, 1091a34, *B* 4, 1000a9.

¹⁴³ To the named places and for the problem on the whole see P. Natorp, 1888, 55–65; now R. Bodéüs, 1992, M. Bordt, 2011, and the omnibus review of T. Dangel, 2014.

¹⁴⁴ Some scholars agree on this point; some of them say that *Met. A* is about ousia in the sense of substance, others that it is about theoria.

¹⁴⁵ J. Barnes, 1995, 108, fn. 34; see above, p. 121.

To reach a new approach to the text, we should stop imputing a systematic and dogmatic mind to Aristotle. Of course, from time to time there are results that can be asserted, there are opinions to defend, and assertions to hold. But these are by-products, or, in more important cases, they are starting points, and are never the ultimate aim of Aristotle's reflection. The job of philosophy is the analysis and examination of opinions and assertions, patiently performed again and again. It is not the aim of the examination to reach new and interesting opinions (this is the lesson of the *Sophist*); rather, with respect to such new opinions our examination ought to start anew. Briefly, we must understand the role and function of endoxa in order to examine our prejudices about Aristotle's philosophy. The traditional interpretation is right only under the presupposition that the main aim of Aristotle's philosophical efforts is to reach new and better conclusions, that is, a theory in the modern sense, as innumerable titles of articles and books prove.¹⁴⁶ This presupposition has proved to be wrong.

2.2.4. Difficulties Arising from the Assertion *Met. A* Contains a Theology

In advance we can admit that the question about God is 'natural,'¹⁴⁷ inasmuch as a religious attitude is normal if not indispensable. Through religion respective communities express and handle fundamental experiences. In the Greek context questions about god or gods belong either to the cult or to literature or to physics (because gods are living creatures that have a soul and the soul is a natural being). But *Met. A* does not treat any of these subjects.

Let us examine some reasons why it is improbable that *Met. A* has god or theology as its theme. The first one is very simple. In a text about god, this word should appear with a regular cadence. But in *Met. A* we count only five occurrences of *theos* or *theios* in chapter 7 and two in chapter 9 (in addition 5 occurrences in chapter 8, but

¹⁴⁶ E. g. J. Owens, ³1978; cf. besides the bibliographies in: A. Bausola, G. Reale, 1994; J. Barnes (ed.) 1995; R. Radice, R. Davies, 1997; M. Frede, D. Charles, 2000; Chr. Rapp / K. Corcilius, 2011; Chr. Horn, 2016.

¹⁴⁷ However what does this mean exactly? Not even the gender difference turned out to be a 'natural fact.' – "All what is, is constituted by sense" Husserl. – Cf. W. Pannenberg, 1988.

they refer to the traditional Greek gods and are left aside also by the defenders of the theological interpretation). In contrast to this, the translation of J. Tricot has 14 appearances of 'Dieu,' or 'divine' to which we have to add some words in uppercase letters like 'le Bien' or 'l'intelligence' or 'l'Être premier,' 'le premier Moteur' etc. This way the translation gives the impression that the author speaks continually about god. But this impression is false in front of the text. S. Fazzo also pointed out this fact (2014, 373). – G. Reale went so far as to claim that just the lack of explicit statements about theology itself is an argument that the theological character is self-evident (G. Reale, 1994, 259). Anyway, his translation has even more hints to god than that of J. Tricot, not only because he writes 'Egli' in uppercase letter.

Furthermore, the question concerning the existence and the characteristics of god mainly needs content-related concepts, but in *Met. A* mainly functional and sorting concepts are used.¹⁴⁸ The spiritual development of the ancient Greeks is often described as a movement from a 'natural religion' and ritual scheme into a 'rational' counter-movement. Myth as a reference point for life and action was replaced by the logos, one says.¹⁴⁹ Surely it is at least right that the work of the Presocratics, the Sophists, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle established a view of the world which competed with traditional religion. Some claim that this new view, also, has a strong theological component.¹⁵⁰ According to others, there was a strong scientific element in this development. M. Bordt, (2006), tried to reconcile the metaphysical, cosmological, and theological aspects by saying that in Plato's *Republic* the Good is identical with god as well as the nous in the *Laws*. Both the theological and the scientific claims might raise the suspicion of anachronistic backdating. Without a doubt, theology made use of philosophy at least since the patristic period. To some degree, the Church Fathers themselves developed the philosophical means, and some concurrence arose between theology and philosophy concerning the claim to truth and the claim to explanation of reality. Later, sciences developed which were partly cooperative and partly in competition with theology. Because only what is already

¹⁴⁸ For this difference see p. 179.

¹⁴⁹ W. Nestle, 1940; E. g. F. Solmsen, 1942.; R. Buxton (Hrsg.), 1999, reacts against this view.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. W. Jaeger, 1947; even before W.J. Verdenius and G. Reale some saw in Plato's demiurge a prefiguration of the Christian God, cf. L. Brisson, 1994.

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practiced can become a subject for reflection, the question about the difference between the theological and the philosophical questions about god can be put in such epochs. Philosophy, then, is the method of analysis and reflection on our DOXA while theology searches and defends rational reasons for a belief which is able to guide our everyday life.¹⁵¹

We can summarize the difficulties in a list.

1. The theological interpretation of *Met. A* is a source of problems because the Aristotelian proof of the existence of god is insufficient according to most interpreters, it is conclusive only in the form Thomas Aquinas gave it. Aristotle's text meets the expectation as little as does Plato's *Phaedo*, if interpreters look for a proof for the immortality of the soul in this dialogue. Interpreters claim that Aristotle saw the problem but did not have the means to solve them.

Of course no philosopher is perfect and infallible. But to aim at a proof of the existence of god and to miss it so obviously is more than mere imperfection, especially when the this problem vanishes if the text is read without this presupposition.

2. If we leave aside the reception and look at the text itself, it becomes evident that god is not the main theme, he simply does not come up with sufficient frequency, and when he is discussed, it serves as an example.¹⁵²

Communities have opinions about god's knowledge, he is a content in the endoxa, a *πάτριος δόξα*, a "belief of our fathers." And this knowledge is used by Aristotle to make some things clear. On the whole, god serves as neither an argument nor something to be demonstrated in *Met. A*. Instead, the topics are becoming and being (genesis, ousia).

3. Aristotle speaks of cosmological issues with extreme reluctance. The cosmological interest, that is the question about the first in our actual world, is a secondary

¹⁵¹ See M. Heidegger, 1970, on the difference between theology as a 'positive science' and philosophy.

¹⁵² This observation is confirmed by H. Lang. But we have to go further than H. Lang, 1993, went. She accepted the theme 'god' for chapters 6–8. But here, too, god is only an example for knowledge as is assumed in contemporary belief. Nothing about god must be proved. Besides H. Lang, many others replace the topic of 'god' with the theme ousia in the sense of substance.

concern and must not be mingled with the first one, the speculative question about the first.

4. In ancient Greece gods are no more than living beings. That is not enough for the Christian concept of God.

5. The standard interpretation asserts that Aristotle tries to prove that there must be an ‘Unmoved Mover,’ who can be identified with god. But while the masculine form of this expression was traditionally chosen by nearly all interpreters – because in this form it is all too easy to identify it with the personal Christian God – Aristotle never uses the masculine term. The moving cause, to proton kinoun, is one point in a list of four causes, beside to ex hou, to ti estin and to hou heneka. Aristotle reflects on the first in all the four points, because that is the philosopher’s job (*Met.* E 1, Z 1); the moving cause has no priority in the group of causes.

‘First Mover’ or ‘Unmoved Mover’ is simply a false translation for to proton kinoun, as already I. Düring said, unfortunately with no effect.¹⁵³

6. If god as the ‘Unmoved Mover’ is to hold the position defended by the tradition, he must not be nous because nous is moved by the noeton (*Met.* A 7.4).

7. In *Met. A* god does not have the characteristics of a creator. He creates neither hyle nor eidos (this is an important point for the later quarrel between Philoponos and Simplicius), neither time nor space. But in a Christian framework, a proof of the existence of God is urgent in its function as creator.¹⁵⁴

For Aristotle, it would be plainly ridiculous to try to prove that Zeus, the heaven,

¹⁵³ I. Düring, 1966, 209; id., 1968c, 253; cf. E. Sonderegger, 1996, 76ff.; W. Schneider, 2001, 245. E. Zeller, 1921, titled rightly his chapter on theology with *Das erste Bewegende*. – Anyway, there are some scholars who begin to realize the difference, e. g. A. Aichele, 2009, 341, who points expressly to the neutral form, even if the ‘divine’ remains as central. M. Bordt, in Rapp (Hrsg.), 2001, 367, says: *Den Ausdruck ‘unbewegter Bewegter’ gibt es bei Aristoteles nicht*, nevertheless the judeo-christian tradition uses the masculine noun (370) and neither the contributors in Horn, 2016, nor C. Horn himself changes anything in this matter.

¹⁵⁴ It is a trend to overlook the distinction between that what a creator does and that what the demiurge does in Plato’s *Timaeus* ordering existent things, see e. g. Rheins, Jason G., *THE INTELLIGIBLE CREATOR-GOD AND THE INTELLIGENT SOUL OF THE COSMOS IN PLATO’S THEOLOGY AND METAPHYSICS* (2010). Publicly accessible Penn Dissertations. Paper 184.

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or Helios, the sun, or Demeter, the growing of cultivated nature, exist, just as it is “ridiculous to want to prove that physis exists” (*Physics* B 1, 193a3), because this belongs to the range of the first and to the range of causes that every proof must already presuppose.¹⁵⁵ If someone wants to find in *Met. A* a proof either must reduce the fourfold concept of cause to the one *causa efficiens*, a process that at last ended with Thomas Aquinas or it is necessary to establish a hierarchy of the causes and to give the first position to the *causa efficiens*. Yet there is no such thing in the texts. Already Simplicius argued against Philoponus that the concept of cause is different when it is about coming to be in nature and when *creatio ex nihilo* is the subject.¹⁵⁶

8. Both the view that *Met. A* is about god or about substance presuppose that ousia means substance. For a reconsideration of this prejudice, see the previous Chapter. Only if we want to talk about substances with the characteristic that they can ‘stand in themselves’ the question of a first Standing-in-itself (i. e. God) arises. Without substance, the question about the existence of god as asked by a long tradition no longer serves any purpose although it may be that other questions about god remain reasonable.

G. W. F. Hegel demonstrates the essential connection of ousia as substance and ousia as subject (in the modern sense), but this attests only the anachronistic character of this interpretation.

9. Finally, the concept of existence does not play the necessary role in Aristotle’s texts, that it would need if the existence of god were at stake. If the concept of existence is absent, there is no need to question the existence of anything, let alone the existence of god. It seems that the concept of existence, like the concept of substance, belongs to a world that is not that of *Met. A*.

It is possible to show the opposite position. For the understanding of *Met. A* it is of great importance to understand its relations to Plato’s *Sophist* to the *Timaeus*, and

¹⁵⁵ See B. Botter, 2005, who very well shows that it is senseless to seek for a proof of the existence of gods in ancient Greece.

¹⁵⁶ This is discussed in greater detail in the following Chapter, ‘Cosmology’ in Part II, 5.1.1.

to the *Metaphysics* of Theophrastus. The Platonic texts give reasons for an interpretation of *Met. A* without substance. Concerning the *Metaphysics* of Theophrastus, we need a new approach to its interpretation, because this text is not the late one traditionally supposed, but instead it is approximately contemporary with Aristotle's text. It is not the late criticism of a student disappointed with his master, but an early text, possibly shortly after Aristotle left Athens.

Apart from this, it is a very laborious but instructive task to look for the way theologians in Antiquity treated their theme. Perhaps Hesiod could be an example, but surely Epicurus, the Stoics, Philodemus' *Περὶ θεῶν*, Cicero's *De natura deorum* and *De Mundo*, the *Theologia Aristotelis* and various Neoplatonic thinkers are theologians. Everybody will see that those texts have quite other things at stake than the themes of *Met. A*.

J. Mansfeld has given a list of questions characteristic of any theology:¹⁵⁷

1. questions about the existence and the attributes of gods,
2. questions about divine providence, about the relation between the gods and humanity,
3. questions about our possible knowledge of the gods.

We do not find any of these questions in *Met. A*.

¹⁵⁷ J. Mansfeld, 1999, 453.

2.3. Cosmology in *Met. A*

In this chapter we ask after the place and function of cosmological considerations in *Met. A*. Questions concerning the origins and form of the world as a whole imposed themselves on peoples of all times and places and all respectively told stories about the coming into being and formation of the world. The starry sky, the sun, the ever procreating living beings were always prime examples of things which man could never itself produce or master.¹⁵⁸ All this is given and belongs to our world, so it is only natural to ask what its beginning and essence may be. Hesiod presented the Greeks with an especially poetical and profound presentation using the genealogical principle to describe and account for cosmic origins. The Presocratics treated of the same theme under the heading of *to pan*, the whole of being or ‘the All.’ In their view the material elements formed the basis of the whole. Plato for his part took up that theme and placed it on a higher level in his *Timaeus* showing that if we ask after the origin of the material things, the elements of the Presocratics are insufficient as answer because these too themselves are no more than forms of matter, even if of a kind other than that of plants and animals.

Met. A pursues this topic. The standard interpretation says that Aristotle had developed not only a metaphysics of substance but a suitable cosmology too which both are designed to found his theology. Metaphysics and theology were the theme of the foregoing chapters. Now we must deal with the question of whether Aristotle’s

¹⁵⁸ Cf. I. Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, (A 288):

Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the more often and steadily we reflect upon them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me. I do not seek or conjecture either of them as if they were veiled obscurities or extravagances beyond the horizon of my vision; I see them before me and connect them immediately with the consciousness of my existence.

Zwei Dinge erfüllen das Gemüt mit immer neuer und zunehmenden Bewunderung und Ehrfurcht, je öfter und anhaltender sich das Nachdenken damit beschäftigt: Der bestirnte Himmel über mir, und das moralische Gesetz in mir. Beide darf ich nicht als in Dunkelheiten verhüllt, oder im Überschwenglichen, außer meinem Gesichtskreise, suchen und bloß vermuten; ich sehe sie vor mir und verknüpfe sie unmittelbar mit dem Bewußtsein meiner Existenz.

cosmological considerations serve the same function as they do in the proofs of the existence of god. A brief reminder of how Plato organized his cosmology will provide the background for the evaluation of its place in Aristotle's text. As a reference point for what should be understood by a 'proof of the existence of God' I take the *Quinque viae* of Thomas Aquinas.

2.3.1. Thomas Aquinas' Proofs for the Existence of God as Model

Thomas Aquinas himself designates his considerations as *quinque viae* in the *Respondeo*-section of the *Summa Theologiae*, Pars prima, quaestio secunda, articulus tertius.

The introductory sentences run as follows: *Prima autem et manifestior via est, quae sumitur ex parte motus*, "The first and most obvious way is that from the argument of motion." From the fact of movement we can conclude that there must be an Unmoved Mover, which can be identified with God. On this point in particular Thomas and his followers likewise feel to be entitled to refer to Aristotle *Met. A 7*.

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Secunda via est ex ratione causae efficientis, "The second way derives from the argument of the efficient cause." The series of all secondary *causae efficientes* must have its origin in a first *causa efficiens*. The series of *causae* would otherwise be prolonged into infinity and thereby we would have given up the explanation of what is before our eyes. —

Tertia via est sumpta ex possibili et necessario, "The third way is taken from possibility and necessity." If a possible being becomes a real being this cannot be without the help of an other real being. It is obvious that some common objects could exist just as well as not exist; they are contingent. But it is impossible that all things are contingent, because in that case nothing at all would be. From the reasoning that a contingent being needs a real being for it to come into being the proof named *ex contingentia mundi* was later developed. *Met. A 6* served as a model for this proof.

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Quarta via sumitur ex gradibus qui in rebus inveniuntur, “The fourth way is taken from the gradation found in things.” Things are perfect in different degrees. Thus we can form a concept of a most perfect thing which could be the cause of beings that are restricted in their perfection. –

Quinta via sumitur ex gubernatione rerum, “The fifth way is taken from the governance of the world.” Even natural things like plants or animals without reason act or behave in a manner to achieve a given objective and it seems as if they were arranged to follow a purpose. But this can only have been achieved by a higher intelligence. –

Thomas Aquinas’ *quinque viae* as a whole could be designated ‘cosmological proofs’ insofar as they start off empirically from our experience of things in our actual world. All five proofs make our experience the subject of discussion in different respects and thence lead ultimately to a highest or first principle.

The point of view from which the proof is presented is either the movement of things, their conditionality, their contingency, their degrees of perfection or their purposive organization. Thomas Aquinas’ proofs have the logical form of conclusions. God’s existence is neither presupposed as evident nor put forth simply *a priori* as a given fact, but it is instead arrived at by inferring from its effects. From a world as creation is inferred a God as creator; from a dynamic cosmos – an Unmoved Mover; from the universe as contingent – a necessary being; from beings having different degrees of imperfection – a perfect being; and, finally, from the purposive constitution of things – a reasonable organizer.¹⁵⁹ Insofar as these are logical deductions, they can be examined as to their conclusiveness and of the validity of their premises.¹⁶⁰ The existing literature shows that this has already been sufficiently well. There is no need to repeat that here, especially because it is not the validity of these conclusions at stake here. We are asking, instead, whether or not in Aristotle’s considerations on cosmology and teleology there is to be found

¹⁵⁹ Briefly as I. Kant explained the idea to be the unconditioned which completes the conditioned.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. G. Scherrer, 1990; lit. concerning the proofs of the existence of God see above, fn. 76, p. 112, fn. 78, p. 114 and fn. 104, p. 104; summaries by H. Seidl, 1982; D. Henrich, 1960; J. Rohls, 1987; W. Rödl, 1992; G. Oppy, 1995.

anything that has a function comparable to the Thomistic proofs for the existence of God.

2.3.2. Astronomy and Cosmology in Plato

After the well-known series of similes in the central parts of the *Politeia* (the simile of the sun, the line and the cave) Plato discusses the curriculum of the philosophers who should govern the state. As propaedeutics they must first study arithmetics, geometry, stereometry, astronomy and harmony (*Pol.* 521ff.), a curriculum that corresponds approximately to the later quadrivium. The main course of study will be in dialectics. The aim of the preparatory study is the “reversion of the whole soul,” Plato says. The disciplines are, therefore, to be taught and learned in an unusual manner. Plato explains the difference of the aims in the *Politeia* as well as in the *Philebus* (56c–57a). There is a particular form of knowledge required by politicians and military leaders (*Pol.* 522c). Astronomy too has a similarly practical use: it helps to determine seasons in advance and it is useful for navigation means (527d). Future members of the government simply do not need this kind of skill in observation of the actual stars. Plato has in mind a “pure astronomy,” which treats the “being speed” and the “being slowness” because the aim of all disciplines of his propaedeutics is the same namely to direct the soul to the being which is ever the same way and which rests as it is, and to turn away the soul from things that are uncertain and different at any given moment. – It is obvious that an astronomy with such aims and designed for future rulers is inappropriate for describing in any way the genesis of the world. The astronomical remarks in the *Politeia* cannot, as a consequence, have a cosmology as their aim, and thus are they not suitable for use in proofs of the existence of god.

The *locus classicus* of Plato’s cosmology has always been the *Timaeus*. In the first part of his speech Timaeus tries to reconstruct a pure noetic cosmos based on the distinctions between the being and the becoming, between identity and difference, between the paradigm with respect to which the demiurge arranges the world and the resulting image. To be sure Plato does speak about becoming, but the natural

process of becoming is constructed through pure noetic concepts. What, in the first part, is something like an intellectual game (although in Plato's view it is the most real basis) is repeated in the second part as a realization of the phenomenal world. In order to make possible this transition from the noetic to the real, he introduces as "a third genus" the chora. Chora is the where-in of all phenomenal becoming, the elemental of the elements.¹⁶¹

The Presocratics had asked after the principles of the phenomena. Plato repeats this questioning and transcends it with the idea that the elements are not of the material nature, which they thought them to be. Presocratic elements are changeable and therefore not fundamentally distinct from the things that are around us. They are not sufficiently elementary and cannot be the stable being which Plato is searching for. Chora is of a very different character than things and elements and can therefore replace them. Aristotle continues this line of the Presocratic and Platonic question in giving it a new turn, when he asks in a speculative way which being (*Sein*) is the basis of becoming.

Even in the *Timaeus* cosmological and speculative considerations stand side by side. But it soon becomes clear that these do not have the function they would have in proofs of the existence of god. Plato, to be sure, says that the demiurge forms (but does not create) the cosmos, the soul and the traditional gods under certain limitations and conditions. These gods have the task to shape the rest guided by the paradigm and using the chora and the given matter. First of all, Plato says that what is said about the demiurge must not be taken literally but as a mythical tale or "likely account" (*eikos logos*). Later, due to its reception, the Platonic *Timaeus* entered the same theological maelstrom as *Met. A*. Because the theological interpretation of both the Platonic *Timaeus* and the *Met. A* is based on the same reception, neither of them can be used as an argument in favour of the theological interpretation of the other: such reasoning would be circular. In no way are the cosmological considerations in the *Timaeus* premises for the deduction of the existence of god as

¹⁶¹ Chora is comparable in its function to Kant's aether and heat substance (*Wärmestoff*), see E. Sonderegger, 2015. Concerning chora see D. Miller, 2003, who claims that the "receptacle," "chora" and the "third genus" are not the same as was assumed up to now.

Thomas Aquinas understood it. If there are sentences that suggest that idea, they must be attributed to the *eikos logos* and the mythical form. The aim remains to explain the “real” cosmos. Starting from the noetic cosmos in the first part the “real” cosmos should become understandable by means of the *chora* in the second part.

Timaeus says that it is difficult to find the “maker and father” of the whole but at least we can try to look for the ‘paradigma’ with respect to which he made it (28c3). That means that Plato is looking less for the maker of the image wherein we live than for the ‘paradigma’ of this image. It is, furthermore, not the existence of this ‘paradigma’ that is in question but its characteristics or its mode of being. The *Timaeus* then, does not in fact contain a cosmology, as often is claimed.¹⁶²

Plato often refers, of course, to the cosmological knowledge of his time but this inclusion has primarily philosophical interest. The whole discourse on nature is indexed as *eikos logos*. The so-called cosmology displayed in the *Timaeus*, therefore, has no scientific or theological goals but Plato wants to make understandable the transition from the noetic to the phenomenal and perceptible world, this transition is the theme. Notes and comments on science, cosmology, mathematics and geometry are made in order to improve our insight into the nature of this transition.

2.3.3. The Function of Cosmology in the *Corpus Aristotelicum*

Where do cosmology and astronomy play a role in the *Corpus Aristotelicum* in general and in *Met. A* in particular and what is their function in the argument? What does Aristotle mean by these terms? What is the relation between cosmology and the leading speculative question in *Met. A*? Are these questions on the same level, is cosmology an integral part of the speculation, or do we have to separate them strictly?

We find cosmological considerations which are near to those in *Met. A* in terms of content and time, especially in the *De Caelo* and in *Physics* Θ. Theophrastus’

¹⁶² F. Cornford, 1937; F. Solmsen, 1942; A. P. Bos, 1989; T. Ebert, 1991 *et alii*.

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Metaphysics is in the same timeframe.¹⁶³ Aristotle takes up this topic anew in the subsequent book *De motu animalium*. First, I will briefly summarize these references in order to compare them with *Met. A* 6–8 so as to find out what the function of cosmology and astronomy is in these works (for the interpretation in detail see the commentary *ad loc.*). The relation of *Met. A* to the Presocratics would play a role too, but to treat of that separately would be out of place here, our treatment of the *Timaeus* must suffice. We must not forget that we are seeking after the function of astronomy within the ambit of the question concerning being (*Sein*) and not for its contents *per se*.

The standard interpretation assumes that Aristotle uses astronomy for its proof of the existence of god. Since many of the assumptions of the astronomy of that time are belied by our current knowledge the standard interpretation has to answer the question as to what the value of this proof could be. The texts mentioned above share some questions, such as concerning the heavens, its uniqueness or plurality, the nature and origin of its movement. These questions, however, are asked in different contexts and with different goals. In *De Caelo* Aristotle asks how natural bodies move and what the principles of their movement may be. Subsequently, he asks what the first body could be, since it must be of a nature other than our everyday objects (269a30–32; 270b1–3). That corresponds to the question of what the ouranos as the origin of all mundane movement, could be. Some further questions are whether the heavens and their movements have a beginning and whether the actual variety of movements is to be explained by the visibly circular motion of the heavens. In just these references, 270b3 and b23, we have to note the restrictions:

[...] if our premises are credible,
[...] how we can say if we accept what is believable for man [...]

The use of this reference in a famous history of philosophy is very typical.¹⁶⁴ We are told there that Aristotle tries “to melt together his own cosmological concept with the

¹⁶³ Theophrastus gives cosmological considerations throughout the text; for astronomy § 27 is particularly relevant.

¹⁶⁴ H. Flashar, 1983, 396.

pre-philosophical astro-theology.” If we stay close to the text, we see that Aristotle stresses here the endoxical character of the astronomical statements; within this frame and with these restrictions alone, are his proposals sensible, but not simply false, as they would be following the standard interpretation.

The ouranos as such is the topic of *De Caelo* A 9. It is said to be unchangeable and eternal. The ancients said beings having these predicates to be divine. The reference to the divinity of the heavens here, as in *De philosophia* and other early texts too, is no more than a citation of existing endoxa. In *De Caelo* B 1 Aristotle gives us a summary of the results. The ouranos has neither a temporal beginning nor can it pass away. It is, therefore, immortal and eternal. Aristotle says:

Therefore we rightly are convinced that it is true what the ancients and our fathers said, that something which moves but without ending is immortal and divine (284a2f.)

After a remark on the limitations of our experience he speaks in B 3 about the divine:

God’s actuality is immortality; that is eternal life. Therefore god necessarily has eternal motion. Since the heavens have just this quality (it is somehow a divine body) and therefore it has a circular body that, due to its nature, always is in a circular motion (286a9–12).

In this text the eternality is connected with the divinity and from this association follows the eternal, circular form and motion. Eternality and divinity are premises, they are not the *demonstrandum* but they belong to the range of endoxa.

“Motion is the actuality of the movable as movable” (*Physics* Γ, 202a7–8). In *Physics* Θ 6 Aristotle asks if we can imagine an origin of this movement. If motion is defined that way no temporal origin is possible, we must, then, deny the question. Movement in this sense is eternal and without any break and must be based on an eternal proton kinoun akineton, a “first unmoved moving.” Different scholars have seen a contradiction between the thesis formulated in *Physics* Θ claiming an eternity of the world and the proof in *Met. A* that movement cannot

be prolonged infinitely but must begin with a ‘First Mover’ (as they name it). One of them celebrated Philoponus as the first to detect this contradiction.¹⁶⁵ But the alleged contradiction results from a specific understanding of the concept of eternity of the proton kinoun, the first moving. Only if eternity is a concept in contrast to creation and if proton kinoun is a creator, will contradiction arise. Thus runs Philoponus’ argument, at any rate. It remains for us to test whether these premises are to be found in Aristotle’s text.

In *Physics* Γ and Δ Aristotle develops the concepts of movement and time. Time is determined by the series of prior and anterior timepoints, movement is determined as the actuality of the possible as such. In *Physics* Θ he uses these theoretical concepts of time and movement.¹⁶⁶ The consequence is, that, if time and movement are conceived this way, there really cannot be any beginning for time and movement. A starting point of time could not have a prior point in time: the first point in time would, therefore, not be a ‘point in time,’ i. e. it would not be time at all, because it would not have a predecessor and would not itself be a successor. If time had a beginning it would become something like a *thing in time*. The transition from possibility to actuality had to presuppose an other actuality, but actuality should only just begin.

In contrast to this the theme of *Met. A* is not the *concept* of movement but the *fact* of movement, the movement we experience. With respect to factual movements we must accept a first causative movement, which itself is not caused and not movable because otherwise a *regressus in infinitum* begins, and that is not acceptable in the range of factual experience. What the modern scholar thought a contradiction between different texts reveals itself as a distinction developed by Aristotle. We must distinguish between the concept of time (here no beginning is conceivable) and time in its factual mundane context, time as phenomenon (here we have to acknowledge that it cannot be conceived without a beginning). At the very beginning of *De motu animalium* (698a),¹⁶⁷ Aristotle cites *Physics* Θ, with respect to “the first moving,”

¹⁶⁵ R. Sorabji, 1987, 6 and chapter 9.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. how he speaks about the same theme in *De Motu Animalium* 1.

¹⁶⁷ A late text with many references to earlier ones; references in I. Düring, 1966, 296, fn. 37.

which we have to presuppose for actual movements. He distinguishes the theoretical treatment of movement in the *Physics* from the treatment that he has in mind in *De Motu Animalium*, cf. 698a12–14. He says that all that

has to be grasped not only in a conceptual and general manner but that we have to go further to the particular and perceptible.

Thus we must ask after the factual and perceptible movements. This means that the question now is of the possibility of movement experienced phenomenally. This distinction corresponds exactly to the division of the *Timaeus*, whose first part develops the noetic structure of the world and the second part its mundane realization. On the other hand, it also corresponds to the difference between *Met. A* and *Physics* Θ. In the theoretical treatment of the question about being (*Sein*), it is about the stasis as a cause of becoming, i. e. about the cause of kinesis and genesis. Here, in terms of the cosmological question, we must ask which resting being, itself not subject to external movement, may be the primary source or basis for motion in our phenomenal world.

In *De Motu Animalium* Aristotle says, concerning the inanimate moving beings, that there must exist a resting being beside and for them. As for living beings, there must, in addition, be a resting point inside of them. If we do not take the Earth as a part of the whole but as a separate being, then the Earth could be the resting point beyond motion. It could serve as the resting point for the movements of the heavens (699a32). The mythical corollary for this would be Atlas. But Aristotle rejects this idea, because the earth is finite and no finite being can serve as a support for the infinite heavens (699b16–18). On the other hand it could be that the heavens too are fixed on an unmoved being (perhaps the sphere of the fixed stars).¹⁶⁸ As its literary figuration of this, Aristotle cites *Ilias* 8, 19–22, where Zeus says that he cannot be pulled down by anything even if all goddesses and gods would try it with a golden chain.

¹⁶⁸ ἤρτηται, the same expression as in *Met. A*, 1072b13 and *De Motu Animalium* 4, 700a3–6. Dante cites the phrase in *Divina Commedia*, Par.XXVIII, 1–42; see the article of Philip Merlan, "Two theological problems in Aristotle's *Met. Lambda* 6–9, in: *Apeiron: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy and Science*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (July 1966), pp. 3-13.

2.3.4. Why do Cosmological and Astronomical Remarks Appear in *Met. A*?

After these preparations we consider the impact of astronomy in *Met. A*. A great part of the standard research is devoted to the cosmological or astronomical content of this book. It is claimed that cosmology in connection with a certain teleology founds the doctrine of the ‘Unmoved Mover.’ The relevant literature on cosmology normally treats also the position of astronomy in the proof of the existence of God and in the metaphysics generally as well.¹⁶⁹ There are further important questions: If chapter 8 is of a later date, and interpolated afterwards, how is the geometry of the spheres of the planets to be understood, how many spheres are necessary to explain the actual movements, do the planets have divine souls or not, and how does the ‘First Mover’ move the second movers?¹⁷⁰ The relation between the ‘First Mover’ and the second movers must be accounted for, and, how motion is transferred from the second movers to the sublunar movements. What, in general, is the connection between the first movers and the mundane movable, and finally, what is the order and number of the spheres and their associated divinities? The question of how the planets are ruled by gods in the literature serves as an example of how Aristotle has drawn far-reaching conclusions from insufficient astronomical knowledge.

All these questions concern the concrete and peculiar realization and coherence of the cosmology of *Met. A*. From questions of this type, we must distinguish the other question: What is the position and function of cosmology in general in *Met. A*? We ought neither to forget that this book is a *θεωρία περὶ οὐσίας*, a theory concerning being (*Sein*). The first part, *Met. A* 1–5, develops the question about *ousia* on the basis of *ousia aisthete*. Aristotle asks how beings come into being, which being (*Sein*) can cause the *hic et nunc* being (*Seiendes*), and he unfolds this question into

¹⁶⁹ P. Duhem, 1914–1959, vol. II; W. Jaeger, 1923; A.-J. Festugière, 1949; D. J. Furley, 1955, in the edition *On the Cosmos*; H. J. Krämer, 1969; B. Effe, 1970; W. Pötscher, 1970; W. K. C. Guthrie, 1981, Kap. VI; F. Solmsen, 1982; D. T. Devereux, 1988; B. Manuwald, 1989; T. Ebert, 1991, 43–54; L. Brisson, 1994, with bibliography; G. Reale, 1994. István Bodnár 2016, 247–267.

¹⁷⁰ E. g. H. J. Krämer, 1967, 318f.: the first mover is imagining a range of beings which is the same as that of the second unmoved movers. This thinking or imagining is identical with the *noesis noeseos*. – R. W. Sharples, 2002, mainly treats the question how the ‘Unmoved Mover’ and the other movers are related to each other (it is remarkable that B. Botter, 2005, begins with the same three quotations as R. W. Sharples).

two directions, the speculative and the cosmological one.

Aristotle uses the concept of becoming in different ways (cf. *Physics* 225a12–20, *Met. Z 7*). ‘Becoming’ can mean the coming-to-be of a thing by means of an other thing, either as becoming-simply or as becoming-such. On the other hand, both can be becoming as natural process (γένεσις φύσει), or by process of production (τέχνη). Finally, something can come into being spontaneously and even by chance. But when Aristotle asks on which being (*Sein*) becoming is based, then it is about quite a completely different becoming. There he is inquiring after the transition, of which Plato treats in the *Timaeus*, the transition from the idea (in Plato’s sense, not the modern one) to the real being of our everyday life (*Werdendes!*).

“Becoming <takes place> from physis into physis” (γένεσις ἐκ φύσεως εἰς φύσιν) this is Aristotle’s decisive concept of becoming, supplemented by the remark: “further, the-so called physis as becoming is the route into physis” (ἔτι δ’ ἡ φύσις ἡ λεγομένη ὡς γένεσις ὁδὸς ἐστὶν εἰς φύσιν).¹⁷¹ Becoming is the realization of an eidetic nature in a hyletic nature.

The question concerning being is itself manifold in its meaning, and there are, therefore, manifold answers too. In the present case we can distinguish a theoretical answer and a worldly side of the question (approximately corresponding to the distinction between ontological and ontic questions). The theoretical answer says that *to be* as {being← awareness → actuality} is the for-the-sake of becoming and thus causes a becoming entity *to be*. The worldly answer is that the sphere of the fixed stars sets in motion like an unmoved moving. Both answers concern a first, the theoretical answer says which being can found becoming, the worldly answer says which is the first physical object that sets in motion.

Here as well as in *De Caelo* B 12 Aristotle qualifies his explanations concerning cosmology or astronomy remarking several times that they are provisional and open to revision.¹⁷² He is deliberating about the manner in which the visible universe, with

¹⁷¹ *Physics* B, 193b12–13; Concerning hyle and eidos cf. *De Gen. et Corr.* 317a23–24 ἐν γὰρ τῷ ὑποκειμένῳ τὸ μὲν ἐστὶ κατὰ τὸν λόγον, τὸ δὲ κατὰ τὴν ὕλην.

¹⁷² See especially *Met.* A 8; cf. the polemics of G. Reale against W. Jaeger, 1994, Prefazione, and 296ff.

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its sun, moon and stars, is to be understood in its various movements. The question about being as the basis of becoming, and, the question of how the being which remains stationary, in relation to which the moving beings can move, is not treated separately. *Met. A* on the whole has as its subject the explanation of natural movement. Aristotle is asking which being (*Sein*) can found becoming, in its theoretical and in its cosmological sense. Chapters 1–5 demonstrate that natural phenomena do not suffice for this explanatory end. Chapters 6–7 offer the speculative answer that *to be* in the sense of {being← awareness → actuality} is the for-the-sake of becoming and underlies becoming. Chapter 8 is a cosmological digression on the same question; while chapters 9 and 10 treat certain related questions.

Although his question is finally a speculative one, Aristotle has to consider natural beings too: on the one hand, because they are common starting points for many questions and, on the other because there we can find some provisional answers. In this way, moreover, he can discuss what has been considered for a long time as the first moving beings, namely the sun and the sphere of fixed stars. It turns out, however, that although the eternal circular movement of the protos ouranos (*Met. A* 7.1) is a special case of movement, it cannot be the first unmoved moving he requires. Afterwards he makes the famous speculative considerations, which are soon raised again at *A* 7.3, with a list of the features of that being, which itself is unmoved but can set in motion. The astronomical side of the questions does not play any further role. As late as *A* 7.10 Aristotle returns to this theme. The sun seems to be an unmoved moving being (as already mentioned in *Met. A* 5.5) but it does not satisfy all conditions, not in fact being unmoved, since it has a measurable size and undergoes changes of place. Chapter 6 makes clear that only an *ousia akinetos* can fulfill the required function, but it must be of a type other than the *eide* (6.6), because these cannot initiate any movement. The philosopher, therefore, seeks for the conditions which this *ousia akinetos* must satisfy, now following the theoretical line of thought. In 6.8 there is one result of this research, it must be an origin (*arche*) whose being (*ousia*) is in the mode of actuality which is not derived

G. Reale thinks that *Met. A* 8 is by all means compatible with the rest; cf. W. Schadewaldt, 1952, and further lit. on Eudoxus and Callipus, fn. 199; D. T. Devereux, 1988, too is relevant; on *Physics*, *De Caelo*, *De Motu* see B. Manuwald, 1990.

from a potentiality. Hence this ousia cannot have any hyle (6.9). This presents the first speculative climax in *Met. A*, where obviously the cosmological point of view is abandoned now.

The speculative high-point is followed by some glances at the already mentioned alternatives of the theologians, the physicists and of Leucippus and Plato (6.13–21). Here again, of course, and until the end of the chapter, cosmological and physical considerations dominate. One of the problems in this context is that it is not enough to prove that something has a totally constant movement because in nature we see many more irregular movements. How can a constant moving cause, which we know only by inference, produce an irregular movement, which we in fact observe? It seems to be contradictory that an eternal and unmovable being should act differently at different times with irregular effects. This leads to a new distinction concerning the causes of movement. Unto itself that being acts always in perfectly the same way, but in relation to or in contact with other beings, its effect can differ.

Not only Aristotle but Theophrastus too treats the theme from a speculative and adjacently from the empirical approach. Theophrastus asks the question in the first paragraph of his *Metaphysics* how the first and the perceptible can be connected; how the transfer from the being (*Sein*) of the first to the becoming of the second is possible; how the factual movements of the natural beings are to be explained: Theophrastus, then, is asking the same question as Aristotle.

In the cosmological context Aristotle often speaks about concrete things like the protos ouranos, phora and the like (e. g. *Met. A* 7.15). But theoretical knowledge too has to take into account what is ‘at our fingertips’ as well as what have the others said (e. g. Pythagoras or Speusippus or others; 7.25), because the endoxa are the starting point in this case too, when we seek for the transition from the ousia (*Sein*) to the onta (*Seiendes*). Against this background we can understand the remark in *Met. A* 8.7. Astronomy is competent to answer the question concerning the astronomical first being, but the astronomical first is not identical with the theoretical first. These are two distinct types of arche and if we want to know what they are,

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we require different methods: namely, the astronomical observation and the theory respectively.

In order to identify the first being, unmoved, that is, therefore never having a coming-into-being, being that which could be a basis for the becoming, we must know, firstly, what in the process of becoming comes to be and what does not; and, secondly, what can at the same time found becoming. In the search for this, Aristotle checks the four causes. It is evident that hyle has no coming-to-be, because it must already be in place for any possible becoming. Could hyle be the primary sought after? No, it could not, because hyle cannot initiate becoming, being itself no more than ‘suitability for...’ (Heidegger: *Geeignetheit zu...*). The *eidos* too has no coming-to-be, but it cannot initiate any movement. This was the main point in Aristotle’s criticism of Plato’s ideas. The *telos* for something is prior to that which it is the *telos* of. Insofar as the for-the-sake-of is pursued by an other being, it initiates movement without being moved or changing itself. Certainly, at the time when it is setting in motion another thing, it does not become itself in this respect, but it has been moved previously. That means that the *telos* which sets in motion is itself only a moved one, so it can cause only a relative becoming not becoming in and of itself. The primary, therefore, which sets in motion, while being itself unmoved, remains to be found. Hyle and *eidos* are already excluded as the primary, which sets in motion unmoved itself, but now we see that this will have to combine the characteristics of two other sorts of causes: as moving cause it must have the form of the for-the-sake-of. A being with these features seems to fulfill the conditions of a unmoved moving: namely to be prior to the moved being and to remain unmoved.

At *Met. A* 7.15 we read “on such a principle heavens and nature depend.” This formulation can be understood in both ways, in the cosmological and in the theoretical one. The standard interpretation follows H. Bonitz, 1849, 498:

Thus the highest principle is the eternal substance, immovable, pure act, necessary, conceivable and desirable, and precisely because it is desirable causes motion.¹⁷³

¹⁷³ *Summum igitur principium est substantia aeterna, immobilis, actus ipse, necessaria, cogitabilis eademque appetibilis, eaque propter id ipsum, quia est appetibilis, motum efficit.*

That means that Aristotle is saying that the heavens and all nature depend on the ‘First Mover,’ i. e. on God. – In the cosmological reading the phrase means that heavens and nature depend ultimately on the sphere of fixed stars. A parallel that supports this reading is found in the *De Motu* 4, where Aristotle uses the same verb. But the distinction between the heavens and the fixed stars must seem artificial, for it was implausible that the earth should not belong to the whole simply in order to form the necessary fixed point for movement of the heavens (see above). In any case, the sentence has a theoretical sequel, which suggests that the cited sentence itself yields a theoretical significance. If we follow this line, Aristotle is here dismissing the idea that the heavens or nature could be the principle for which we are searching. They are not the primary we seek for, since both depend on another principle, on being (*Sein*). This means that Aristotle is here leaving the cosmological path. If the heavens and nature cannot stand as the primary being sought after, then that will not be found by cosmological considerations at all.

It follows from this review that the cosmological or astronomical considerations in *Met. A* 8 do not lead to any theological or speculative principles. They are instead considerations in a range, which although indeed having connections with the main question about being (*Sein*), because they having to do with the problem about the transition from the noetic to the mundane world, they do not bring us to any conclusions concerning the theoretical part of the question. Aristotle takes them into account because they played a role in his time and because they were used as arguments by others. He wishes, simply, to eliminate them. Astronomy and the like give perspectives for the transitions from pure theory to physics which inevitably we have later to face. In a cosmological respect, the proton kinoun is a being (*Seiendes*), it is a οὐσία πρώτη καὶ ἀπλῆ καὶ κατ’ ἐνέργειαν, “an elementary being and in actuality,” but as *to be* it is the speculative {ousia← noesis →energeia}. How they come together cannot be entered into at this point.

2.3.5. The Difficulties of the Cosmological Thesis

If a cosmology ought to be an argument in a proof of the existence of god and if god is considered as ousia (*Sein*), then ontic arguments must be accepted as premises for ontological conclusions. But that much is clear, in that Aristotle distinguishes very well the question concerning the movements of the heavens as a physical and astronomical question from the question concerning primary knowledge and the question about being (*Sein*).¹⁷⁴ Theophrastus too distinguishes in the same way:¹⁷⁵

It may be that astronomy too contributes something <to these questions, sc. about the first moving, about the for-the-sake-of...> but surely not primarily because this <question> is prior to nature and the leading <question>; and as many say this line of thought doesn't belong to physics or at least not the whole.

Aristotle asks what the first is, under two aspects:

- On which being (ousia, *Sein*) does becoming does rest? (θεωρία περὶ οὐσίᾳς),
and
- Whence originate actual movement and becoming do result? (πόθεν ἡ κίνησις,
πόθεν ἡ γένεσις),

The second question, referring not only to eternal and uniform motion, but to the ever changing movements with which we have primarily to do, is clearly subordinate. Since both agree that astronomy does not help in the question concerning the primary, astronomy deals with physical questions.

If one wanted to contend that Aristotle in *Met. A* has construed a cosmology in order to prove the existence of god, one must overlook the difference between the theoretical and the cosmological question as the first and the second question. Aristotle is aware of the difference between empirical and theoretical questioning and he makes clear that a theoretical question cannot be answered by empirical means. We cannot, therefore, impute to him the intention to answer with astronomical observations the theoretical question about being (*Sein*). On the contrary, in *A* 8.7 he

¹⁷⁴ Cf. above, Part II, 2.2.3 the references concerning the division of knowledge.

¹⁷⁵ Theophrastus, *Met.* § 27

systematically assigns to physics and astronomy a definite place within the whole of knowledge. Astronomers are thus competent for questions about the necessary number of movements, of spheres and the like, but not in the question concerning the primary into which he is enquiring: that being (ousia, *Sein*) which is capable to found coming-to-be. Whoever wished to know what Aristotle's cosmological questions were, can find these in *De Caelo*: What is the coming to be and the passing away of the world as a whole? How the structure of the world must be conceived? What are space and time, what is the body of the ouranos and which are its features? How the sky of the fixed stars is composed? What is the first in the cosmos? What is its first moving? –

Here too we can distinguish “the first” in two ways, by analogy with the concepts of becoming just discussed above. One is “the first being” in the cosmos, this belongs to the physical question. Another “first” is a noetic first being, not a part of the cosmos: this belongs to the theoretical question. It is evident, then, that the theoretical question does not ask after a first being in the range of beings but after ousia, *Sein*. The proton kinoun in *Met. A* is ousia as a for-the-sake of the coming to be. The question about a “first moving” arises in *Met. A* because the moving cause (to kinoun) is part of the list of four causes, which must be applied in any case, and it is the philosopher's task to ask the question what the first is, in any case, also in that of to proton hothen he kinesis. Concerning the present question, “that which can set in motion” was marked up in this list as a pivotal factor (see above, p. 141, Nr. 5, and the following page). Because motion here means natural motion it provokes cosmological questions. Aristotle asks the question about the motion of natural beings in *Physics B*, and there he gives the answer that the beginning of this motion is physis. This answer too is a theoretical not a cosmological one because physis is not one being among others (*Seiendes*) but ousia, *the being (Sein)*, of natural beings.

That Aristotle discusses astronomy in *Met. A* is due to the fact that cosmology is one side of the question about movement and the beginning of natural movement is linked with the question of the transition from theoretical to natural being. Aristotle sets out this question in *De Motu Animalium* in the very first chapter. It is the same transition from theory to physics as in the *Timaeus* where the point of transition is

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marked by the difference ‘with chora – without chora.’ This transition is comparable with the “*Übergang*” which Kant speaks of in the *Opus postumum*. In short, it is the transition from *Sein* to *Seiendes* where being is not to be understood in its Parmenidean sense.¹⁷⁶

We may consider the whole under the aspect of the classification of knowledge (see on this what is said in the chapter about theology, 2.2). At various points Aristotle discusses this question, his goal being to establish “the first” in knowledge, i. e. that knowledge which is required by any other knowledge. In *Met. A* 1–2 he presents the fundamental distinction between theoretical and productive knowledge, which is enhanced in *Met. E* 1 by the practical knowledge (in the ancient sense of the word). This threefold division results from the activities involved: to produce, to act, to reflect upon. Reflective knowledge is further divided according to the differences of the beings contemplated in physics, mathematics and theology or first philosophy. *Physics B* 2 presents the difference between mathematics and physics, *Met. Z* 11 between physics as second philosophy and first philosophy whose subject is *prote ousia*. If the being (*ousia*, *Sein*) of natural beings were the first, then physics would be first philosophy. We must ask therefore, whether there is another being (*ousia*) prior to natural being. If that was the case then the knowledge of that being would be prior to the knowledge of natural beings. Pertinent to this, Aristotle distinguishes different *dianoetic aretai* in *Nicomachean Ethics Z* 3.

It results from all these classifications, firstly, that Aristotle distinguishes different ways of knowing, which can be hierarchically organized; and secondly, that in the hierarchy of knowledge, astronomy is not of the first order. In the quarrel concerning the eternity of the world between Philoponus and Simplicius there is an analogous distinction between two types of questions about two types of becoming. Simplicius is on the point of explaining natural becoming because he is interpreting Aristotle, Philoponus in contrast argues for creation out of nothing, which is surely not the natural becoming which is thematic in Aristotle’s *Physics*. Simplicius says (*CAG X*, 1145, 27f):

¹⁷⁶ More on this correlation in E. Sonderegger, 2015.

Anyhow, if god, as he <: Philoponus> says, causes <the beings which> came to be directly by him without time <: ἀχρόνως> and without a genesis, then it is clear that those <beings> don't have their being by becoming <διὰ γενέσεως>

and (CAG X, 1150, 30f.):

Aristotle says, what is produced by god immediately are fully eternal beings and they do not have a coming to be at all (only those things have a coming to be in a part of time which can vanish).

If one were minded to construct a cosmological proof of the existence of god with the text of *Met. A*, one would be forced to ignore at least 6 references, which express severe reservations (see table 2.2).

<i>Met. A</i>	8.9 (at the end);	
8.13	εὐλογον ὑπολαβεῖν, ἀναγκαῖον – τὸ γὰρ ἀναγκαῖον ἀφείσθω τοῖς ἰσχυροτέροις λέγειν,	“it is reasonable to accept this,” but not necessary, “to say what is necessary we leave to the stronger ones,”
8.15	τοῦτο εὐλογον...ὑπολαβεῖν,	“it is reasonable to accept this”;
8.22	ἐν μύθου σχήματι,	“in the form of a story”;
8.23	μυθικῶς ... προσῆκται, ὅτι θεοὺς ᾄοντο τὰς πρώτας οὐσίας εἶναι,	“it is added in mythical form...that one believes that gods are the first beings”;
8.23	πάτριος δόξα,	“the belief of our fathers.”

Table 2.2.: Reservations about astronomy

Discussion of the first quotation may suffice. In *Met. A* 8.7 we read that there are several movements of each planet, but:

...but as to how many they may be, we refer now to what certain mathematicians say, <just> to have a certain idea, in order to retain a definite quantity in mind; by the way, partly it is necessary that we search ourselves partly that we obtain information from the searchers; if to those who deal with that something contrary to what is said now seems <to be right>, <it is necessary> to esteem

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both <groups of mathematicians>, but to trust those who adhere more exactly to principles.

From this we may at least conclude, that his cosmological statements are not Aristotle's own claims and that they do not have the status for him of premises from which to infer conclusions about the existence of gods. They are starting points for considerations. Aristotle is willing to reconsider his statements if better observations arise. Aristotle, in sharp contrast to Simplicio in the *Discorsi* of Galilei, would have been glad to look through the telescope.¹⁷⁷

The connection between *Met. A* and *Timaeus* is obvious. So many scholars have identified the demiurge of the latter with the 'First Mover' of the first. What is more, the Christian Creator was brought in a line with those two with the result that some statements about the Aristotelian god were applied to the Christian God.¹⁷⁸ The dogmatic parallel was even extended to the claim that the 'First Mover' (as they wrongly name it) is the goal of all mundane movements. It remains an open question how we are to understand this, seeing as how we observe everywhere the very contrary. If god is the goal of the world, then it is no long way to the idea of a creation, for which the creator sets its goal for. Creation, then, retains its own teleology.

We must set aside the old premises¹⁷⁹ and ask entirely anew what it was that Plato had in mind with his *eikos logos* and the demiurge. In the reception of these cosmological statements in *Met. A*, Theophrastus' *Metaphysics* was read from the times of Neoplatonism for a very long period as an introduction to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, until the renaissance the texts were even transmitted together. Theophrastus emphasizes right at the beginning that one of the main questions in philosophy is the connection between the noetic and the natural. Some thought that Theophrastus would speak about the cosmos and its first mover. Theophrastus concretizes this

¹⁷⁷ *Discorsi e dimostrazioni matematiche, intorno due nuove scienze attenenti alla meccanica & i movimenti locali*

¹⁷⁸ With many others H. J. Krämer, G. Reale, Herzberg, 2013, Horn, 2016.,

¹⁷⁹ See e. g. Rheins, Jason G., 2010; in his dissertation he made an attempt to defend the standard interpretation.

theme with ephesis, “desire,” which is his theme from § 7 until § 25 (of 34 §§ in total). There, then, is a correspondence in terminology.

Anyone who may wish to understand how a theology based on cosmology is construed may read *De mundo*, a text that was considered “until modern times as an epitome of the Aristotelian cosmology.”¹⁸⁰ *De Mundo* is a pseudo-Aristotelian text, probably written between 40 and 140 AD (Lorimer), or not long after Andronicus’ edition. The book was translated by Apuleius who thought it to be an Aristotelian text. It complies with all conditions a cosmology must fulfill if it is to serve as a proof of the existence of god. Just this was the reason why G. Reale took it as an authentic Aristotelian book in his edition (1974). But that would be valid only if one were conditioned exactly by *De Mundo*, by *Theologia Aristoteles* and by *Liber de Causis* to read *Met. A* with theological content and otherwise it is not valid.¹⁸¹ In the first chapter the anonymous author of *De Mundo* says that the contemplation of the whole, i. e. of the cosmos is the philosophers task, because it is the most noble thing, and this is his subject: “Let us theologize about this.”¹⁸² The text starts with the decision to bring together cosmology and god.¹⁸³ It is meant to describe the world as a creation of god. There are not to be found analytical questions about ousia etc. that are characteristic for *Met. A*, not to mention theoretical considerations concerning arche, energeia, noesis. Though he treats the concepts of cosmos, of the aether, of the heavens and its eternal movement. We can see very well what the anonymous author means by “theologize” in chapter 6, where he describes cosmic causation by god through several levels; and in chapter 7, where he treats the uniqueness of god even though he is worshipped under several names, a theme dealt with later by Dionysius Areopagita.¹⁸⁴ Apuleius’ translation of that work greatly influenced the

¹⁸⁰ H. Flashar, 1983, 289.

¹⁸¹ Cf. R. Arnzen et al., 2007, 271–3, on *Liber de causis*; 273–4, for the *Theologia Aristotelis*.

¹⁸² 391b4; on the juxtaposition of cosmology and theology in *De Mundo* see A.-J. Festugière, 1949, 341ff.

¹⁸³ See A.-J. Festugière, 1949, 341ff.; K. Oehler, 1969; W. Pötscher, 1970; B. Manuwald, 1989; A. P. Bos, 1994; H. Seidl, 1995.

¹⁸⁴ Dionysius Areopagita, Περὶ θεῶν ὀνομάτων: Lit. on *De Mundo*: W. L. Lorimer, 1933, 2. ed. revised by L. Minio-Paluello, Bruges 1965; D. J. Furley, 1955 (repr. 1965), 331–409; an important article by H. Strohm, 1952, 137–175; see its translation with introduction, commentary and bibliography in the Akademieausgabe (together with the *Metereologie*, Darmstadt 1984 (3. ed.). Cf. A. P.

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reception of *Met. A* during the Middle Ages.

Copernicus refers in the introduction of his *Commentariolus* (1514) only to Callippus und Eudoxus, but his first sentence goes very well with the Aristotelian tradition:

I see that our ancestors have adopted a multitude of celestial spheres mainly for this reason, in order to bring the apparent movement of the stars under regulation.¹⁸⁵

Of course, Aristotle stands in the background when cosmoc regularity must be preserved as well as when his astronomic construction is rejected in detail. This becomes clear in I. Keplers translation of *De Caelo* B 13–14. *Met. A* is also affected by this criticism as it contains similar theses. Depending on the level of astronomic knowledge of the time of the interpreter, the statements in *Met. A* were given more or less weight, accepted as observations or derided. Today too this is a problem for interpretations which would attribute some importance to the cosmology of *Met. A*. Rarely has this been expressed as clearly as it was by H. Flashar, 1983, 395, but in fact it is the permanent background of the standard interpretation:

Aristotle's presentation of the cosmology is hampered by the fact that his system, as is well known, is 'false' in substantial parts[...]¹⁸⁶

The standard interpretation simply prolongs this line of thought and reads *Met. A* in the view of the *De Mundo*.

Bos, 1994, 289–318, on *De Mundo* especially 289ff., 300f.

¹⁸⁵ *Multitudinem orbium coelestium maiores nostros eam maxime ob causam posuisse video, ut apparentem in sideribus motum sub regularitate salvarent.*

¹⁸⁶ *Die Darstellung des Kosmologie des Aristoteles ist durch den Umstand erschwert, dass das Weltbild des Aristoteles in seinen wesentlichen Teilen bekanntlich ‚falsch‘ ist [...]*

2.4. Teleology in *Met. A*

If Aristotle is known for anything it is for his teleology.¹⁸⁷

There will likely not come about any teleological explanation of nature, which does not in some form or another transfer onto the world the conception of ends of its proponent, or to put it another way, place the human mind simultaneously in the role of creator of the world.¹⁸⁸

Such statements testify the extent to which Aristotle's teleology is accepted in the standard interpretation and the direction in which it is tending. In fact, considerations about telos play a crucial role in *Met. A*.¹⁸⁹ The concept of telos only allows Aristotle to determine the first moving as unmoved and distinguish it from other beings that can set in motion other beings. According to the standard interpretation this makes possible the teleological proof of the existence of god.¹⁹⁰

But apart from this specific function Aristotle's teleology received much attention from three sides in the last hundred years. Firstly, at the turn from the 19th to the 20th century, much emphasis was laid on teleology by the vitalists; secondly, at the end of the 20th century we observe a new interest in issues pertaining to sense and ends.¹⁹¹ This can perhaps be understood as a (Christian) reaction to the postmodern trend in which such large-scale considerations were less plausible. And finally,

¹⁸⁷ A. Gotthelf, J. G. Lennox, 1987, 199; see A. Gotthelf, 204–242, with a comprehensive discussion of the concept of telos. – J. G. Lennox, 1985, 143–163, tries to corroborate the thesis that Theophrastus criticizes Aristotle in his *Metaphysics*, he assumes that Theophrastus takes telos in a realistic way.

¹⁸⁸ This is the opening phrase of a famous work by W. Theiler, 1925: *Es wird wohl keine teleologische Naturerklärung geben, die nicht in irgend einer Form die Zweckvorstellung ihres Verfechters auf das Weltganze überträgt oder, anders ausgedrückt, den Menschengeist gleichsam in die Rolle des Welterschöpfers versetzt.*

¹⁸⁹ See *Met. A* 7, 1072a26–b4.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. K. Gloy, 1983, 527ff.; she finds in *Met. A* a final-teleological proof; 531: Gloy says that Aristotle identifies the moving cause and the final cause in order to explain the origin of movement; cf. H. P. Cunningham, 1991, 5–35. – A. Mansion, 1946, 35: the principle of teleology dominates Aristotle's whole physics completely; K. Düsing, 1988, 541: *In der Ontologie als der Lehre vom Seienden nimmt die Teleologie bei Aristoteles und allen, die ihm nachfolgen, eine beherrschende Stellung ein.* Ch. Horn, 2016, intends to prove that according to Aristotle the whole cosmos is teleologically ordered by God.

¹⁹¹ Some impluses by R. Spaemann, R. Löw, 1981.

teleology has played a role in modern efforts to explain the metaphysical vocabulary through biology. In addition, we must not forget that in ethical and hermeneutical discussions purposes and aims are at the centre of interest.

2.4.1. Some Modern Interpretations of Aristotle's Teleology

The manner in which the standard interpretation takes Aristotle's teleology is shaped mainly by two traditions: on the one hand by the medieval concept of creation and on the other by the Kantian idea of purposiveness (*Zweckmässigkeit*). This could be more or less efficiently disguised, but ultimately, the modern understanding of telos corresponds in principle with Brentano's 20. thesis about *Met. A*:

Purpose means something that is intended.¹⁹²

In the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (1995) 'Teleology' is defined in the following way:

The philosophical doctrine that all of nature, or at least intentional agents, are goal-directed or functionally organized.

In the given context teleology usually means the claim that 'goal' or 'sense' are principles by means of which God or nature 'produce' things, be it literally or metaphorically. God as the highest and first being establishes ends for his 'creatures.' Beside other goals on a lower level, these creatures all have one common goal in God, because God has connected not only the created things with each other in that they have purpose, but in a special way He has established Himself as the goal of the whole creation. Of course, the medieval concepts of the 'purpose of creation' vary one from another to some degree, but we retain the fundamental idea, which is clearly articulated by Thomas Aquinas, for example, in the Prooemium of the *Summa theologiae*:

¹⁹² F. Brentano, 1986, 251, *Zweck heisst Beabsichtigtes*. – R. Spaemann, 1988, 549, in turn thinks that it is *eine wissenschaftlich schwer plausibel zu machende Position*, if teleology in its proper sense is restricted to human purposive action while the rest would be teleological only by analogy.

...because the main purpose of this sacred doctrine is to convey the knowledge of God, and this not only what He is in Himself but also with respect to his being the cause and the end of the things, especially of the rational being.¹⁹³

And in contemporary formulation:

God is the origin and the aim of His creatures, especially of humans.¹⁹⁴

We may consider the Kantian position in more detail. Kant often thematised the difference between the material and the formal way of speaking about nature. This is the subject in the *Preface* to the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B XIX; where it arises in a discussion of the difference between the concepts of world and nature *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B 446f. It is furthermore a fundamental distinction in the *Prolegomena* concerning the question *Wie ist Natur selbst möglich?* (§ 36; see also § 14–17); and it is with just this distinction that Kant opens his book *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft*.¹⁹⁵ Beside these, the main source for

¹⁹³ *quia igitur principalis intentio huius sacrae doctrinae est Dei cognitionem tradere, et non solum secundum quod in se est, sed etiam secundum quod est principium rerum et finis earum, et specialiter rationalis creaturae.*

¹⁹⁴ On creation see G. Scherrer, 1990: *Gott ist Ursprung und Ziel seiner Kreaturen, ganz besonders des Menschen.*

¹⁹⁵ *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft*, Vorrede:

If the word Nature be merely taken in its formal signification, there may be as many natural sciences as there are specifically different things (for each must contain the inner principle special to the determinations pertaining to its existence), inasmuch as it [Nature] signifies the primal inner principle of all that belongs to the existence of a thing.[1] But Nature, regarded in its material significance, means not a quality, but the sum-total of all things, in so far as they can be objects of our senses, and therefore of experience; in short, the totality of all phenomena—the sense-world, exclusive of all non-sensuous objects. (Transl. Ernest Belfort Bax)

Wenn das Wort Natur bloss in formaler Bedeutung genommen wird, da es das erste innere Prinzip alles dessen bedeutet, was zum Dasein eines Dinges gehört, so kann es vielerlei Naturwissenschaften geben, als es spezifisch verschiedene Dinge gibt, deren jedes sein eigentümliches inneres Prinzip der zu seinem Dasein gehörigen Bestimmungen enthalten muss. Sonst wird aber auch Natur in materieller Bedeutung genommen, nicht als eine Beschaffenheit, sondern als der Inbegriff aller Dinge, so fern sie Gegenstände unserer Sinne, mithin auch der Erfahrung sein können, worunter also das Ganze aller Erscheinungen, d. i. die Sinnenwelt, mit Ausschliessung aller nicht sinnlichen Objekte, verstanden wird.

teleological considerations is his *Kritik der Urteilskraft*.

When nature is considered *materialiter*, Kant says, this will mean the total of natural things and the *Inbegriff der Gegenstände der Erfahrung* (“the epitome of the objects of experience”) and we are looking at the unity of natural things in their existence; but prior to nature *materialiter* is nature as *das erste innere Prinzip alles dessen, ... was zum Dasein eines Dinges gehört*. Nature in this formal sense is prior to experience in two respects. First because nature as the formal *Gesetzmässigkeit aller Gegenstände der Erfahrung* is apriori and necessary (features not derived through experience). The *Gesetzmässigkeit* must be based on the *Beschaffenheit unseres Verstandes* (*Prolegomena* § 36). Secondly any singular phenomenon is empirical only and empirical perceptions remain as unconnected as they are when acquired. Empirical acquaintance cannot transcend itself, so no singular experience can give unity to the multitude of our perceptions. Yet, we require this unity in our reasoning, if we wish to live sensibly in our world and, still more, if we wish to understand such things as nature. Experience requires this unity in order to become knowledge.

If we did not know wherein our perceptions have their unity we could not understand anything, because no particular perception could be meaningfully situated. We cannot achieve this unifying knowledge through experience. On the contrary, this knowledge is the basis of any given particular experience. The totality or unity of knowledge is beyond any particular experience and must precede it, its logical form of representation is that of the idea but not that of the conception; and the required idea giving this sort of unity is purposiveness (*Zweckmässigkeit*).

Indeed, the Kantian idea of purposiveness has some connection with the medieval concept of creation although the former’s function and its ‘reality’ are quite different. In the Middle Ages the *natural finality* was considered primarily as a visible expression of God’s goodness and omnipotence, the Kantian purposiveness on the other hand has nothing to do with God and it is no more than an idea. If we cannot recognize God by means of our conceptions or representations in general and God as the last and highest subject establishes ultimate or highest purposes, then

His purposes too, which He had established, will be unrecognizable to us. That we cannot know these purposes results from the destruction of the possibility of the proofs of God's existence. A natural goal, therefore, can no longer be conceived any more as a goal established by God. Nevertheless the idea of a purpose cannot be surrendered, because we require it to unify our particular experience (for through objective there becomes construed a link between things). The first laws in nature, insofar as being epitomes (*Inbegriff*) of the natural phenomena contribute to this requisite unification.¹⁹⁶ That alone, however, is not sufficient, empirical laws too must contribute. It is the idea of purposiveness that unites these laws. The idea of purpose gives unity which transcends experience to the experience.

So much for the concealed background of our concept of the goal. Following, I add some notes on the three modern references to the Aristotelian teleology (mentioned above), in only a few selected examples only. Vitalism claims that teleology is a real and immaterial principle working out through nature. Of this form of vitalism, H. Driesch is an exponent.¹⁹⁷ E. Zeller represents a weaker form of vitalism when he speaks of the "[...] inherent striving for form in the material."¹⁹⁸ This is taken up together with many others by H. Happ according to whom *telos* is a kind of a principle of power, an impulse seeking a realization, an 'inner' *causa efficiens*, as it were. N. Hartmann attacked such ideas: "the ultimate nexus is a determining force, which runs against the current of the flow of time and process."¹⁹⁹ By inverting the relation between cause and effect teleology becomes nothing but a kind of inverted form of causation, as N. Hartmann observed.²⁰⁰

R. Spaemann says that in the view of Thomas Aquinas finality as well as the other three causes are real principles on which the world is constructed in the form it has in fact. He adds that according to Aristotle teleology is "a precondition for the com-

¹⁹⁶ As an example I. Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, B XXXII, says: *Z.B. der Verstand sagt: alle Veränderung hat ihre Ursache (allgemeines Naturgesetz).*

¹⁹⁷ H. Driesch, 1905.

¹⁹⁸ E. Zeller, 1921, 339: [...] *dem Stoff innewohnende Streben nach der Form...*

¹⁹⁹ N. Hartmann, 1951, 3, [...] *der Finalnexus ist eine Determination, welche der Richtung des Zeitflusses und der Prozessabläufe entgegen läuft*; cf. W. Stegmüller, 1983 (2. ed.), 679.

²⁰⁰ 1951, 21, 24, 65–68.

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prehension of natural phenomena,”²⁰¹ and that according to Thomas Aquinas the obvious orientation of things towards purposes can only be explained by a purpose-setting mind, ultimately by God.²⁰² This gives the basis for the teleological proof of the existence of God. R. Spaemann contrasts his view of the Aristotelian teleology (that the processes in nature follow a given goal) with the mere teleonomy which seeks only to explain the emergence of successful programmes.²⁰³ He sets Aristotle, however, against the idea “of universal connectedness of external objectives, in which all events in the world are related one to another and everything somehow good.”²⁰⁴ His main task was is to reconcile the different concepts of teleology in biology and philosophy. That should be possible because not concerning a “difference between two biological theories” but merely one “between two disciplines, biology and philosophy.”²⁰⁵

H. P. Cunningham treats the criticism concerning the physico-theological proof of the existence of God, as conceived by D. Hume and I. Kant, because he thinks that by this criticism Aristotle falls equally under criticism, insofar as only Aristotle’s ‘First Mover’ can ensure the purposeful coordination between things we see operating in fact. H. P. Cunningham tries, therefore, to defend the proof of the existence of God (and Aristotle with it) by pointing out that the concept of chance in the arguments of D. Hume and I. Kant does not have the same function as in the Aristotelian arguments.²⁰⁶

Some scholars have proposed an understanding of the Aristotelian teleology by showing that some metaphysical concepts (such as *genos* and *eidos*, but especially *telos*) have their origin in biological research. By investigating the biological texts of Aristotle they hoped that these concepts should become more comprehensible.

²⁰¹ R. Spaemann, 1981, 79, *eine Bedingung für das Verständnis natürlicher Phänomene*.

²⁰² R. Spaemann, 1981, 85.

²⁰³ R. Spaemann, 1988, 550.

²⁰⁴ *eines universellen Zusammenhangs äusserer Zweckmässigkeit, in der alle Ereignisse der Welt aufeinander bezogen sind und alles irgendwozu gut ist* (551).

²⁰⁵ It does not concern the *Differenz zwischen zwei biologischen Theorien* but only a *Differenz zwischen zwei Disziplinen, zwischen Biologie und Philosophie*.

²⁰⁶ H. P. Cunningham, 1991, 35. Cf. the references in K. Gloy, 1983; W. Cramer, 1967, and J. Moreau, 1975, had been treating the subject before yet.

This method seemed to be all the more appropriate since Aristotle's results and insights in the field of biology are considered important even today.²⁰⁷ These attempts presuppose that fundamental concepts like class, kind, goal become more understandable if metaphysics starts issues from biology. They assume that it is easier to understand the 'form of an animal' than the metaphysical concept of form in general, which derives from abstraction.

Again and again, then, and in a variety of ways to be sure, we see that the concept of telos plays an important role in the context of the teleological proof of the existence of God, in cosmology as in biology. It is indispensable, therefore, to ask what the function of this concept in *Met. A* may be.²⁰⁸

2.4.2. The Difficulties of these Interpretations

Thomism, old and new, incorporates Aristotelian thoughts in order to rationalize Christian dogma. In this tradition teleology means:

The directedness of the being in function and form upon an end, in which the being discovers the completeness and perfection proper to itself, but also the 'end' [...] of its essence.²⁰⁹

In this medieval context ends can be established only by a reasoning agent, be it human or divine. This reasoning sets the ends for the world as a whole and for the

²⁰⁷ D. M. Balme, 1975; W. Kullmann, 1981; F. Büchner, 1981; W. Kullmann, 1998; G. E. R. Lloyd, 1991; W. Kullmann, 1979 (now in W. Kullmann, 1998). A. Gotthelf, J. G. Lennox (eds.), 1987, here is the elaborate contribution to the Aristotelian telos by A. Gotthelf, 204–242; W. Theiler, 1925; D.-H. Cho, 2003. The anthology edited by D. T. Devereux, and P. Pellegrin (ed.), 1990, includes some important contributions, among others those of G. E. R. Lloyd, P. Pellegrin, D. M. Balme.

²⁰⁸ Some lit. on 'goal': H. Driesch, 1905; id., 1928 (4. ed.); H. Conrad-Martius, 1944; ead., 1969; N. Hartmann, 1951; K. Bartels, 1966; I. Düring, 1969; W. Kullmann, 1972; id., 1974; J. Moreau, 1975; I. Craemer-Ruegenberg, 1980; R. Bubner, 1981; R. Spaemann, 1981; id., 1988; J.-E. Pleines, 1991. Comprehensive: W. Kullmann, 1998. "Zur Wirkungsgeschichte des Teleologieprinzips" in: H. Blumenberg, 1955, 637–648; id., 1957, 61–80 und 266–283; H. Poser, 1981; A. Preus, 1990, 471–490 (esp. on *Met. A*); J.-E. Pleines, 1991.

²⁰⁹ W. Brugger, ¹⁷1976, 396, *Die Ausrichtung des Seienden in Struktur und Funktion auf ein Ziel, in dem das Seiende seine wesensgemässe Erfüllung und Vollendung, aber auch das 'Ende' [...] seines Wesens findet*

things therein. These ends are real principles for the construction of the world and its beings, as it was argued by F. Brentano in his 20th thesis. If we ask “What is the goal of this or that?” we are doing so in terms of a particular thing, but the quite distinct question “What is the goal of the whole?” implicitly underlies it. This question is possible and even necessary in respect of a world, which is not itself a whole but requires God to be truly complete. The answer will necessarily be a religious or a theological one. The Christian answer is in both cases “It is for the sake of God.” But we cannot ask further “And what is God for?” We have to note, that, just as in the Christian context we do not ask “What is God for?” so in the Aristotelian context we ask not “What is the physis for?” because physis is origin and goal of movement as God is cause and goal of His creation.

I. Düring says that Aristotle is claiming that man is the telos of all of nature,²¹⁰ while I. Craemer-Ruegenberg tries to refute this.²¹¹ She too sees a first principle in Aristotle’s system but one that is the end as such in contrast to the end of *something*. She says that in the proof of the ‘Unmoved Mover’ Aristotle identifies the moving cause and the final cause. Only in this way can the series of the particular ends culminate in an ultimate moving end, which is end only and nothing else. Especially, it is not also an instrument, as are the other ends. God as a first mover is this surmounting, ultimate cause.²¹² Both, I. Düring and I. Craemer-Ruegenberg, agree that Aristotle establishes a telos for the nature as a whole; the former sees man as the telos, the latter God. Here it becomes evident that Aristotle’s concept of end and function for the end varies widely in its modern (often contradictory) interpretations. By the standard interpretation teleology becomes an explanatory principle for the whole of the world, and because Aristotle is attributed with a realistic position, it is at once also a constructive principle.²¹³ As a result of this development it became possible to see the subject of metaphysics precisely in this interweaving of substance, reason and

²¹⁰ In: *RE* Suppl. XI, 322, with reference to Aristotle, *Politica* A 8, 1256b15–22.

²¹¹ In: H. Poser (Hrsg.), 1981.

²¹² This is a generally maintained idea, see H. Seidl, G. Reale, J. G. De Filippo, 1994, H. Flashar, 1983, and many others.

²¹³ K. Düsing, 1988, 542, thinks that it is legitimate to expand the teleological question *auf das Weltganze* and that an answer is possible; moreover he says that the objections of N. Hartmann (partly criticising metaphysics, partly categorial, partly sceptic) can be rejected (542–544).

teleology.²¹⁴

To take all causes in some way as efficient or productive was another important change in the conceptualization of cause. That is the reason why we are not used conceiving the matter (hyle) as a cause, and that telos seems to be no more than a variant of the *causa efficiens*. That change was prepared for by the Stoics²¹⁵ and it became definitive with Thomas Aquinas. In his texts *causa* without specification stands for *causa efficiens*. Up to the present, the standard interpretation adopts this habit until today by assuming that hyle, telos, eidos too have an effect one way or another such as the *causa efficiens*. The modern use of teleology implies that any end is founded by a conscience and that the world is totally organised by ends.²¹⁶

Kant has shown that the extrapolation from the experience of purposiveness in singular cases to the purposiveness of the whole is a result of the antinomy of pure reason. Human reason is urged to ask such questions concerning the whole (because it needs a frame for its understanding) but by giving the totality of conditions to a given conditioned thing and by pretending to grasp the “absolute totality in the synthesis of appearances,”²¹⁷ reason succumbs to an illusion and captures not a real object but no more than an idea. Purpose is a “merely subjective principle to the appropriate use of the cognitive faculty,”²¹⁸ by which alone we have the idea of the nature as a system of purposes (*KdU* § 67). By means of this idea we transcend particular experience. It is not possible to deduce something real from this idea of a purpose: the idea, therefore, has no theoretical but nevertheless practical value.

The concept of the subject is fundamental for the Thomistic as well as for the Kantian manner of understanding ‘end.’ Thomas Aquinas takes God as the fundamental subject, while I. Kant replaces this with human reason in general. Even if the Kantian concept of the end as an idea, which provides our experience with unity, is not expressly attributed to Aristotle, the current understanding of an end is that of *end*

²¹⁴ Cf. K. Ulmer, 1971, 16; cf. W. Stegmaier, 1977, 16.

²¹⁵ Cf. A. A. Long, D. N. Sedley, 1987, vol I, 340.

²¹⁶ Cf. the discussion by W. Wieland, 1970, 265.

²¹⁷ *Kritik der Urteilskraft* § 69, ...*die absolute Totalität in der Synthesis der Erscheinungen* ...

²¹⁸ *KdU* § 69, 312, ...*ein bloss subjektives Prinzip zum zweckmässigen Gebrauche der Erkenntnisvermögen* ...

of a subject. Thus we can see the fundamental difference between this concept of an end and the Aristotelian use of *telos*. The Aristotelian *telos* is not constitutive for the world, neither in the realistic nor in transcendental sense, it is not ‘made’ by a subject. It is, instead, an item in a set of necessary questions about causes. Aristotle draws this list from the different forms the Greek of his time use *aitia* or *aition* in their arguments.

W. Kullmann, J. G. Lennox, A. Gotthelf, D. M. Balme, and Dae-Ho Cho, have made several attempts to explain the Aristotelian metaphysics by means of biology. They start from the fact that certain concepts like ends, genus and kind play a role in biology. Thence they contend that Aristotle translated their functions from the field of life to the field of being in general, certainly as a principle of reality and existence. In this way, those concepts became metaphysical terms. If we take into account the Aristotelian way of handling the issue, we will see that this argument is circular. It is sure enough that Aristotle does refer to biological examples in order to illustrate certain things, but he does so in aiming at discovering the fundamentals of just of those concepts we use in everyday life, whether be it in biology or elsewhere. He is interested in the fundamental opinions on which our everyday and our technical language are based. It is permitted only to everyday life or biology to presuppose the meaning of *eidos*, not to reflection. For reflection such opinions are starting points for research. It is the aim of reflection to make these concepts clear and well-founded.

If there had been any Aristotelian metaphysics at all, it would not have been an abstractive project or a discipline mandated to make fundamental statements about things beyond natural beings. It would, instead, have been the name for research into the principles and fundamentals of our language and our opinions about beings. In this research, it is important to see that when we think or speak, we cannot help but use *to be*. *Ousia*, being, *Sein*, therefore, is at the core of all these efforts.

We could apply the ‘biological’ method if these concepts were abstractions. But if Aristotle analyses in “topical attitude” (*topische Einstellung*) the diffuse everyday opinions in order to get at their fundamentals as causes, categories, predicables,

genus, kinds, actuality, potentiality etc., and if these can be used in a purified form as terms, then it is circular to say that the ‘metaphysical’ concepts would be easier to understand if they are explained by their biological origin, because this use were more natural or more fundamental. The concepts of genus, kind, goal etc. in biology are the raw material for reflection and analysis, they are presuppositions (*Vormeinungen*) that are still not clarified, they remain to be clarified. It is not possible to clarify the results of the analysis by means of these still unclarified opinions. It is quite another issue that these opinions can serve very well as illustrations anywhere.

The ‘descriptive teleology’ tries to protect Aristotle from the direct attribution of our modern concept of purpose – an evident anachronism – because this concept depends totally on the concept of a subject. In an article on Aristotle’s teleology W. Kullmann proposes as definition of teleology:

With the notion of teleology (or final purpose) we connect the idea that certain movements, in particular certain technical or organic processes are goal-driven.²¹⁹

Here and elsewhere he wants to meet certain reproaches that have been made against the Aristotelian teleology, especially against the connection of the telos with a conscious reason.²²⁰ Quite the contrary, he says, Aristotle’s teleology is descriptive only, without any reference to a designing reason. In a similar way S. Broadie (1990) argues that Aristotle’s teleology does not have any psychological implications. A descriptive teleology does no more than ascertain “that it is good how it is; that it is convenient,” it does not entail a claim that any subject arranged or planned it.

S. Broadie argues that Aristotle formed his concept of natural teleology by analogy with human handicraft, but that this does not mean that teleology is contam-

²¹⁹ W. Kullmann, 1979; jetzt in: id., 1998, 255ff., *Mit dem Begriff der Teleologie (oder der Finalität) verbinden wir die Vorstellung, dass bestimmte Bewegungsabläufe, insbesondere bestimmte technische oder organische Prozesse zielgerichtet sind.*

²²⁰ W. Kullmann, 1979, now in: id., 1998, 12–15; cf. id., 1981, 23.

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inated by psychology,²²¹ because “even the artisan does not deliberate.”²²² What the craftsman does is not determined by his own deliberations but by professional rules (*techne*).

Examining *De Generatione Animalium A*. Preus too concludes that teleology has nothing to do with a deliberative behavior.²²³ According to Aristotle natural things have the principle of movement *in se* therefore there is no need of a creator as an external principle. We would, otherwise, have a double causation for one and the same being. Aristotle avoids determinism and does not know of evolution (249ff.). We can state, at the least, that A. Preus’ arguments support the understanding of the ends as a functional concept (257).

Some of the problems arising with teleology may be conceivably be obviated through emergentism, but I am not aware of anyone who has yet attempted, as much in the Aristotelian context. All the same, it is worth a glance, because of the relationship of emergentism with vitalism. Emergentism seeks to bring into account the hierarchical organisation of things (in different varieties, to varying degrees to be sure), together with the fact that in the course of development there come about new functions and new things. In order to make this account, emergentism is unwilling to ground this finality upon a supernatural entity, be that the conscious and deliberate creation of a god or some immanent metaphysical principle beyond material nature. Emergentism forms an early 20th century reaction against the inadequacy of materialism as well as of vitalism (e. g. S. Alexander, C. L. Morgan, W. Sellars), in the second half a response to the defeat of the reductionist approach (e. g. H. Putnam, J. Fodor, N. Block, K. R. Popper, M. Bunge).²²⁴ Emergentism, then, may be seen as

²²¹ S. Broadie, 1990.

²²² S. Broadie, 1990, 398: Aristoteles, *Physics* 199b26–28. !Physics!199b26–28

²²³ A. Preus, 1975.

²²⁴ Some important literature on emergentism: W. Krohn, G. Küppers (Hrsg.), 1992; A. Beckermann, H. Flohr, J. Kim (ed.), 1992 (contributions of a conference in Bielefeld, 1990); M. Tooley (ed.), 1999 (a collection of classical articles from 1950 to 1992); A. Stephan, 1999 (an overview of positions and issues). On the concept of emergence: Elanor Taylor, “An explication of emergence,” *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, Vol. 172, No. 3 (March 2015), pp. 653-669. Bedau, Mark, and Humphreys, Paul (2008). *Emergence: Contemporary Readings in Philosophy and Science*, Cambridge: MIT Press.

a modern method for resolving problems, which in the past were solved by means of teleology. Its main tool is the concept of self-organisation. That this theory still pertains is due to the issues it seeks to explain. How can we understand that natural objects have life? How can we understand the genesis of mental activities? And yet, even the chemical or perceptive features of things require explanations beyond what is given, beyond description of their corporeal features. Many anthologies, even instituted competition (such as the *Essay Prize* offered by the *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 1997), and endless controversy testify to the fascination of this approach.

2.4.3. An Alternative Understanding of Aristotle's Teleology

The standard interpretation sees in Aristotle's teleology a constructive principle, by which our world as it is may be built up. If we pay attention to the use Aristotle makes of the term *telos* or more precisely *to hou heneka*, then we see that this is simply one of four causes, which are no more than answers to four classes of questions (along with the claim, that any question is reducible to one of these four). The four classes of answers express our opinions about the causes of beings. And just as in any other case it is the philosopher's task to ask after the first. Aristotle asks in *Met. A* about the first which sets in motion in the same way as he does for the first with any other of the four causes.

Aristotle uses different types of terms. The difference between functional and content-related concepts is of particular importance. Concepts such as 'soul,' 'nature,' 'cosmos,' describe a concrete subject, they name respective themes with which to deal. They refer to beings, events, facts in our world. By contrast, functional concepts are tools with which to analyze questions and issues, which are implied in the content-related concepts. Using them we can provisionally hold off from content and reflect exclusively on that which is given in the employed expression, in the underlying thoughts, in the presuppositions concerning content. Functional concepts differ in most cases from the content-related concepts by their linguistic form. As a rule thematical concepts are substantives, adjectives, verbs, but functional concepts are

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formed on words constructed from prepositions, pronomina etc.²²⁵

Plato had early isolated such ‘hinges’ of the structure of sentences by means of the article. So this expression is a quotation and refers to the function the term has in a sentence. The most famous examples in Plato’s *Sophist* are the terms *tauto*, *thateron*, *to ou* which designate identity, difference, negation. The quotational function of the article is used in everyday Greek too, there is nothing artificial in it. In this way are formed the terms of the four causes. Aristotle does not argue with the objective of constructing the world upon these four causes, but he does claim that there is no question, which cannot be ranked with one of them. All questions fall in one of the classes which state what any given thing is made of (to ex hou, he hyle), whence it is set in motion (hohen he arche tes metaboles, to proton kinoun, or kinesi), what it really is (to ti en einai, to eidos), and for the sake of what it is (to hou heneka, to telos). It is an additional condition that these four causes are not reducible to one another. In this sense they are four corner points. Aristotle did not obtain them empirically, through physical experiments and research, but through reflection on the use of these expressions. So these terms reflect opinions about causes, which lie in the language itself (not in the personal or private opinion of somebody about this or that). They, therefore, cannot be said to construct a world in any realistic sense. The train of Aristotle’s analyzes are not preserved in our texts, we have only the results (concerning the causes see *Physics* B 3 and *Met.* Δ 2). That Aristotle can introduce these terms without any further explanation suggests that terms like *to ti estin?* *to ti en einai*, *to ex hou*, *to hou heneka*, *to hoti* etc. were self-evident in their linguistic structure to every contemporary native speaker, because they were constructed by the means of everyday language. The linguistic background of the terms *to ti estin* and *to ti en einai* is especially evident. The former quotes the question “What is that?” the latter the question *τουτί τί ἦν τὸ πρᾶγμα*; “What at all is this?” common in the colloquial language.²²⁶ Aristotle treats other opinions about the causes (e.g. that *tyche*, chance, or *tautomaton*, accident, are causes) in the same analytical way (*Physics* B 4–7).

²²⁵ Many examples and references by E. Sonderegger, 2012, 3.2., *Anführungen*.

²²⁶ For references in the Aristophanes’ comedies see E. Sonderegger, 1983.

The linguistic form of these terms gives strong evidence for their functional character. They all quote parts of sentences. All these terms: “The out-of-which?” or “The where-from-of-movement?” or “The for-what-reason?” or “The meaning of *to be* as used in the question ‘What at all is this?’” are reminiscent of the functions of these expressions in sentences like “Out of which is that made?” “What is it made of?” “Where does the movement of this thing come from?” “For what reason is that here?” “What is it really about?” This connection gets lost, of course, when for centuries the abbreviated forms, removed from their living speech context (such as e. g. *hyle*, *telos*, already coined by Aristotle) and then their Latin translations – e. g. *causa materialis*, *formalis*, *efficiens* and *finalis* – become current, and all that with a solid realistic background. We drift very easily into realism anyway; especially in this case when the original context of the expressions has been lost. Plato has pointed out this fact in the *Sophist* in the context of the defenders of the body as the proper being.

That, in any case, seems to be the reflex attitude for us all, and rightly so since it enables us to get on with the business of living life. It enables and entitles us to be realists, to care about the facts, without wondering too much about what is not immediately given, about the frame which we live in (as language, culture, education, world, prevailing opinion in general) and where things and facts are coming constantly into being. This pragmatic move seems to be a predominant feature, at least in European culture. Indeed, the reflectiveness is not always the most useful attitude, at any rate, not invariably the appropriate response to any given situation. But Aristotle’s concern is not everyday life, it is precisely reflection. And here we cannot afford to take functions and elements of sentences for realia, that is for things and objects.²²⁷

In the course of time these concepts have been understood in many different ways. The concept of the end, in particular, is one that became subject to several different influences. Some cultural changes gave the term a special turn. The Stoics were realists, and their conception of hypostasis, in the sense of a materialistic existence,

²²⁷ Already W. Wieland, 1982, 262, had argued that way.

became the core of their *ousia*. So philosophy has confirmed the common sense. In the Christian era some leaders felt the need to maintain and to prove the reality and existence of their God in the face of other gods. Philosophy was also deployed as a weapon in this battle. By philosophical argumentations it became possible 'to prove' that God is the supreme for-the-sake-of the world. In this way, an analytical and heuristic tool became hypostasized, a thing or embodiment.

Textual tradition contributed its part in this process. So Theophrastus' *Met.* (written in a realistic attitude) was transmitted as introduction to Aristotle's *Met.*. Furthermore it was read up until almost the present day as a late text and as a criticism of a disappointed student, with the teleology of its master as the main target. This made it easier to find this teleology in the criticized texts too. New findings seem to question the traditional assumptions. Theophrastus' *Metaphysics* is neither a fragment nor of late date. It was probably written in the same period as *Met. A*, which means shortly after Aristotle left Athens after the death of Plato, possibly accompanied by Theophrastus. Both texts reflect the contemporary status of problems treated in the Old Academy: one, however, in a realistic the other in a speculative manner (see below, 5.1.2).

One of these functional concepts is to *hou heneka*, with the abbreviation to *telos*. The term to *hou heneka* is compound of a relative pronoun and a preposition. Relative phrases may open with it (without article of course) having the sense 'for the sake of' or 'because of' or 'thanks to' or 'due to.'²²⁸

²²⁸ Platon, *Phaedo* 67b, Οὐκοῦν, ἔφη ὁ Σωκράτης, εἰ ταῦτα ἀληθῆ, ὃ ἑταῖρε, πολλὴ ἐλπίς ἀφικομένῳ οἷ ἐγὼ πορεύομαι, ἐκεῖ ἱκανῶς, εἴπερ που ἄλλοθι, κτήσασθαι τοῦτο οὐ ἔνεκα ἢ πολλῆ (10) πραγματεία ἡμῖν ἐν τῷ παρελθόντι βίῳ γέγονεν, ὥστε ἢ γε (c1) ἀποδημία ἢ νῦν μοι προστεταγμένη μετὰ ἀγαθῆς ἐλπίδος γίγνεται καὶ ἄλλῳ ἀνδρὶ ὡς ἡγεῖται οἱ παρεσκευάσθαι τὴν διάνοιαν ὥσπερ κεκαθαυμένην.

'Well then, my friend,' said Socrates, 'if that is true, I may well hope that when I have reached the place whither I am bound I shall attain in full measure, there at last, *that for which* I have spent the effort of a lifetime; therefore it is with good hope that I set out upon the journey now appointed for me, as may any who deems that his mind is made ready and purified' (R. Hackforth, 1952).

Platon, *Theaetetus* 184a, καὶ μοι ἐφάνη βάθος τι ἔχειν παντάπασιν γενναῖον. φοβοῦμαι οὖν μὴ οὔτε τὰ λεγόμενα συνιώμεν, τί τε διανοοῦμενος εἶπε πολὺ πλέον λειπόμεθα, καὶ τὸ μέγιστον, οὐ ἔνεκα ὁ λόγος ὠρμηται, ἐπιστήμης περί τι ποτ' ἐστίν, ἄσκεπτον γένηται (5) ὑπὸ τῶν ἐπεισχωμαζόντων λόγων, εἴ τις αὐτοῖς πείσεται

...and I thought there was a sort of depth in him that was altogether noble. I am afraid we might

Such relative phrases are part of Greek colloquial language, they are the starting points for understanding the functional term. To hou heneka equates to: “Think of that which you think every time you use the phrase ‘Something is for the sake of something else.’” Through the article it becomes a reference and a term. Terms like for-the-sake-of are not content-related conceptions but only functional ones, they help to articulate a question or to analyze a given problem. As a quotation to hou heneka cannot have a fixed content like ‘world-order,’ ‘god’ or the like. But in

not understand his words and still less follow the thought they express. Above all, that *for the sake of which* our discussion started – the nature of knowledge – might be thrust out of sight, if we attend to these importunate topics that keep breaking in upon us (following Cornford, 1935).

Platon, *Philebus* 54c Sokrates: Οὐκοῦν ἡδονὴ γε, εἶπερ γένεσις ἐστίν, ἕνεκά τινος οὐσίας ἐξ ἀνάγκης γίγνιτ’ ἄν. Protarch: Τί μὴν; S.: Τό γε μὴν οὐδ’ ἕνεκά του γιγνόμενον ἀεὶ ἰὸ γίγνιτ’ ἄν, ἐν τῇ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ μοίρα ἐκεῖνό ἐστι· τὸ δὲ τινὸς ἕνεκα γιγνόμενον εἰς ἄλλην, ὃ ἄριστε, μοῖραν θετέον. Pr.: Ἀναγκαιότατον.

S.: Then there must be some Being with a view to which pleasure comes to be, if it is true that pleasure is Becoming. Pr.: Of course. S.: That *for the sake of which* every thing may come to be falls under the heading of Good; while the means, my excellent friend, must find a place under another heading. Pr.: Most decidedly (after R. Hackforth, 1945).

Platon, *Symposium* 220c, Τὸν οὖν Σωκράτη, Νήφειν μοι δοκεῖς, φάναι, ὃ Ἀλκιβιάδῃ, οὐ γὰρ ἄν ποτε οὕτω κομψῶς κύκλω περι(5)βαλλόμενος ἀφανίσαι ἐνεχέριες οὐδ’ ἕνεκα ταῦτα πάντα εἴρηκας.

Then Socrates said, “You are sober, in my opinion, Alcibiades, for otherwise you would never have so elegantly cast a screen about yourself and tried to conceal *why* you said all this (Benardete).

Platon, *Protagoras* 316b, Τί οὖν ἐστίν, ἔφη, οὐδ’ ἕνεκα ἤκατε;

He said “What is it *wherefore* you come?”

Platon, *Gorgias* 467c, Sokrates: Πότερον οὖν σοι δοκοῦσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι τοῦτο βούλεσθαι ὃ ἂν πράττουσιν ἕκαστοτε, ἢ ἐκεῖνο οὐδ’ ἕνεκα πράττουσιν τοῦθ’ ὃ πράττουσιν;

Then is it your view that people wish merely that which they do each time, or that *for the sake of which* they are doing what they do?

Platon, *Politeia* 410c, Ἄρ’ οὖν, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ, ὃ Γλαύκων, καὶ οἱ καθιστάντες (c1) μουσικῇ καὶ γυμναστικῇ παιδεύειν οὐχ ἕνεκά τινος οἰόνται καθιστᾶσιν, ἵνα τῇ μὲν τὸ σῶμα θεραπεύοιντο, τῇ δὲ τὴν ψυχὴν;

Then may we not say, Glaucon, said I, that those who established an education in music and gymnastics did so *for the sake of something* namely to treat the body by one and the soul by the other?

Aristotle, *Protrepticus*, B 12 (Jamblichus, *Protrepticus* 9), Τῶν μὲν οὖν ἀπὸ τύχης γιγνομένων οὐδὲν ἕνεκά του γίνεσθαι, οὐδ’ ἔστι τι τέλος αὐτοῖς· τοῖς δ’ ἀπὸ τέχνης γιγνομένοις ἕνεστι καὶ τὸ τέλος καὶ τὸ οὐδ’ ἕνεκα (ἀεὶ γὰρ ὁ τὴν τέχνην ἔχων ἀποδώσει σοι λόγον δι’ ὃν ἔγραψε καὶ οὐδ’ ἕνεκα), καὶ τοῦτο [ὑτί] βέλτιόν ἐστιν ἢ τὸ 5 διὰ τοῦτο γιγνόμενον.

Now of the things that come into being by chance none comes into being *for the sake of anything*, nor have they an end; but in the case of things that come into being by art there is an end and an *object of purpose* (for he who possesses the art will tell you the reason why he wrote, and for what purpose he did so), and this is better than that which comes into being for its sake.

a given situation it may be well that if we know the telos we know the answer. Even so, the answer would be only a partial one because for a full answer we have still to ask the further questions about the other causes too. Telos together with the other conceptions in this group give structural guidelines for the research, they constitute a set of questions which functions as a heuristic principle.

In order to see more clearly its function, we shall examine some of the texts where Aristotle uses telos. In the *Physics* the concept plays a role when he develops the concept of nature. If we come to understand the function of telos in this context we shall be able to decide, whether Aristotle had developed a teleology in the sense of the standard interpretation or not. In a short outline of the question of what nature is, as developed in the *Physics*, we can locate the starting point of this question, then we may consider the function of telos in this question. Beside some references in *Met. A* (esp. chapters 7, 8 and 10) we find important remarks on telos in *Physics* B 2 and 8, in *De Partibus Animalium* and in the so-called scientific texts in general.

To understand what natural beings are, means to understand the ousia of these beings. Certainly, there are few assertions in the *Physics* that Aristotle wants to uphold, but the following ones certainly belong to this group:

- The being (*Sein*) of the natural beings is physis, nature.
- Physis is the principle of natural beings.
- Natural beings cannot be without movement.
- Physis is the principle of movement and rest of natural beings.
- All agree that natural beings realize *to be* (ousia, *Sein*) in an exemplary way, be they particular beings or parts of it or their elements.

What we have to ask in *Physics*, therefore, is: In what sense is physis the principle of the movement of natural beings? In several overviews of opinions of former thinkers Aristotle shows that they too understood physis as a principle and a cause (see *Physics* A and *Met. A*). But those have grasped the cause only in the form of the ‘out-of-what-is-that-made?’ For them physis was primarily hyle (see summary in *Met. A* 3, 984a16–18). It is true that for movement an underlying being is necessary,

something which persists through change. But nevertheless we have to ask whether this is sufficient to take hyle as the definitive principle of natural beings and of their movement. If we consider what hyle is, we must deny so. Hyle means ‘to be appropriate for...,’ it has not any determinations; nothing can be said about it; it is not a particular thing; it is pure possibility; it is, what it is only with respect to or in relation to another being. That hyle cannot capture physis as cause and principle of the movement of natural beings does not imply that that answer is totally wrong, the answer is only incomplete; the other causes must, consequently, be considered too. Is not physis cause or principle in the sense of the telos or the eidos? The cause in the sense of ‘origin of movement’ had already been taken into account by the Presocratics even if only vaguely (see summary in *Met. A* 4, 985a10–14).

At several places Aristotle speaks about the turn from physis as hyle to physis as telos, e. g. *Physics* B 2 and B 7–8. In *Met. Z* 3 too, the question concerns the same turn in the context of the question about ousia (*Sein*). Let us try to pick out the main points. In *Physics* A Aristotle asks what are the principles of natural beings and what is already known by others; in book B he asks how and in which ways physis is a principle. Asking the second question he examines claims of common sense, namely that the out-of-which is the nature of beings and then that nature is the form, the eidos, of beings (B 1–2). He then proposes his own distinctions, gained by the analysis of colloquial language. The result is the four aitia. But there were other opinions concerning the causes, namely that chance or accident could be a cause, these too are treated (B 4–6). In B 7 he concludes that there are no more causes than the four, for, yes, tyche and tautomaton are causes too, but only incidental ones. What is meant by them is not a cause itself but must be considered as ‘as-if-appropriateness.’ Both presuppose the concept of telos, they cannot found it. By the endoxa themselves it is clear that hyle cannot be what natural beings properly are and can’t be the principle of their movement. Nobody would accept the answer to the question “What is that made of?” if he had been asking “What is that?” or “What is that for?” If somebody would like to know the form of a bed he will not be content with the answer “It is made of timber.” Already in situations like these the eidos is more essential than hyle.

And in our everyday life we take the actual being to be ‘more being’ (*seiender*), i. e. *to be* in a truer sense than the possible thing. The completed bed realizes the sense of bed better than the planks in the stock of the carpenter. The out-of-which of a being is this being as potentiality; only when the eidetic determinations are realized *is* the being really. That all this has to do with colloquial language is confirmed by the considerations in *Met. H* and *Θ*. After all hyle being a mere possibility is a principle, but, compared with the *eidos*, only in a weaker sense.

The analogy between the production by artisanal knowledge and the coming to be by *physis* is another cause for taking *eidos* more fundamentally than hyle. The artisan has to know the appropriate material and the form of the work. Insofar as handcraft imitates and pursues nature, must *physis* be a principle not only as hyle but as *eidos* too. In fact *telos*, *eidos* and the origin of movement are often the one and the same being (*Physics B 7*), with the effect that the knowledge about *eidos* includes the knowledge about the *telos* and the origin of movement. What comes to be, turns from something into something else. That out of which it becomes is nature and that into which it turns, its essential form, is nature too. Even the way from the out-of-which into the result, the process proper of coming to be is *physis*, and that, perhaps, in the most proper form (“The so-called nature as becoming is a way into the nature”).²²⁹ What comes to be reaches its end in its nature.

What is it that we understand, when we say that we understand the *telos* of a being? What does it mean to state that *physis* is a cause in the sense of for-the-sake-of? As a coming-to-be *physis* *intends* to its being. Actuality is the essential modus of the *ousia* of beings (*des Seins des Seienden*). What comes to be has a relative being (*Sein*), it is provisional, directed, it points beyond itself. An everyday example may illustrate this: children play, learn, grow up etc. Certainly all these activities have a sense in themselves, through them children evolve, they reach adulthood. By them children *are*, what they do is not at all inconsequential. Nevertheless, it would not be sensible to say that all what they do is for its own sake, without any aim beyond this particular activity. It is not completely irrelevant, whether the baby becomes

²²⁹ *Physics B 1*, 193b12–13, ἔτι δ’ ἡ φύσις ἡ λεγομένη ὡς γένεσις ὁδὸς ἐστὶν εἰς φύσιν.

an adult or not. We say of a baby “This is a human being” but we take the sense of human from the adult and developed being and we distinguish the meaning ‘baby’ from the meaning ‘human being’ because they do not share all determinations in common. The baby is a potential human being because he is on the way to becoming a human being.

We will not draw far-reaching ethical conclusions from this, otherwise we should have to take into account more than the mere concept of man, but the example ought to make clear only that there is a difference between the being in the course of its realization and the being which has reached its *eidōs* and which *is* this *eidōs* in fact. I think Aristotle would like to give a relative right to both modes of being (the baby and the adult) but nevertheless to define the one as the for-the-sake-of the other. Natural beings have their periods, over several periods things come *to be*.

After its origination becoming continues up to its culmination – in Greek this is called its *akme* – with all its essential determinations. In this actual phase of being, becoming comes to its end and this end is not a termination but a fulfilment. Then it passes slowly away to its temporal end and dissolution.²³⁰ In this culmination the being finds its achievement. The end of becoming (i. e. the *akme*) is the beginning of being (*Sein*). Therefore Aristotle names this actuality its *telos*, the turning point of becoming. And, we remember, actuality does not signify existence but ‘to have the determinations belonging to its *eidōs*.’ The result of becoming is again nature,

²³⁰ Physics, B 2, 194a27–33:

ἔτι τὸ οὐ ἔνεκα καὶ τὸ τέλος τῆς αὐτῆς, καὶ ὅσα τούτων ἔνεκα. ἡ δὲ physis τέλος καὶ οὐ ἔνεκα (ὄν γὰρ συνεχοῦς τῆς κινήσεως οὐσης ἔστι τι τέλος, 30 τοῦτο <τὸ> ἔσχατον καὶ τὸ οὐ ἔνεκα· διὸ καὶ ὁ ποιητὴς γελοίως προήχθη εἰπεῖν ἔχει τελευτήν, ἥσπερ οὐνεκ’ ἐγένετο· βούλεται γὰρ οὐ πᾶν εἶναι τὸ ἔσχατον τέλος, ἀλλὰ τὸ βέλτιστον)

Further, it belongs to the same study to know the end or what something is for, and to know whatever is for that end. Now nature is an end and what something is for. For whenever there is a definite end to a continuous change, that last thing is also what it is for; whence the comical sally in the play ‘He has reached the end for which he was born’ – for the end should not be just any last thing, but the best (Transl. W. Charlton, 1970).

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physis. In its completeness being can present itself. So, what was only possibility, now is actuality. This actuality is the for-the-sake-of becoming, but all the rest is for the for-the-sake-of.

Some say that they find in the first sentences of Timaeus' lecture (*Timaeus* 29de) the preparatory stage of teleology, combined with theology:

Let us, then, state for what reason becoming and this universe were framed by him who framed them. He was good...

We shall return to this below, 5.1.1, in dealing with that dialogue.

The difference in Theophrastus' conception of the goal compared with that of Aristotle is especially well visible in paragraphs 15, 24–27, 28–34 of his *Metaphysics*. Afterwards, in the view of the reception this became the pupil's angry reaction to the exaggerated use of teleology by his master in explaining things. What were four points in a list of questions and a hermeneutical principle in Aristotle's thinking became for Theophrastus (or for the Old Academy) a constructive principle of the world, even if one with a non-realistic basis, of course.

Indeed, in the view of Theophrastus these questions are also closely tied to discourse and opinion. Further, the beginning of his text and his evaluation of astronomy in § 27 show that he is well aware of the speculative aspect of the case. On the other hand, the way he treats the question of how numbers may be related to perceptible things or of how numbers can produce life and movement, reveal a realistic mood (§ 3). Aristotle treats the same question in *Met. A* 10.30–10.41. Here again he stands in strong contrast to Theophrastus.

When we consider how Theophrastus in § 6 deals with the question which forms the speculative apex for Aristotle – that the origin is actuality and being (*Sein*; *Met. A* 6.8), further indivisible, not quantifiable, divine (*Met. A* 7.27, in the summary, using Parmenidean terms) – we discern with ease the difference between the realistic and the speculative view.

Theophrastus often speaks about telos. The main question, he says, is how far we

can (or must) go into details in the search of the goal of something and in the deduction of causes and, whether or not it is possible to assign a goal to all things. He says it is decisive to find the criteria for the limit on how far we can assert something about the telos (§ 24). Not only W. Theiler, 1929, but present scholars too take those questions as a criticism of the use of the telos by Aristotle.²³¹ In this line of reception, Aristotle's telos is a constructive principle, something with an active power in reality. This is quite incorrect in the case of Aristotle, and not fully adequate even in the case of Theophrastus.

Aristotle himself does not claim that there is a deducible telos for everything, because he distinguishes between different forms of causes. If we wish to state the causes of a being, we must consider all four types of causes. For some questions it is correct to claim the hyle as cause, for others the moving etc. And finally Aristotle often says that "we see that some beings are ever the same way, but other beings only mostly," and it is evident "that some becoming things are for the sake of something, but others not" (see e. g. *Physics* B 5). If Theophrastus had intended to criticize Aristotle his criticism had missed its mark.

Let us illuminate once more, in a different manner, how physis can be a principle in the sense of for-the-sake-of without being a constructive teleological principle. There are many things in nature about which we can say "X is good for Y." Be X a feature or quality of an animal, Y an ability to act (e. g. "Legs are good for walking."). If activities result in a thing ("The carpenter made a table"), then Aristotle calls that kinesis, if in the realization or actualization of the animal itself an *energeia*. If you say "X is good for Y" then this means "X is good for the actuality of the *eidos* Y," because the respective activity is part of the *eidos* of the respective being (note that here too 'actuality' does not equate simply to existence). The change from possibility to actuality is constitutive for the concept of actuality (see *Physics* Θ, conclusion). The actual being is that which has the *eidos*, the more it has the determinations of its *eidos* the more it *is* and is real or actual. Step by step a being grows into its completed form which is the last for-the-sake-of of becoming.

²³¹ See the *Handbuch*, edited by Rapp und Corcilius, 2011, 406, where Theophrastus' *Metaphysics* is still a *Fragment*.

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This is not established by any conscious reasoning.

In *De partibus Animalium* (A 1, 639b21) Aristotle distinguishes different types of necessity. One of them is the hypothetical necessity, which we encounter in nature: “If there should be an eidos of a natural being, then there must be that-and-that before.” The same can be said with identical sense in terms of the for-the-sake-of: “The former possible being is for the sake of the actuality of the eidos of a natural being.” The last for-the-sake-of is the actuality of a respective being, so that growing up or developing becomes nature.

Now we touch on the use of telos in two other sectors of Aristotle’s philosophy. First telos has an essential function in ethics. The *Nicomachean Ethics* begins with considerations on telos. For the sake of the good we do anything. The goals and purposes of our actions are diverse, we have, therefore, to ask how they relate to each other, if they have some order and which is the highest or the proper purpose of man. In order to give an answer Aristotle separates activities which have their goal in themselves and activities which have their goal beyond themselves. Activities of the first type take place for themselves. They are named *energeiai* – to go for a walk, to think and to recognize are examples of *energeiai*. The second type has a result beyond its own activity, these are named *kineseis*, of which craft activities are examples.

A few deliberations on *endoxa* lead to the insight, that the proper good and the highest telos of man is *eudaimonia*. *Eudaimonia* is not outside or beyond the activity or state which makes a man *eudaimon*. It is the purpose which is the goal of all other purposes, and it has nothing beyond itself. All other goals and purposes have to comply with it. If we look more precisely at what *eudaimonia* consists in (*Nicomachean Ethics* A 9), we see that it is *energeia*, actuality, in fact the proper and best actuality of man. The ethical considerations, then, conclude with the same result, namely that the telos is the realisation of nature.²³²

What about the use of telos in the concrete research of natural beings? It is neither

²³² T. Schirren, 1998, addressed a book in this connection.

possible nor necessary to summarize all the texts which deal with science, I shall take as exemplary *Physics* B 8, 199a20ff. Here Aristotle discusses some instances from this domain, in some detail the example of the spider, which makes its web as appropriately as the swallow builds its nest. Two remarks from the outset: these examples are neither designed to prove some superior reason of any kind nor to show nature as a mysterious agent of goals. They should make clear, however, that to declare the telos often facilitates better understanding some features in nature. We understand some things much better when we know their for-the-sake-of than anything other given quality. The telos therefore is a heuristic principle and not, importantly, a means to create the cosmos.

Let's look at the text in more detail (*Physics* B 8, 199a26–30):

If, then, the swallow's act in making its nest is both due to nature and for something, and the spider's in making its web, and the plant's in producing leaves for its fruit, and roots not up but down for nourishment, plainly this sort of cause is present in things which are and come to be due to nature. And, since nature is twofold, nature as matter and nature as form, and the latter is an end, and everything else is for the end, the cause is that for which must be the latter.²³³

The circle closes. The spider spins its web. The spider has a nature. Its nature is the principle of movement of the natural being. This nature causes the spider to make its web. That the spider makes its web is part of the realization of the spider's nature. It is part of the actuality of the spider to make its web. The perfect actuality of man is the eudaimonia as is said in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. This actuality is not like a possession, but obtains continuously, at every respective moment (*je und je*). Man is and lives having perceptions and thoughts (*Nicomachean Ethics* A 9) by 'actualizing his being' he realizes his nature.

So far we have looked at the Aristotelian teleology without reference to *Met. A*.

²³³ Transl. by W. Charlton, 1970. – *Wenn denn die Spinne ihr Netz [...] von Natur aus und um einer Sache willen <sc. um der Nahrung willen> macht, dann ist klar, dass ein Grund dieser Art <sc. das Worum-Willen als Grund> im Werden und im Seienden ist. Und weil die Natur zwiefach ist, zum einen als hyle, zum andern als Gestalt, diese aber das Telos ist, um des Telos willen aber das andere, dann wäre dieses der Grund, das Worum-Willen.* – W. Charlton tends to a view of teleology with a basis *in re*, see p 121.

Our observations should serve as a basis for interpreting respective places in the commentary. We will close with some preparatory remarks on the function of telos in *Met. A*. First, I recapitulate some points belonging to the standard view, which say that Aristotle in *Met. A*, speaking about god, must speak too about the relations between god and the world, and that he does so by means of his concept of telos. It is said that god is the ultimate telos of all beings,²³⁴ that all beings are orientated towards him and seeking for him. As natural processes in general drive on towards their end (telos), so the world as a whole drives towards God because, as its Unmoved Mover, He is the telos of the world. The primary function of the telos is to make possible the teleological proof of the existence of God.

When we examine the text we see, that in *Met. A* 1–5 Aristotle speaks of aitia and archai, in general. In *A* 5.11 he summarizes four kinds of causes: the eidos and the steresis, the hyle and the moving cause. Telos is thematic only in an indirect way in chapter 6, namely insofar as the goal is a characteristic of the concept of actuality, which, again, emphatically does not mean existence, but the fact that a being reaches its end by realizing its eidos. Only with *A* 7.1–7.4 is telos the theme, because we have to understand how an unmoved moving must be conceived; without an

²³⁴ See Thomas Aquinas, *In Metaphysicam Aristotelis Commentaria*, Nr. 2521:

Dicitur autem primum movens movere sicut appetibile, quia motus caeli est propter ipsum, sicut propter finem, causatus ab aliquo proximo movente quod movet propter primum movens immobile, ut assimilet se ei in causando, et explicet in actum id quod est virtute in primo movente. Non enim est motus caeli propter generationem et corruptionem inferiorum sicut propter finem, cum finis sit nobilior eo quod est ad finem. Sic igitur primum movens movet sicut appetibile.

In the *secunda via* of the proofs of the existence of God Thomas Aquinas says that God is *causa efficiens*, see *Summa Theologiae*, Prima Pars, Quaestio 2, Art. 3. – H. Seidl, 1995, 61, denotes him as *höchster transzendentaler Zweck*. – E. Berti, 2000, 202–203, confirms the standard interpretation slightly modifying it:

What is clear, . . . is that the unmoved mover is an efficient cause, and not a final cause in the sense of the standard interpretation, i. e. as final cause of the heaven.

And: . . .the unmoved mover itself, which is the final cause of itself and moves the heaven having itself as aim, i. e. the same unmoved mover.

unmoved moving cause the actual movements would disappear in infinity. There are already in our everyday experience, Aristotle says, examples of unmoved moving causes, namely τὸ ὀρεκτὸν καὶ τὸ νοητόν, “that which is aimed at and that which is thought of” (*Met. A*, 7, 1072a26). That which is aimed at and that which is thought of, the beloved for instance, move our striving and our thinking evidently without any movement of themselves. Such is the feature of the for-the-sake-of, it can move other beings without itself being moved (1072b1); we strive for the sake of the strived at, we think for the sake of the thought of (*um des Gedanken willen*). So in *Met. A* the function of the telos consists in enabling us to understand that and how the first moving is unmoved. The first moving moves “like a telos” and is capable of moving something else, itself unmoved.

We cannot presuppose here the meaning of the designations ‘being’ (*Sein*), ‘awareness,’ ‘actuality’ in *Met. A* 7 (ousia, noesis, energeia). We have to ask entirely anew what is the meaning of the thesis that ousia, *Sein*, is the first moving and that it moves unmoved itself, that it moves like the for-the-sake-of. In these considerations we must not forget that ‘being’ is not isolated but correlated with ‘actuality’ and ‘awareness’ in a way which is still to be explained. I refer to the respective places in the commentary, which suggest that teleology in the sense of the standard interpretation must be dispatched of, it remains, in fact, inappropriate to the speculative drive in Aristotle’s thinking.

2.5. *Met. A* as Noology

It is common practice to attribute Aristotle with a noology in *Met. A* insofar as the ‘first’ there is often identified with the nous, the activity of which is the noesis noeseos. The etymology of nous remains unclear.²³⁵ But the use of the word since Homer is explored very well by K. von Fritz and by B. Snell.²³⁶ Its use shifts from nous as an organ to the nous as a function as B. Snell said (1955, 33). It seems that the sense of sight is central to it, the Greeks are in other ways too a highly visual people. Nous will be translated hereafter mostly with ‘reason’ or ‘intellect,’ noesis first with its usual translation ‘thinking’ but later, in the context of Aristotle’s speculation with ‘awareness’ (*Bemerken*) and ‘perception.’

For all those interested in this text, the noesis noeseos stands at the center of all considerations. Indeed this is a strong common assessment, which I too share. In almost an equal number, on the other hand, are those who concur in understanding this term as denoting ‘God’s thinking’ although this is nowhere in fact stated in the text. This claim is supported only if the explicit theme of chapter 9, the nous, is implicitly identified with God. That identification would entail the problem that the nous is moved by what it thinks, so it is on the wrong side of the *systoichia* (see *A* 7.7). That should not be the case for God. Almost all interpreters seem to take the noesis in the famous sentence (*Met. A* 9, 1074b34), once as *intentio prima* then as *intentio secunda*. In this case, then, it seems to represent a reflective attitude. In fact the term is employed *three* times. As far as I can tell, this fact has perturbed no one up to now. The whole phrase reads as follows:

Therefore it <: the nous> thinks itself, if it is the strongest <being>, and <its> thinking is the thinking of thinking.

²³⁵ See P. Chantraine, 1968, s. v.; some suggestions of etymologies by H. Frisk.

²³⁶ K. von Fritz, 1945, 223–242 and 421; id., 1946, 12–34; B. Snell, 1955 (3. Aufl.), 27–35 on nous, *psyche*, *thymos* (mind, soul, courage); cf. J. Leshner, 1973. There is a new book about the nous, edited by Giovanna Sillitti, Fabio Stella, Francesco Fronterotta (edd.), *Il nous di Aristotele*, Academia Verlag, Sankt Augustin 2016, but concerning the problem of the origin of the word there has been no substantial progress. The contributions to the understanding of nous in Aristotle’s work remain very much within the frame of the standard interpretation.

or, in the translation of D. W. Ross:

Therefore it must be of itself that the divine thought thinks (since it is the most excellent of things), and its thinking is a thinking on thinking.

The standard interpretation takes two occurrences as identical (so one of them can be omitted), and the ‘is’ as defining. So the the phrase means: “The ‘thinking of the nous’ is to be understood as ‘thinking of its own thinking’ by definition.” Neo-scholastic authors and authors close to them without hesitation give to subvene in the term a personal God (see e. g. the translation by D. W. Ross). In that way nous becomes a conscious subject explicitly. Many authors who do not mention these presuppositions share them too. This conviction is widespread not only in neo-scholastic literature²³⁷ but representatives of philological and historical research hold to it too.²³⁸ All these schools or circles effectively prolong the medieval line of thought.

The exceptional speculative (or theoretical) statements in *Met. A* 7 and 9 concerning nous and noesis have some themes in common with *De Anima* (esp. Γ 4–6) and with Plato’s *Timaeus*. Some cryptic, at any rate extremely terse statements have given rise to different psychologies and noologies. But the noesis noeseos was always at the core. The two first named presuppositions make the broad consensus, about the meaning and the status of noesis there is some discussion. Some consider whether it refers to a merely formal or intrad to a content-related reflecting. Some seem to fiercely disagree with one another (as e. g. H. J. Krämer und K. Oehler,) but nevertheless share the common opinion that Aristotle is speaking about reflection. Following on Thomas Aquinas, it is proposed that God creates the world in His thinking of thinking.²³⁹ the world comes into being through God’s only thinking of thinking, whether it be in detail or in principle. Some others maintain that by his formula Aristotle is expressing that it is a ‘pure act’ or an ‘ultimate activ-

²³⁷ See e. g. F. Brentano, J. Owens, G. Reale, H. Seidl and others.

²³⁸ Like e. g. W. D. Ross, H. Flashar, K. Oehler, H. J. Krämer, or some participants of the *XIVth Symposium Aristotelicum*, 2000, and contributors to the *New Essays*, 2016.

²³⁹ In *Metaphysicam Aristotelis Commentaria*, Cathala, p. 736, nr. 2614 [...] *patet quod cognoscendo se omnia cognoscit*; cf. *Summa theologiae*, Pars prima, Quaestio 2, Articulus 3; id., Pars prima, Quaestio 14.

ity.’ In different papers K. Oehler defended the formal interpretation of the noesis noeseos.²⁴⁰ But despite his formal view of noesis noeseos he says that Aristotle thinks that noesis noeseos is in fact God’s thinking and “the being of the highest Mover.”²⁴¹ From the title and the quotation (1973, 49) K. Oehler argues that the noesis noeseos is to be equated with the “transcendental unity of apperception,”²⁴² which is for I. Kant “the highest point” of the transcendental philosophy (*Kritik der reinen Vernunft* B, 132ff.). As K. Oehler maintains, both Aristotle and Kant, in fact, ask how an “identity of consciousness in the representations of the consciousness itself”²⁴³ may be possible, taking into account, of course, the differences of time and culture. God cannot arrive at his own essence going through finite things as human beings do, he cannot have any subject other than himself (K. Oehler, 1973, 50). The Greeks had a concept of self-awareness (57), it is, therefore, false to contend, that such a concept originated first with Descartes (58). With the noesis noeseos the antique philosophy reaches its summit, because it denotes the transcendental reflection, which is objective (*gegenständlich*) but without having any concrete content. The self is that which is thought of in this reflection, it is the subject (*Gegenstand*) and the starting point. “The thinking becomes what is thought of and object”²⁴⁴ K. Oehler says. That has been derisively called *All-Unwissenheit* (an omniscience without any knowledge).

In *Vorgestalten der Reflexion*, 1966, H.-G. Gadamer explained the thinking of thinking as *absolute Reflexion* as did before him G. W. F. Hegel, referring to Plato’s *Charmides*. The thinking of thinking stands beyond self-consciousness. In a previous article he designated the noesis noeseos as “the true speculative identity of subject and object”²⁴⁵ and as “the highest point of its <: Aristotle’s> metaphysics”²⁴⁶ (H.-G. Gadamer, 1961). The “citation from Aristotle’s theology without any com-

²⁴⁰ As it seems, already in his dissertation, 1953, then 1962; see further K. Oehler, 1973, 45–59, and the article *Der unbewegte Beweger des Aristoteles* in the collection 1984.

²⁴¹ *das Sein des höchsten Bewegers* (1973, 55).

²⁴² *transzendente Einheit der Apperception*

²⁴³ *Identität des Bewusstseins in den Vorstellungen des Bewusstseins selbst.*

²⁴⁴ *Das Denken wird Gedachtes, wird Gegenstand.*

²⁴⁵ *wahrhaft spekulative Identität des Subjekts und Objektes.*

²⁴⁶ *die höchste Spitze seiner <: Aristotle’s> Metaphysik.*

ment²⁴⁷ at the end of Hegels *Encyclopädie* is sometimes used to support this interpretation.²⁴⁸ German idealism, as it seems, felt itself endorsed by this text no less than the thinking of the Middle Ages.

K. Gloy too called the noesis noeseos, identified with God, “the highest point” of Aristotle’s theoretical philosophy.²⁴⁹ She attempted to outline a theory of nous having two elements in its self-knowledge: as self-knowledge of perishable substances it is externally referring, as self-knowledge of eternal substances it is self-referring (537). Both factors together give the substantiality in general. Referring to nothing other than to the divine self-knowledge itself makes possible human knowledge of things and of knowledge of itself (541). Aristotle’s noesis noeseos is neither filled with contents nor is it the mere process of self-explication, even if it goes to determine itself absolutely. This noesis noeseos is a final point but it is not achieved by mere formal considerations in order to avoid a regression. It is, instead, a kind of a theory of origin as it was conceived later in the history of philosophy by Fichte or more generally in German Idealism (542). K. Gloy argues against the use of this theory of origin (her own interpretation of noesis noeseos) as a proof for existence: “To postulate only to be for itself as a representation of substantiality is not enough to prove the existence of a being for itself.”²⁵⁰ She thinks, nevertheless, that it is a merit of Aristotle’s considerations that he aligns ontology and epistemology in the noesis noeseos.

H. J. Krämer opted for a content-related interpretation as had K. Oehler before him.²⁵¹

He says that God thinks, “insofar he is thinking his contents, himself and thinking itself, and, therefore he is the thinking of thinking,”²⁵² (169) and adds that Aristotle

²⁴⁷ kommentarlose Zitat aus der *Theologie des Aristoteles*.

²⁴⁸ H.-G. Gadamer, 1966, 143; S. Herzberg, 2013, does not mention Hegel in his monograph on that text. See below on Hegel, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, p. 400.

²⁴⁹ K. Gloy, 1983.

²⁵⁰ *Das blosse Postulat eines Für-sich-Seins als Repräsentation von Substantialität reicht nicht aus zum Existenznachweis eines solchen Für-sich-seins*.

²⁵¹ H. J. Krämer, 1964, 127ff., the loci cited by H. J. Krämer, 1967, 315: Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, H 12, 1245b16; H 14, 1154b25; K 8, 1178b21; *Politica*, H 3, 1325b21; *Metaphysics A* 2, 983a6; *Magna Moralia B* 15, 1212b37.

²⁵² *sofern er seine Inhalte denkt, zugleich sich, das Denken selbst, und ist infolgedessen Denken des Denkens*

does not know a “pure thinking apart from any concreteness.”²⁵³ H. Flashar too points out that the thinking of thinking must be *gegenständlich*, because the ancient concept of consciousness is object-oriented.²⁵⁴ He says that in chapter 8 Aristotle contends a plurality of divine unmoved substances (318), which form the content of God’s thinking: “The god is thinking primarily the series of essences inherent in him.”²⁵⁵ God too cannot think otherwise than in an object-oriented manner and finally the thinking of Aristotle’s God is based “on the objective structure of the first sphere of being”²⁵⁶ and takes place by means of objects (331). The theology of *Met. A*, it may be added, is not exactly original either. It was preformed long before in the Academy, especially by Xenocrates.²⁵⁷

T. De Koninck’s observations are of special interest.²⁵⁸ First he gives a very informative overview of the reception of *Met. A* from antiquity up to the present.²⁵⁹ In particular, he wants to show that noesis noeseos is, indeed, reflection but that, nevertheless, does not involve a sheer narcissism. Asking whether God as First Mover is *causa finalis* or *causa efficiens*, he thinks that God is at once both, but *causa efficiens* either way and this by means of noesis noeseos. His activity in highest perfection and as pure act of being is the origin of all the world and all things. F. Inciarte argues roughly the same way.²⁶⁰ H. Seidl agrees arguing that:²⁶¹ “Because the divine intellect is the first cause of all beings as a pure act of being, [...] he becomes aware of himself, how he is the first cause of being for all things,”²⁶² and: “In *Met. A* 7 and 9 noesis means the intuitive actuality of recognizing, which is, in the case of the divine intellect, i. e. the first principle of being, at the same time

²⁵³ Cf. H. J. Krämer, 1967, 317, *reines, von der Gegenständlichkeit isoliertes Denken*.

²⁵⁴ H. Flashar, 1983, 379.

²⁵⁵ *Der Gott denkt offenbar primär die Reihe der in ihm einwohnenden Wesenheiten* (319).

²⁵⁶ *auf der objektiven Struktur der ersten Seinsphäre*.

²⁵⁷ Cf. H. J. Krämer, 1967, 332; see H. J. Krämer, 1969, too.

²⁵⁸ T. De Koninck, 1991.

²⁵⁹ E. J. García de la Garza, 2011, also presents a new and extensive documentation of the reception of *Met. A*, especially in antiquity, in the 19th and the 20th century. His presentation is structured by aspects of reception.

²⁶⁰ F. Inciarte, 1994, 1–20.

²⁶¹ H. Seidl, 1987, 157–177.

²⁶² *Da die göttliche Vernunft als reiner Seinsakt erste Ursache für alles Seiende ist, [...] erkennt sie von sich selbst, wie sie erste Seinsursache von allem ist* (158)

pure actuality of being.”²⁶³ In this way H. Seidl thinks to avoid the contentless reflection, given that God creates the world. In his commentary on *Met.* he writes: “So the term *noesis noeseos* means that the divine intellectual being is activity of recognition and object of recognition at once, being perfect actuality.”²⁶⁴

It is worth noting that the proposals for understanding *noesis noeseos* offered by the interpreters never transcend the line of aporias formulated by Aristotle himself in *Met. A 9*: What does the nous think? Does it think something or nothing? Does it always think only itself or other things? If other things, then always the same things or different things in succession? Does it think of accidental things or of beautiful things? Isn't it better not to think of some things at all? All ‘solutions’ remain within the frame established by these aporias. *Met. A* has been landed in a dense and almost inextricable net of interpretations, which were not seldom expressed through a questionable vocabulary and with an incorrect translation of to proton kinoun. The task now is to trace and understand the thematic references in *Met. A* to other Aristotelian and Platonic texts and to do so without the dogmatic determinations resulting from the history of reception.

I would like to demonstrate some of the problems that result from the theological interpretation. Some sentences in *Met. A 7*, which are to be found liberally cited in that sort of interpretation and seem to support it, will serve the purpose. This section will serve only a critical function, the positive aspect will appear in the commentary.

1072b3 κινεῖ δὲ ὡς ἐρώμενον, “it moves like the beloved.” – In the standard interpretation the ‘beloved’ is God. The sentence then means that God is the ‘First Mover’ in the sense of a beloved being. – Against this we can say that the sentence should be understood the same way as its parallel in 1072a26, where Aristotle speaks about the for-the-sake-of. That which is thought of, which is strived for, which is beloved are examples from our everyday life, which facilitate understand-

²⁶³ In *Met. A 7* und *9* hat die *noesis* die Bedeutung intuitiver Erkenntnisaktualität, die in der göttlichen Vernunft, dem ersten Seinsprinzip, zugleich reine Seinsaktualität ist (164).

²⁶⁴ Vol. II, 579: Der Ausdruck *noesis noeseos* besagt also, dass das göttliche Vernunftwesen als reine, vollendete Wirklichkeit zugleich Erkenntnistätigkeit und höchstes Erkenntnisobjekt ist.

ing of the claim that there are unmoved moving beings. In no way they are meant to be taken as the real determination of the unmoved moving being (*Sein*), which Aristotle is searching for. To take ‘beloved’ as an attribute of God in this sentence is simply arbitrary.

1072b7 ἐπεὶ δὲ ἐστὶ τι κινουὺν αὐτὸ ἀκίνητον ὄν – ἐνεργείᾳ ὄν, τοῦτο οὐκ ἐνδέχεται ἄλλως ἔχειν οὐδαμῶς, “Because there is a moving <being>, itself unmoved, in actuality, this can never behave differently.” – The standard interpretation says that Aristotle means God in this sentence. – To that we may reply, that Aristotle here is shifting from the theoretic to the cosmological view, as the immediate continuation shows: φορὰ γάρ [...], “for the movement [...]” Aristotle remains in the cosmological range until sentence 10.15 (1072b14). From 10.16 on again the speculative view is predominant.

The part ἐκ τοιαύτης ἄρα ἀρχῆς, “of such an origin [...],” in phrase 10.15 points to the same as ἐπεὶ δὲ ἐστὶ τι κινουὺν αὐτὸ ἀκίνητον ὄν in sentence 11 (“because there is an unmoved moving [...]”). This is said in a cosmological context. It never refers to God.

1072b15 διαγωγὴ δ’ ἔστιν οἷα ἡ ἀρίστη μικρὸν χρόνον ἡμῖν. οὕτω γὰρ ἀεὶ ἐκεῖνο, “The way of life which is best <is possible> for us only for a short time. For that <being> is this way for ever.” The standard interpretation maintains that Aristotle here is drawing a conclusion by analogy from our short-lived happiness through an insight into God’s enduring happiness. – And to this we may respond that Aristotle cites an endoxon as below, b24. Whoever assumes that there are gods quite naturally assumes too that they are happy. Homer already named them ρεῖα ζῶοντες (“easy living”), and even Epicurus would not modify that. No Greek needs a proof that gods are happier than we, a proof like this would be superfluous and ridiculous as it would be ridiculous to prove “that there is a nature” (*Physics* B 1, 193a3). The comparison works the other way round: the ‘way of life’ should motivate us to turn our view from *Seiendes* to *Sein*, the evident happiness of the gods given by the endoxa should offer a clue as to the goodness of noesis₁.

1072b19f. αὐτὸν δὲ νοεῖ ὁ νοῦς, “The nous thinks itself.” – According to the stan-

dard interpretation the nous is to be identified with God, the sentence speaks of a specific divine activity, of the thinking of itself. – To this we would reply, that the nous cannot be God, because the nous is moved by that on which it thinks about. God as nous is, on principle, on the false side of the *systoichia* (1072a30–31). If one would wish to avoid this logical consequence, one has to invent a special arrangement for God. This applies all the more if the immediately following sentence (b23) should have a connection to it. Here Aristotle refers either to the human nous or to the nous in general. Aristotle is asking what the nous can have as divine feature: this question would be senseless referring to the divine nous.

1072b23–26 τοῦτο ὃ δοκεῖ ὁ νοῦς θεῖον ἔχειν, καὶ ἡ θεωρία τὸ ἥδιστον καὶ ἄριστον. εἰ οὖν οὕτως ἔχει, ὡς ἡμεῖς ποτε ὁ θεὸς ἀεὶ, θαυμαστόν, εἰ δὲ μᾶλλον, ἔτι θαυμασιώτερον. ἔχει δὲ ᾧδε. “It seems that the nous has just this divine feature, i. e. the theory is the most pleasant and the best; if god behaves that way always as we sometimes do, that is wonderful, if even more so, it is the more wonderful. – But it behaves in the following way: [...]” Here, for once, the standard interpretation felicitously finds employed the word for god, *theos*, in the text. It assumes, therefore, that Aristotle concludes from our way of life to the divine way of life. This interpretation seems to be confirmed by the last sentence, which it takes as a summary of the previous text. – To this supposition we may respond that god may be mentioned but he is not the subject. The subject is the question which are the divine features of the nous. The divine characteristic of the human nous is *that it is actual (wirklich)*, ‘having’ in it what it has thought of and the *ousia*. If this is the case, we have an example of *theoria*. The last sentence “But it behaves in the following way” does not have god as its subject but it is impersonal and refers to the following text. ᾧδε points ahead (“in the following way...”); the word which points backward is οὕτως (“as just said”). The sentence is not the closing of a consideration but the opening of a new one. W. D. Ross, II, 381, saw this and tried to elude the problem (other commentators have not felt equally troubled by it): “for ᾧδε retrospective cf. a 26.” But this ᾧδε too refers to the following *κινεῖ οὐ κινούμενα* as an explanation.

1072b30 τοῦτο γὰρ ὁ θεός, “Just that is god.” – The standard interpretation sees

here the concluding and confirming seal in favour of the theological interpretation of the whole text. All the previous considerations have this last sentence as their goal. – Thomas Aquinas strengthened this interpretation by repeating this sentence as a refrain after each proof of the *quinque viae*.²⁶⁵ He, however, spoke even more carefully than his followers saying *et hoc dicimus deum*, which in effect is just what Aristotle had in mind to say: that corresponds to our opinions about gods. Here as *Met. A* 2, 983a8–10, Aristotle refers to prevailing opinions. Even T. De Koninck seems to understand it that way when he translates the phrase (1992, 119): *Du reste, c'est bien ainsi que l'entendent les humains ...* Aristotle makes it explicit that we have to do with an endoxon b28, φάμεν δὴ, “we say that...”.

This view of the result to be achieved later on should give the background for that which now could seem arbitrary. In the commentary we will find the reasons for this. We normally think of noesis as a thinking of a subject, of a consciousness, of a person. But we have now to think of a noesis without a personal subject endowed with consciousness. How are we to speak about noesis without asking “Whose noesis is this?” We look at the world and see many things. Why is it that we are able to see something? – We see something because we have already seen what there is to be seen, not in detail but in principle. A particular being, which we have seen, activates a network of associations or an order which has been seen before. By this ‘before’ is meant the basic distinctions, the basic concepts and values of prevailing opinions which go to forming a world (*Grundmeinungen einer Meinungswelt*). What is seen before as the world, in this sense: this is the noesis₁. This noesis makes possible another noesis, which consists in our particular understanding, seeing, recognizing. We see in actuality what has in fact already been seen as a structure, this is the meaning of noesis noeseos. Finally we are brought to consider that it is not noesis that is the final point in *Met. A*, but the sense of *to be* as {ousia← noesis →energeia / DOXA}.

²⁶⁵ *Summa Theologica*, Prima Pars, Quaestio 2, Art. 3.

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3.1. General Motives to Replace the Old ones

The energy with which the standard interpretation is defended again and again, even if occasionally with some slight qualifications, is really surprising.¹ To be sure, this can in part be explained by the fact that the text is used in the service of living religious interests. Again and again we find some large and potent groups of scholars organizing and defining the Aristotelianism of the Middle Ages in order to establish some religious doctrine. In this way a certain interpretation of Aristotle's philosophy strongly retains its *Sitz im Leben*. In fact there are other scholars beyond the Scholastic and Christian who defend the standard interpretation. And why do they one may well ask. What does it matter that Aristotle has developed a metaphysics with a closely related theology, in whatever form that it may have taken? It would be less astonishing if the reconstructed theology had any relevance to anyone beyond those mentioned. This is simply not the case. The old gods were already toppled by 384 C. E. in the battle over the altar of Victoria, fought between Ambrosius and Symmachus. Efforts in the 20th century to revive the old gods in a modern manner have failed too. Leaving aside the negative stance adopted against K. Kerényi many scholars were only bemused by W. F. Otto's *Die Götter Griechenlands* (1929), who tried quite rightly to take seriously the *Wirklichkeit der Götter*.² The history of religion is permitted a rather unconcerned positivism as exemplified by M. P. Nilsson in his work.

¹ At the beginning of this chapter I rely on ideas and formulations already published in my: "Aristoteles, *Met. A* – eine Theologie?" in: *Metaxis* 9, 1996, 74–76, and on the opening of an article in: *Information Philosophie*, 2001. Many thanks to the publishers for permission to do so.

² Some texts edited posthumously 1963 by E. Grassi.

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Beside the neo-scholastic wing, for which our text is of some existential importance I do not know of any fervent defender of Aristotle's theology who would put into practice the results of his research. To what end these efforts to prove that Aristotle developed a theology? May it be that this is an inadvertent diversion from something else in the text, something which may bear upon and challenge us, as readers? It seems that no new version of any 'Aristotelian theology' bothers anyone, save other scholars with their own reconstructions of that subject.

Some may appeal to the legitimacy of historical studies. We have, beyond doubt, to continue to endeavor to study the history of humankind, the history of ideas is of highest importance. We would do best, however, to refrain from positivist historical claims and simplistic historicism, in the case of Aristotle no less. No one can rightly appeal to the legitimacy of historical studies without reflecting on how his questioning is itself conditioned by history. Why does our own historical situation lead us to study *Met. A*? Why should we study an irrelevant and otiose theology, which on the one side rests on evidently false scientific presuppositions and on the other on contradictory metaphysical concepts³ and that, thirdly, is without any impact on our lives? If we cannot or do not wish to justify the relevance of historical questioning against the background of our time, then we should at least have some idea about why, in precisely the 5th and the 4th century BC just this 'theology' emerged. These questions must be worth asking afresh today, questions that concern us, that we can repeat, with answers that may potentially change the asker.

Against my attempt to replace the standard interpretation, with its rich tradition, with another shifting the main premises, there may arise certain objections. Any standard interpretation has its own right in its time as it is grown up by its *Wirkungsgeschichte*, the long history of its reception, which will reflect more or less perfectly the spirit of its age. Many wise and learned scholars are involved and anyone who thinks that only he has knowledge – *qui solus sapit* – would only be discredit himself by the very assumption. What improves with a quite different understanding of

³ An American Professor of a University of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints tried to resolve this contradiction in his *Aristotle's Two Systems*, 1987, with a final chapter entitled "What Aristotle should have said."

this ancient text, what reasons could justify any a radical change?

Some reasons and motives appear right from the outset, with the construction of the standard interpretation itself. In Part II we studied these showing the difficulties intrinsic to some of the main themes in the reception. The content of *Met. A* is often reported in language pathetic and elevated, but that conceals only insufficiently the very weak and even tendentious connection with the text itself. There are, moreover, many differing voices, within the set constituting the standard interpretation, even granted that they share certain common fundamental convictions. Despite the dawn of new research in the 19th century the current understanding of Aristotle remains an understanding determined by presuppositions arising during the Middle Ages, its pillars being substance and realism. In its time this was a good appropriate understanding. It helped people to lead a good life, but it became rigid and stereotypical, without connection to *our* contemporary world and its exigencies, even leaving aside the fact that the historical correctness of that earlier understanding is open to doubtful reservations. If, interpreting Aristotle, we sustain premises deriving from the Middle Ages, then we maintain an obvious anachronism.

We may well ask why there obtains a permanent dispute over a metaphysics of substance the uselessness to our context of which is demonstrable? M. Heidegger alone took the effort to articulate and clarify his own hermeneutical situation in relation to Aristotle in his “*Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles*.”⁴ There is no comparable effort in the historical or philosophical research on Aristotle. Scholars simply assume the validity of their unreflective and immediate understanding and the critique derived from that. Unsuccessfully did P. Natorp argue on the basis of the composition of the *Met. A* that there is no theology to be discerned there. It seems that his thesis finds an opportunity for revival today. R. Bodéüs, has pointed to some dubious basic issues in the standard interpretation (1992, 72), and H. Lang too resists that interpretation. B. Botter, 2005, reaffirms this doubtfulness about the theological standard interpretation in her investigations of the use of the words *theos* and *theios*. S. Fazzo, 2014, has recently contributed further arguments against

⁴ M. Heidegger, ed. by H.-U. Lessing, in: *Dilthey-Jahrbuch* 6, 1989, 235–274.

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the theological interpretation, although she adheres to the notion of ‘Primo Motore’ and only substitutes a metaphysics of substance for the theology as so many others have done.

One earlier, notable scholar on the scholastic branch of research, seems to be in agreement with my proposal. E. Gilson wrote in his introduction to J. Owens’ *Doctrine of Being* (1951, 7–8):

To practically all the men of the middle ages, he <sc. Aristotle> was The Philosopher, but because they themselves were Christians and theologians, they held a general view of the world very different from his own[...] One of the present tasks of history is to give back to Aristotle what is Aristotle’s[...]

These two phrases exactly express the essentially required turn. This remained, however, only a programme. Scarcely anyone can be said to have carried out this task, J. Owens himself included. As E. Gilson has said the issue is about understanding a different world, the world in which *Met. A* was composed, appreciating the questions to which this text was seeking to provide answers, but in such a way that these questions and their respective answers have something to offer us. With the character of the guest of Elea Plato shows in the *Sophist* that this question calls the questioner into question. The guest had the objective of refuting the sophist (the fundamental arguments and convictions of that class of persons) and in doing so he realized that the question of what non-being is becomes unavoidable. He must give up his examination and turns to the question of what being is. This very question proves that he himself does not know what *to be* means.

In standard histories of philosophy there is broad agreement concerning the central claims mentioned above. Monographs, companions, articles and collections confirm them again and again. The very comprehensive bibliography on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* of R. Radice and R. Davies gives an overview of the extensive but surprisingly homogenous literature on the themes treated in Part II, 2.⁵ The highly anticipated volume with eleven papers by “a distinguished group of scholars,” participants of the XIVth Symposium Aristotelicum in 1996 and published in 2000,

⁵ R. Radice, R. Davies, 1997.

represents, unfortunately, was a reactionary step backwards.

Today, research on Aristotle's *Met.* can be divided mainly into two branches. The older is the scholastic branch, with such prominent exponents as e. g. E. Gilson, J. Owens, G. Reale, H. Seidl, and the so called Louvain school. Then, there is a philologically and historically inclined branch; leading figures were of which are W. Jaeger, I. Düring, W. K. C. Guthrie, H. J. Krämer, H. Flashar and Ch. Rapp. Scholars like M. Frede and J. Barnes are masterful philological as well as historical researchers. Besides these there are dozens and even hundreds more of important scholars.⁶

If there are still philosophers interested in Aristotle's thought, that is another question. Apparently, there are not many: E. Berti, (1992), for one, presented some material. Some other philosophers one may mention would be M. Heidegger, H.-G. Gadamer, P. F. Strawson, H. Putnam, and J. L. Austin. Not all, to be sure, but most of philosophers citing Aristotle do for one or another reason rely on the standard interpretation prepared by philological or historical research. It was M. Heidegger alone, who distanced himself from that construal, even as he tried to establish a new approach to Aristotle's philosophy. People find arguments or forms of proof for their own ideological persuasions in Aristotle's texts. A look at the *Index auctorum* in the bibliography of R. Radice and R. Davies reveals that amongst those most cited, scholars teaching at Christian universities or affiliated institutions predominate.

Supposedly disinterested philologists and historians, for whom all of this – and not only the astronomical presuppositions – is evidently not to be taken as philosophical truth but of only 'historical interest,' deal with the advantages and disadvantages of this research. What remains is the historical interest, but, the content of the findings of that research is not even worth refuting. Avowedly neutral observers too assented to the defining of the text by theology or its 'cementing in place' (*Einbetonierung*) in a new and foreign world. We urgently require an understanding of *Met.* A disencumbered from theological presuppositions, because it is absolutely useless to study

⁶ See the index in Radice-Davies.

the text with the aim of finding any information about God. Findings about God are results of the presuppositions established by the reception (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) not results of the reading the text. If we abandon these medieval premises, we can ask completely anew what the text actually wanted to say. If there is still any struggle over some alleged Aristotelian positions, that is only really about the historically more accurate, the more sophisticated, or acute contemporary view. Contention is no longer over the Aristotelian content but instead the relative positions of vying scholars.

It would seem then, that there are reasons to re-examine the whole affair. Whether it would be worth trying so and taking seriously the philosophical contents we will only know by doing. This experiment compels its own questions. I wish to inquire about some of the presuppositions and conclusions of the current understanding, which has been determined mainly by the Middle Ages. I do ask whether they pertain for our understanding of Aristotle's thought, but I do not deny that some questions, which were asked in other times and worlds can have an important impact on us. When we take into account the differences of worlds, we have to ask how it is possible that the ideas of one world can retain meaningfulness for another. The world of the Ancient past is not so entirely passed away, as little as the world of the Middle Ages. There may be questions posed during the Middle Ages and the Ancient world, which survive temporal change. It may be that they become more abstract the more time elapses. The test will tell. Instead of merely repeating the theological readings of the text – in its time good and useful – we ought to try interpreting it cognizant of our own particular hermeneutic position and consider the possibility that Aristotle here is asking a question quite different other than what had been imagined. If it proves true, that in Aristotle's thought, substance and everything related to these, do not play any role, then Aristotle's philosophy could serve as an example for us today of something in which we are of need: a thinking without substance and subject.

3.2. Reading Aids in the Text

Of course, it is impossible to turn back time or undo the effects of the *Wirkungsgeschichte*, but if we can make explicit the premises of the current standard interpretation, then we may suspend their effectiveness during our study. We are entitled to do so all the more since *Met. A* itself offers some clues to its reading. “We have to study being (*Sein*) ...” In this opening phrase Aristotle announces his main theme: What is ousia, being, *Sein*? Obviously, the standard interpretation makes another reading. It takes the phrase as an answer, not a question and supplies as solution its preferred subject, the highest substance: God. I, by contrary to this, try to show that this reading is misguided (see Part III, 4. First Key Proposition). The sentence condenses the thoughts of a long tradition to a single theme, ousia; and this is not an answer but the name for that which is asked after (*Problemittel*). Its function is similar to that of a phrase in the middle of the *Sophist*, 242bc, where the guest from Elea says, that we have to start from the scratch, with apparently the simplest and clearest thing, because just this has become unclear: the question what *to be* means. We cannot meaningfully answer any other question before this one is answered.

This opening phrase of *Met. A* is far from being the claim “That is so and so,” quite otherwise it is the summary of a long-term discourse, in which have participated Presocratics, Sophists, Plato, the Old Academy. The phrase also denotes the method to be followed in that inquiry: *theoria*. Sometimes *theoria* means the same as *methodos* but in *Met. A* it refers to a special method. The word appears only three times in this text, here at the beginning, *A* 1, 1069a18; then at the speculative high point, *A* 7.19, 1072b24; and again at *A* 8.6, 1073b6. Two references are highly exposed, that at the beginning and the occurrence at *A* 7.19, where, as later in the *Nicomachean Ethics* K 8, 1178b29–32, it is the name for the highest possible realization of us human beings. The second phrase names the respect in which the theme will be treated. The ousiai, the beings, shall be investigated with respect to ousia, *Sein*, which is their principle and origin. That corresponds exactly with the aim formulated by Theophrastus, in *Met.* § 1. Further Theophrastus points out that the theme ousia has become urgent in the context of the question about becom-

ing; and finally he names the same key factor in the present issue as Aristotle does, namely, *metabole*, change.⁷

Aristotle says that we have to examine the reasons of becoming (*Met.* A 2.2). It has resulted from the previous investigations that *being* came to be seen as the first cause of becoming. Thus the next question to be asked is: How can being (*Sein*) be the first cause of movement? In *Met.* A Aristotle gives an answer in three steps. Being (*Sein*) is primary in becoming and it is the cause of becoming

1. as actuality (*energeia*, *Met.* A 6.8), then
2. as a moving cause like a goal which is not moved itself (*Met.* A 7), and finally
3. as *noesis*, awareness, (*Met.* A 7 und 9).

These answers must not be understood as if they had to be added together. What I called ‘three steps’ is, in fact, to be understood as a climax which makes it possible to understand by speculation what *ousia* is. *Energeia*, *proton kinoun akineton*, *noesis*, “actuality, first unmoved moving, awareness” are three manners of speaking of the same, namely *ousia* (being, *Sein*), under three different aspects.

3.3. Dating of *Met.* A

What was the ongoing discourse (*Gesprächslage*) in which the first sentence of *Met.* A was uttered? What were its themes and who its participants? In which part of this general discourse is *Met.* A located? What are its content-related conditions and its intellectual surroundings? Here I wish to lay out reasons for a dating of *Met.* A shortly after Aristotle left Athens, after the death of Plato in 347 BCE. Next after this we shall seek to identify the partners in that discourse. His immediate partners are, of course, the members of the Academy. We have, therefore, to check which texts in this environment are most suitable for revealing the background of *Met.* A. We must trace the contents, the theses and accompanying opinions relevant in this discourse, following Aristotle’s topical rule *προτάσεις λαβεῖν*, “to state theses and

⁷ Theophrastus, *Met.* 4a5 corresponding to *Met.* A 1.9.

opinions in my own terminology.” Such theses begin to speak to us modern readers when they are looked at against the horizon of questions that gave rise to them. Knowing them, we have access to the fundamental opinions of that community of discourse (*Gesprächsgemeinschaft*). We attempt to give this background in Part III, 5.1 “The textual basis of the Academic Background” where I prepare for the commentary of the first key proposition, KP 1.

We will see that fundamental concepts and opinions of this background are guided by the thinking of the Presocratics, Sophists, Plato and the Old Academy; we shall be interested in their bearing on the distinctions made in *Met. A* 1.1. In particular, we have to set out the relevance of these opinions for the fact that Aristotle thinks, first, that the correct approach to the question of being (*Frage nach dem Sein*) is that of *theoria*; second, that he distinguishes *ousia* in singular from *ousiai* in plural and finally the *ousiai* from their *archai kai ta aitia*. The result will be that *Met. A* with its connections to Theophrastus and the Old Academy fits better the intellectual situation at the earlier date than that at the end of Aristotle’s life (he died 322 BCE).

We begin with some considerations concerning the dating of *Met. A*. The history of reception of *Met. A* clearly shows how important the dating of a text is. The meaning of the work will differ *toto caelo* depending on whether it is considered an early text or one of Aristotle’s last. Along with the date the respective discursive context (*Gesprächslage*) changes. At the end of his life the discourse is in large part determined by himself, if early it is determined by Plato and the Old Academy (and their forerunners). It has not been very long that we have been asking after the dates of Aristotle’s texts. Until the 19th century his thoughts were considered a timeless system, as many still seem to regard it today. It was W. Jaeger, who achieved a breakthrough in this issue with his works of 1912 and 1923.⁸ He made clear that

⁸ For a summary of the question see I. Düring, 1966, 189–199, as well as M. Frede, 2000, 47–49. Further informations by A. Mansion, 1927, 307–341 und 423–466, esp. 327–341. G. Reale, 1993, 6. ed., 280ff., tried to refute the arguments of W. Jaeger for the early date, without success; H. Wagner, 1959, 129–153; D. T. Devereux, 1988, 166–188; G. W. Most, 1988, 224–233. Even E. Berti, 2016, 72, says that comparing *Met. Z* and *A*, we see that *A* is to be considered as “earlier sketch.” I think Gutas, 2010, has summarized the decisive arguments for the early date.

Aristotle's *Met.* on the whole is not of the looked for type of systematical work, but that there are distinguishable layers from different periods of his life and that the text was re-edited several times and evolved as a manuscript for lectures. We have to recognize that the place of *Met. A* in the *Metaphysics* has nothing to do with the sequential order of the work. Researchers have taken adopted the well-founded conclusions of W. Jaeger and attempted, as in the similar case of the Homeric poems, to sort out and to date the different strata. What else could one do for lack of historical references in the text? As a criterion for dating the statements, W. Jaeger had chosen how near or how far away from Plato's thinking they were. W. Jaeger was the first to make the argument for an early dating of *Met. A*. Many were dissatisfied with this dating, because even in the 20th century its systematic pole position and with is the late dating, were considered as evident. With its unsurpassable theological content (even if that required some correction by its defenders and was based on translation errors) the text had to remain the highlight and the culmination of a system. Only a mature Aristotle could think and write such things.

For historical reasons, it is easy to understand why G. W. F. Hegel thought that way, but it is surprising that such contemporary scholars as K. Oehler, N. Hartmann, W. D. Ross, H.-G. Gadamer, G. Reale, H. J. Krämer, further, most participants of the XIVth *Symposium Aristotelicum XIV* in 2000, or the contributors of *New Essays* in 2016, and, in general, most contemporary interpreters of Aristotle do so. They cannot imagine that *Met. A* is the work of a young philosopher, if it is the "coping stone" (W. D. Ross), *der höchste Punkt* (K. Oehler, K. Gloy *et al.*), of whole a system, be it of Aristotle's philosophy or be it of Ancient Philosophy in general (Aristotle was about 37 when he leaved the Academy). We see that the dating of *Met. A* is crucial. As a late work it is the closing copstone of a theologically oriented philosophy, if an early work it can be read (as I wish to show) as a speculative sketch and a program to be carried out.

To my knowledge, nobody before W. Jaeger thought that the work was an early one. W. Jaeger put it concessely when he said that *Met. A* is not Aristotle's last but first

word on theology.⁹ – I include his list of reasons:¹⁰ in *Met. A* we find no reference to other books of *Met.* (122); nor do we find the terms *prote philosophia* and *theologia* as titles for his own project, which seems improbable if it had come after ZHΘ (123); if *Met. A* 1–5 should be late it could be no more than a summary of ZHΘ, but the question about *ousia* is not asked the same way there as here, therefore it is not a mere recapitulation; it would, furthermore, be rather extensive for a recapitulation as compared with the text of supposed reference (124). Another argument is the one from composition. *Met. A* stands as a lecture on its own, it forms no part of the ‘main lecture on metaphysics’ either by content or by style (124–5); the perceptible *ousiai* are not thematic in the main lecture but in *Met. A* they take up about half of the space (126). And finally, as W. Jaeger says, the second half contrasts sharply with the first, it presents *mit treffsicheren Hammerschlägen* (“with precise hammer blows”) the outline of his thought, “without worrying about details” (1923, 228).

H. Flashar accepted the early date in *Ueberweg* (1983, 378). G. Reale has discussed W. Jaeger’s arguments and has tried to counter his arguments against the late date. His main idea is that a theology like that in *Met. A* comprehends all the rest in its entirety and cannot stand at the beginning of the project.¹¹ Many modern scholars verify the connection missing between *Met. A* and the rest, beginning with H. Bonitz, going on to W. Jaeger up to H. J. Krämer, who calls it an *erratischer Block*.¹² L. Elders (1972, 44), says that he sees few references to other books in *Met. A* but in the rest of the *Corpus Aristotelicum* no mention of *Met. A* at all, whereas B. Manuwald (1989) sees one express reference (*ausdrückliche Rückverweisung*) to *Met. A*, namely in *De Motu Animalium* 4, 700a6–9.¹³ The arguments of G. W. Most in favor of the early date of Theophrastus’ *Met.* resting on biology, are very

⁹ Further arguments in favour of the early dating we find in H. von Arnim, 1931; I. Düring, 1968a, and in H. Flashar, 1983, 378. – G. Reale, 1993, 594f., gives an unsatisfactory summary of W. Jaegers arguments, see below, p. 217.

¹⁰ W. Jaeger, 1912, 122–130.

¹¹ G. Reale, 1961, 1994, sixth ed. – D. T. Devereux has carefully examined the arguments of G. Reale; his negative results seem to me definitive, see footnote above, 8, and p. 218.

¹² H. Bonitz, 1849, 9; W. Jaeger, 1913; H. J. Krämer, 1964, 191.

¹³ B. Manuwald, 1989, 9.

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important. G. W. Most can show plausibly that it is more likely that Aristotle cites Theophrastus than *vice versa*.¹⁴ To find out the date of *Met. A* it is crucial to know how the relation is between *Met. A* and Theophrastus' *Met.*¹⁵ The consensus is that both texts have to do with each other, even if the absolute dating is controversial or the fact is interpreted in a different way as for example, by G. Reale compared with D. T. Devereux.

The *Metaphysics* of Theophrastus has been considered: (i) as a late work, written after Aristotle's death; (ii) with the intention to criticize Aristotle, especially his teleology; and (iii) as fragmentary. All three presuppositions have proven to be wrong. H. J. Krämer has already named some points in Theophrastus' *Met.*, which show "ideas which are to be set in the early period of Aristotle or even before him and common in the Academy."¹⁶ There are no exact quotes in either text from the other, but sufficient clear references in content. It does not seem that Theophrastus is familiar with *Met. ZHΘ* at this time, he does not take into account distinctions made there, such as the distinction between actuality and potentiality, nor the categories or the four causes. If the text were late he could scarcely do without reference to these sets of concepts.

We can see some themes and questions common to both texts: What is primary in knowledge and being? What is the relation between the first (the principles) and the second (the perceptible beings)? Into what kind of detail can we go in the search for the causes for something? For W. D. Ross, J. Tricot, even for Th. A. Szlezák the text was a fragment. The careful examination by A. Laks and G. W. Most in the introduction of their edition of the text proves definitively that the text is complete,¹⁷ M. van Raalte says that this is *communis opinio* today.¹⁸ If Theophrastus' text too is written shortly after Aristotle left Athens, it is a near contemporary text and both

¹⁴ G. W. Most, 1988, 224–233; D. Frede, 1971, 65ff. too argued for an early date.

¹⁵ On the chronological relation between both see M. v. Raalte, 1993, 23–24.

¹⁶ H. J. Krämer, 1973, 206–214, esp. 211–212; *früharistotelisches, ja voraristotelisches und gemein-akademisches Gedankengut*.

¹⁷ D. Gutas, 2010, does not contradict even if he is a little bit more reluctant concerning the structure of the text given by Laks and Most.

¹⁸ M. van Raalte, 1993, 7.

must be understood against the same Academic background. In this context the possible intention of the text may be quite other than has been thought so far.

Contrary to what A. Laks und G. W. Most argued M. van Raalte would like a later date for Theophrastus' *Metaphysics*. I add a short comment to her five arguments (25). *ad 1*: M. v. Raalte emphasizes the content links between, on the one side, the *Met.* of Theophrastus and *Met. A* and, on the other, the biological books. – With respect to the former, it must be noted that the common themes in these books result from the common Academic background. With respect to the biological writings G. W. Most has shown that it is more plausible that the reference runs from Aristotle to Theophrastus than the other way round (1988, 224–233). – *ad 2*: In Aristotle's work we find no response to Theophrastus' criticism, neither that concerning the teleology nor that concerning the 'Unmoved Mover.' – If the texts are contemporaneous then no reaction is needed. It is even possible that Theophrastus' text is a work commissioned by his senior, Aristotle. Then it would be natural that they do not mention each other, even if other Academic members are mentioned. *Met. A* is a more speculative answer to the Academic discourse in the background, Theophrastus' *Met.* is more realistic. – *ad 3*: M. v. Raalte observes that the conceptions of αἰθήρ (ether) and σύμφυτον πνεῦμα (natural breath) are more consistent and more developed in Theophrastus than in Aristotle; and *ad 4*: that in general in *De Caelo* and in some biological works there are grave inconsistencies. – The difference results from the fact that Theophrastus follows the more concrete line of research, Aristotle in *Met. A* the more speculative. – *ad 5*: At last M. v. Raalte says that Theophrastus aims at unifying the particular and the principles right from the start. – In just this respect both texts correspond mutually very well, especially in their opening chapter.

That both texts converge in content to some degree is for G. Reale an argument in favour of the late dating. It would be unimaginable, he says, that Theophrastus refers in his work – in his view obviously written after Aristotle's death – to an early work. G. Reale repeats the traditional understanding of Theophrastus' *Metaphysics*:

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namely that a frustrated student much later criticizes his already dead master,¹⁹ but if Theophrastus wrote his work at about the same time as Aristotle, this argument no longer applies.

In *Met. A* 8 Eudoxos and Callippus are mentioned, that raises special dating problems for the book.²⁰ A new era in the research on Aristotle began with the works of W. Jaeger, 1912 and 1923, in general; but there are also new insights into *Met. A* 8 in particular. W. Jaeger thought *Met. A* on the whole an early work, but chapter 8 inserted later, because in that chapter Callippus, who died 330 BCE, is referred to in the imperfect tense (1073b32–38).²¹ That means, so W. Jaeger says, that at the moment when Aristotle wrote his book Callippus was already dead. He looks, then, for stylistic, content-related or historic arguments which will plausible a late dating of this chapter. He says that in the chapters 1–5 there is a sketchy style, but that chapters 6–10 are written in a *höheren Schwung*,²² chapter 8 alone being *vollkommen ausgearbeitet*, “completely finished.”²³ Chapter 8 disrupts the line of argument with its astronomy.²⁴ And here again the method is that of physics instead of the previous and subsequent *spekulativen Gedankenreihe* (speculative sequence). Finally, he says that the conception of metaphysics is different from that in the other chapters, where it signifies the science of the highest being. In *Met. A* 6–7 the theological speculation leads to the ‘Unmoved Mover’ but in chapter 8 he speaks again of many movers.

Chapter 8, then, seems to be the *terminus post quem* of *Met. A*. If it is consistent with the line of thinking and if the sentence was written after the death of Callippus’, then

¹⁹ It is an interpretation like that of W. Jaeger, W. D. Ross, F. H. Fobes, 1929, XXV, W. Theiler, 1958, 102–5.

²⁰ For Eudoxos and Callippus see: F. Lasserre, 1966; R. M. Dancy, 1991; T. Heath, 1959, 190–224; K. F. Ginzler, in: *RE* XX, 1662; A. Rehm, in: *RE* Suppl. IV, 1431; W. Schadewaldt, 1952 (: he attributes the dogma of the ‘Unmoved Mover’ to Eudoxos); K. von Fritz, 1978; lit. on this theme in the article ‘Eudoxos’ by M. Folkerts, 1998, Sp. 225; on Callippus see F. Heglmeier, 1988; the article ‘Callippus’ by W. Hübner, 1999, 202–203.

²¹ “Callippus put the same arrangement of spheres as Eudoxus [...]”

²² W. Jaeger, 1912, 126; also W. D. Ross says that the text is written “[...]in the maturity of his powers [...],” 1924, I, CXXXI.

²³ W. Jaeger, 1923, 369.

²⁴ W. Jaeger, 1923, 371.

the whole book must be late. I. Düring already has pointed out that the imperfect tense can mean “formerly present,”²⁵ not necessarily “he who lived formerly”²⁶ and “the use of the tenses cannot be a criterium when he mentions contemporaries”²⁷ This observation is confirmed by D. T. Devereux.²⁸ M. Frede too does not wish to rely on the ‘Callippus imperfect.’ Nevertheless he thinks *Met. A* is late; but not so late as M. Burnyeat had proposed (: “at the end of his life, [...]”); except that, in his view, chapter 8 fits in very well with the rest (2000, 47–49), his reasons partly based on content partly on stylistic features (such as the use of hiatus). Many interpreters think that this chapter abruptly interrupts the line of reasoning extending between chapters seven and nine. It must trouble those who hew to the standard interpretation that Aristotle speaks of many movers and considers anew a polytheistic solution, after having so successfully offered a monotheistic one. There was, therefore, some debate over whether the theorem of the ‘Unmoved Mover’ was early or late.²⁹ L. Elders presents the dispute in outline, but – disappointingly – concludes that chapter 8 is spurious due to its polytheistic inclination, whereas the rest of *Met. A* is late.

G. Reale defends a scholastically inspired *philosophia perennis*, so the stakes are high concerning the question of the date of *Met. A*.³⁰ Early on and in detail he discussed W. Jaegers’ arguments. I use one of his later papers 1994, 296–317 (cf. 1993, III, 595). Here he takes up W. Jaeger’s arguments in favor of the late date of chapter 8, but against W. Jaeger tries to show that this chapter fits in very well with the line of thought of the rest. The conclusion is that the whole book is late. That is in accordance with his understanding of *Met. A* as *il libro ‘theologico’ per eccellenza* (1994, 259). But, some points in his presentation of W. Jaeger’s arguments are not correct. He speaks of content (301) whereas W. Jaeger does about style; G. Reale contends (303), that metaphysics and astronomy in *Met. A* 8 both deal with the

²⁵ *den früher hier anwesenden*

²⁶ *den, der früher lebte*

²⁷ [...] *der Tempusgebrauch bei Erwähnungen von Zeitgenossen ist daher wertlos als Kriterium.*

²⁸ See below, Part III, 4. Erster Leitsatz; I. Düring, 1968a, 330b45 on the imperfect tense; I. Düring, 1966, 191f.; D. T. Devereux, 1988, 173, on the dating of Callippus’ finding.

²⁹ Concerning the ‘Unmoved Mover’ see the bibliography of R. Radice, R. Davies, 1997; cf. G. Oppy, 1995., too; newly the *Handbuch* edited by Chr. Rapp und Corcilius., 2011, and Chr. Horn, 2016.

³⁰ Cf. A. Bausola, 1994.

eternal substance, so that there is no difference with the concept of metaphysics in *Λ 1*, as W. Jaeger has claimed. Finally, he thinks that the restrictions in *Λ 8* apply only to some few specific points, but not to astronomy in general, as W. Jaeger and probably most readers do rightly think. Whereas W. Jaeger takes up the differences in scientific reliability and rightly points to the phrase “we say that only to have some idea about that” (1073b13, ἐννοίας χάριν λέγομεν), with which Aristotle labels the less reliable character of astronomical theses, G. Reale emphasizes the four cases of *ananke* in 1073a23–b1, which is something quite else. By saying that Aristotle ‘comes back’ in chapter 9 to the theme of the chapters 6–7, G. Reale only confirms that there is a break. Concerning the difference between the one ‘mover’ and many movers he argues, that on both occasions Aristotle is referring to the same, there being no contradiction because his argumentation is working on different levels.

W. Jaeger thinks that, what Aristotle says about the celestial mechanics in chapter 8, constitute an interruption of the reasoning concerning the First Mover who thinks himself, but G. Reale says that *Λ 6* und *7* *dimostrano... l’esistenza e la natura del Motore immobile, Λ 8 dimostra la molteplicità dei motori*, and, that *Λ 9* returns to the theme of *Λ 7*, in order to dissolve some theoretical difficulties (1994, 308f.). – G. Reale’s refutation, it seems, remains unconvincing, he often simply has not taken W. Jaeger’s meaning.

D. T. Devereux too – after many others – has taken up the issue.³¹ His arguments again justify the early date of book *Λ*. The verb in the imperfect tense proves nothing, the findings of Callippus could have taken place well before and Aristotle have been informed about them.³² For D. T. Devereux it is important that in *Met. Λ* Aristotle uses only analogy not the *pros-hen*-method, and the hierarchy of sciences in *Met. Λ 8* corresponds with the hierarchy of substances in chapter 1. The concept of metaphysics is the same here as there, which means it is not a general ontology. Still, the question in *Λ 8* needs to be understood in the context of the question about movement. Even the first philosophy has to deal with sensible substances. In his extensive and careful study D. T. Devereux took into consideration too the relations

³¹ D. T. Devereux, 1990.

³² Cf. D. T. Devereux, 1990, 173 and I. Düring, 1966, 191f.; id., 1968, 330b45.

of *Met. A* with Theophrastus' *Met.* – with negative results.³³ Chapter 8 cannot be dated by any of the arguments used so far. D. T. Devereux prefers the concept of metaphysics as criterium for dating. He takes up the possible development from analogy to 'focal meaning' as methodological principle, a proposal made earlier by G. E. L. Owen. Relying on analogy Λ becomes a metaphysics of more primitive form and therefore earlier in date, D. T. Devereux argues. Insofar as metaphysics is first philosophy its subject is not only the supra-sensual substance but perceptible substance too and it has to ask after the cause of their movement (180). In *Met. A* there is no science of being at all, as later in *ZHΘ* and there is no evidence that the first philosophy ought to be a general ontology (it is limited to theology and cosmology). It is more plausible that *Met. A* must be dated before *ZHΘ* than the other way around and Theophrastus' *Met.* could have been written in the time between Λ and *ZHΘ* (182).

To summarize: as concerns the chronology I follow the arguments of W. Jaeger, G. W. Most and D. T. Devereux (but not his concept of metaphysics) in favor of an early date of *Met. A*. This means that if we wish to understand the text from its origin and from its context then we must understand it against the background of the Academy. *Met. A* and Theophrastus' *Met.* are written at about the same time, probably shortly after Aristotle and Theophrastus left the Academy, soon after Plato's death. Both authors try to get clarity on questions and issues resulting from the discourse in the Academy. H. J. Krämer and E. Berti saw that the understanding of *Met. A* presupposes knowledge of the Academic discourse.³⁴ Such being the case, a dating soon after Plato's death seems to be more plausible than twenty years later. Even if the early date of *Met. A* and of Theophrastus' *Met.* cannot be definitively proved but only shown to be plausible – the same applies to the late dating – this early dating will be one of the premises of my account. Nevertheless, my main thesis, that *Met. A* is a speculative sketch about *ousia*, *Sein*, is unaffected by the dating. It is very well possible that, at a later time, Aristotle was referring to the texts which form the background of the speculation.

³³ D. T. Devereux, 1988, 167–188.

³⁴ H. J. Krämer, 1964, Kap. II "Struktur und geschichtliche Stellung der Aristotelischen *Nus-Metaphysik*," esp. 146–147; E. Berti, 1981, 227–252.

3.4. Context and Problem Area of *Met. A*

3.4.1. Themes and Issues in the Academy

If *Met. A* is the early work I think it is, then its background is the Academic discourse.³⁵ What are its themes and in which texts will we seize these?³⁶ The main topics and the leading questions in the Academy were established by the Presocratics and the Sophists whose texts were still available. Plato too has discussed many of the abiding themes in his dialogues. His dialogues the *Sophist* and the *Timaeus* are particularly relevant for *Met. A*. That there are many connections between the Academy and Aristotle is scarcely controversial and H. J. Krämer's overview contains so much material that it would be useless multiply it.³⁷ It is obvious that the *Timaeus* is a starting point for many Academic questions. It seems that Aristotle referred to that dialogue as early as in his *Protrepticus* (ca. 354 BCE.).³⁸ The references in *Met. A* to the *Sophist* are less well observed. They concern not so much details in content, as the two very central points, which I will discuss below. J. Dillon has devoted an impressive study to Plato's followers until Arcesilaus.³⁹ He provides us with a very informative list of "the principal problems left by the *Timaeus*" (p. 24f.) which were treated afterwards by Plato's successors (see below 284). Apart from that the 'Late Plato' has been the theme of many studies, certainly, with contradictory results.⁴⁰ When we include books and articles on the

³⁵ That is S. Fazzo's opinion too, 2014, 75ff., 2016, 198.

³⁶ Overviews of the Old Academy: W. K. C. Guthrie, IV, 1975, 19–24; V, 1978, 446–492; M. Isnardi Parente, 1979; H. J. Krämer, 1983, 1–174, resp. new edition 2004, 1–165; F. Wehrli, 1983, 459–599, resp. new edition 2004, 493–666; J. Dillon, 2003.

³⁷ H. J. Krämer, 1983; on the *Timaeus* in Antiquity see L. Brisson, 1994, 533–4; on the Middle Platonists see R. T. Wallis, 1995; L. E. J. Deitz, 1986; the *loci* where Aristotle cites the *Timaeus* are given by H. Bonitz, 1870, 598a60–b19.

³⁸ I. Düring, 1957.

³⁹ J. Dillon, 2003.

⁴⁰ As a small selection: H. Teloh, 1981; K. M. Sayre, 1983; W. J. Prior, 1985; C. Gill, M. M. McCabe, 1996; R. G. Turnbull, 1998; F. von Kutschera, 2002; Gill, Mary Louise. 2015. "Method and Metaphysics in Plato's *Sophist* and *Statesman*" In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* edited by Edward N. Zalta.

esoteric Plato the range of theses becomes even more varied.⁴¹ Moreover, Plato's *Parmenides* (130c–134d) and *De Ideis* (reconstructed from Alexander's commentary on the *Metaphysics*) have many themes in common, their reasoning concerning the possibility of the ideas being very similar. It is not important if it is Aristotle who refers to Plato or the reverse.⁴² In any case, it would not be the only time Aristotle and Platon can be seen to relate to each other. G. Fine thinks that Aristotle wrote the *De Ideis* during the time that he was still in the Academy.⁴³

3.4.2. The Texts where we can Find the Academic Discourse

The Academic discourse must be captured through the texts of the members of the Academy. We know many of their names, a most comprehensive list was compiled by E. Zeller, II, 1, 982, Anm. 1. The first volume of Friedrich Ueberweg, Karl Praechter, 1926 (reprint, Basel 1967) 341–347 und 100*–101* also contains much material and we are happy to have the new presentation of the Old Academy by H. J. Krämer in H. Flashar, 1983, (new edition with supplements 2004). T. Dorandi has provided a new philological basis for the whole discussion.⁴⁴ As a rule, Aristotle and Theophrastus are left out of discussions of the Old Academy, but it is clear that they too belong to that group no less than for instance Heracleides Ponticus. It is for technical reasons alone that they are excluded, because we have a large body of texts of them and including them in that context would be simply unmanageable. Of course, they do form a separate branch within the Academy, but that is true of others too, of Speusippus or of Xenocrates, for example.

There are several collections of the fragments of the members of the Old Academy. These differ essentially in their objectives, but also in the volume of reported frag-

⁴¹ See T. A. Szlezák, 2004; Mirbach, D. (Ed.), Krämer, H. (2014).

⁴² CAG I, Hayduck, 1891, parts of it are edited by D. Harlfinger, 1975; O. Gigon, *Aristotelis Opera*, 1987; an edition with English translation and commentary by G. Fine, 1993; an edition with German translation by A. Graeser, 1998, 122–143.

⁴³ Cf. G. Fine, 1993, 41.

⁴⁴ T. Dorandi, 1999; he can draw upon his edition of Philodemus' papyri (Pherc. 1021 e 164), 1991, stützen; K. Gaiser, has treated the same subject immediately before him, 1988

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ments.⁴⁵ In connection with Plato's so-called 'Unwritten Doctrine' other collections of fragments have been made.⁴⁶ We have at our disposal, further, collections of fragments of particular members of the Academy: Speusippus,⁴⁷ Xenocrates,⁴⁸ Heracleides Ponticus,⁴⁹ Eudoxus of Cnidus,⁵⁰ Philippus of Opús,⁵¹ Theaitetus.⁵²

I wish, now, to justify why I do not use such texts to illustrate the Academic discourse which I have been invoking, but do the texts of Aristotle and Theophrastus. Let us consider, firstly, some reasons why collections of fragments seem not to be a good basis. The comparison of different collections will clearly show that not only the gathering of the fragments but also the reconstruction of the works from which they are cited is controversial and problematic. All collections of fragments, suffer from an inherent inadequacy. They pretend to present a text while only in fact offering a quotation from a particular context, which will have its own specific ends. The editors, of course, are well aware of that fact, they know the context and take it into account considering the beginning and the end of the quotation, but some users may be not aware of this fact, and they run the risk of misunderstanding the text. We can understand a quotation only if we know its function in its original setting. There is usually not enough space for providing this information or the context of the cited text is simply not at our disposal. A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, in their book *Hellenistic Philosophers* (1987), devised an approach to, at least in part, circumvent the dilemma. There they always but very briefly, note the context of the cited text. These issues of collections of fragments were the subject of books by G. W. Most and W. Burkert some years ago.⁵³

⁴⁵ W. Nestle, 1923; C. J. de Vogel, 1973; H. Dörrie, 1987ff.; J. Dillon, *The Heirs of Plato*, Oxford 2003.

⁴⁶ J. N. Findlay, 1974; M.-D. Richard, 1986; K. Gaiser, 1988.

⁴⁷ P. Lang, 1911; E. Bickermann, J. Sykurtris, 1928; M. Isnardi Parente, 1980; L. Tarán, 1981; A. F. Natoli, 2004.

⁴⁸ R. Heinze, 1892; M. Isnardi Parente, 1982.

⁴⁹ F. Wehrli, 1953; O. Voss, 1896.

⁵⁰ F. Blass, 1887; F. Lasserre, 1966.

⁵¹ L. Tarán, 1975.

⁵² E. Sachs, 1914.

⁵³ See the methodological observations made by G. W. Most and W. Burkert, 1998; very instructive is the introduction of G. W. Most in: G. W. Most, 1997; in this book I. G. Kidd gives a good example for the problem how to get and to handle fragments in the case of Poseidonius.

Collections often also show an ideological defect. It is not reasonable to include only those quotations confirmed by name. On the one hand the naming may be deliberately or inadvertently incorrect (it is the work of source criticism to decide on this). On the other hand there are many verified and identifiable quotations without name. Moreover, the beginning and the end of quotations are often uncertain, just as is how literally the quotation is to be taken. In drawing their conclusions about the quotation, editors are guided by their own given interests and objectives, and it is unavoidable that the collection will confirm their leading intention.

Next, I present some reasons why the early texts of Aristotle and Theophrastus seem much better suited for the characterizing of the Academic discourse in the period around the death of Plato. Nobody can deny that it is methodologically more correct to base an interpretation on transmitted than on reconstructed texts. If there are any such texts, this is the question. For some time, it has become more and more plausible that Aristotle's *Met. A* and Theophrastus' *Met.* are early works, written, that is, not long after Plato's death. If that is the case, they are better witnesses of the Academic discourse than the fragmentary testimonies of other members of the Academy. In them we have authentic contemporary texts instead of the uncertain and contradictory reconstructions of modern scholars, however acute these may be.

Met. A 1.1 is part of a discourse determined by Plato's late dialogues (as noted above), especially the *Parmenides*, the *Timaeus*, the *Sophist*. We can trace this discourse in Theophrastus' *Met.* and in Aristotle's early work. Works of particular relevance are *De Caelo*, *Met. A* 6 and 9, *Physics* H 1 and Θ and in addition to these the *Categories*, *De philosophia* and *De Ideis*.⁵⁴ We keep in mind that the present section has no other goal than to make clear the Academic background of *Met. A* 1.1: We wish to know which the fundamental opinions and beliefs, the problems and the driving questions in the background are, which give the first phrase of *Met.*

⁵⁴ W. D. Ross, gives some indications to content-related references between *Met. A* and the Academy in his commentary, 1924; but see H. Bonitz, 1870, too; very valuable are the lists compiled by G. Reale, 1993; J. Tricot, 1974; further informations in the histories of philosophy by H. Flashar, 1983, and W. K. C. Guthrie, vol. V, 1978.

A its weight and meaning.

Finally, we have to reflect on the different positions of the partners in this discourse. A new situation of discourse had developed in the Academy insofar as it was a school. In our everyday life, we think and credit things according to our life situation, say as human being, as citizen, as professional. The school produces a new life situation, we are compelled to think and hold certain beliefs about the thoughts and beliefs of others. The original process of making meaning and examining that meaning it begins anew. Whatever is said is no more than another new proposition or belief. This is the process that unfolded in the Academy. The findings of K. Gaiser and H. J. Krämer confirm the dogmatic character of the school. It seems, at least, that Theophrastus, Speusippus and Xenocrates began again to contend their ideas and tried to establish a system of deduction of natural beings from principles.⁵⁵ The guest from Elea showed that we have other possibilities to choose from. We do not need to set our own opinions against those of others, we can afford to refrain from contention and do no more than reflect on the fundamentals of given opinions. In this situation Theophrastus has chosen to contend his own view, Aristotle the way of reflection instead of contention (*unbehauptendes Denken*, a ‘thinking without claims’).

If we accept the arguments for the early date of *Met. A*, then Aristotle is referring to the contemporary Academic discourse.⁵⁶ Further places where Aristotle asks the question about becoming are *Met. A* 3–9 and *Physics A*. In this discourse Aristotle focuses on *ousia*, the question of the meaning of being. That is a particular choice, other members preferred other questions. In repeating the question of the *Sophist*, being becomes the subject for understanding. His question thereby forms a speculative turn, treatable only theoretically.⁵⁷ As point of reference, he uses the obvious variety in colloquial language of the senses of *to be* and of *ousia*. The question about being is not absolutely out of nowhere, without any past. With this

⁵⁵ Entirely in the line of what H. J. Krämer and others said; compare e. g. Theophrastus, *Met.* §§ 3–4 and 11; on Xenocrates and Speusippus see e. g. H. J. Krämer, 1964, 31f.

⁵⁶ For the details see below, Part III, 5.1 The Academic background.

⁵⁷ See E. Sonderegger, 2013, I. 2.

question Aristotle resumes the question about becoming, put by the Presocratics and by Plato. Plato is partly following on from the Heraclitean theorem that all is movement (see *Theaetetus*) and his own critical position with respect to this, partly Parmenides' statement in the *Sophist*, that it is not for us even to ask whether there is non-being. The *Timaeus* belongs to the same context, where Plato investigates the connection between becoming and being.

The question about becoming remains. Each epoch puts it in its own form. To realize how general and how varied this question is over time, we can compare Hesiods' *Theogonia* with the idea of creation in the Middle Ages, the scientific approach in modern times, the beginning of G. W. F. Hegels' *Wissenschaft der Logik*,⁵⁸ or the §§ 86 ff. of his *Encyclopaedie*; in the 20th century there are examples of how the issue of becoming and the question of its origin was treated by A. N. Whitehead in philosophy or by S. Weinberg in physics.⁵⁹ These examples testify to the extent and the unfading interest of this question. For reflecting people, how to conceptualize and understand becoming has always been one of the most important questions.

That Aristotle asks after the being on which becoming can be founded, is the difference between his questioning and that of the others. The question about the meaning of being is asked in order to attain knowledge about becoming. Becoming is the given and what we would like to understand, being belongs to its conditions and is what is now at issue. The question is asked primarily with philosophical, secondarily with a cosmological objective. The result does not come about through physical experiments or calculations, it is the outcome of reflection on contemporary opinions about becoming and being. Within this range Aristotle tries to establish the principal and primary with the method of topical attitude.⁶⁰ If being is the basis of becoming, we must be certain that being is neither, in whatever way, a part of a thing becoming nor even a becoming itself. The arguments for a first unmoved moving in *Met. A*, but in *Physics* Θ 5–6 too, have the aim to prove just this. Aristotle summarizes different contributions to the question about being as the basis of

⁵⁸ G. W. F. Hegel, ed. 1934, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, 1. Abschnitt, 1. Kapitel.

⁵⁹ S. Weinberg, 1977.

⁶⁰ See below, p. 228, extensively E. Sonderegger, 2012, 154–156.

becoming. He orders them as follows: being must be a basis and a principle in the categorical sense as in the modal sense as well; the Presocratics have found the hyle: hyle, to be sure, is a being on which becoming rests, but taken alone it is not a sufficient cause, which Aristotle shows in *Met. Z 3*. The whole book *Z* proves that the (non-Platonic) *eidos* is prior to the hyle. In *Met. A* Aristotle had already pointed to these thoughts, but the core issue in this book is the question about being as the cause of becoming, especially about the first moving (as in *Physics Θ*). The *telos* as cause makes understandable why and how the being as cause of becoming can move without itself being moved, namely like a for-the-sake-of-something. The sentence *Met. A* 7.26, “That there is a being (*ousia tis*), eternal and unmoved [...],” must be understood in this context. The sentences before this one refer to other opinions about the first in becoming. Some say that the perfect and the best is not from the beginning, that is only the result. Against this 7.25 objects, offering as an example that the first in becoming is not the seed but the complete animal. This is a theoretical statement not a scientific thesis. It only instances with an example the theoretical insight, that becoming rests on being. The complete animal has the eidetic determinations, which the seed does not have. And in this sense it is ‘more real,’ ‘more being.’ Therefore, states 7.26, there is an *ousia*, which has the Parmenidean determinations of being.

That becoming was the crucial topic for Theophrastus, for the Old Academy and the early Aristotle is due primarily to the influence of Plato’s *Timaeus* and then also the Presocratics. In this dialogue, Plato juxtaposes the pure noetic and the mundane-aesthetic being and asks, how the transition from the first to the second is possible.⁶¹ Theophrastus and other members of the Academy paid more attention to the concrete aspect of the problem, Aristotle more to the cosmological and the speculative. The question about being is an example of the continuity of issues between Plato and Aristotle.

⁶¹ I. Kant reflected on the same theme in the *Opus postumum (Übergangsschrift)*, see E. Sonderegger, 2015.

3.5. Character of Philosophy

At the end of this chapter I present a list of new presuppositions for reading *Met. A*. For the new beginning it is still more important to see the character of Aristotle's philosophy than its particular points. It is a widely shared view that philosophy in general has as its ultimate aim to discern some theses which are true and can be safely, obviously with sound reasoning, maintained and that it is desirable that philosophy develops a system or at least the outline of a system. Most scholars in Aristotelian research share this view. Hardly anyone can imagine another alternative to this dogmatic view than an agnostic, sceptic, aporetic or vague, postmodern outlook.

In the Aristotelian context, then, many think, that by *prote ousia* Aristotle means the particular thing ("this horse"). Plato attributed this type of thinking to those who "refer all things to the body."⁶² Even if occasionally there is some opposition to that view, it is not easy to really take the opposite side, since we are realists by nature. As R. Rorty or G. W. F. Hegel or others say, we are naturally realists, the reflective position is always and necessarily a secondary one. Aristotle performs this reflection using the opinions and beliefs of his time (*endoxa*). He does not develop and sustain a system, does not argue an *aporia*, he intends to analyze the *DOXA* in order to get its fundamental conceptions and distinctions. He tries to transform contemporary opinions into concepts in topical attitude.

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These premises seem new only compared with the premises of the standard interpretation, in fact they are old, because they take into account the reading aids in the text and the topical attitude which guided Aristotle writing. Based on these premises, I try to work free of the distortions of the history of reception. It has already been said above and some share this view that *ousia* is the subject of the book. But it is

⁶² Pl., *Sophist* 246c9 ... τῶν εἰς σῶμα πάντα ἐλκόντων ...

not consensus that Aristotle, by asking after ousia, asks after that which is primary in being and that which gives unity in the multiple use of being (ousia) and to be (einaí).

The method by which to accomplish is theory in topical attitude. The long-term aim is to know which the causes of becoming are, more precisely which being is the first cause of becoming and how this process is possible. Becoming is considered in two respects, first as the becoming of natural beings (as Simplicius had already tried to explain to Philoponus) and second as the speculative transition from the noetic to the mundane state of the world. We have, further, to take into account the kind of text and its date. Approximately contemporary with Theophrastus' *Metaphysics*, it is Aristotle's early *Programmschrift*, in its function comparable with the *Ältestes Systemprogramm* of German Idealism. It is not the alleged apex of a system but a starting point. Together with Theophrastus' *Metaphysics*, Plato's *Timaeus* and Aristotle's other early writings it brings together the issues of the Old Academy. Aristotle focused on his main point, the question about the meaning of being, and he gives a speculative answer which differs from the answers Plato and the other members of the Academy had offered. As early as in *Met. A* Aristotle is applying the method of topical attitude. Firstly, he collects and orders the current opinions (endoxa); he, then, gives them a conceptual outfit formulating them in his own terminology (προτάσεις λαβεῖν; the quotations, *Anführungen*), in order to identify their fundamentals. The noesis as structure becomes visible, if the opinions on the surface are traced back to their foundations.

He answers the crucial question about being saying that being is ground of becoming:

- as energeia, actuality,
- as first moving, which sets in motion unmoved itself, like a for-the-sake-of-something, and finally
- as noesis, awareness.

Being as the first ground of becoming must be energeia, actuality (6.8), which does not mean existence, but 'having arrived at its complete form.' That {being–

actuality} is a cause in the sense of the for-the-sake-of-something because, as Plato had seen (*Philebos*, 54a–c), becoming is for the sake of being and not the reverse (*Met. A* 7.5–7.9). But in the natural process of becoming being is a result and the last while the *eidos* is its origin and the first (*Met. Θ* 8). Being achieves its actuality nowhere other than in *noesis* which is not that of the human subjective thinking. Our human thinking can only recognize something if it has recognized itself before any mundane activity. In this *noesis* which is the structure of a world, the actuality of the *nous* becomes the actuality of being.

Here a summary of the results and a presentation of the new premises in the form of some theses.

1. A theological reading of *Met. A* must assume that Aristotle had developed a metaphysics of substance. That tends to a theology whether including a concept of creation or not and having proofs of the existence of god or not. –
Against that, we must counter that such ideas appear later in the history of the text. Aristotle's *Met.* does not develop any metaphysics as a discipline. It is, in its main parts, a revival of Plato's question about being (see the *Sophist*) and consequently no resulting theology.
Where Aristotle speaks of god or gods, he is not aiming to prove anything about gods, but those serve as examples and they are drawn from the range of *endoxa*. The intention of the text is to enable us to practice speculation.
2. *Met. A* and Theophrastus' *Met.* are broad collections of problems and questions treated in the Old Academy and both try, to provide answers to these questions. What is at issue is natural genesis, not creation by God, whether that be out of nothing or otherwise.
3. In *Met. A* 1.1 and in *Met. A* 7.21 Aristotle provides aids to interpretation (cf. above, 3.2) and we must take advantage of them. If the text is a theoretical one and written in topical attitude, then it must be read in the corresponding fashion.
4. The book opens with a presenting of the question about being. For Aristotle this question is the result of the discourse of his philosophical tradition, of the Academy, in the final instance. This question becomes urgent if it has been seen

3. *New Premises for Reading Met. A*

that becoming cannot establish becoming nor make it understandable.

5. Considerations about the causes, those which have a genesis and those which do not, have led to the insight that the manner we speak about becoming (i. e. our endoxa about becoming) will be reasonable only when we complement becoming with an unmoved moving cause.
6. What must we think of that which, itself unmoved, sets in motion, i. e. about the first with respect to becoming?
 - a) The ousia which Aristotle names in Λ 1.1 is completely open, it is not yet fixed in its content, we only know that it is spoken in multifarious ways;
 - b) the being of the unmoved moving for which we search, must be conceived as actuality (*Met.* Λ 6.8);
 - c) actuality, *energeia*, means that the being in question has reached its complete form (but not that it exists or that it is at hand, *vorhanden sein*). This {being–actuality} is a cause in the sense of the for-the-sake-of-something (*Met.* Λ 7.5–7.9);
 - d) the *causa efficiens* is not the main cause or the core of the four causes. Accordingly the main part of becoming is not played by a god as a creator. That becomes even clearer if we consider the sense of to proton kinoun, *kinein* does not mean *efficere*;
 - e) beside other uses *being* is used in two opposite but correlated ways: genetically it is the word for the last, the result and the for-the-sake of a process, but eidetically it is the word the first (*Met.* Θ 8);
 - f) in the noesis there is no distinction anymore between the actuality of the nous and the actuality of being; nous and noeton are distinguishable no more because noesis is prior to both, nous and noeton;
 - g) if and only if noesis has recognised itself, can the actuality of the nous ($\acute{\epsilon}\nu\acute{\epsilon}\rho\gamma\epsilon\iota\alpha$ τοῦ νοῦ) become the actuality of being (: {*energeia*–*ousia*}, see *Met.* Λ 7.17–7.23);
 - h) *to be*, expressed in the formula

$$\left\{ \frac{\text{being} \leftarrow \text{awareness} \rightarrow \text{actuality}}{\text{DOXA}} \right\}$$

is not a thing, not an event, not a fact, not a state of affairs; it is, to speak of it only in an inaccurate way, the for-the-sake-of becoming, attracting (metaphorically) the becoming to become a being, but in no way is it anything like a *causa efficiens*.

4. Key Propositions

4.1. The Commentary is Guided by a Selection of Key Propositions

4.1.1. General Remarks

In this chapter I will make some preparatory remarks concerning the content of *Met. A*, the method I follow in commenting upon it and finally, I present an outline of its content as I see it.

In commenting on a text there exist different possibilities. We have continuous commentaries and we have also monographs concerning the book as a whole. The continuous commentary seems not to be useful in the present case, because in that form we must consider many details which distract from the main line of thought and this is what is here at stake. There are, moreover, many commentaries which help us better to understand a particular word, phrase or sentence, such as those of H. Bonitz, A. Schwegler, W. D. Ross, L. Elders, S. Fazzo, S. Alexandru, F. Baghdassarian, L. Judson.¹ Many questions are common to all comments, but some claims of the standard interpretation are less treated: that *ousia* means substance remains untouched and the so-called ‘Unmoved Mover’ is not questioned at all. The intellectual background of the Academy is not dealt with in depth.

Today it is more problematic how to comprehend the whole, rather than particular words or sentences in isolation. The monograph, then, would have been a good form for explaining the contrast between mine and the standard interpretation. With that

¹ The commentary by M. Bordt (2006) is designed for an overview; some contributions in the *Symposium Aristotelicum*, 2000, and in the *New Essays*, 2016, are useful too.

4. Key Propositions

form, however, we sail too far from the text. In our case, it is pivotal to develop the line of thought through closest possible contact with the text. In that way alone can I show that the new understanding hews more faithfully to the text itself than does the standard interpretation. Thus, have I resolved to offer a commentary following a series of key propositions. In this chapter I present them and give the reasons for my choice.

In Part II, 1, Traditional Reading, we learnt that, if we wish to understand *Met. A*, it is crucial that we not allow our understanding to be obstructed by the traditional premises and presuppositions left unexamined. We, thus, consider first the horizon of questions (*Fragehorizont*), which determines the framework of our reading. We make explicit this framework with our new premises presented in Part II, 2, New Premises. Further argument justification follow in the commentary.

Aristotle's reflections in *Met. A* lie within the framework of the question of the meaning of being. This question is not a naïve one, it is conveyed in many ways. We have, therefore, to look for the emplacement of that question in its tradition and take into account that Aristotle asks this question against the background of the insight in Plato's *Sophist* that new answers are useless, because each of them would be no more than a new claim having to be re-examined just as the old ones did. It seems possible to perform the test but, as the Eleatic guest shows, with the cost that the examining person is not less examined than the contention he examines. The examiner must give up the intention to contend and the whole question must be reoriented. We can do no more than reflect on the prevailing opinions.²

The result of Plato's analysis of the prevailing opinions, carried out in the *Sophist*, are the "five highest genera." The first, 'being' (to on), names the subject. The main features of *to be* in the prevailing opinions (i. e. of those who identify being and body and of the friends of the ideas) are movement and rest (kinesis, stasis). Reflecting on these features of *to be* we find two concepts of reflection: identity and difference (*Reflexionsbegriffe*). Without these we cannot think or speak intelligibly

² Some mistake this for an aporetic approach (e. g. W. Mesch, C. Rapp, D. Fonfara). This results from the view that a philosophy with solid results is much more interesting than a philosophy that asks questions.

about *to be*.

Aristotle takes up this project, to ask the question about being as Plato did in the *Sophist*. Under this condition we cannot expect him to be proposing new answers to the question but seeking to clarify the sense of the question, considering the method, analyzing the given contentions and the opinions, which underlie the colloquial speech. In addition, Aristotle's question about being has a concrete connection. He does not ask out of the blue "What at all – all other things aside – does *to be* mean?" Quite the contrary, his question is asked in the context of the question about becoming. This question was immediately urgent in his days, no less than it is in ours (see above, p. 225). Asking the question about the meaning of being he wants to know which being becoming is founded on and how this works. There are answers to this question and, not only those of the Presocratics on hyle (be that understood as the elements or Democritus' atoms), but the Parmenidean one too: that *being* is pure being, without any negation. Aristotle, of course, is familiar too with the different answers by which Plato tried to determine the being capable to ground becoming, namely the idea, the principles of hen and of the aoristos dyas (about which we know very little) and finally the good. He knows, too, how Plato tried to trace the transition from the noetic world to the factual world in Timaeus' metaphoric speech. The demiurge, the chora and geometry played a prominent role in that Platonic attempt.

Met. A is to be read taking into account this background. Collecting and analyzing the opinions about being, Aristotle leads us to the insight that the being (*Sein*), which is the ground of all becoming is: {οὐσία ← νόησις → ἐνέργεια / DOXA} (for the exact sense of this formula see the Commentary, Part III. esp. 6, 7 and 9). The answer or better, this analysis, which must not be contended as a new opinion about reality and truth, has as its background questions like these: What is primary in being (*Sein*)? With relation to what "to be" is said in many ways? In which sense of being is being the ground of becoming? What does it mean to be the ground of becoming? Searching for answers to questions of this kind, we will come to the difference with the standard opinion that ground or cause is essentially to be found in the *causa efficiens*, best represented by the 'Unmoved Mover.' Aristotle asks

after the connection between that which we must think about primary being and that which we see as perceptible things. It is the same question Theophrastus is asking at the beginning of his *Metaphysics*. The question is always posed in close contact with Plato's questioning. Aristotle, then, is trying to make understandable the first that sets in motion. With his speculative answer that being is noesis as the for-the-sake of becoming Aristotle is able to remedy the insufficiency in Plato's ideas, which cannot account for the initiating of movement.³

4.1.2. Outlines of *Met. A*

First I give an outline of the whole text of *Met. A* in a shorter version, representing the 'bone structure' only, afterward in more extensive version (see below 4.2), this will be 'fleshed out.' Both versions are designed to give a first orientation of the line of thought as I see it and to lay out reasons for my choice of the key propositions (KP). In the last part of this chapter (4.3) I gather together all these sentences in a list.⁴

Sentence I

The first sentence is so fundamentally important that it must be separated from the rest. In this sentence Aristotle concentrates the complex and broad discourse of the tradition on the question of the meaning of being. The appropriate method for treating with this question is theory, he says, and the point of view which guides the question is what is being as the primary. At the same time, he integrates the insight obtained in the *Sophist*, that the DOXA about being underlies all other opinions because, being ourselves in a certain world, we cannot do other than follow

³ See the remarks at the end of a series of first considerations about becoming. If external moving causes and causes, like the logos, are distinguished (*Met. A* 3.9), we do not need ideas as causes of becoming (*Met. A* 3.11); cf. too *Met. A* 9, 991a8–11, 991b3–9 et al.

⁴ It is useful to compare this outline with other outlines in different contributions in the *Symposium Aristotelicum* on *Met. A*, 2000 and with the dispositions given by M. Bordt, 2006 or by García, 2011; also the new commentaries by F. Baghdassarian and L. Judson provide us with very useful outlines of the text; of course, there are many commonalities but divergences too, which find their reasons in the different goals of the authors.

its prevailing opinion about being. A large part of the Commentary is devoted to the explanation of this one sentence, because we must make explicit the different lines of tradition which are hidden in this sentence. We must understand what it is a consequence of and of what it is an alternative. Because *Met. A* is, as it were, a parallel text to Theophrastus' *Met.* we have to consider its relation to that text. And lastly we must keep in mind Aristotle's other early works which belong to the same horizon of questions.

Group of sentences II

The chapters 1 to 5 have an introductory character and purpose. They explain the sense of the question about being. They set out, further, which other questions this question is connected to, they show the method to follow and state that the endoxa are its basis. Aristotle displays his repertoire of concepts, which makes possible the asking of the question. He wants to make understandable the being of the beings starting from endoxa. The first five chapters are incomplete and they show it. They make clear that by the means they use, the theory which the first sentence calls for cannot be provided and that, if we cannot determine being, then neither can we determine becoming.

Group of sentences III

In the chapters 6 and 7 we find a third group of sentences containing two speculative highlights. The first seven phrases of chapter 6 prepare for the first speculative high point, presented in *Met. A* 6.8 (= KP 12). This sentence designates a kind of unity of ousia and energeia as the first outcome of the theory; the following text draws out some conclusions from this result. The next key propositions, KP 13–16, have partly cosmological content, partly they consider the connection between noesis and ousia. The last key proposition in this group, KP 17, unites, in a second speculative high point the insights thus far reached, in a thought which can be represented in the formula {οὐσίᾳ ← νόησις → ἐνέργεια / ΔΟΞΑ}, and Aristotle calls, what he has done, 'theory.' In these chapters Aristotle tries to make comprehensible 'the first,' which as being (*als Sein*) is the cause of becoming, but itself has no becoming. Here we find the central point of the speculative sketch.

Group of sentences IV

In the fourth and last part we find additions, independent of each other, to the theory of the foregoing chapters. Chapter 8 has cosmological interests, chapter 9 presents clarifications and reflections on some concepts and sentences used in the speculative sketch of chapters 6 and 7. The questions mainly concern nous und noesis. Chapter 10 deals with some aporias, the first being the most important. It concerns the question of how it is possible to concile his speculative sketch with Plato's idea of the good. After this short summary, I add a more detailed outline, which should make plausible my selection of the key propositions.

4.2. Establishing the Key Propositions (KP)

4.2.1. The First Key Proposition, *Met. A 1.1* = KP 1

In this section I omit translation of the key propositions, which can be found above in the translation of *Met. A*. In the Commentary they will be re-introduced to facilitate reading.

The first sentence of *Met. A* must be selected as a KP. It is only seemingly simple and short. If we try to uncover its background we see how complex it really is and how rich its content is and how manifold its relations. At the same time it is a synthesis of the whole philosophical tradition and offers an alternative against it. In the first chapter of the commentary, Part III, 5, "First Key Proposition," I will show the historical background of this sentence. First, it names the subject of the inquiry, *peri ousias*: "What is the meaning of being?" then it names the appropriate method, *theoria*. The second sentence names the point of view from which the question has to be asked, namely in which sense being, *Sein*, is primary.

Plato had shown in the *Sophist* that there are certain opinions about being: partly as in the opinions of philosophers, partly because *to be* is used in current language in many ways. That is the reason why it is necessary to examine the logos (*Soph.* 259e

ff.). The *Topics* prove that Aristotle is well aware of this fact. In this book he reflects on the use of predicates and in the *Organon*, in general, he tries to clarify the use of *to be* and to guard the discourse against the effects of sophisms. Among the multitude of opinions we cannot expect a harmonious agreement between the different users of *to be* because everyone continues to maintain his opinion about *to be*, explicitly or implicitly. If we do not want to continue merely setting opinion against opinion, we must desist from making any contentions about being. New contentions about being could be no more than new variants of the old contentiousness. There is no other way out of the difficulty of the philosophical discourse, than to reflect upon that which has previously been asserted about being and to analyze these contentions. We have especially to reflect on the implicit meaning of *to be*, hidden in our speaking where a latent contention lies which we hardly can be aware of, which, nevertheless, is implied in every statement. The guest from Elea in the *Sophist* (242–244) found precisely this to be the case and this observation was the inspiration for Aristotle to make being, *Sein*, the subject of *Met. A*. The opening sentence of the book is the first key proposition.

KP 1 *Met. A* 1.1 (1069a18) Περὶ τῆς οὐσίας ἢ θεωρίας· τῶν γὰρ οὐσιῶν αἱ ἀρχαὶ
καὶ τὰ αἴτια ζητοῦνται.

4.2.2. The Group of Sentences in *Met. A* 1–5: KP 2 up to KP 10

Met. A 1.2–1.8.

The first sentence is a result of the discourse in the Old Academy, in the time before Plato died. Its traces can be tracked back in particular in the *Sophist*, the *Timaeus*, in Theophrastus' *Metaphysics* and Aristotle's early work. The question about the use of *to be* (εἶναι), had become the most urgent question to ask. It is always the philosopher's task to ask after what is primary, the same is true asking the question about being, the question Aristotle took on as the subject of *Met. A*. In contrast to all other questions this question asks for a ground which has no other ground. Being

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cannot be grounded, but its structure can be detected.

In the first five chapters the question is limited to the being of natural beings, because these are the least contested. The first questions are: How are being and becoming related? What is primary in being, what primary in becoming? In the set of becoming beings, what has itself a becoming and what not? Which are grounds and elements of becoming? When we consider the different ways the Presocratics treated their theme – to *pan* – and how Plato spoke about being and becoming in the *Timaeus*, then we see that *ousia* remains the most urgent theme in the background. In the following sentences (A 1.2–1.6) Aristotle gives three reasons, why being is necessarily the first topic for his inquiry. *Ousia* is the first with respect to which something is said. Further, it is only about *ousia* that we can speak in an independent way, apart from all other beings and, finally, the ‘ancients’ too have always asked after the causes of being. Modern thinkers,⁵ by contrast, think that it is more the universals that are the *ousia*, while the ancients (i. e. the Presocratics) more the particular things.

Aristotle extends the last doxographic remark to a little chart summarizing the prevailing opinions about being. He combines the criteria of perceptibility and perishability and designates four groups of beings (1.7). If we look around us – taking into account both immediate perception and prevailing opinions – then all beings can be classified as perceptible things, some of them perishable, others not (as far as was observable at the time). Beside these there are beings perceptible and not perishable. In this list there are also beings not perceptible but perishable, but it seems that this class of beings is empty or that they play no special role. – This classification is not part of an Aristotelian system, it is no more than an organized collection of opinions, set up along the lines of his own terminology. Aristotle does not draw further conclusions from his list. From the text we can deduce the following table 4.1 “Classification of beings.”

In this table, 1. means beings around us; 2. the heavenly bodies; 3. would be

⁵ He is thinking of Plato and the members of the Academy. Cf. the opinions about the reference reported by E. Berti, 2016, 73f.

ousia	perishable	not perishable
perceptible	1	2
not perceptible	3	4

Table 4.1.: Classification of beings

perishable things below the threshold of perception; 4. a group exemplified by the ideas and mathematical entities.

The second key proposition gives this classification of endoxa:

KP 2 *Met.* Λ 1.7 (1069a30–36) οὐσίαι δὲ τρεῖς, μία μὲν αἰσθητὴ, ἥς ἢ μὲν φθαρτὴ, ἢν πάντες ὁμολογοῦσιν, οἷον τὰ φυτὰ καὶ τὰ ζῷα ἢ δὲ αἰδῖος, ἥς ἀνάγκη τὰ στοιχεῖα λαβεῖν, εἴτε ἓν εἴτε πολλά· ἄλλη δὲ ἀκίνητος, καὶ ταύτην φασὶ τινες εἶναι χωριστήν, οἱ μὲν εἰς δύο διαιροῦντες, οἱ δὲ εἰς μίαν φύσιν τιθέντες τὰ εἶδη καὶ τὰ μαθηματικά, οἱ δὲ τὰ μαθηματικά μόνον τούτων.

Afterwards we must look for the principles, on which these opinions are based.

***Met.* Λ 1.9–5.11**

With sentence 1.9 a long section opens, which continues up to the end of chapter 5. From the given list Aristotle treats the way of being of perceptible beings, ousia aisthete, and its causes. He translates the common opinions into his terminology. That is the content of the third key proposition:

KP 3 *Met.* Λ 1.9 (1069b3) Ἡ δ' αἰσθητὴ οὐσία μεταβλητή.

The sentences 2.3 to 2.8 contain a reflection on the conceptual core of perceptible beings, namely metabole. If we wish to know the cause, which has no becoming we have to clarify which features of beings have a becoming and which not. The fourth sentence gives a partial answer, which will be justified in the subsequent sentences:

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KP 4 *Met.* Λ 3.1 (1069b35–36) Μετὰ ταῦτα ὅτι οὐ γίγνεται οὔτε ἡ ὕλη οὔτε τὸ εἶδος, λέγω δὲ τὰ ἔσχατα.

If hyle und eidos have no becoming it must be asked, whether they are the being (*Sein*) which is searched for. If that should prove not to be the case, what else has no becoming in the process of genesis must be clarified. What is primary in this process, what can initiate it? To give an answer, Aristotle analyzes the structure of becoming: something becomes something by means of something else. In 3.4 he formulates the principle underlying this structure: Every being comes to be through another synonymous being. In *Met.* Λ 1.7 Aristotle spoke of three groups of beings to give a first orientation. Now the question shifts from the being in general to the proper being. The fifth key proposition lists up three manners of proper being:

KP 5 *Met.* Λ 3.7 (1070a9–13) οὐσίαι δὲ τρεῖς, ἡ μὲν ὕλη τόδε τι οὖσα τῷ φαίνεσθαι (ὅσα γὰρ ἀφῆ καὶ μὴ συμφύσει, ὕλη καὶ ὑποκείμενον), ἡ δὲ φύσις τόδε τι εἰς ἦν, καὶ ἕξις τις· ἔτι τρίτη ἢ ἐκ τούτων ἢ καθ' ἕκαστα, οἶον Σωκράτης ἢ Καλλιίας.

In this case, too, we must not forget that Aristotle presents in this sentence not a system of his own but only endoxa, conceptualized in his terminology. If we asked someone “What do you think this actually is?” we would receive just these three answers, depending on the situation in which we have posed our question: it is what it is made of (“that is flesh”), or it is the essence of the thing (“this is a man”), or it is the particular being constituted by both (“this is Socrates”). Afterwards he studies the finite and changeable natural being with respect to its coming to be and the causes for that process, provided that the natural being can be captured with the concepts of hyle, eidos and to ek touton. Now it is obvious that hyle and eidos are causes but do not come to be (3.1); and, neither of them can initiate the process of becoming. Aristotle is widening, therefore, the range of causes with the distinction that there are causes, which come together with the caused being and others which are prior to the being caused. That is the sixth key proposition:

KP 6 *Met.* Λ 3.9 (1070a21–23) τὰ μὲν οὖν κινεῦντα αἷτια ὡς προγεγενημένα ὄντα,
τὰ δ' ὡς ὁ λόγος ἅμα.

The following sentences which conclude the chapter partly explain this sentence and partly analyze the claim that ideas could be causes in the sense which is relevant here. We have seen that only to ek touton is an ousia, which comes to be. Up to this point ousia has been a thematic concept, derived from endoxa, now it is used as a terminus, namely insofar as ousia is a category, determinable by the other categories. If ousia is the first category, then the question of whether its causes and elements are also causes and elements of the other categories or not may be posed. This question underlies the seventh key proposition:

KP 7 *Met.* Λ 4.1 (1070a31–33) Τὰ δ' αἷτια καὶ αἱ ἀρχαὶ ἄλλα ἄλλων ἔστιν ὡς, ἔστι
δ' ὡς, ἂν καθόλου λέγη τις καὶ κατ' ἀναλογίαν, ταῦτά πάντων.

In 4.3–4.9 Aristotle presents a negative answer. The first and the second categories cannot have the same causes, because we cannot find anything that could be more general than the categories. In 4.10–4.17 he gives a second conciliating answer, namely that in some sense there is a common ground for all beings in some sense there is not. In 4.13 he resorts to the distinction of causes from 3.9. He asks anew the question whether all categories can have the same causes by the light of distinguishing the causes into internal and external ones. This section ends abruptly with an addendum, the question about the first moving cause: I select this sentence as the eighth key proposition.

KP 8 *Met.* Λ 4.17 (1070b35) ἔτι παρὰ ταῦτα ὡς τὸ πρῶτον πάντων κινεῦν πάντα.

In chapter 5 there is a third answer to the question about the common causes of all categories. The basis of this answer is the idea that that which is a cause for the ousia is a cause too for the other categories, but only in a mediated way because ousia is choriston but the other categories cannot be without ousia. Aristotle calls this answer a 'first way.' In the ninth key proposition (5.4) he presents a second way; that is the fourth answer to the question of how all beings can have the same aitia and

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archai. This answer is based on the distinction between actuality and potentiality.

KP 9 *Met.* Λ 5.4 (1071a4ff) ἔτι δ' ἄλλον τρόπον τῷ ἀνάλογον ἀρχαὶ αἱ αὐταί, οἷον ἐνέργεια καὶ δυνάμις· ἀλλὰ καὶ ταῦτα ἄλλα τε ἄλλοις καὶ ἄλλως.

Sentence 5.6 points to the fact that it is not the same thing, to take something as a cause in a general way or not. – Aristotle introduces the concluding review with the tenth key proposition, which is about the first causes:

KP 10 *Met.* Λ 5.7 (1071a18f) πάντων δὴ πρῶται ἀρχαὶ τὸ ἐνεργεῖα πρῶτον τοδὶ καὶ ἄλλο ὃ δυνάμει.

The rest, 5.10–5.11, is summary.

4.2.3. The Group of Sentences in *Met.* Λ 6–7: KP 11–18

For most interpreters the chapters 6 to 10 form a second section within *Met.* Λ, both in style and content.⁶ The dividing difference in content is, following the standard interpretation, that in the first chapters the perceptible ousiai are the subject, whereas in the second five chapters Aristotle develops his theology.⁷ As for style, chapters 1 to 5 have rather more the character of notes, as do many other parts in Aristotle's pragmaties.⁸ Many sentences are incomplete and written in mere series without connecting particles. In contrast, chapters 6 to 10 are elaborated more, many sentences connected with connecting particles.⁹ While the division into two stylistically different parts is evident and not contested, this is not the case for the theological content of the second part. Chapter 8 has a cosmological subject, a theological sense is arrived at only by detours and in chapter 9 too the word 'god' is neither used nor does god play any role. The word 'god' is used four times (first

⁶ L. Judson tries to minimize the difference between the two parts, but the linguistic arguments for the difference are stronger than his.

⁷ See e. g. W. Jaeger in the critical apparatus *ad loc.*: c. 1–5 *physicas substantias*, c. 6–10 *theologiam tractans*.

⁸ W. Jaeger, 1912, 125–6; id., 1923, 229.

⁹ ἔτι, οὖν, ἄρα, ἀλλά, ἀλλ': in chapters 1–5: 0,175 per line, in 6–10: 0,315 per line.

at 1072b24) in chapter 7. Each time it is used as an example, such as in chapter 8 where Aristotle speaks about god ἐν μύθου σχήματι (“in a mythical manner,” 1074b1; see above, fn. 2.2.4, p. 139).

The leading question of how we are to understand the unmoved being (*Sein*), which is capable of setting in motion, remains the same in both parts. This question, however, is treated with a theoretical and a cosmological interest. As concerns the cosmological side it is the search for the first being in the realm of natural beings that can set in motion something. In this ontic range it is legitimate to give the question a theological turn even if theology is not the subject proper of *Met. Λ*. Nearer to the issue is Theophrastus’ question at the beginning of his *Metaphysics* or that resulting from the *Timaeus* and even that which Kant considered in his *Opus postumum*, namely how to understand the transition from the noetic world to the factual world of our everyday life.

Precisely this question is the focus of Aristotle’s research. If the endoxa are reduced to their fundamentals then we are compelled to ask for the connection of these noetic concepts and distinctions to our perceptible world. The results of our reflection on the fundamentals of our opinions must have a connection with what we perceive. Cosmological interests exclusively dominate chapter 8. In chapter 9 Aristotle treats some theoretical questions following the considerations about noesis, in chapter 10 he returns to Platonic questions. Aristotle tries to integrate Plato’s thoughts about the good, because the Platonic good is in some way comparable to his own concept of {οὐσία ← νόησις → ἐνέργεια / DOXA}. Here too we divide the whole text in two parts as the standard interpretations does, but the second part must itself be still further divided into the chapters 6 and 7 with their speculative highlights and the following chapters 8 to 10, which contain addenda, reflections, specifications of what has been previously said.¹⁰

¹⁰ P. Donini, denotes chapters 9 and 10 as annexes, see “Il libro lambda della Metafisica e la nascita della filosofia prima” in: *Rivista di storia della filosofia*, (2002), 181-199.

4.2.3.1. Met. Λ 6

In chapter 6, Aristotle first reflects on the results of the five foregoing chapters. He does not set out a new approach in this second part, but continues the question about the being which is able to ground becoming on a higher level. The leading questions remain: “How the movement of natural beings (*ousiai physikai*) is possible?” or “What sort of being (*Sein*) can ground the emergence of natural beings?” Now Aristotle asks which conditions underlie that being. The concept of movement is the same as in the *Physics*: “Movement is the actuality of a possible being as such”; this concept of movement must not be restricted to the cosmological aspect of movement or even to motion in a scientific sense or in the sense of creation. Further we must not forget that Aristotle switches without further notice between the different views, the view on natural beings and the theoretical view of the question about the meaning of being.

Met. Λ 6.1–6.8

KP 11 *Met.* Λ 6.1 (1071b3–5) Ἐπεὶ δ' ἦσαν τρεῖς οὐσίαι, δύο μὲν αἰ φυσικαὶ μία δ' ἡ ἀκίνητος, περὶ ταύτης λεκτέον ὅτι ἀνάγκη εἶναι αἰδιόν τινα οὐσίαν ἀκίνητον.

Considering the three manners of being (mentioned in *Met.* Λ 1.7) Aristotle starts with the thesis that there must be an unmoved eternal being. The reason at that point is that, if becoming must be grounded in being (*Sein*), one manner of being (*Seinsweise*) must be eternal, unmoved and necessary, for otherwise either a regression begins or all things would be perishable and in consequence have perished. In conceptual terms we can conceive a beginning or an end neither for the movement nor for time. This contention, that movement cannot end, only means that we cannot think of a beginning or an end of movement, it is not a physical statement. If we try to formulate the beginning or the end of time or movement, we inevitably run into contradiction. That we cannot conceive a consistent concept of the beginning of

movement in some sense means the same as the problem in modern physics, which says that there is no possible equation for the ‘point zero.’ This means that there is no equation possible ‘for the time before’ the Big Bang, out of which the Big Bang would have been the result. That is simply not calculable. The same is true for the beginning of movement.

We can summarize the first seven sentences of the chapter in the following way: The answer to the question whether and how natural movement initiates is that, on the one hand, we cannot conceptually define such beginning of movement in time on the other that “eternal ousiai” such as for example, the Platonic ideas are of no use, and nevertheless the natural movement cannot be conceived without an actual moving. This is what Aristotle maintains in the eighth sentence, which forms the first theoretical high point, formulating the necessary and sufficient condition of the ousia for which he is searching:

KP 12 *Met.* Λ 6.8 (1071b20) δεῖ ἄρα εἶναι ἀρχὴν τοιαύτην ἧς ἡ οὐσία ἐνέργεια.

Aristotle later repeats the claim that the movement without a temporal beginning needs an origin whose being is actuality, e. g. in *Met.* Z 9, 1034a31f. and 1034b16–19, saying that without actual being there cannot be any becoming.

***Met.* Λ 6.9–6.10**

The sentences 6.9–6.10 draw out the consequences of 6.8: Any such ousia must not have hyle. Only then will it fulfill the conditions of being eternal and actual. Such an ousia, however, is not capable of producing the mixed or irregular movements of the natural beings around us. Aristotle will treat this problem at the end of the chapter, 6.22–6.28.

Met. Λ 6.11–6.12

In the sentences 6.11–6.12 Aristotle reflects on the result of 6.8 and adds some further considerations. If the principle's way of being (*Seinsweise*) is actuality we are confronted with the aporia whether or not actuality really is prior to potentiality. Some could say that actuality requires potentiality, because only what was potential can become actual; if that were true, potentiality would be prior and the principle, whose being is actuality, would not be the first.

Met. Λ 6.13–6.22

In 6.13–6.22 Aristotle considers some alternatives to his thesis in 6.8, for example what theologians and physicists or Leucippus and Plato have said (especially in *Timaeus* 30a). What if everything originates “out from the night,” or if it would be right to say “Everything is in everything” or if the origin were the self-movement? Aristotle can reply that even the contrasting theses must accept in addition an actual being as the origin.

Met. Λ 6.23–6.29

Aristotle raises an issue with the theoretical insight of 6.8. A being remaining unchangingly itself can produce only a movement which is always the same. In fact, we do see different and changing movements in the nature around us and even in the heavens. What is the reason for the change and the alteration of these movements? To explain this Aristotle uses his distinction between *καθ' αὐτό* and *κατ' ἄλλο* (‘with respect to itself’ and ‘with respect to other beings’). The being named in 6.8 acts with respect to itself in always the same way, with respect to others differently.

4.2.3.2. *Met. Λ 7**Met. Λ 7.1–7.3*

In chapter 7 we find some considerations about the meaning of “setting in motion while being unmoved.” The sphere of the fixed stars can set in motion eternally, because it moves in a circle (according to the state of knowledge at that time). All other natural movements (the movement of the sun in the first instance) must be derived from this first movement, in a mediated fashion, of course. The other natural movements on Earth are, for their part, derived from the movement of the sun. In *De Generatione et Corruptione*, B 10, Aristotle discusses the same fact. To the question “Why is there life?” he answers “Because of the sun and its movement.” Here, in *Met. Λ*, he tries to refer the theoretical insight to the natural beings: it be necessarily possible to realize the theoretical condition (formulated in 6.8) in the actual cosmos. It thereby becomes immediately evident that the sphere of the fixed stars cannot fulfill the required condition because it is moved, even if eternally and in a circular motion. In a cosmological sense that sphere may be an origin, but not in the speculative sense. The first being, unmoved but setting in motion, must be unmoved in any form. In the combination of the positive and negative positions of ‘setting in motion’ and ‘being moved’ we look for the ‘setting in motion while being unmoved,’ which denotes a further criterium for the primary being sought after. The 13th key proposition lays out this position:¹¹

KP 13 *Met. Λ 7.3* (1072a25f.) [...] τοίνυν ἔστι τι ὃ οὐ κινούμενον κινεῖ, αἴδιον καὶ οὐσία καὶ ἐνέργεια οὐσα.

We know that this first being is eternal, being (*ousia*) and actuality. But we cannot find such a thing neither in the range of astronomical nor in the range of terrestrial beings. Therefore we have to give up the astronomical view of the problem in favor of the speculative. What else, if not the sun and the sphere of the fixed stars can move in the required manner?

¹¹ Fazzo writes ἐνεργεία, I prefer the nominative of the manuscripts.

Met. Λ 7.4–7.15

These phrases do not continue the previous line of thought, they start another anew: we must get beyond the sun, the stars and the like to a more essential primary. – In which sense does the first setting in motion do this while remaining unmoved itself? If one takes the term ‘which sets in motion itself unmoved’ in a naturalistic sense, one must say that such a thing cannot be since the possibility of being in motion is essential to natural beings. To make understandable what he means Aristotle is pointing to an unmoved moving ‘thing’ in our everyday experience. He wants to show that ‘to set in motion while itself unmoved’ is no mystery. What we are striving for, what we are expecting, even what we think of does move us exactly that way. That is the 14th key proposition:

KP 14 *Met.* Λ 7.4 (1072a26) κινεῖ δὲ ὧδε τὸ ὀρεκτὸν καὶ τὸ νοητόν· κινεῖ οὐ κινούμενα.

If we distinguish the setting in motion and the moved as the two aspects of movement, then that which we think of and that which we strive for are on the unmoved side as the for-the-sake-of our thinking and striving, while the nous or the orexis (desire), are on the moved side. That means that the noeton, the perceived, is on the unmoved side, the nous on the moved side. The noeton is, then, more original and principal than the nous, because the latter is moved. Noesis is the primal unity of both, noeton and nous. And this noesis, not nous, is the unmoved origin, whereby it is essential to take noesis not as the activity or behavior of an active being or of a subject.

KP 15 *Met.* Λ 7.7 (1072a30–32) νοῦς δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ νοητοῦ κινεῖται, νοητὴ δὲ ἢ ἑτέρα συστοιχία καθ’ αὐτήν· καὶ ταύτης ἡ οὐσία πρώτη, καὶ ταύτης ἡ ἀπλή καὶ καθ’ ἐνέργειαν ([...])

Another consideration confirms that it is correct to place the for-the-sake-of with the unmoved (7.9). That for which the for-the-sake-of is a for-the-sake-of, is moved, the for-the-sake-of itself is not. We must find the transition from the first mov-

ing cause which sets in motion as does a ‘strived for’ or a ‘thought of,’ and which moves as a telos, to the factual natural movements, which we see around us (7.10). Therefore the cosmological interest comes to the foreground. The section ends with the famous note “The heavens and the physis depend on such an origin” (7.15). I choose this as the next key proposition, because it shows that even the heavens and the physis depend on ‘something,’ they are not the first origin we look for. They are origins, to be sure, but only cosmological or astronomical ones. The speculative origin cannot be found elsewhere in the cosmos or in another area of beings, but principally outside of it.

KP 16 *Met.* Α 7.15 (1072b13f.) ἐκ τοιαύτης ἄρα ἀρχῆς ἦρτηται ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ φύσις.

***Met.* Α 7.16–7.23**

Aristotle now considers what ‘actuality’ of the first origin can mean. Here we find the second speculative highlight, where being, actuality and noesis are joined. He reminds us about our opinions about god, as before he had reminded us of the understanding of the strived for, thus can he make more plausible what he means by ‘setting in motion unmoved.’ A common opinion about gods should make evident and understandable the speculation about being.

The distinction between a thing that sets in motion and a moved thing (7.7–7.8) is no more valid. In this noesis nous and noeton can no longer be distinguished as they are in everyday life. The actuality of the noesis is at once also the actuality of the ousia and *this* actuality of the ousia is the goal of becoming. But that is not that which we can describe *a posteriori* in the case of the becoming of a particular natural being and in which many material processes are involved. No, it is instead the noesis in which the transition from steresis to eidos takes place; something like a thought *a priori*. The three sentences which state this may be classed the 17th key proposition:

4. Key Propositions

KP 17 *Met.* Α 7.17–7.19 (1072b18–24) ἡ δὲ νόησις ἡ καθ' αὐτήν τοῦ καθ' αὐτὸ ἀρίστου, καὶ ἡ μάλιστα τοῦ μάλιστα. αὐτὸν δὲ νοεῖ ὁ νοῦς κατὰ μετάληψιν τοῦ νοητοῦ· νοητὸς γὰρ γίγνεται θιγγάνων καὶ νοῶν, ὥστε ταῦτὸν νοῦς καὶ νοητόν. τὸ γὰρ δεκτικὸν τοῦ νοητοῦ καὶ τῆς οὐσίας νοῦς, ἐνεργεῖ δὲ ἔχων, ὥστ' ἐκείνου μᾶλλον τοῦτο ὃ δοκεῖ ὁ νοῦς θεῖον ἔχειν, καὶ ἡ θεωρία τὸ ἥδιστον καὶ ἄριστον.

***Met.* Α 7.24–7.25**

In the following sentences Aristotle discusses the alternatives given by the Pythagoreans and Speusippus. They think that the best and most beautiful cannot be at the beginning, but must be as a result at the end.

***Met.* Α 7.26–7.27**

The chapter concludes with an extensive and typical final sentence (ὅτι μὲν οὖν [...]). Aristotle recapitulates there the determinations of the being (*Sein*), which is being sought. They are determinations, which Parmenides has used to denote being. They are not designations for a thing, a being (*Seieindes*), not even for god, but for {οὐσία← νόησις →ἐνέργεια / DOXA}; in short, for being. This is the 18th key proposition.

KP 18 *Met.* Α 7.26 (1073a3–12) ὅτι μὲν οὖν ἔστιν οὐσία τις αἰδῖος καὶ ἀκίνητος καὶ κεχωρισμένη τῶν αἰσθητῶν, φανερόν ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων· δέδεικται δὲ καὶ ὅτι μέγεθος οὐδὲν ἔχειν ἐνδέχεται ταύτην τὴν οὐσίαν ἀλλ' ἀμερῆς καὶ ἀδιαίρετός ἐστιν (κινεῖ γὰρ τὸν ἄπειρον χρόνον, οὐδὲν δ' ἔχει δύναμιν ἄπειρον πεπερασμένον· ἐπεὶ δὲ πᾶν μέγεθος ἢ ἄπειρον ἢ πεπερασμένον, πεπερασμένον μὲν διὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἂν ἔχοι μέγεθος)· ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ ὅτι ἀπαθὲς καὶ ἀναλλοίωτον· πᾶσαι γὰρ αἱ ἄλλαι κινήσεις ὕστεραι τῆς κατὰ τόπον.

This sentence is only a summary of problems discussed, nevertheless it includes a novelty with regard to the criteria for being named so far, namely kath' hautogenomenon, choriston, energeia, aletheia. Here Aristotle adds the criterion τὸ

πρῶτον κινῶν ὡς τὸ τέλος (“the first setting in motion in the sense of a goal”). This last is the determination for that which initiates movement, which is not god, even less the nous, but being (*Sein*). choriston energeia

4.2.4. The Group of Sentences in *Met.* Λ 8–10: KP 19 until 30

The three last chapters too must be read from the perspective of the leading question: What can be the basis for becoming? But in these chapters we have only some additions to issues discussed already previously. There is no connection on the subject such that, for example, the themes in chapters 9 or 10 could be seen to follow from what is said in chapter 8.

In chapter 8 Aristotle takes up the cosmological and astronomical concern of the question. In this chapter the speculative view is scarcely present. It deals mainly with the first cause that can set in motion in a sense comparable to its treatment in *De Caelo*, *De philosophia* and *Physics* Θ, because it is mainly about the factual movements of the natural beings and the manner of their connection with the speculative first moving. In *Met.* Λ 1–7 Aristotle has developed the sense of the question about the being which grounds becoming as its for-the-sake-of. This question has found its answer in two speculative high points, I summarize this answer in the formula {οὐσία ← νόησις → ἐνέργεια / DOXA}. Now, in chapter 8, it follows a cosmological answer to the question about the being which grounds becoming.

In *Met.* Λ 9 Aristotle gives some specifications of what had been said concerning noesis and nous in *Met.* Λ 7. The argument in Λ 9 is completely independent from the cosmological digression in the foregoing chapter.

In *Met.* Λ 10 Aristotle wishes to include Plato’s thoughts concerning the good as expressed in the *Timaeus*. This is very reasonable since, for Theophrastus too, it represented a major question in his *Metaphysics*. The reason for this, as it seems, was that it was a much debated subject in the Academy, as can be seen by Speusip-

pus' divergent theses.¹²

Met. Λ 8

Met. 8.1–5

In the first section of chapter 8 Aristotle treats the question of how many “such ousiai” we have to accept in order to explain the observable movements. He puts the question in 8.1, our 19th key proposition:

KP 19 *Met. Λ 8.1 (1073a14–17)* Πότερον δὲ μίαν θετέον τὴν τοιαύτην οὐσίαν ἢ πλείους, καὶ πόσας, δεῖ μὴ λανθάνειν, ἀλλὰ μεμνησθαι καὶ τὰς τῶν ἄλλων ἀποφάσεις, ὅτι περὶ πλήθους οὐθὲν εἰρήκασιν ὅ τι καὶ σαφὲς εἰπεῖν.

It has been noted ever since as a problem that here Aristotle admits a plurality for something which seemed clearly to be unique. The difficulty disappears when the question in this chapter is not considered as a speculative but as a cosmological one concerning the factual movements of natural beings, which is very different from the speculative question about the ousia. It is not, of course, the cosmological aspect that is at the core of the overall project. Instead, because the subject is important and there are definite opinions about it does Aristotle wish to consider it under this aspect too (8.2). But nothing of what he reports about these cosmological conditions is said as his own thesis. He often he repeats his *reservatio mentalis*, on which we shall see more detail in the commentary. A first part of the answer is the 20th key proposition:

KP 20 *Met. Λ 8.3 (1073a23–25)* ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ πρῶτον τῶν ὄντων ἀκίνητον καὶ καθ' αὐτὸ καὶ κατὰ συμβεβηκός, κινούν δὲ τὴν πρώτην αἰδίον καὶ μίαν κίνησιν [...]

¹² See A. Graeser, 1999, 2002 und 2003.

Met. Λ 8.6–8.16

Aristotle opens the second section asking which kind of knowledge can be appropriate in these issues. From here I draw the next key proposition:

KP 21 *Met.* Λ 8.6 (1073b3–6) τὸ δὲ πλῆθος ἤδη τῶν φορῶν ἐκ τῆς οἰκειοτάτης φιλοσοφίας τῶν μαθηματικῶν ἐπιστημῶν δεῖ σκοπεῖν, ἐκ τῆς ἀστρολογίας· αὕτη γὰρ περὶ οὐσίας αἰσθητῆς μὲν αἰδίου δὲ ποιεῖται τὴν θεωρίαν, [...]

Saying that astronomy is the appropriate science to determine the number and form of heavenly movements Aristotle shows that he is clear about the difference between the subjects of chapters 6–7 and 8, because here it is cosmology not theory. Aristotle offers three answers. It is not his aim to sort out ‘the right one’ from among these, his aim is to make more concrete the general cosmological considerations (8.7). Aristotle presents the models of the spheres: that of Eudoxus, that of Callipus and his own model, with several reservations. All models should explain the transitivity of the movement from the first setting in motion to the last moved from, as it were, the sun’s orbit to the trembling leaf in the wind. In this section there is also nothing about theology and even the cosmological remarks are made as examples.

Met. Λ 8.17–8.20

For the question of whether the heavens are unique or not compare *De Caelo*, *De philosophia* and in *Physics* Θ.

Met. Λ 8.21–8.23

The sentences 8.21–8.23 conclude the chapter. Here we find some remarks concerning traditional views of the stars and the gods. Aristotle makes it as clear as possible, that he wants to speak about tradition in the common sense (1074b9 ὅτι θεοὺς οἴοντο τὰς τρώτας οὐσίας εἶναι, “...that they believed, that gods are the first in being;” 1074b13 πατέριοι δόξα, “what our ancestors believed” etc.). It ought, then,

be clear that no theological or speculative conclusions can be drawn from these remarks. What is being said here is of a different kind, its object is cosmological and it refers to traditional opinions and beliefs.

Still, it is very important to ask how the speculative result fits together with cosmological reality. Plato asked this question in the *Timaeus* and for Theophrastus it was the leading question of his *Metaphysics*. We have thoughts and we have perceptions. Our thinking does not produce what we see, but, nevertheless it determines what we see *in particular* in that we had seen it *in principle* in advance. Going back to Aristotle's formula in Λ 9.10 we may say: we can perceive₃ only because we have perceived₁; "to perceive₃" means our particular and factual perception, "to perceive₁" means the noetic structure which underlies a given set of prevailing opinions (i. e. the fundamental opinions which form a world).

The cosmological question has its own rightful place beside the theoretical question, but, it is of a completely different kind of questioning. The one is theoretical, aiming at the fundamentals of given opinions; the other is astronomical science, having provisional presumptions, able to be revised at any time through the findings of new observations. Therefore Aristotle expresses his reservations in *Met.* Λ 8.9 and 13 as well as in 8.22–8.23. Astronomy is not about being (*Sein*) but about beings (*Seiendes*). In the range of beings too there is, of course, a first or primary and there is a transmission of movement from former to later. In the commentary on this section I will explore in detail the parallels between this distinction and the division of the *Timaeus* into a first part 'without chora' and a second part 'with chora.' The concordance of this division with Kant's different aims in the *Metaphysischen Anfangsgründen der Naturwissenschaft* and in the *Opus postumum* as "Übergangsproblem" has been the theme of my work elsewhere (2015).

Met. Λ 9

Met. Λ 9.1–9.7

The ninth chapter can be divided into four sections. The first section (9.1–9.7) develops some alternatives to the question of what the nous is thinking about using some simple distinctions. The starting point for these considerations is 9.1, our next key proposition:

KP 22 *Met. Λ 9.1 (1074b15)* Τὰ δὲ περὶ τὸν νοῦν ἔχει τινὰς ἀπορίας· δοκεῖ μὲν γὰρ εἶναι τῶν φαινομένων θειότατον, [...]

Met. Λ 9.8–9.10

In 9.8–9.10 Aristotle gives an answer to the question asked in 9.1, he says that the nous thinks himself. This answer is a reformulation of what the second speculative highlight has prepared (7.16–7.20 = KP 17). The tenth sentence of this chapter is rightly one of the most famous sentences of the whole *Corpus Aristotelicum* and cannot be omitted from our the list of key propositions. It confirms that the noesis now is at the core of the formula for *to be*: {οὐσία← νόησις → ἐνέργεια / ΔΟΧΑ}.

KP 23 *Met. Λ 9.10 (1074b34)* αὐτὸν ἄρα νοεῖ εἴπερ ἐστὶ τὸ κράτιστον, καὶ ἔστιν νόησις νοήσεως νόησις.

Met. Λ 9.11–9.15

In the third section a possible objection to the reflexivity of the nous presented in 9.10 is adduced. The objection becomes the more plausible the more the reflection is thought to be without content. A valuable knowledge normally refers to something else than to itself. I choose the consideration which introduces the speculative counter-reaction as the next key proposition:

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KP 24 *Met.* Λ 9.14 (1075a1–3) ἢ ἐπ’ ἐνίων ἢ ἐπιστήμη τὸ πρῶγμα, ἐπὶ μὲν τῶν ποιητικῶν ἄνευ ὕλης ἢ οὐσίας καὶ τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι, ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν θεωρητικῶν ὁ λόγος τὸ πρῶγμα καὶ ἡ νόησις.

It seems that the distinction between knowledge of a the thing and thing itself is not always as easy to make as we might.

***Met.* Λ 9.16–9.17**

The chapter concludes with some considerations on another aporia (9.16–9.17). Aristotle asks whether his theory holds true even if the object of our thinking is composed. We must not forget that the result in *Met.* Λ 7 was not a divine mind. No question and no problem following such a line of interpretation could contribute anything to the matter. It does not matter whether there are gods at all or what gods think or do not, because the theory about being is at stake, its result is representable in the formula: {οὐσία← νόησις →ἐνέργεια / DOXA}. The subject is the noesis as the for-the-sake-of becoming which moves unmoved.

***Met.* Λ 10**

The tenth chapter opens with a question, which is immediately answered in 10.2. The rest of the chapter consists of a loose compilation of critical remarks on other views, partly in a series of questions which are relevant for the question about the first cause that sets in motion. The speculative insight is not expanded. The key propositions are thus only loosely connected to one another, the main point of the list is that they be retained in mind.

***Met.* Λ 10.1–10.6**

The question and its answer are:

KP 25 *Met.* Α 10.1 (1075a11–13) Ἐπισκεπτέον δὲ καὶ ποτέρως ἔχει ἡ τοῦ ὅλου φύσις
τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ ἄριστον, πότερον κεχωρισμένον τι καὶ αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτό, ἢ
τὴν τάξιν. (10.2) ἢ ἀμφοτέρως ὥσπερ στράτευμα.

This question, how the nature of the whole contains the good, whether as something separate or as the order of the whole, immediately follows the last sentence of the forgoing chapter (9.17), in a mediated form picking up the question of the *Timaeus*.

For Theophrastus that question is at the core of his *Metaphysics*. It seems to be an eagerly debated question in the Academy. Aristotle examines whether it is possible to combine his insight with what Plato has said about the good. Some interpreters say that the concept of the pros hen does not play a role in *Met.* Α. It may be that this is not quite so true as they strongly propose. At any rate, this thought is to be found in 10.5 (“All things are ordered to one thing [...]”). The first and one, with respect to which all other beings *are*, is the prote ousia, now grasped in the formula {being←awareness→reality / DOXA}. Beside this we have to take into account other ‘firsts’ depending on the context.

***Met.* Α 10.7–12**

The sentences 10.7–10.12 deal with other views on the causes of becoming; they employ the opposition in their account, but have nevertheless some shortcomings.

***Met.* Α 10.13–10.25**

In these sentences we have to do with the question of where in becoming the good can be found, whether at the beginning or at the end of becoming. To the same context belongs the question why some things are perishable and others not. That is our key proposition 26:

KP 26 *Met.* Α 10.24 (1075b13) καὶ διὰ τί τὰ μὲν φθαρτὰ τὰ δ' ἀφθαρτα οὐδεὶς λέγει·

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Met. Λ 10.26–10.27

The short section 10.26–10.27 asks two questions in some way only *pro memoria*. Aristotle gives no answer, it may be that he thinks that the answer can be drawn from the foregoing considerations.

KP 27 10.26 (1075b16–17) ἔτι διὰ τί ἀεὶ ἔσται γένεσις, καὶ τί αἴτιον γενέσεως οὐδέϊς λέγει.

What is the cause of becoming? Aristotle points out that it is insufficient to use only the two principles (on the necessity of relying on three principles see: *Physics* A 6, *Met.* Λ 5, at the end) and that Plato's ideas will not do (see also *Met.* Λ 10.31).

Met. Λ 10.28–10.29

The form of our knowledge of the primary is the subject of these sentences. Others must accept an opposition in this knowledge, Aristotle not, which seems the better position.

KP 28 *Met.* Λ 10.28 (1075b20–21) καὶ τοῖς μὲν ἄλλοις ἀνάγκη τῇ σοφίᾳ καὶ τῇ τιμιωτάτῃ ἐπιστήμῃ εἶναί τι ἐναντίον, ἡμῖν δ' οὐ.

Met. Λ 10.30–10.38

KP 29 *Met.* Λ 10.30 (1075b24–27) ἔτι εἰ μὴ ἔσται παρὰ τὰ αἰσθητὰ ἄλλα.

Aristotle points to the consequences if we assume that there is nothing beside the perceptible beings, on the other hand he says negative consequences entail if we assume ideas as non-perceptible beings beside the perceptible beings.

Met. Λ 10.39–10.41

KP 30 *Met. Λ 10.39 (1075b34–36) ἔτι τίνι οἱ ἀριθμοὶ ἐν ἧ ἡ ψυχῇ καὶ τὸ σῶμα καὶ ὅλως τὸ εἶδος καὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα, οὐδὲν λέγει οὐδεὶς;*

The last sentences ask after the cause of unity, be it of numbers be it of body and soul, be it of *eidōs* and thing. In particular, Aristotle speaks about the problems which arise, when we declare numbers as causes. This is in continuation of what had been said about the theory of ideas, 10.30–10.38.

The book concludes with a citation from Homer: “It is not good, when many rule, one alone should rule” (*Iliad* II, 204). It has been often said, that Aristotle here confirms his monotheism, to which conclusion his considerations about the Unmoved Mover should lead. The cause of unity is probably deeper. It points to the unity, which the world has in the *noēsis*. The citation in 10.41 is inspired by the example ‘army’ in the second sentence of the chapter.

4.3. List of the Key Propositions

See the translation of *Met. Λ* in part II for the translation of these sentences. In the commentary the translation will be repeated for the reader’s convenience.

- KP 1 Treated in Part III, Chapter 5:
Met Λ 1.1 (1069a18–19) Περὶ τῆς οὐσίας ἢ θεωρίας: τῶν γὰρ οὐσιῶν αἱ ἀρχαὶ καὶ τὰ αἴτια ζητοῦνται.
- KP 2 Treated in Part III, Chapter 6:
Met Λ 1.7 (1069a30) οὐσίαι δὲ τρεῖς, μία μὲν αἰσθηθὴ, ἥς ἡ μὲν φθαρτὴ, ἦν πάντες ὁμολογοῦσιν, οἷον τὰ φυτὰ καὶ τὰ ζῷα ἢ δὲ αἰθέρια, ἥς ἀνάγκη τὰ στοιχεῖα λαβεῖν, εἴτε ἔν εἴτε πολλὰ: ἄλλη δὲ ἀκίνητος, καὶ ταύτην φασὶ τινες εἶναι χωριστήν, οἱ μὲν εἰς δύο διαιροῦντες, οἱ δὲ εἰς μίαν φύσιν τιθέντες τὰ εἶδη καὶ τὰ μαθηματικά, οἱ δὲ τὰ μαθηματικά μόνον τούτων.

4. Key Propositions

- KP 3 Met A 1.9 (1069b3) Ἡ δ' αἰσθητὴ οὐσία μεταβλητή.
- KP 4 Met A 3.1 (1069b35–36) Μετὰ ταῦτα ὅτι οὐ γίνεταί οὔτε ἡ ὕλη οὔτε τὸ εἶδος, λέγω δὲ τὰ ἔσχατα.
- KP 5 Met A 3.7 (1070a9–13) οὐσίαι δὲ τρεῖς, ἡ μὲν ὕλη τόδε τι οὐσα τῷ φαίνεσθαι (ὅσα γὰρ ἀφή καὶ μὴ συμφύσει, ὕλη καὶ ὑποκείμενον), ἡ δὲ φύσις τόδε τι εἰς ἦν, καὶ ἕξις τις· ἔτι τρίτη ἡ ἐκ τούτων ἡ καθ' ἕκαστα, οἷον Σωκράτης ἢ Καλλίας.
- KP 6 Met A 3.9 (1070a21–22) τὰ μὲν οὖν κινεῖντα αἷτια ὡς προγεγενημένα ὄντα, τὰ δ' ὡς ὁ λόγος ἅμα.
- KP 7 Met A 4.1 (1070a31–33) Τὰ δ' αἷτια καὶ αἱ ἀρχαὶ ἄλλα ἄλλων ἔστιν ὡς, ἔστι δ' ὡς, ἂν καθόλου λέγη τις καὶ καθ' ἀναλογίαν, ταῦτά πάντων.
- KP 8 Met A 4.17 (1070b34–35) [...] ἔτι παρὰ ταῦτα ὡς τὸ πρῶτον πάντων κινεῖν πάντα.
- KP 9 Met A 5.4 (1071a3–5) ἔτι δ' ἄλλον τρόπον τῷ ἀνάλογον ἀρχαὶ αἱ αὐταί, οἷον ἐνέργεια καὶ δυνάμις· ἀλλὰ καὶ ταῦτα ἄλλα τε ἄλλοις καὶ ἄλλως.
- KP 10 Met A 5.7 (1071a18–19) πάντων δὴ πρῶται ἀρχαὶ τὸ ἐνεργεῖα πρῶτον τοδὶ καὶ ἄλλο ὃ δυνάμει.
Treated in Part III, Chapter 7:
- KP 11 Met A 6.1 (1071b3–5) Ἐπεὶ δ' ἦσαν τρεῖς οὐσίαι, δύο μὲν αἱ φυσικαὶ μία δ' ἡ ἀκίνητος, περὶ ταύτης λεκτέον ὅτι ἀνάγκη εἶναι αἰδιδίον τινα οὐσίαν ἀκίνητον.
- KP 12 Met A 6.8 (1071b19–20) δεῖ ἄρα εἶναι ἀρχὴν τοιαύτην ἣς ἡ οὐσία ἐνέργεια.
Treated in Part III, Chapter 8:
- KP 13 Met A 7.3 (1072a25–27) [...] τοῖνον ἔστι τι ὃ οὐ κινούμενον κινεῖ, αἰδιδίον καὶ οὐσία καὶ ἐνέργεια οὐσα.
- KP 14 Met A 7.4 (1072a26–27) κινεῖ δὲ ὧδε τὸ ὀρεκτὸν καὶ τὸ νοητόν· κινεῖ οὐ κινούμενα.
- KP 15 Met A 7.7 (1072a30–32) νοῦς δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ νοητοῦ κινεῖται, νοητὴ δὲ ἡ ἐτέρα συστοιχία καθ' αὐτήν· καὶ ταύτης ἡ οὐσία πρώτη, καὶ ταύτης ἡ ἀπλή καὶ καθ' ἐνέργειαν ([...])
- KP 16 Met A 7.15 (1072b13–14) ἐκ τοιαύτης ἄρα ἀρχῆς ἤρρηται ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ φύσις.
- KP 17 Met A 7.17 –19 (1072b18–24) ἡ δὲ νόησις ἡ καθ' αὐτήν τοῦ καθ' αὐτὸ ἀρίστου, καὶ ἡ μάλιστα τοῦ μάλιστα. αὐτὸν δὲ νοεῖ ὁ νοῦς κατὰ μετάληψιν τοῦ νοητοῦ· νοητὸς γὰρ γίνεταί θιγγάνων καὶ νοῶν, ὥστε ταῦτὸν νοῦς καὶ νοητόν. τὸ γὰρ δεκτικὸν τοῦ νοητοῦ καὶ τῆς οὐσίας νοῦς, ἐνεργεῖ δὲ ἔχων, ὡστ' ἐκείνου μᾶλλον τοῦτο ὃ δοκεῖ ὁ νοῦς θεῖον ἔχειν, καὶ ἡ θεωρία τὸ ἥδιστον καὶ ἄριστον.

- KP 18 Met A 7.26 (1073a3–5) ὅτι μὲν οὖν ἔστιν οὐσία τις αἰδίδιος καὶ ἀκίνητος καὶ κεχωρισμένη τῶν αἰσθητῶν, φανερόν ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων· δέδεικται δὲ καὶ ὅτι μέγεθος οὐδὲν ἔχει ἐνδέχεται ταύτην τὴν οὐσίαν ἀλλ’ ἀμερῆς καὶ ἀδιαίρετός ἐστιν (κινεῖ γὰρ τὸν ἄπειρον χρόνον, οὐδὲν δ’ ἔχει δύναμιν ἄπειρον πεπερασμένον· ἐπεὶ δε πᾶν μέγεθος ἢ ἄπειρον ἢ πεπερασμένον, πεπερασμένον μὲν διὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἂν ἔχοι μέγεθος)· ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ ὅτι ἀπαθὲς καὶ ἀναλλοίωτον· πᾶσαι γὰρ αἱ ἄλλαι κινήσεις ὕστεραι τῆς κατὰ τόπον.
Treated in Part III, Chapter 9:
- KP 19 Met A 8.1 (1073a14–17) Πότερον δὲ μίαν θετέον τὴν τοιαύτην οὐσίαν ἢ πλείους, καὶ πόσας, δεῖ μὴ λανθάνειν, ἀλλὰ μεμνησθαι καὶ τὰς τῶν ἄλλων ἀποφάσεις, ὅτι περὶ πλήθους οὐθὲν εἰρήκασιν ὅ τι καὶ σαφὲς εἰπεῖν.
- KP 20 Met A 8.3 (1073a23–25) ἢ μὲν γὰρ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ πρῶτον τῶν ὄντων ἀκίνητον καὶ καθ’ αὐτὸ καὶ κατὰ συμβεβηκός, κινουὺν δὲ τὴν πρώτην αἰδίδιον καὶ μίαν κίνησιν·
- KP 21 Met A 8.6 (1073b3–6) τὸ δὲ πλήθος ἤδη τῶν φορῶν ἐκ τῆς οἰκειοτάτης φιλοσοφίας τῶν μαθηματικῶν ἐπιστημῶν δεῖ σκοπεῖν, ἐκ τῆς ἀστρολογίας· αὕτη γὰρ περὶ οὐσίας αἰσθητῆς μὲν αἰδίδιον δὲ ποιεῖται τὴν θεωρίαν, [...] Treated in Part III, Chapter 10:
- KP 22 Met A 9.1 (1074b15) Τὰ δὲ περὶ τὸν νοῦν ἔχει τινὰς ἀπορίας· δοκεῖ μὲν γὰρ εἶναι τῶν φαινομένων θειότατον, [...]]
- KP 23 Met A 9.10 (1074b33–35) αὐτὸν ἄρα νοεῖ, εἴπερ ἐστὶ τὸ κράτιστον, καὶ ἔστιν νόησις νοήσεως νόησις.
- KP 24 Met A 9.14 (1074b38–1075a3) ἢ ἐπ’ ἐνίων ἢ ἐπιστήμη τὸ πρᾶγμα, ἐπὶ μὲν τῶν ποιητικῶν ἄνευ ὕλης ἢ οὐσία καὶ τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι, ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν θεωρητικῶν ὁ λόγος τὸ πρᾶγμα καὶ ἡ νόησις·
Treated in Part III, Chapter 8:
- KP 25 Met A 10.1–2 (1075a11–13) Ἐπισκεπτέον δὲ καὶ ποτέρως ἔχει ἢ τοῦ ὅλου φύσις τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ ἄριστον, πότερον κεχωρισμένον τι καὶ αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτό, ἢ τὴν τάξιν. ἢ ἀμφοτέρως ὥσπερ στράτευμα·
- KP 26 Met A 10.24 (1075b13) καὶ διὰ τί τὰ μὲν φθαρτὰ τὰ δ’ ἀφθαρτα οὐδεὶς λέγει.
- KP 27 Met A 10.26 (1075b16–17) ἔτι διὰ τί αἰεὶ ἔσται γένεσις, καὶ τί αἴτιον γενέσεως, οὐδεὶς λέγει.
- KP 28 Met A 10.28 (1075b20–21) καὶ τοῖς μὲν ἄλλοις ἀνάγκη τῆ σοφία καὶ τῆ τιμωτάτη ἐπιστήμη εἶναι τι ἐναντίον, ἡμῖν δ’ οὐ.
- KP 29 Met A 10.30 (1075b24–27) ἔτι εἰ μὴ ἔσται παρὰ τὰ αἰσθητὰ ἄλλα, οὐκ ἔσται ἀρχή, ὥσπερ τοῖς θεολόγοις καὶ τοῖς φυσικοῖς πᾶσιν.

4. Key Propositions

KP 30 Met Λ 10.39 (1075b34–36) ἔτι τίνοι οἱ ἀριθμοὶ ἐν ἧ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ σῶμα καὶ ὅλως τὸ εἶδος καὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα, οὐδὲν λέγει οὐδεὶς.

Part III.

Commentary

5. The First Key Proposition: *Met. A 1*

The first sentence of *Met. A* is at once also its first key proposition.

KP 1 *Met. A* 1.1 (1069a18–19) Περὶ τῆς οὐσίας ἡ θεωρία· τῶν γὰρ οὐσιῶν αἱ ἀρχαὶ
καὶ τὰ αἴτια ζητοῦνται.

The present theory concerns being <: *ousia, Sein*>; for it is the beings <: *ousiai, Seiendes*> whose principles and causes are sought.

Because *Met. A* is an independent book, its opening cannot be connected with the previous books, its background must be looked for elsewhere. Since the early dating of *Met. A* is most likely, it becomes clear that its background is the Old Academy and its origins.¹ Of this context and its significance, we ought to take note. A major reference point of the Academy is the *Timaeus*, insofar as this dialogue recapitulates the Presocratic efforts to identify the principles of becoming at a higher level. As concerns the question about being the *Sophistes* is essential, thus shall we examine the relationship between *Met. A* and these influential dialogues. Since it is beyond any doubt that *Met. A* and Theophrastus' *Metaphysics* are contemporaneous works, the relationship between these must be considered too and, finally, we must take into account the point that Aristotle's early works belong to the same context.

5.1. The Academic Background of KP 1

The *Timaeus*, Theophrastus' *Met.* and *Met. A* stand on the ground of a common question. Given the distinction between becoming and being in the *Timaeus* Plato has sought to mediate between both in order to make understandable the world as we

¹ See above, 3.3. But the dating does not touch the argument essentially; if someone would date the book otherwise, the same texts could nevertheless be its background as an ideal the point of reference.

experience it day by day. That mediation is achieved through the chora. Theophrastus' *Metaphysics* takes up the same theme, asking after the connection of 'the first' with 'the second' (§ 2). His conclusion too, that this connection is founded on the fact that the second 'aims at' the first, is compatible with Plato's that becoming is for the sake of being, as well as with Aristotle's answer: becoming is not possible without being, and, the manner in which the 'unmoved moving' sets in motion is comparable to the manner in which a desired being sets in motion.

Every philosophical theory must undergo the test of if and how it can explain what is obvious in its respective world. *Met. A* too faces and meets this challenge, because here too Aristotle asks what we can experience and know, how and why that is possible. The question about being as the ground of becoming is answered speculatively here, namely that *to be* means {οὐσία← νόησις →ἐνέργεια / ΔΟΧΑ}. Aristotle takes into account primarily the theoretical aspect but he is not completely neglecting of the cosmological either.

"What is the origin?" can be asked in at least three ways. Either that question asks after the beginning of this or that, or it asks after the beginning of the whole, or it asks after the origin as such. The question is common to all three texts in the different ways to ask it. In this chapter I try to substantiate the connections between *Met. A* and the *Timaeus*, Theophrastus' *Met.* and Aristotle's early work.

5.1.1. Plato's Late Dialogues

Let us consider at first the relationship obtaining between *Met. A* and the *Timaeus*. What is the theme and the aim of this dialogue of Plato? What may it contribute to the leading question, if Aristotle's sentence *περὶ οὐσίας ἢ θεωρία* does correctly summarize its own tradition, a tradition in which the *Timaeus* too stands? There are many different common themes shared between *Met. A* and the *Timaeus*, indeed these are just the themes treated above in Part II, 2.

The tradition, which the standard interpretation follows, emphasized theology. Often Plato's demiurge was identified with Aristotle's 'Unmoved Mover'; one de-

scribed the gods populating the planets, the formation of the cosmos, the circular movement of the stars and teleology as the ruling principle in the cosmos. While not all of these claims can be verified, the nous is a common theme of both texts without doubt.

Theology: the Demiurge

If the *Timaeus* is read as a text on the creation of the cosmos, as has been done and as continues to be a great part of interpretative tradition,² the demiurge will inevitably be seen as a parallel to the Judeo-Christian God. Because in *Met.* Λ in the standard interpretation to proton kinoun was changed into the masculine form as the “First Mover” (a personal form never once occurring in the whole *Corpus Aristotelicum*), it became considered as an anticipation of Christian theology and suitable for serving as a philosophical fundament of its theology up until today. The demiurge, the first moving cause and the Judeo-Christian God come to form a lineage.³ That lineage can be drawn together only under the following conditions:

- if we are not to take into account the eikos logos in the *Timaeus*,
- when we reduce the four causes to the *causa efficiens*,
- in changing the neuter noun to kinoun into the masculine ho kinous,
- by reading the *Timaeus*, manifestly against the grain of the piece as a story about creation.

I shall refrain from naming scholars who militate for these falsifying conditions of interpretation. They stand, in any case, very much for the *communis opinio*, I add only, that these assumptions are results of the long history of reception (*Wirkungsgeschichte*), from which we must come clear. We do well to pay attention to the function of the demiurge and ask what it is exactly that initiates mundane movement in the *Timaeus*. That is by no means the demiurge, who creates only what is

² As an example for many others see J. Rheins, 2010.

³ M. Bordt too opposes this view in his “Why Aristotle’s God is not the Unmoved Mover,” in: *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. XL, Summer 2011, 91–110. In Rapp, *Handbuch*, 2011, 367, he points to the fact of the neuter form of the term, 370.

immovable (69c). Movement begins only from the soul. That is the first cause, that sets anything in motion. If the *tertium comparationis* must be the ability to initiate movement, then the demiurge is not the right candidate to be Aristotle's kinouon akineton. The demiurge is a mythical character, the usefulness of which being that it makes it possible to speak of the noetic foundation of the world-order in the form of a story. The whole story is comparable, to some degree, with that of the gods in Hesiod's *Theogony*, insofar as their genealogy represents the world order.

It is completely fallacious and against both the spirit and the letter of the *Timaeus* to take the chronology of the story as the record of the constructing of the cosmos, Plato himself explicitly excludes this understanding (34e).⁴ Speaking of what the demiurge does and says Plato describes the world from the point of view of the nous. Telling that story in the form of an eikos logos he can show what a purely theoretically constructed world is like. With the involved teleology Plato is able to demonstrate the idea of optimization of functionality. Both demiurge and teleology are no more than means of representation.

Teleology

If it is plain that the demiurge belongs to the metaphorical structuring of the story then next we must ask what he does in fact signify in a non-mythical account. At the beginning of the dialogue Socrates ties in with the talk about the state the discussants had had "yesterday" and sums up its content. He recalls the 'state in rest,' that means its idea, with the main point that rulers must not be interested in power in order to be able to govern, then other circumstances of the talk are mentioned. The partners in the current conversation are presented, Critias explains where he has his knowledge about Atlantis from, and that it is necessary that before him Timaeus tells about the formation of the world until the appearance of mankind (27a).

Then Timaeus begins with his lecture. He names the theme, περὶ τοῦ παντός

⁴ Nevertheless this possibility is entertained again and again in the scholarship, see e. g. L. Dean-Jones, 2000, 104, referring to D. T. Devereux, 1998, 226.

(“about the universe,” 27c), he invokes the gods to assist him in this difficult issue (27cd) and he presents the methodological and content-related guidelines he wants to follow. Socrates calls this introduction a “proem” (29d5). Timaeus raises as his first question: why the demiurge made the world the way it actually is. He answers his own question with “because he was good” (29e1) and so wanted everything to be good (30a2). Being and goodness are the ultimate for-the-sake of coming-to-be and about things that come to be we cannot speak as we speak about the ideas but only in the form of the *eikos logos*.⁵

When the demiurge takes into account the for-the-sake-of, that is part of the mythical form, at the center of which is the demiurge. Timaeus infers from the goodness of the demiurge in general the goodness of his actions in a particular case. We cannot draw metaphysical, theological or cosmological conclusions from that statement. A second and still more important result is that the question about the for-the-sake-of (certainly in its manifold sense) belongs to the question about the connection of being and becoming. This is its systematic place, independent of the mythical story. That is why the question itself remains an essential one for Aristotle.

If one asks after the origin of the ‘beings’ that grow, one must ask too after their end, because the question of the origin (*arche*) is a question about order whose cornerstones are origin and end are. Order is the opposite of aimlessness. Timaeus, Aristotle and Theophrastus ask, therefore, after the *telos* and the *hou heneka*. That question is inevitable if one asks the question about being. Plato asks both questions, that about the origin and that about the for-the-sake-of-which, in two directions, as questions about this or that and as questions about the whole.⁶ Aristotle adds the question about the for-the-sake-of-which as such. These questions about the origin and about the for-the-sake-of-which are ambiguous, they have both a natural and a

⁵ *Timaios* 29d2–30b7; Plato explicitly says, that becoming is for the sake of being and that the good is the for-the-sake of the rest in *Philebos* 54c; correspondingly Aristotle says in *De Partibus Animalium*, A 1, 640a18 ἡ γὰρ γένεσις ἕνεκα τῆς οὐσίας ἐστίν, ἀλλ’ οὐχ ἡ οὐσία ἕνεκα τῆς γενέσεως “becoming is for the sake of being, but not being for the sake of becoming”; the phrase in *Philebos* 26d γένεσις εἰς οὐσίαν, “to grow into being,” is comparable with that of Aristotle in *Physics* B 1, 193b13 ἔτι δ’ ἡ φύσις ἢ λεγομένη ὡς γένεσις ὁδὸς ἐστὶν εἰς φύσιν, “further, the nature which is named <nature> in the sense of becoming is a way into nature.”

⁶ *Timaios* 27a, 29e.

purely analytical sense. It is plausible to see the questions, on one hand, as asking after the rational reasons (*Vernunftgrund*) and, on the other, after the natural causes. In the *Timaeus* as well as in the *Met. A* it is evident that Plato and Aristotle pursue both directions respectively. However, Aristotle himself never went on to convert the analytical results in teleology into cosmological and constructive principles, that was the work of the reception.

If the question about the for-the-sake-of and that about the best is raised and if an answer is given, even in a figurative manner (“Because he was good,” *Timaeus*, 29e), then the question which Theophrastus asks, to which degree of detail we can go into, is quite possible (9b2).⁷ The answer given for the whole cannot be transferred directly to particulars, because these are subject to further conditions. *Timaeus* says explicitly several times that the demiurge sets up all in its best form.⁸ Firstly, because the demiurge himself was good, he has set up this world and, secondly, he set it up as a good world. The cosmos as it now is is a reasonable and animate living being (29e–30b). Aristotle does not frequently employ teleological considerations in *Met. A*, but when he does, it is at systematically relevant positions, e. g. where he says that the ‘unmoved moving’ moves “as a beloved being” and in the sense of a for-the-sake-of (see below, Commentary on *A* 7.4 and 7.10).

By the first part of his lecture already (29 d–47e), where *Timaeus* presents the world as a teleologically and reasonably ordered whole, the concept of teleology can easily be replaced by the concept of functionality and still more, where he shows that the foundation of the world by reason must accept restrictions and constraints in its realization in the *chora* (see mind and body of man, 69a–90c). ‘Good’ means ‘functional’ and within the realms of functionality we look for optimization under given conditions. The term for these necessary conditions is *ananke*.⁹

⁷ Cf. the same question is asked by Aristotle in *De partibus animalium*, *A* 1, 639b11ff., 640a7 οὐδ’ ἔστιν εἰς αἰδίον συναρτῆσαι τῆς τοιαύτης ἀποδείξεως ἀνάγκην, “the necessity of this proof cannot be traced back to eternity” (i. e. *in infinitum*). That is said in the context of the difference between the hypothetical necessity as we see it when a particular thing grows up and the necessity of an *apodeixis*, cf. *A* 2, 677a17.

⁸ *Timaios* 27a, 29e, 44c, 46c8, 48a3.

⁹ ‘What is necessary’: *Timaios* 47e; Theophrastus, *Met.* 10a26, b19, 11a16, Aristoteles, *Physics* B 9.

Cosmology

Cosmology is considered the most evident common theme of Plato's *Timaeus* and Aristotle's *Met. A*.¹⁰ As already noted, the impact of this dialogue in the reception was extremely powerful. In Middle- and Neoplatonism the *Timaeus* was used as if it was Plato's physics and formed part of the *Curriculum* (Iamblichus, Proclus).¹¹

During the first half of the Middle Ages the *Timaeus*, in the Latin translation by Chalcidius, was the only Platonic dialogue known. Other dialogues were known only by name and by the reports of antique authors like Cicero. For the longest period of time it was regarded as Plato's main work,¹² and up to even in the 20th century it has fascinated scholars in science (like W. Heisenberg) with its abstract and geometrical outlook on nature. Plato makes Timaeus tell the story of the organization of the world. This narrative should end with the appearance of man, so that afterwards it be possible to present the "moving state," which was discussed "yesterday"¹³ "at rest" (19b). The pair of concepts, movement and rest, is part of the megista gene developed in the *Sophist*; the guest from Elea made it clear that only both together can ever make up being (*Sein*). The static and merely ideal conception of being in the manner of the "friends of the ideas" is equally as incomplete

¹⁰ P. Duhem, 1914–1959; G. Böhme, 1996; K. Gloy, 1996; M. von Perger, 1997; R. Ferber, 1997. On the cosmology of the *Timaeus* see especially: A. E. Taylor, 1928; F. M. Cornford, 1937; H. Cherniss, 1944; F. Solmsen, 1960 (on the effects of the *Timaeus* on Aristotle's *Physics*); J. Mittelstrass, 1962; H. Blumenberg, 1966; G. Vlastos, 1975; W. Detel, 1979, 130–155; A. F. Ashbaugh, 1988; T. Ebert, 1991, 43–54; L. Brisson, 21994; L. Tarán, 1972–1983; K. Gloy, 1996; A. P. D. Mourelatos, 1981; J. Dillon, 2003, 24: "It is indeed on the interpretation of the doctrines presented in the *Timaeus* that much cosmological speculation within the Old Academy can be seen to be centred."

¹¹ Proclus, *Theologia Platonica*, 1, 28: Ὑμεῖς δὲ ἅρα ἐκ μὲν τοῦ Τιμαίου τὴν ὅλην περὶ τῆς φύσεως θεωρίαν προάγειν δυνήσεσθε, "You can derive the whole theory about nature from the *Timaeus*." On the *Curriculum* cf. R. T. Wallis, 1995, 19. On the *Timaeus* in the Middle Ages cf. J. Mittelstrass, 1962; G. Vlastos, 1975; W. Detel, 1979. C. Ratkowsch, 1995, has presented the direct influence of the *Timaeus* on the *Cosmographia* of Bernardus Silvestris; M. Lemoine and C. Picard-Parra, 2004, have presented a collection of texts (with introduction) of the School of Chartres, which have to do with the *Timaeus*.

¹² P. Friedländer, 1964–1975, III, 329. – The *Timaeus* was a point of reference for the School of Chartres.

¹³ See the introducing part, 17b.

as the idea that all beings are always in motion.

Timaeus introduces the subject of “all” in 27c, Aristotle uses the same subject to set up his question in *Met. A 1.2*. The concept of “all” appears in different key propositions, for example, in KP 8 and KP 10, but the sense of “all” does change. While the Presocratics meant the universe, Aristotle means “all beings,” not as “all particulars” (as did the Sophists) but as “all beings in principle.” This is due to the shifting of the question concerning the universe and its elements to a question about being as foundation of becoming. If we consider this shift of the concern, then Aristotle’s theory about being is in some way the reformulation of a central Presocratic question at a higher level. Aristotle, at any rate, saw it this way as is evident from the way he integrates their thoughts into his doxographies.

The first and most important distinction of the proem is that between being and becoming, which is linked with the distinction between the noeton and the aistheton. Only afterwards does the demiurge begin to give an order to the cosmos (29d). It has been noted by some ever since that whatever he does, it is no *creatio ex nihilo*. This becomes eminently clear in the discussion between Simplicius and Philoponus the Christian about the eternity of the world.¹⁴ As Plato presents it, it is about organizing or arranging pre-existing things, not about creating them. The chief issues concern the model to which he adapts the as yet still not ordered fundamental elements and movement. Timaeus says that the demiurge has ordered the world according to a beautiful and unchanging model; that he has formed the cosmos as a living being, which is an image of its model and that it contains all living beings. The demiurge moulds the soul of this cosmic animal (35a). The order is visible in the orbits of the planets, in their relations of distances, in time, which is a movable reproduction of the immovable Aeon. That is what the demiurge did. Afterwards he gave life to the gods and after having mixed a second kind of souls (41d), it fell

¹⁴ See Simplicius’ commentary on Aristotle’s *Physics*, Θ 1, 251b28–252a4: Simplicius *CAG X*, 1169,10–1171,29; Philoponus: 1171,30–1182,39; Simplicius on creation: 1145,17–29: when god creates something *ἀμέσως* (“immediate”) and *ἀχρόνως* (“without any time”), then that has nothing to do with Aristotle’s subject; 1151, 32: creation implies change in god; 1120, 18 *κοσμοποιεῖν*; on ‘creation’ cf. 1122, 24; 1142,22; 1151,17, 1173,1–1175,10. Nevertheless, many scholars, as J. Rheins in his dissertation, 2010, call it creation without hesitation.

to the gods to do the rest in the development of the world.

If we compare this with Aristotle's presentation it is clear that the same narrative features cannot be found, because Aristotle does not use a figurative language. There are, however, sufficient comparable elements, should we try to translate the myth into conceptual language. Table 5.2 below, outlines some cosmological themes to be found in the *Timaeus*, in *Met. A* and other early works of Aristotle.

A few remarks on this table. The 8th chapter of *Met. A* has an astronomic and cosmological subject. The question of how the cosmological theme can be integrated into the theoretical considerations of the chapters 7 and 9 is very controversial. For some scholars it clearly interrupts the line of thought, for others it is a necessary part (see above p. 216). The movements of the planets are the subject of this chapter and Aristotle does offer some proposals for how to understand the beginning of movement in the astronomical sense. Beforehand, at *A* 5.5 and at *A* 7.1, he had named the sun and the first sphere of the heavens as the first causes of natural movement. Further themes in *Met. A* 8 are the number of the spheres, the relation between the first cause, which sets in motion itself unmoved, and the second causes of movement, the mediation of movement from the first physical cause of movement to other physical causes of movement (cf. Theophrastus, *Met.* § 1). The gods, created by the demiurge, are identified by some interpreters with the 55 or 47 gods of the spheres.

31b–32b Timaeus speaks about the elements in the normal sense of the term, but with the chora Plato has in mind something of a still more elementary character than the Presocratics had looked for (48b, 46c). For the four visible and changeable elements cannot constitute the origin, that must be something absolutely unchangeable and indefinite. As such he introduces the “receptacle of becoming” (49a). At first, he names it hypodochē and “third genus” as something beside the being and the becoming (48e–49a; 50cd; 51d; 52d). He tries, apparently, to make his meaning clear with the use of different metaphors. After the comparison with the wet nurse (49a4–5) comes the analogy with gold (50a4–b5; he means that the relationship between hypodochē and things is comparable to gold, from which different things

5. The First Key Proposition: *Met. A 1*

Plato, <i>Timaeus</i> :	Aristotle:
the cosmos is a living organism with soul and nous	there are many unmoved movers, Λ 8
the cosmos is single, 31a	<i>Met.</i> Λ 8.17-8.20, <i>De Caelo</i> A 8
there are elements, 31b-32b	<i>De Caelo</i> 311b13-312a12
the corporeal world has three dimensions, 32a	<i>De Caelo</i> II 2, 284b21-22, 285a27ff., (Aristotle takes the vector or orientation to be more essential than the dimensions)
the form of the cosmos is the sphere, 33a	<i>De Caelo</i> B 4
circular movement, 34a	Λ 6 (beginning), Λ 7 (beginning), Λ 7.12
the first movement is that of the self-moving soul, 36a	Λ 6.20 (contra Plato)
time is the moved image of aion (“eternity”), 37cd	the movement of the stars and planets is eternal, <i>Met.</i> Λ 8.3-8.5
ouranos and time have a beginning, 38bc	movement and time do not have a coming to be and a passing away, <i>Met.</i> Λ 6.2; 7.1; the cosmos is eternal, Λ 7.16
number and courses of the planets, 38d	<i>Met.</i> Λ 8
gods of the stars, 40a	<i>Met.</i> Λ 8
celestial movement of is transferred to the mundane things, 58a	sun and ecliptic <i>Met.</i> Λ 5.5

Table 5.2.: *Timaeus* – *Met.* Λ , *De Caelo*

can be made), then the mass (ekmageion), from which something can be formed (50c2); then the substrate for unguents (50e6); after that the mother (51a5; and that even though the same was named wet-nurse shortly before) and finally, he uses the term chora, place (52a8).

Compared with the hypodochē or the chora the traditional elements are secondary. In the first place Plato speaks about the elements in the context of the connection between corporeal things and our senses (31b–33a). In the second he wants to show the inadequacy of the traditional elements (49cd, prepared at 47e). They cannot be primary because they change themselves. They serve as a foil for hypodochē and chora. In the third place, which is about the elements, Plato tries to establish the noetic order of the elements based on their geometrical structure, while at the same time considering the conditions of ananke in order to explain in this way the effects of the elements on our senses (61d).

The activities of the demiurge should serve to make clear in a poetical manner that the changeable world, in which we live, is based on a noetic and unchangeable one. If the world of the nous were not implemented in a natural world, there would be no use of movement and the question of how movement is possible would be superfluous. As we do, in fact, live in a natural world, we do have to ask the question of why and how there is also a world of nature beside the noetic world. What good could the world of change bring about? What is improved if beside the unsurpassable unchangeable world of being there is another transient one, in motion, with things subject to becoming? Plato answers this question with a story (29d–30a), saying that the demiurge took upon himself the task of arranging the things disordered “because he was good and in no way jealous.” He has found the visible things disordered and because order is better than disorder, he formed it as we see it is now. The question is not whether and why the demiurge *created* the world, which Plato explicitly denies he did (it is a Christian question). The question is, instead, why he has intervened in the disordered state.¹⁵ It is left unsaid why and whence the already existing things had come to be. The question remains how the noetic order can be

¹⁵ It would be better not to employ phrases like “the divine creator of the world” and such like, which are used for instance by J. Halfwassen, 2000, 39–62, and many others.

transferred to things in the disordered state, and this question, in turn, requires an answer as to how these things can be transferred in ordered movement. The answer is: it is the result of the action of the demiurge.

Movement requires elements and their order. In the first place, mentioned above, where Plato speaks about elements, he relates the characteristics of the elements to the fact that they are corporeal and perceptible (31b). There cannot be visible things without fire, no tactile things without solids (i. e. without earth). The elements are the basis of our capacity for accessing mundane beings.¹⁶ The other two elements, water and air, have the function to mediate between the first two elements. Further, if the cosmos has a self-moving soul, then this soul will be the principle in the sense of a rule of movement and in the sense of an origin of movement. The cosmos being a body, fills space and has a shape. The movements which it can perform must be in accord with its space and shape. Its shape is the sphere, its first movements, therefore, are circular.

Aristotle concurs, *De Caelo* Γ 3: because there are simple movements, there must be simple bodies too. The perceptible beings we have to do with cannot be made up by either one single element or by an infinite number of them, since perceptible beings can be destroyed and the process of destruction must come to an end.

The movement of the cosmos is circular (34a) and eternal (37d), Timaeus says. Aristotle (*Met.* Λ 6, 1071b32) cites Platon (*Timaeus* 30a) on the eternity of the eternal movement. Circularity of motion and the shape of the sphere are related for Aristotle too, and in *De Caelo* B 3–4 he says that the reason why the ouranos is eternal is that it is divine, which has as a consequence that it is spherical and its movement circular.

That the ouranos is unique is a common theme too.¹⁷ Movement proceeds in time, time must also be a theme. Plato says that time emerged with the ouranos *Timaeus* (38bc). The aion is its paradigm, it has a variety of determinations, but these are not

¹⁶ Aristotle speaks about the correlation between the senses and the elements in *De Sensu et Sensibilibus* 2, where he sometimes refers on the *Timaeus*.

¹⁷ See *Tim.* 31a, Aristotle *Met.* Λ 9 and *De Caelo* A 7–9, with good remarks by G. E. R. Lloyd, 2000, 266.

successive as in the case of time, but all together. Timaeus calls time “the moving image of *aion*.” In this way, becoming as such and not only the becoming of this or that can be made the subject since becoming is realized in movement and movement in time.¹⁸ When Timaeus speaks about ‘producing’ and ‘creating’ that is due to the fact that he tells a story. This point is made explicitly when he presents the “making” of the soul of the world. What he intends is a timeless structure, the story makes it necessary to realize it in a vivid description.

Nous and noesis

The nous is another important common theme in both texts. Plato says in the *Timaeus* that the demiurge arranges the disordered perceptible things by supplying them with nous, but only a living being with soul can possess nous (30b), the function (nous) needs an organ (soul) thus the cosmos must have a soul. Plato hereby meets the claims raised by Socrates, who blames Anaxagoras for promising to show how the nous rules the world, but in fact remained at the level of corporeal causes (see *Phaedo* 98–99). It is important that we keep in mind that the demiurge *is not* the nous but that he *gives* the nous.

In speaking about the visual process, Plato distinguishes rather casually between proper or first causes and causes incidental (46c–e). Afterwards, the crucial distinction between nous and *ananke* (47e–48d) is based exactly on this distinction; both kinds of causes being necessary to attain knowledge of the beings around us (68c–69a). All the rest of the dialogue (69a–92c) has to clarify that it is possible to tie together both kinds of causes and, this is done with the aid of an example. This is the human being with its soul and body and this, “arriving at the nature of man” was the initially declared terminus of the discourse (27a).

In *Met.* Λ the term nous appears when Aristotle prepares the speculative high points and in these high points themselves (see KP 14–17 and Chapter 9). Aristotle also uses the related concepts *noeton* und *noesis*, and it is the latter term that seems to

¹⁸ Aristoteles on becoming: *Physik A*, *Met. A*, *Met. Z*, 7–9.

bear the decisive part of the argument, not the nous. Aristotle speaks about the nous in 7.4 (KP 14) because he wants to illustrate what a kinoun akineton is. That which the nous is aware of sets in motion the nous without itself being moved, only the nous is moved (KP 15). In 7.19 (KP 17) Aristotle states that the nous is actual only in the noesis (that is, when it performs its function), which is the “divine” in it. In 9.10 (KP 23) too, he uses the term noesis, in three senses: Every factual awareness (= noesis₃) realizes a world order (= noesis₁) by means of that ability to be aware (noesis₂).

The standard interpretation identifies the nous with god and the alleged ‘First Mover,’ usually after some evasive preliminary remarks.¹⁹ The nous seems to be the link between the demiurge and the cause which sets in motion itself unmoved. The way Plato speaks about the nous, however, suggests that something in this construal is wrong, because the nous seems to be the highest point in a system or the highest being, but it is rather the demiurge that ought to hold this position. Finally, the demiurge belongs to poetical language, the nous and still more the noeton and noesis belong to technical terminology.

The Character of the *Timaeus* as Text

Plato himself reflects on the nature of his text, the *Timaeus*, and that right at the start, in the proem. The last point he makes on the subject is that, of a solid and stable thing we can speak using solid and stable language; but of any unstable thing, such as the cosmos, it is only in a figurative language that we can speak (eikos logos; 29cd).

The elements, the human body, the functions of the senses, the planets with their spheres: these are described in great detail and in language now physical, now a mathematical. The famous Platonic solids and the calculation of the distances of

¹⁹ One example is that of J. Brunschwig, 2000, 276, who happily employs the terminology common “in French Thomistic circles.” Could that fail to contaminate the contents of the argument? Of course, it is quite possible that his text was intended for just such circles.

the planets belong to this part of Timaeus' lecture.²⁰ By this precision one might believe – and against Timaeus' repeated affirmation, that all is said in the form of an *eikos logos* – that we may take it face value. Some interpreters take the *eikos logos* as a metaphorical manner of speaking, others a manner of speaking which is adapted to the non-noetic content. G. Böhme proposed understanding the phrase not as “plausible speech” but as “speaking about plausible things.”²¹ If that is correct, what is said about the cosmos must be taken literally, the uncertainty inheres not in the speech itself, but in the subject.

If we wish to examine the impact of the questions asked in the *Timaeus* on *Met.* Λ we must bear in mind the specific and different characters of the texts. In the case of Plato, we are reading a figurative myth, while Aristotle's is a theoretical study the aim of which is achieving clarity on some unanswered questions. With the theoretical question about being and about the primary in becoming is taken up the function of the demiurge. The question is treated within the frame of a set of *aitia*. The ‘first moving’ forms part of a rather technical vocabulary and is never intended as asserting something about a being or even to prove its existence, it is simply the name for the first in one of the four causes.

In the *Timaeus* there is even more than just *eikos logos*. The introduction takes the form of a dialogue, about 10 pages as against about 65 pages of lecture and inasmuch differs clearly from all other dialogues. In the lecture itself, however, there are different levels or kinds of text. The *eikos logos* does form the basis, something like a *basso continuo*. On this basis, though, we do see a clear contrast between conceptual and mythological passages. Furthermore, there are many digressions, which differ in subject and text style. The mathematical excursuses are famous (on the Platonic solids, on the fundamental triangle), but there are also astronomical (planetary orbits, the *teleios eniautos*, “the complete year”), physiological (form and function of the body parts), and mythological excursuses. Finally, we must not forget the invocations of the gods at two strategically important positions. What follows from all this is that the *Timaeus* requires a special kind of translation, in

²⁰ On these themes see the excellent presentation by L. Brisson, 1994.

²¹ G. Böhme, 1996, 29.

fact a modulated form of translation appropriate to the variation in the character of this very special text.

We pay especial attention to two points repeatedly treated in the literature. Firstly, again and again we encounter interpreters who transfer the chronology of the story directly upon the chronology of the formation of the cosmos while the story has only its narrative chronology *qua* story. Plato himself points out the fact (34e). The sense of the account is the presentation of a system; Timaeus' lecture in the form of the *eikos logos* is a narrative in service to a system and its chronology corresponds to the ontological hierarchy in the system. Secondly, we must ask to what end the story is told. It tells of the becoming of a cosmos in which the nature of the human being may be conceivable. That is the declared aim from the start (27a) and is declared as the achieved goal at the end (90c und 92c). It seems improbable that this figurative representation of the becoming of the cosmos is to be directly transposed into the literal, actual becoming of the cosmos in a quasi scientific sense.

We find about thirty uses of expressions like *eikos logos* or *mythos eikos* in the seventy-five Stephanus-pages of the complete dialog. Plato makes clear, then, that Timaeus' lecture is not about something, which can be spoken of with the reliability of noetic considerations. The subject requires empirical experience, the desired knowledge cannot be derived from *a priori* premises. Natural beings do not hold their determinations in a constant manner, they move and change and so does correspondingly the knowledge about them. We cannot speak about the cosmos in the same way as we do about the ideas. The lecture about the cosmos even in its purely noetic form must be figurative. The first part, then, is under incidental conditions, but Plato tries here already to introduce some systematic points of view, for example, discussing the correlation between the elements and the functions of our senses or in speaking about the constitution of the corporeal world by geometrical forms.

It is plain that Plato presents the respective knowledge of his time with pleasure and in great detail, nevertheless it should be kept in mind that all this remains subject to a general *reservatio mentalis*. At any rate, Plato has seen that he must speak of the world *hic et nunc*, even if in the form of the *eikos logos*, which is neither a mere

myth nor a form of conclusive argumentation. It is necessary to speak about that world if we wish to understand the transition from the ideal world to the mundane and if the ideas should have some function in this context.²²

The Influence of the question in the *Timaeus* on *Met. A*

J. Dillon has engaged with the ‘legacy’ of Plato’s *Timaeus*. He draws a list of six questions, which are left open by this dialogue,²³ placing particular emphasis on the cosmological part. He thinks that the main questions in the *Timaeus* concern the demiurge and the “young gods”; then, the meaning of hypodochē; how it is possible to produce the three-dimensional world from two-dimensional triangles; and finally, how this construction of the world may be compatible with the theory of ideas. I complement J. Dillon’s list with some further points, with which Plato added to and enhanced the discussion about the cosmos, which had been led by the Presocratics, see table 5.3.

1. The elements of the Presocratics are replaced for being insufficiently elementary; they do not have the character that the first being ought to have.
 2. The chora replaces the elements.
 3. The nous takes on new value and function as cause; it conveys an *a priori*-order to the world.
 4. With the activities of the demiurge the ideas take on a function in the becoming.
 5. Finally, Plato is clearly aware of the issue that if being and becoming are distinguished as is done in the proem, then the transition from being to becoming remains to be explained.
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Table 5.3.: Plato – Presocratics

There is an identifiable impact on *Met. A* from the *Timaeus* but it consists less in

²² See some notes on the function of the ideas in the *Timaeus* by R. Ferber, 1997.

²³ J. Dillon, 2003, 24.

the use of certain terms or in the discussion of specific themes than much more in the fundamental orientation of the question. Right at the start of *Met. A* Aristotle distinguishes between the singular of ousia, *Sein*, and the plural, the beings, *Seiendes*. This corresponds to the double perspective under which he poses the question, that is as a cosmological and a speculative one. This two-fold view is established in the *Timaeus* and Aristotle subsequently considers the possibility of the mediation of these views. This mediation between two distinctive perspectives corresponds to the question in the *Timaeus* of how the transition between the noetic and the factual world may be understood and how it works. Under both perspectives is the proton kinoun (‘which sets in motion firstly’) a leading term. In the speculative line of thought the first setting in motion can be expressed by the formula {ousia←noesis→energeia / Doxa}. Noesis in this formula corresponds to noesis₁ in the phrase noesis₃ noeseos₁ noesis₂ estin. Noesis₂ is the point where the noetic structure and the worldly realization are mediated, any particular realization is noesis₃. The protos ouranos is the ‘first moving’ in the cosmological line, and the sun and the ecliptic perform the cosmological mediation. The combination of cosmological and speculative interest, then, can be designated as an effect of the *Timaeus* on *Met A*.

Plato says that the transition from the noetic to the aesthetic or mundane world is enabled by means of the hypodochē and chora. We do not find anything in *Met. A* which parallels chora but certainly have elsewhere. When Aristotle wants to speak about hyle or about the connection between hyle and necessity, he refers to Plato’s chora or hypodochē. Aristotle identifies Plato’s chora with his prote hyle in *De Generatione et Corruptione* B 1, 329a9ff., where he approvingly cites Plato’s illustrations with gold and with the wet nurse in the *Timaeus* but limiting it to alloiosis. He also cites the terms πανδεχέζ, pandeches, “that which takes up all things” (*De Caelo* Γ 8, 306b16–19) and uses δεκτικός as characteristic of the hyle: hyle is “physis, because taking up (: dektike) the beings, which have the principle of movement in themselves” (*Met.* Δ 4, 1015a15–6.) He discusses the relation or similarity that chora could possibly have with hyle and topoi (*Physics* Δ 2, 209b1–17).²⁴

²⁴ Cf. M. Baltes, 1976 and 1978.

Prote hyle and chora have in common that: both are a substrate and do not have a coming-to-be and a passing-away; both are not perceptible; they are primary, something like a material out of which things are formed; they do not themselves have any form; and they impose some necessity on the becoming beings.²⁵ Of course, there are differences too: hyle is that which undergoes the change of contrary determinations and it is one of the four causes, which does not apply in the case of chora. Moreover, hyle is pure potentiality and a concept of being (*Seinsbegriff*). The distinction between potentiality and actuality plays no role in Plato's dialogues and, as hyle for something, it is always a relation (*Physics* B 2, 194b9). Aristotle emphasizes that hyle cannot be construed through planes, as Plato had said, because hyle is not to be identified with the body (*De Generatione et Corruptione* B 1, 329a9ff.). The elements, to be sure, are solid (stereos, spatial and corporeal), but Plato's analysis goes as far as planes and it is impossible, that the "nurse" and the first hyle be planes. "We say," Aristotle continues a24, "that there is a hyle of perceptible bodies, but that this hyle is not separated." The elements are formed out of this hyle, it is an arche, nothing for itself but appears always with its contrary. He reminds of talking about it elsewhere and in more detail (sc. *Physics* A 6–7).

The decisive effect of the *Timaios* on *Met. A* may be this that it became urgent to look for a speculative answer to the question about the being which can found becoming.

Common Themes in the *Sophistes* and in *Met. A*

The *Sophist* is a second dialogue which had a significant influence on the question asked in *Met. A*. In this dialogue Plato showed that the most important question to ask is the question about being. Being is the most basic thought or concept, on which all the others are based, it seems the easiest and most self-evident notion, but when we attempt to articulate it we become compelled to confess that we too entertain only contradictory opinions about it (*Sophist* 242b10). Aristotle takes up

²⁵ See also *Physics* B 9, 200 a14: ἐν ὅλῃ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον ("necessity is in the hyle"); cf. 200a30ff.; *Met.* Δ 4, 1014b26–35; *Met.* Θ 7, 1049a24.

this issue in his first speculative sketch, *Met. A*, then he will go on to do so again in more detail in *Met. ZHΘ*.

If everyone does no more than assert their own opinions, there is the end to discourse. This is the sophist's stance. Plato showed in the *Sophist* that we, indeed not only the "earth-born" but the "friends of ideas" too, must therefore desist from assertion. New assertions – about the sense of "to be", say – are no more than the next assertions and only sustain the old patterns of comportment in argumentation. Even one who were to set a criterion favoring his own views on "to be" could not do so without assertion. There is nothing for it but to analyze the existing opinions, the opinions "we all" share. Such is the stance of the guest from Elea. Aristotle adopted that stance and in the *Topics* developed a method to do just that. The "topical attitude" (*topische Einstellung*) allows for the examination of opinions without the making of new claims.²⁶ Aristotle continues this 'thinking without claims' (*unbehaftendes Denken*, as I have called it), he again sets the same question about being, in the topical attitude and with new tools (one of them being the 'quotations,' *Anführungen*, which too were preformed in the *Sophist*).

Aristotle's results differ from Plato's. While the result of Plato's analysis of the prevailing opinions about *to be* were the 'five highest genera' Aristotle gives a speculative sketch in *Met. A* and a vision about being which can be summarized in the formula {ousia←noesis→energeia / DOXA}. Later he repeats the question in *Met. ZHΘ*. The content of the formula, that is, the use of *to be*, is extended more broadly to the categories, the modalities, the distinction true/false. *Met. A* sets out a program, which Aristotle tries all his life to carry out. The *Sophist*, then, is crucial to Aristotle's manner of asking the question about being.

Some Principle Phrases about Being and Becoming

In the following table I recapitulate the commonalities in content between some late Platonic dialogues and Aristotle's *Met. A*.

²⁶ Cf. E. Sonderegger, 2012, I. 2 and I. 3.1.

Places <i>Met.</i> Λ	Themes	Platonic dialogues
<i>Met.</i> Λ 1.7; 6.1	Being and becoming are different.	<i>Timaeus</i> 27d, 29c3; <i>Sophistes</i> 248a7
<i>Met.</i> Λ 7.6	Our approach to being and becoming is different too, i. e. we refer differently to things becoming things and to beings: to the latter as noesis and episteme, to the former by doxa, opinion, ²⁷ and aisthesis.	<i>Sophist</i> 248a10–12; 246b–c
<i>Met.</i> Λ 7.3; 7.7–10	Becoming is for the sake of being. Metaphorically speaking one could say, that things becoming ‘are striving for’ being.	<i>Philebus</i> 26d8; 54a6 ²⁸
<i>Met.</i> Λ 9.10	Knowledge of becoming presupposes knowledge of being; without knowledge about being it is not possible to know anything about becoming.	<i>Sophist</i> 242–243 (= the middle of the dialogue)
<i>Met.</i> Λ 1.1, 6.8, 9.10, 10.30	Becoming rests on being, without being there is no becoming. ²⁹ Things that emerge undergo this process in order to be.	<i>Timaeus</i> 29–30
<i>Met.</i> Λ 10.31	Contra: The ideas are the being of the beings.	

²⁷ Note that this everyday doxa must not be confused with the DOXA in the formula for *to be*, which denotes a fundamental character of our speech and thought.

²⁸ *Philebus* 26d8 Socrates: “...And now as to the third kind, I am reckoning all this progeny of our two factors <sc. the kinds of Limit and Unlimited> as a unity, and you may take me to mean a coming into being, resulting from those measures that are achieved with the aid of the Limit,” and 54a6: Socrates: “...Now let us take another pair. ...All Becoming on the one hand, and all Being on the other. ...Now which of these shall we say is for the sake of which? Becoming for the sake of Being, or Being for the sake of Becoming?” (Transl. R. Hackforth, 1945.)

²⁹ Cf. later in *Met.* Z, 1034a30–32, 1034b16–19; *De partibus animalium* A 1, 640a10.

5. The First Key Proposition: *Met. A 1*

<i>Met. A</i> 6.16, 10.26	The becoming of things that become is possible because they participate in beings, in the ideas. In the first half of Timaeus' lecture the becoming is a becoming in thought; to get the real becoming we require additionally chora; chora mediates being and becoming.	<i>Timaeus</i> 49a, 52a
<i>Met. A</i> 7.18, 9.10	The world is preformed in the soul; the perceptible world is, so to speak, construed in the soul. This anticipates the concept of being as {being←awareness→actuality / DOXA}, as exposed in <i>Met. A</i> . Structurally, this corresponds to the Platonic idea that knowledge is remembrance; Aristotle agrees in a certain sense, but puts it in a more technical language.	<i>Timaeus</i> 52d <i>Timaeus</i> 36 e

Table 5.4.: Principle phrases about being and becoming

This synopsis gives the most general thematic framework, common to some late dialogues and *Met. A*; in the core of this framework is the question about being and about the transition from noetic structures to worldly facts. We will see that Theophrastus' *Metaphysics* fits very well in this framework (cf. esp. § 2).

5.1.2. Theophrastus, *Metaphysics*

Date

It has been quite some time now that two fundamental assumptions concerning the text of Theophrastus' *Met.* have undergone important alterations: concerning its

date and its nature. The text was long dated to after Aristotle's death, it seemed to be the late revenge of a disappointed student on his master, and for some time after the edition of W. D. Ross, one spoke of a *Metaphysical Fragment*. Now both assumptions seem to be incorrect.

Theophrastus was born in Eresos (Lesbos) some years before Aristotle entered the Academy (367/6). We have no information about the date of Theophrastus' entry into the Academy that is confirmed by external data. We have only reports about his cooperation with Aristotle in Mytilene, after they left Athens (about 345, see I. Düring, 1957, and W. W. Fortenbaugh, 1985). Theophrastus seems to have first held the position of an assistant or a research associate at Aristotle's institute. That is all the more plausible if they were previously acquainted with each other. His books testify to the fact that he is very familiar with the discussions and issues of the Old Academy. If he had not been there himself, he would have had to obtain any knowledge from reports (mainly from Aristotle himself) and out of books from the members of the Academy. We must assume, in any case, that he knew these texts. It is mere surmise that he was in the Academy a few years before Plato died (347), but quite plausible. When they left Athens, Aristotle was between thirty-five and forty years old, Theophrastus between twenty and twenty-five. For the date of Theophrastus' *Met.* there is no external data available. As a result, the attempts at accurate dating vary greatly in their conclusions. They depend on the assumptions made concerning the contents and function of the book. Some have tried to date it on the basis of some particular statements it contains. W. D. Ross, M. van Raalte, A. Laks and G. W. Most note several dozen places (see their footnotes) where terms or content common between the texts can be discerned. It is, however, not possible to claim certain priority for Aristotle's text. Every claim for a given dating is based on decisions about the interpretations of the content.

W. D. Ross wrote in the introduction of his edition, for long an authoritative one, that Theophrastus' *Met.* displays the spirit that obtained in the Lyceum after Aristotle's death.³⁰ G. Reale, as many others, emphasizes the close connection between

³⁰ W. D. Ross, F. H. Fobes (ed.), 1929, XXV; A. Laks, G. W. Most, ed., 1993, produced the leading edition now.

Theophrastus' *Met.* and *Met. A*, which he of course takes to be a late book, so that Theophrastus' work must also be late.³¹ In contrast to those scholars H. J. Krämer mentions five points which testify to "*früharistotelisches, ja voraristotelisches und gemeinakademisches Gedankengut*" in Theophrastus' *Met.* and this is an argument for early dating.³² M. van Raalte offers an informative synopsis of different positions on the question of dating (1993, 23–24). She too prefers a late date for the book (25, but see my arguments contra above, p. 215).

G. W. Most compares some statements concerning biological questions discussed in both Theophrastus' *Met.* and in some biological works of Aristotle. It seems to him more plausible that Aristotle is referring to Theophrastus' work than the other way round.³³ By the reasoning of D. T. Devereux, based on the concept of the highest form of philosophy, it follows that *Met. A* is earlier than the *central books*.³⁴ Incidentally, we have in his contribution a series of very convincing arguments against the G. Reale's arguments in favor of a late dating for *Met. A*.

One of the reasons offered for a late dating is that Andronicus of Rhodes (scholarch about 70 B. C.) placed Theophrastus' book as an introduction untitled at the beginning of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Nicolaus of Damascus (1st century BCE.) names Theophrastus for the first time as the author of this text, which served as critical introduction to Aristotle's *Met.* until the Middle Ages. The introduction would have been less plausible, if the work had been the work of the young Theophrastus. On the other hand, what would be the sense of an introduction criticizing in essential points the work it introduces? Could it be that Andronicus has placed the two texts together because he has become aware of the fact that both texts refer to roughly the

³¹ G. Reale, 1994 (6. Aufl.), 296–317.

³² H. J. Krämer, 1973, 206–214:

1. the universal is divided in genera and species (8b20)
2. the use of analogy (4b12; 8a19)
3. knowledge of *protá* by means of negation (9a19)
4. science 'comprehends the identical in the many' (8b24)
5. the difference between theoretical, practical and poetical knowledge.

³³ G. W. Most, 1988; cf. the edition by A. Laks, G. W. Most (edd), 77–79.

³⁴ D. T. Devereux, 1988, 167–188.

same context?

The transitional phrase in § 6 μέχρι μὲν δὴ τούτων [...] , “hitherto [...] ,” to § 7 τὸ δὲ μετὰ ταῦτα [...] , “that afterwards [...] ,” takes on a different meaning according to what one thinks about the text as a whole. If one wanted to read the Theophrastean text as late and a pre-emptive criticism of the following *Met.*, then paragraphs 1–6 report the themes, in which Theophrastus agrees with Aristotle and the rest is criticism. If, however, it is an early work, then the conformity is not only between Theophrastus and Aristotle, but with the Old Academy too. The questions, beginning with § 7, are questions to both, Theophrastus and Aristotle, issues that resulted from the discussions in the Academy.

Many think that the close thematic connection is another reason for the late date of Theophrastus’ *Met.*, but this is valid only if one accepts without further proof the late date of Aristotle’s *Met. A* in combination with its supposedly evident theological content. Beginning in the Middle Ages and up today many follow this line of thinking: because *Met. A* contains an Aristotelian theology, it fulfills the task of closing the last remaining lacuna in his metaphysical system. The highly complicated considerations about the nous and the so-called ‘First Mover’ (as many still obstinately put it³⁵) can only have been possible in the latest stages of a philosophical career. The text is a late one and it tends to monotheism, which too is something that develops in the end stages. This impression is confirmed by the fact that, until Albertus Magnus, the *Liber de Causis* was taken to be an Aristotelian work. Used for educational purposes, it had an impact on the interpretation of *Met. A*, because it treats of incorporeal entities.

Some offer yet another reason for a late dating of *Met. A* (which, if true, would corroborate the late date of Theophrastus’ work), namely the problem of the date of *Met. A* 8, which seems to yield some external data. For in this chapter, Aristotle using the imperfect tense, mentions (beside others) the theories of Eudoxus and Callippus concerning the movements of the heavenly bodies and their spheres. It seems

³⁵ See e. g. the contributions of the *Symposium Aristotelicum* on *Met. A* (2000) or the *New Essays* (2016) and the commentaries published 2019 by F. Baghdassarian and L. Judson.

that Aristotle could hardly have met Callippus before 330 BCE, hence it follows that the text is late (Aristotle died 322 BCE).

I will put forward some arguments against the assumption that the imperfect tense is chronologically telling (on which see also I. Düring, 1968a) and that, if Aristotle knew Callippus' theory, he must not have been in Athens (for the discussion of the dating of *Met. A* see also above, p. 216). Even if *Met. A* 8 is late, there remain two possibilities. Either *Met. A* 8 is late and indelicately inserted in an earlier text (as e. g. W. Jaeger, 1923, 366, or D. Frede, 1971, thought), or it fits very well into the context of chapters 7 and 9 and the whole text is late, as, since P. Merlan, M. van Raalte and certain contributors to the *Symposium Aristotelicum* (2000) believed. Again, even if one finds that the arguments in favor of the earlier dating more convincing (as I do), there are different possible explanations about the origin of the two texts. Theophrastus' *Met.* could have been a close-following reaction to Aristoteles' text, encouraged, perhaps, by Aristotle himself; both could also have been written at the same time, as a collection of the current topics of the Old Academy; finally, Aristotle's text could have been a speculative complement to the more realistic text of Theophrastus. We cannot resolve this uncertainty. The fact stands: both are early texts, from shortly after Aristotle had left Athens, belonging chronologically close to each other and to the Old Academy.

In his edition of Theophrastus' so-called *Metaphysics* (2010, with arguments for *On First Principles* as the real title) Dimitri Gutas examined the issue of dating in great detail. He took into account the arguments in favor of the late date and offered several in favor of an early one (say between 347 and 334; he prefers as date the time Aristotle was in Assos). It seems that this conclusion can scarcely remain open to doubt any longer and an early date for *Met. A* can also be established.

Comments on some particular arguments

Both texts – *Met. A* and Theophrastus' *Met.* – have certain contents and expressions in common, but there are no unambiguous quotations from the one or other (see the footnotes of the mentioned editions). While Aristotle and Theophrastus cite other contemporary philosophers, they do not each other. Why would Theophrastus avoid

naming Aristotle, if he were going to criticize him? – When his book is dated early, then it becomes unsurprising that there is no reference one to the other but only to the Old Academy. Even if one of them seems to contradict the other, this may be due to a different perception of the situation and symptomatic only of differing views of the common tradition. There is a difference, at least, insofar as Aristotle follows more a speculative line and Theophrastus more a realistic one. If the two texts are contemporary and refer to the same set of issues, then there is no obvious need for them to be citing each other.

Many questions Theophrastus asks are asked by Aristotle too. They cannot be objections, as, e. g., the question how far we can go in inquiring what something is for. Even the question of whether “all things are at their best” and to what point we can go in asking after a cause (§§ 15, 25: *di’ aitiou theorein*, 28) are common to both. Aristotle asks in the first sentence of *Met.* A 10 how “the nature of the whole contains the good and the best” and proposes an answer. The third book of the *Topics* (also an early work) is a search for means and structures of argument, which would allow for the obviating of the *aporia* concerning the question about the good and the best. Finally, we must not overlook the hint in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (A 3, 1094b11–27), where Aristotle suggests that not all questions have the same accuracy (*akribeia*). This means that we cannot always state universal propositions with the same cogency. It should also be noted that, in such cases, Aristotle often uses the expression *hos epi to poly*, “mostly.”

When Aristotle says in his *De Partibus Animalium* (A, 1, 641b12), “[...], because nature does all things for the sake of something,” we must consider under which aspect this point is being made. In Aristotle’s case it is the theoretical aspect, in Theophrastus’ case it is instead the area of natural beings. The insight that the search after the *archai* is very different from that starting from principles (Theophrastus, *Met.* §§ 13 und 25), is also made by Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics*, A 4, 1095a30–b1), and Plato too had earlier led us to it (*Cratylus* 436d, *Phaedo* 101e, *Politeia* 511b).

In particular is the question following the report of the consensus (§ 7) – what is the

nature of ephesis – often understood as an objection to Aristotle, in fact is a genuine Aristotelian question. Theophrastus asks this question in the context of the question of how we can understand, that we see and experience many movements, but assume, that there is only a single first cause of motion. That is just the same question Aristotle poses in *Met.* Λ 6.23–6.25. It seems that this topic was current and belongs to the question which, since the *Timaeus*, must necessarily be asked: namely, how the transition from the noetic to the perceptible world is possible. Aristotle is very careful in the scientific field, a sign of that is the fact that in *Met.* Λ 8 he reports several theories of his contemporaries about the number of the heavenly spheres, before he himself proposes a provisional solution to the problem. He does several times note that all of this must be offered with considerable reservations. This cannot be transformed into mere assertions, which they would be if Theophrastus' statements about them were objections. We can see particularly well the accordance, on one hand, between Plato's *Timaeus* and the questions of the Old Academy and, on the other, with Theophrastus and Aristotle when we consider the question of how far we can go in explaining what follows the archai.³⁶ For this question, how the transition from the world without chora into the world with chora may be understandable, is raised with the *Timaeus*.

Theophrastus (§§ 8 and 27) and Aristotle agree on how they see the role and function of the astronomy in knowledge. Astronomy has to do with the number of the spheres etc. (see *Met.* Λ 8.6), but not at all with the question of being, as it is raised in the first sentence of *Met.* Λ . It is nearly the same case with the position of mathematics (see Theophrastus, *Met.*, § 3), which has no means to explain the transition from the noetic to the perceptible world. What Aristotle says (at *Met.* Λ 1.7, then 8.1–8.2, and again 10.39–10.41) corresponds perfectly to what Theophrastus thinks.

One ought also to take into account that, as a late work, Theophrastus' book would be fairly uninteresting and obsolete, as far as it relates to Aristotle's questions but as an early one, it would be a rich resource in regard to the discourse of the Academy.

³⁶ Theophrastus, *Met.*, § 11; in principle he already asks this question in §§ 1 and 2, where Theophrastus asks whether the noeta have a connection with ta tes physeos or not, because the noeta are the archai, the natural beings are consequences.

If one were to argue that Theophrastus' *Met.* is really the late criticism of his master by a disenchanted student, one would be forced to admit that Theophrastus neglects essential distinctions, which Aristotle made in ZHΘ. If both texts, that of Theophrastus and that of Aristotle, were written around roughly the middle of the fourth century BCE then the Old Academy, itself marked by Plato's late dialogues, is their background. Furthermore, if Theophrastus' *Met.* is not a late criticism and if we are not obliged to read it as a response to any claims by Aristotle but as a text, which like *Met. Λ*, lists and reflects the main problems of the Old Academy, then it is one of the best sources for this background. Theophrastus is more interested in realistic questions, Aristotle in speculative ones, but for both the question about the transition from the noetic to the perceptible beings is central and the question about the first and the principle is omnipresent in Theophrastus' work as much as it is in Aristotle's (§§ 1, 6, 11, 13, 18, 25, 27, 34).

In summary, major reasons for an early dating of Theophrastus' *Met.* are firstly, the fact that we can see in it an objective in common with *Met. Λ*, oriented by the discussions of the Old Academy; then, that many things in both texts become better understandable, if the texts are written at about the same time; and that instead of an obsolete criticism it is an intelligent summary of enduring issues (comparable with *Met. B*).

The Structure of Theophrastus' *Metaphysics*

In order better to compare the content of Theophrastus' *Met.* with Aristotle's *Met. Λ* we ought to consider the content and structure of Theophrastus' work. Quantitatively, it divides into two very unequal parts. The first is the summary of the consensus (§§ 1–6), the second is the presentation of the remaining questions (§§ 7–34). In this second part, the different questions overlap with one another so that, for instance, the second problem is introduced whilst the first is as yet still open. This is because the problems at stake are interlaced and themselves connected one to another. It is not, then, possible to divide the text into clear-cut distinct units. This shows that Theophrastus is well aware of the conceptual connection between the is-

sues. Questions about desire (ephe σ is) and origin (arche) are connected because the desire aims at the origin. The question about the origin and the First cannot be asked without reflection on the manner of posing question. The question of how far to go in the inquiry into desire and the question about the limit of the for-the-sake-of, these cannot be posed separately, one without the other.

In the first part, Theophrastus asks two main questions. First, he asks what the method for a theory about the First could be; second, how the connection between the noetic and the natural beings is possible (§ 1–2). He proposes contemporary answers to these questions (§§ 3–4). It is consensus, he says, that the crucial question is that concerning the First as a principle. So much is clear, that the First, which we are looking for, is an unmoved cause of movement (§ 5). If we wish to speak about the First, we have to understand its being and its actuality (§ 6). Theophrastus' first sentence³⁷ does not criticize Aristotle's first sentence,³⁸ on the contrary, it confirms the subject, namely "the First" and that *theoria* is the method to treat this subject. In the same sense, Aristotle says that which he is searching for is being, *ousia*, as the principle of beings, *ousiai*.

After the summary of the consensus in § 6 Theophrastus proposes in §§ 7–25 an answer to the second question. He says, the connection between the first and the second, i. e. between the noetic and the natural area, is that the second seeks for the First (ephe σ is). There are several unanswered questions concerning this proposal, Theophrastus says. How can "to seek for" represent a mediation between our thoughts and our perceptions? Mathematics alone, at any rate, cannot perform this mediation. Even astronomy is not the appropriate method for inquiring after the First although it is concerned with primary things. Then, to what extent must the caused effects be presented and explained? The range of application of the principles "All is for the best" and "All is for the sake of something" must be examined; as too which method is apt to ask after the origin; and how will be able to understand that one and the same First has such different effects in nature as we see it.

³⁷ "How and by which means have we to define the theory about the First?"

³⁸ "The present theory concerns being <: *ousia*>; because it is beings <: *ousiai*>, whose principles and causes are searched for."

The first part (§§ 7 until ca. 25) treats the ephesis, the desire or the ‘aiming at.’ “The First” sets other beings in motion in the same way as the desired being moves the desiring. In this context, he asks methodological questions in both directions: (§§ 11–13): “How far should we go in inferring the particular beings from the principles?” and the other question: “How far should we go asking after the principles?” Here (§ 13) Theophrastus states the methodological insight, which is also valid for the question about being as Aristotle puts it, namely, that the question about the principle is different from all other questions. All knowledge about other things can take their principles as given and start with them, but the question about the First cannot do exactly this take the principle as given and known. This corresponds with what Aristotle says in agreement with Plato: “The way to the principles is not the same as the way starting from the principles.”³⁹ This is in accordance with the manner in which Aristotle treats the problem in *Met.* Λ, what he says there is not deduction but *theoria*, speculation.

The paragraphs 22–34 treat the knowledge of the First. Theophrastus dissolves the general question into more specific, particular questions. While there are many different ways (*tropoi*) of understanding, what is the difference between the *theoria* as an eminent form of knowledge and the other forms? It seems we cannot get knowledge about the First if we ask after the First in the same manner as we ask after the cause of anything. The reason is that this second type of questions remains within the range of beings but no particular being in the realm of all beings can be the cause of all other beings. Therefore the question about the First requires a different method, one which makes possible asking questions, so to speak, ‘outside’ the beings. It is the method, which Plato outlines in the *Sophist* and Aristotle in *Met.* Λ and practices in more detail in *Met.* ΖΗΘ. Questions about method must take in problems like the following: With what does this question begin and what is its principle? What does it refer to when it refers to the First? What is the nature of the First? To what extent can the question about the cause be instigated if one starts from the perceptible?

³⁹ *Nicomachean Ethics*, A 4, 1095a30–b1.

In the second part he picks up the question of the possible range of application of the question about the for-the-sake-of (§ 25), which played a role already in the first part (§ 15). This topic belongs to the first part because the First causes motion like a for-the-sake-of, but it belongs to the second part too because we must clarify the difference between the form of knowledge of the First and other forms of knowledge (§ 23). Up to what point can our asking after the First proceed, if we ask after a cause in the same way as we do when asking after the cause of this or that (cf. § 25)?⁴⁰ If we read this text against the background of the issues of transition as treated in the *Timaeus*, keeping in mind the issue of the question about being, while excluding any mere asserting as treated in the *Sophist*, then we must admit that Theophrastus has grasped the situation of his time very well. That the text had another effect in the reception does not lie with Theophrastus.

Theophrastus' *Met.* and Aristotle's *Met.* Λ share a common basic goal. Both steer the interest to the question of a theory of the First. While in the question of the connection between the First and the natural beings Theophrastus lays the emphasis more on the realistic side, Aristotle does so more on the speculative side. The two agree on the question about the 'aiming at' (ephe σ is), on the question of appropriate method in the question about the first and the arche, on the question of the possible range in the question about the for-the-sake-of; and, finally, on the position of astronomy in the hierarchy of knowledge.

What does Theophrastus' *Metaphysics* Contribute to Understanding *Met.* Λ ?

We may ask what Theophrastus' *Metaphysics* contributes to understanding *Met.* Λ , assuming that: both texts were written early and chronologically very close to each other; both were produced with the aim of recording the issues at stake in the Old Academy shortly before Plato died; and to note the open questions. In Theophrastus' text the central problem of the transition receives a particularly clear treatment in its cosmological aspect. It could scarcely be put more concisely than

⁴⁰ Note that there is a parallel with the modern discussion about internal and external questions.

Theophrastus did in his second paragraph:

The starting point is, whether [there is] some connection and something like a mutual association between intelligibles and the [things] of nature or [there is] none, but the two are, as it were, separated, though somehow both contributing to [bring about] all of existence. (Transl. D. Gutas)

The questions raised by Aristotle and Theophrastus correspond to each other even in the way they are asked (see table 5.5), but even more so when we look into their meaning. Aristotle's question concerns which being becoming is based on, Theophrastus poses the same question but, as in the wording of the paragraph above, does so from the point of view of the problem of transition. That can be formulated as follows: "How can we conceive the transition from the archai to the natural and perceptible nature?" If an understanding of the transition from the noetic to natural beings is possible, at least one essential kind of becoming is understandable. Aristotle emphasizes the theoretical side of the question and starts from the colloquial use of *to be* in order to ask after the meaning of *to be* in its first and fundamental use. What he develops in *Met.* Λ 6 to 7 and 9 can be summarized in the formula {ousia \leftarrow noesis \rightarrow energeia / DOXA}. Theophrastus on his side, singles out of his tradition the more realistic thread.

In this concept of transition from noetic principles to perceptible beings the ephesis (the desire or 'aiming at') has the function to realize the noetic structure in the natural world. The transition takes place in such a way that nature aims at its origin, which initially gave it the potential to move. In this context ephesis is evidently something like a cosmic power or impulse, which should explain the movements in our factual world.⁴¹ Theophrastus' questions refer to this sort of desire. He asks, how far we can reasonably go in search of the for-the-sake-of and still expect an answer, when the domain of our question is worldly reality. This question is justified because with the desire something like a natural finality in general is assumed.

Theophrastus also asks the extent to which particular things can be deduced from the principles. This question too is quite logical in a cosmological and therefore a

⁴¹ An idea, which has fascinated vitalists.

5. The First Key Proposition: *Met. A 1*

realistic approach. It is evidently the function of the principles to make possible the deduction (cf. §§ 11–18). The question about the principles, nevertheless, remains essential (§ 13). There should be mediating between the perceptible domain and the supernatural. This realistic connection, formulated as early as by Theophrastus, would be taken up by Christianity, because it serves very well to conceptualize the idea of creation; this realistic link between the perceptible and the super-perceptible is just at the core of just this idea. It is no wonder that this concept was transferred to Aristotle, since at the time Theophrastus' text was the introduction to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. A further far-reaching question is the value of the principle "All is at its best," a question which preoccupies Aristotle too (see above, Part II, 2.4).

Some of Theophrastus statements can serve as a foil for *Met. A*. There, ephesis is anything but a cosmic power. Primarily, it stands as a well-known example of something that is itself an unmoved cause having the ability to set something else in motion (see *Met. A* 7.4 and 10). In *De Motu Animalium* 6, Aristotle uses the same examples for the first moving in order to explain how the soul can move the body, in this text in the realistic sense, of course. In contrast to this, in *Met. A* the desire and the aiming at are examples for the first moving in a theoretic line of thought, which cannot terminate in worldly things.

The concept of the telos is realistic in the manner Theophrastus uses it too and within the context of his questioning. Theophrastus sees in the telos a principle, by which the world can be constructed, quite in contrast to Aristotle. The principles serve for the deduction of the natural things, so how far we can or must go in the deduction by telos must be defined. He says that the search for the telos must be limited in both directions: towards the archai (§§ 33–34) as well as towards the particular (§§ 11ff.).

It is particularly interesting to note that Theophrastus, in consensus with the Academy, remains attached to the question about the First. Of course, the question about the First is the prime issue for philosophers in all contexts, but this question does not mean the same in every world and even within one and the same world it can be asked in different senses. Theophrastus emphasizes that this question requires a

methodology unto itself (§ 13). He explicitly excludes three methods, the astronomical (§§ 8 and 27) and the mathematical method (§ 8), and especially the method used in the other areas of knowledge namely, calling something knowledge merely when one has been able to give the reasons for it (di' aitiou theorein). This is not possible in the case of the First. The method for this special search istheoria, as stated in § 25 and at the prominent positions of the first and last paragraph, in accordance with *Met.* Λ 1.1, see table 5.5.

Aristotle, <i>Met.</i> Λ 1.1	Theophrastus, <i>Met.</i> § 1
περὶ οὐσίας ἢ θεωρία· [...] ἢ οὐσία πρῶτον μέρος· The present theory concerns being; ...the proper being is the first part <of the whole>, ...;	πῶς ἀφορίσαι δεῖ καὶ ποίοις τὴν ὑπὲρ τῶν πρῶτων θεωρίαν; How and with what sort of [things] should one mark the boundaries of the study of the first [things]? (D. Gutas)

Table 5.5.: Aristotle, *Met.* Λ 1.1 and Theophrastus, *Met.* § 1

If we reconsider the points of the consensus reported by Theophrastus, that the primordial question is that about the First; that its method is theory; that we are searching for being as primary in order to understand how becoming is grounded on being; and which or what that being is, then we see that these points are precisely the subjects which are also at the centre of *Met.* Λ.

5.1.3. Aristotle's Early Work

The Relevant Texts

We find references to the Academy in Plato's late dialogues and in Theophrastus' *Met.*, but no less in Aristotle's early work, and all of this can help to shed light on the background of *Met.* Λ.⁴² We shall look through Aristotle's early work in

⁴² For literature on Aristotle's early work see H. I. Düring, G. E. L. Owen (Hrsg.), 1960; E. Berti, 1962; P. Moraux, 1975; B. Dumoulin, 1981; id., 1986; J. Wiesner, P. Moraux, (Hrsg.), 1983; H. Schmitz, 1985; J. Wiesner, 1985 und 1987; A. Preus, 1992; J. Barnes (Hrsg.), 1995, 305–307 (bibliography);

thematic not chronological order, because for the moment we are interested only in its function as background to *Met. A*, not in tracing the development of Aristotle's thinking. These texts are particularly closely connected to the subjects of the ideas (and in addition to this, the numbers and the ideal numbers), movement, being (ousia), and methodological reflection. The theme most treated is that of the ideas and their criticism (*De ideis, De philosophia, Met. A* 6 and 9, M–N, insofar as there are early passages). The theme of 'movement' is very intricate, because what tradition has received as cosmology, theology and teleology is very closely linked with movement. We, thus, shall encounter many things which have been important in the traditional reception of the book.

At the outset we ought to explain what is meant by the term 'early work'.⁴³ The first works listed by Diogenes Laertios' in Aristotle's *Vita* can be classes as early.⁴⁴ To be sure, this is not a strictly chronological list although the chronological criterion is predominant. Like Plato's work, that of Aristotle is divided in two parts, the esoteric and the exoteric texts. What we have to read are Plato's exoteric works, intended for the general public, the dialogues. If there were, as is plausible, esoteric scripts, those are lost. We do know something about one of them, the lecture *On the Good*. In Aristotle's case, it is the other way around. Cicero was able to read Aristotle's dialogues and make a positive judgement of their style. Afterwards they were lost but the scripts for use in school were preserved, the so-called *pragmaties*. The dialogues seem to be early works, but they are not the only ones in this group, texts like *De Ideis* are also among them.

"To study the work of Aristotle" does not always mean the same thing. In the early Peripatos it referred to styling the texts having content of particular interest at that time; in Cicero's time it meant the dialogues; in Late Antiquity the *pragmaties* were much commented; in the Middle Ages only parts of the *Organon* were known, the *logica vetus*.⁴⁵ It was not before the 12th century that his work became known to the

Flashar 2006.

⁴³ Cf. P. Moraux, 1975.

⁴⁴ Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* V 22–27.

⁴⁵ The *Logica vetus* is, in short, Aristotle's *Categories* and *De Interpretatione* in the translation of Marius Victorinus und Boethius together with Boethius' commentaries; in addition Porphyry's *Isa-*

extent we do today, the early work forming a part of this and some of these became known only from reconstruction.⁴⁶

The notion of ‘early work’ typically refers chronologically to a phase of life.⁴⁷ Aristotle’s philosophical life divides into three. The first phase, after earliest youth (384–367), is that of his stay in the Academy (367–347); then follows the epoch of travels (347–335: Atarneus, Assos, Mytilene, Stagira, Mieza), and finally, a second period at Athens (335–322). By this division, the texts written during the first stay at Athens and those during his travels can be called early work. In this case, we are obliged to concede that works produced when Aristotle was already over forty years old belong to the early phase.

It seems that Aristotle had already drafted some of his later *pragmaties* before and during his travels. Attempts were, of course, made to distinguish the layers (as was done in the case of Homer and with the same methodological weaknesses). The first and most famous example is that of W. Jaeger’s attempt, who tried to distinguish the different layers in the text and reconstruct the development of the *Metaphysics*. Afterwards, many others followed his example.⁴⁸ – For our project not only the dialogues belong to the early work, but we include also the texts which in all likelihood were written not long after he left Athens. With respect to *Met. A* the works that are most relevant are those listed in table 5.6.⁴⁹

Judging from Aristotle’s reactions and the number of references, it seems that three

goge with commentary. Sometimes included were also Boethius’ logical treatises and an unfinished commentary on Cicero’s *Topics*.

⁴⁶ As examples: the *Protreptikos*, I. Düring, 1961; D. S. Hutckinson and M. R. Johnson, 2017, at philpapers.org; *De Ideis*: G. Fine, 1993.

⁴⁷ I. Düring, 1957.

⁴⁸ See Flashar, 2004, and the begin of the article by M.-L. Gill, 2005; a relatively late example is e. g. B. Dumoulin, 1986.

⁴⁹ I follow the ordering of I. Düring, 1968a, Sp. 332f. – A useful list of places in the *Met.* where Aristotle refers to other works is given by G. Reale, 1993, vol. I, Indice XI, 363f.; in addition, Indice X, where references within the *Met.* are listed. W. D. Ross, 1929, and L. Elders, 1972, give parallels to the *Met.* in other works *ad loc.* – S. Fazzo, 2014, emphasizes the importance of the Academic tradition. With respect to later works we have to compare in particular the *Physics* with *Met. A* 1–5, *Met. Z* 7–9; and the parallels of *Met. A* 6–10 with *Physics* HΘ. – The edition of the fragments is that of O. Gigon, 1987. For particular works see the separate editions (see bibliography).

5. The First Key Proposition: *Met. A 1*

<i>De ideis,</i>	<i>De philosophia,</i>
<i>Categories,</i>	<i>De Interpretatione,</i>
<i>Topics,</i>	<i>Metaphysics Λ,</i>
<i>Physics H 1,</i>	<i>Physics Θ,</i>
<i>De Caelo,</i>	<i>De generatione et corruptione,</i>
<i>Metaphysics A 6 and 9, and ev.</i>	
<i>Metaphysics M 10 and N.</i>	

Table 5.6.: Aristotle's early work

Platonic dialogues above all preoccupied him: the *Parmenides*, the *Timaeus* and the *Sophist*. While he cites by name the first two, he never mentions the third by name. He did, however, himself write a dialogue by that name. In the *Topics*, the *Metaphysics* and other works he treats problems arising from the *Sophist*.⁵⁰ Objectively the *Sophist* exercised the most significant influence on Aristotle. That he took the question about being and not that about the good to be the crucial question and that he made a new outline of this question in *Met. Λ* iterated in *Met. ΖΗΘ*, this can all only be the effect of that dialogue. He was inspired by the *Sophist* too to create a new kind of concepts: the quotations.⁵¹ Finally, throughout the *Organon* he examines in detail the logos, a task that was set as a the necessary programme by Plato in the *Sophist* (259–260).

If G. R. Ledger is right in his dating of the *Timaeus*, then it is the latest complete dialogue, only the fragmentary *Critias* follows. It is consensus that the *Timaeus*

⁵⁰ As an example, in the first book of the *Topics*: A 1, 100b24 – *Soph.* 226a, ἐριστικοὶ λόγοι, “sophisms”; A 5 and 7 on identity and difference, ταὐτόν and διάτερον; A 17 – *Soph.* 231a, ὁμοιότης, “resemblance.” – Examples from other parts of the *Corpus Aristotelicum*: *Soph.* 236a2–3 μεστὰ ἀπορίας αἰεὶ, “ever full of aporia” – *Met.* Z 1, 1028b2–4; 240e εἶναι πὼς τὰ μὴ ὄντα, “that the non-being is somehow”; *Met.* Γ 7, 1011b26; *Soph.* 242 doxography: *Physics* A, *Met.* A; *Soph.* 251 ἄνθρωπος / ἄνθρωπος ἀγαθός, “man / good man”; *Met.* Z 6; and τρέχει, βαδίζει, “he runs, he walks,” as examples; *Soph.* 254b9–11 τοῖς πᾶσι κεκοινωμένας, “which is common to all beings”: *Top.* Δ 6, 127a26 τὸ πᾶσι ἀκολουθοῦν, “that which follows all things”; *Soph.* 258 ὡς ἐστὶν – εἶδος : τὸ ὅτι, τὸ τί ἐστὶν; *Soph.* 261–2 δηλώματα τῆ φωνῆ περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν, “which makes manifest by voice something about the ousia”: *De interpretatione* 1; also φωνή – λόγος, ὄνομα – ῥῆμα; *Soph.* 263 σύνθεσις; *De Interpretatione*, 1, 16a12; *Soph.* 263 λόγος is true/false: *De Interpretatione* 1–6; μὴ ὄν: *Met.* N 2 1098a2–6.

⁵¹ See E. Sonderegger, 2012, I. 2.3.

belongs to the late works. Aristotle often refers to it by name (see Bonitz, *Index*), more often still to its content, mainly when that is about movement or about the hyle. This is the case not only in *De Caelo* but also in *Physics* H 1 and Θ , in *De Generatione et Corruptione*, in *De motu animalium*. Apart from *Met.* A he speaks about that which can set in motion itself unmoved in *De Philosophia*, *De Caelo* and *Physics* Θ .

The *De Ideis* as well as *Met.* A 6 and 9 (also M–N) are relevant to understand Aristotle’s criticism of the ideas and the reference that this criticism has to Plato criticism of the ideas in the *Parmenides*,⁵² the *De Philosophia* too should be noted in this regard. *De ideis* “belongs to the time in the Academy,” G. Fine argued (1993). According to A. H. Chroust it was written “about the time of Plato’s death” as W. Jaeger had already maintained. He took it as a programmatic text produced on the death of Plato.⁵³ W. Jaeger regards M 10 und N as early texts; J. Annas provides arguments in turn against that thesis (1974). In M–N we find many parallels to *Met.* A, but the consensus is that A 6 and 9 came before M–N and that they belong to the early period. H. Schmitz (1985, 511) places A 9 even before the *Timaeus*. The early dating of the *De Caelo* is testified by the fact that Aristotle took the *Timaeus* into account there; further, that he makes use of arguments first developed in *De Philosophia*; and the fact that dynamis and energeia do not appear here.⁵⁴ Finally, the *Topics* with its numerous examples issuing from the Academy, are certainly of an early date.⁵⁵ Fortunately for our purpose the exact chronology of the texts does not matter. It will suffice, that we have at our disposal real texts which are chronologically near to *Met.* A, and not only fragments and reconstructions.

The Subjects

⁵² Cf. I. Düring, 1975, 180f.; then newer studies on Plato by H. C. Günther, 1998; J. A. Palmer, 1999; K. Wood, 2005; very instructive are two smaller texts on the *Parmenides* by A. Graeser, 1999 and 2003.

⁵³ W. Jaeger, 1923, 23, 125ff, 133ff.; edition by H. D. Saffrey, 1971; B. Effe, 1970, says that because *De Philosophia* is very close to the *Philebus* and the *Timaeus*, it must have been written after the *Timaeus*; edition by M. Untersteiner, 1962 (Hrsg.); E. Berti, 1962, 336ff. discusses different approaches to dating of the dialogue.

⁵⁴ As argued by J. Krämer, 1983, 265–266.

⁵⁵ I. Düring, 1968b, 202–229.

It seems that the criticism of the Platonic ideas took up a large amount of space in Aristotle's first texts. In the extensive research about this criticism the questions discussed are how conclusive it is and to which phase of the theory of the ideas it refers. As Aristotle speaks in his criticism of subjects quite other than those we find in the dialogues, the question arises what the content of the so-called Theory of Principles and of the Unwritten Doctrine really is. The research on this is based on presuppositions about method and content, which are even more than usually controversial. It is, therefore, not a sound basis for us.

Let us take another approach and no longer ask whether Aristotle's criticism is correct or not; not least because such could only be judged with respect to theories, which have yet to be reconstructed; instead, we shall ask after the objectives of this criticism. To what end and in what respects did Aristotle criticize the ideas? We may well ask this, because Aristotle did not reject the ideas as a whole, they continued to play a role in his arguments. He even retained the term *eidos*, though it be in a modified sense. He has analyzed the particular thing of everyday thinking in *eidos* and *hyle* and, as regards its function, the *eidos* is now one of the four ways 'we' (the Greeks of his time) use the term 'cause' and it is the 'second *ousia*.' As the textual basis for our questions about the aim of the criticism of the ideas, we shall rely on *De ideis* and *Met. A 6* und *9*.

It is typical for the way Aristotle proceeds, that he reconstructs the target of his criticism in a way we do not find in Plato's text. It is not only today that we ourselves have to reconstruct the theory of ideas and the arguments pro and contra, this already applies to Aristotle because Plato did not develop and organize any such over-all-theory in his dialogues. Every critical reflection must proceed in this way. Aristotle follows the method, developed in the *Topics*, of regarding all theses and claims from the topical point of view. He, therefore, transforms the free Platonic formulations into propositions and theses in his own terminology in order to stabilize them better for quotation (: *protaseis labein*). It is only in relation to such quotable statements that it is possible to formulate objections, and, as the text shows, it is not necessary that the objections be definitive, they can be tentative. They belong to the considerations pro and contra and it is possible to develop Aristotelian arguments against

the latter.

Only in such Aristotelian (and modern) reconstructions and by no means in the Platonic dialogues themselves there are proofs that ideas exist. Ideas are certainly the proper beings in the dialogues, but ‘to exist’ is not at all the primary meaning of *einai*, *to be*. What *to be* means remains still to be discovered (see the central section of the *Sophist*). In the dialogues the ideas are neither an assertion nor something to prove, they turn out rather to be an experiment to show what the necessary condition for giving a proof would be, they are preconditions for the asserting and proving of anything. Nevertheless, what Plato tries to show in his dialogues is that it is possible to lead someone to an understanding of what they are, that they can be revealed as fix points for our thinking. For some remarks on the origins of the Platonic idea see below, p. 315 ff.

De Ideis

In the *De Ideis* we find five arguments against the ideas.⁵⁶ The first argument takes the idea as that which is the object of knowledge, since knowledge refers to something other than perceiving. Knowledge refers to what is stable, identical with itself, something beside the perceptible particular things. – The argument against this take on the idea is: not every object of knowledge “other than the perceptible” need to be an idea, it could be simply a universal. Following this conception of the idea, we would have too to accept ideas of things, which craftsman-like know-how deals with. The defenders of the ideas would deny that.

According to the second argument, the idea is “the one above the many,” not one

⁵⁶ The main part of the text comes from the commentary by Alexander of Aphrodisias (ca. 200 A. D.); most of the text is printed in *CAG I*, M. Hayduck, 1891; further texts in the edition by Gigon). This commentary is transmitted in two recensions, the *recensio vulgata*, which is a little bit more detailed than the *recensio altera*. Editions of *De Ideis*: see the complete edition by V. Rose, 1896 (repr. Stuttgart 1966); then W. D. Ross, 1955; D. Harlfinger, 1975, 15–39, this last edition is today the authoritative edition for both recensions; O. Gigon, 1987, 372–384 (he prints both recensions following the edition by M. Hayduck); G. Fine, 1993, both recensions following the Harlfinger edition, with English translation and an in-depth-comment; A. Graeser, 3, 1998, 121–143, gives a reading text following M. Hayduck with a German translation.

of the many things but different from them. Against this one may reply, that this concept of the idea can be applied to negations and negative statements too. In this case we would have to accept ideas of non-beings. Even in that case “the one above the many” could be no more than an universal. – This objection is especially interesting. Aristotle himself has excluded negative terms in *De Interpretatione* because they are not determined: terms like ‘not-house’ ought not be used in arguments. Aristotle is therefore well aware that the argument against the ideas, which uses negation, itself has a counterargument.

The third is called the argument “from the nous.” It runs as follows: that which is in our mind (nous), i. e. that which we are aware of and which we think of, refers not to a particular, perishable thing but to a being. The thought remains even if the thing vanishes, and this “remaining beyond the thing” is the idea. – The argument against is that there are consequently ideas of vanishing things and of particulars too, because in the nous are such things too. – This argument too can be rejected with reference to the fact that “to be in the nous” is expressed in many ways (*pollachos legetai*). The particular is not “in the nous” the same way that the idea is. The particular as such cannot be “in the nous” in any case. We cannot define particulars and there are no conceptions of them. We can think of particulars, but these thoughts are again universal. It is not plausible that Aristotle was not aware of this at the time. Even if we are to replace the conception with the description to arrive at a concept of an individual, it is clear that there is a difference between the description and the idea. In addition, the description includes other elements which are universal.

The fourth is named the argument “from the *pros ti*” and runs as follows: that which we can say unequivocally and in truth of a number of things, refers to the proper being, precisely to the idea. Statements about particulars are not absolutely the same in different cases, only statements about the idea are absolutely identical. One can say, for example, that Plato and Aristotle are both men, but in a slightly different manner. Neither realizes man-ness in pure form, the concrete categorical determinations of each differ slightly. One of the arguments against is, that in this case there would be ideas of the *pros ti* as well, when there should only be ideas of *ousiai*. – This argument too can be refuted by Aristotelian means. Socrates, of course, is a

man in a slightly different manner than Plato, and insofar the statements ‘Socrates is a man’ and ‘Plato is a man’ are not identical. But in ‘Socrates is a man’ the predicate does not mean the particular Socrates, but the man in general, and that is the same for Plato and Socrates.

The fifth argument is that of the ‘Third Man.’⁵⁷ When something is said with truth of a number of things, without being one of them but remaining distinct: this is an idea. – The argument against: if ‘man’ is said as an idea, which is something itself, separated from the particular man, then ‘man’ must be said of this idea as well as of the particulars and this is the ‘Third Man.’ This model is iterable and so the idea vanishes in infinite deferral.

All of these argue in common, in view of our everyday experience, against the logical consistency of the idea. They are not arguments against the idea as such.

Met. A 6 and 9

From an overview of the first book of the *Met.* we see the relation between chapters 6 and 9. It is easy to divide *Met. A* because Aristotle provides some structuring notes. The main division is: introduction (chapters 1 and 2); two main parts (chapters 3–7 and 8–9); and final chapter (chapter 10). In the introduction Aristotle tries to make clear the general objectives of knowledge. He divides knowledge by the criterion of purpose: one form of knowledge concerns our acting, another our producing, the last is the knowledge, which is sought for its own sake. With respect to this variety in forms of knowledge, Aristotle asks whether there is a primary form of knowledge, what and how it would be. As criterion he uses the prevailing opinions about the wise man. The result is that theoretical knowledge, the knowledge which is for its own sake, is the most free and therefore primary.

In the first main part, divided by three summaries (984a16–18; 985a10–18; 987a2–27), Aristotle presents what had up to then been believed to be this primary kind

⁵⁷ The article by G. Vlastos, “The Third Man Argument in the *Parmenides*,” in: *Philosophical Review* 63 (1954) 319–349, (now in: *Studies in Plato’s Metaphysics*, R. E. Allen (Hrsg.) London 1965, 231–263), produced an incredible amount of reactions; for literature see now new editions and commentaries of the *Parmenides*.

of knowledge. Because he takes knowledge to be not only as ‘knowledge that,’ but also ‘knowledge why’ (knowledge of causes), he analyzes the opinions on causes too. The first summary says that at first only the cause in the sense of hyle was recognized. Considering what Thales, Anaxagoras, Parmenides, Hesiod and Empedocles have said, we can say, that two kinds of causes were found: the hyle and the hothēn he kinesis (“where the movement comes from”). Anaxagoras considered the nous to be the origin of movement; Hesiod the Eros; Empedocles philia and neikos (love and strife). Chapter 5 deals with the school of Pythagoras and takes up Parmenides again (including Melissus and Xenophanes), and, finally, Chapter 6 with Plato. –

In the second main part Aristotle discusses the problems of the endoxa presented. He begins with a summary of these endoxa. It is in this context that he treats the Platonic ideas. In Chapter 6, then, Aristotle presents the afterwards so-called ‘theory of the ideas’ (and related subjects) in the form of endoxa and in Chapter 9 shows the problems inherent in this ‘theory.’ The goal of the study is to find the “knowledge sought after” and to define its content. He seeks a primary theoretical knowledge which can explain, why the phainomena are such as we experience them. The four aitia are the means to examine this, their function is to yield a set of questions. At the end of Chapter 10 Aristotle can state that, beyond his four causes, no others have been identified.

In the sixth chapter we find a complex presentation of the theory of ideas. This is linked with thoughts we do not find in the dialogues, nevertheless the content can be displayed in general form. Aristotle begins with the fundamental determinations of the idea and their origins. He says that the ideas are inspired by Cratylus, Heraclitus and Socrates. The ideas are the point of reference of the definition: they are peculiar, standing beside perceptible things, the proper beings, which alone can be said *to be* in strict sense; and only the ideas are knowable. Apart from this, there are some remarks about numbers, which although being numbers are not so in the normal sense and other remarks about principles. The latter should be causes or principles on a higher level than the ideas. Plato is said to have stated, that as the ideas are the causes of things, so the numbers are causes to the ideas. The expression eidetikoī

arithmoi, “eidetic numbers,” appears occasionally in Aristotle’s text and more often in the commentary of Alexander of Aphrodisias and in Syrianus. Aristotle subsumes the one under ousia, the “large-small” and the indefinite dyad under hyle;⁵⁸ these are the last elements and causes in the Aristotelian sense.

Aristotle obviously also speaks in his report of the Platonic philosophy about themes other than the well-known subjects, themes which are not treated in the dialogues. This gave rise to the inference of an ‘Unwritten Doctrine.’ Because we do not have much material for this doctrine, scholars relied on places in the dialogues where Socrates said that there remained more to say on the given subject. The Tübingen School named such instances “*Aussparungsstellen*.”

To the mind of the present author and to some other too it is true that there remain passages in the dialogues which cannot be understood (while the Tübingen School argue that everything was understandable, by their reading at least). I find, for example, in the literature no reasonable and convincing explanation of what is meant by the idea of the good. Some drift off into theology and make the idea of the good god or even something above the gods. Plato himself as well as Aristotle have made the idea a subject of discussion. We can surmise, that in his late dialogues Plato tried to circumvent some of the weaknesses and aporia of the idea. A sign of this may be the discussion of the weakness of writing and text in the *Phaedrus* and in the *7th Letter*. Evidently, we must not understand the text of the dialogues literally, nevertheless we ought to take them at their word. It seems, then, that there was something like an internal philosophical discourse at the Academy, about which we do not know very much.

Meanwhile, exceptionally sophisticated books and articles about the purported Unwritten Doctrine have been written, but unfortunately with little support from the texts and of only limited philosophical interest. Many interpreters have wanted by all means that the Platonic philosophy has had its last mysteries. They also wanted to know them and write books about that, about which Plato said it was impossible

⁵⁸ The “great and small” is identified with chora, which itself is understood as topos.

to write.⁵⁹ So much is clear is that Plato had spoken about things other than ideas, things connected to numbers and the pair of principles, the one and the indefinite dyad. That their function was to serve as a basic structure for deduction as H. J. Krämer meant, is not in the texts themselves, it is no more than a surmised reconstruction. It is possible that the first generation of students made this systematization and reification (*Vergegenständlichung*), I would not attribute it to Plato. In *Met. A 9* Aristotle shows that the ideas are a useless duplicaton of the world.⁶⁰

If there are as many ideas as beings then the ideas lose the character of principles. The proofs in favor of the ideas are not conclusive partly on logical grounds, partly because ideas appear where they are not required. This shows that the concept is not restricted and narrow enough according to *Topics Z 3*.

Aristotle asks whether the ideas can be ground of the perceptible things, be they eternal or perishable (*Met. A*, 991a8–b1). His analysis shows that ideas cannot be causes either in the sense of movement or the out-of-which and to say that they are ‘models’ (*paradeigmata*), is simply metaphorical talk. It is another question how and in which sense the ideas can be separately. Can an idea, as the *ousia* of a being, be separately from that being? Aristotle also examines the approach of taking ideas as numbers (or as geometrical entities as point, line, surface, solid). The test is restricted to the question, whether ideas can be grounds of perceptible things, the result is negative.

Aristotle and others seek out the grounds of the evident (see 992a24f., *ton phaneron to aition*, in combination with 990b1). The phrase “the ideas are causes of the evident” is often understood in a realistic sense, as if ideas were *causae efficientes*. That is hardly what Aristotle had in mind nor is that the sense of his question, of which being becoming is grounded on. This is a question he comes on through Plato and which he accepts, along with the question of how we can think of the transition from the noetic to the aesthetic world. He neither wants to prove that there

⁵⁹ I forego to give examples, this is all familiar enough.

⁶⁰ This motive was used in the positive sense by G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, Werkausgabe 18, 40; *Wissenschaft der Logik*, 6, 27; 18, 39; *Wissenschaft der Logik*, § 21 and 22.

are no ideas nor that Plato's intentions are meaningless. His criticism leads to the conclusion that the ideas cannot serve the desired purpose.

Aristotle's criticism has received different interpretations.⁶¹ First, it is controversial which points in the dialogues or in other sources his criticism is directed at. Some want to find essential parts of the theory of principles already present in the dialogues, such as the *Philebus*.⁶² It is, furthermore, unclear what the content of these other sources would be. Some say that Aristotle means that Plato took the ideas as *causae efficientes* (which is incorrect), others that Aristotle criticizes Plato for having had no interest in causes at all (G. Fine); finally, some maintain that the criticism concerns the ideas even when they are understood as *causae formales*, even so they are not determined sufficiently and correctly. Many say that Aristotle simply did not understand Plato or that he had distorted the sense of his theories deliberately (e. g. H. Cherniss, H. J. Krämer). In this regard, I agree with J. Dillon and C. Shields,⁶³ who argued that it is more plausible to assume that Aristotle did understand Plato better than we, because he lived in the same world as Plato, was with him for twenty years and was a kind of assistant to him in the Academy for a couple of years. We live about 2400 years later, inhabiting a completely different world and we have our knowledge from texts alone. It is highly likely that in his days Plato has "helped" his dialogues with oral explanations.

It seems that in the Old Academy competing solutions were developed for problems that persisted after the *Timaeus* (and other subjects too, of course). This dialogue was treated on its cosmological and theological side, while for Theophrastus and Aristotle the question about the relation between "the first and the second" and about the transition from the noetic to the aesthetic world was in the foreground, since the concept of methexis could not serve to mediate those. This was also one of the

⁶¹ Some examples: H. Cherniss, 1945; P. Wilpert, 1949; G. E. L. Owen, 1957, 103–111 (M. C. Nussbaum (Hrsg.), 1986, 165–179); E. Berti, 1962; G. E. L. Owen, 1965; J. Annas, 1974, 257–283; W. Leszl, 1975; J. Annas, 1977, 146–160; S. Mansion, 1984; G. Fine, 1987, 69–112; A. Graeser (Hrsg.), 1987; G. Reale, 1993, 253ff.; G. Fine, 1993.

⁶² K. M. Sayre, 1983.

⁶³ J. Dillon, 2003, 17; Chr. Shields, "Plato and Aristotle in the Academy," in: G. Fine (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Plato*, Oxford 2008, 505.

problems in which Speusippus was interested.⁶⁴

Unlike as in other efforts to discover to which phase of the theory of the ideas Aristotle's criticism referred or to reconstruct the theory of principles from his allusions here we ask: to what ends were the ideas and a possible theory of principles developed and why could both not answer the questions they were meant to. Our main question is not what the ideas really are or what their determinations are and so on.⁶⁵ Rather, we would like to have answers to questions of the following kinds: What are there ideas for? What do they do? In which areas do they have a function and what is their function? It seems that in his criticism Aristotle was guided by questions of this kind.

Before we can criticize Plato's ideas or Aristotle's criticism of the ideas, we first must ask for what purpose Plato has 'invented' the ideas, what problems were to be formulated or solved by them. – It is clear that questions of this type can be answered in various ways, depending on the context in which the function of the ideas is being asked after. The answer which I propose can be compatible with other ones, we need only make explicit the different contexts, such as semantics, ontology or others.

In my view the ideas are an intuitive insight with comparable functions in different areas. We have to bear in mind that Plato's purpose in using the ideas can differ from Aristotle's perception of their function in Plato's dialogues. It may just be that the question "What does Plato use the ideas for?" is not the most appropriate,

⁶⁴ A. Graeser, 1999.

⁶⁵ The following text of G. W. F. Hegel, could provide the starting point of a modern interpretation of the ideas (see *Theorie Werkausgabe*, 1971, Bd. 19, 40):

Die Idee ist nichts anderes als das Allgemeine, und dass dies Allgemeine nicht als das formell Allgemeine genommen wird, wie die Dinge nur teil daran haben oder (wie wir es ausdrücken) nur Eigenschaften der Dinge sind, sondern indem dies Allgemeine als das an und für sich selbst Seiende, als das Wesen genommen wird, als dasjenige, was nur ist, was nur Wahrheit hat; und 41: ...sie sind allein das Sein.

because the ideas are only one part of the distinction between the noeta and the aistheta, which is combined with the distinction between being and becoming. We cannot reasonably speak about ideas in isolation, because they are what they are in relation and in distinction to something else, which is not an idea. It would be better to ask after the sense of this difference. What does the distinction between the being and the becoming, between the conceptual and the perceptible, by which the ideas are the being and the conceptual, serve? In which problem area did this difference become necessary and helpful? To which questions the ideas are an answer?

It seems to me that the ideas are Plato's response to the discussion of some of the central problems of his time. In the concept of the idea he manages to integrate three insights suggested by the tradition. I give an account of these suggestions in the chronological order of the dialogues, in which they appear. First, I mention the impulse lent by Socrates (the early dialogues); next that of Parmenides (*Parmenides*); and finally, that of the Presocratics (*Timaeus*). The chronology is not otherwise decisive, this is a systematic consideration.

Plato received a first impulse from Socrates. Aristotle tells us that the ideas have their origin in the Socratic question of how we shall be able to form a basis for our acts (*Met.* A 6; cf. Plato, *Euthyphron* 7b–c). What is the reason we seem to have safe knowledge, capable of becoming ethically normative? Why and how is it that we have a solid knowledge of what is good, when that is evidently neither a perceptible thing nor a mathematical or suchlike entity? How is it possible that normative predicates can be used constantly and reliably?⁶⁶ The ideas are answers to such questions.

It seems that ethical issues led Socrates to definitions, that what definitions refer to are ideas. Reflection on the conditions of this kind of knowledge leads to dialectic. Plato and perhaps Plato only (that means not Socrates), then tried to test the possible use of the ethically proven method elsewhere. What is certain is that Plato examines whether the stability found in ethical noeta holds also for noeta in general.

⁶⁶ Cf. W. Wieland, 1982, 127.

In our everyday experience we see that our knowledge about changeable things is suitable and sufficient enough to the situations in which it is required. This knowledge is not irrefutable, but it would be wrong to say that we do not know anything. On what is this knowledge founded? We have always to ask for the origin of our knowledge. On what knowledge, prior to experience, is experience based? It is urgent to ask after the referents of our thoughts because the general thoughts cannot possibly relate directly to the individual things. Nevertheless, we believe that our thoughts about them are true. With reference to what, our statements are true? We distinguish in our everyday life between the perceptible things and our thoughts about them. We distinguish between the particular things and their nature and our knowledge about them. In knowledge too, we distinguish between basic presuppositions and the knowledge based on these. It seems to have been the intuition of Socrates and Plato, that these distinctions cannot be made and comprehended without ideas.

Socrates has shown that our ethical knowledge must be based on some knowledge prior to experience and he discerned this basis in the general and unconditional ethical norms especially. Plato, perhaps, generalized this into ideas which constitute knowledge about stable beings independent of or prior to experience. He said, metaphorically, that we 'remember' those when we have a corresponding experience. This line of thought leads to the culmination in the *Politeia* where the idea of the good is presented as the highest and first idea. Ideas are the being (*Sein*) on which becoming and knowledge about becoming is based.

A second impulse came from Parmenides. Plato realized that the programme of the absolute separation between being and not-being is not feasible. In the *Sophist*, therefore, the question about being arose and asking this question, the guest from Elea discovered the DOXA and 'the sophist in myself.'⁶⁷ The DOXA marks a position in the discourse. First many people contend something, side by side, without any connection. Plato related them to each other through Socrates, who is the point of reference for all opinions, thus do the participants in the dialogue become aware

⁶⁷ See E. Sonderegger, 2012, 85.

of their opinions. Finally, Plato has confronted himself with his own opinion, showing that the position of the sophist is the position of everyone in the discourse, who is contending an underlying conviction about being, that is, it applies to the ‘friends of the ideas’ too. This is what I intended to say by the discovery of the ‘sophist in myself.’ We all, not only the known sophists, must abandon this position in order to escape the crisis of discourse and free ourselves from merely asserting claims. Aristotle has reflected this situation in the discourse, organized by Plato in the dialogues; all of Plato’s dialogue participants are referred to Socrates. Drawing on the situations in the Platonic dialogs Aristotle has replaced this personal reference in the *Topics* with rules on how to deal with opinions and claims. Finally, since the Academy is a school there arises a new situation of discourse. In schools it is necessary again to contend something.

This line leads to the five highest genera in the *Sophist*. Reflecting on the various opinions about being (one of them is the conviction that the ideas are the being), Plato sees that the discourse can only be saved by acknowledging one’s own DOXA. The result of his analysis of the DOXA are the five highest genera. This is one of his attempts to clarify the question of where the pre-empirical knowledge stems from. In contrast to the first impulse, which aims at an understanding of norms which are not at our disposal, here, in the *Sophist* the second impulse has as its aim to arrive at an understanding of being, after some shocks and aporia and this ought to provide a new starting point for thinking. Plato’s basic distinction between being and becoming, the considerations about the idea (the idea is the being, *Sein*, the idea is the only thing that can be said as itself), the highest genera (the being as that which is asked after, movement and rest as concepts describing *to be*, identity and difference as concepts of reflection, *Reflexionsbegriffe*) – all these insights, are that not steps on the way to the question about being? Plato’s final conclusion on this path was in the discovery of the DOXA about being and its articulation as the highest genera.

Plato received a third impulse from the Presocratics, who asked what the principles of becoming are. They concluded, that the elements are these principles. This line leads to the *Timaeus*. Plato shows that the elements (earth, water, air, fire) are

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insufficient as principles, because they are no more than a special kind of things within the set of all things. As present things, they cannot be principles, they are not sufficiently elementary.

Plato develops the concept of transition in the *Timaeus* (picked up by Theophrastus in the first paragraph of his *Met.*) by presenting the world in two versions, one noetic, the other as world in the chora. By combining ideas and chora the world of movement and becoming should become comprehensible and that is what the dialogue aims at. How the demiurge formed the world, seeing the ideas as models, this is not only a metaphor for our knowledge of the world, but also an illustration of the fact that the world is and of how it is (*Dasein, Sosein*).

The ideas came about, then, from intuitions in three areas. The intuition, in fact, is always the same one, any difference issues from the difference of the fields in which it applies: values and acting; experience and knowledge; or becoming and being. The fields do not overlap, so the intuition cannot be exactly formulated as a consistent over-all theory; what the ideas do as fixed points of reference in the different fields being different. In the range of human acting, the idea is a supra-personal basis, in the range of experience it represents the noetic world prior to the factual world, in the range of becoming the being is model.

Against this background Aristotle's criticism of the ideas is a criticism concerning more the method than the goal, because Aristotle does not abandon the issues and problems which the ideas were conceived to resolve. Both Plato and Aristotle, have the same horizon of problems, which Theophrastus shares too. How we are to think of the transition from a not-perceptible principle to the perceptible things?⁶⁸ How things become beings, that is, how things can *be*? Which being grounds becoming? Whence comes the 'desire' to be, the drive of things that become and how is it that we know anything about that?

The question persists and Aristotle, therefore, says at *Met. A 1.1*: "The theory is about the being (*Sein*)."

⁶⁸ See also J. Stenzel, 1959 (3. ed.), 109ff.; K. von Fritz, 1978, 162.

It is not at all Aristotle's intention to say that Plato's statements are false, he wants to ascertain the validity of his thoughts by means of the criticism in *De ideis* and in *Met.* A 6 and 9. Any criticism is situated in larger context of a comprehensive report of possible and factual opinions about the question of how being may be the ground of becoming. Plato says that the ideas are the being (*Sein*), in *De Ideis* Aristotle reveals some logical inconsistencies in this concept. In *Met.* A 9 he shows that the ideas are not able to satisfy the intended function and that the question remains.

Neither a theory of ideas nor a theory of principles could resolve the problems because by the time they entered in a new field of problems. Examining the ideas to their consistency and explanatory power, Aristotle prepares the ground for his own question about being. It remains to be seen whether the considerations in *Met.* A will answer better the remaining questions: whether the 'vision' presented in it will give a better answer to the question about the being which grounds becoming than the ideas and whether it can explain the transition from noesis to nature better than Plato in the *Timaeus* did.

Cosmology, movement, transition

Whoever might wish to give an answer to the question about the First in the context of the questioning about the transition from the First to the Second, has some further topics to discuss. To the cosmological question conveyed by the Presocratics via Plato's *Timaeus* belongs the question of the movement. Aristotle takes up this question first in *De Philosophia*, *De Caelo* and in *Physics* H and Θ.

In *De Motu Animalium*, *De Partibus Animalium*, *Met.* A and B, *De Anima* and, of course, in the *Physics* he further developed the question of movement. When this question is asked not only as a question about the nature and the conceptual elements of movement but as a question about the cause of movement in the factual world, and when the question must be asked as the question about the first moving (to avoid the progress, *Physics* H 1, Θ 5), then this question can easily drift to theology.

In his early dialogues Plato tried to explain his vision of the idea and its function, and why it is necessary to accept it; in the *Timaeus* he asks how the noetic and

the perceptible, separated at first, might have to do with each other. By asking so it becomes evident, that the ideas, which were, within the frame of the Socratic situation of discourse, a good basis to understand our acting, are no longer adequate in the new context of the question of how the perceptible can be grounded in noetic beings. It is the new set of problems, brought about by Plato himself, in which his old tools, the ideas (and, if he really had one, the theory of principles), will no longer serve.

What the ground of being may be remains open what. It is very plausible to distinguish the areas of being from becoming, but then the mediation is missing. We are capable of thought, we have a world of thought, indeed we live in a world of thought with structures in place prior to experience, structures that lay down the basis for experience and provide us with an *a priori* order (*kosmos noetos*). We live in a sensual world too, however, which we perceive. This duality makes it unavoidable to take heed of the transition from one world to the other. If being and becoming are not to be two absolutely separated worlds – a position for which the guest from Elea in the *Sophist* militates – then we must ask after their relation, mediation or connection. We must inquire not only after our knowledge (“How being makes knowing something about becoming possible?”) but just as much after what it means for a thing becoming *to be*.

For answers to questions of exactly this kind did Plato seek in the *Timaeus* and the answer he found was *chora*. Aristotle followed Plato on this path and went further. He affirmed that we certainly cannot say anything about movement and the perceptible world without something like *chora*, but understood that neither ideas nor the *chora* itself is capable of causing movement. How is it possible that *aistheta* and *noeta* “co-operate in a certain sense” Theophrastus asked in *Met.* § 2. How is it possible that we *know* something about what we have *perceived* through the senses? Is there an isomorphy between *aistheta* and *noeta*, or an analogy? Or are the one images of the others? – Such questions show that the established instrument for yielding answers – the *methexis* – has become problematic. It seems that the question of transition was at the centre of interest in the Old Academy, at least as far as we can tell from the reports of Aristotle and Theophrastus. Whatever the content

of the theory of the ideal-numbers and the principles may have been, it seems that they were developed to meet objections brought against the older version of the conception of the ideas.⁶⁹

In addition, these contents played a role in the process of transition from the noeta to the aistheta. Alexander of Aphrodisias, for example, in his *In Aristotelis Metaphysicam* (117, 25f.), introduces the principles with the following quotation from the *De Philosophia*:

ἐκτίθεται δὲ τὸ ἀρέσκον αὐτοῖς, ὃ καὶ ἐν τοῖς Περὶ φιλοσοφίας εἴρηκε· βουλόμενοι γὰρ τὰ ὄντα (ἀεὶ γὰρ οὐσίας τὰ ὄντα λέγει), ταῦτα δὴ τὰ ὄντα βουλόμενοι ἀνάγειν εἰς τὰς ἀρχὰς ὡς ὑπέθεντο (ἦσαν δὲ αὐτοῖς ἀρχαὶ τῶν ὄντων τὸ μέγα καὶ τὸ μικρόν, ἣν ἔλεγον ἀόριστον δυάδα), εἰς δὴ ταύτην θέλοντες πάντα ἀναγαγεῖν [...]

He reports what seems correct to them, which he had also said in *De Philosophia*: They <: the members of the Academy> state that the beings (he always calls the beings *ousiai*), they state to trace these beings back to the principles, which they have posited (principles for the beings were for them the great and the small, which they called ‘indefinite dyad’), on that <principle> they wanted to refer everything [...]

It is quite possible that not Plato and Aristotle did think of a deduction of all things from the first principle (that would only be creation in a secular form) but that other members did think along those lines, as modern defenders of the Unwritten Doctrine suppose, when they say that the beings are deduced from the one and the indefinite dyad. Eudemus, Speusippus, Xenocrates may have considered such possibilities. One and the same question can be asked in different ways, even in one and the same world. Depending on how one sets out and what one sets as goal, the same question can turn out to be cosmological, theological or theoretical, and the answers can differ respectively. Such is the context of Aristotle’s early work.

Questions such as: How the cosmos came about? What is its origin, its structure, which are its principles? Why there is life? – such questions can lead to theoretical and epistemological questioning about how becoming is to be understood, how be-

⁶⁹ That the theory of principles should remedy some errors in the theory of the ideas is also E. Berti’s view, 1962, 323.

ing and becoming are related to each other, on which being becoming is founded. This is the ground common to the *Timaeus*, Theophrastus' *Metaphysics* and *Met. A*. It seems that Aristotle first treated the question about movement in *De Philosophia* and in a very instructive manner in fact. Yet, many 'fragments' are only reports, the exact reading being uncertain. It is rare that we can definitely allocate a given text to a certain book, nevertheless some attempts have been made to reconstruct the book (see above fn. 53). We may, however, dispense with the reconstruction of the book, simply compiling texts treating of the same theme. Then we end up with blocks of quotations and reports that describe the way to philosophize. It may have somewhat resembled the doxographies in *Physics A* or *Met. A*. One first block concerns sophia, the genuine philosophical knowledge, which is arrived at across different levels. The term *theoria* may or may not have appeared in this doxography, but we do find the term in the *Protrepticus*. It denotes the characteristics which distinguish philosophical from other forms of knowledge. A second block consists of the criticism of the ideas⁷⁰ and a third block with movement. This last question must have been associated with the gods, because one of the reasons to presume the existence of gods are the meteora (see *De Philos.* frg. 12a). The movement of the heavens belong to these and its unchanging order (fr. 18 and 19a) and the gods are considered to be their authors.

In *De philosophia* the questions about the the First and the knowledge about it are characteristically connected. In this context Aristotle also assesses the explanatory power of the ideas. The conclusion is that the knowledge about the ideas cannot be the knowledge being sought and, finally, there is a discussion about the origin of movement, which had been initiated in the *Timaeus* but had not received a satisfactory solution in that dialogue.

De Caelo begins with the following statement:

The knowledge about nature <deals> almost entirely with bodies and magnitudes further with their affections and their movements and, finally, also with the principles which belong to this kind of being.

⁷⁰ E. Berti assumes that *De ideis* is prior to *De Philosophia*, so that Aristotle can previous have used his anterior text.

The kind of movement is contingent on the kind of body that is moving. Simple bodies have simple movements, compound bodies compound movements. An instance of such simple movements in nature that we can see are the circular movements of the stars. These movements are – “as is known so far” as Aristotle emphasizes – without a temporal beginning or end and without any other alteration. There must, therefore, be a body able to bring about such a movement. This body can be neither light nor heavy, because such bodies move either to the middle or away from the middle. It must be the “the first natural body” which differs from the elements earth, water, air and fire: Aristotle named it aether.

The subject of *De Caelo* is only one area of physics, but within this area Aristotle wants to ask after the First in such a way that the movements of all other natural bodies become explicable. With this aim *De Caelo* is on the cosmological side of the question about the transition, *Met.* Λ on the theoretical. In the leading question about the First and the transition to the second they agree not only with each other, but also with Theophrastus’ *Met.* Aristotle provides his cosmological report with strong reservations (*De Caelo* A, 270b3, more extensively in 270b12–25). *De Caelo* B begins with clear indications that the opinion that the heavens did not become and that they therefore are divine, is conventional (283b26–284a6). Insofar we cannot speak of scientific statements in *De Caelo* and all the less in *Met.* Λ .

The first sentence of *Physics* Θ runs as follows:

Has movement ever had a beginning without having been before and does it perish again, so that <then> nothing moves <anymore>, or has it neither come about, nor does it perish <ever>, but was it always already and ever will be, and is that <: to be in motion> an immortal and never ending characteristic of the beings, like a life for all natural beings?

Aristotle then lists some of the endoxa concerning this question (250b15–251a5). All who have spoken about the origin of the cosmos and who have dealt with coming-to-be and passing-away in general must assume that there is movement. He concludes the introduction (251a5–8) with a comment on the usefulness of this question. It is not only valuable ‘for the knowledge about nature’ (*peri physeos*

theoria), but also for thinking about the prote arche, the ‘first beginning.’

This text in the *Physics* evidently corresponds with Theophrastus’ *Met.*, not only in the general line of thought but also in part quite literally and it is consistent also with *De Caelo*, *De Philosophia* and with *Met. A*. In the first sentence of *Physics* Θ the Parmenidean vocabulary is striking. We will meet it again at the end of *Met. A 7*. The word *apaustos* (“never-ending”) belongs to an elevated poetic high style. Parmenides uses it; next Aeschylus and Euripides in lyric sections of their tragedies; Plato is the first to use it in prose; then we find it in *Physics* Θ 1, and Theophrastus, *Met.* § 5.⁷¹ Aristotle develops this question further into considerations about an unmoved arche, which maintains the eternal movement of the heavenly bodies.

The logic of the *regressus* demands that if there are moved things, there must be ‘something’ which can set in motion, itself unmoved. That has as consequence that, should the movement should be “continuous” (*syneches*), then there must be a first moved thing, moved by the first that sets in motion itself unmoved. This first moved thing must be eternal too and from its movement derive all other movements. The last are the movements of all things we see around us, which are sometimes in motion, sometimes at rest, now one way, now another. The first tier of moved beings, those moved by the unmoved being, provide the answer to the question about the transition, posed in the *Timaeus*. We should keep in mind that the statement about the first being that sets in motion and the first moved being is made in hypothetical form.

The statement in *Physics* Θ that the world is eternal seems to contradict the one in *Met. A*, that the movement begins with a ‘First Mover.’ R. Sorabji thinks that Philoponus first discovered this contradiction in the context of the eternity of the

⁷¹ *Physics* Θ 1, 250b13–14 (in the introductory sentence: καὶ τοῦτ’ ἀθάνατον καὶ ἄπανστον ὑπαρχει τοῖς οὄσιν, οἷον ζωὴ τις οὄσα... “that belongs to the beings as something immortal and never ending, like a life...”) Parmenides, frg. 8, 27 ἄπανστος, as attribute to εὖν; Aeschylus, *Supp.*, 574 (in a lyric part: αἰὼν ἄπανστος; Euripides, *Supplices*, 82 (lyr.); Pl., *Tim.* 36e4 attribute to βίος, “life”; *Crat.* 417c5 ἄπανστος καὶ ἀθάνατος <φορά>, “never ending and immortal <movement>”; ἄπανστος not found in Homer, or in Herodot. To this sentence see E. Sonderegger, “Aristotle’s Theory of Nature from the Point of View of our Hermeneutical Situation,” in: *Aristotle on Logic and Nature*, ed. by Jan-Ivar Lindén, Peeters, Leuven, 2019, 281–284.

world.⁷² Philoponus said, that it is not possible that there be an infinite number of things and that a process with infinite steps could not be carried out. If the world were eternal, as Aristotle says, then there would be an infinite number of periods of time. – The contradiction pointed out by R. Sorabji, presupposes a realistic understanding of eternity which stands in contrast to the Christian understanding of creation, based on a creator who sets in motion at a certain moment. Eternity in a realistic sense contradicts a temporal beginning of the world.

In reply to this, we may say that Aristotle himself saw very well the antinomy between the eternity and the finitude of the world. He has tried to maintain both possibilities and to allocate them to different contexts, while Philoponus, on the other hand, rather dogmatically fixed the antinomy. According to Aristotle, it is not possible to speak about a beginning of time, as regards the notion of time. We cannot assume a beginning for time, if time is defined by the difference of before and after: a *first* period of time would become an phase within time, while a *first* point of time having no point of time which it succeeded, could not be a point of time. That is the conceptual context, but in the natural context it seems necessary to assume a first producing movement, which itself is not caused and not moved, otherwise the reason for the actual movements we experience *hic et nunc* disappear in the infinite regression. – It is this difference which determines the discussion between Simplicius and Philoponus. Simplicius cannot understand what Philoponus means by creation as a philosophical term, Philoponus (and R. Sorabji) cannot see that Aristotle speaks about natural becoming in one context and, in the other, about the abstract concept.

Many see another contradiction between the concept of ousia in the *Categories*, in *Met. ZHΘ* and *Met. Λ* some alleging that it is only as a result of Aristotle's philosophical development. For the standard interpretation prote ousia in the *Cat.* is the concrete particular "just this horse," while in *Met. ZHΘ* it is the eidos and in the presumed late text *Met. Λ* it is, finally, God. E. D. Harter, (1975) tried to resolve the apparent contradiction, saying that between the *Cat.* and the *Met.* there

⁷² R. Sorabji, 1987, 6, Chapter 9: "[...] Philoponus' great achievement [...]."

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is no difference in the conception of the ousia, the difference is in the eidos. While in the *Categories* Aristotle understands the “universal species” as eidos, the eidos in the *Met.* is the “particular form of a concrete individual.” The “substantial form” as combination of *causa formalis* and *causa finalis* is the primary reality and it is neither universal nor individual but “individuated.”⁷³

To this we can reply that prote ousia is always the heading to a question. It is useful in different respects, which D. Fonfara has persuasively shown. But the starting point is always the same: the question of what the hen is in the pros hen legesthai of *to be*; even the methodological means, namely the topical means, are always the same. If *Met. A* is an early work, then Aristotle, saying that ousia is noesis, departs with a speculative climax at the outset. Aristotle distinguishes in the *Cat.* prote ousia and deuterai ousiai. The First is the primary and one with respect to which, we use *to be* in various ways. It is the hen in pros hen legesthai. We are looking for it, but it cannot be articulated. The second is the humanly possible substitute for that; the ti en einai cannot be articulated, but we can designate genus and species of a thing.⁷⁴

Reflection on Method

Every philosophical consideration must include some reflection on the method to be followed. By means of such reflection, Plato showed through the figure of the guest from Elea in the *Sophist*, that new assertions about being would not further the cause. After the discourse about being that had been conducted by the Presocratics and Sophists and the difficulties to which that discourse was by then (at Plato’s time) subject, any mere assertion about being had to come to an end. Any new assertion would be no more than a new opinion to be proven true, there was no egress from the world of opinions. The only way to break out of this circle is to reflect on existing claims and opinions. This insight cannot be set aside. It is implausible that Plato and Aristotle would later have forgotten or excluded it.

⁷³ Harter, 1975, 15; for further remarks on this theme see below Part II, 2.1.2; D. Fonfara, 2003, ingeniously tried to unravel the apparent contradiction between the *Categories* and *Met. Z* by a distinction of different views, namely ontology and epistemology.

⁷⁴ Cf. E. Sonderegger, 2012, III. 8.

Evidently, assertions are not equally problematic in all areas. What has been said above is valid primarily in the theoretical area and for abstract reflection. In our everyday life and in empirical knowledge, realism and assertions are quite normal and well justified, while in the theoretical domain of the question, however, one ought to go through one's tradition in order to become clear about one's place within the discourse. One of Aristotle's strongest means to achieve this is the quotations (*Anführungen*); in the *Categories*, *De Interpretatione*, and especially in the *Topics*⁷⁵ he has developed other means. Plato and Aristotle made it clear, what thinking without claims is and its power, Plato with the highest kinds in the *Sophist* and Aristotle with the theory in *Met. A*.

These are all conclusions, preceded by much reflection. There is reflecting on the difference between the methods of the physicist, the mathematician and the philosopher (*Physics* B 2, *Met.* Γ 2–3, E 1); on what astronomy has or has not to do with the question about the First (*Met.* A 8, Theophrast, *Met.* § 27); another concerning the question of how it is possible to ask after the First (cf. *Nicomachean Ethics*, A 1, 1095a38–b1 with a reference to Plato); on how the knowledge about the First differs from knowledge about other topics; and, finally, how the transition from the First to the Second ought to be conceived. – All these themes are common within the Old Academy⁷⁶ they exercised their effects on Theophrastus' *Met.* and Aristotle's early work. It is likely that the Academy was developing a suite of potential modifications to the theory in reply to the outstanding questions just mentioned. Aristotle opposed such attempts, the mere rebuilding or updating of the idea being insufficient. That is at the core of his criticism of the ideas. It is not his aim to modify the hypothesis of the ideas, even if he retains idea as one of the four causes and maintains that *eidōs* is that which, together with *hylē*, constitutes the particular.

The question itself requires reorientation. Socrates started from with the question of what the origin and basis of a solid knowledge in the domain of our actions would be. Plato, alone perhaps, expanded the question to knowledge itself in general. The proper being ("that which is beside the perceptible") could qualify as basis for sure

⁷⁵ See "topical approach" (*topische Einstellung*) in E. Sonderegger, 2012, III. 3.1.

⁷⁶ Very plausibly in the sense as it was reported by K. Gaiser, 1963, or by H. J. Krämer, 1983.

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knowledge. In this case we have to explain how it is possible that we actually live in a world of perceptible things, which are not proper beings and at the same time can know something of them on the basis of the proper being. It was never up for discussion of deriving the perceptible particulars from the principles or proper beings.⁷⁷

This reorientation is already associated with a further change of the question in the Platonic dialogues. The proper being founds our knowledge of ethical norms and of perceptible things (early and middle dialogues). The good is the basis of knowledge and of being as well (*Politeia*). In the *Timaeus* the conclusion is drawn: if the good is the basis of being and of knowledge, then we ought to be able to reconstruct the intellectual contingency of the particular from the first principle (this not to be confused with a realistic causal inference or producing). We must arrive at an understanding of how the perceptible world is connected to the noetic such that the perceptible *is* and somehow becomes understandable. Theophrastus pursues the question in its realistic sense, when he asks how far we can go in asking after the for-the-sake-of-something and in the search for its grounds. Along with other questions not related to our present subject, the question about the difference between being and becoming, and about the difference between aistheta and noeta and how and why being arises from opposites are the guiding questions in Aristotle's early work as well as in Theophrastus' *Met.* In summary, it can be said that Aristotle has seen in the hypothesis of the ideas and what is related to it (such as the theory of principles, the hen, unity, the aoristos dyas, the indefinite duality), an attempt to determine the primary knowledge (prote philosophia, as zetoumene episteme, "knowledge we are looking for") of the first being (prote ousia). The foundations laid by Plato do not suffice, but the aim of arriving at a primary knowledge of the first being is not called into question. Quite the contrary, this objective should only be pursued by better means. Aristotle will try throughout his life to realize the speculative sketch presented in *Met. A*.

⁷⁷ This would be a projection of a false understanding of Neoplatonistic considerations onto Plato.

5.2. The First Sentence in *Met. A*

5.2.1. The Kind of Phrase that KP 1 is

The understanding of the whole book depends on how we understand its first phrase and it depends even more on the type of sentence than on its content. For a long time it was understood as programatic.⁷⁸ It designates what is asked after, being (*Sein*); and next, the method of the question to be followed, the *theoria*. The following sentence says that the beings should be studied with respect to which is the first *for* them (and very significantly not *of* them!).

Is that, however, really good reason to anticipate a metaphysics of substance? Is ousia something about which either we or Aristotle can contend anything because knowing what it is? Is it clear enough in its main features, at least, what ousia is and we have only to ask which of the ‘candidates’ is to be selected as substance?⁷⁹ Even if it were already clear that substance translates ousia (although that is obviously not the correct translation, authors in late antiquity were much more cautious than modern ones), we would still have to ask what substance means. If ousia was clearly substance, the question would not be as open as it remained after Plato’s *Sophist* and as Aristotle has retained it. However, even after *Met. A* and ZHΘ, the *theoria peri ousias* remains an unfinished project, something yet to resolve.

If we leave aside the standard interpretation and we read *Met. A* 1.1 as not having the closure that had been imagined, as open as it in fact is – as also M. Frede wanted to do (2000, 55) – we can see that Aristotle’s position is very similar to that of Plato

⁷⁸ W. Jaeger, 1912, 122; M. Frede, 2000, 55, characterizes it very well as “referring to an already ongoing enterprise,” unfortunately he thinks of this enterprise as a metaphysics of substance. S. Fazzo, 2009, has emphasized the extraordinary importance of this phrase, which, as she says, is much more than an *incipit*. In her book (2014, 116) she treats the connection of this phrase with Plato’s *Sophist*, 244a4f., but nevertheless sticks with ousia as substance, with the thesis that Aristotle wants to found the primacy of the substance in *Met. A*.

⁷⁹ Many are used to think of the *Metaphysics* that way, amongst others M. Frede and G. Patzig in their Commentary on *Met. Z*. But, from time to time we read that the instances in Z 3 are not candidates for the substance, but material to find the criteria for substance, see e.g. M. L. Gill, 1989, M. V. Wedin, 2000, M. Burnyeat, 2001, S. M. Cohen, 2009, 201.

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expressed in his *Sophistes* 243de. There, in the middle of the dialogue, reaching the aporia confronting one who questions how to ask after the first and the origin of all and of all knowledge (242b), it is *to be* (τὸ εἶναι, 243e2), which takes this first place and it is only apparently the most clear and simple of concepts, in fact it obscure and inducing of aporia, something we only thought we were clear about, but we of which we too, the friends of the ideas and not only the somatikoi must admit to having no better than opinions, no stable knowledge.⁸⁰ This is reason to raise once more and anew the question about the First and with new methods.

The first sentence of *Met. A 1.1* is very close to the sentences in the middle of the *Sophist* but apart from that we must take into account how close it is to the other Aristotelian sentence: “The term ‘being’ is used in manifold ways.” Both Aristotelian sentences have two things in common, they summarize a tradition and his reflections with respect to the fundamental opinions. KP 1 says that the philosophical discourse which had taken place up to then showed that the study about *to be* is necessary in this intellectual situation. Plato has said the same in his *Sophist*. Secondly, like the phrase in the *Sophist* Aristotle’s phrase “the term ‘being’ is used in manifold ways” cannot be surpassed; it stands against all argument and riposte. Even one who attempted to contradict it is in fact accepting it, for any contradiction affirms it, all contradictions being no more than further opinions the phrase invites reflection on them.

The first sentence in *Met. A* is, then, a sentence opening up the question about being, like its counterpart in the *Sophist*, but as the conclusion to a long tradition. It condenses a long and ramified discourse on being, only in the spirit of the topical approach protaseis labein, in order to concentrate and to continue the discourse on a new, that is on the theoretic level. It is like a work instruction “we have to do our work now.” The task is to ask after the sense of *to be*, because it became unclear what *to be* is, what is clear is only the heading of the issue, ousia. The theoria peri ousias is a task that remains to be accomplished. The sentence expresses a disposition to the problem: “Now we have to ask in theoretical attitude what we

⁸⁰ Cf. *Met. Z 1*: it is and remains doubtful in Aristotle’s view, what ousia does mean; see E. Sonderegger, 2012, I. 2.

have ever understood by *ousia*, the basis of all our speaking and meaning,” thus, it matches the main concern of the *Sophist*. That is confirmed by the fact that here as well as in the *Sophist* 238a, 242b and 243d, it is a question of origin, the origin is not given it must be attained.⁸¹

The sentence is a beginning, but also the culmination of a tradition of discourse. We are no longer obliged to read Aristotle’s texts as products of a thinking outside of history or as an absolute thinking in any way. Sadly, admirers and critics too often do this; some, because they think an absolute knowledge about an independent truth is possible; others, because they get a good opponent that way. Instead, we might try to establish the situation of the discourse in which they were written. Aristotle has focussed the tradition on the question about being.

In the second sentence he gives the reason why it is right to do so: it is because *ousia* is the first whichever way we turn the question. We have to begin with the *theoria* about being, and for this reason we had to clarify what this sentence referred to, what other sentence it contradicts, to which question it is an answer.

It has not been necessary to include all the themes of the foregoing discourse, it had been sufficient to discuss the relations and connections with *Met. A*. That would to some extent have been easier, because we have not had to reconstruct the situation of the discourse ‘as it really was’ (which in any case were impossible), but we could limit ourselves to Aristotle’s reception of it, and how we find it in his texts. To that end, we have studied some parts of Plato’s *Sophist* and *Timaeus* and of Theophrastus’ *Met.* and Aristotle’s early work. On this ground it should be possible to understand what is at issue in *Met. A*. The tradition in its broader sense and the context of the discussion in which the question of this text has a sense should now have become apparent.⁸²

⁸¹ Roughly in the middle of the dialogue (*Sophistes* 242b6ff.) the guest says: “Say please, with which beginning we could start that dangerous discourse? It seems, dear child, that we have to go this way absolutely.” Theaetetus: “Which way?” Guest: “We have to study first which seemed to be clear all the way ...” Then, he adds the question about being as that which seemed to be absolutely clear; 243d1f. the guest: “...now we have to consider what is most important and that which leads primarily.” Theaetetus says that the guest means that which everyone understands by ‘being’.

⁸² See E. Sonderegger, 2012, I. 2.

5.2.2. KP 1, in brief

Let us try to summarize the results of the above. The first sentence of *Met. A* runs as follows:

Περὶ τῆς οὐσίας ἢ θεωρίας τῶν γὰρ οὐσιῶν αἱ ἀρχαὶ καὶ τὰ αἴτια ζητοῦνται.
The present theory concerns being <: ousia, *Sein*>; for it is the beings <: ousiai, *Seiendes*> whose principles and causes are sought.

It presents three distinctions: the first is that between the ousia and the theoria; the second between ousia and ousiai; and the third between the ousiai and their archai kai ta aitia. The first distinguishes the subject and the method: the subject is the ousia, the method the theoria. It is Aristotle who focuses the discourse on being, but that is not from misunderstanding or ill will as H. Cherniss wished to show. On the contrary, Aristotle excels in this way some of the efforts of the tradition and of his present day and renders the question once more the rank it had had in the works of Parmenides' and Plato.

Theory differs from other forms of research. It consists in returning to first principles, to the fundamental, in contrast to moving from the principles to further findings. Aristotle, like other philosophers, uses the term in other contexts too, there is no establishment of definitive terminology. In this first sentence the word does have programmatic importance, an importance underscored by its repetition in Chapter 7 at another prominent place, further by its use in the early work and its appearance in Theophrastus' *Met.* § 1. Theory, then, is conceived as the appropriate method for the question about the First, but in what does this peculiar method of going to the principles consist? In the *Topics* we can see what the young Aristotle thinks concerning the knowledge of the First. The main point amongst others is that the given must be analyzed for its simple preconditions that make up it. We must look into which elements a proposition can be broken down to, to which simpler features a concept can be terminally reduced. The method to do this is the "topical attitude."⁸³ When this is done, the presuppositions we have found must not again be asserted as

⁸³ See E. Sonderegger, 2012, I. 3.1.

a truth, but represented as the prerequisites of endoxa.

There are indeed different lines of research within the Old Academy, according to which on the one side is Aristotle, on the other all the rest. There is a division of topics; some members of the Academy – quite in the spirit of H. J. Krämer and others – work towards the establishment of a ‘pyramid of being,’ whereas Aristotle, in contrast, looks to some extent for facts, even reported ones, while never forgetting theoretical questions. Above all, it is a matter of methodological division, inasmuch as Aristotle never forgets the lesson, he has drawn from the *Sophist*, namely: other than the areas in which assertion is legitimate and even necessary, the core of philosophy is non-assertive.

Secondly, Aristotle distinguishes *ousia* in the singular from *ousiai* in the plural. The singular is the leading term of the topic, the primary that is sought for and *ousia* corresponds to the *on* in Plato’s *megista gene* in its function. The singular term shows the continuity of the problem between Plato and Aristotle. The plural designates the area where the research begins, the area of beings to be questioned, it designates the given, the things, the beings in the endoxa. Everybody knows since ever what *ousia* is in his tradition, everybody has a firm opinion about what *ousia* is. Everyone lives, speaks and acts in the line of his tradition. The difference between the singular and the plural is the difference between being (*Sein*) and beings (*Seiendes*) and at the same time, the difference between the first and the second (in Theophrastus’ view the *noeta*, noetic beings, and *ta tes physeos*, natural beings), which makes necessary the question about transition.

If we ask after the principles and causes of the many *ousiai*, then we must ask too after the causes of becoming and movement. Aristotle and Theophrastus designate desire or ‘aiming at,’ *epheis*, as the cause of becoming of the things that become; things that become aim at or desire *to be*.

The question of transition is the result of a development. Parmenides, perhaps, had already appreciated the problem of the transition but found no solution, it became

5. The First Key Proposition: *Met. A 1*

the decisive question only with Plato's *Timaeus*.⁸⁴ If we take into account what Theophrastus said it seems that the question of transition was among the main questions in the Academy.⁸⁵ As said above, the theory of principles, the ideal numbers, the criticism of the ideas were already connected with this question. *Met. A* is an alternative speculative sketch for the same. Following Plato in this point Aristotle denoted the arche by the singular ousia. It is the principle in all beings (but not in a causal or constructive sense). Through a certain acquaintance with this singular, humans come to understand the many and particular ousiai.

The method for asking after this singular is *theoria*. The *archai kai ta aitia* had been established as the leading respects in the inquiry for the tradition, especially for many of the Presocratics. Even for someone who might think that Aristotle misunderstood the Presocratics focussing on *archai kai aitia* must agree that this was his particular reception of them. Some Presocratics understood the question about the origin of becoming in the sense of the material origin of the things, in Plato's and Aristotle's view, at least. They named elements as that origin, therefore. The elements are no more than a realist and material foundation for the being of things. Plato completely changes the sense of the question of becoming: with him it became a question about the transition from the noetic to the aesthetic world which means that now a fundamentally different answer is required. He sets the ideas as this answer. The ideas are the being of the beings (*Sein des Seienden*). By means of the ideas can we understand things that change, the transient, phenomenal things on a ground of stable being.

Plato later became aware of the *aporia* entailed by his finding. Thus he wrote in the *Sophist* that the 'friends of ideas' have only opinions about being like everyone else which is why in that dialogue the examiner, the guest from Elea, is himself subjected to examination. The consequence is that he sees that we do not need new answers is for old questions but to review and reflect on existing opinions. The result of this reflection in the *Sophist* the *megista gene*.

⁸⁴ For how Eudoxus saw this connection, see K. von Fritz, 1978, 162.

⁸⁵ See J. Stenzel, 1959 (3. ed.), 109ff., on transition.

There is no consensus about the temporal relationship between the *Sophist* and *Timaeus*,⁸⁶ but for our purposes this is not decisive, the connection of thoughts can remain the same with different chronologies. A “true chronology” would not change the thought but would only tell us when Plato was thinking what. Only the relationship between the contents of these two dialogues matters to us. If the *Timaeus* was written after the *Sophist*, and if we can assume that its aim is to reconstruct the factual world by mathematical and geometrical means, then we must ask why Plato now finds it worth talking about factual things (which are by no means proper beings) after having asked the unsurpassable question about being in the *Sophist*. What other philosophical question is worth being asked when the question about being is the highest and ultimate question? In the *Sophist* this highest and last question arises because Plato realized that his proposal, that the idea is the being, is nothing more than an opinion, even if conceptually it goes beyond the tradition.

It is not possible to ask a theoretical question of any higher degree, but it is possible to integrate into it another question. If the opinions about being are analyzed and if their ground is found, it is possible to ask the manner in which the actual, phenomenal, pseudo-beings (the things that become, *das Werdende*) are related to the proper beings. How can the connection between being and becoming be conceived? Plato raises what the Presocratics had in mind to a higher level. He makes clear that it is not enough to take some of the set of things – earth, water, air, fire – as the element of things. The question about the *archai kai ta aitia* must aim at the truly elemental character of the elements. This he calls *chora*. The connection between being and becoming is established by *chora*, through which things that become can seek to be.

The question about being is complex and difficult and encumbered with many possible misunderstandings. A first misunderstanding could be to take being (*ousia*, *Sein*) as the ground of becoming in the sense of the *causa efficiens* of things coming

⁸⁶ G. E. L. Owen, 1953: *Timaeus* soon after *Politeia*, in any case before *Parmenides* and *Theaitetus*, *Sophist*, *Politicus*; H. Thesleff, 1982: *Timaeus* after *Parmenides*, about 355a; K. M. Sayre, 1983: *Timaeus* before *Parmenides* or at the same time with *Parmenides*, 2. part; further Lit. R. Ferber, 1997, 6ff., and M. Erler, 2007, 262–263 ...wohl im letzten Lebensjahrzehnt (257...347)...; R. M. Dancy, 2004, 7, fn. 26: *Theaitetus* between *Parmenides* and *Sophist*.

to be (there are those who attribute this role to God). On the contrary, the insight is that all becoming is based on being but that is not enough. We need the second insight, that the becoming has, metaphorically, something like a drive towards being, that being is the object and the for-the-sake-of becoming.

Plato had focused the Presocratic question on being, the Academic discourse took up the proposal; thereafter, Aristotle was inspired by the *Sophist* to ask the question about being, now in his theoretic manner, of course and by his conceptual means. Admittedly, who can be said to represent the Old Academy and what was really ever said, is controversial. I thought, therefore, methodologically correct to prefer existent texts to reconstructions. If one accepts this and if one takes Theophrastus' *Met.* together with *Met. A* to be of early date, one can include Aristotle's early work as representative of the Academic discourse within limits, of course, but on the ground of valuable texts. It is not necessary to demonstrate any unity in this discourse, it is quite plausible that the Academy was a 'polyphonic' organization.

On several occasions Aristotle referred to the background of his theoretical approach, in the doxographies, for example. The first sentence of *Met. A* is one of these references. Aristotle wants to revitalize the old question by presenting a theoretical alternative to the tradition.

We can summarize that sentence as follows: considering the previous discourse and summarizing the discourse from the Presocratics up to Plato's *Sophist* and *Timaeus*, it is clear that the question about being is at issue because being has proven to be the origin and basis of becoming. Merely offering a new answer about that is of no use, it would only be a new statement on the same level, which would have to be examined in the same as the older ones. No, the question must be built up in the approach of a thinking without claims (*topische Einstellung*); as a basis of the research serve the endoxa, the prevailing opinions.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Cf. the paraphrase of this first sentence by L. Judson, 2019, 50, who translates the singular *ousia* with the plural 'substances'; it is noteworthy that he says in his Prologue to the Commentary, that substance "is a rather misleading translation..." but keeps that translation nevertheless, sure, after some remarks on *ousia* in the *Categories*.

6. From KP 2 until KP 10: *Met.* Λ 1–5

In *Met.* Λ Aristotle asks after the being (*Sein*) that makes becoming possible. In the first five chapters he limits the research to the ousia aisthete and uses as his starting point the endoxa about it.

6.1. *Met.* Λ 1.2–1.8, with KP 2

If we wish to understand becoming, we must understand being, ousia, before (see Part III, Chapter 5). Yet, ousia is a word used in many ways in ordinary language as well as in the philosophical tradition. It can mean ‘thing,’ ‘property,’ ‘the particular,’ ‘proper being,’ but also the nature of a thing and being (*Sein*) in general. In the *Categories* ousia is used in three ways terminologically, first as prote ousia, secondly and thirdly as the deuterai ousiai, i. e. as genus and as species. Ousia is the subject of *Met.* Λ , as elsewhere movement, time, nature or soul are the principle subjects. The use of ousia is neither simply univocal nor equivocal, its unity is that of the pros-hen-unity thus we are searching for the hen in the pros-hen-structure. In asking after ousia we wish to know what the first and one is, with respect to which the diversity of uses of ousia has its unity.

In the last Chapter I have tried to show the traditions in which *Met.* Λ 1.1 (KP 1) is rooted. The Greek listener or reader of this sentence was clear about this tradition. They themselves lived in it, Aristotle did not have to say very much about it, it was enough simply to have it in mind. In the following sentences he gives three further reasons justifying ousia as his subject. To begin with, ousia is the first, irrespective of whether the totality of beings has the form of an organized whole or

of an aggregation of unconnected things. In both cases further determinations are only possible after the ousia has been identified.

The second sentence, a19, καὶ γὰρ εἰ ὡς ὅλον τι τὸ πᾶν [...]: καὶ εἰ τῷ ἐφεξῆς [...]¹ lacks a verb, as often in Greek in general and even more so in the *Corpus Aristotelicum*. The most natural supplement would be ἔστιν or λέγεται ('is' or 'is said'). Depending on the verb we supply, the sentence will read either "If it is like a whole [...]" or "If it is said to be a whole [...]"² Because Aristotle always treats 'to be' according to the structure of the logos, this difference may be two faces of the same coin, rather than two alternatives. Further questions in the second sentence concern the sense of the difference "as a whole" and "successively"³ and the reason why ousia is primary in both cases. This difference seems to be the same as that between a holistic and a serial view of the world. W. D. Ross thinks that it is the opposition between "the universe as a genuine unity" and "as forming a loosely connected series." – Next we should like to know the significance of to pan.⁴ Some have thought that it means synholon, the particular thing as the unity of form and matter in contrast to the particular thing with its different categorical determinations.⁵ In the tradition of the Presocratics we could understand to pan as the universe, the whole world. K. Oehler saw in 1.2 the contrast between the substance and the accidens,⁶ for if the substance vanishes the accidens vanishes too. There is, however, an eternal accidens: movement.⁷ H. Seidl, on the other hand, argued that Aristotle had in mind the difference between the first, immaterial and unmoved substance and the second, material and moved substance.⁸ –

¹ (1.2) "For, if the whole is like a total, the proper being <: ousia> is <its> first part, as well as if it is <a being> part-by-part, in this way too the proper being <: ousia> is primary, ..."

² W. D. Ross, 1924, translates: "[...] may be regarded." T. A. Szlezák, 2003, supplements <betrachtet wird>.

³ Concerning ἐφεξῆς, "successively," see *Physics* E 3, 226b34 and *Met.* Γ 2, 1005a11; ἐ. means a series of several things under the condition that they follow the first thing and are of the same position or kind (examples are line, unity, house). This would be a very loose kind of unity.

⁴ F. Baghdassarian, *I-univers*: L. Judson, "totality of things."

⁵ So H. Bonitz *ad loc.*, but cf. W. D. Ross, 1924, II, 349.

⁶ K. Oehler, 1984, 41.

⁷ *id.*, 47.

⁸ H. Seidl, 1995, 66f.

Aristotle continues, explaining that in both cases *ousia* is the *proton meros*, the first part. ‘Part’ does probably not mean ‘real component,’ so that *ousia* would be the first portion of a thing. *Kata meros legein* means “to speak about something part by part,” in this case *ousia* would be the first to be mentioned when speaking of something. If we take into account what Aristotle says in *Met. Z 9–10*, then mere, parts, are characteristics and requisites which make up the *eidos*. It seems to me that this makes the best sense. Indeed *ousia* is the first noetic determination we must state (explicitly or more often implicitly) when speaking about anything. The other categorial determinations denote beings in a restricted sense (1.3), they are only qualities or changes of the proper being, i. e. variable determinations of *ousia* as opposed to the stable determinations which constitute *ousia*. Another sense of ‘first’ in this context, should be added, namely that it signifies the world as a structure in contrast to the world as the sum of all the things therein.

choriston A second reason that *ousia* is the first is that only *ousia* is *choriston*, ‘separable,’ while the other categorial beings are not (1.4). A being is separable if its concept can be formed independently of other determinations that the being may additionally have. A being is not separable if its concept cannot be formed without that from which it is not separable.⁹ *Ousia* must underly all categorial determinations, no other categorial determination can be said to stand for itself, but be only a determination of *ousia*. The term complementary to not-separable is “that which can be said as itself.” In accordance with this, in *Cat. 5* two characteristics distinguish *ousia* from the rest, namely μήτε καθ’ ὑποκειμένου τινος λέγεσθαι, “to be said neither of an underlying ...” (meaning roughly the same as καθ’ αὐτὸ λέγεσθαι, “to be said in respect of itself”) and μήτε ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ τινι εἶναι, “...nor being in an underlying” (meaning roughly the same as *choriston*).

Aristotle justifies this in 1.3 pointing to the fact that if we accept e. g. *poion ti* as a being without that of which it is a determination, we should have also to accept not-beings as beings (e. g. ‘not-white,’ or ‘not-straight’ are examples of *poion ti*). It

⁹ *Choriston* does not mean *transzendent*, as H. Seidl says in his Commentary on *Met. A 1.4*, 1980, 547. – I avoid the translation with ‘independent’ or ‘autonomous,’ because that would involve the notion of subsistence and lead to substance.

is important to see, that the rejection is not definitive but only relative, under certain conditions a non-being can very well be called a ‘being.’

We can summarize the sentences 1.2 to 1.4 as follows. When speaking about any given thing, we first have to state its ousia, whether the unity of all beings be holistic or serial (for it amounts the same to say that the beings are a unity because inter-related to each other or that they are independent and their unity only an external one). In both cases we have first to designate the ousia of a thing (systematically, not temporally) and then the further designations.¹⁰ He adds that the further designations are beings only in a restricted or improper sense because being separable is an essential feature only of ousia.

The third reason that ousia is prior to the other determinations is given in a doxographic remark (1.5–1.6). The forerunners had, in fact, always searched for principles, elements, causes of ousia. They found them in particular things (like fire or earth). Philosophers of the time, Plato and the Academy, preferred universals. Hence ousia in its variety must be studied above all, because it is primary, categorically as well as with respect to separability and even following the prevailing opinions. We are prepared, then, for the second key proposition:

- KP 2 *Met. A 1.7 (1069a30)* οὐσίαι δὲ τρεῖς, μία μὲν αἰσθηθὴ, ἣς ἡ μὲν φθαρτή, ἦν πάντες ὁμολογοῦσιν, οἷον τὰ φυτὰ καὶ τὰ ζῶα ἢ δὲ αἰθερῶν, ἣς ἀνάγκη τὰ στοιχεῖα λαβεῖν, εἴτε ἓν εἴτε πολλὰ· ἄλλη δὲ ἀκίνητος, καὶ ταύτην φασὶ τινες εἶναι χωριστήν, οἱ μὲν εἰς δύο διαιροῦντες, οἱ δὲ εἰς μίαν φύσιν τιθέντες τὰ εἶδη καὶ τὰ μαθηματικά, οἱ δὲ τὰ μαθηματικά μόνον τούτων.
 <There are> three ways of being <: ousiai, Seinsweisen>: one <of them> is perceptible, and of this <kind> one is perishable, on which all agree, e. g. plants and animals, and the other eternal; of this, <i.e. the perceptible kind of beings in general,> it is necessary to search for the elements, whether there is one or many; another <kind> is immovable, and of this some say that it is separable, some dividing <the immovable and separable kind> in two <types>, others putting the ideas and the mathematical in one nature, and others <accepting> only the mathematical <as separable>.

As examples for the three ways of being Aristotle names the natural beings on the

¹⁰ ‘Red’ is not the same when it is said about the sky or about an apple.

earth, the natural beings in the sky and beings such as mathematics deals with.¹¹ – Whence does this classification stem and what is its purpose? The content of the classification is simply an endoxon, because all share it (the phrase ...ἦν πάντες ὁμολογοῦσιν directly refers only to the perishable way of being, but the consensus exists also about eternal things). The content of the classification is not a specific Aristotelian finding,¹² only the compilation is Aristotle’s work. Even today natural beings divide into those that show their changes, their coming to be and passing away and others for which this is not observable in our lifetime or by visual inspection.

When modern science says for example, that the fixed stars and the galaxies do in fact move we must not conclude, that the statements from antiquity that they are immovable are falsely made. Firstly, Aristotle always marked his reservations and made clear that he was referring to endoxa; secondly, revisions on the basis of new observations were envisaged; and finally, still today it is impossible to detect the movement of a fixed star other than the circular one with the naked eye. Visual inspection is the basis of Aristotle’s statements (we remember that οἶδα means ‘I have seen’). Today our astronomical ‘knowledge’ is based on instruments that very few of us could handle and calculations that would overwhelm most of us. We believe, certainly with good reason, in the consensus of the experts. – Beside the natural beings, the text continues, some groups of scholars separate ideas and mathematical others combine them as one kind of being, others accept only mathematical as an unmovable kind of being. Admittedly, it is unclear what they mean when they say that such things *are*. At any rate, these statements are nothing more than endoxa, even if in this case of professional scientists.

Aristotle arrives at his classification by combining the characteristics ‘perceptible’ and ‘perishable’ and their negations, so that four forms of being result (see above, table 4.1, page 241). One field is empty, that of perishable and not perceptible beings, so that there remain three. By this taxonomy Aristotle tried to establish out

¹¹ Cf. P. Merlan, 1953, 134: “classes” or “level of being;” T. A. Szlezák, 2003, *Substanzen gibt es aber drei* [...]; I prefer ‘ways of being’ to ‘kinds of beings.’

¹² Berti, 2016, 75, agrees.

the way of being, which was the least disputed in order to ask the question about being with reference to the consensus-group. This would be the way of being of the perceptible beings around us, the *ousia aisthete*. The main feature of these is their being changeable, this point is made in the third key proposition: “The perceptible way of being is changeable.”

6.2. *Met. A* 1.9–2.8 with KP 3

Having outlined his question about being in 1.1–1.8 and selected one of the ways of being as the basis of his research, which he captured terminologically in 1.9 by its main characteristic: *metabole*, change, he goes on explaining in 1.9–2.2 the notion of change. The next group of sentences, 2.3–2.8, contains reflections on these remarks. Chapter 3 introduces the question of what it is that becomes itself in the process of becoming and what does not. First, Aristotle discusses *eidos* and *hyle* because these concepts are included in the notion of *metabole*. Neither of them has a coming-to-be. In 3.2 he takes the use of ‘becoming’ in ordinary language as a fresh starting point for the same question. Later in the text, he replaces the division in four ways of being with an analysis of being starting from the *endoxa* about *ousia*. ‘We’ (his Greek-speaking contemporaries) call *ousia* the *hyle*, the *physis* and the *from-these-both*. In the fourth chapter, he asks whether or not all categories, i. e. *ousia* and the rest of the categories, have the same causes and principles. Aristotle develops three answers to this question, first a negative one, then an answer in the sense of “partly yes – partly no” and finally, in chapter five, a positive one.

Met. A 1.9–2.2

In 1.9 to 2.2 the perceptible being is terminologically fixed to serve as basis for the research because it is the least controversial being. New contentions about being would serve no purpose, we would continue in the old manner of merely setting our opinions against one another, which had been the very cause of the crisis of the discourse described in the *Sophist*. We must leave it at the old assertions and reflect on those. When the *endoxa* form the field of investigation, then it is right to take

the most plausible, as the stock of that which must be investigated. Aristotle, then, begins the analysis of becoming by capturing the perceptible being terminologically. In the third key proposition he says that the ability to change is at the core of the perceptible being:

KP 3 *Met. A 1.9 (1069b3) ἡ δ' αἰσθητὴ οὐσία μεταβλητή.*
The perceptible being is changeable.

The singular “The perceptible being” generally applies for all perceptible beings (generalizing function of the article), so that changeability is their main feature, thus, in fact, it means their way of being.

The concept of *metabole* is applicable in four categories (2.2), namely with respect to that which something is, how it is conditioned, how big it is and, where it is. In every case the *metabole* is a change between two extremes (opposites) which do not themselves change during the process of becoming, so that a third being, which bears the change, is required; Aristotle calls it *hyle* (2.1). Even *hyle* is a word used in ordinary language, converted by Aristotle into a term with the meaning ‘possibility to ...,’ or as M. Heidegger translated it ‘suitability for ...’

With respect to a clear pair of opposites, we can speak of a ‘turn,’ in other cases we speak rather of a ‘change’; though this kind of change must be distinguished from qualitative change. *Cat. 10* lists four kinds of opposites (*antikeimenon*). Something stands in opposition to another thing:

1. as relatives,
 2. as contraries (“good – bad”),
 3. as *steresis* – *hexis*, i. e. the not-being present of a determination in contrast to its presence,
 4. and, finally, as affirmation and negation.
-

Table 6.1.: Kinds of opposites

The opposition which is relevant here is number 3. The *metabole* is a change “from something to something,” comparable to *kinesis*, movement. It includes all four ways of becoming: becoming absolutely, quantitative and qualitative change and

local motion.

6.2.1. Met. A 2.3–2.8

The main characteristic of the perceptible being is *metabole* as Aristotle states in 1.9. The following sentences make clear that ‘becoming’ of natural beings means ‘to change’ or ‘to alter.’ By this he designates the change between opposite determinations, actually the transition from *steresis* to *eidos* or *vice versa*, which must take place in a third being, the *hyle*. The opposite determinations are not present at the same time, one of them is actual the other potential. So, the sentences 2.3–2.8 reflect on the elements implied in the concept of *metabole* and in its various kinds. On certain questions, when Aristotle refers to the Presocratics he does so to assess the conclusions arrived at. The *hyle* can change because it can have both positive and negative determinations (2.3). The concept of *metabole* thus implies the difference between actuality and potentiality. Because *to be* can denote an actual as well as a potential state of a being, it is possible to say that “all beings come about of not-being,” one has only to add that this is meant as incidental becoming. Just as well, or even better still, we may say “all beings become out of a being, more precisely out of a potential being” (2.3). That is what Anaxagoras meant by the ‘one,’ says Aristotle, and that was better said than what Empedocles, Anaximander and Democritus have said about the same. Anaxagoras’ statement too should be improved in the following way: “All is everywhere, but potentially only not actually.”

It is not quite clear whether the transmitted text must be understood in the way it has just been reported, combining Empedocles, Anaximander and Democritus (see the commentary by W. D. Ross). It is, furthermore, not clear what Aristotle meant when he spoke of Anaxagoras’ ‘One.’ Fortunately, these questions are not of very great importance for our purposes. It only matters that Aristotle uses some statements made by certain Presocratics as evidence that it was their intention to take *hyle* as the changing being and that this can be expressed through his distinction of actuality and potentiality.

Who says that something comes about from a not-being, actually means that it comes about of a potential being (2.5). The not-being is not an absolute not-being but a potential being; but even if it is only potentially, it has the positive possibility to become that which in fact afterwards it becomes. It is, therefore, not possible that “everything becomes everything from everything” that would be a becoming by chance; that contradicts our experience, we see that the things come about out of suitable predispositions.

If we accept the nous as the determining principle as Anaxagoras did, and the hyle as that which is determined and if both are unique, then we cannot explain the plurality and variety of the things. A unique determining principle and a unique determined thing can only end in a unique result (2.7). Aristotle concludes with a summary (2.8): thus far we have seen three principles of becoming or, in other words, if we want to understand and explain becoming, we must speak about at least three things, about eidos, steresis and hyle. The result of the reflection leads to a specification of the term *metabole*, which was used before in a more general way. Now we can say that *metabole*, change, is a turning from possibility to actuality, and that this transition from steresis to eidos will take place on a third, the hyle.

We should not forget either that Aristotle takes the *endoxa* as a launching point for reflection, but does not talk about becoming in the ordinary sense of the word. He refers to *endoxa* but translates them and the questions about them into his own terminology, so he can speak about becoming in a precise and terminological way: Becoming is the transition from steresis as potentiality to eidos as actuality. This transition must not be understood once more as a natural process of natural beings or things. Steresis and eidos are thoughts or mental concepts, the transition happens in *noesis*, in pure thought, so that the transition is a noetic one. With these terms the foundations of the opinions about becoming in Aristotle’s tradition are expressed terminologically. The question about becoming leads us to other questions: Where does the impetus for this transition come from? Why this transition from steresis to eidos does set off? Later on we shall find that the transition is initiated through something that does not itself begin, through an *Ungewordenes*, “something that has not become,” in short, through *ousia*, being, *Sein*.

6.2.2. Met. A 3.1–3.11: KP 4, KP 5 and KP 6

In chapters 1 to 5 the perceptible beings are the field of research for treating the question of the being which underlies becoming because they are the least disputed. In a first analysis of becoming Aristotle uses the concept of *metabole* (1.9–2.8), in a second analysis, which begins with 3.1, he states that in the process of becoming *hyle* and *eidos* do not become. This, not itself becoming, is a necessary feature of the being we are looking for. In his analysis he uses the way ‘we’ speak about becoming in ordinary language and presents a new classification of *ousia* (3.7) and a new kind of cause (3.9). Sentence 3.1, the fourth key proposition, sums up the foregoing section and makes a statement which will be substantiated in 3.2–3.4.

KP 4 *Met.* A 3.1 (1069b35) Μετὰ ταῦτα ὅτι οὐ γίγνεται οὔτε ἡ ὕλη οὔτε τὸ εἶδος, λέγω δὲ τὰ ἔσχατα.
1069b35(1) *After that <we must say> that neither the hyle nor the eidos come into being – I mean the last ones.*

In the first analysis it became clear that *hyle* and *eidos* play an essential role in becoming. Now Aristotle adds that both do not become.¹³ Hence the question about that which becomes in the process of becoming remains as yet unanswered. By process of elimination he can identify which *ousia* on the given list does have a becoming: it is, obviously, the *ek touton*.

What is the meaning of the specifications “I mean the last ones [sc. *hyle* and *eidos*]” in 3.1 and, accordingly, of the “first” which sets in motion in 3.2? Sometimes Aristotle names the *prima materia* “ultimate *hyle*,” but it is unlikely that he meant that in this sentence. It seems that we can fill in concrete examples which show that in both cases the directly involved cause is meant. If something changes in the process of becoming, then neither the *hyle* nor the *eidos* has a becoming in this process, both are already present. The timber is in the stock, the form of the bed is in the mind of the carpenter when he begins to make the bed, but the bed itself comes to be.

¹³ For the same theme see *Met.* Z 7–9.

To give reasons for his statement in 3.1 Aristotle analyzes the process of *metabole*. He does not draw on scientific means or the like, but on an analysis of how ‘we’ speak about change and about coming to be. If we take as an example “a table comes about out of timber through a carpenter,” then *metabole* can be analyzed into: *from what* it becomes; *through what* it becomes; and *into what* it turns to be. So, Aristotle sorts out the basic concepts required by analyzing the formal structure of the ordinary language of his time about becoming. Whenever we say “something comes to be” or “something changes” or “something turns into something” we mean in fact “a thing becomes something through something from something.”¹⁴ The analysis of speaking about *metabole* shows that we presuppose some thing or ground on which becoming takes place (*hyle*), another through which it becomes (to *proton kinoun*) and finally one into which its coming to be ends (*eidou*).

Hyle and *eidou* evidently do not have any beginning. They are necessary causes of becoming, insofar they belong to the being, *Sein*, that grounds becoming. But they are not sufficient causes, neither of them can initiate becoming. The reason for this is that *hyle* is only potential and insofar does not have any effect (see *Met. A 6.5–6.8*). *Eidou* for its part cannot set in motion anything, because its relation to the things, the *methexis*, only allows things to partake in the *eidou*. Just this was the deficiency in Plato’s ideas and the main theme of Aristotle’s criticism of them. If *hyle* and *eidou* had a becoming through a particular process of becoming then a *regressus ad infinitum* would be entailed (3.3). The question of which being is able to initiate movement and becoming, without having itself movement and becoming, then, remains. We have to concentrate on the other causes, on to *proton kinoun* and to *telou*, which have not as yet been considered.

Before he does this, Aristotle mentions another condition of becoming:¹⁵

¹⁴ See correspondent analysis in *Met. Z 7, H 6, Physics B and A 7*.

¹⁵ For the use of *ἐκ συνωνύμου* compare: *Met. Z 9, 1034a21–26*, where the wording is *ἐξ ὁμωνόμου*, but the sense is the same as here.

Met. A 3.4, 1070a4f Μετὰ ταῦτα ὅτι ἐκάστη ἐκ συνωνόμου γίγνεται οὐσία (τὰ γὰρ φύσει οὐσίαι καὶ τᾶλλα).

After that <we must say> that everything <: hekaste ...ousia> comes into being from some univocal <being> (for <what is> by nature as well as the others are beings <and this rule applies for all beings>).

That means that becoming proceeds along the lines of being. This is valid not only for natural becoming, but also for things that result from artificial, accidental or spontaneous processes.¹⁶ That may seem to be obvious of natural becoming and Aristotle alludes to the fact with the sentence “A man₁ begets a man₂.” The reason that a particular animal, plant etc. (= natural being₂) comes to be and has such and such features is that another actual animal, plant etc. (= natural being₁) of the same kind implants its own nature in the natural being₂. It is less obvious that the same happens with products of culture: the carpenter and his table are in no way univocal beings. In the last sentence of the third chapter we find the reasoning to account for why the sentence is valid for cultural processes too. Medical art and knowledge contain in some way the notion of health. This notion of health will bring about health for a man in the same way that the *eidos* of a man will bring about the being of another man. In 3.8 Aristotle reasons in the same way. In *Met. Z* 9.5 (1034a24) too he uses *techne* in the function of *eidos*. *Techne* and *eidos* differ only in that the natural being has the cause of movement in itself, whereas the cause of movement for a cultural product is external to itself, it is in the producer. It is this point which Aristotle emphasizes in 3.6.

The many beings and the different ways of being are the starting point of the research. To find the being that can found becoming Aristotle first explores *hyle* and *eidos* because they have no becoming in a particular process of becoming – they *are* already. Indeed, they are indispensable for becoming, but they cannot initiate movement or becoming. The question has not yet found a suitable solution, so Aristotle chooses a new point of view for further investigation. He no longer looks at the many things and their classifications as he did in 1.7, where he had organized them by the characteristics ‘perishable’ and ‘perceptible’ and by their negations. Now he

¹⁶ For different ways of becoming see *Met. Z* 7 (at the beginning), H 6 and *Physics* B.

considers the possible answers when someone is asking what this thing is. If somebody asks, “What is this?,” depending on the situation the answer may be “Clearly, that is timber!” or “Clearly, that is a bed!” One would, then, have designated the hyle or eidos of the thing or the actual thing in question. Essential moments of ousia can, thereby, be identified. Now, in the fifth key proposition, Aristotle formulates the new point of view to consider ousia. The question is no longer about classes or kinds of beings but about the essential moments of being, which will be found through the possible answers to the question of what things properly are.

- KP 5 *Met. A 3.7 (1070a9–13) Οὐσίαι δὲ τρεῖς, ἡ μὲν ὕλη τόδε τι οὖσα τῷ φαίνεσθαι (ὅσα γὰρ ἀφῆ καὶ μὴ συμφύσει, ὕλη καὶ ὑποκείμενον), ἡ δὲ φύσις τόδε τι εἰς ἧν, καὶ ἕξις τις· ἔτι τρίτη ἡ ἐκ τούτων ἡ καθ’ ἕκαστα, οἶον Σωκράτης ἢ Καλλίας.*
 neu 1070a9 KP 5 (7) *There are three ways of being <: ousiai>: First the hyle, which is a some-this by appearing concretely (for, what is by contact <: by external connection only> and not by growing together <: not by natural and essential connection>, is hyle and hypokeimenon), then the nature, which is a principally determined being into which <the growing up evolves> and some state <: ἕξις τις>, further a third, the from-them <: i. e. the being realizing the previous ways of being>, namely the <being an> individual, e. g. Socrates or Kallias.*

If ‘being’ is considered in itself, then the three distinctions between hyle, physis (elsewhere called eidos) and to ek touton are more essential than the classification of an amount of beings in kinds.¹⁷ Aristotle adds an explanation with every determination. In respect to hyle, he says that it is “a principally determined being τῷ φαίνεσθαι.” Now, hyle is certainly not a τόδε τι, a principally determined being.¹⁸ That Aristotle makes hyle a tode ti must have its reason in the additional dative τῷ φαίνεσθαι. This addition can be understood negatively as it was by Pseudo-Alexander (κατὰ φαντασίαν), H. Bonitz (*imaginationi tantum est τόδε τι*) or W. D. Ross (“which is a ‘this’ in appearance”), the dative means ‘only seemingly,’ then. We could also take it as instrumental in which case it takes on a positive meaning: “If it appears, by appearing concretely, it becomes a concrete thing.” Hyle, being

¹⁷ For this distinction see Z 3, 1029a2–7 and Z 8.

¹⁸ For τόδε τι in 1070a10, 11 and 13 see the commentary *ad loc.*, and the glossary; cf. E. Sonderegger, 2012, 171–174; Meinong called this *unvollständige Gegenstände*. – Cf. H. Bonitz, 1849, 476, who points to H 1, 1042a27, Z 3, 1029a20 and 27, *De Anima* B 1, 412a7.

no more than appropriateness to something, becomes a certain particular in a given case ‘by appearing’ in an *eidōs*. Hyle by itself is the potentiality, say to be a bed. The planks in the stock are not yet a bed; but when the carpenter forms a bed with the planks, then the bed ‘appears,’ the hyle becomes a principally determined being, not the hyle in itself but insofar as it contributes to construe a particular bed.

The parenthesis in 3.7 concerns the opposite case. If something has an external connection, it is hyle only and that which underlies (example: bricks lying side by side); but, if something has a symphysis, if it is grown together into a new nature (if it has a natural conjunction, for example: bricks forming a house), then it is a *tōde ti*, a certain particular. In *Physics* Δ 5 (at the end) and in E 3 Aristotle says that symphysis forms an actual unity, that means that the being is grown together into a nature, whereas by contrast *haphe* is that which has the potentiality for such. Here, we can apply this too: hyle in itself, as potentiality and appropriateness for ..., is in opposition to the hyle which is grown together with the *eidōs* into the actual concrete particular.

Aristotle explains *physis*, nature, in two directions: as *tōde ti eis hen* and as *hexis tis*; so that *tōde ti too* can be *physis* but the *eidōs* (in the text ‘*physis*’) is a *tōde ti* just as little as hyle is. *Eidōs* is universal, *tōde ti* particular, more exactly it is the blank space for a particular (and therefore only a principally determined being). Aristotle specifies two meanings of *ousia* in *Met.* Δ 8. The first use of *ousia* is *hypokeimenon eschaton*, that which cannot be said of another being; the second is the *tōde ti* and *choriston*, the shape and the *eidōs* of something. It seems that *tōde ti* has not its technical use here, but one that is founded in ordinary language and rarely used by Aristotle. We may translate it with ‘something specific’ or ‘definiteness’ (*Bestimmtheit*). He uses *tōde ti* or only *tōde* again in 3.7 (1070a11) and 3.8 (1070a13) with the meaning ‘to be determined as such and such’ that is in some way the same as *eidōs*.¹⁹ Besides the hyle, which is as yet not what it has the potential to be, there is the form “into which” the actual particular “grows.” If that happens then the third-named *ousia*, the concrete particular, is present. This too is considered as

¹⁹ Cf. W. D. Ross, II 358: refers on Δ 8, 1017b25 (note).

ousia in everyday, common-sense thinking. We have to bear in mind that all this is said in the form of technically articulated opinions, *endoxa*. We have, then, to speak now about the ἡ ἐκ τούτων ἡ καθ' ἕκαστα <οὐσία> (1070a12), “the concrete actual particular,” because just this and this only has a coming to be. Afterwards, we have to look for the cause which sets it in motion, mentioned in 3.2.²⁰ Both hyle and *eidos* can be called *ousia*, if certainly in a different sense. Both, separately and together as the *ousia* that consists of them both, point to the further way for the question about being. The new classification in 3.7 replaces that in 1.7.

3.8 is a corollary to 3.6–3.7, it treats the question of whether the just mentioned *tode* as definiteness is independent from the *to ek touton*, the particular, with its composite form of being. That is not possible in some cases, the *eidos* of a house for example, is not separate from the actual house; the health is not apart from the healthy animal, and so with all things belonging to culture – unless we consider the producing knowledge (e. g. medical science, architecture) as the *eidos*, which could be separable from the particular.²¹ Perhaps, in the case of natural beings, we may speak of separate *eide* as Plato did.

The end of 3.8 can be easily misunderstood: “...to the proper being in the strongest sense belongs the last <hyle, which together with the *eidos* makes up the individual being>.” This does not mean that hyle in itself is the proper being in the strongest sense, the expression must be understood in the context of the present classification in 3.7 and it means, therefore, that the last hyle belongs to the compound particular. The sentence specifies only *which* hyle is relevant for the compound particular, evidently the last, which means the hyle that directly makes up the particular. The same is true of the purpose of the series of examples fire – flesh – head, in which the respective previous example is the hyle of what follows.

The analysis of how we speak about the becoming and changing of things (*metabole*) reveals three ‘parts’ of becoming, the opposites *steresis* and *eidos* and the underlying hyle. The provisional result is that becoming is the transition from a potential

²⁰ Cf. for this also the two citations of the sentence “A man begets a man” in 3.6 and 3.12.

²¹ With (3.8) εἰ μὴ ἡ τέχνη, compare *technē* as *eidos* in Z 9, 1034a24: ἡ γὰρ τέχνη τὸ εἶδος.

being in the state of steresis to an actual being in the state of *eidos* and that this takes place on the ground of a third, the *hyle*. Neither *hyle* nor *eidos*, however, can give the impulse to start the transition in this process, so this question of that which can provide the initial impetus remains. If we put this together with the other two causes, we find a new classification. *Hyle* and *eidos* are internal causes, they are necessary parts of the being, present together with the particular, while the moving cause is external and temporally prior. This is the subject of the sixth key proposition.

KP 6 *Met.* A 3.9 (1070a21–23) Τὰ μὲν οὖν κινουῦντα αἴτια ὡς προγεγενημένα ὄντα, τὰ δ' ὡς ὁ λόγος ἅμα.
The moving causes are beings <: *onta*> that are beforehand, while other <causes>, such as the notion <: *logos*>, are at the same time.

The particular, to *ek touton*, consisting of *hyle* und *eidos*, is that with respect to which the moving cause is “prior.” The causes of movement, which we encounter in everyday life, are all becoming themselves. That is obvious in the case of natural beings and things belonging to culture; the question now, however, is not how this or that thing comes to be but about becoming itself and in general. Thus we must ask after the first moving cause, which is capable of setting in motion becoming, in itself and in general, as a transition from steresis to *eidos* (cf. 4.13–4.17 and 5.5). The moving cause will play a major role in chapter A 6. The term “<causes> such as the notion” means here the same as *eidos*. Sentence 3.10 gives examples for the principle referred to in 3.9. The particular and its *eidos* are always together. It is impossible that a particular could be present without its *eidos*. We find a noteworthy variation in the expression for the eidetic nature: in 3.7 it reads *tode ti*, *physis* and *hexis*; in 3.8 *tode* and *logos*. It seems that Aristotle wants to avoid a technical terminological definition or that he considers it unimportant.

The questions in parentheses in 3.10 do not concern the main question about being. The question whether a part of the eidetic nature of a being for example of the soul or the intellect, remains after its passing away can, thus, be left open without damage. The question arises because the second classification of causes had a temporal criterion, moving causes are prior to emerging being, while *hyle* and *eidos* are si-

multaneous with it. And, hyle and eidos have no becoming in a particular process, so that we can ask whether they have an end or not.

In 3.11 the question of whether the ideas are necessary or useful is denied. Platonic ideas must be distinguished from the Aristotelian eidos, which is necessary for becoming. Aristotle wishes to apply what he said previously about the Platonic ideas. To understand becoming we must understand being. But being cannot be something like the Platonic ideas, because they cannot initiate movement and the three mentioned causes as eidos, hyle, kinoun, are sufficient to make understandable becoming. That is evident not only in the case of natural beings as Aristotle indicates with the repeated phrase that the actual man conveys through his nature his eidos to a becoming man. The same is the case in cultural producing, where the relevant knowledge (not the producing artisan), is the eidos, because “the medical science is the notion of health.”

6.2.3. *Met. A 4.1–4.2, with KP 7*

Hyle, eidos and to ek touton have been hitherto considered with respect to what they contribute to ousia, in which sense they are ousia and whether they have a becoming or not. Amongst these three only the last has a becoming. This ousia, the concrete particular, has many categorical determinations. Aristotle seeks to clarify whether all categorical determinations have the same cause or not. Right at the start he states a general principle, in some sense it is the anticipated result: The causes of different categories are different and, although with some restrictions, they are “in some way different, and in another way not,” he says (4.1). If we speak “analogically” then we can say that different categories have the same cause. Aristotle uses the proper being, ousia, and the *prosi ti* (4.2) as a model to formulate his question, whether the proper being and the other categories have the same causes or not. In 4.3–4.9 he develops two possible but contradictory answers, two further answers follow in the fifth chapter. While developing the answers he introduces some new distinctions which specify the sense of “analogically.” In 4.13–4.17 it is the distinction between internal and external causes, in 5.4–5.5 the distinction between actual and potential

causes, in 5.6 the distinction that causes can be universal or not and, finally, in 5.7 (see 4.17 already) the distinction between the first actual and potential principles. The answers rely on these distinctions. The question remains the same until the end of chapter five. The first answer is exposed in 4.3–4.9, the second in 4.10–4.17, the third in 5.1–5.3 and the fourth in 5.4–5.11.

Whether the being proper and its categorical determinations have the same causes or not has far-reaching consequences. Only if all categories have the same cause can the question about the causes be restricted to this one cause, which determines all categories; otherwise, if each category has its own cause, then the cause of each category must be considered separately. In the seventh key proposition, Λ 4.1 (together with 4.2), the leading question is extended in this sense.

KP 7 *Met.* Λ 4.1 (1070a31–33) Τὰ δ' αἴτια καὶ αἱ ἀρχαὶ ἄλλα ἄλλων ἔστιν ὡς, ἔστι δ' ὡς, ἂν καθόλου λέγῃ τις καὶ κατ' ἀναλογίαν, ταῦτά πάντων.

In some sense, the causes and principles of some beings are these, of other beings they are others, in another sense, if you speak generally and by analogy, they are the same for all.

6.2.4. *Met.* Λ 4.3–4.9

In 4.3–4.9 we receive a first answer to the question posed in 4.2. Aristotle gives two reasons for the thesis that it is not possible that all categories have the same cause. The first in 4.3–4.5 runs as follows: If the *pros ti* and *ousia* had the same cause, this cause would have to be something that both had in common and therefore stood above the categories. There is nothing beyond the categories, however, categories are the highest general determinations of the beings. The categories can be reduced neither to one common genus nor to each other.²² If one category should be prior to another the second should be an element of the first, but that is impossible in the case of the categories. Aristotle uses the being proper and the *pros ti* as an example, but the reasoning is valid for all categories. The question of how the proper being could be an element of the with-reference-to-something or the converse of this (4.4–4.5),

²² H. Bonitz, 1849, cites *Met.* Δ 28, 1024b15, K 9, 1065b8, *Physics* Γ 1, 100b34, *Analytica posteriora* A 22, 83b15; it is enough to point to the fact that 'to be' is no genus.

is only a rhetorical question. The categories are a list of different uses of ‘to be’ to avoid confusions arising from its usage. The proper being and the with-reference-to-something are categorical determinations of one and the same being, but different from each other and not reducible to each other.

In the sentences 4.6–4.9 there is a second argument. First, Aristotle repeats the leading question (4.6): How can the same elements be elements of all beings? Then he transforms this into the question of whether or not an element can be the same as the compound thing of which it is an element. This evidently cannot be (4.7), but, is that really the same question as asked in 4.6? Of which “all” ought the elements to be the same? Taking into account what is said hitherto and the conclusion concerning the categories in 4.8, “all” means “all categories.” Then the question in 4.6 asks whether the different categories can have the same elements. Provided that the categories are the highest genera, the most universal determinations of beings and of our discourse as well, that is impossible. Common elements of categories could be nothing other than higher and more universal determinations. Both, the elements and the composite, of which they are elements, would be the same, namely categories.

This, evidently, is absurd. If we wanted to change the presupposition by assuming that there are elements which are common for all categories but without themselves being categories then none of these elements could be the proper being or, for instance, a with-reference-to-something (as an example for the other categories), if categories are the highest genera, however, that should be.

Aristotle’s reasoning has the form of indirect evidence. If *ousia* and the other categories had the same elements, then *ousia* and the other categories could not be elements themselves; but they are inescapably elements, because they are reducible neither to something else nor to each other. Thus, there are no common elements for all categories.

4.7 gives an important supplement. What has been said so far referred to the perceptible beings. Now Aristotle adds that there is no such thing even in the noetic realm, neither ‘being’ nor ‘unity’ are such elements. Compound and as much as simple

beings *are* and both *are* in their respective forms of *unity*. In the *Topics* Aristotle has shown that *being* and *unity* “follow all beings.”

6.2.5. Met. A 4.10–4.17, with KP 8

In 4.10–4.17 Aristotle gives a second answer in his typical locution ἔστι μὲν ὡς [...], ἔστι δ' ὡς οὐ, “Or, as we say, in some sense there are <the same elements of all beings> in another sense not.” The second and positive answer concerns the perceptible bodies.²³ The sentence is divided into three parts (1070b10–13; b13–4; b14–16); but, probably they do not present three kinds of substance as W. D. Ross suggests, the subject is the same in all three parts. The first part shows that it is possible to say that all beings have the same causes and elements. This is the case if we assume that the warm is the *eidos* as one of the causes of the perceptible body, and that the cold is the *steresis* and then the *hyle* is that which is potentially both. The second part aggregates this as things or beings (*ousiai*); the just stated *eidos*, *steresis* and *hyle*, taken together are the *ousiai*, the particular beings, in terms *ta ek touton*. The third part, introduced with ἢ, does not speak about a new subject, but specifies only that which was said in the second part.²⁴ *Ta ek touton* is, strictly speaking, the unit of warm as *eidos* and cold as *steresis* in an appropriate *hyle*, as an actual thing, say flesh or bones. In such cases the elements are the same, but the things themselves differ from the elements (see end of 4.10).

Can we transfer this to “all” in 4.11? Speaking now about “all <beings>” Aristotle revokes the limitation to the perceptible things in 4.10, and includes the other categories, in accordance with the leading question in chapter 4, whether the proper being and the other categories have the same causes or not. The answer is that “all” cannot have the same elements and principles except by analogy.²⁵ That had already

²³ H. Bonitz, 1849, 480f.; he cites Alexander, 651, 16, and C. A. Brandis, 1836, 24, who thinks that Aristotle’s discussion about the elements refers to B 4, 1000a5 and K 2, 1060a27; H. Bonitz gives some arguments against this view, 1849, Prooemium, 24f.

²⁴ For further examples of this use of ἢ see Kühner-Gerth, *Griechische Grammatik*, II 2, § 538,3.

²⁵ “By analogy” means that there is the same relation between different things whereas the *pros-hen*-relation means that different things have a different relation to the same.

been said in the parentheses in sentence 4.11, but in 4.12 it is said again explicitly and with examples. If we say that the causes of all are the same, be it directly or by analogy, then we must take into account that in a particular case only their function is the same, whereas the elements actually involved can be different. Aristotle says that when something becomes coloured, the *eidos* is white, the *steresis* black, and the surface is the *hyle*: or, when day and night come to be, then the light is the *eidos*, the dark the *steresis* and the air is the *hyle*, thanks to the air both, *eidos* and *steresis*, can become day and night.

We are still looking for those causes, which have no coming into being but are necessary for coming into being and can initiate movement. The moving cause was mentioned before in 4.1 and 4.9, but only with 4.13 is it the subject. The moving cause is external to the caused being (in contrast to *eidos*, *steresis* and *hyle*); it cannot be an element but is nevertheless a cause and a principle (4.13). That which sets in motion is an *arche* and an *ousia*. Thus there are three elements, which by analogy are the same for all beings; and, if we add the moving cause there are four causes and principles. We must not forget, Aristotle repeats and adds at the end, that the direct internal and external causes in each particular case are different.

In 4.14 and 4.15 Aristotle gives two examples. Health and illness stand for *eidos* and *steresis*, the moving cause is the knowledge of the physician (4.14); or, the shape of the house is the *eidos*, the not yet organized construction material the *steresis* and the knowledge of the architect is the moving cause. In 4.16 he reflects on the types of moving causes, because they are not the same in the case of natural beings and things belonging to culture. If a man begets a man, then the moving cause is the *eidos* in the actual man, in the case of beings belonging to culture the moving cause is the *eidos* in the thought of the craftsman. There are, thus, three causes, in a sense four, depending on whether or not we count *eidos* once or twice. Aristotle sums it all up in 4.17: the art and knowledge of the physician (as moving cause and as *eidos*) is in some way health (as *eidos*); the art and knowledge of the architect is in some way the *eidos* of the house; and the *eidos* in the actual man is the moving cause for the man that becomes. No moving cause has its becoming in the respective process, in which it is involved, the moving cause must be anterior. But every moving cause

has a coming to be in another antecedent process. All causes so far considered *are* already. Even within this restricted frame (and without any speculative intention) it is right to say that becoming is based on being.

The chapter seems to end very abruptly with KP 8. I shall try to make this sentence comprehensible by recapitulating the line of thought. The perceptible ousia has been selected as the area of research into the causes. In this area Aristotle searched for the first and for that which has no coming to be through a process of becoming. We have seen that hyle and eidos do not have a becoming but that they cannot initiate movement and becoming. We have seen, furthermore, that the moving cause has no becoming in a respective process, but otherwise all moving causes that we know of have a coming to be. Thus we have still to ask after the first unmoved but moving cause which is the cause of all beings.

KP 8 *Met.* A 4.17 (1070b35) ... ἔτι παρὰ ταῦτα ὡς τὸ πρῶτον πάντων κινουῦν πάντα.
...; yet <there is a principle> beside those <just listed; namely a principle> as the first of all moving all.

We have always to ask for the primary and that in the case of the moving cause too, of course. What is this first cause of being (*Seinsgrund*) that has not any becoming? This question does not ask after a cause of something actually present, but after something systematically primary, beyond time, that is to say the first and one, which is the hen for the rest in the sense of the pros-hen-relation.

6.2.6. *Met.* A 5.1–5.11, with KP 9 and KP 10

In chapter five Aristotle first gives reasons that – in contrast to what is said in chapter four – it is right to limit the question to ousia, because without the proper being no other category can be. This is the fourth answer to the question, whether ousia and the other categories have the same causes (or the third, if one takes the first two parts of chapter 5 as only expositions of the aporia and not as answers). It is affirmative, because ousia is the necessary ground for all other categories. In this chapter Aristotle distinguishes the different ways, in which ousia and the other categories can have the same aitia and archai. Ousia is the common cause for all,

because:

- (i) ousia has categorical priority (5.1–5.3);
 - (ii) ousia has modal priority (5.4–5.5); and
 - (iii) ousia is prior when we take into account that something can be a cause in the universal or in the singular sense (5.6).
-

Table 6.2.: Priority of ousia

Aristotle gives one example for each of the three cases. I discuss them next. The ninth and tenth key propositions stem from this section of the text.

ad (i)

Ousia is the one and same cause for all, because it alone is separable. This is to say that without ousia we cannot speak about any other category, without ousia no other category can be. Of ousia, independent of any other category, however, we can speak. Ousia can be independent of any other category (not as a particular being, of course). Aristotle does not use the term ‘category’ but *pathe* and *kineseis* (5.2) but if we wish to describe what a being can experience or how it can change, that must be done in categorical terms. By limiting the area of possible accidents, ousia indirectly becomes cause for all of them.

As examples for such common causes Aristotle names “soul and body, or more precisely intellect, impulse and body” (5.3).²⁶ Such are the causes for that which can happen to a particular, concrete man. Many conclude, incorrectly to my mind, that Aristotle supports essentialism by saying that ousia limits the area of possible accidents. Firstly, Aristotle provides his statement with some restrictive conditions (see the following sentences); secondly, the thesis does not concern everyday things but is a result derived from the analysis of opinions about ousia and belongs to the speculative area whereas essentialism has in its focus the essence of real things.

ad (ii)

²⁶ ἦ as above, 1070b14, not as alternative choice but introducing a specification. For the connection of *nous* and *orexis* see *De Anima* Γ 10, *Nicomachean Ethics* Z 2, 1139a18, *De motu animalium* 6, 700b19 and 20, *Politica* A 5, 1254b5 and Γ 16, 1287a32.

KP 9

Met. A 5.4 (1071a4ff) ἔτι δ' ἄλλον τρόπον τῷ ἀνάλογον ἀρχαὶ αἱ αὐταί, οἷον ἐνέργεια καὶ δύναμις· ἀλλὰ καὶ ταῦτα ἄλλα τε ἄλλοις καὶ ἄλλως.

Yet <also> in another way, analogically, the principles are the same, namely as actuality and potentiality; but these too are <principles> for one thing this way for another that way and in any case differently.

In another way too, the principles of the proper being and the other categories can be analogically the same, namely when we consider whether the cause is cause actually or potentially. The modalities, actuality and potentiality, are not themselves causes, the issue is the difference in whether the causes are actual or potential. In the individual cases the causes may be different actually but the same analogically. This means we have to take into account, whether whatever is a cause is actual or potential, because the being-a-cause is different in each case. In addition the actuality of an actual cause and the potentiality of a potential cause can differ in different cases.

Aristotle distinguishes two cases in which the modality of a cause can vary. In 5.5(a) (1071a6–11), he considers the case that the same being, depending on its relation, is an actual or a potential cause, taking as examples wine, flesh and man. In 5.5(b) (1071a11–17), he deals with the difference between potential and actual in the case of causes which have neither the same hyle nor the same eidos as the caused being, taking as example the man with its hyle and its eidos and for moving causes the father and the sun.

We begin with 5.5(a). Wine, flesh, man are examples for causes, which are potential or actual depending upon their relation. Wine is in itself an actual being, having its categorical determinations. It can be an actual cause for, say, festive atmosphere or for wine stains on the tablecloth, but it is at the same time a potential cause, namely as hyle for the body (flesh) which for its part is a potential cause for the drinking man. Each of these is something for itself and when it is cause actually for something it is cause in a different way than when it is cause potentially (the wine which has the potential to build up the flesh and the wine which is already integrated in the flesh). Aristotle says, therefore, that all causes of this kind fall within the already

mentioned causes, namely *eidos*, *steresis* and *to ex amphoin*, but that they differ when they are cause actually or potentially. Wine is a *to ek touton*, it is composed of grapes, the *hyle* of the wine; and wine has its own *eidos*, as well as the grapes taken for themselves. Wine as potential vinegar is *steresis* and *hyle* of the vinegar. The vinegar has its own *eidos* and it is a *to ek touton*, a particular thing; in another relation, if it is used to prepare salad dressing, vinegar is again *steresis* and *hyle*.

We find a textual problem at 1071a9. Should we place a punctuation mark between the words [...] ἀμφοῖν στέρησις [...], as W. Jaeger and S. Fazzo do, or not, as W. D. Ross proposes? W. D. Ross renders the text as follows (II, 359): “[...]; the form (if it is separable) and that which includes both elements but is a privation exist actually, the matter potentially.” With a punctuation mark the sense changes totally. The being determined by the *eidos* and the from-both *are* actually (actuality does not mean ‘to exist’ but ‘to have the necessary determinations’), but the being determined by *steresis* *is* just as well (to be determined by *eidos* or by *steresis* means to have or not a certain determination or only in restricted manner). *Hyle* is potentiality in both cases, because ‘it can become both’ (see at the end of 5.5(a)), i. e. it is that which can be determined in the sense of *eidos* or of *steresis*. H. Bonitz, 1849, 484, connects the foregoing classification of causes in *eidos*, *steresis* and *hyle* and the present classification in actuality and potentiality as follows: *forma rei*, *res concreta*, *privatio* belong to actuality, *materia* to potentiality.

H. Bonitz says that the part 5.5(b) of the sentence is opaque. He accepts, therefore, the emendation of Trendelenburg ἄλλως δ’ ἢ (485). With this reading the text is concerned with the kinds of causes and with the sun as a first moving cause (mentioned before in 4.17). The sun has a status of its own *vis-à-vis* the four causes and *vis-à-vis* the distinction between actuality and potentiality. As a *primum movens* the sun must be distinguished from the type of cause, which it most resembles, namely to a particular thing as *causa movens*.

What is the result for our understanding of 5.5(b)? In 5.5(a) it was stated that if the cause and the caused thing have the same *hyle*, potentiality and actuality are used in the modal sense. In the process of becoming the modality of the *hyle* changes.

The hyle is only a potentiality but thanks to the eidos, hyle comes to be part of an actual ‘from-both.’ Now, in 5.5(b) Aristotle adds that if the cause and the caused thing have neither the same hyle nor the same eidos, actuality and potentiality differ from the sense in 5.5(a), i. e. that their sense is other than the modal sense. To make this clear he uses man as example. Its remote hyletic causes are the elements, as fire and earth, but a man does not consist of them unmediated, his immediate hyle is the nutrition or flesh, blood, bones, made up by that, so the remoted hyle of man differs from its immediate hyle. The hyle which, together with the eidos, makes up the from-both, the actual man, is the same in any case. The man’s eidos does not have a hyle, but the moving cause does. The father has the same kind of hyle as the son, but not, of course, the same particular portion. Further, if we ask after the first moving cause in nature, we find the sun and the ecliptic. The sun has neither the same hyle nor the same eidos as the man, which is caused.

Now, what is the difference between actuality and potentiality in (a) and (b)? In 5.5(a) we see the hyle-eidos-sequences, where the hyle-phase is a phase of potentiality for the next eidos-phase, as a phase of actuality. If we include the remote hyle in a less strict sense we can say “all things have the same hyle,” because all natural beings are formed out of the same elements and the same first hyle. If, however, we only consider the next hyle as cause, then the hyle of different beings is different. In this case the difference between actuality and potentiality is a modal distinction. In 5.5(b) the issue is about the difference between actuality and potentiality, when the caused and the cause do not have the same hyle. To ex hou is the hyle; the eidos and the hou heneka do not have any hyle but to kinesan or arche kineseos do. This hyle can be the same in the cause and in the caused. That is the case with the natural growing out of plants and animals where we consider the hyle which makes up the plant or the animal together with the eidos. But when we consider the pasture as the hyle of the cow, then the hyle is different from that of the causes. In the artisanal production the hyle and the eidos of the moving cause and of the caused being is different, in any case (carpenter – table).

Considering the first cause, which is capable of setting in motion in the field of natural becoming, i. e. the sun and the ecliptic, we see that the sun as cause has a hyle

different from that of the caused. This means that not only does “the same arise[s] out of the same” (which is the case if the notion of the produced thing and the productive knowledge is taken as the *eidos* of the produced thing, as has been shown) but different beings also arise out of different beings. J. Tricot refers in his footnote to the text to *Met.* Θ 1. This is helpful for the understanding of 5.5. It seems that Aristotle wants to point out two kinds of difference between actuality and potentiality. On the one hand we have the technical modal use of the concepts (*dynamis* – *energeia*), on the other hand there is the sense of *dynamis* in its colloquial use, where *dynamis* is “the principle of movement and change in another being or insofar as it is another being” (cf. Θ 1, 1046a4–11). With this sense of force or power is connected the resistance and the capacity for suffering. We must understand the sun as *dynamis* in this sense because it is the principle of movement in another being. If the caused beings and the causes have the same *hyle*, then potentiality has the modal meaning, *hyle* is this potentiality; if they have a different *hyle*, then it has the sense of *arche kineseos*.

It may come as a surprise that Aristotle mentions the sun. But it is remarkable that Aristotle never forgets his leading question, even if he makes lengthy digressions. The leading question lies in the first sentence of the book: Περὶ οὐσίας ἢ θεωρίας, “The present theory concerns being.” To be able to carry out this theory we first have to identify and to define the field of investigation. Following the line begun in the *Sophist*, it is clear that this area is that of the prevailing opinions about being. In this area the opinions about natural beings are the least controversial. With regard to them, we ask after the being and the primary, which makes becoming possible and which being involved in this process has a becoming and which not. We have, then, to ask after that which is capable of initiating movement, because just this question has not yet been answered. The Platonic ideas cannot be the being we are searching for, because the ideas cannot found movement, they cannot cause or move anything, even if they do have that other necessary feature, immovability.²⁷ They are insufficient to answer the questions raised in the *Timaeus* and picked up

²⁷ Certainly *Soph.*, 248e–249a, is not taken into account here; but what Aristotle names τὸ παντελῶς ὄν, is not the idea in the sense of the “friends of the ideas.”

by Theophrastus at the beginning of his *Metaphysics*.

We are satisfied, then, with a partial response as given in 5.5. The father as moving cause is a good example, but inadequate as an answer to the leading question which being can ground becoming. The sun seems a much better candidate. The sun, in any case, does belong to the set of eternal beings. It is a moving cause, even the cause of life on earth. According to the state of knowledge at the time, it is the first cause capable of initiating becoming in the area of natural beings. The ecliptic belongs to the same astronomical area and is responsible for the variation in the sun's manner of being a cause. The discussion about the difference between actuality and potentiality in 5.4–5.5 must serve as a preparation for the considerations in 5.6–5.9. This last part must be understood in connection with the foregoing.

ad (iii)

Aristotle begins with the distinction that some terms can be said universally, others not (5.6), then he states a thesis concerning the first principles:

KP 10 *Met.* A 5.7 (1071a18f) πάντων δὴ πρῶται ἀρχαὶ τὸ ἐνεργεῖα πρῶτον τοδι καὶ ἄλλο ὃ δυνάμει.
Thus, the first principles of all <beings> are the first actual this and another <principle> which is potential.

The 'actual this' (meaning the full-determined particular) and the potential hyle belong to the first principles of all beings. After the foregoing considerations about potentiality we must make a differentiation in the notion of potentiality. In some cases it is modal, as potentiality in contrast to actuality (in the sense that the being is determined in its *eidōs*), in other cases it means the power to set something in motion, in contrast to actuality (in the sense of realization or performance of the movement).

The sentences 5.6 and 5.7 form a unit, 5.8 and 5.9 explain them. The "general causes" refer to genera, the other to particulars. Aristotle cites man as a cause, but 'man' is not the same as genus and as particular, so the causes of both must be different too (and both of those are themselves causes, in different ways). The

genus is a being only in a secondary sense (*deutera ousiai*), while the particular is “more being.” Let us consider these differences in the meaning using as example the phrase “A man begets a man.”

1. As a singular sentence it means: “Peleus begets Achilles.”
 2. As a universal sentence it means: “Something with the *eidos* man begets a man and not, say, a tree.”
 3. In a mixed manner: “The *eidos* ‘man’ in the begetting man, insofar it is its nature and therefore its principle of movement, is the cause that the single, begotten being is again a man.”
 4. The statement “The particular is the first and essential cause of a particular” is in turn universal. Only the actual cause in a given case is different from an other actual cause of the same kind in another case, but both have in common the determinations to be a ‘this’ and to be ‘actual’ (they do not differ in their *eidos*). 5.8 explains this with the example of the father.
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Table 6.3.: “A man begets a man”

It is not clear to which the word ἐκεῖνα in 1071a19 refers. W. D. Ross thought that it refers to a17 and means the Platonic ideas. In a similar way, T. A. Szlezák translates: *Jene allgemeinen <Prinzipien> [...] With H. Bonitz, it seems more plausible to me that it refers to “this” in 5.7.*

5.9 takes up the assumption that causes and elements of the beings differ from each other. If that is true, then there are no general causes, neither in the categories in general, nor in each category separately, but even here it remains true that by analogy all beings can have the same cause. In the case of the particulars the three causes – the actual hyle, the *eidos* of the particular and the moving cause – do differ.

5.10 gives a long summary. If we ask with regard to the principles and elements of the beings and of every single category, whether there is a universal cause for all beings (and categories) or whether every particular has its own cause, then we must first be clear about the underlying presuppositions that we accept in the frame of the above mentioned distinctions. The answer will differ, contingent on this. If we ask generally, the answer will be affirmative, with the limitation that it is valid

only analogically. If we ask taking into account the distinctions made above, we can answer more discriminatingly and name as causes the *eidōs*, the privation and the moving cause. We can, moreover, designate a single cause for all beings insofar as all beings, which are not *ousia*, depend on it. As a cause *ousia* determines to a certain degree all other categories.

With καὶ πάντων we again encounter a textual problem (1071a33, in 5.10). In W. Jaeger's edition this is the beginning of a sentence (: [...] πλὴν ὁδί. καὶ πάντων ὁδὶ μὲν [...]); W. D. Ross puts the comma after the phrase ([...] πλὴν ὁδί καὶ πάντων, ὁδὶ μὲν [...]). W. Jaeger punctuates as Moerbeke did, T. A. Szlezák, L. Judson follow him. The reading of W. D. Ross seems to me to make sense, but I think that the two ὁδί, a33 and a34, display only the first ὁδί in 1071a33. Paraphrasing the sentence we get: only in a certain way are there the same principles for all beings : a) insofar as *hyle*, *eidōs*, *steresis* and the moving cause are the same causes for all beings by analogy; b) insofar as the *ousia* is the cause for every other categorical determination.

In the second half of the sentence 5.10, 1071a35, Aristotle reminds us again of the first universal principle of all, namely the actual particular. This too is a general principle for all beings. In contrast to this, the factual first and direct causes for something are different if they are opposites, which cannot be combined in a superior genus and which are not said in many ways. Finally, the directly involved *hyle* of a certain being too is a different principle.

We can summarize as follows: Corresponding to the diversity of our ways of speaking (*Met. A* 5.10) the *aitia* and *archai* of the *ousia* and the *symbebekota* are different; when we take into account the distinctions made in (i), (ii) und (iii), then the *ousia* and the *symbebekota* have the same *aitia* and *archai*.

5.11 is the final sentence in the usual form. Presented here in the form of a list are the results of the distinctions made in *Met. A* 4–5:

1. By analogy and in general the cause for all beings is the same; if we consider the causes in detail, if we ask what the cause for this and that is, then the

causes are different.

2. By analogy and in general the cause for all beings is the same, be it actual or be it potential. The respective first causes for something must be an actual any-this. This is valid for natural beings as well as for beings in the cultural area.
3. We cannot explain and understand the transition from steresis to eidos with hyle and eidos alone. We have, therefore, to examine the other causes in the list, the moving cause and the telos.
4. Due to the variety of our manners of speaking, the causes for all beings are different unless we explicitly take this variety into account and we pay attention the the pros-hen-relation.

At the start, we asked in a more general way the question which being is the basis of becoming. That question now has a more precise meaning. We ask after the first, which is prior to becoming, having no coming-to-be itself and which is in some sense the cause of becoming. This is all asked within the frame of the given distinctions in our language. What on the whole can initiate movement is asked, we do not ask after the cause of the existence of this or that. The Platonic idea fulfills the condition of having no coming-to-be, but it cannot initiate any movement, being only something in which things can participate and even the Aristotelian eidos cannot move anything. The same is true for the hyle: as pure possibility it cannot initiate any movement. The being we are searching for is not yet found, the investigation made so far will not suffice. There is something we have seen that can set in motion and which has no coming-to-be: the sun, but the sun is not unmoved in the manner we seek (5.5). Not even the sun can make becoming understandable. The investigation made thus far has revealed necessary but not sufficient causes. Theophrastus intends the same when he remarks (*Met.*, § 25):

Up to a point, then, we are able to conduct studies by means of a cause by taking starting points from sense-perceptions; but when we move on to “the first and highest” [things] themselves, we are no longer able to, ... (Transl. Gutas)

Eidos and hyle do not have all the features to be required the first causes. We must

continue our investigation into the first unmoved moving cause and the first telos. The series of the finite moved causes cannot end in an infinite regression. This result, that our inquiry is incomplete, once again confirms that that which is asked after is nothing other than being, *Sein*.

7. KP 11 and KP 12: The First Speculative High Point, *Met.* Λ 6

In *Met.* Λ 6, Aristotle makes a new beginning, by referring back to *Met.* Λ 1.7. This new start leads to two speculative high points. Although the next chapters stand in contrast to the previous ones, they are based upon them, therefore I shall briefly recapitulate the turns the question about being has taken in *Met.* Λ 1–5. Next, the plan of the chapters 6 and 7 will prepare us to locate the speculative high points in their context. The further sections of this chapter discuss KP 11 (*Met.* Λ 6.1) and KP 12 (*Met.* Λ 6.8), together with subsequent reflections on that sentence in *Met.* Λ 6.9–6.29. The exposition of the second speculative high point in *Met.* Λ 7 is given in the next chapter, which treats key propositions 13 until 18.

7.1. Recapitulation of Content and Results of *Met.* Λ 1–5

The first sentence of *Met.* Λ denotes the subject of the inquiry, the method and the point of view from which the question about being is to be asked. With this sentence Aristotle refers to a long tradition of philosophical discourse that includes Presocratics, Plato and the Old Academy. It is a fact that he concentrates the discourse on the question about being; it is not relevant for our question whether he was right or not to focus his tradition in that way. His method of the inquiry is *theoria* and the point of view from which the question is asked is the question of what being (*Sein*) can found becoming. That he asks the question about being together with the question about becoming seems to be a result of the foregoing discourse that had shown that becoming cannot ground itself, but needs being as its ground. The first five chapters have clarified the sense of this question.

Aristotle does not search for an answer by means of experience or by exploring beings present in the world, precisely because these things, experience and being that are present, need to be founded; instead, his method is *theoria*, speculation practiced in topical attitude. Since, then, the leading question is after that being which is the basis of becoming we ask – within the given distinctions, which are distinctions made by the language – for the first which precedes becoming having itself no becoming. It is, nevertheless, a cause of becoming, it ‘causes’ becoming. The quotation marks should remind us that being does not ground becoming in the sense of a *causa efficiens*.

In the following section – from *Met.* A 1.2 up to 1.8 – Aristotle lists some modes of being from which three types of being result. It is something like an overview of prevailing opinions about being: ‘we’ speak about perceptible beings, of which some are finite, others not and about not-perceptible beings. On the basis of this overview Aristotle chooses the perceptible being, *ousia aisthete*, in 1.9, as the subject of first investigation because this is the being least disputed, the opinions about it popular and stable. He translates these opinions into his own terminology in order to have in place a valid basis for the question about being. He does this in sentences 1.9–2.2 employing the term *metabole*. These sentences contain the first analysis of the being of the *ousia aisthete*.

We can divide the text from 2.3 to 5.11 into two sections. Up to the end of chapter 3 there are reflections on the elements of the concept of *metabole* and a second analysis of becoming, oriented towards the way we use the term ‘to become’ in our discourses: “All becoming things become something out of something through something” (so 3.2; as an example: “A table becomes out of timber by a carpenter.”) Thus, we have as causes the *eidōs*, the *hylē* and the moving cause.

In chapters 4 and 5 Aristotle asks in what sense all beings can be said to have the same *aitia kai archai* and in which sense they cannot. If we wish to know what the first cause is, then we must ask after those within the range of the four causes, which do not themselves have a becoming. For we seek for a being without becoming, but one which can found becoming. Within the set of beings that do not have a

becoming, we must select that which can initiate movement.

Both hyle – which was the Presocratic answer to the question about the first being – and eidos – Plato’s answer – do not have becoming. Hyle cannot be the being we are searching for as the basis of becoming, because it is mere indeterminateness and potentiality.¹ The eidos is not suitable, because it cannot initiate movement. From the list of the causes there, therefore, remain telos and the moving cause. With respect to a present process of becoming, the moving causes have no becoming, they already are. Considered, however, in another respect they do have themselves a becoming.

Any philosophical questioning is ultimately directed at what is primary in its field, so Aristotle has asked whether hyle or eidos have the necessary features to stand as the first causes of being. After answering that in the negative he now asks whether the moving cause could stand as that primary. One reason for this choice is that the moving cause is one in the list of causes, but another even stronger is that Aristotle was searching for an answer to the question of how movement can first begin. The primary that sets in motion must be something without itself any form of motion. As such, nothing in our world is suitable, not even the sun, which – to the knowledge of the time – it was considered an eternal being, was thought subject to the conditions of a specific form of movement and to have a hyle.

If there is one and the same cause for all categories (for instance, the same is the cause for something being an apple and being green) then all we have to do is to investigate this one cause. If, however, each category has a different cause (one thing is the cause for it being an apple and something else cause that the apple is green) then the procedure becomes much more complicated. In the second part, in chapters 4 and 5, Aristotle investigates in which sense the same can be cause for different categories and in which sense it cannot (the question whether the entire spectrum of the use of *to be* shares a common center or not belongs to the same complex of questions.) The answer is positive when being in general is under con-

¹ Note, that with this shift of the concept Aristotle has transformed hyle into a *Seinsbegriff*, a concept characterizing being.

sideration. Insofar as ousia and eidos define the framework of possible realizations in the different categories we see one and the same cause for all categories. The answer is negative, when we consider only the causes of a particular, of a *tode ti* (5.10).

7.2. Disposition and Line of Thought in *Met. A 6* and 7

In *Met. A 6.1* Aristotle refers to the distinguishing of beings into three groups, made in 1.7: one of them being the group of perceptible beings, some of these eternal others perishable and the third that of not-perceptible beings. On the basis of these distinctions, the conclusion is “that there is also an eternal and unmoved being.” Even this conclusion is drawn on the basis of opinions. Aristotle does not anticipate the speculative result that comes only later with 6.8. This sentence does not claim the existence of anything either, it is no more than the logical consequence of given endoxa.

Through the first eight sentences of the sixth chapter Aristotle arrives by the shortest way at the highest speculation. Throughout the rest of *Met. A*, Aristotle is only developing and explaining this result, so to speak. In sentences 9 to 12 Aristotle considers the state of hyle in this context, then the problem of whether actuality or potentiality is prior. The rest of the chapter is devoted to considerations of the consequences of other assumptions about the question. Consequently, we see no other being than that with the characteristics mentioned in 6.8, which could make being (ousia) understandable as a reason for becoming. The text concludes with an analysis of the question of how irregular movements could be the effect of a cause that is working constantly, in the same regular way.

The first three sentences of chapter 7 introduce the unmoved moving. The phrase ...καὶ εἰ μὴ οὕτως ... in sentence 7.1 signifies, that if we did not accept the result of 6.8, i. e. if the origin of movement was not conceived as {being–actuality}, then we should have to return to the solutions just rejected in 6.13–6.22. The combination of the determinations ‘moved’ and ‘moving’ and their negations result in a table,

wherein the ‘unmoved moving’ has a position.

W. D. Ross saw a textual corruption in 7.3, W. Jaeger a lacuna. S. Fazzo has recently come up with a solution, which at once is sensible in itself and accepts the manuscript reading (2012, and 2016, 203). Against the transmission, at 1072a25 she prefers the dative ἐνεργείᾳ, to get the sense “Unmoved Mover in act” instead of “unmoved mover as act” (2016, 181–205). She argues that Aristotle mainly uses the pair with dative δυνάμει – ἐνεργείᾳ, and that the notion of an “ἐνέργεια [as] an absolute concept” (183) is not an Aristotelian but a Neoplatonic one and that furthermore, the *Iota adscriptum* often drops out in capital writing. In 1071b20 she retains the nominative ἐνέργεια, because ousia with a genitive depends on it (196); her paraphrase of 6.8 runs: “...those beings which eternally act [i. e. the heavens] are such that acting is the very essence of them.” It seems to me that we can arrive at the same meaning with the nominative or the dative. Even if the original text did have the nominative, after 6.8 the meaning would be ‘being – in the mode of actuality’ which had had no prior possibility and had never a coming to be.

- 7.3 (1072a24–26) ἐπεὶ δὲ κινούμενον καὶ κινῶν καὶ μέσον, τοῖνον ἔστι τι ὃ οὐ κινούμενον κινεῖ, αἰδίον καὶ οὐσία καὶ ἐνέργεια οὐσα
 Since <there is a> moved, a setting in motion, and an intermediate <type of being>,
 LS 13 *there then is also some <type> that sets in motion without being moved, which is eternal, being <: ousia> and actuality.*

In a longer section (7.4–7.15) Aristotle shows that a cause that sets in motion, itself unmoved, is possible, understandable and even necessary. To explain this he takes up everyday experience. Everybody is familiar with causes that set in motion, themselves unmoved, namely the things which one desires, thinks of, loves (7.4). Starting out from such experiences, it becomes easier to understand the being, *Sein*, for which we are searching as a being which sets in motion, itself unmoved. Aristotle has raised the question to a new level.

Subsequently (7.10ff.) he explains that a desired object or person can initiate motion without being moved itself because it is a cause in the sense of a goal. Insofar as

something is moved in another respect, it has some potentiality and it can become otherwise than it is just now. This means it does not meet the condition stated in 6.8. At first, it may seem that the heavens or nature is the principle and origin we are searching for, but that would be mistaken in the same way that it was to take the sun for the principle (5.5). Even the heavens and nature depend on the arche we are looking for (7.15).

In the sentences from 7.16 to 7.23 Aristotle reaches the second speculative high point. This begins abruptly with a statement about the “way of life” (diagoge, 7.16, 1072b14):

And we have a way of life, such that it is the best, for a short time, for that <origin> is this way forever, and indeed <that> is impossible for us.

How does this fit in the line of thought? – In 6.8 Aristotle said that the being we are searching for, the principle and origin of becoming, must be actuality. What being (*Seiendes*) does fulfill this condition? The sun and the fixed stars are first in our natural world to initiate motion, but all the same they do not fulfill the necessary condition. The question remains what actuality will mean in the case of the first moving cause, if it should set in motion without itself being moved like a telos. With the diagoge, way of life, Aristotle redirects the attention from the realm of beings (*Seiendes*) to being (*Sein*), another example the manner in which the philosopher can shift a question to a higher level. In doing so he is following suggestions made by Plato in *Sophist* 248e: ousia, being, cannot be purely static, it must include life, soul, thought. How ought we to understand the actuality of being, which as the sought out cause of becoming in the sense of a telos, sets in motion without being moved itself? Aristotle responds in 7.16–7.19 that noesis, actual awareness, is the cause we are searching for.

In 7.24–7.25 Aristotle discusses dissenting opinions. There are anticipated possible objections to his thesis that the complete and perfect is the beginning. Pythagoreans and Speusippus think that the most beautiful and the best cannot be the beginning, but that they are the end, as we find in observing plants and animals. Aristotle responds that this objection has its basis of factual things that become, but that even

here actuality and the perfect state must precede. It is not the seed which is the beginning, but that from which the seed comes. Now, this example from the realm of everyday life must be translated in into the speculative frame.²

Sentences 7.26 and 7.27 conclude the chapter referring primarily to 6.1 (not to 7.17–7.20). 7.26 is a very typical closing sentence beginning with ὅτι μὲν οὖν (*Thus, that there is some being <: ousia, Sein>, eternal, unmoved, and separate from the perceptible <beings> is clear from what has been said; ...*). The vocabulary used in this sentence points to the origins of the question in the Parmenidean thinking.

At this point we must consider a specific difficulty of the text. Normally, we rightly assume that a word is used in a text in a consistent way, i. e. that it retains the same meaning throughout the text. Aristotle himself establishes this as a rule because equivocations destroy an argument or render it invalid. Here, the word *ousia* should have the same sense at every occurrence. According to this rule one could sum up the different determinations given about *ousia* and all of these together would express what *ousia* is. It would be possible to state a result of all these determinations, god, for example and say that this is the first substance we are searching for. The rule, however seems to be seriously violated in *Met. A*. The reader must be aware of the diversity of meanings of *ousia* and make his choice without any helpful indication from the text. The different determinations of *ousia* cannot, then, be summed up. They refer to different things.

We find a good example of how Aristotle shifts from one use of *ousia* to another in sentences 6.1 to 6.8. Here Aristotle leads us on the shortest route from the things and beings around us to the highest point of speculation about being. In 6.1 *ousia* means groups of beings, because it refers to 1.7; in 6.2 it means the particular; in 6.8 it means being (*Sein*), as it does in *Met. A* 1.1. Aristotle is switching between ‘ousia absolutely’ (*Seiendes*) and ‘ousia of something,’ but he is aware of the difference. ‘Ousia absolutely’ stems from the area of endoxa and is the starting point for the

² This is comparable to the chicken-and-egg problem. If the question is asked in the natural area, there is no possible solution. There is no chicken without an egg and no egg without a chicken. But if the question is asked in the eidetic area, that means, if we want to know where the eidetic determinations primarily lie, then the answer is that the chicken has the priority.

reflection, the 'ousia of something' corresponds to the *ti estin*;

But besides this twofold use of *ousia*, we find in *Met. A 1.1* and in the speculative sentences a third use, which could be confused with 'ousia absolutely.' This third use is the peculiar goal of all the theoretical considerations: being, *Sein*. If we accept these distinctions for our reading then we see that Aristotle, by different approaches, leads his readers from the *endoxa* to the deepest basis of their opinions, i. e. to their opinion about *to be*. Sometimes the meaning of *ousia* in questions and answers can change in quick succession. What is said later about *ousia* is not necessarily thought to be added to that which had been earlier said, there could be a totally new approach. Things can be said in a new respect and on a level of question which in the meantime has shifted.

In addition to this we have to take into account the possibility of a twofold interest at play, and this in every sentence of every chapter but most especially in chapters six to ten. For, Aristotle pursues an astronomical-cosmological interest and a theoretical interest as well. This duality is founded on the way the question must be asked in the tradition of the *Timaeus*. The contribution of this dialogue was to show that for the question about being (*Sein*) the theoretical method is prior to the physical method. Theophrastus takes this up in his first paragraph:

How and with what sort of [things] should one mark the boundaries of the study of the first [things]? For surely the [study] of nature is more multifarious and, at least as some actually say, more lacking in order, involving as it does all sorts of changes; but the [study] of the first [things] is bounded and always the same, for which reason, indeed, they even place it among the intelligibles but not the sensibles, on the ground that the [intelligibles] are unmovable and unchangeable, and on the whole consider it more venerable and more important.
(Transl. Gutas)

The theoretical method alone can provide an answer to the question of the first beginning. If we do not want simply to restate new opinions against old opinions then we cannot do otherwise than reflect on our own opinions and seek out their fundamentals. That, however, does not prevent Aristotle from returning to the astronomical side of the question. The objective is not to decide whether the speculative part

in chapter 6 and 7 or the astronomical part in chapter 8 is the last word. In the thinking without contention, there is, in any case, no last word but also no first word.³ The comments on both issues are to be considered within their respective frame, the one in the theoretical the other in the frame of an actual cosmological discussion. What astronomy cannot provide for the question about the first is clear: astronomy has nothing to do with the theoretical first.

The overall direction ought not to be along the line of asking “We have a subject, the substance, and now we wish to know what we can know about it.” Better instead were: “We have opinions about the beings, now we want to ask for the necessary fundamentals of these opinions, for their very horizon.”

The two lines of inquiry intersect, following different types of questions about the first and the origin. The theoretical question asks “How and in which sense being is cause and origin of becoming?” the physical “Which are the first causes of this natural being?” We find the same duality of questioning in Plato’s *Timaeus* and in the difference of questions asked by Kant in the *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft* and in the *Opus postumum*.

7.3. KP 11 (*Met. A 6.1*): The First Speculative High Point

KP 11 *Met. A 6.1* (1071b3–5) Ἐπεὶ δ’ ἦσαν τρεῖς οὐσίαι, δύο μὲν αἰ φυσικαὶ μία δ’ ἡ ἀκίνητος, περὶ ταύτης λεκτέον ὅτι ἀνάγκη εἶναι αἰδιόν τινα οὐσίαν ἀκίνητον.
Since there are, as has been stated <in A 1.7>, three kinds of being <: ousiai>, two natural but one immovable, one must say about the last, that it is necessary that there is some eternal immovable ousia.

Aristotle begins his reflections in *Met. A 6* referring to the divided opinions about beings reported in *Met. A 1.7* with the thesis, “that it is necessary that there is some eternal immovable ousia.” In 6.2 to 6.4 he gives some reasons supporting this thesis; in 6.5–6.7 he adds considerations about the actuality and potentiality of the

³ Quite contrary to what Th. Nagel, argues in his *The Last Word*, New York 1997.

moving cause, and immediately draws the speculative conclusion 6.8: *Therefore there must be a principle such that its being <: ousia, Sein> is actuality.* The remaining sentences of the chapter are corollaries (about the hyle, about which of the pair, actuality and potentiality is prior to the other, 6.9–6.10) and reflections on the conclusion in 6.8 (6.11–6.12). Finally, 6.22–6.28, Aristotle deals with arising objections to his own result.

6.1 refers to the list of opinions reported in 1.7. From the three groups of beings the perceptible and moved beings have already been discussed. Now the other group, the unmoved beings are to be examined. As regards the content, sentence 6.1 is connected even more strongly with 1.1 than with 1.7. The theory of being, announced in 1.1, is taken up now in a closer circle than before; the starting point, namely the opinions about the being of natural beings is outlined in *Met. A 1–5*, the theory itself as reflection on the fundamentals of our opinions, can now begin. In the following chapters 6–7, Aristotle gives a speculative answer to the question of what the being, *Sein*, is, that fulfills the necessary and the sufficient conditions, which the first moving cause must meet, with respect to the world in motion, as we see and experience it.

Neither Parmenides nor Plato, could put the question concerning the primary in this form, they did not possess the intention or the tools for such. Parmenides had to declare an epiphany, Plato wished to present the opinions in order to have them tested by Socrates. Nevertheless, it is obvious that Aristotle's question is in the tradition of Parmenides since he employs Parmenidean expressions to describe being, *Sein*; and he is also located in the tradition of Plato, for – beside the many references to the *Sophist* and beside the common main theme, the question about being – Aristotle uses the new type of terms established by Plato, the quotations.⁴

Contrary to the standard argument it seems that the essential goal in *Met. A 6–10* is not to trace the first cause creating of the world's creation but to find that being which can found becoming. The first cause that is capable of setting in motion is just one of several points to explain in what prevailing opinions claim about natural

⁴ For quotations, *Anführungen*, as a type of term see E. Sonderegger, 2012, 3.2.

becoming.

This becomes very clear in 6.5–6.8. In the question “How does movement come about?” the notion ‘movement’ is to be understood in a double respect. With respect to the content, movement is the transition from a not-thus-determined being to a thus-determined being, that is, from steresis to eidos. In modal respect it is the transition from potentiality to actuality. Determination is always a determination of a being to be determined, so that the transition requires something on which it can take place. This can never be the steresis-itself or the eidos-itself, but it is that which Aristotle named hyle. Obviously hyle has no becoming in a particular process but is necessarily involved in this process. The eidetically determined hyle becomes a from-both (*Met. A 1–2*).

A first heuristic means asking the question about the being which founds becoming was the examination of the way we speak about changes; a second was the distinction between internal and external causes. The causes which were discussed hitherto, namely steresis, eidos, hyle, can be put together as internal causes, they make up the being which becomes. External causes are the moving causes (*Met. A 3–4*); but, in the area of natural and beings in the cultural area, it turns out that they themselves have a becoming. We must distinguish between the causes which have a becoming and those which do not and only the latter ones are now of interest.

7.4. KP 12 : *Met. A 6.8, The First Speculative High Point*

KP 12 *Met. A 6.8 (1071b19–20) δεῖ ἄρα εἶναι ἀρχὴν τοιαύτην ἧς ἡ οὐσία ἐνέργεια.*
Therefore there must be an origin such that its being <: ousia, Sein> is actuality.

The reflections in A 1–5 did not succeed in tracking down the being which is capable of founding becoming, that only comes with *Met. A 6.8*. Here Aristotle designates the sufficient condition: it must be an origin whose being is actuality.⁵ In the short

⁵ S. Fazzo, 2012, 184 translates: “Bisogno dunque che esista un principio tale, che la sua sostanza

passage from 6.1 to 6.8 Aristotle turns our attention from the causes of becoming of natural beings to the cause of becoming itself, to being, *Sein*. I shall now attempt to integrate 6.8 with a paraphrase of the text, where the sentence is the fitting culmination. We cannot define a first point of movement and time, so if the natural beings are in motion in a time without beginning and without end, then the being that sets them in motion cannot be limited in time (6.2–6.4), we must surmise that this being is eternal. Therefore, an eternal being, capable of setting in motion something else, is sought in chapter six. Unlike with the ideas, which indeed are beyond time but can do no more than to allow to be partaken in, this first moving being must be able to initiate the transition from steresis to eidos; and, what is more, it will not suffice to be *able* to do that, its actual performance must not be based on a prior potentiality to set in motion that which is now being realized (*Met.* Λ 6.5–6.6), because such a transition would again require another moving cause, in which case we would find ourselves in a *regressus ad infinitum* (*Met.* Λ 6.7). To initiate the transition from steresis to eidos must be the being, *Sein*, of this origin. If, then, the natural movement without a beginning must be founded and maintained “there must be an origin such that its being is actuality.” With this we have reached the first speculative high point in *Met.* Λ 6.8.

That is my paraphrased rendering of the text. This alone will not suffice. We shall endeavor another approach in regarding the consequences of that sentence placing it within the historical chain of thoughts that lead up to it. Aristotle has concentrated the previous philosophical discourse on the question about being in *Met.* Λ 1.1; what is the role and the place of 6.8 in this question? – In the sentences leading up to 6.8 ‘beginning’ has meant the beginning of natural movements and of natural coming to be. We need to understand which natural being is the ground of natural becoming. That is a direct reference to *Met.* Λ 1.1, because becoming is the traditional problem and the value of any new effort to understand being will be assessed on its power

sia atto;” in 2014, 293, “la sua sostanza” is replaced by “la sua essenza.” She wants to distinguish between “the essence of a being in actuality” and “it is actuality.” She confirms the modification 2016, 196, saying that the eternal substance according to its essence must be active, especially in the context of *Met.* Λ 6 where the eternal movements of the heavens are the subject, not the ‘First Mover.’ S. Fazzo thinks that it is essential to leave ἐνέργεια in the nominative in KP 12 while the word is in the dative in KP 13, 1072a25.

to explain becoming. If we take on the question about becoming, that is if we – “like the ancient thinkers” – wish to be able to explain what becoming is, how it is possible and if we wish to avoid both the Parmenidean aporia about being and the sophistical aporia about non-being then we must understand what has a coming-to-be in the process of becoming and what not. We have, thus, to find an answer to the question about the beginning of becoming.

The transition in the process of becoming has two sides:

1. With respect to the natural becoming of a particular being, it is a question of physics.
2. With respect to the transition from steresis to eidos it is a question of speculative theory.

The expression ‘beginning of becoming’ is ambiguous. In our parlance it means the natural becoming of a particular being. At the beginning of its coming to be there is another particular being. A being of the same type as the caused beings cannot, however, initiate the first movement and becoming as the first in a sequence, because then there must be a beginning of movement and time, which, as we have seen, is not conceivable so.

The being initiating becoming *in toto* cannot be the first in a sequence, we must adjust the sense of the question. That is the reason why Aristotle tries in *Met. A* to shift the horizon of the question. In both cases there must be an impulse given by a proton kinoun. That which, in the speculative case, first sets in motion transforms the indefiniteness of a possible being in eidetic definiteness: this is what is meant by actuality. Actuality is what is aimed at in the process of becoming. Actuality signifies that something has attained its telos in a stable form. This form is the for-the-sake of becoming and therefore the good of becoming and in this way it is the first moving cause. To be actual is the goal of things that become, the becoming-thing ‘strives’ to be, so to speak.

In the complete being the eidos becomes evident. This ‘it becomes evident because it has attained the respective determination’ is the being (*Sein*) of the thing, for the

sake of which something begins to become and this being sets in motion unmoved as a goal. This being is the unmoved moving cause.

The main result of the sentences *Met. A* 6.1–6.8 is a shift of the horizon within which the question must be asked. We have to move from the question about the causes of beings around us, to that of being as ground. The origin of becoming is being. This origin is neither a first in a sequence nor a temporal primary. It is the being ‘striven for’ by that which comes to be. It ‘causes’ the transition steresis to eidos and it is the cause of this transition. The following sentences 6.9–6.27 confirm that actuality is the crucial point. In this section Aristotle is not concerned with anything else more than this.

7.5. *Met. A* 6.9–6.29: Reflections on 6.8

In the sentences 6.9–6.29 we find reflections on the result presented in 6.8. There it was said that only a non-contingent actual being can be cause and principle of the natural becoming without beginning. This form of actuality is a special form because it is not based on potentiality.

The reflections divide into four sections. In 6.9 to 6.10 Aristotle says that the ousia mentioned in 6.8 cannot have hyle. In 6.11 and 6.12 he deals with an aporia concerning the energeia already mentioned in 6.8. In 6.13–6.22 he treats other views on the subject. Sentences 6.23–6.29 deal with the problem that it is not evident how something that is itself in an eternal and completely uniform motion can produce the irregular movements we see in fact.

In 6.9 we encounter a conspicuous change in the number of ousia. After the singular in 6.8 we now find it in the plural form. Nevertheless, Aristotle cannot be speaking about a wholly new issue in 6.9, since there is a reference back with the demonstrative pronoun: “Still further, such beings <: ousiai> must be without hyle; for they must be eternal, if anything else is eternal.” W. D. Ross (II, 369) identifies the singular in 6.8 with god, the plural is an anticipation of the many unmoved movers

of the spheres (cf. E. Berti, 2000, 192). We note the same change from singular to plural in *Met. A* 1.1. There the singular stands for the heading of the question about being absolute before any distinctions, while the plural stands for the many beings around us. The singular in 6.8 has the same sense as in 1.1 and the plural in 6.9 can too be explained by the plural in that sentence. The first thing to ascertain for each being is the group to which it belongs: is it an eternal or a perishable being, is it a natural being or a number etc.? Now, there are many such groups which explains the plural in 6.9.

I shall next attempt to make this view plausible by paraphrasing the sentences 6.8–6.10. The being (*Sein*) of the arche we are searching for, the origin of all changes (metabole) from steresis to eidos, must be non-contingent and actual. If there are such ways of being – no matter how many, it is not about their number now – they cannot have any hyle, because hyle necessarily includes possibility, change and finiteness. That which is eternally setting in motion cannot be of this kind. This confirms the result in 6.8 that the being we are searching for must be non-contingent and actual.⁶

There is, however, another possible understanding of the plural. What is said as a general rule in 6.8 must be true in every single case of becoming too. In this case, the plural will refer to the many particular cases of factual becoming. Being (*Sein*) with its actuality is always the origin of becoming.

Against this background the question about the priority of possibility and actuality arises (6.10). One could argue that possibility is prior to actuality because all actual beings must be possible, but not all possible beings need be actual. The extension of possible beings is broader than that of actual ones. Actuality, then, seems to presuppose possibility which therefore has priority. The argument that the extension of the notion A is broader than that of B works in the frames of genus and species. The compared beings must have certain determinations in common, but it would be

⁶ I think that all variants of 'actuality' in 6.10, 1071b22, are compatible with this sense; a) ἐνεργείᾳ in the dative means "in the actual mode"; b) if we accept the nom. sg., then the sentence refers directly to the singular in 6.8; c) the nom. pl. refers to the plural in 6.9. – S. Fazzo, 2016, 195, as in her edition 2012, retains the singular in 1071b20, but prefers the dative in b22 which also makes sense.

false to combine actuality and possibility as genus and species. The argument, thus, is inconclusive.

It remains that in the context of natural becoming the actuality is prior, because something only possible requires an actual moving cause in order to be realized. From this point, Aristotle presents other views on the beginning of becoming and discusses their problems. He proposes that factual, natural movement can be understood neither through the claims of the theologians about the first moving cause,⁷ nor in the way the physicists have expounded (6.13); the ‘Night’ of the former and the *homou panta* of the latter are only possibilities. They constitute, perhaps, the primitive material of becoming, but are not a cause for becoming.

Here as in the other cases, the criterion for the origin of movement is the concept of actuality. Because the *hyle*, which the physicists designated as a principle, cannot set in motion anything (6.15), Aristotle says in 6.16 that Leucippus and Plato assumed the eternal *energeia*. After raising an objection to Plato’s thesis that self-movement could take over this function (*Timaeus* 30a), Aristotle cites Anaxagoras, Empedocles and Leucippus (6.22), all of whom argued that actuality is prior.

In the sentences 6.13–6.22 Aristotle refers to considerations coming from the tradition. In discussing them he confirms the priority of actuality vis-à-vis potentiality stated in 6.8 and he can solve the *aporia* mentioned in 6.11.

He closes the chapter raising an anticipated objection to his own thesis.⁸ In *Physics* Θ 3–6 (cf. the *aporia* in Θ 3, 253a24–30) and *De Caelo* B 12 we find similar considerations. – If the origin of things moved and things becoming is the {actuality–being} mentioned in 6.8, then we cannot establish and understand how different movements are possible. The {actuality–being} has no *hyle* and no possibility. If it

⁷ W. D. Ross says that ‘theologians’ refers to *Met. A* 983b29; the term includes the early cosmologists; see also *Met. B* 4, 1000a9, *A* 6, 1071b27, *A* 10, 1075b26 and *N* 4, 1091a34, plus *Meteorologica B* 1, 353a35.

⁸ W. D. Ross says that 1072a9–17 (6.23–6.29) refers to the difference between the sphere of the fixed stars with a motion that is “ever the same” and the ecliptic with different movements (cf. 1071a15 and *De Generatione et Corruptione B* 10, 336b15).

is operative it has always the same effect.⁹ In fact, however, we see and experience many and different movements. To all appearances, the movement of the fixed stars is always the same. The planets show a zigzag movement, although analyzable in the circular movements of different spheres. We see further rather more irregular movements in the sublunar dimension: clouds, elements, animals and other phenomena. Nevertheless, the claim that even these irregular movements depend on the first moving cause should not be given up.

Following Aristotle, the difference between “with respect to itself” or “as far as it is up to it” and “with respect to something else” allows to differentiate movements. The {actuality–being}, left independently unto itself, would always produce the same effects but with respect to the fact that it is the for-the-sake of becoming of this or of that, its effect is different depending on this or that.

Which movement will effectively result depends on for what the {actuality–being} is the cause of the change from *steresis* to *eidos*.

⁹ L. Elders, 1972, 156, says that this is the ‘Unmoved Mover,’ E. Berti, 2000, 298, and others say that this is the sphere of the fixed stars.

8. KP 13 – KP 18: Second Speculative High Point, Chapter 7

8.1. KP 13 : *Met.* Λ 7.3

KP 13 *Met.* Λ 7.3 (1072a25–27) [...] τοίνυν ἔστι τι ὃ οὐ κινούμενον κινεῖ, αἰδιδιον καὶ οὐσία καὶ ἐνέργεια οὐσα.
[...] *then there is also some <way of being> that sets in motion without being moved, which is eternal, being <: ousia> and actuality.*

The first three sentences of chapter seven state that there is a type of being which can set in motion something without itself being moved. Sentences 7.4 until 7.15 clarify in a general way how something can set in motion without itself being moved. 7.16–7.23 ask in what sense the word ‘actuality’ (energeia) is used in 6.8. Aristotle includes a discussion of other views (7.24–7.25) and concludes both chapters, six and seven, with two final sentences (7.26–7.27).

In the first section (7.1–7.3), we encounter some linguistic or textual problems:

- To what οὐτώ [...], 7.1, 1072a19, does refer?
- Should we break up the first sentence in two, the second beginning with καὶ ἔστι τι [...], a21?
- Which question is resolved with 7.1?
- Must we read energeia in 1072a25 in the nominative with the manuscripts or in the dative heeding the conjecture of S. Fazzo?
- How to repair the corruption at 7.3?

The word οὐτώ in 7.1 may refer to the immediately preceding text. Certainly, in

6.23–6.29 is only dealing with the part of the question of how we can explain the different natural movements which we see in our world, if the first cause is setting in motion in an eternal and constant way. The foregoing chapter had ended with the rhetorical question (6.29): “So why must one search for other principles?” Aristotle is here rejecting the solutions offered in his time – be it the answers given in the Academy or those which he will go on to cite immediately next – and preparing us for his own answer given in 6.8. “Since it is possible <to explain becoming> this way, ...” then refers to 6.8 and signifies that the issue of the first moving cause as explanation of natural becoming will be resolved in 6.8.

A. Laks (2000, 208 and 213) punctuates in 7.1 differently from W. D. Ross and W. Jaeger, placing a period instead of a comma after $\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\omicron\iota\tau' \grave{\alpha}\nu \tau\acute{\alpha}\hat{\upsilon}\tau\alpha$. He thinks that $\acute{\omicron}\acute{\upsilon}\tau\omega$ in 7.1 refers to 1072a9, i. e. to the priority of the actuality over potentiality (211–213). He argues that the eternity of movement (this is the content of the sentence beginning with $\kappa\alpha\acute{\iota} \acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\iota \tau\iota$, 1072a21) can be deduced from the priority of the actuality (this is the content of the sentence beginning with $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\epsilon\acute{\iota}$, 7.1). – It is improbable, however, that $\acute{\omicron}\acute{\upsilon}\tau\omega$ refers to the argument that actuality is prior to potentiality because that is only an appendix to the thesis that the being of the origin we are searching for is actuality but not potentiality (with which A. Laks is in agreement). Nevertheless, it is thinkable – irrespective of punctuation – that the sentence beginning with $\kappa\alpha\acute{\iota} \acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\iota \tau\iota$ (1072a21) is a new sentence, because if it were merely consecutive to the sentence $\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\omicron\iota\tau' \grave{\alpha}\nu \tau\acute{\alpha}\hat{\upsilon}\tau\alpha$, it would be in the optative rather than in the indicative mood.

If the origin we are searching for is that mentioned in 6.8 then the *theoria peri ousias* announced in *Met.* Λ 1.1 is achieved and that would be the sense expressed by of $\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\omicron\iota\tau' \grave{\alpha}\nu \tau\acute{\alpha}\hat{\upsilon}\tau\alpha$. Thus, finally $\acute{\omicron}\acute{\upsilon}\tau\omega$ in 7.1 is referring to 6.8 and to the solution of the issue formulated in Λ 1.1.

If this solution is refused ($\kappa\alpha\acute{\iota} \acute{\epsilon}\iota \mu\grave{\eta} \acute{\omicron}\acute{\upsilon}\tau\omega\varsigma$ 7.1), i. e. if the origin is not conceived as an origin whose being is actuality, then we are thrown back on the alternatives, which had been refuted in the preceding chapter, 6.13–6.21. Then we must say as the ancient have that becoming is to be explained in terms of Night, of non-being

(6.13, cf. 2.3–2.4), of some “all together,” and we return to the assertion of opinions. If, however, we may rightly conceive of the origin in the sense of 6.8 and if, in fact (ἔργω), we observe the sun and the sky as exercising an eternal motion, namely in a circle, then the sphere of the fixed stars is eternal, it causes as beginning of all movement the eternal movement of the natural becoming. The fixed stars with their eternal, circular movement can be seen as the actual cosmological cause of natural movement (if the aporia in 6.23–6.29 has been resolved). The mingling of the theoretical and the cosmological view is very striking in this sentence. Οὕτω reminds us of the theoretical side of the question, but the continuation deals with the cosmological side.

The sense of 7.1 could be that the origin conceptually defined in {ousia–energeia} in 6.8 will suffice as the non-temporal origin of becoming which has neither beginning nor end. It will not suffice, however, as the origin of that becoming which drives the humors in the bodies or the clouds in the sky, but of that becoming which consists in the transition from steresis to the actual eidos. Again, the next sentence, 7.2, is an unanticipated cosmological notice: “Hence there is also something that moves <the first heavens>.” Aristotle concludes from the factually observable, eternal and perfect circular motion of the heavens that there is certainly a moving cause behind this circular motion. There is something other than the fixed stars themselves to which we may attribute their movement. With regard to this statement we must not neglect the provisos in respect of the astronomical observations as well as the fact that this is all inferred from empirical data, about which Aristotle says explicitly that they are restricted and open to correction.

If that which can set in motion and maintain the eternal movement of the fixed stars (7.2) can only be an unmoved moving cause, this concept must be reflected on. It is problematic insofar as nowhere in nature do we observe such a thing. Everything that sets something in motion is itself also moved. The concept of an ‘unmoved moving cause’ seems to be contradictory in the area of nature, because movement is an indispensable character of natural beings.

Aristotle deals with this concept in 7.3. S. Fazzo alone thinks that the text is not

corrupt, her attempt to preserve the text’s reading is noteworthy.¹ She maintains that Aristotle in this context is speaking about nothing other than the movements of the celestial bodies. In contrast, it seems to me that Aristotle is here introducing the speculative concept and the possibility of an unmoved moving cause. As far as the reading of the text goes, I follow S. Fazzo. But even if the text were corrupt, it would without doubt be clear what would have to be correspondingly added. Aristotle combines the positive and negative instances in the distinction of beings that set in motion and beings that are moved; this results in four groupings, one of which is the unmoved moving being, see table 8.1.

	1.	2.	3.	4.
sets in motion	+	+	-	-
is moved	+	-	+	-

Table 8.1.: Beings setting in motion and being moved

Beings in the first group are active natural beings. The second group is the set of those which we are searching for. Group three are inactive natural beings and examples of the fourth group are ideas and numbers.

7.2 seems to be an existential proposition: “Hence there is also something that moves <the first heavens>,” but in 7.3 the claim about the existence of something is only in the background.² The sentence states only that in the list there is also a place for an unmoved moving ‘thing,’ which precisely speaking is something to ask after, its existence is neither stated nor claimed nor proved by the scheme. This proposition, that there is an unmoved moving ‘thing,’ must be understood in connection with the leading question of *Met.* Λ: What is that being, *Sein*, which is able to found becoming? A first part to the answer has been given in 6.8; now we can add that the arche mentioned there sets in motion being itself unmoved.

¹ See see above, p. 375, and S. Fazzo, 2012, 58; *eadem*, 2016, 203 and 181–205.

² In contrast to this A. Laks, 2000, 215, for example, triumphantly declares about 1072a23–26: “This section is short, but it contains the only argument in favour of the existence of an unchangeable mover which one can find in the whole of Λ 6 and 7.” – Even the term “mover” remains.

With respect to the being which is the origin and cause of becoming and of mundane being – and that is what it is about in 7.3 – an existential proposition is senseless. Existential propositions declare something about things *in* a world, now the issue is *the world itself*. Further, existence is not a Greek problem and can only be asserted about a thing in a world, but not of that which is the subject here. Even a sentence like “This world exists” is senseless, because this sentence can have a sense only in an other world, where ‘to exist’ stated about a world has a sense (this is comparable with the external question rightly criticized by R. Carnap).

At the end of 7.3, Aristotle recapitulates the characteristics of the First, which sets in motion, see table 8.2.

The first moving is:

οὐσία	justified in A 1
ἄιδιον	justified in 6.1–6.4
ἐνέργεια	justified in 6.5–6.8
οὐ κινούμενον κινεῖ	justified in <i>Met.</i> A 7.3

Table 8.2.: Determinations of the first moving

Now we must ask how the {being–actuality} can effect the transition from steresis to eidos. Explaining precisely this is the goal of the *theoria* announced in *Met.* A 1.1. In the next two sections, 7.4–7.15 and 7.16–7.27, the speculative attempt reaches its second point of culmination.

Based on the above, we can summarize the first section, 7.1–7.3, as follows: Since the being, which founds becoming is comprehensible in the way stated in 6.8, the leading question as exposed in *Met.* A 1.1 (the question about being) is hereby solved in its theoretical form. One not accepting this answer would have to return to those other answers: the ground of becoming is Night; or the “All together”; or the non-being.

There does actually exist something we see that is in an eternal circular motion, so that the first heavens can be called eternal. In that case there must be something else which sets this heaven in motion. If we combine the possibilities of ‘to set in

motion’ and ‘to be moved,’ it does transpire that there is a position for an unmoved moving. This is exactly the {being–actuality} named in 6.8 which assumes this position. We can say about it that:

- (i) it sets in motion other beings being unmoved itself;
- (ii) it is without a temporal beginning or end;
- (iii) its being is actuality.

8.2. KP 14 : *Met.* Λ 7.4, and KP 15 : *Met.* Λ 7.7

KP 14 *Met.* Λ 7.4 (1072a26–27) κινεῖ δὲ ὧδε τὸ ὀρεκτὸν καὶ τὸ νοητόν· κινεῖ οὐ κινούμενα.
But what is longed for and what is thought about move in this way; they move unmoved.

How can an unmoved being cause motion? The astronomical point of view must be replaced by the speculative point of view. For it is clear that there is no being in our natural world, even if the sun and the sphere of the fixed stars play a special and prior role which had that necessary character of the origin we are searching for, namely to be all together unmoved, If we are asking after the being that moves, being totally unmoved itself, then the sun is not the answer.

What does ‘set in motion, being unmoved itself’ mean at all? In fact, that one thing can set another in motion without itself being moved is far from being a mystery. Here at 7.4, as in *De Motu Animalium*, 6, 700b23–24, Aristotle easily points out situations that everybody is aware of. In everyday life, when we act, such unmoved things play an important role: pursuing a target, striving for something, loving someone, we are moved while our target is not moved; thinking about something our thoughts are moved by the thing we think about, but the thing itself remains unmoved. The objects of desire and of thought set in motion our desire and thinking while being unmoved themselves.

We find the same also in *De Anima*, Γ 10, 433b11–13: “The first <producing movement> of all is the object of desire (for this produces movement without being moved, by being thought of or imagined)” (Transl. D. W. Hamlyn). Aristotle speaks about that which is desired and that which is thought of or about that which can be desired or can be thought of.

It has often been thought that the sentence 7.5 “The first of both <i. e. of that which can be longed for or be thought of> is the same” was enigmatic.³ As I see it, the phrase points to the end of 7.6: ἀρχὴ γὰρ ἡ νόησις, “for awareness <: noesis> is the origin.” The origin for both, for desire and for knowledge, is being aware of the respective goal.⁴ What Aristotle says in *De Motu Animalium* 6–8 about the question λοιπόν ἐστὶ θεωρῆσαι πῶς ἡ ψυχὴ κινεῖ τὸ σῶμα (“Now we have to consider how the soul sets in motion the body”) confirms this interpretation.

Being aware of the good sets in motions our action: the good is our goal, we allow ourselves to be moved by it. In 7.6 it is clear that Aristotle is speaking about us humans, not about gods. What he says is intended to illustrate what is meant by speculation. Because 7.6 stands in immediate connection with 7.4 and 7.5, these sentences too give examples of that for which we are searching, the unmoved moving cause. ‘To be the object of desire or of thought’ is by no means a definitive determination of the unmoved moving being sought, i. e. of the being which is the origin of natural becoming. That is not of any interest at this moment. Here we need only to understand how an unmoved being, capable of setting something in motion, is possible. Of course, the first unmoved moving is an object of desire and of thought, but is so not with respect to itself but incidentally.

The examples have highlighted that the defining character of the first unmoved moving is to be a cause in the sense of a goal. The content of this goal we infer from sentence 6.8: its being is actuality (not existence). In saying this, Aristotle is in no

³ Thomas Aquinas, 1926, Nr. 2522, says that that first desired and thought of is the good; H. Bonitz, 1849, 496, says that the first of the desired and thought of is τὸ καλόν (“the beautiful”), according to 1072a27–b1.

⁴ 1072a30 (at the end of 7.6): H.-G. Gadamer translates: “Denn der Ursprung ist das Denken”; J. Tricot: “Le principe c’est la pensée”; H. Bonitz: “Prinzip ist das Denken.” Maybe Aristotle wants to describe what W. Schneider, 2001, names the fusion of being and eudaimonia in the actuality.

way being revolutionary. Being had long before been said to be the for-the-sake-of becoming, so Plato, *Philebus*, 54a5, who said that becoming is for the sake of being and not at all the other way round. Things which become do so in order to be. This ‘in order to be’ is the first which sets in motion, it must be such that its being is actuality (*Met.* Λ 6.8) and it sets in motion like an unmoved goal.

The actuality that is striven for in every process of becoming is the first moving cause; this is the speculative main result of *Met.* Λ.

“Becoming” here means neither the development of a natural being out of its undeveloped nature according to natural laws, nor even its coming into existence, be it according to a Big Bang theory or according to a Creation story. The term ‘becoming’ signifies the change from indeterminateness to determinateness. A thing which becomes is not simply an absolute thing with no connection to any world. Instead, it is ‘this particular here’ or ‘this particular here as something.’ A thing can be ‘something as something’ (*etwas als etwas*) only by entering into a world and there is no world without a noetic structure. Aristotle calls this structure noesis, awareness. In this area of awareness the becoming thing becomes an ‘any-this.’⁵ This means that the leap from becoming into being takes place in the noesis. This first “being”⁶ is the result of a process in which something is aware of something as something or perceives something as something; the being aware is perceived itself, because both the perceiving and the perceived are potential knots in the net of the same noesis, the same world. *To be* this way is the telos, that which is aimed at in the process of becoming. It is the for-the-sake-of becoming, comparable to the unmoved goal in the case of actions and thoughts.

If we further divide that which belongs to desire and thinking into that which moves and what is moved, the noeton belongs on the side of what sets in motion. The end and fulfillment of motion and of coming-to-be is the first, simple and actual ousia and precisely this is what sets becoming in motion. Both, the movement caused by

⁵ It bears repeating at every possible opportunity: this is not the awareness of a human or divine subject or of a human or divine consciousness.

⁶ ‘First’ not in the temporal but in the systematic sense; ‘to be’ here does not mean ‘to exist’ or ‘to be present-at-hand.’

desire or of thought, begin with being aware of the desired and the thought of it (: ἀρχὴ γὰρ ἡ νόησις). This leads to a pair of columns (7.7, systoichia): The nous faces that which it can think of, the orexis that which it can desire; the first, simple and actual being faces the nous. Examples for that which can be desired are the beautiful and that which is to be chosen for itself (7.8).

There is some discussion about what systoichia refers to. W. D. Ross, *ad loc.*, thinks that it refers to a definite series of contraries.⁷ It does seem, however, that the term ought to be understood in a more general way, as the result of distinguishing pairs following a rule. In the present case it concerns the distinction between nous and noeton. In this case, *Met. A 7.7* has the sense: If we distinguish between nous and noeton, nous is aligned with thought, knowledge, recognition: while the noeton with that which is recognized and the ousia.⁸ We can further complete the rows: If on the one side we place thought, knowledge, desire then on the other side are being, the recognizable and the desirable. The nous is not an unmoved moving cause. The nous is moved if it recognizes or thinks something, as Plato at *Sophist*, 248e–249a, said. In this way, it is not easy to understand why the nous has been identified with god by Aristotle’s interpreters. The nous does not, in any case, stand on the side of unmoved things, even if it thinks itself. If one should wish to avoid this they would necessarily have to must resort to mystical formulation.

If being (ousia, *Sein*) should be the unmoved moving as the for-the-sake of becoming, then the the for-the-sake-of must be applicable to the unmoved moving cause (*Met. A 7.9*).⁹ Aristotle uses the notion of the for-the-sake-of in two ways. The good could be taken as the content of the for-the-sake-of; insofar it is unchangeable since what is good in itself is and remains good. But if ‘good’ means ‘good for someone’ then it is variable, for what is good for one person can be bad for another;

⁷ See also H. Happ, 1971, 264f.; H. J. Krämer, 1964, 154f.

⁸ T. A. Szlezák, 1979, 147, has argued against a strong fixation on the content of the systoichia by W. D. Ross, 1924.

⁹ The for-the-sake-of belongs to the the unmoved beings: H. Bonitz, 1849, 499f., says that this is a reference to *De philosophia*; cf. also *Physics B 2*, 194a35: “the for-the-sake-of is double”; see also *De anima B 2* 415b2, *De Generatione Animalium B 6*, 742a22. – Themistius gives an example: the for-the-sake-of medicine is health; health is eternal and unchanging; but health is in favour of the patient, which is changeable. S. Fazzo’s reading reflects this very well.

or even what was used to be good for a person can be bad later (7.9). Further, the motion is transitive and can continue; what is moved by the unmoved moving cause can itself set in motion other things (7.10).

The fixed stars are not completely immobile, they execute the first movement in circular form. This movement is eternal, certainly, but nonetheless changeable and insofar has some potentiality, at least concerning place or position (the fixed star touches one point of the circle after the other), if not being. The being of the sun is the same as the morning sun and the evening sun, but is at first in the East, then in the West (cf. *Met.* Λ 7.11). Mobile beings can change the way they behave, this is true even for the eternally moving heavenly beings, but not for the unmoved moving cause. The moving cause, immobile in every respect, is more fundamental than the sphere of the fixed stars, which, in the spatial sense at least, is mobile.

8.3. KP 16: *Met.* Λ 7.15

KP 16 *Met.* Λ 7.15 (1072b13–14) ἐκ τοιαύτης ἄρα ἀρχῆς ἤρτηται ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ φύσις.
Thus <even> the heavens and the physis depend on this kind of principle.

We can understand the expression τοιαύτη ἀρχή, “this kind of principle,” in two ways. It could refer to the sphere of fixed stars which was mentioned immediately before and which has its aspect eternal and actual although mixed with some potentiality. By that reading, the text would mean that the rest of the heavens and nature around us depend on this first sphere.¹⁰ Alternatively, the expression refers to 6.8 and to the leading question about being, as οὕτω in 7.1 did. In this case it asks which being, *Sein*, makes possible natural becoming as we see that around us. For the Presocratics it was the elements that do this; for Plato the ideas and chora; for others, as Aristotle reports, it is the sun or the still more constant sphere of the fixed stars that do so.

¹⁰ Aristoteles uses the same verb ἤρτηται also in *De motu animalium*, 4, 700a6.

One might suppose that this sphere is the first and absolutely independent moving cause, by inference from its eternal circular motion. From this movement should be inferred in a mediated manner the other natural movements, among the first of them the movement of the sun. From this movement depends the natural becoming on Earth as Plato had indicated by means of the simile of the sun, but the movement of the fixed stars cannot be the origin Aristotle is searching for. Aristotle says in 7.15, therefore, that we must seek another origin, even for the heavens and the nature in general. He points to the origin named in 6.8, the arche which is {being–actuality}.

7.15 closes the cosmological considerations that began with 7.11. It does not open new ones,¹¹ as the dash made by W. D. Ross and W. Jaeger would suggest. With this sentence the astronomical perspective is changed to the speculative one. The presupposition to 7.15, that the eternal motion of the heavens is the first or last moving cause and a suitable answer to the question about being (*Sein*) as posed in *Met. A* 1.1, turns out to be only one step along the way. Speculation alone reaches the final end.

8.4. The Second Speculative High Point, KP 17 : *Met. A* 7.17–7.19

8.4.1. Text and Translation

Given the great importance of this sentence, I add here 7.16 to the text and the translation of *Met. A* 7.17–7.19, which form KP 17.

KP 17	<i>Met. A</i> 7.16–7.19 (1072b14–24) (16) διαγωγή δ' ἐστὶν οἷα ἀρίστη μικρὸν χρόνον ἡμῖν (σὺ τῶ γὰρ ἀεὶ ἐκεῖνο · ἡμῖν μὲν γὰρ ἀδύνατον), ἐπεὶ καὶ ἡδονὴ ἢ ἐνέργεια τούτου (καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐγρήγορσις αἰσθησις νόησις ἤδιστον, ἐλπιδες δὲ καὶ μνημαὶ διὰ ταῦτα). (17) ἢ δὲ νόησις ἢ καθ' αὐτὴν τοῦ καθ' αὐτὸ ἀρίστου, καὶ ἢ μάλιστα τοῦ μάλιστα.
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¹¹ So says also A. Laks, 2000, 230: “The sentence presents itself as a conclusion.”

(18) αὐτὸν δὲ νοεῖ ὁ νοῦς κατὰ μετάληψιν τοῦ νοητοῦ· νοητὸς γὰρ γίνεται θιγγάνων καὶ νοῶν, ὥστε ταῦτον νοῦς καὶ νοητόν.

(19) τὸ γὰρ δεκτικὸν τοῦ νοητοῦ καὶ τῆς οὐσίας νοῦς, ἐνεργεῖ δὲ ἔχων, ὥστ' ἐκείνου μᾶλλον τοῦτο ὃ δοκεῖ ὁ νοῦς θεῖον ἔχειν, καὶ ἡ θεωρία τὸ ἥδιστον καὶ ἄριστον.

b14 (16) We have a way of life, such as it is the best, for a short time,¹² for that <origin> is this way forever, and indeed <that> is impossible for us, for its <: the origin's> actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) is also a pleasure (and therefore being awake, perceiving, and being aware are the most pleasant <states>, while hopes and memories <are pleasant> on account of them).

1072b18 KP 17 (17) Awareness in itself is of what is best in itself, and <awareness> in the highest degree is of <that in> the highest degree.

1072b19 (18) The nous is aware of itself, at the same time partaking in that of which it is aware; for <the nous> becomes an object of awareness by touching and being aware <of itself>, so that the nous and that of which it is aware are the same.

1072b22 (19) For that which can receive the noetically perceptible and the being (: *ousia*) is nous: <which> is actual by having <the noetically perceptible>; therefore it seems that nous is divine more from the latter <: its actuality> than the former <: its receptivity>, and *theoria* is the most pleasant and best.

With just this passage (more precisely with sentences 7.15–7.24) and without any additional comment does G. W. F. Hegel conclude his *Encyclopaedie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, Heidelberg³ 1830. Elsewhere, in the chapter dealing with Aristotle in the *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, he comments on *Met.* A 7, 9 and 10 at length (with longer translations).¹³

In 7.16–7.19 and 7.20–7.23 Aristotle is considering the first origin, which, being a cause beyond the natural causes of movement, initiates the transition from steresis to eidos and enables the becoming of natural beings.¹⁴ Now we are at the heart of

¹² Variant: <The origin's> way of life is such as it is the best for us for a short time. / Ross: And it is a life such as the best which we enjoy, and enjoy for but a short time...

¹³ For some remarks on this passage see N. Hartmann, 1955–58, II, 214–252; W. Wieland, 1970, 35, fn. 18. For Hegel's remarks on the text see *Theorie Werkausgabe*, Bd. 19, Frankfurt am Main 1971, 160–168.

¹⁴ Stephan Herzberg, 2012, has dealt with 1072b14–30 in a study with the title *Menschliche und göt-*

the speculation in *Met. A*. We have already understood that the origin of becoming that causes the change from indeterminateness to determinateness must produce its effect in the manner of the longed for or the thought of, as the for-the-sake-of becoming and that the being (*Sein*) of this origin must be actuality (not existence). Becoming ‘aims at’ reaching this actuality (metaphorically speaking). This holds for everything. Each single being seeks to reach its perfection in actuality and determinateness in its own {being–actuality}.

Aristotle tries to explain what the actuality of this origin means. In order to do this, he links being and actuality with noesis, awareness. As has been repeated, he is not speaking about a human or divine mental state. Noesis, awareness, means something like the noetic structure of the world. The question about being is not a logical, physical, cosmological or ethical one. The answer becomes a speculative or, as Aristotle puts it, a theoretical one. It is not possible to prove the ‘viewing of the First,’ because any proof can be made only on the basis of ‘having seen the First.’ This First is the structure of a world. We cannot see, understand, experience something beyond our world. In this way, the question about being is a unique and singular one.

Even so, it is no mystical experience or divine revelation. Aristotle can lead us to this view with comparisons or conceptual means which cannot completely satisfy, perhaps, but there is no better way to stir to speculative insight. Above all, the text is allegory (in its literal sense). In this main section especially, where we should be reaching for the end of theory and speculation, we must be aware of the necessity to use the language of metaphor and comparison, language which says one thing and means another. As a speculative text, it represents the attempt to initiate a turn from attending to the things around us and away from particular beings towards

tliche Kontemplation. It is the result of his studies at the Katholisch-Theologische Fakultät of the Eberhard Karls Universität in Tübingen. For him it is self-evident right from the start that Aristotle presents a theology in *Met. A* (without any justification; but he is far from being alone doing so), the main question in his view is the relation between human and divine thinking. He chooses the variant that it is the relation of analogy. Also he reverses the *explicandum* and the example and says that human knowledge is the example and the starting point to find something about divine knowledge. He does not mention Hegel.

being and actuality itself, just as τῆς ψυχῆς περιαγωγή, “the reversion of the soul,” had been the aim of Plato’s philosophy (cf. *Politeia* 518cd, 521c). This turn or reversion, however, can only begin with that with which we are acquainted. The text often has to travel to and fro between comparison or example and that which in fact is meant, but difficult of expression in simple words. What, in fact, is meant is the answer to the leading question about being and this in the speculative way. The method for thinking about being is theory, because being itself is, finally, noesis. Being must not be understood abstractly or for itself, but in the sense of {being ← noesis → actuality}. So much for the speculative answer. It seems that Plotinus has understood very well this point in *Met.* Λ. He set it down in *Enneades* III 8 formulating it in his own Neoplatonic language.

8.4.2. What does “Way of Life” Mean?

In 7.16 Aristotle introduces the word *diagoge*, “way of life.” This is mostly understood in a personal sense, as if Aristotle would wish to speak about god.¹⁵ In contrast to this, we shall try to understand the word as a figurative means towards speculation and not as a technical terminological component of argument. We may well ask how the word does align with the course of the leading question so far and what it contributes to the speculative insight.

We shall recall that in 5.5 Aristotle dealt with the claim that the sun, and later, in 6.1–6.4 and 7.1–7.2, the sphere of the fixed stars is the first moving cause. Both have a singular kind of actuality and both are origins, but both too undergo local changes and are not primary in the sense required. The leading question must be asked in a new way. We pose the question of what the primary as a goal and end of becoming may be, setting in motion while being unmoved itself, being the cause of the change from undetermined possibility to determined actuality. In 6.8, with a first step starting from the opinions about being, we have seen that {being–actuality} is

¹⁵ See for example, A. Laks, 2000, 231–237, gets into some difficulty making consistent sense of the text with this presupposition. He says that the argument does not convince; which evidently is the case, because Aristotle’s aim is different.

the for-the-sake-of the natural motion without temporal beginning. From this it follows that beings of the type of the sun and quite generally of the type of being, *Seiendes*, cannot stand as the origin we are searching for.

Which are the characteristics of the actuality of being (*Wirklichkeit des Seins*), which while it remains unmoved itself, are capable of causing becoming in the sense of a goal? Comparing being with a “way of life” Aristotle directs our regard from the area of beings (*Seiendes*) to the area of being (*Sein*) as actuality. Everybody knows what diagoge, “way of life,” means and everybody since Homer has an idea of the way of life of humans and gods. Even by our ordinary understanding the “way of life” is not a being (*Seiendes*), as we ourselves who lead this life are, it is the way to be human.

If we take into account that with the question about being Aristotle, he too employing the metaphor of life, is repeating the question that was first asked in the *Sophist*, where Plato tries to clarify the sense of *to be* (248e–249a), then the phrase “way of life” seems to be an appropriate metaphor for {being–actuality}. If god is the point of comparison then the suggestion of what is meant is even more powerful: the {being–actuality} *is* in a higher degree than the divine way of life, just as the divine way of life exceeds our human way of life.

8.4.3. What is the Meaning of “We have a way of life, such as it is the best, for a short time, for that <origin> is this way forever, and indeed <that> is impossible for us”? (7.16)

Next we examine the text 1072b15–16:

We have a way of life, such as it is the best, for a short time, for that <origin> is this way forever, and indeed <that> is impossible for us.¹⁶

Later, in 7.20, Aristotle speaks about the difference between gods and us humans

¹⁶ Alternatively: “<The origin’s> way of life is such as it is the best for us for a short time.” Ross translates: “And it is a life such as the best which we enjoy, and enjoy for but a short time (for it is ever in this state, which we cannot be).”

with respect to the perfect way of life. Many think that god, mentioned in 7.20, is already being referred to with *ekeino* in 7.16. But it seems much more plausible, that *ekeino* refers to *ek toiautes arches* in 7.15, which refers to {being–*energeia*} in 6.8. The best state, the *theoria*, is estimated to be only possible to humans within temporal limits, whereas there are no such temporal restrictions for “this” (7.16) or for god (7.20).

At first glance, the opposition between the brief and the eternal duration of the best way of life “for this” and “for us” seems to correspond to the opposition between the possibility of the evanescent human intellectual recognition of luck and the eternal knowledge that belongs to god. This interpretation seems to be backed by the Platonic distinction between god, who knows and man, who strives to know (cf. *Symposium* 203e–204a). Thus, the opposition would mean that we humans have only brief opportunity in a few special moments to be happy in the highest knowledge whilst God does forever.

I do not wish to question this reading, but would like to make another use of it. The sentence does not provide information about god, it just cites a common opinion in order to lead us to the theory. Whoever should prefer the direct, god-oriented interpretation must take into account, that god is not named in 7.16–7.17; in 7.19 only the word *theion* appears and in 7.20 we have the first occurrence in *Met.* Λ of the word *ho theos*. As to the period during which someone is in the state of the lucky actuality of *noesis* and *theoria*, it remains to say that even if it were about the difference between men and gods we still must admit that the expression “for a short time only” could mean any greater part of human life, even whole the lifetime. Compared with the life of immortal gods any human period of time is short. Considering the ‘eternal’ duration of an eventual divine *theoria*, it is irrelevant how long a man is in the state of *theoria*, which in any case would be “short in time.” What Aristotle says in *Nicomachean Ethics* K 7, when dealing with *eudaimonia*, which consists in *theoria*, corresponds very well with this interpretation. *Eudaimonia* is said to be “something divine” (1177b28) and Aristotle invites us not to be too hum-

ble “but when possible to emulate the immortal gods.”¹⁷ In *Met. A 2*, 982b24ff. Aristotle is speaking of a form of knowledge which is for the sake of itself. It is the most free and therefore the most divine knowledge. Simonides seems to say that it is impossible for us humans to acquire this knowledge¹⁸ but Aristotle, for whom it is possible to aim at this knowledge and to whom the gods are not jealous, contradicts this. If it were the superiority of the gods being demonstrated in sentence 7.16 that would be an irrelevancy to the Greek reader.

The difference between gods and men had been well established and recognized since at least the time of Homer’s *Iliad* and up to Plato’s *Sophist* (see the opening scene).¹⁹ There is no need to prove the existence and the superiority of the gods, it is part of the endoxa. In comparison to the speculative consideration about being it is of secondary interest if there are gods or not. They too are no more than beings (*Seiendes*) and do not belong to the class of {being–actuality}. What then is the purpose of the opposition? The opposition between the short and the long length of time with respect to men and gods is no more than an endoxon. That our life is short is a topos of the late archaic lyric.²⁰

It is no more than a common opinion that makes this distinction, but now we shall have to transfer it to the question of origin, that is about being. It is the consensus and I agree, that the “this” in 7.17 refers to the unmoved moving. I wish here to underline that “this” does not refer to god but to {being–actuality}, which is the unmoved moving end of all becoming. Whoever should wish to take “this” to refer directly to god must do so as a simile. In the manner that the way of life of gods surpasses that of humans, so the unmoved moving {being–actuality} surpasses all factual being (*Sein*), even that of the gods. As it does throughout the text, speculative

¹⁷ 1177b33 ἀλλ’ ἐφ’ ὅσον ἀθανατίζειν.

¹⁸ *Met. A 2*, 982b30a, cf. Plato, *Protagoras*, 339a–346d; D. Page, *Poetae Melici Graeci*, Simonides, frg. 37.14.

¹⁹ Aristotle refers to this common opinion in 1074b13 citing the πάτριος δόξα, “belief of our fathers.” See also the texts collected by A. Laks and G. W. Most, *Les débuts de la philosophie*, Fayard, Paris 2016, Chapitre 3. Les dieux et les hommes.

²⁰ See Mimnermus, frg. 2D, Pindar, *Pythia*, 8, 95; Aristotle himself cited in the *Eudemus* the story about Silenus and King Midas (Ross, *Eudemus*, frg. 6), in content in accordance with Sophocles, *Oedipus Colonus*, 1211ff; there are similar statements by many other poets in late archaic lyric.

and cosmological interests alternate, so the {being–actuality} can be represented as the actuality of the world. In being awake, thinking, in perceiving and not only at some selected moments of insight we, in fact, perform this {being–actuality}. All beings (*Seiendes*) aim at this end.

8.4.4. “...for its actuality is also a pleasure” (7.16)

What does ‘pleasure’ contribute to the understanding of ‘actuality,’ and for what or for whom is actuality a pleasure? In modern times being and actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) are, to a large extent, reduced to existence, the present-at-hand or presence in space and time. The Aristotelian insight that *to be* is expressed in many ways has the potential to enhance the modern understanding. Even modern thinkers would not dispute that there is a manifold use of *to be*, but disagree that multiple use has something to do with each other or have a common focus.

I think that at least the manifold use of which Aristotle speaks, at least (being in its categorial, modal, veritative use), are oriented towards some hen, which we are seeking. In this case too, however, if the different ways to use *to be* have something in common, the characteristics of their relations must be clarified. For, the different use refers differently to the hen, and as we with our more extensive historical experience than was available to Aristotle must not neglect to add this hen can change over time. It is the center of a cluster of common opinions at given moments in time.

Using the expression “way of life” in connection with the gods, Aristotle prepares us to conceive that the difference between the actuality of {being–actuality} and that of a particular being is comparable to the difference between the divine and human way of life. Actuality, at any rate, is not static existence or reality, it is, rather, something like the life of the being and yet not simple activity. In a similar way, Aristotle designated sight (*das Sehen*) the actuality of the eye and the soul the actuality of an organic body.²¹

²¹ Here again we see a typical issue of speculative expression. When we try to articulate a specula-

The expression “its actuality is also a pleasure” (1072b16), justifies both the preceding part of the sentence (diagoge d’) and the following part (b17), which begins with kai dia touto; it is not necessary to parenthesize this as did W. D. Ross. Relating to the earlier part it reasons that this way of life is the best and from there it follows that being awake and so on is most enjoyable for us. The text argues systematically, that to be actual is also a pleasure for “this” <: for the origin> and therefore being awake and in conscious states is the most enjoyable “for us.” Hermeneutically we can turn the argument around: We are able to experience that being awake, thinking, perceiving are outstanding ways of being actual, we can use this to come to understand the actuality of {being–actuality}.

It has become established practice to supply ‘god’ or ‘nous’ to the expression “its actuality” as that which experiences pleasure. When, however, this expression is employed in order to lead us to the insight of the theory, then what we have here too is only a comparison, a metaphor and not a plain text. If we take into account the whole line of thought it seems to be obvious that “of that,” at 1072b16, has the same referent as “this,” at b15, namely the unmoved moving cause. “Its actuality” is, then, the actuality of {being–actuality}, which is the origin, that which, in the sense of a goal, first sets in motion while itself unmoved.

The first unmoved moving is being (*Sein*) in the mode of actuality as the for-the-sake of becoming.

It is a ‘pleasure’ for all beings to reach their goal, to be actual, but in a further and special way for us humans, who are capable of appreciating the being of the beings, when we ourselves are actualized having reached at our goal. At the level of the beings (*Seiendes*) the actual world represents the {being–actuality}. To paraphrase once again the passage “Its actuality is also a pleasure”: In the cosmological sense the actuality of {being–actuality} is the actuality of the world we live in, in the theological sense it is the actuality of god, in the theoretical sense it is being, *Sein*.

tive insight by means of language, we conjure only a thought, but the expression does not properly correspond to the content of that thought. It would not be correct to use the simile ‘life’ to interpret *energeia* as activity or action.

In fact, it is much more important that all things which undergo the process of becoming, reach at a certain time their unmoved goal. That end has set them in motion and arriving here is a pleasure for each being, for each after its own fashion, for humans but no less for flowers, worms, stones etc. Things which become become beings when they reach their goal or telos, their appropriate actuality. In the speculative sense they reach their actuality in the noesis.

In some sense, the human and divine actuality in the noesis is something special but that does not in any way mean that the other beings would not exist if they were not perceived in some way by humans or gods, there is no question of empirical idealism. Primarily each being *is* in *its* respective noesis₁. It is just a secondary and empirical statement to say that a being is in the human noesis. When we ask under what conditions things are something (*etwas*), we have to answer that whatever they may be, they can only *be* in one world, that is, in a noesis₁, which is the structure of that world. Such is the speculative view.

Up to this point, I have been translating noesis with ‘thinking,’ as it is customary to do. Now we must replace this translation with the more appropriate ‘perceive’ or ‘being aware’ (for passive forms forms of perceive are required). Permit a bold comparison: the process of measuring in quantum physics and being in the noesis are in some ways comparable. As in quantum physics there is no definable state without measurement, so without noesis is there no definite being. When we are aware of something in our everyday life (noesis₃), that is the counterpart of measurement, but the net which makes it possible to place something at a certain point, that is noesis₁ as the structure of the world.

Imagine an absolute and abstract being – how would it be possible to say something about that? How could we speak of something that had no relations, something without or beyond a world? We dare not employ other words and things in order to explain the ‘absolute thing.’ There is no explanation at all. – None of this will do. No thing *is* absolutely, without any relation, strictly ‘in and for itself.’ Anything is within a world and it cannot be in a world without being in a noesis. ‘Something without or beyond a world’ is only ever a figurative expression or a *contradictio in*

se. Nothing can be said about an absolute and detached thing. The thinkable before the thought, the thing in itself, that is – comparable to the non-being in *Sophist*, 238c10, – ἀδιανόητόν τε καὶ ἄρρητον καὶ ἀφθεγκτον καὶ ἄλογον, it is “inconceivable, ineffable and unutterable, it is senseless.” Everything we are talking and thinking about, everything we experience and refer to, will necessarily be something, *etwas als etwas*, and thus it will be in our world. It is neither possible nor sensible to speak or to think of something that is not in a world.

It is not necessary that this world, in which things are, be the world of humans or gods. This means that there are different forms of noesis, different ways of ‘perceiving’ or ‘being aware.’ Even without any humans and gods there is a world, and therefore a noesis. If noesis means perceiving or being aware, what kind of perceiving or being aware could be meant other than that of a human consciousness? Aristotle gives noesis a speculative turn. Of course, our perceiving or being aware of something as humans is also noesis, but that is only secondarily. Primarily, noesis₁ is what makes it possible for us to perceive and to be aware, this is the basic noesis as structure of the respective world. Only by entering in this noesis₁ things become actual and real. But that noesis₁ is not the consciousness of a subject in the modern sense and the things are not the so-called mind-independent things, conceived as things before or beyond any world. The structure of the respective world is decisive for the being of things, through this structure they become a thing in a world. Entering into this structure things pass from possibility to actuality. We must take into account that the speculative intention can only be expressed through simile, at best by well known opinions about of humans or gods.

Human discursive thinking requires both, the perceiving nous and that which is perceptible to nous: the noeton. This distinction does not yet exist in the noesis₁ which is {being–actuality}. Aristotle discusses this in the sentences immediately following.

8.4.5. Why Does Aristotle Introduce Noesis in 7.17?

The being (*Sein*) that is the cause of becoming because it is the for-the-sake of becoming is comparable to a way of life. It is pleasant *to be*. For human beings some excellent performances of *to be* would be being awake or perceiving by the senses or thinking (7.16–7.17). We realize our {being–actuality} at any given time simply by living and being but, in being aware, we do so to a higher degree. That is the most beautiful and the best for us humans, even if it is only realizable for us for a short time in comparison with the timeless noesis (and even if this ‘short time’ were for the whole life span, it would be fleeting). God is believed to be permanently in that state, all the happier must we consider him.

Noesis, being-aware, is a new element in the enquiry. It is the last and conclusive speculative moment discerned by the theory about being. Noesis says conceptually what diagoge does figuratively, it is this primal first out of which being and actuality evolve. I choose to translate noesis with ‘being-aware’ or ‘perceiving’ as relatively neutral words which in this context are not yet terminologically overladen. Ordinarily it is translated with ‘thinking,’ but that seems excessively limited. The disadvantage of my translation is that, without a subject, it would seem that there could not be awareness.

With respect to this new element there are some questions: What does noesis mean in this context? In what sense does noesis complement being (*Sein*), which must be taken now as {ousia← noesis →energeia}? Will it not lead to an extreme subjectivism if we give awareness this position? Finally, we must supplement the formula with DOXA: {οὐσίᾳ← νόησις →ἐνέργεια / DOXA}, because this first being (*Sein*) is based on prevailing opinions in a particular world; whoever would contest this, would confirm this principle doing so.

The true and first actuality of being, *Sein*, is noesis, thus noesis is the first unmoved moving. The for-the-sake-of becoming of all things is to be actual in that way, that is to say: to arrive at this noesis and to be in that noesis is the first unmoved moving cause.

One could compare the way bodies seek to settle in their natural position with the drive by which beings are moved to find their ‘natural place’ in the noesis. This being (*Sein*) provokes that becoming as the for-the-sake of becoming. This causation is not temporal, because it belongs to the area of noesis, but the mundane realization of that takes place over and over again, it has, does and ever will.²² Causation does not equate with production, or to be *causa efficiens* or such things. It signifies to bring something from undetermined potentiality into determined actuality. The causing {ousia← noesis →energeia} is not temporally prior to that which is caused in a temporal sense, because it is not at all temporal. In the realization it is the end at which becoming aims.

The pure actuality of being – which does not mean the existence of the material world as such, but the actuality of the material world in the noesis – has at its precondition the fact that “the nous is aware of itself,” otherwise there is neither being nor actuality of whatever. In a particular case of awareness in a particular world, that which is aware of a thing or perceives something, can do so only because it is ever aware of the world as a structure before this single case. ‘Pure actuality of being in noesis’ means the basic pattern which makes possible all thinking and perceiving in their world, be it to gods or to men (and to any other beings). In KP 18, therefore, this {οὐσία← νόησις →ἐνέργεια / DOXA} is described in Parmenidean terms, because it is about being (*Sein*) and not about beings (*Seiendes*). Such would be possible if one understood this actuality as the thinking of a personal god, but that would represent a reification for the sake of everyday life.

It is common opinion that the act or a state of mind of awareness requires a subject, a being capable of being aware of something. In addition, awareness requires an object, because ‘being aware’ is intentional: it can only mean ‘being aware of something.’ It is, however, in no way evident that being, *Sein*, also requires awareness.

Just this point, that there is no being without awareness, noesis, is that which Aris-

²² The for-the-sake-of is a further criterion (necessary but not sufficient) of being in addition to the criteria examined in *Met. Z*, namely separability with respect to itself.

totle wishes to demonstrate in the theory of *Met.* A. We must see that, beyond *Met.* A 6.8, the final ground and the first origin is not the pure {being–actuality}, but that {being–actuality} results, instead, from noesis. Without awareness, the {being–actuality} is incomplete, it is not actual in that way, in which the first unmoved moving must be. The formal concept of being we have now arrived at is the structure {οὐσία← νόησις →ἐνέργεια} whose content is given by a respective DOXA. Noesis is placed in the middle because the external terms, ousia and energeia, are something like an expression, evolved outcome or consequence of noesis.

It is comparable to Parmenides’ theorem “*to be aware* and *to be* are the same.”²³

The intention of this sentence is not to put together or to identify two different entities separately existing beforehand, it means, rather, that there is an original unity, a “same” out of which *to be* and *to be aware* develop.

Aristotle picks up the formula in 7.18: the nous becomes noetos and so both are the same. The everyday distinctions of the systoichia collapses. They are the same in the noesis and, here too, noesis is a unity which precedes all realization (as ousia and energeia, as nous and noetos; which makes it comparable with the theoria in Plotinus’ text, see the last Part in this book).

“Way of life” is a metaphorical expression of {being–actuality} in 6.8. Now, at 7.17, noesis replaces this metaphor and is said to be the pleasant actuality of {being–actuality}. Awareness has steps, levels and modes, the highest mode is directed at highest things, the lesser at lesser things and so on. Every way of being takes its own form of awareness, the human takes a human form, gods a divine form, a stone a stony form. Noesis designates the pure {being–actuality}, which had been sought since *Met.* A 1.1, its mundane realizations are very different. In everyday life basic noesis is present in any form of awareness.

What does it mean that noesis is the “actuality of the nous” (7.19)? Noesis is the primal unity, nous, ousia and noeton are systematical (not temporal) developments out of it. The results can be ordered in a row of connected pairs (systoichia). The nous

²³ Parmenides, 28 B 3: τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἔστιν τε καὶ εἶναι.

can grasp *ousia* and *noeton*, it can “assimilate” it (*dektikon*, *in sich aufnehmen*) and so it is the core of every particular process of acquiring knowledge. Insofar as thinking is the process in a present situation it is transitive, objectivating, *dianoetic*.

The *nous* can act this way in a particular case only provided that the *noeton* is identical with it (: with the *nous*) in advance. The *noeton* is not prior to a particular act of awareness in the form of a particular thing, but as a node provided in a net. The structuring order or nexus are captured and described by the basic opinions of a world. Aristotle says in *Met. A* and in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that *theoria*, speculation, is the purest performance of *noesis*. Thanks to the basic *noesis*, a particular *noesis* in our everyday life becomes possible.

Now, we should like to understand what the pure actuality of this *noesis* may be. In the standard interpretation the actuality often has been understood as gods existence and the actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) of the *noesis* as *actus purus* translated as pure activity (*Tätigkeit*). Let us, instead, try to reach an alternative understanding starting, as Aristotle did, from everyday experience. Firstly, actuality is not a determination of things, as little as *to be* is a predicate of a thing. Instead, as Aristotle already said, it is something like a way of life. Being awake, perceiving and thinking, therefore, are eminently ways of being a human. Those correspondences and comparisons from our ordinary experience serve to bring us to insight into what *noesis* is. As another possible comparison he has talked about the gods, because to the gods, it seems, we must assign ‘pure actuality’ in the highest degree.

In the first five chapters of *Met. A* Aristotle asks after the first and the origin, starting from opinions about *to be*, as Plato in the *Sophist*, 246–248, had done taking as starting point for the question about being the opinions of the “aborigines” and those of the “friends of the ideas.” These chapters had no definitive result. Only later, in 6.8, is such an origin discerned as {being–actuality}, where actuality does not mean existence but completion of the eidetic determinations of a being. Taken wholly unto itself, a being having its eidetic determinations (say a horse) would be just an abstraction and would not have as yet any emplacement in a world. The actual being is an involvement of the total set of possible relations, in short: it is in a world.

Mere eidetic determinations outside of a world cannot constitute an actual being, the particular is actual and real only within a whole. That whole is the respective world constituted by fundamental opinions and distinctions. For an *absolute* being there is nothing else external to itself, not even its cause. Without connection and emplacement within situational potentiality there is no ‘this.’ We can say, positively, that the eidos is the aspect that a being A presents for another being B, which in its turn presents its aspect to A. Both, the being that is perceived and the perceiving being, are aware of each other and thereby they *are*, maybe in a common world, maybe each in its own world. Each ‘performance’ of being aware (noesis₃) brings about the change from a potential to an actual being. What, however, is the *first* unmoved awareness (beyond time and prior to particular awareness) which can set something in motion? – It is ‘absolute’ or ‘pure’ awareness (*Bemerktheit schlechthin*), noesis₁.²⁴ Only this noesis can yield the relations, which constitute the structure, which is to say the world in which a particular thing can *be* what it is.

{Οὐσία← νόησις →ἐνέργεια} as the goal and end of becoming is the unmoved moving cause; it brings into being the thing which becomes. What are the conditions under which a becoming thing comes to be a being? An absolutely isolated thing could not become a being, that is possible only within the context of a world. Getting its eidetic determinations is to move from potentiality into actuality and this takes place through entering in a world. That world is formed by basic concepts, distinctions and values, in short, by DOXA. It would make no sense to speak that is to use *to be* beyond a world. Any utterance refers to or is related to its respective world which means to a total of opinions, whether this done consciously or not.

In the original noesis₁, both the perceiving and the perceptible form an undivided unity whereby the perceptible is not the ‘real’ thing but a noetic potentiality. So the world as noesis₁ can provide an openness, in which potentialities can change into actualities and where any particular finds its place, where it can fit in and be determined and *be* that way.

The statement ‘all things aim to be’ means that all things aim at getting at the node

²⁴ See commentary on 9.10.

in a local nexus where they can be. When we are aware of something, we fix a being as such. That is the worldly realization in parallele to the way in which the unmoved moving cause systematically sets in motion something by causing the change from steresis to eidos. So, through noesis as the world of beings, the becoming things attain their being (*Sein*).

This first and primordial noesis has no subject. Only as the noesis of gods or men does noesis take on the character of subjectivity.²⁵ The basic noesis predefines the whole in which relations of beings and things can be realized. As such, the basic noesis is not the awareness of a subject but the condition of that awareness. The relation between the one and the other, the perceiving and the perceived, does, of course, have an effect, in different ways, certainly, physically but also quite otherwise. That the A experiences the B has an impact on A itself. The B experiences the A equally (in manifold ways). That impact is based either on their common noesis or DOXA or world, or on common features of their respective worlds. All things that are, have this mutual perceiving and experiencing impact upon each other. That which cannot enter into the whole of a DOXA *is not in a world* and therefore simply *is not*. That perceiving is not restricted to human or divine awareness but that just as much the plant perceives the soil in which it roots as the moon perceives the sun etc. is very well observed and explained by Plotinus in *Enn.* III.8.

As has been said several times before noesis has yet another meaning. Besides that of perceiving and being aware in the everyday sense, noesis has yet another meaning, that of the structure of a world. We can distinguish between world_I and world_{II}; whereby world_{II} means the world of our factual existence and of present things and world_I the ‘world before that world.’ Aristotle brings into play the vision of a relation-structure, which ‘is’ already prior to any concrete thing. Concrete things do nothing other than realize a point of this structure in a particular case. The structure is already the true actuality before any realization of it, it is the condition of possibility for all the rest, for the worldly actuality. The structure of an opinion-based world does not just begin with the particular beings, which realize

²⁵ C. O. Schrag, 1969, finds some comparable ideas in W. James and A. N. Whitehead.

the structure. It is not an idea of god, for gods too are only elements in the structure. The particular being carries out its own being only in the noesis. Only by virtue of noesis₁ does it stand within an order, within a world.

If a being arrives at its worldly actuality in an act of awareness of another being (noesis₃), the factual structure is that of a peculiar world_{II} and insofar it is only secondary, but this world_{II} is based on noesis₁. The structure represented by noesis₁ seems to be a mere potentiality, but, in fact, this structure is that “origin whose being is actuality” mentioned in 6.8. The being and the actuality of this structure can be described in Parmenidean terms but we must not hypostasize it anew as an objective fact in our phenomenal world, it is and remains a structure of an opinion-based world.

8.4.6. The Cancellation of the Difference Between that which Perceives and the Perceived

In 7.7 Aristotle says that that which sets in motion and that set in motion is different (νοῦς ὑπὸ τοῦ νοητοῦ κινεῖται, “that which is aware is moved by that which it is aware of”). Such pairs form a *systoichia*, a double row. On the one side is that of which one is aware, the noeton and the ousia as that which sets in motion, and on the other side is the moved, like that which is aware and that which thinks (the nous). From this arise many questions. What exactly happens in the process of being aware? What is going on when a particular being is aware of something and how is it possible that a particular can be aware of another particular, which *is* only by virtue of being noticed?

7.18 gives an answer to these questions. That which is aware of something can do so only on the condition that it be aware of itself priorly. ‘Of itself’ means that the being aware of something is priorly in a structure in which the thing noticed can appear. Through this process the being which is noticed becomes a noeton, it enters into a world and becomes an actual and fully definite being (*es wird etwas als etwas*). That which another being is aware of (*das Bemerkte*, A) is for its own part a

being aware (*das Bemerkende*, B, for any thing is a being aware of and has noesis) so that in the process of noesis the being aware (*das Bemerkende*, B) becomes that which something else is aware of (A), it becomes a noeton.

For us humans this world-structure is not private, it is common to a community. The one (say A) can appear in the structure of the other (say B) and the other (say B) can respectively give a place to the one (say A) inasmuch as both are within a common structure (: within a world_I or noesis₁) which has enough common features so that each can be aware of the other.²⁶ In this noesis₁ the being aware and that which it is aware of are not separated, only together they *are*. In the speculative view, noesis₁ as structure of an opinion-based world is the actuality, while the other, noesis₃ is the worldly realization of that structure at a certain point. In the case of our actual world, that means that the being aware presents its structure as a potentiality to that which it is aware of and that the latter becomes an actual being in the world of the being aware. In the mutual, common noesis there is no difference between the being which sets in motion and the being set in motion, valid in 7.7. This is the reason why we cannot say that an absolute, actual being could be grasped by an equally absolute or independent thinking. Our opinion-based whole has systematically determined that which the being aware can perceive as a particular thing.

Some may now argue that this speculative interpretation of *Met. A* is a secondary import, but it is, in fact, the result of the cancellation of the distinction made in 7.18 between the perceiving and perceived. Even opponents of this interpretation must somehow appreciate the meaning of this statement. The cancellation is no mystical event or an experience reserved for a single philosopher, it is valid for everyone and for the simplest actions, it results from the fact that we are and live as parts of an opinion-based whole. This {οὐσία← νόησις →ἐνέργεια / DOXA} we are searching after, is the world in which each thing performs its being (*Sein*) be it active or passive.

It is the special characteristic of Aristotelian speculation that {οὐσία← νόησις

²⁶ I forgo here to explain the relations regulating the mutual perceiving, say of a human being and a stone.

→ἐνέργεια / ΔΟΧΑ} is attributed no personal subject be it human or divine. Noesis and integration in {οὐσία← νόησις →ἐνέργεια / ΔΟΧΑ} is what simply happens, it requires no inventing and commanding subject, no human, no institution. no god has invented or created noesis, it is prior to all of those.

That which is aware of something is primarily aware of itself, in being so it is capable also to be aware of the object, see 7.18. This sentence is not a statement about a particular being (say god), but says something about the fundamental structure of being (*Sein*) of all beings. This structure is prior to any particular perception and that pertains for all beings, men, gods, stones. In some cases, in the case of human beings, for example, it is possible that this implicit structure becomes explicit through reflection. That which is aware of something can, thus, also be aware of the fundamental structure of the world in which what is perceptible has been ever perceived.

When a being aware stands before an actual perceptible thing, then the respective position of this thing in the structure becomes activated. This process has been discussed under various headings. Plato called it anamnesis; elsewhere it is the *a priori*; in physics the principle “Pressure generates counter-pressure” is an application of that notion. If a being aware is aware of another being, then both are actualized through their mutual awareness (7.19). All our interpersonal activities have this character of mutuality. The Greek language has the middle voice to express this. The nous perceives the perceptible and the being (*Sein*). In doing so it becomes actual itself; its divine character consists in being able to do so and this is *theoria* and the most beautiful (7.19). It follows from this description that all beings *are* beings only thanks to noesis and in noesis and that a being aware can perceive something else only if the structure of the world is effective in itself. That is the condition for perceiving anything (7.18). The nous can recognize what it has perceived, that is its *ousia*, and on this basis, that it is aware of itself, the nous “is actual” (ἐνεργεῖ δέ). To be in noesis, to be in its world, is something that works without the underlying structure needing to be explicitly known. Comparable with this is the case of language and grammar: anyone can speak their own language even without having an explicit knowledge of its grammar.

Next, I shall attempt to summarize the speculative content of 7.16–7.19.

7.16: The being (*Sein*) we are searching for is something like a way of life. The actuality of that being (*Sein*) is beautiful, pleasant and when we are awake or being aware we are in a comparable state. The possibility of being like this is limited in time for us humans, while the being itself (*Sein*) and the noesis in itself are always in the best state.

7.17–7.18: In the narrow sense {being–actuality} is actual only in noesis. The nous can be aware of something on the basis of being aware of itself. In being so the nous becomes its own object. Awareness in itself is awareness of the best, that is in fact the noesis itself as the world-structure. A lower noesis refers to lower beings, a higher to higher ones. In the noesis as the opinion-based world-structure the being aware and that which it is aware of are not yet discrete or distinguished.

7.19: It is the same process in which the nous recognizes itself and its object, but by different functions: one is transitive, the other reflexive. Through reflection one can make the noesis explicit. In our everyday life, enacting a noesis always requires a subject which is aware of something (noesis always has an agent), but the noesis itself does not need a subject. Being aware is directed towards its object (it is intentional) but the precondition for doing so is the underlying world-structure, detectable by a reflexive turn, being in place. The being aware and what it is aware of are actual only in the awareness. There are levels and ways of being aware, the highest for men is *theoria*. To be actual by being aware of something is a more divine feature in the nous than merely being able to pick up that of which it is aware. At the centre of the Aristotelian theory are insights of the kind which are listed in table 8.4.

It follows from all these considerations that the positivist opinion that truth and reality subsist in our world absolute and objective, that there is an absolute givenness and we have only to discover the beings, is not wrong but is nothing other than a further concrete version of noesis₁, in a specific world amongst other possible realizations in other potential worlds.

- There is no becoming without being–actuality, no being–actuality} without noesis.
 - Noesis is the actuality of the nous.
 - The being aware is actual through giving the perceived a place in its world and the perceived becomes actual by entering into a world which means into noesis₁.
 - ‘Being-aware’ alone and ‘being’ alone are abstractions and secondary forms of actuality (like existence).
 - The prime actuality is awareness (*Gewahren*). ‘Being actual’ means ‘to be aware of something and to be perceived.’
 - Noesis is realized in different ways; each has its respective form of actuality, characteristic for a definite opinion-based world.
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Table 8.4.: Examples of speculative insights

This view which connects our experience with the fact of being in a certain world is neither a form of aporetic thinking nor a form of relativism, because in any world we can attain truth and reality when guided by noesis. It negates only that there is truth and reality beyond a world.

8.4.7. The Meaning of the References to God in 7.20–7.23

Because of the importance of this passage I reproduce here the translation:

- 7.19 (1072b22) *For that which can receive the noetically perceptible and the being (: ousia) is nous: <which> is actual by having <the noetically perceptible>; therefore it seems that nous is divine more from the latter <: its actuality> than the former <: its receptivity>, and theoria is the most pleasant and best.*
- 7.20 (b24) If, therefore, god is always well in such a way, as we <are> sometimes, that is wondrous; if even more <so>, it is even more wondrous.
- 7.21 (b26) But he behaves this way.
- 7.22 (b26) And indeed life belongs <to the nous>; for the actuality of nous is life, and actuality is just this; and its actuality, in itself, is the best life and eternal.
- 7.23 (b28) Of course we say that god is a living being, eternal and best, so that life and age, unbroken and eternal, belong to god; and precisely this is <what we mean by> god.

In this section (at 1072b25 to be exact) Aristotle mentions god for the first time in *Met. A*. Many scholars have felt legitimized by this in taking the whole text as theology. My own view about this claim is set out in Part II, 2.2. When seeking to understand the reason why Aristotle does mention god in 7.20–7.24 we ought to recall the context. In *Met. A* Aristotle is searching for the origin of natural movement. Aristotle asks his question in two forms, as a natural and as a speculative one, exploring the latter being his primary objective. He has developed the leading question about being and transformed it into the question of what the first moving cause may be, given that natural movement has neither beginning nor end. This question too is treated as both a physical and as a speculative one. The answer to the physical question is that the sun, the sphere of the fixed stars (πρῶτος οὐρανός), and, in *De Caelo*, the aether as the first body, execute the first movement in space. The theoretical question about the origin of movement was transformed into the question of what can cause the change from steresis to eidos and from possibility to actuality. Part of the answer is given in 6.8: {being–actuality} is the origin. The answer is completed in 7.17–7.18 where it is stated that {being–actuality} takes place in the noesis. This, to be in that noesis, is that which first sets in motion as a goal. All becoming things are moving towards this goal, the goal of being actual in the noesis,

which means in the structure of a world (not in a personal consciousness). This is the being (*Sein*) for the sake of which all becoming happens.

The formula for the same is {οὐσία← νόησις →ἐνέργεια} and, because all this can happen only in an opinion-based world the complete formula for *to be* is {οὐσία← νόησις →ἐνέργεια / DOXA}. DOXA below the line indicates where the content of {οὐσία← νόησις →ἐνέργεια} does come from. *To be* that way is the for-the-sake-of becoming.

The question remains what the philosopher’s mentioning of god may add in this context. It is plain right from the start in Greek culture, from the *Iliad* up until to Plato and on to Epicurus, that gods are different from humans. It would have crossed no one’s mind to doubt this or to try to prove their existence.

In *Met.* Α the immortal gods are obviously compared with humans in some respects, but in which? Firstly, it must be held that the divine noesis is at a level much more perfect than our human noesis and more eminently actual than we are. This may be the main content of any opinion about gods in other cultures and worlds too. The same is valid for the longevity of achievements, that is why they are called immortals, but we mortals. The gods must, after all then, be supposed nearer to the origin, that is to the noesis. The divine represents a purer being (*Sein*) than we humans do, as in line with our opinions. The original and first noesis, which underlies all being, is realized in different ways. Gods must succeed in their realization much better than we. They can be said, thus, to live in a more proper sense than we mortals do. If any life is, then it is the life of the gods that is actuality and noesis as the actuality of the nous. Such beliefs about gods give ground to well justified comparisons between gods and men, so our beliefs about gods can help us to understand the quite different noesis which – beyond any question of men and gods – gives space to the actuality of being.

Aristotle repeatedly emphasizes his reliance on opinions about gods. In 1072b23 he says: ὃ δοκεῖ ὁ νοῦς θεῖον ἔχειν, “what the nous seems to have as a divine characteristic [...],” b 28: φημὲν δὴ τὸν θεὸν εἶναι [...], “we say that god is [so and so],” and finally see *Met.* Α 8, 1074a38–b14. The remarks in *De Caelo* Α 3,

270b1ff. and A 9, 279a22ff. point in the same direction.

It also becomes clear that noesis as awareness does not share the everyday sense of it. The question of whether we humans see or understand anything in a special way is not posed. Our whole life, indeed, the being of nature and natural beings, the being of cultural beings, the being (not existence) of quite simply all things is in this noesis and there can be nothing beyond noesis. All beings and, perhaps, human beings especially, enact all what they are performing this awareness, realizing in every case what is already laid down in the noesis. Plotinus will understand the very same in *Enneades* III 8 under the heading *theoria*.

In the noesis of the nous all is thought, perceived and united beforehand in a non-temporal sense. Only under this condition can things *be*, retracing what is defined by the noesis₁. By this process all things become actual. The concept of noesis is now very far from its everyday use, it does not mean the thinking of a subjective, particular and personal mind. Here it is awareness as a process without subject. In it there is no difference between nous and noeton, that distinction is secondary. Perhaps noesis is something like the *cogito* of Descartes if would be formulated impersonally as *cogitatur*.

8.4.8. Met. A 7.24–7.25: Aristotle Confronts Other Opinions with His Results

In 7.24–7.25, Aristotle gives different opinions on what the *first* may be. Pythagoreans and Speusippus have said that “the most beautiful and the best” cannot stand at the beginning but must be a result at the end. An example to this rule is the development of animals. At first there is only the semen, the complete animal comes only at the end. This objection has natural becoming as its grounds and it refers to the course of time.

Aristotle mentions one of two possible counterarguments. Certainly, the semen is less complete than the mature animal, but the semen is not the beginning even in the natural process but a product, the fruit of an actual and complete animal (see *Met.* N 5,1092a17, where the statement “a human begets a human” gives the reason for

that). Aristotle knows and distinguishes different ways of ‘beginning.’ In *Met.* Δ 2 he definitely mentions the semen as first because it can set something in motion. Nevertheless, the semen is subordinated in the hierarchy of causes because it is for the sake of another, namely of the ousia. In *Physics* Θ 7 too, Aristotle distinguishes between different senses of ‘the first,’ most notably between the senses of first in time and first in being (*Sein*). Here (261a13ff.) we find the speculative sentence that declares that the incomplete being in the process of becoming is going towards its origin in order to become complete (in accordance with *Physics* B 1, 193b13, “nature in the sense of becoming is the path into nature.”)

Aristotle does not speak of the difference between the physical and the theoretical view in 7.24, because with the objection, the theoretical level has been abandoned. In the speculative area arguments involving beings (*Seiendes*) are irrelevant. The counterargument mentioned in 7.24 is valid on the basis of the distinction between the first concerning the factual becoming of a particular thing and the first in being (*dem Sein nach*); in the case of the particular the semen is antecedent to the complete animal, in the latter ousia is prior.

8.4.9. KP 18 : Met. A 7.26

KP 18 *Met.* A 7.26 (1073a3–12) ὅτι μὲν οὖν ἔστιν οὐσία τις αἰδίος καὶ ἀκίνητος καὶ κεχωρισμένη τῶν αἰσθητῶν, φανερόν ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων· δέδεικται δὲ καὶ ὅτι μέγεθος οὐδὲν ἔχειν ἐνδέχεται ταύτην τὴν οὐσίαν ἀλλ’ ἀμερής καὶ ἀδιαίρετός ἐστιν (κινεῖ γὰρ τὸν ἄπειρον χρόνον, οὐδὲν δ’ ἔχει δύναμιν ἄπειρον πεπερασμένον· ἐπεὶ δὲ πᾶν μέγεθος ἢ ἄπειρον ἢ πεπερασμένον, πεπερασμένον μὲν διὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἂν ἔχοι μέγεθος· ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ ὅτι ἀπαθὲς καὶ ἀναλλοίωτον· πᾶσαι γὰρ αἱ ἄλλαι κινήσεις ὕστεραι τῆς κατὰ τόπον.
Thus, that there is some being <: ousia, *Sein*>, eternal, unmoved, and apart from the perceptible <beings> is clear from what has been said; it has also been shown that this ousia cannot have any magnitude, but that it is without parts and indivisible, for it sets in motion <other beings> for an infinite time but nothing finite has an infinite power; and, since every magnitude is either infinite or finite, on this account it would not have a finite magnitude, nor an infinite one, because there is no utterly infinite magnitude; but surely <it has also been shown> also that it <: ousia, *Sein*> is unaffected and unalterable for all other motions are secondary with respect to change in place.

By the standard interpretation, 7.26–7.27 summarizes the characteristics of the ‘Unmoved Mover.’ It is obvious and uncontroversial that 7.26 is a summary and it is beyond dispute that the summary covers chapters 6 and 7. B. Manuwald says that there is a close connection between this section and *Physics* Θ 10 and he thinks that the content is more proper to the *Physics* than to *Met.* A, because Aristotle “argues in a surprisingly physical manner” (65).²⁷

We do well to scrutinize that more closely. In 7.26 the Parmenidean vocabulary is striking. Following the order in *Met.* A the determinations are: eternal (Parmenides, frg. 8, 27); without becoming (frg. 8, 3); unmoved (frg. 8, 26); separated from sensible things (frg. 2, frg. 7); without magnitude; and therefore without parts (frg. 8, 22); unaffected and immutable (frg. 8, 3–4). There is, thus, ‘something’ with the determinations which Parmenides gave to being (to eon; *Sein*). The obvious reference to Parmenides should make clear that this is not about beings but about being,

²⁷ B. Manuwald, 1989, 61–66.

Sein.²⁸ The becoming, which we must acknowledge as *on pollachos legomenon*, is not possible without being, without *prote ousia*. One of the determinations of that being is to be the first moving in the sense of a goal (τὸ πρῶτον κινῶν ὡς τὸ τέλος). In *Met. ZHΘ* the following criteria of *prote ousia* are mentioned: *kath' hautō legomenon*, *choriston*, *energeia*, *aletheia*, and, only with certain reservations *tode ti*. It is the way of being that satisfies these criteria which every becoming strives after. The text makes clear, in any case, that neither the *nous* nor god are that *ousia*, which initiates becoming as its *telos*. What Aristotle says in *Met. Λ 7.19–7.24* and *27* are in no way descriptions of god because even god recognizes only what is described here (*Met. Λ 7.20–7.21*).

Since *noesis* is the actuality of the *nous* there is an *ousia* having Parmenidean determinations, because just this is its actuality. This *ousia* is not any being (*Seiendes*), it is the being (*Sein*) we are searching after as the for-the-sake of becoming. It is the good, that being, which has its actuality in the *noesis*.

²⁸ I follow the line of interpretation that Parmenides' subject was being, *Sein*.

9. From KP 19 to KP 21 in *Met.* Λ 8

While the structure of *Met.* Λ 8 is uncontroversial¹ there are some other difficult problems and questions about this chapter. Here, Aristotle treats astronomical theories in concrete form as nowhere else in his *Met.* There are issues of chronology, since he mentions the astronomical theories of Callippus.² The third and most difficult problem is how the eighth chapter with its astronomical content is to fit into the line of thought of *Met.* Λ 5–10. If we leave the chapter in its place in the traditional order, we must identify the meaning of these cosmological considerations within the whole larger work. If we opt, rather, for a break in the sequence we then face the question of its dating.

9.1. Outline of Chapter Eight

I present a short outline of the chapter. First Aristotle lays out the question to be treated: whether or not “the ousia of this kind” is singular (8.1–8.2, 1073a14–22). He says that the ideas cannot explain any movement in the world and that assuming the ideas does not bring sufficient clarity with respect to the question of the number of the “ousia of this kind.” Sometimes it is said that the ideas are numbers, but here and there that the numbers are an infinite quantity and elsewhere again only a decade. In *Met.* Λ 8.3–8.7 (1073a23–b17) we find the fundamental principles and distinctions on the basis of which Aristotle wants the question decided. There is also a remark about the competence of astronomy and mathematics with respect

¹ The division which I propose is, in its main features at least, in accordance with that of G. E. R. Lloyd, 2000, 252. G. E. R. Lloyd emphasizes Aristotle’s poor expertise in astronomy, which is less important here.

² See Part II, 3.3.

to the present question and strong reservations are expressed as to whether the astronomical observations of his time are reliable and complete enough. When new observations came along, the question would have to be asked anew, he says.

In the next section, which is the longest in this chapter (8.8–8.11; 1073b17–1074a14), Aristotle first presents two astronomical systems, that of Eudoxus and of Callippus, then he proposes his view about the number of the spheres. Sentences 8.12–8.16 (1074a14–31) are an appendix. From the 55 moving spheres, 47 of which eternally moving, we can deduce the number of the *ousiai* and *archai* *akinetoi*, so that the number of the unmoved moving principles is defined.

The next section (8.17–8.20; 1074a31–38) treats the question of the uniqueness of the *ouranos* as does *De Caelo A 7–9*. Unfortunately, it is not quite clear what Aristotle has in mind by *ouranos*, the argument is somewhat cryptic: “because the first *ti en einai* is without *hyle*, for it is *entelecheia*.”

The chapter closes with a reference to the traditional connection between the observing of the heavens and the inferring of gods (8.21–8.23; 1074a38–b14). This connection is discussed in *De Philosophia* and *De Caelo A 3* too.

9.2. Astronomy in *Met. A 8*

With regard to astronomy, the most prominent subject in *A 8*, it is essential to see that it is more relevant *that* Aristotle treats this subject than *what* he says about it. His statements about astronomy are naturally contingent on the state of knowledge in his time and Aristotle is well aware of that. Here and in *De Caelo* he repeatedly expresses serious reservations about the contemporary state of observations. The text shows very clearly that Aristotle would have appreciated the telescope and, quite in contrast to Simplicio in Galilei’s *Discorsi*, he would have reconsidered the case had he the benefits of its powers.

G. E. R. Lloyd (2000) has convincingly shown that in many places and on many topics it is not entirely clear, which astronomical theories Aristotle really follows.

He also explained how limited Aristotle's competence in astronomy was, a point that had already been made by W. D. Ross *ad loc.* We may, therefore, pass over this topic and turn to the question of why it is that Aristotle includes astronomical considerations in his project and what their function may be in the sequence of reasoning of *Met. A*.

We have already dealt with this kind of background to *Met. A* in Part II, 3.3 and in connection with the *Timaeus* in Part III, 5.1.1 under the heading 'Cosmology.' For reasons which had become established as traditional, astronomy must be included in the question of which being could be the basis of becoming, for Plato had presented the world in two versions in the *Timaeus*: a pure noetic one and a realistic one, taking into account chora. The question is posed within the framework of the Older Academy.

For systematic reasons too, Aristotle had to take this question into account because the question about being as ground of becoming has both a speculative dimension and a realistic-physical one. Theophrastus explicitly emphasized this point in the introduction of his *Metaphysics*. As we, asking the question about being, are ourselves physical bodies, we dare not neglect reflecting on the nature of the transition (the *Übergang* to use Kant's expression in the *Opus Postumum*) between the noetic and the physical view. We have already seen that under the speculative view the being we are searching after is captured through the formula {οὐσία← νόησις →ἐνέργεια / DOXA}. It remains, then, to seek out the physical side because the foregoing references to the sun and the sphere of the fixed stars were too scattered.

Once we have understood the process of "becoming into being"³ as a transition from steresis to eidos in noesis, which is to say in the sense of the transition from non-determined to determined in awareness (noesis₁), the physical consideration remains. For this the natural growth of animals will serve as model.

³ See Plato, *Philebus* 26d7, γένεσις εἰς οὐσίαν, "becoming into being"; Plato, *Definitions*, 411a5 γένεσις κίνησις εἰς οὐσίαν, "becoming is movement into being"; Aristotle, *Met.* Γ 2, 1003b7, ὁδὸς εἰς οὐσίαν, "way into being"; or possibly the most explicit reference *Physics* B 1, 193b12–13 ἔτι δ' ἡ φύσις ἡ λεγομένη ὡς γένεσις ὁδὸς ἐστὶν εἰς φύσιν, "furthermore: the so-called nature in the sense of becoming is a way into nature."

Aristotle coined the expression “nature in the sense of becoming is a way into nature” (*Physics* B 1, 193b13). It is the goal of the process of becoming that the thing becoming attains into its definitive form. The question now is not about the noetic beginning and origin of becoming, but remains within the natural frame. The answer will depend on the world in which the question is asked, on the available knowledge about natural things, but especially on what kind of knowledge of nature one looks to cultivate in this world.

The Big Bang, which is the first impulse of all movement is such an originary moment for us today. Scientists are attempting to formulate a *Great Unified Theory* capable of including all moving forces in one single and comprehensive theory (in the modern sense). Aristotle located the first moving force in the sphere of fixed stars, the first heaven. Through ever more complex sets of circumstances, the initially very simple movement is transferred to the things of the world around us with their manifold movements.

9.3. How *Met. A 8* fits together with *Met. A 5–10*

W. Jaeger says that the eighth chapter interrupts the line of thought and for this reason thinks that it is a late interpolation, while the rest of Λ is an early text. In the view of L. Elders the eighth chapter contradicts the alleged monotheistic system of the book.⁴ He goes so far as to maintain that *Met. A 8* is not authentic. For D. T. Devereux, on the other hand, the eighth chapter fits in perfectly with the rest because in both Aristotle was operating with the same metaphysical conception. In his introduction to the *Symposium Aristotelicum* (edited with D. Charles) M. Frede tries to demonstrate a certain plausible unity to the sequence of ten chapters, in that they all are about “unchangeable substances” and not about god. L. Judson also thinks that the chapter can be easily arranged. Neither J. Brunschwig nor A. Kosman who

⁴ Apart from W. Jaeger and W. D. Ross, with M. Burnyeat and with the coeditor M. Frede, L. Elders is the most often quoted author in *Aristotle's Metaphysics Lambda* of the *Symposium Aristotelicum*, 2000.

both treat chapter nine, discuss the problem of continuity.⁵ Both L. Judson and F. Baghdassarian treat the issue at greater length; they rather try to integrate the chapter in the whole of *Met. A* and giving less importance to questions of chronology.

In the context of the discourse following the *Timaeus*, *Met. A 8* fulfills the expectation raised after that dialogue, that the problem of transition be dealt with. The development of the notion of a noetic world represents an important advance, for previously the answer to the question of origin and first principles was sought only within the common, phenomenal world and that is insufficient. The speculative answer to that question calls for an answer to the connection between the speculation and the empirical experience.

In the noesis the becoming being finally becomes actual (mind you, not ‘existent’) and all that is becoming strives to enter into this actuality for it strives *to be*. The answer to the question about the natural beginning of this process of realization and of the transition from possibility to actuality is that the first movement originates from the outermost sphere. To this question with its two aspects the answer ‘ousia’ has a double aspect. In the speculative line it is the heading to the question about being, in the physical line to the natural beings.

In the next chapter I explain how, to my mind, the eighth chapter fits in its context.

⁵ In their contributions there is no German language literature cited, not K. Oehler, K. von Fritz, and not H.-G. Gadamer, H. J. Krämer, T. A. Szlezák et al.

9.4. KP 19 : *Met.* A 8.1

KP 19 *Met.* A 8.1 (1073a14–17) Πότερον δὲ μίαν θετέον τὴν τοιαύτην οὐσίαν ἢ πλείους, καὶ πόσας, δεῖ μὴ λανθάνειν, ἀλλὰ μεμνήσθαι καὶ τὰς τῶν ἄλλων ἀποφάσεις, ὅτι περὶ πλήθους οὐθὲν εἰρήκασιν ὅ τι καὶ σαφὲς εἰπεῖν.
It must not escape our notice whether we have to assume one singular ousia of this kind or many, and how many <they are>; but we must also mention the statements of the others, that they did say nothing about the quantity, which could be said quite clearly.

After these preliminary remarks we consider KP 19 (*Met.* A 8.1), where Aristotle asks whether “the ousia of this kind” is unique or not. With “such” or “of this kind” Aristotle refers to the theoretical ousia which was treated in A 7. Now it is taken from the perspective of how this ousia can be the cause of natural becoming. The question is pursued of whether there is one being or many beings in nature, which could be the origin of natural becoming.

As usual in such cases the answer is that the ousia is unique in a certain way, namely as the sphere of the fixed stars, in another way there are many such ousiai, namely as the mediating spheres and the sphere of the moon. We must take into account, that in Aristotle’s time it was not observable that the heavens are temporally finite and changeable (as, for example, concerning the movement of a single star in a constellation). Although certain phenomena, such as the irregular surface of the moon were easily observable to the naked eye,⁶ the moon has now become the last element in a series of unchangeable spheres, so that it might be plausible that it have some irregularities, but also that the planets and the stars have different colors, and that the changing stars may have been evident. Other irregularities, such as comets, were placed below the moon.

With τοιαύτη οὐσία in KP 19 Aristotle is asking after the function of the speculative ousia in the natural context. Many interpreters, however, wonder why Aristotle wishes to ascertain the number of those beings when other astronomical questions

⁶ See G. E. R. Lloyd, 2000, 249.

were of much greater relevance such as the questions concerning the periodicity of the planets, their velocity, the inclination towards the ecliptic and others.⁷ Certainly one of the reasons may be Aristotle's insufficient knowledge of astronomy, which is why he could not distinguish the essential questions from inessential ones.⁸ Another reason is the leading question, which pertains to the origin of natural movement. As to this question, it is important to know whether that origin is unique or not. We must make sure, in any case, that there is not an infinite number of principles. That would contradict the idea of a principle and would make impossible any knowledge at all in this area. Investigating the number of something is also part of the standard questioning procedure in Aristotle's inquiries.⁹

In *Met.* A 8.3–8.7 Aristotle presents his fundamentals and the distinctions by which he wishes the question decided. There are two main points: in *Met.* A 8.3–8.5 he presents the content-related aspect (with 8.3 as KP 20); in *Met.* A 8.6–8.7 the methodological point (with 8.6 as KP 21).

9.5. KP 20: *Met.* A 8.3

KP 20	<p><i>Met.</i> A 8.3 (1073a23–25) ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ πρῶτον τῶν ὄντων ἀκίνητον καὶ καθ' αὐτὸ καὶ κατὰ συμβεβηκός, κινοῦν δὲ τὴν πρώτην αἰδίον καὶ μίαν κίνησιν·</p> <p><The basis for our reasoning is as follows:> The origin and the first in the area of the beings is unmoved, both in itself as well as accidentally, it sets in motion the first eternal and single movement; ...</p>
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According to KP 20, the first origin is unmoved in itself as well as accidentally and it is the initiator of the first eternal movement. In fact, we observe also other eternal movements beside the simple movements of the sphere of the fixed stars. If

⁷ G. E. R. Lloyd, 2000, 252.

⁸ L. Judson tries to rehabilitate Aristotle to some degree, 263–5, 269–70.

⁹ See πόσα in TLG; examples: *Topics* A 2: For how many things and why is this inquiry useful? *Met.* A: how many αἴτια and ἀρχαί are there? *Met.* Z 2–3: how many ousiai are there? In a general manner the question of quantity is put with the formula posachos legetai.

any eternal movement must have an eternal unmoved moving cause, then we must suppose an eternal unmoved moving ousia for each such movement. It follows from this that there must be as many eternal unmoved moving ousiai as there are eternal movements. With respect to this First we have two questions to ask, they are not easily answered. What, firstly, is meant by “origin and first of beings” and why, secondly, does each eternal movement require a separate individual moving cause?¹⁰

G. E. R. Lloyd thought that the different movements could be explained by the different axes, periodicities and positions that the spheres take in the whole. Indeed Aristotle does, indeed, use the term taxis in 8.6 and 8.8–8.9 and mentions the different inclination of the spheres in relation to the zodiac. One has, perhaps, to accept the principle as an axiom. The antique idea, that the physical body itself should determine its own motion stands, at any rate, in rather sharp contrast to the view of classical physics that a physical force (or a field) acts upon it. In the Aristotelian context the body is an ousia, which seeks to occupy its natural place. In the case of the heavenly bodies that place is above and their motion is circular. Anyway, in *Met. A 8* Aristotle leaves behind the theoretical level and enters the physical.

Ousia in 8.1 is still referring to the ousia of chapter seven, but only because its function of being an unmoved moving cause must find a counterpart in the physical area. The expression “origin and first of the being” in 8.3 (1073a23) must refer to the first moving in this sense, to the sphere of the fixed stars. It is certainly not the noesis in 7.17 that is meant because here the subject is real and visible (1073a28). It does, however, have the same function, namely as cause of the change from steresis to eidos, from indeterminate to determinate.

¹⁰ 1073a28 τὴν μίαν ὑφ’ ἐνός, “the one by one”; cf. G. E. R. Lloyd, 2000, 254 *ad loc.*; it might be that the first transmits its movement to different things in different ways.

9.6. KP 21 : Met. A 8.6

KP 21 *Met. A 8.6 (1073b3–6) ... τὸ δὲ πλῆθος ἤδη τῶν φορῶν ἐκ τῆς οἰκειοτάτης φιλοσοφίας τῶν μαθηματικῶν ἐπιστημῶν δεῖ σκοπεῖν, ἐκ τῆς ἀστρολογίας· αὕτη γὰρ περὶ οὐσίας αἰσθητῆς μὲν ἀδίδου δὲ ποιεῖται τὴν θεωρίαν, αἱ δὲ ἄλλαι περὶ οὐδεμίας οὐσίας, οἷον ἢ τε περὶ ἀριθμοῦς καὶ τὴν γεωμετρίαν.*
 ...; but we must learn the quantity of the movements from the mathematical knowledge whose nature is nearest to philosophy, namely from astrology; it is this <knowledge> which considers the being <: ousia>, which is perceptible but eternal; the others <in the range of the mathematical knowledge> do not deal with ousia at all, e. g. that which <deals> with numbers and geometry.

The considerations presented can be summarized in three points and from these a question arises, which is answered by KP 21: (i) There is a certain number of eternal unmoved ousiai; (ii) they are organized hierarchically; (iii) that hierarchy is determined by the different ways in which the fixed stars, the planets, the sun and the moon are moving. These three points give rise to the question which form of knowledge is competent to determine that number.

That is, obviously neither a theoretical question because it refers to perceptible beings, nor a mathematical or geometrical question, because these forms of knowledge are always expressed *in abstracto* (cf. *Physics B 2*). “Astrology” remains, then, to serve as the knowledge required. We see that Aristotle’s evaluation of astronomy is not in contrast to that of Theophrastus. In the physical domain and especially with regard to the question of the number of the principles required, astronomy is competent, but this form of knowledge has nothing to do with theoretical questions about the first.

Aristotle, furthermore, expresses major reservations here and elsewhere about what we know with certainty in astronomy (*Met. A 8.7*; see also *Met. A 8.12*, but as well *De Caelo A 3*, 270b11–25, *De Partibus Animalium*, A 5, 644b22–645a6). He presents the theories or opinions of other philosophers and does this only ἐννοίας χάριν (1073b12), in order to have something concrete to say about how it could be. He reports the celestial mechanics following Eudoxus and Callippus, to which he

adds his own solution (8.8–8.11). G. E. R. Lloyd (2000), has given a good account of the remaining problems, of what remains unclear or what is not well founded in that proposal. Remarks in 8.12–8.16 are intended to definitively establish the number of spheres, but even here we find a reservation expressed, which can hardly be ironic, as J. Tricot, II 695, thought. That number, too, remains hypothetical.

Aristotle wishes to convey that the number is complete under certain conditions, one of which is the astronomical system one chooses to rely on, the other are the observations presently possible. He confirms this in the second part of 8.12. If every movement in the celestial area contributes to the movement of a star, i. e. if the movements of the spheres are entangled with one another and if the best state of everything must be its telos (to reach its telos meaning to realize the eidetical determinations and to become actual), then the number of the ousiai we have found has reached its telos and there is no need of more ousiai (8.12).

Aristotle adds two further principles: (i) everything which sets in motion and every motion is for the sake of the moved thing (there is no motion purely for the sake of itself or for the sake of another motion, for that would terminate in something like a free-flying movement), (ii) even if a movement were for the sake of another movement this other movement must have its telos, unless we are to end in a *regressus in infinitum*. Every astronomical movement must culminate in the movement of a “divine body in the sky” (8.16).

The next, penultimate, section (8.17–8.20) treats the uniqueness of the heavens. The thesis itself is less interesting than the type of argumentation employed. In the thesis that there is only one heaven (8.17) and that this heaven is the origin of all natural movement, by ‘heaven’ Aristotle probably means the first of the three senses mentioned in *De Caelo* A 9, 278b10–21; i. e. he refers to heaven as the outermost sphere of the universe, respectively to the corresponding natural bodies. Now he argues that if there were many ouranoi as, for example, there are many humans, then there would be eidetically one principle for every heaven, but quantitatively many principles. The quantitatively many things have hyle, but to have hyle is impossible for the heaven, “because the first ti en einai has no hyle because it is entelecheia”

(1074a35–36). This is the difficult point in the argument. Unfortunately G. E. R. Lloyd, 2000, says nothing on the matter. Bonitz (513), thinks that the text is corrupt, Ross *ad loc.* that what is meant is the “Prime Mover,” F. Baghdassarian (317) and L. Judson agree.

It is easy to understand that the many has hyle because the many is made up of singulars and each singular (to kath’ hekaston) is a synholon, that is a composite of form and hyle. Socrates is the example offered for that in the text. Conversely, we can say that the eidetically unique can become many thanks only to hyle. The eidetic one remains one as long as it is not realized in hyle and it is not said about an underlying thing (hypokeimenon).

The remarks on hyle and ti en einai are more difficult. Hyle is a term to describe being (a *Seinsbegriff*). Its usual translation as ‘matter’ is as misleading as could be. M. Heidegger grasped the sense much better with his translation *Geeignetheit zu ...*, ‘appropriateness’ or ‘suitability for ...’ Hyle stands, then, in the domain of possibilities. The statement “the first ti en einai has no hyle” does not primarily mean that the ti en einai has no material parts (which would be trivial) but that it has no unrealized potentialities. The subsequent remark that the first ti en einai is entelecheia is self-evident, but this first ti en einai does not need to be god or the (inexisting) ‘Prime Mover,’ it is the ti en einai of anything. The reason for that comes from 6.8 where it was said that the answer to the question about the speculative origin of movement is given with {being–actuality}.

Only something which is actual neither occasionally nor only *de facto* can be the origin. What is established theoretically must be valid, *mutatis mutandis*, in the natural domain too. The natural equivalent of this origin is the first unmoved heaven, which is eternally in motion and suffers no interruption.

The expression “the first ti en einai” remains to be reconsidered.¹¹ Considering the various ways in which the term is used¹² we see that no ti en einai has hyle in any

¹¹ On the linguistic background of the term to ti en einai see my papers 1982, 1992, and 2000, as well as the remarks made of H. Schmitz, 1985, and H. Weidemann, 1996.

¹² *Met. Z.*, chapters 4, 6 and 11, but also *De Caelo A 9*, 278a3: It does not belong to the determinations

case. On the other hand, hyle is part of every any-this (tode ti). The sky is unique but not an any-this. Thus, it is trivial to say that the first ti en einai in the sense of the ‘ti en einai of the first,’ namely of the sky, has no hyle, but it is not trivial that this is so on the basis of {being–actuality}. As in 6.8 we must take {being–actuality} not as god, as if what were intended was a hidden proof of the existence of god. It is, instead, about the position of the first in the distinction between possibility and actuality, a distinction developed by Aristotle himself.

As to the principle of becoming on the theoretical side, i. e. to {οὐσία← νόησις → ἐνέργεια / DOXA} as the being which is the for-the-sake of becoming (taking place as ‘becoming determined’ in awareness, noesis₁), so does the first sphere and the aether as the physical cause of natural movement on the physical side correspond. This first movement initiates the movement of the other spheres, in combination with further secondary causes of movement (which also depend on the first) continuing down to the next and familiar natural movements.

G. E. R. Lloyd recounts the last section (8.21–8.23) as if Aristotle would support his own statements, with his references to traditional opinions. It would, however, be a questionable logic first to give arguments and then to end with the vindication of an opinion poll. G. E. R. Lloyd tries, therefore, to lend great plausibility to the traditional belief in the stars. We should not imagine, however, that such suggestions render more plausible the argument. Firstly, the remark that the starry sky motivated people to belief in gods has always been taken to refer to *De Philosophia*, secondly it is uncontroversial that the text here is reporting prevailing opinions. The question is just what the function of these endoxa is.

They do not support the plausibility of the foregoing considerations, quite the contrary, they only underline the reservations. Previously it was a matter of the stars connected with gods (not only in 8.16), now Aristotle says that this must not be taken at face value. It was spoken only en mythou schemati and it is patrios doxa, the “belief of our fathers.” That is a clear indication that in theoretical and physical considerations theological arguments have no place. The drift to theology is a re-

of a sphere whether it is made out of ore or not.

lapsing into the endoxa, which are always a necessary starting point of the inquiry but never to be taken as a result or something to be contended.

10. From KP 22 to KP 24 in *Met.* Λ 9

Since the main features of the speculative outline are already fixed in *Met.* Λ 7, perhaps it is of only secondary importance to know how well chapters seven and nine cohere with each other. The three last chapters contain only addenda, specifications, explanations or further questions. Nevertheless, both the eighth chapter dealing with cosmological questions and the ninth chapter returning to speculation, have enjoyed considerable attention because these addenda were essential. J. Brunschwig thinks that the subject of the ninth chapter is still the divine thinking while, rather subtly, he places greater emphasis on the fact that the subject is not god himself but noetic aspects of god. It is taken for granted by many that also in chapter 9 God is the topic, L. Judson for example simply adds ‘divine’ to nous without further remark (304), see also his Epilogue to chapter 9 “1. What is the Divine Thinking about?” (326–329) and F. Baghdassarian speaks of a *intellect divin* and a *pensée divine* (329 and elsewhere). For the sake of precision, we should mention that Aristotle never uses the word ‘god’ or ‘divine thinking’ in the *Met.* Λ 9 which is observed by a minority of interpreters, see below p. 446. Theology in chapter 9 is the importation of the reception. Aristotle uses the superlative ‘most divine,’ at 1074b16, as a characteristic of *human* nous and does so in order to characterize our nous as the most divine thing on earth (“within the range of phainomena”),¹ and at 1074b26, where it characterizes the object of thinking.

I adduce some quotations which manifest the special language that has been used when speaking of the divine thinking.

H.-G. Gadamer (1961), says the “the very speculative identity of subjective and

¹ See Blyth, “The Role of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* 12.9,” in: *Methexis* 2016, 76–92, esp. 79ff., who stresses the fact that it is simply an endoxon, that our human nous is the “most divine.”

objective” is “the culmination point of his metaphysics [...]”² and that that Aristotle like G. W. F. Hegel has in mind the transcending of the dimension of self-consciousness by absolute reflection getting (1966). H. J. Krämer (1967, 317), denies that Aristotle could have had an idea of “a pure thinking without any object”; and 319: “God primarily thinks the series of the essences in Himself,” that is “pure thinking of objects.”³ – K. Oehler (1973, 50) writes:

Concerning how Aristotle defines God’s noetic way of being – namely that it is a thinking of Himself – it is essential to see that this self-thinking does not need another object to be aware of itself as we do in our finite human thinking but that He has nothing other than Himself as object⁴

and 55:

Aristotle defines the being of the first mover as thinking of thinking.⁵

K. Gloy (1983, 519) calls the noesis noeseos the “point where ontology and epistemology coincide.”⁶ H. Seidl argues in his Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, II, 579, that the noesis noeseos cannot be understood as a reflexive self-knowledge:

The expression noesis noeseos means that the divine rational being is at the same time the highest activity and the highest object of knowledge.⁷

Further, 1987, 158, H. Seidl says:

Because the divine intellect is a ‘pure act of being’ and so the first cause of all

² Gadamer: ...die wahrhaft spekulative Identität des Subjektiven und Objektiven, ist die höchste Spitze seiner *Metaphysik*.

³ Krämer: ...reines, von aller Gegenständlichkeit isoliertes Denken; Der Gott denkt offenbar primär die Reihe der in ihm einwohnenden Wesenheiten, reines Objektdenken

⁴ Was nun die aristotelische Bestimmung der noetischen Seinsweise des Gottes betrifft, dass sie ein Denken seiner selbst sei, so ist für dieses Sichselbstdenken des Gottes wesentlich, dass es nicht erst, wie das Sichselbstdenken des endlichen, menschlichen Denkens, über einen anderen Denkgegenstand zu sich selbst kommt, sondern überhaupt nur sich selbst zum Gegenstand hat.

⁵ Aristoteles bestimmt hier das Sein des höchsten Bewegers als das Denken des Denkens: *noesis noeseos*.

⁶ *Koinzidenzpunkt von Ontologie und Epistemologie*.

⁷ Der Ausdruck *noesis noeseos* besagt also, dass das göttliche Vernunftwesen als reine vollendete Wirklichkeit zugleich Erkenntnistätigkeit und höchstes Erkenntnisobjekt ist.

beings, [...] he recognizes that he is the first cause of being for all things.⁸

and little later, 164:

In *Met.* A 7 and 9 noesis means the actual intuitive knowledge, which in the divine intellect, i. e. in the first principle of being, at the same time pure actuality of being.⁹

F. Inciarte (1994, 21), comments on ‘actuality’:

Aristotle’s God cannot change. Otherwise he should be something which acts in one way or another, a substance which finds itself in changing states. That is, however, just what he is not, instead he is pure activity, so to speak, pure action, which bears itself. The fact that he is not a substance in action but the self-bearing pure action or activity does not imply that he ought to be conceived as process.¹⁰

and, shortly after:

Aristotle’s metaphysics begins as ontology and attains its perfection as theory, where, indeed, it does not have to cease as at the end of a process, as theology. It is throughout, from its opening (principle) and its completion, always a doctrine about substance (Ousia) as the being as such. Only that the substances . . . are subjects of predicate qualities, while the first substance of all is its own subject, an activity bearing itself, which required no other subject.”¹¹

A. Kosman approaches my own position more closely arguing that when Aristotle

⁸ *Da die göttliche Vernunft als ‚reiner Seinsakt‘ erste Ursache für alles Seiende ist, [...] erkennt sie von sich selbst, wie sie erste Seinsurache von allem ist;*

⁹ *In Met. A 7 und 9 hat die noesis die Bedeutung intuitiver Erkenntnisaktualität, die in der göttlichen Vernunft, dem ersten Seinsprinzip, zugleich reine Seinsaktualität ist.*

¹⁰ *Der Aristotelische Gott kann sich nicht verändern. Dazu müsste er etwas sein, was so oder so handelt, eine Substanz, die sich in wechselnden Zuständen befindet. Gerade dies ist er aber nicht, sondern er ist reine Aktivität, reine, wenn man so will, Handlung, die sich selbst trägt. Dass er nicht eine Substanz ist, die handelt, sondern sich selbst tragende reine Handlung oder Aktivität, bedeutet aber ebensowenig, dass er als Prozess aufgefasst werden kann;*

¹¹ *Die Aristotelische Metaphysik beginnt somit als Ontologie und erreicht ihre Vollendung, bei der sie allerdings nicht wie beim Ende eines Prozesses aufhören muss, als Theologie. Sie ist aber von ihrem Anfang (Prinzip) und ihrer Vollendung her durchgehend Lehre von der Substanz (Ousia) als dem Seienden als einem solchen. Nur dass die Substanzen [...] Subjekte von Eigenschaften sind, während die allererste Substanz sich selbst Subjekt ist, eine sich selbst tragende Aktivität, die keines anderen Subjektes bedarf.*

calls the thought ‘divine’ he means to characterize the intellect as god-like and not a god’s intellect (311). M. Bordt also takes a less traditional position of Λ 9 (141f.), saying that the theme of the chapter is the question of why the human intellect is the most divine of the phenomena.

For some interpreters the noesis noeseos is a narcissistic activity (J. Brunschwig, 2000, 305; cf. E. Zeller; W. D. Ross), for others it is a self-reflection without object (K. Oehler, K. Gloy, H.-G. Gadamer). Others think that the concept of a thinking without an object was impossible for antiquity (H. J. Krämer), while still others place at the centre the function of living (J. G. De Filippo). For T. De Koninck (1991, 150), noesis noeseos is neither a self-reflection nor a mere logical relation but an activity in highest perfection, but that activity does not bring plurality or motion into God. F. Baghdassarian sees in the *pure auto-comtemplation du Premier Moteur* the *causalité seulement finale* (21), she interprets noesis noeseos as *parfait retournement de la pensée divine sur elle-même* (339).

An old and venerable view is that God’s self-knowledge prepares the knowledge of the world, as Thomas Aquinas said *intelligendo se intelligit omnia* “by thinking himself, he thinks all things”¹² an idea later picked up by F. A. Trendelenburg, and F. Brentano. A. Kosman (2000) explained in his contribution that all knowledge on the one side is necessarily intentional but on the other side must include an element of self-consciousness too. Indeed, Aristotle develops this idea in Λ 9.11–9.15, but takes care not to fall into the duality-trap, pointing out that under the speculative view nous and noeton are not separated and therefore there is no intentional relation.

So much for some points in the reception. Next, we move to the structure of the chapter. It can be divided into four sections.¹³ In the first sentence Aristotle says that he wants to discuss some aporia concerning the nous (9.1), which seems to be the most divine thing we know of, but it is unclear how and why it is so. In the five sentences 9.2–9.7 he explores this question, in 9.8–9.10 he offers an answer:

¹² Thomas Aquinas, *In Aristotelis Metaphysicam* XII, lect. 11, Nr. 1614.

¹³ The division of the chapter is not controversial, F. Baghdassarian and L. Judson present the same division.

the nous thinks itself and “thinking is thinking of thinking.” There follow some objections against this proposal: ordinarily knowledge is thought of as knowledge of something other than of itself (9.11–9.15). The last two sentences introduce a new aporia: what of the composite things we know of?

Next we shall attempt to follow the speculative sentence 9.10.

The first sentence mentions the theme, the aporia concerning the nous.

KP 22 *Met.* Λ 9.1 (1074b15) Τὰ δὲ περὶ τὸν νοῦν ἔχει τινὰς ἀπορίας:
In Hinsicht auf den nous bestehen gewisse Aporien; [...]
Concerning the nous there are certain aporias; it seems to be the most divine
<being> in the range of the appearing <beings>, but the conditions under which
it is such <: πῶς ἔχων>, has with it some problems.

The theme announced here obviously refers to chapter 7 passing over *Met.* Λ 8. This means that after the cosmological, the speculative intention is once again leading. After the remarks on astronomy some questions concerning the given speculative answer to the question about being need to be raised. The origin of movement must be a non-contingent actuality, as had been said in 6.8. Afterwards, 7.17–7.19, Aristotle added that this non-contingent actuality is nothing other than noesis. This means that noesis forms an opinion-based world which enables something to notice something and being noticed by this. Here *to be* means {ousia← noesis →energeia / DOXA}. That is our state of knowledge so far. The nous and what it is aware of are divided into two ranks according with our everyday understanding: one setting in motion the other being moved itself.

It became clear, however, that this division is not valid for the original noesis. Noesis is prior to nous. In this ‘primary’ noesis, nous and noeton are not separable because each disappears when its counterpart disappears. Only when both are together, in an original unity, are they actual and real. The distinguishing of noesis into nous and noeton, as into two separate beings is valid in our everyday acting, living and thinking, it is the basis of our normal realism.

It is not surprising, then, that Aristotle wants to revisit this unity, peculiar and difficult as it is to understand. It is not general considerations that are the reason for the revisiting, but special grounds, namely the question of why the nous seems to be what is most divine on earth for it is not clear why and in which way it is so. By the standard interpretation, this question proves the chapter is about the divine intellect. According to this view, the *aporia* is how and what God thinks.

S. Broadie, A. Kosman, B. Botter and, on this point at least also M. Bordt too, have already made arguments challenging this traditional view. Here I offer my own contribution to that effort to challenge that view. Anyone who reads the text in Greek taking care not to allow for the distorting effects of the secondary literature, will observe that the word ‘god’ simply does not appear in *Met.* A 9. This is in marked contrast to the host of reports on the matter (one of the latest examples being C. Horn, 2016, but also the new commentaries made by F. Baghdassarian and L. Judson, 2019). We do find the superlative *theiotaton*, “most divine,” occurring twice. In neither case is the word related to god (1074b16; b26): “As it seems the nous is the most divine <being> in the range of the appearing <beings>, but the conditions under which it is such <: $\pi\omega\varsigma$ ἔχων>, has some problems.” In the first case it is the human nous that is being called “most divine”; in the second it refers to the object of thought. Here, as in the other places, Aristotle involves the gods in order to have a point of comparison. By pointing to traditional views about the divine he makes more readily comprehensible to his contemporaries what he means here by *noesis*. They are brought to mind of what they already take to be true in thinking and knowledge of the gods. These opinions about the gods are examples and points of comparison, here as well as in *Met.* A 7, which are meant to aid understanding of what is actually intended.

Developing the sense of his question in 9.2–9.7, Aristotle raises the issue which represents the problem common to any theological interpretation of *Met.* A. If the nous is identified with god, we must explain why god comes to stand on the wrong side of the *systoichia*, on the side of moved beings: if god is identified with the nous he cannot be the unmoved moving cause. The theoretical considerations in 7.17–7.19 have shown that the problem does not arise because neither the nous nor the

noeton are the unmoved moving being, but {ousia← noesis → energeia / DOXA}. Otherwise, the nous would be a hypokeimenon for something, so to speak, it would be the subject of an activity. But the noesis in the formula is without subject, because it is a system of basic opinions. Only the factual realization of noesis has a subject, but this question is not at issue here.

We might ask what it is that the nous is aware of. Of course it is extremely improbable that it is aware of nothing. If the nous is only potentially aware of something this means that it has the faculty to be aware of something so it would be in a lower degree than the {actuality – being}. The nous is thinking actually only when there is something to be apprehended but then that which it is aware of ranks before itself (9.2). The apprehended being could be the nous itself or it could be something else. In either case the answer must exclude that the nous be changing. Concerning the noesis, we may ask after its content. Aristotle leaves open for the moment whether the question concerns nous or noesis (9.3). In fact, the further sentences 9.8–9.10 deal with noesis. Perhaps, he leaves open that alternative due to the use of nous and noesis in common language. In any case, he says in his terminology that noesis is the actuality of the nous (as seeing is the actuality of the eye). That the origin we are searching for must be in the modus of the non-contingent actuality is explained in 6.8.

At the beginning of chapter nine Aristotle develops some distinctions. The nous is aware of nothing or of something; if it is aware of something, that must be itself or something else; if something else, it is either always the same or in each case different; the nous must be aware of that which is most divine and most honorable, but, without itself changing.

Based on these distinctions and due to the absolute priority of the noesis, which since 7.17–7.19 is made clear, it follows in KP 23 (= 9.10, 1074b33), that the nous can be aware only of itself. The second half of the sentence explains the meaning of the first part: “So then it <: the nous> is aware of itself if indeed it is the most excellent, that means awareness₃ is awareness₂ of awareness₁.”

This phrase is a further culmination point in Aristotle’s theoria. In it noesis is men-

tioned three times. The traditional comments identify two of them, the most common citation of the phrase is therefore “noesis noeseos” or “thinking of thinking,” dispensing with the first nominative.

We must keep in mind the context of this phrase. In *Met.* A the subject is the awareness of human beings. To introduce the awareness of animals or of gods will lead only to anthropomorphism. We cannot speak reasonably about how gods think or how they realize, but we can reflect very well on our own opinions about divine awareness, which we take to be the best and purest form of such. From those we can infer what our best human potentialities may be. By this point, we have arrived at the speculative approach of 6.8 (KP 12) and 7.17–7.19 (KP 17) once again.

All these considerations must have to do with the leading question: on which being is becoming based? At this point it is no longer left open whether we have nous or noesis to speak of, because *to be* means – in short – noesis. It is necessary to take into account that noesis is used three times in this attempt to give a speculative answer to the question about being as the ground of becoming.

KP 23 *Met.* A 9.10 (1074b33–35) αὐτὸν ἄρα νοεῖ, εἴπερ ἐστὶ τὸ κράτιστον, καὶ ἔστιν ἢ νόησις₃ νοησεως₁ νόησις₂.
 So then it <: the nous> is aware of itself if indeed it is the most excellent, that means the awareness₃ is awareness₂ of awareness₁.

Perhaps the following paraphrase will help to clarify the meaning of the phrase. When we, humans, are aware of something or realize something in our everyday life (= noesis₃), then some node in a nexus of fundamental conceptions, distinctions and values (noesis₁) is actualized because we have the capacity to do so (noesis₂). – The nexus is the structure of our world, it is ‘the world before the world.’ This is rightly called the best and the most divine, because it enables us to make particular experiences, providing a space, an openness to be aware of particular things (noesis₃), in so doing we *are* and we are actual, *wirklich*.

We recognize a particular thing because we have recognized it in advance as an element, as a potentiality within a structure. In a factual state of awareness (noesis₃)

we recognize that thing as a point in the world, in noesis₁. Doing so that point becomes actual as a being, as do we ourselves as being aware of something. The prerequisite for this process to take place is {ousia← noesis →energeia / DOXA}. Noesis in this formula for *to be* is primarily noesis₁ as the world-order in the whole, but it is also noesis₃, our factual realizing of that order at a certain point, where we are aware of something.

De Anima Γ 4–6 (and especially *De Anima* Γ 4, 429a22–24) can help to understand the phrase noesis noeseos noesis:

ὁ ἄρα καλούμενος τῆς ψυχῆς νοῦς [...] οὐθέν ἐστιν ἐνεργεῖα τῶν ὄντων
πρὶν νοεῖν,
the so-called nous in the soul [...] is nothing in the realm of beings actually
before it is aware <of something>

It is just that which all becoming things are striving after. The impetus which drives the becoming thing on its path to becoming a being, ceases only when the becoming has reached its *eidos*, its definite form. Reaching that is only possible through taking its place in awareness₁ and being there is the for-the-sake of all becoming, at the end it *is*.

We are capable of understanding something (which is the meaning of noesis₃) because we always have been in noesis₁. This noesis₁ has two aspects. On the one hand noesis₁ is the world which guides our life, our actions, our thoughts and determines what is false and what true, good and bad. In this way it is the non-worldly, noetic actuality which is prior to our factual phenomenal lives. This world is the origin and basis of our lives. We acquire it through growing into it. We act and live along its lines, it is as if we ‘perform’ the world. This is accomplished even if that structure is not explicitly known. This gives some plausibility to the empirical approach, which says that that world is actual prior to our perceiving and activating. The actuality of the world as structure is not, however, identical with its corresponding worldly realization, it has so to speak a higher actuality, which was never a potentiality.

On the other hand, this noesis is the ultimate in our factual recognizing. We know of

it only by reflecting on and analyzing the whole set of our opinions. What is primary in everyday life and what is primary in speculation are not the same. We begin with noesis₃, with our factual and particular awareness of something. In contrast with this, noesis₁ makes particular knowledge and acting possible antecedent to all that.¹⁴

Aristotle raises an objection with respect to this point, that awareness is primary in being and becoming. The objection is not a speculative one, but stems from everyday thinking. Knowledge, awareness, opinions and thoughts all have referents, they do not refer to nothing (cf. Platon, *Sophist*, 237d, 262e). That which knowledge, thinking etc. refer to is not the knowledge or thinking itself, but something else. We are, to be sure, aware of our knowing, thinking, seeing. We are aware that we know, we are aware that we see, but only incidentally, en parergo, only in a secondary manner. Thinking, seeing, awareness are primarily intentional, object-oriented.

Aristotle introduces a second problem (9.12–13): if the being of thinking and the being of that which is thought of are not the same, we may ask which is prior.¹⁵ This question is asked from the point of view adopted in 7.7, where nous and noeton were divided into two ranks.

We have agreed that nous is the best and the most precious we can think of. If the nous is aware of something it is at the same time both active and passive (noein, noesis versus noeisthai, nooumenon), it is perceiving something and is in turn affected by that which it perceives. We ask, therefore, whether it is its active or its passive side that makes it the best. Is nous the best through its being aware of something or through its being affected? The answer will show that this very distinction cannot be made in theory. The reason for this is not that there a false conception of nous is operative, but that nous is taken in one instance as the speculative nous in the other as the everyday nous.

¹⁴ Cf. *De Anima* Γ 4, 429a10–29.

¹⁵ On the expressions in the dative τὸ εἶναι νοήσει, τὸ εἶναι νοουμένῳ see E. Sonderegger, 2012, 186–190.

Aristotle answers the question in 9.14–9.15. He says that in some cases the knowledge itself is the matter, so that the distinction implied in the question is inapplicable. That the knowledge is itself the matter can be seen in the case of craft-knowledge: the table without hyle is at the same time its *ti en einai* as well as the knowledge of it. Thus, here too Aristotle uses our everyday experience to show what he means speculatively, just as he did earlier in the case of the *orekton*, as example of the unmoved moving cause or with the gods, as examples of a singular way of life.

Now we ought to apply this in the theoretical domain. Here, the *logos*, the notion is the matter as well as the knowledge of the matter. Thus, in the theoretical domain we cannot distinguish what in everyday life we must, as has been clear since 7.17. In *noesis*₁ the distinction between model and application does not pertain (9.15).

Aristotle still mentions a further *aporia* (9.16).

How must be understood the unity of *nous* and *nooumenon*, the unity of awareness and the matter, the unity of the three ways of *noesis*, if that which we are aware of is composite? Every composition entails change, even in the case of knowledge, the parts of a composite object of knowledge are subject to change. We know something by going through its characteristics (hence we call it *dia-noia*). Could it be that all beings without hyle are indivisible and the *aporia* dissolves? Within the theoretical domain we refer to things without hyle. In this case, we may say that the *noesis* mentioned in 9.10 is very readily understandable from everyday situations too.

If the *nous* (not the *dianoia*) is aware of a composite object, say of a horse, we can say that the *nous* can synthesize all particular characteristics of that *uno intuitu*, into one single ‘picture.’ Perhaps it would be better to say that this original, synthetic unity that the *nous* provides is what enables us to experience particular composite things.

Every being is one, otherwise there is no insight possible. Nevertheless, the being must not be elementary, it is enough that it be synthesized. The exceptional (“divine”) feature of the *nous* is just this synthesizing capacity. It is performing this for us all the time and at every moment, it brings into unity anything we may encounter

and sets it in the totality of a world, by which it becomes understandable. In this way it continuously realizes to being-aware₃ of awareness₁ at all times.

11. KP 25–KP 30: *Met.* Λ 10

The tenth chapter, too, contains supplements.¹ Aristotle returns to some as yet unresolved problems. It is a chapter that looks a little like the well-known doxographies, where Aristotle develops aporias out of the existing contentions and theses. The aim of the method is partly to formulate the issue at stake in the proper manner, partly it is to ensure the completeness of his own presentation. The end of a book is scarcely the right place for such aims, however. This passage must have another meaning. Either way, Aristotle is here showing points, in which his speculation about the question concerning the being which can be the basis of becoming, is superior to the solutions traditionally offered on both the natural as well as the speculative side. On the basis of his speculation there are possible answers where the others fail. Aristotle confronts only by implication his answer to the leading question with those of others. He only gives his answer explicitly in a few limited cases, otherwise it has to be found in the preceding text.

There is some consensus on the division of the chapter's opening (sentences 1–6 = 1075a11–25). The rest of the text has been more subject to dispute. D. Sedley (2000, 336ff.) divides the following text into the section B (1075a25–b34) and C (1075b34–1076a4). In his section B he traces criticism of other contentions con-

¹ In contrast to this the editor of *New Essays*, 2016, 269–293, finds the chapter to have a special objective, namely to prove that the world receives its order and unity in the sense of *divine-design* from a deity, which is in the center of the universe: “The order goes back, according to Aristotle, to a divine entity which is in the center...” This is being alleged of a text, no less, in which there is no occurrence of the word for ‘god.’ He adds: “This deity is compared with the general of an army...” – nowhere in the chapter does any such comparison appear. Where could it lead, when we ourselves are taking license to make up the text we wish to comment on? – L. Judson tries to demonstrate a tighter unit of the chapter “Aristotle endorses the view that the world contains ...a unitary teleological structure” depending on the goodness of the ‘Prime Mover.’ Also F. Baghdassarian emphasizes more the unity of the chapter.

cerning the first principle. Other philosophers have not succeeded in drafting a distinct account of the function of the good in the cosmos. Section C shows that they fail to make an account of the unity of the cosmos. – After a short introduction (1075a25–28) H. Carvallo (1966) discerned the criticism of a false conception of material and goal (1075a28–1075b16). Thereafter, he wrote, Aristotle criticizes others that they did not offer any explanation of how coming to be took place.²

It seems, in this way, that it is not very easy to arrange Aristotle’s disparate notes into any semblance of perfectly defensible order. L. Judson and F. Baghdassarian have tried to show this at some points very plausibly but both supposing as a matter of course a ‘Prime Mover’ in their arguments which is never mentioned in the text.

At the beginning (10.1–10.5) we do read how the “nature of the whole” contains the good, the rest is clearly intended as a criticism of those who take it “otherwise.” We must, first of all, clarify the meaning of the thesis and formulate it in plain language, because Aristotle is speaking here only in the form of rhetorical questions, figuratively and through comparisons. Next, we must ask what the precise sense of “otherwise” in 10.8 may be, and to what it refers. Finally, we need to get at the meaning of the different sets of criticism and appreciate how the criticisms do not affect Aristotle’s *theoria* in its speculative and its cosmological aspect.

Let us begin from the least disputed opening point. The introductory question seems to be clear:

KP 25 *Met. A 10.1–10.2 (1075a11–13) Ἐπισκεπτέον δὲ καὶ ποτέρως ἔχει ἢ τοῦ ὅλου φύσις τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ ἄριστον, πότερον κεχωρισμένον τι καὶ αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτό, ἢ τὴν τάξιν. ἢ ἀμφοτέρως ὡσπερ στρατεύμα;*

KP 25 (1) We have to consider also in which of the two ways the physis of the whole has the good and the best, whether as something separated and <as a being> itself by itself or as the order <of its parts>.

(2) Or in both ways like an army?

It seems that Aristotle tends towards the second interpretation: the whole contains the good in the way that the army has its order due to the good leader. This is main-

² The division in: H. Carvallo, E. Grassi (ed.), 1966, is made by H. Carvallo.

tained on the basis of the principle that “all is ordered towards one goal” (10.5). That principle is explained by the simile of the household, where all things are ordered towards one goal too. It is by this simile that we ought to understand the principle.

To what the introductory question refers and how we ought to understand the phrase “the good and the best,” are questions that need attending to. Both, W.D. Ross (1924), and D. Sedley (2000), L. Judson (2019), F. Baghdassarian (2019, 350, with slight qualification: *ne désigne pas uniquement le Premier Moteur*) unhesitatingly relate the expression to God.³ In their view the introductory question asks how God can be the source of all the good in the world. – In this form the question is close to a Platonic statement. In the *Republic* Plato had declared the good to be the ground of being and knowledge through the series of similes of the sun, the line and the cave.

It is astonishing that Aristotle should pose the question of the good, for the idea of the good has no special priority amongst his topics. He took up the question about being in the *Sophist* but did not the question of the good from the *Politeia* or from the so-called Unwritten Doctrine. He mentions Plato’s famous lecture *On the good*, but makes no use of it in his argument. Here, in *Met.* A 10.1, we however discover that question concerning the good. In *Topics* Γ he did also discuss the question of how we are able to decide to choose the better.

Plato said the idea of the good is *epekeina tes ousias*, “beyond being.” Its counterpart in *Met.* A as ground of being and knowledge is the {οὐσία← noesis →ἐνέργεια / DOXA}. What sets in motion and sustains motion is the striving to be and to become actual (: to attain *Seins-Wirklichkeit*) in the noesis, in perceiving and being perceived. The particular being becomes actual in a noesis₃ due to our noesis₂ guided by the noesis₁. But this noesis₁ is already actual before the particular noesis₃, like a ‘world before the world.’ The for-the-sake of becoming is *to be* and that is the good for the thing becoming but the being of a particular thing becomes integrated in a whole (9.17 at the end), in a world, which is in fact noesis₁. Every single

³ F. Baghdassian, 350: *...ne désigne pas uniquement le Premier Moteur*; L. Judson, 340, sees as the main theme in chapter 10 “The Priority of The Prime Mover and the Unity of the Cosmos.”

thing is oriented towards this noesis₁ (10.5), in this consists the unity of everything (ἐν τὸ ὅν) and inasmuch the good.

Besides other possible connections, the introductory question does certainly stand in clear relation to the final sentence of the preceding chapter. There it was said that the First, being without hyle, cannot be divided. Even for the human intellect it is not the concrete particular which is its good and best, but the whole, more so even than the system as such, noesis₁ (1075a10). If the question in 10.1 is linked with 9.17 then it is asking how the system can be realized in the “nature of the whole.” This question must be understood in the same sense as the question about transition from the noetic to the material world.

H. Bonitz (1849, 518), thought that the section 1074a11–25 is to be read in close connection with chapter 9, the nature of the first principle and its relation to the world being their common subject. Aristotle offers two answers. The good is in the world as it is in the army, so it follows from the principle “all things are oriented toward one goal.” This principle is exemplified by the household. Every thing stands in relation to every other thing (10.4). That is clear if being as noesis₁ means the order of the world, that is a totality of relations. The order of the world is not a random relation of things or groups of things, no, all things, as has already been said, are ordered towards one goal just as in a household all persons are.

In this sentence, 10.5 at the end, there are some difficulties as concerns the grammar and the content of the expression “their nature is such a principle.” D. Sedley (2000, 330), translates: “For that is how (universal) nature works as a principle for each thing in the cosmos.” He takes “nature” to be the nature of the world on the whole, H. Bonitz thought that “nature” refers to the particulars (*ipsarum rerum singularum*). In the interpretation of D. Sedley (2000, 333), the example of the household shows that one unique nature orders all things at different levels of freedom according to their different contribution towards one goal, while for H. Bonitz the nature of the particulars is such as to contribute to the whole. Grammar and syntax support of H. Bonitz’ view, sense that of D. Sedley. In summary we may say that Aristotle here calls the arche ‘the good,’ as he had already done in 9.17 and that thereby

he is referring to the {being–actuality} in 6.8 and, according to 7.17–7.19, to the expanded form {ousia← noesis →energeia} which is the formula for the overall order providing and ensuring the pros-hen-structure.

The pros hen tetaktai is the predecessor of the later to on pollachos legetai – alla pros hen. This hen, called prote ousia in *Met. Z* and elsewhere, has now reached its speculative interpretation because it was said that *to be* only becomes actual in noesis. By this alone does an undetermined thing enter in the noesis, i. e. into the nexus of a world, which is the order and the ‘structure of a totality of a set of opinions’ (*Struktur eines Meinungsganzen*) and this gives the thing its determinations.

In 10.7 Aristotle mentions the problems that philosophers, who wish to explain that “otherwise” encounter. To what is the word “otherwise” referring? Does it mean “otherwise than explained in 10.1–10.6” while referring to the “good in nature” (as D. Sedley thinks), or does it mean “otherwise than the theoretical result of *Met. Λ*”? The latter would imply that *to be* would have to be captured otherwise than by the formula {ousia← noesis →energeia / DOXA}. Perhaps, alternatively these two possibilities coincide, so that the explanations in 10.1–10.6 are only another formulation of the theoretical result? Perhaps again, it could mean “otherwise than the cosmological result of *Met. Λ*.” Such are some possibilities for understanding the “otherwise” with respect to that which precedes it. In whichever case, the sequence of the text shows that Aristotle has in mind to speak of the fundamental structure of becoming.

Aristotle deals with the same issue in other texts too, e. g. in *Met. A* or in *Physics A* and in *Met. Z*. Finally, it bears comparison with the issue discussed in *Met. Λ* 1–3 and that may be decisive. If the beginning of the book had correctly established the context, then Aristotle asks at the end of the book, what has been the outcome of the whole speculation (cf. above, Part III, 5.2.2). Indeed, the sentence relates to *Met. Λ* 1–3, insofar as it deals with the question about the becoming of natural beings. Further, while he mentions the good, he demonstrates that he wants to give account not only in the natural domain but in the speculative as well.

Aristotle briefly outlines his concept of becoming (10.7–10.12). He takes as starting

point the consensus that becoming takes place in oppositions (10.8). Against other thinkers he argues that it is not right to make the hyle into one of the opposites (10.11), in fact the hyle is a third factor with the pair of opposites (10.10). The pair of opposites cannot initiate becoming, because neither can set something in motion and they do not change themselves, the warm does not become cold by itself and so on. Next (10.13–10.14), he describes the problems which would arise if his concept of becoming is rejected. In the following two sentences Aristotle asks certain questions in reference to the exposition in 10.1–10.6, the consensus mentioned and to the leading question in 10.7–10.12. It seems that these questions only form a series without any further connection. As he changes his point of view without providing reasons – some problems are theoretical, others are put from the natural point of view – the impression is made that the different points are made only *pro memoria*.

The following sentences, from 10.13 until 10.23 (or until 10.25), seem to refer directly to the question in 10.1, they deal with the question of the good. If all things come to be out of opposites without the hyle as the third then all (except the one) partake of the bad, because the bad is on the one side of the row of opposites (10.13). That Aristotle points to the one suggests that he may have in mind the Academic theory of principles, by which the one and the undetermined duality are principles. In that case his remark is a criticism, but if the opposition between good and bad were the same as that between eidos and steresis then Aristotle himself must agree on that negative consequence since all things partake in steresis.

That Aristotle accepts as self-evident the principle “in all <beings> primarily the good is principle” (10.14) is surprising since it is of Platonic origin. Aristotle uses it to criticize those who accept neither the good nor the bad as principles. We must, consequently, assume that he agrees with this principle. I do not know of other places where Aristotle makes use of this principle, though two applications of its basic premise are discernible. One of them is in the *Nicomachean Ethics* A, where the point at issue is why we act and what we are striving for. All striving is oriented towards the good, therefore we are ultimately striving for that which is good in itself, quite in contrast to all other goals after which we strive, which are for the sake

of something else.

In the concept of telos and of the for-the-sake-of, we trace a second argumentative application of the good. If B is why we are doing A, then B is the telos and the good. In *Met. A* Aristotle has shown that *to be* in the sense of {ousia← noesis →energeia / DOXA} is the unmoved moving cause, the for-the-sake of becoming and as such the good. The remarks about the deficiencies of the thesis of the opposition between the good and the bad (10.13–10.23) thus may be referred to the theoretical result in *Met. A*.

How and why, however, does the theoretical result in *Met. A* depend on the correct understanding of becoming defined by two opposites and hyle as third? To be clear, Aristotle has achieved the speculative result by asking after the first and after that being which is the basis for becoming. The analysis of becoming in *Met. A* 1–5 provides the basis for the speculation. The distinction of two modes of becoming is at the core of that analysis. The becoming of concrete things is quite different from the transition from the noetic to the concrete being. Becoming is, in any case, the change from steresis to eidos which takes place upon an underlying hyle. If this basis is withdrawn the speculation cannot attain its goal.

Platonists agree with the sentence that “in all <beings> primarily the good is principle” but they fail to say how or in which sense the good is principle. The Platonic idea of the good will scarcely be a cause in the sense of *causa materialis*, *formalis*, *finalis* or *efficiens*. Instead, Plato’s idea of the good is rather something like Aristotle’s τὸ πρῶτον ὄθεν ἔστι, γίγνεται καὶ γινώσκεται, “the first from where something is, comes to be and can be recognized.”

When Aristotle criticizes Empedocles or Anaxagoras, he has in mind the inconsistencies or incompleteness of their concept of cause, but not their general aim.

KP 26 *Met. A* 10.24 (1075b13) καὶ διὰ τί τὰ μὲν φθαρτὰ τὰ δ' ἄφθαρτα οὐδεὶς λέγει
[...]
and no one says why some are perishable but others not; [...]

Sentences 10.24 and 10.25 can be assigned differently. When Aristotle says ‘no one says’ is he referring only to Empedocles and Anaxagoras or also to the *pantes* of sentence 10.23? The historical perspective is of no importance for us at this moment. The sentence refers to those who declare that the causes are the same for the becoming of all things, with the result that they can offer no reasons why some beings are perishable while others imperishable. Others too, who say that the being comes to be out of non-being and others that all is the same, find themselves on the wrong side. That may constitute part of the foregoing criticism, which refers to the fact that they name only two *archai* (1075b14), but it may also form the opening of his treatment of the topic he will deal with in 10.26, namely ‘becoming.’ That is said in the sentences 10.26 and 10.28 as the next key propositions:

KP 27 *Met.* Α 10.26 (1075b16–17) ἔτι διὰ τί ἀεὶ ἔσται γένεσις, καὶ τί αἴτιον γενέσεως, οὐδεὶς λέγει.
Further, no one says, why there always will be becoming and which is the cause of becoming.

KP 28 *Met.* Α 10.28 (1075b20–21) καὶ τοῖς μὲν ἄλλοις ἀνάγκη τῆ σοφίᾳ καὶ τῇ τιμιωτάτῃ ἐπιστήμῃ εἶναι τι ἐναντίον, ἡμῖν δ’ οὐ.
While for others there is necessarily something that is the opposite of wisdom and of the most valuable knowledge, there need not for us.

If we take 10.1–10.7 as introduction (“In what way is the good in the world?”) and 10.8–10.12 as report of the established consensus (“All beings come to be out of opposites”), combined with the criticism of its inadequacy (the third which underlies the opposites is missing), then 10.13–10.23 may be the report of the insufficiency of the opposite-claim with respect to the understanding of the good, and 10.24–10.27 the report of the insufficiency of the opposite-claim with respect to the understanding of becoming. Finally, sentences 10.28–10.29 deal with the consequences of the opposite-claim for knowledge.

KP 29

Met. Λ 10.30 (1075b24–25) ἔτι εἰ μὴ ἔσται παρὰ τὰ αἰσθητὰ ἄλλα, οὐκ ἔσται ἀρχή καὶ τάξις καὶ γένεσις καὶ τὰ οὐράνια, ἀλλ' αὐτὴ τῆς ἀρχῆς ἀρχή, ὥσπερ τοῖς θεολόγοις καὶ τοῖς φυσικοῖς πᾶσιν.

Further, if there was nothing beside the perceptible <beings>, then there would be neither a principle nor an order nor a becoming nor the heavenly beings, but <there would be> always a principle of a principle, as <in fact> all theologians and natural scientists <must assume>.

With 10.30–10.38 Aristotle opens a new theme. He is asking after the consequences when there is nothing other than the perceptible beings. This question corresponds to the fourth aporia in *Met.* B (995b14ff. and 997a34ff.), which is one of the most fundamental questions in the whole of *Met.* The chapter concludes with the question of the cause for unity (10.39–10.41).

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Met. Λ 10.39 (1075b34–36) ἔτι τίνοι οἱ ἀριθμοὶ ἐν ἧ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ σῶμα καὶ ὅλως τὸ εἶδος καὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα, οὐδὲν λέγει οὐδεὶς· οὐδ' ἐνδέχεται εἰπεῖν, ἐὰν μὴ ὡς ἡμεῖς εἴπη, ὡς τὸ κινεῖν ποιεῖ.

Further, whereby numbers <are> a unity, or the soul and the body, and generally the *eidōs* and the thing, no one tells us something <about that>; and it is not possible <for them to say something>, unless one speaks as we <have said>, namely that which sets in motion produces <that unity>.

These considerations link with the preceding ones about the ideas. In 10.31 already, Aristotle had referred to the numbers, in 10.40 he takes up the question again. It is, however, a different topic when one asks after the reason why numbers, soul and body and the nature of a thing and the thing, in general, are one.

Certainly, the tenth chapter is the last of the whole book, but it has not the usual form with a summary of results. It does show that the speculation carried out in this book can provide answers to the leading question in both directions: in the natural as well as in the speculative sense. To understand the chapter it will be pivotal to take a perspective on it compatible with that which precedes it. This is possible when we see why the theory of *Met.* Λ has no problems with the good as mentioned in 10.13–10.23, or with becoming (10.24–10.27), knowledge (10.28–10.29), the non-

sensual (10.30–10.38) or with unity (10.39–10.41). Next, I shall attempt to show that this is the case.

Ad 10.13–10.23: There are no problems with the good because *to be* in the sense of {ousia← noesis →energeia / DOXA} has proven to be the good in the sense of the for-the-sake of becoming, as such it is that which sets in motion unmoved itself; this applies on the level of the singular beings as well as on the level of the whole.

The theoria has shown that being (*Sein*) is the good and the arche without contrary and the unmoved moving cause. The remark in 10.21, that “medicine is somehow health” can be understood by means of the difference between the theoretical and the natural objectives of knowledge. Medicine as totality and system of a certain knowledge corresponds to the speculative view of noesis₁, theoretically, medicine is already health. Under the natural aspect, medicine leads to health. Becoming healthy is a process the telos of which is health. Insofar as health is a physical state, health is something other than medicine.

The mention of Anaxagoras’ nous in 10.20 is also instructive. The nous sets other things in motion such as Plato’s demiurge, the Judeo-Christian creator or the mentioned physician do. That is the perspective in the natural mode, not in the theoretical. By the theoretical approach we cannot speak of such setting in motion. The particular noesis₃ as an activity of knowledge or thought has no priority (even if it is the most important act in our everyday life), but in the theoretical sense the noesis₁ is prior and that allows us to have our particular noeseis. On the other hand noesis₁ is not something like an objective whole, in principle the same for all humans for all times, something like I. Kant thought was pure reason and intellect. On the contrary, noesis₁ has grown up as a world of opinions and can be discerned as a structure through analyzing a given world of opinions (*Meinungswelt*).

Ad 10.24–10.27: The questions about the eternity of movement and the causes of becoming which arise in the context of becoming can be answered if we apply the set of the four causes, the ether as the hyle of the heavens and the four elements that account for the difference between perceptible eternal and perceptible finite beings (that was the tenth aporia in *Met. B*, 996a2–4). The eternity of becoming becomes

understandable through noesis₁ by the theoretical approach, in the area of natural beings through the sphere of the fixed stars.

Ad 10.28–10.29: W. D. Ross, *ad loc.*, says that it is “[...] a curious and difficult passage [...]”; he tries to explain it on the basis of the Platonic opposition between knowledge and ignorance with respect to being and non-being (he refers to *Rep.* 477–478). The primary form of knowledge has no opposite, because it is a knowledge of the first principle (i. e. knowledge of god in the view of W. D. Ross), which evidently has no opposite principle.

But what is the sense of “opposition” here and what does it mean that there is no opposite to the first? There is no opposite to ousia or to the first (cf. *Cat.* 5, 3b24–32). Opposition can mean that nothing stands intermediate between two values, like there is nothing between even and odd numbers or that there can stand medially some value, such as between black and white. Aristotle says (1075b21–22) that the opposition requires hyle, but the first is without hyle. What does this mean, does it mean that *any* first thing will have no opposite or that only the first as seen in *Met.* A will have no opposite? The knowledge without an opposite which is at issue here, must be seen in the context of the aporias 2 and 3 in *Met.* B, 995b6–13 and 996b26–997a33 and of *Met.* E 1 too. In aporia 2 it is asked whether it is the matter of one and the same knowledge to deal with the principles of ousia and with the general principles of proof. In aporia 3 it is asked whether there is a single knowledge of all ousiai or many different forms of knowledge of the different ousiai. I list in Table 11 the points by which the first cannot be said to have an opposite.

What does it mean that there is something (or nothing) opposite to the first knowledge or to the knowledge of the first? In *Met.* A Aristotle, using *theoria* as method (in contrast to *dianoia* and also to *logismos*), aims at a knowledge of the first to which there is no opposite; he leads us through speculation to see this first in that and how synthesis is possible.

Ad 10.30–10.38: By speculation a non-perceptible being, *Sein*, has been shown, which I have tried to grasp in the formula {ousia← noesis →energeia / DOXA}. This is connected with aporia 4, that is with the question of whether or not there

- The knowledge we are searching for relates to ousia; there is no opposite to ousia;
 - ousia is the first about-what: this determination is right and necessary but not sufficient (see *Met. Z 3*);
 - ousia is the result of the interaction of the opposites upon the hyle, consequently it is not itself an opposite, but ousia incorporates the opposites (see *Categories 5, 4a10–b18*);
 - ‘being’ as primary in the sense of noesis noeseos noesis has no opposite;
 - if we presume that the first in the sense of being has an opposite, what could that be, could it be non-being? The ‘first’ and ‘something else’ would be a contrast that would occur at the hyle, but on the level of the first there cannot be something else;
 - in *Cat. 11, 13b36*, Aristotle says that “the bad is contrary to the good, in fact necessarily.” There is, then, a difference between the good as the first without an opposite and the good with the bad as its opposite;
 - opposites must be in the same genus (see *Cat. 11, 14a19*): but neither to on nor ousia are a genus.
-

Table 11.1.: The first has no opposite

is an ousia besides the perceptible ousiai. Being, *Sein*, is not perceptible but it has perceptible consequences in beings. This *to be* is the ground of the change from steresis to eidos, whereby beings come to be. Further, it predefines an order in the sense of a cosmological result, so it is the ground of ta ourania. On the fact that numbers and ideas are not able to initiate motion, enough has already been said in the text (10.31).

Ad 10.39–10.41: Owing to what are numbers, soul and body and in general the eidos and the thing one? Aristotle’s answer is that this happens in the process of becoming through the cause which sets in motion (to kinoun). D. Sedley (2000, 346–8), and W. D. Ross *ad loc.* try to explain the point relying on *Met. H 6* (which is a later text than Λ). Form does give unity but things come to existence only through a *causa efficiens* (see 1045a30–33 and b21–23).

It is, however, also possible to derive the explanation from *Met.* Λ itself. That which first sets in motion is the {being–actuality} (6.8), complemented in 7.17 with noesis. Being, *Sein*, in this sense, is not a second thing beside the cause which sets in motion, but is itself the first unmoved moving, not in the sense of *causa efficiens* but as the for-the-sake of becoming. In this way it is the ground of the unity of numbers, of soul and body and in general of eidos and thing.

In *De Anima* B 1, 412b4–8 we find a similar consideration. The soul is the first entelecheia of the body. We must, therefore, not ask whether soul and body are one nor ask in general whether hyle and that of which it is the hyle are one, because *to be one* and *to be* are said in many ways but of both the first is entelecheia, actuality. Here, in *Met.* Λ it is the actuality in the noesis, in the world. Unity *is* thanks to noesis noeseos noesis. Aristotle means the same when he says hen to on.

The eidos and the being become one on their route to the cause, which first sets them in motion and on route to the for-the-sake-of, to the noesis. This, again, is a speculative sentence, it must not be taken in a realistic manner. There are not separate particular eide and things which later become a unity, but *to be* is the unity (hen to on), insofar as any particular perception realizes a point in a comprehensive structure, that is in a world. In a factual state of perceiving something and being perceived at once (= noesis₃) that which is prior to this event as a system of opinions that is as noesis₁ comes to be in a phenomenal world.

Ad 10.41: At the end Aristotle quotes a passage from Homer's *Iliad* from the opening of the *Peira*: "It is not useful when many are ruling, one single sovereign should rule" (*Iliad*, B 204). Agamemnon wants to test the morale of his army after dreaming a dream sent by Zeus. He says that he will give up the war against Troy and contrary to his expectation the men assent and run to the ships to sail away for home. Athene appears to Ulysses and orders him to stop the flight. He says to the fleeing warriors that they should fear the wrath of the sovereign, who has received his authority from Zeus. He blames them, they are of little worth in either council or in war. They should be wary of making decisions because "It is not useful when many are ruling, one single sovereign should rule," he who, in fact, has his scepter

from Zeus. So the koiranos in B 204 is not the absolute first sovereign, he has his power from Zeus. He is not a good model for the first principle in the sense of the *divine-design reading*, as for example, C. Horn among many others take it.⁴

It is, at any rate, a poetic figuration. The one sovereign may stand for *to be* in the sense of {ousia← noesis →energeia / DOXA}, the unmoved moving noesis, the actuality for which beings are striving.

⁴ C. Horn, 2016, 269.

Part IV.

**Noesis in *Met.* Λ and Theoria in Plotinus,
Enn. III 8**

12. Theoria in Plotinus' *Enn.* III 8 and Noesis in *Met.* Λ

Plotinus' *Enn.* III 8 can and should be compared to *Met.* Λ. For this there are, in the main, three reasons. First, Plotinus himself refers to Aristotle's *Met.* Λ (among the works of other authors, especially Plato and Parmenides) by quotation and allusion. Secondly, both, Aristotle and Plotinus, ask the question about being. Thirdly, their method of answering the question is that of speculation and they offer a comparable speculative answer. The keyword of Aristotle's answer is noesis, Plotinus' is theoria.¹ Plotinus' thesis "Everything is striving for vision" is comparable in sense with the one that can be drawn from *Met.* Λ, namely, that ultimately *to be* only realizes itself in the noesis.

Next, I shall elaborate on these reasons, then present *Enn.* III 8. From this outline the proximity of the two texts will become clear.

First, some remarks on the allusions. For the details of the references I refer to the table in the appendix. At the beginning of *Enn.* III 8, where Plotinus wants to show that the 'products' of nature are products of her vision, he speaks, as Aristotle had, of the first motionless moving (2.16-17) and uses Aristotle's very expressions kinoun protos and akineton. He points to this using ekeino (2.17), as did Aristotle to the origin after which we are seeking.

Several times the Parmenidean theme of the identity of being and thinking or of nous and noeton comes to the fore. Regarding νοῦς and νοεῖν, Plotinus says: τὸ γινῶσκον ...εἰς ἓν γνωσθέντι ἔρχεται, "the recognizing ...comes to unity with the

¹ Andreas Kirchner, „Alles strebt nach Theorie“ Bemerkungen zu Plotins Konzept der Theoria, in: Thomas Jürgasch, Tobias Keiling (eds.) *Anthropologie der Theorie*, Mohr Siebeck, 2017; Kirchner tries to show that Plotinus' theoria is the further development of Aristotle's theoria.

recognized" (*Enn.* III 8, 6. 15–17); ταὐτὸν τὸ εἶναι καὶ τὸ νοεῖν, “to be and to perceive are the same” (8.8); ἐν ἄμφω, and 8.10 ἐν οὕτως ἄμφω, “in this way they are a unity” (8.5-6). Plotinus also poses the question of whether the nous thinks something or nothing, rejecting the possibility of thinking nothing with the same argument employed by Aristotle: what then would be the *semnon*, the venerable, in the nous (9.16)? Plotinus calls the nous the “most beautiful of all” (11.27), Aristotle the “most divine of all.” Like Aristotle, Plotinus also points out that the primary for which we are searching cannot be something that has come about out of potentiality to reality (11.2). As an image of the reality of nous, that is of noesis, both use the figure of life (9.33), following the *Sophist* 248e-249a. Both also say that the First is the for-the-sake of everything else (Plotinus 7.15-18).

That Plotinus refers in this way to *Met. A* suggests common interest and shares subject matter which consists in the question of being. Our description in Part II of the background to *Met. A* and the commentary on it in Part III have shown that the book poses the question of being and offers a speculative answer. Aristotle poses the question of being starting from the central question in Plato’s *Sophist*, 242c-243e.² *Met. A* represents an early speculative blueprint to an answer to that question, *Met. Z* a later, more concrete elaboration.

Secondly, Plotinus also makes it clear at various places that his book is about being and that he wants to show that being consists in vision, *theoria*. In 3.17-18 he writes: “To be means for it <: for nature> to produce” and nature’s production is vision (3.20-21, ἡ ποίησις ἄρα θεωρία, “so then producing is *theoria*”); later, referring to this again Plotinus writes 5.1-2: “Becoming is the vision of nature.” Chapters 5 to 7 generally show that the being of the soul is vision which Plotinus summarizes at 7.1-2: “All true beings come from vision or are vision.” That being consists in vision also applies to what is first, 7.16: τῶν πρώτων ἐν θεωρίᾳ ὄντων, “...if the first has its being in vision, ...” .

Finally, both follow the speculative method and give a speculative answer to the question of being. Aristotle’s speculative answer can be summed up in the famous

² See my commentary on *Met. Z*, 2012, where this is explained in detail.

formula noesis₃ noeseos₁ noesis₂, which means: something can only *be* if it fits into the noetic structure that constitutes a world. This noetic structure consists of basic distinctions, concepts and values. It is something like a ‘world before the world’ comparable to what Plato is talking about in the first part of the *Timaeus*. The world determines what *can* be, where ‘world’ here does not mean the totality of things, for that would only repeat the common sense or scientific approach. World in this case means the noetic order of things, it corresponds to noesis₁ in Aristotle’s formulation.

A comparable speculation can be found in Plotinus’ *Enn.* III 8. The thesis of that text “Everything strives for vision,” in fact, means nothing other than “everything strives to be,” whether that be as the action of vision or as the result of vision. Plotinus says playfully and ironically that everything is vision or is thanks to vision. He distinguishes between vision and the seen (*theoria* – *theorema*), the vision and its result (which is a thing or object not pre-existing). Natural beings are the result of the vision of nature, nature itself is the result of the vision of the soul, which itself is the result of the vision of nous. The nous is not, however, the first origin and the ultimate first, but itself still depends upon ‘something.’ That ‘something’ is not one of the beings but stands above all beings (see end of III 8.9). It is the *δύναμις πάντων*, the potentiality for everything, like the noesis₁.

13. The Long Treatise [*Grossschrift*] and the Structure of *Enn.* III 8

Enn. III 8 bears the title Περὶ φύσεως καὶ θεωρίας καὶ τοῦ ἑνός, *On Nature, Contemplation and the One* (occasionally only cited as *Peri theorias*, as already by Porphyry). Plotinus here develops the thesis ...πάντα θεωρίας ἐφίεσθαι “All is striving for vision.”¹ This text is the first part of the so-called Long Treatise, the following parts are *Enn.* V 8, V 5 and II 9. The text was divided by Porphyry into these four parts, its overall subject seems to be the question about hen, unity. Plotinus develops the question from different starting points. In III 8 he shows that the being of nature, of the soul and of nous is vision. In V 8 he proceeds from the difference between being and knowledge; in V 5 he argues against the idea that the noeta are outside of the nous; and in II 9 he finally turns against Gnostic arguments.

Because *Enn.* III 8 is the very beginning of the whole text, we may dispense with the presentation of the later parts, acquaintance with which is not presumed as necessary to the understanding of the earlier section. Chapter 7 contains a summary of the preceding chapters, from which the structure of the whole text is easily inferred. The first chapter exposes the paradoxical idea “All is striving for vision.” This thought is, then, examined up to the fourth chapter concerning nature, in the chapters five

¹ Περὶ φύσεως καὶ θεωρίας καὶ τοῦ ἑνός, *Enn.* III 8. For the *Grossschrift* see: R. Harder, 1937, 1–10, is the first to set together the whole text; V. Cilento, 1971, and D. Roloff, 1971, give extensive commentaries. – For *Enn.* III 8 see: E. R. Dodds, 1956, 108–113; J. N. Deck, 1967; V. Cilento, 1973, M. I. Santa Cruz De Prunes, 1979; D. O’Meara, 1993, 72–78; M. L. Gatti, 1996. – It is noticeable that, for example, J. N. Deck, M. I. Santa Cruz De Prunes and M. L. Gatti unlike Plotinus begin with the ‘One.’ I think that is due to the prejudice that Plotinus’ thinking is oriented entirely vertically. – This is, of course, not the only text where Plotinus uses the concept of *theoria*, vision; see also *Enn.* III 2, 6; V 1, 7; V 3, 10; V 4, 44 and others.

to seven concerning the soul and in chapters 8 to 11 concerning the nous.

These clearly delineated sections of the text are based on the implicitly underlying questions “What do being, becoming, producing mean?” Plotinus asks the questions about producing, becoming and being in the different domain of unity (commonly known as ‘hypostases’) and answers each of these questions with “being, viz. becoming, producing mean vision.”²

² *Enn.* III 8, 3, 19: being is vision for nature; 3, 20–21: acting is vision; 5, 1: becoming is vision.

14. “All is striving for vision.”

In what follows I shall attempt to clarify what Plotinus understands by *theoria* in the thesis “All things are striving for *theoria*, vision” and how being, becoming, producing, acting mean nothing other than vision. It will be sufficient to take a closer look at Plotinus’ approach in the case of nature. The structural principles in the case of the soul and the nous are the same as in the case of nature where he says that becoming in nature is the result of the vision of nature. In the approach, where being is vision, (*theoria versus theama* or *theorema*), viewing and the viewed are distinguished from each other.¹ Since that which is seen can in turn see another thing, this mutual relation, developed in the case of nature, can be iterated. Nature is the vision of the soul, the soul is the vision of the nous. In this way, Plotinus is ultimately searching for the arche: to hen and to agathon.

We shall see that *Enn.* III 8 is an extremely speculative text. It is far from any kind of realistic or the like view of creation, with which it is occasionally associated. Like any other speculative text, it is challenging. It’s sense cannot be grasped by the usual means. Plotinus is well aware of the fact that his speculation turns our everyday opinion and experience upside down. Thus, he says right at the beginning of the treatise, that it is only about a “play” (1, 1) and that everybody will find his proposal “paradoxical” (1, 8).

¹ The translation with ‘object of contemplation,’ ed. Gerson, would be misleading because it insinuates that this object *is* already; but Plotinus wants to say that what will be an ‘object’ afterwards comes to be by vision.

14.1. The Paradoxical Character of this Sentence

The tractate *Enn.* III 8 begins as follows:

If we say first just playing, before we take serious, that everything strives for vision and looks at this goal, not only the rational living beings, but also the unreasonable ones, and also the nature in the plants, and also the earth producing this, and that everything reaches <the vision also>, as far as it is ever possible for it in its nature, that thereby, however, in one case the vision and the success is so, in another case different; one gets the truth, but another one only an imitation and a picture of it – who could bear the paradox of this speech?²

Plotinus later expands the range application of the sentence beyond the being of nature to action.³ This means that the principle is valid not only in the domain of objects but also in that of our actions. Why does Plotinus emphasize his thesis so much as “play” and “paradoxical”? The question is all the more urgent, since later at the more earnest moments (: III 8, 6, 16) the thesis is by no means abandoned, but all the stronger.

The question that runs through the treatise, never explicitly but always implicitly, is “What is the meaning of the term ‘being’?” This question is not placed by Plotinus at the beginning, as Aristotle had done in *Met.* Λ, but it appears clearly enough in the answers offered, at the end of the third chapter, for example, where Plotinus says that for nature ‘to be’ means ‘to produce’ and nature produces through vision (“nature’s ‘producing’ (poiesis) has proved to be vision,” 8, 3, 17–23). At 8, 4, 5 Plotinus introduces nature speaking: “...what has come to be is my vision <:

² Transl. Gerson with minor modifications: “If, before attempting to be serious, we were actually to begin by playing and say that all things aim at vision and look to this goal, not only rational but also non-rational animals and nature in plants and the earth which produces them, and that all things achieve it as far as they can in their natural state, but contemplate and achieve it, some this this way and others another way; some in a genuine manner, others by acquiring an imitation and image of it, would anyone put up with the oddity of the statement?”

³ See III 8, 1, 15; moreover III 8, 6, 1–2 and III 9, 6, 9–10 and 37. The sentence has been associated by R. Harder, R. Beutler, W. Theiler, 1964, 366, and M. I. Santa Cruz De Prunes, 1979, 13, with that of Eudoxus, “Everything is striving for lust,” referring to Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics.* K 1, 1172b10. As regards the content this reference is rather unlikely; in contrast to the sentence in the *Nicomachean Ethics* Plotinus’ sentence has speculative objectives even if applicable in the context of our actions; the vision produces what it sees, desire is directed to what is present.

theama> ...”; at 8, 5, 1, Plotinus resumes what he had been saying about nature with “that becoming <in nature> is vision,” and, at 8, 7, 1, looking back: “That all genuine beings are from vision or vision ...is somehow clear.”

What is true in the case of nature is true all the more in the case of the soul and the nous. At the different levels of unity (nature, soul, nous) we always find the same: being is vision on all levels of unity.

Plotinus writing at the very beginning of the book “All things are striving for vision” (McKenna), is offering a speculative answer to the question of being. He says that this sentence actually means “‘to be’ means vision”, since everything strives to be, and everything can only be by perceiving or being perceived. But saying this Plotinus must expect manifold other answers to the same question. After all, we ever know what ‘to be’ means. In our everyday life we have naive and realistic opinions about *to be*. As philosophers, we know many traditions and different philosophical opinions on the subject, among which we will prefer one or the other. We might think, for example, that *to be* means *to exist* or *to occur as a thing in space and time* or we might conceive it, as Plotinus specifically mentions, *to be composed of matter and form* (an Aristotelian concept). We might think with Plato *the idea is the being*, or something else. And it is with respect to just such opinions concerning being that Plotinus now expects us to undergo a complete reversal.

In our everyday thinking one might primarily focus on the individual as the pattern of being and model the workings of nature on the artisan. On the one hand we see the manufacturing craftsman, on the other the object manufactured and of the manufactured object what it is made of and the shape it takes under manufacture. This pattern of thought is based on a dualistic conception of being. Through his action, the artisan impresses form upon the apparently formless matter. But, since matter does itself always actually have a form this construal cannot be true. Matter and form do not seem to be the absolutely separate domains that they were presumed to be. If hyle and eidos were absolutely separable it would be difficult to understand how they could become unified in the phenomenal object of fact. Through his speculation, Plotinus is attempting to overcome the fallacy of this dualism and to get at

the unity of proper being, which is vision; a vision in which not only hyle and eidos, but also producer and product are united.

This sentence – "All things are striving for vision" – must not be understood as if it would say "All x are striving for being F or doing F." That would only repeat the customary, dualistic view of things according to which there is one thing that is striving for something and another which is object of desire while both the desiring and the desired are strictly distinct from each other. It is just this dualism, which Plotinus wishes to supersede through speculative thought. 'To strive for vision' actually means to strive for being and, correlatively, the same means also 'to be the result of the vision of another being, by being the vision of that being,' i. e. to 'realize the vision of another as being seen,' to be itself and to be for that other. The vision is only secondarily the vision of another thing. Primarily, it is the realization of the envisioning being itself. It would not match Plotinus' intention if it were said that nature directs itself toward the world of the body by vision. In this case, this world of the body would be pre-existent, but Plotinus wishes to convey that natural beings come to be through nature's vision.

Vision is not the vision of a particular subject, it is impersonal and "everywhere." In III 8, 9, 26–28 Plotinus uses the beautiful image of a voice in space, which is audible at every point in that space. This stands for the omnipresence of the regarding nous:⁴

As when a voice echoes through loneliness or in this loneliness encounters people < somewhere in loneliness >, if one then opens one's ear, then this <: the voice > at the same time communicates completely, but also not completely.⁵

Plotinus tries to illustrate his understanding of 'vision' with the image of the geometrician drawing (8, 4, 8). The actual activity of the geometrician is to see his construction in its geometric purity. He drafts on paper or in sand, to be sure, but

⁴ In analogy with this image he uses that of all-illuminating light, leaving aside the corporeal source of light *Enneades* VI 4, 7.

⁵ Just as when a voice fills an empty space or human beings, too, as well as the space, in whatever part of the empty space you place your ear you will receive the voice as a whole and yet not all of it. (Transl. Gerson)

the drawn result is not the actual goal because it never will be geometrically correct, the objective sought is the thought which the draft should represent. In this way is the vision of nature to be understood. Only, nature does not even draft, but only regards. As nature has a vision of things, things come to be.

14.2. Nature Does not Work Mechanistically

In three steps, Plotinus tries to free us from the naive assumption that nature produces in the manner of the artisan (chapter 2). First he refers to the comparison with the craftsman; second he analyzes the distinction between the parts remaining and moved in an object which becomes; finally he reflects on the being of physis.

The naive idea of production is not the whole truth, even in the case of the artisan, writes Plotinus. For even in handicraft production, there are other things required than the craftsman and the material to produce his works. Artisans could not actually produce colors, they would have to take them from somewhere else. Complementary to that, we may add, even if they make colors, there would always be something they would need to draw from elsewhere. They need something that remains compared to what they produce. What remains is of a different kind than what the producer otherwise needs.

The mechanistic conception has even less explanatory power in its transposition to the process of becoming that unfolds in nature. “Nature does not lever” Plotinus says right at the start, “it does not need hands or feet and has no need of tools to produce something.” One might well replay that that was intended only metaphorically but even if we remove the anthropomorphizing component of the comparison, the mechanistic contents of the simile remains and this is the real reason why natural becoming cannot be explained by the action of the artisan. Unlike the artisan, nature is not a subject that acts (as is also maintained by Aristotle). Nature is not visible as actor in the various processes of becoming, which run “calmly” and “remain in

themselves."⁶

The coming into being of natural beings is also not comparable with the process by which timber becomes a table through the work of a carpenter. Such is immediately obvious in many natural processes, like the development and growth of living beings. Both the work of the artisan and becoming in nature require something in themselves that is enduring and in that permanence, not in the working hands, the productive power (*dynamis*) does inhere (8, 2, 14). Plotinus adds (8, 2, 15) that this power does not require some movable element (which would be the *hyle*) in addition to the permanent one, because in that case the power would not be "that which primarily sets in motion" and the "immovable in the whole" (8, 2, 17–18). That patterning of an active and passive element in the process of becoming would repeat the dualistic separation in the naive conception of an artisanal workmanship. Like Aristotle, Plotinus does not ask what the particular things are and how they come to be in a scientific sense.⁷ He is asking in what their unity does consist. Ultimately, then, it is a matter of understanding what constitutes the unity of the particular being. When we would say – with Aristotle – that the *synholon* consisting of *eidōs* and *hyle* is the unity for which we are looking, that is only an assertion, no explanation, an assertion for which we could still ask for justification.

Even such things as tables or shoes do not take their unity from the external manipulations of the artisan, but from the idea, from the form, its purpose and the like, in other words from everything that guides and determines the action of the artisan. The closer the artisan approaches the result the closer the object nears its end and the more it *is*. This is the becoming with which Plotinus is concerned. We can easily understand that it is correct to say that an artisan 'sees' or has a vision of how his work is coming nearer and nearer its objective.

In the end, the work produced converges with the craftsman's guiding idea. At the same time, it becomes the looked at, the seen. In his producing the craftsman is that

⁶ *Enn.* III 8, 4, 5; 5, 25 with reference to the soul.

⁷ Quite differently e. g. J. N. Deck, 1967, 3: "Contemplation is thus productive – productive of concrete, substantial realities", or 111: "Both of them <sc. nous and Nature> are genuine efficient causes of the real sensible world."

which is having the vision, while his table, his shoe or given product is that which is looked at. In this process both *are*. In working he realizes his vision: his table, his shoe is the result of the vision. The table’s becoming is a ‘coming into the artisans vision.’ The result of the vision and the having the vision both become what they respectively are through that very vision.

The logos is what remains (8, 2, 19) and nature, Plotinus continues, is nothing other than this. Nature must be *eidos* too (8, 2, 22), but not itself comprised “of hyle and *eidos*.” Plotinus explains this with an example (8, 2, 25-27). How does hyle, for example, become fire? It could scarcely happen that way that fire would be added to hyle. That would presuppose the existence of fire in the natural sense. But that is exactly that what is asked after. Hyle becomes fire in such a way that the logos of fire is “added” to the underlying indefinite hyle.

What Plotinus says here, relying on the example of an element, can and must be applied to any thing. In this way, nature is the logos which conveys itself to the hypokeimenon, but itself remains what it is (29-30). The *logoi* are what actually “produce” (28), i. e. they turn the ‘something becoming’ into ‘something being.’ The logos is and operates in different ways. In one sense, it is in the manner of permanent priority, but also in the changing outer visible form (31). In this form, however, it is “dead” and cannot produce anything else. As being-in-advance, however, the logos does have the power to produce.

14.3. The Iteration of the Relation “Viewing – Viewed”

The becoming of natural beings is founded in nature’s vision, but nature’s vision is not the absolute beginning, so what does precede it (*Enn.* III 8, 3)? Plotinus distinguishes between a logos which is strong enough to remain in itself and another logos which turns outwards. If nature, as logos, could remain entire unto itself and could thus be nothing other than vision alone, then nature would be the total vision of every natural being, it would be its (immaterial) embodiment, so to speak. Without hyle, it would be that which remains. Real nature is too weak to do so,

it turns outwards and strives to be actual also in hyle which seems to be more but, in fact, is less. The thesis that nature is "too weak" would mean that nature could not sufficiently maintain its unity. It produces external beings because nature is too powerless to keep its vision to itself and anthropomorphically speaking, we might say nature were not satisfied with the mere vision.

What nature beholds, then, becomes natural beings, "falling out" from the pure vision (8, 4, 10). Natural becoming is, in principle, nature's vision but insofar as nature produces anything else it is only a secondary vision. This secondary or imperfect mode of vision is emanation. Emerging is essential for being (*Sein*), but that emergence can take place in different ways.

Nature is already a thought (: logos, 8, 2, 29; 8, 3, 11), thus *to be* means for nature "to have a vision," a vision that "goes outward." Nature is indeed vision but not the absolute beginning of vision. It is itself already a result, namely the result of the vision of the soul. Nature is, at the same time, a seeing and a seen (3, 17; *Schau und Geschautes*). As vision, nature produces, in being viewed, it is a product of the soul. What is seen by nature in its vision are the natural beings. In this context Plotinus employs the already mentioned image of the geometer, who also looks at his drawing, but in his thoughts does not mean the drawing at all, but the geometrical facts.

Because physis is both, viewing as well as viewed we may ask whose vision it is the result of. There is an iteration, then, of the distinction between what is seeing and what is being seen. In what follows Plotinus considers the soul and the nous in the light of this distinction. In the vision of the soul, the seeing and the seen attain a higher unity than is possible in the vision of nature.

On the occasion of the discussion of the vision of the soul, Plotinus explains the being of the soul as *menein*, *proienai* and *epistrephein* (: to remain in itself, to emerge, to return to itself). It is entirely in these three moments that the vision of the soul consists: More still, that is the very notion of *being* or *to be*. The being of the soul as *theoria* is the subject of chapters 5 to 7. As moments of *theoria*, Plotinus mentions *menein* and *proienai* in 8, 5, 11-17 and *epistrephein* in 8, 5, 35.

These three moments of being must not be understood as three things or as periods, epochs or levels of a being. They do not evolve one after the other, but they are untemporary and wholly together, as the figures in a picture are present together.

Being takes place at once (untemporary) by remaining, proceeding and reverting to itself. These three factors cannot be captured with the image of the life-cycle of a butterfly, as the larva, caterpillar, imago, butterfly. For, in each moment of being, the being (*Sein*) of any being (*Seiendes*) is determined by the three factors at once. In each individual moment of its temporal unfolding this trinity constitutes the unity of the being. Whatever something may be, it resides within the frame of its concept or essence. Becoming and stepping out of essence into existence, however, it realizes this essence and comes into itself precisely through this realization.⁸

Such considerations apply to an even greater extent to the nous, which as a system, is the unity beyond time. We have, then, to ask again whether the nous is the first vision or is itself viewed by something “prior” to it (8, 9, 1–6). Plotinus answers that the “potentiality of all beings and the power to view all beings” (δύναμις τῶν πάντων) is prior to the nous (8, 10, 1).⁹

The expression is reminiscent of Aristotle’s formulation in *De Anima*, Γ 8, 431b20,

Νῦν δέ, περὶ ψυχῆς τὰ λεχθέντα συγκεφαλαιώσαντες, εἵπωμεν πάλιν ὅτι ἡ ψυχὴ τὰ ὄντα πῶς ἐστὶ πάντα.

Now, to sum up what has been said about the soul, let us once again say that the soul, in some way, is all beings.

The soul is, in a certain way, all beings, because it can take all eide in itself and, through this, it can recognize and see all things.

If we reverse the logic of the realists, according to which the soul is only capable of seeing what is factual retrospectively and we ask on what basis the soul be capable

⁸ See e.g. E. Sonderegger, 2004, in the commentary on Proclus’ *Stoicheiosis theologike*, on paragraphs 25-39.

⁹ δύναμις is used deliberately in its double sense of ability or possibility to be all and the power to produce all by view; we find the same formulation only in Damascius Περὶ ἀρχῶν.

14. "All is striving for vision."

of this, we will be compelled to reply that the soul is able to do this on the basis of an aptitude or a disposition. That aptitude of the soul to recognize anything in our world derives from its already having seen in advance and its possession of a basic grid of the world, an order, which enables it to grasp and classify any given object in its respective world. That is not far away from the vision which Plotinus calls *theoria*. Aristotle continues in *De Anima*:

ἢ γὰρ αἰσθητὰ τὰ ὄντα ἢ νοητά, ἔστι δ' ἡ ἐπιστήμη μὲν τὰ ἐπιστητά πως, ἡ δ' αἴσθησις τὰ αἰσθητά: πῶς δὲ τοῦτο, δεῖ ζητεῖν.

For, the beings are either perceptible or conceivable, but knowledge is in a certain sense the known, the perception the perceptible; how that <is possible> that is what we have to ask.

Aristotle points to the reciprocal influence of basic patterns and particular experience.¹⁰

Of course the realistic view of the statement that perception is somehow the perceptible is correct too, only it is incomplete. For it gives only the *ex post* and does

¹⁰ Due to its major importance I cite too the sentences that follow, Aristotle, *De Anima*, Γ 8, 431b21–432a3:

τέμενεται οὖν ἡ ἐπιστήμη καὶ ἡ αἴσθησις εἰς τὰ πράγματα, ἡ μὲν δυνάμει εἰς τὰ δυνάμει, ἡ δ' ἐντελεχεία εἰς τὰ ἐντελεχεία: τῆς δὲ ψυχῆς τὸ αἰσθητικὸν καὶ τὸ ἐπιστημονικὸν δυνάμει ταῦτά ἐστι, τὸ μὲν <τὸ> ἐπιστητὸν τὸ δὲ <τὸ> αἰσθητόν. ἀνάγκη δ' ἡ αὐτὰ ἢ τὰ εἶδη εἶναι. αὐτὰ μὲν δὴ οὐ· οὐ γὰρ ὁ λίθος ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ, ἀλλὰ τὸ εἶδος· ὥστε ἡ ψυχὴ ὡσπερ ἡ χεὶρ ἐστίν· καὶ γὰρ ἡ χεὶρ ὄργανόν ἐστιν ὀργάνων, καὶ ὁ νοῦς εἶδος εἰδῶν καὶ ἡ αἴσθησις εἶδος αἰσθητῶν.

Knowledge and perception are divided as the things they have to do with, the potential <knowledge or perception> in the potential <state of affairs>, the actual in the actual; the soul's ability to perceive and to understand is potentially the same, one that is to be understood the other that is to be perceived. They must be either the things themselves or their *eide*. Clearly not the things themselves; for it is not the stone which is in the soul, but its *eidos*; therefore the soul is like the hand; for the hand too is a tool for tools, and the *nous* is the *eidos eidon* <: form for forms> and the perception is the form for the perceptible.

not take into account that which is prior to it. If that were the complete and correct answer to the question about our possibilities for knowing and perceiving, then we would have nothing more to ask, but this is exactly what Aristotle invites us to do. What we have to ask about is the way – hard to see – in which we would be able to ‘learn’ a world (we learn how to behave and to act in a world), when we can only do so because having one and already inhabiting one.

With δύναμις τῶν πάντων, which stands above the nous, Plotinus points to the to hen, to unity (10, 1). He uses the similes of the source without origin, the roots of a plant, to give an idea of what he means and brings us here to a second speculative point in inverting the priority of actuality and potentiality. The “potentiality of all beings and the power to view all beings” (δύναμις τῶν πάντων) beyond the nous is the potential for a vision without subject, the vision prior to anything at all, before even a viewer.

14.4. Being is Vision – but, what is Vision?

We conclude these reflections with some considerations about the question of what is meant by ‘vision’. – The word might primarily evoke the everyday action of seeing in general, but Plotinus transforms it into specific term. Everyday seeing always refers to seeing some object which is independent of the person seeing it. Seeing always proceeds from a subject, even if seeing should reflexively refer to the subject itself. Plotinus’ vision is not of this kind. His vision does not refer to vision of anything else, for such does not yet exist, as long as everything receives its being only from vision. This form of vision is not intentional it does not depend upon a particular seeing subject. It cannot be translated with ‘somebody is seeing something.’

Plotinus’ intuition “being is vision” contrasts with other conceptions of being which he demonstrates to be secondary of insufficiently thoroughgoing, in that they all presuppose a world in which they can be asserted. Anyone who wishes to consider them thoroughly must consider their world, the fundamental distinctions through

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which the assertions become sense and can be true or false. This world is not a thing, not a being, but an order and nothing else, an order of fundamental distinctions, concepts and values. This order is easily, but only metaphorically, demonstrable as a vision.

15. The Connection between Noesis and Theoria

In addition to Plotinus' command to understand being as vision, I would propose another suggestion. Some interpreters think that in *Enn.* III 8 Plotinus is debating with Plato's *Timaeus*. The reason for thinking so is that Plotinus refuses to use the work of the craftsman as a model for explaining natural becoming.¹ Seeing that relationship is certainly justified. Here, however, I am trying to activate another reference. For it seems to me that *Enn.* III 8 contains an interpretation of *Met.* Λ and we may say, inflecting what Plotinus has said:

If someone, just playing, said that the statement that being is vision (: theoria) was nothing other than an interpretation of Aristotle's sentence *kai esti noesis noeseos noesis* in *Met.* Λ , then would it be possible for anyone to accept this paradoxical proposal?

Let us playfully scrutinize this proposal from idfferent sides. Its claim is that the main point in Aristotle's *Met.* Λ is not only the question about ousia (and this definitely not in the sense of substance), but that noesis too is at the core of the speculative answer to that question. As in the case of ousia, however, it has become more and more difficult to understand what Aristotle has meant by noesis, if that is translated with 'thinking' and even for the same reasons, namely because both ideas have been pulled into the maelstrom of theology.

Following the line of interpretation of the present book and taking into account the three mentions of noesis in the phrase *kai esti noesis₃ noeseos₁ noesis₂* and, finally, also assuming that noesis₃ and noesis₂ are not identical, then noesis₃ is the *explicandum*, i. e. our individual awareness, be that as perception or as thinking.²

¹ See e. g. D. O'Meara, 1993, 72, and id., 1975, p. 70; L. Brisson, 1994; M. Baltes, 1976; with reference to the 'modeller' *Timaeus*, 76c6.

² For the traditional views of noesis noeseos noesis I refer to what is said in Part II, 2.5, as well

Noesis₁ is the world order as a whole, noesis₂ our ability to realize that order in a particular case. The sense of the phrase kai esti noesis₃ noeseos₁ noesis₂ can therefore be expressed in this way: In each individual becoming aware of something we realize a node in the nexus, which is the world as an order of everything. In any given act of vision, the being that 'is looked at' (metaphorically only) enters into that order which is defined by basic terms, distinctions, values. As that 'not-yet-being' enters into this world at a certain point it becomes a being, it is something as something (*es ist etwas als etwas*).

In realizing that world, the viewing *is* and the viewed object too, being united in vision. This is the same as to say "being is vision" and therefore all things are striving for vision.

Both Aristotle and Plotinus discuss being, both search for the arche as the first, as the origin of being, both give us a speculative answer. Aristotle finds the structural fundament of the beings in noesis₁, Plotinus in the 'producing' origin, but an origin which 'produces' only by theoria. Theoria enables the becoming of things of lower levels of unity, but only through vision, not artisanal working. The vision of a higher unity gives rise to things of a subordinate unity.

In this realization of a 'world view,' the respective being has its factual reality and its being and this, in fact, is the same as to say: "Being is vision." Everything, therefore, strives for vision.

as to the commentary on KP 23 in Part III. For the traditional view of the term see also the new commentaries by F. Baghdarassarian and L. Judson, 2019.

Part V.

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17. Appendix

Plotinus, Text
III 8

Met. Λ Text

Henry-Schwyzler in ed. minor

9.15- 16	νοοῦν μὲν ὁ νοῦς ἀνόητον δὲ ἀγνοήσει καὶ ἑαυτό; ὥστε τί σεμνόν;	1074b17- 18	εἴτε μηδὲν νοεῖ, τί ἂν εἴη τὸ σεμνόν;
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Harder-Beutler-Theiler, in the commentary

2.17	ἐκεῖνο (“unbewegter Be- weger”!)	1072a25	ἔστι τι ὃ οὐ κινούμενον κινεῖ
8.14- 21	νόησις – ζωή	1072b18	νόησις
		1072b26	καὶ ζωὴ δὲ ὑπάρχει f.
9.16	ὥστε τί σεμνόν	1074b17	εἴτε μηδὲν νοεῖ, τί ἂν εἴη τὸ σεμνόν;

other things I noticed

2.17	ἐκεῖνο (: what sets in motion primarily)	1072b15	ἐκεῖνο: what is searched in 7.15 as ἀρχή
2.17- 18	ἢ ἐκεῖνο οὐκ ἔσται τὸ κινουῦν πρῶτως	1072a23- 26	τὸ κινουῦν πρῶτως, τὸ ἀκίνητον
		1070b34	ἔτι παρὰ ταῦτα ὡς τὸ πρῶτον πάντων κινουῦν πάντα

		1050b3	ἕως τῆς τοῦ ἀεὶ κινουῦντος πρώτως
		Phys., 258b4- 5	φανερὸν τοίνυν ἐκ τούτων ὅτι ἔστιν τὸ πρώτως κινουῦν ἀκίνητον
6.15- 17	τὸ γινώσκον ...εἰς ἔν τῷ γνωσθέντι ἔρχεται	1072b21	ὥστε ταῦτὸν νοῦς καὶ νοητὸν
7.15- 18	...καὶ τὰ ἄλλα πάντα ἐφίεσθαι τούτου ...	1072a26	κινεῖ δὲ ὧδε τὸ ὀρεκτόν
		1072b27	ἐκεῖνο δὲ ἡ ἐνέργεια
8.5-6	νοῦς – ἐγνωσμένα ...εἰς ἔν ἄμφω	1072b21	
8.8	ταῦτὸν τὸ εἶναι καὶ τὸ νοεῖν	1075a1	ἢ ἐπ' ἐνίων ἢ ἐπιστήμη τὸ πρᾶγμα
8.10	ἐν οὕτως ἄμφω	1072b21	
9.33	νοῦς: ἐνέργεια οὐσα ἐν διεξόδῳ	1073b26- 27	–καὶ ζωὴ δὲ ὑπάρχει· ἡ γὰρ νοῦ ἐνέργεια ζωή, ἐκεῖνο δὲ ἡ ἐνέργεια
10.1	ἀρχὴ διεξόδου: δύναμις τῶν πάντων	1074b34	καὶ ἔστιν νόησις ₃ νόησεως ₁ νόησις ₂
11.2	Wirklichkeit – Möglichkeit	1071b12- 20	–Priorität der ἐνέργεια; ἀρή: ἦς οὐσία ἐνέργεια
11.27	νοῦς ...πάντων κάλλιστον	1074b15- 16	–δοκεῖ <ὁ νοῦς> μὲν γὰρ εἶναι τῶν φαινομένων θειότατον

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