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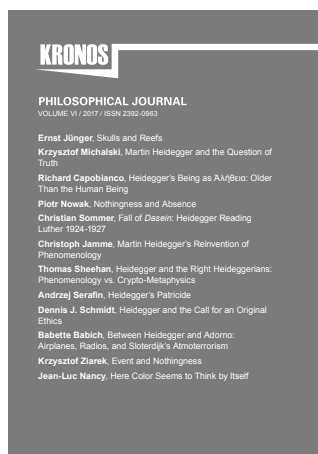
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# EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION



We partake in national culture almost unknowingly – whether we want to or not. It is as indispensable as oxygen because, like oxygen, it makes breathing possible. We also experience national culture in a negative way when – for instance, during holidays – we drown in the bothersome twitter of an unfamiliar, foreign language. In such moments we move as if shrouded in a haze, and reality itself loses sharpness, becomes weightless and unimportant. Yet the idyll does not last long, no longer than several weeks after which we return to our humble abode and are once again as “important” and “smart” as before.

But what is a nation anyway? What is the basis of its definition? A nation is presented as that which I encounter before I learn to speak. So it is the language, the mores, the ethical norms, the common history or geography, the space of communal life. The nation is my origin. The nation always precedes and shapes me even when I do not really like it. It will still be there even when I am gone. It is a force which enlightened reformers sometimes try to tame, reform and modernise. In Dostoyevski's work a keystone that joins isolated human monads is the nearly untranslatable word “почва”, meaning “soil”, “ground”, but not in the sense of chernozem or sands, but rather a base thanks to which one can stand on one's own two feet. One cannot distort or destroy this kind of “ground” by, for instance, throwing it into fire or pouring acid over it. It is solid in nature.

Not all states are nations, and this is an important reservation. Usually we see a variety of rules defining this or that nation. For instance, Belgium and Switzerland are artificial creations. The first balances on the edge of permanent dissolution, the other defines itself via a universal reliability in the spheres of banking and finance (“run like a Swiss watch”). In the latter case a consolidating function is played by referenda (*Landsgemeinde*) usually concerning common, though trivial, matters. In the United States the “почва”, the foundation is the flag and the constitution – they hold together this young, heterogeneous nation. Thus, the base has its origins in the nation, while simultaneously being the condition of the nation's existence and continuation; the base comes from the people's will and determines its “being together”.

In Poland the “ground”, the national εἶδος is culture, as evidenced by a set of history-proven facts. First and foremost it is a hundred and twenty years of Poland's non-existence that Poles survived thanks to the culture of the highest quality, thanks to the work of the world's greatest poets. Because Polish poets are the greatest of the great and – as a result – untranslatable, peculiar, national. They are absolutely important and urgently needed, indispensable.

The war for Poland was fought in extremely oppressive conditions, when Poles had no schools of their own, no state administration or free cultural institutions. That is why national culture should

be easily assimilable, it should add naturally to the body of the nation thanks to which it is an area where the nation can understand itself better. It usually is an elite culture as elite as the work of Adam Mickiewicz, Fyodor Dostoyevski or William Wordsworth. Only thanks to participation in national culture a world of universal values opens before us (and for us). For example, for Europeans this strongly elitist but also national element (a keystone) consolidating the modern self-identification of the continent is the heritage of classical Greece that was absorbed in different ways by national cultures – German, French, Polish, or, recently, American.

In the work of Stanisław Szukalski, discussed in the present issue of “Kronos”, Polish culture acquires a “personality”, a distinct character. In his artistic creations the mythical richness of Europe becomes close to us, as it is aboriginally Polish, familiar, different from singular “national fables”. When culture and nation go together they gain a certain weight. Stanisław Szukalski was an exceptionally important artist for defining Poles’ national substance. Towards the end of his life he became someone equally important for a group of American artists who loved him and accepted him as their spiritual father. Glenn Bray, Lena Zwalve, George Di Caprio, Ray Zone, Robert and Suzanne Williams were with him in the last years of his life. Some of them stayed with him until his last moments, just like Phaedo, Crito and his father, Hermogenes, Epigenes, Aeschines, Antisthenes, Ctesippus, Menexenus, did for Socrates.

*Piotr Nowak*  
Deputy Editor-in-Chief

Wawrzyniec Rymkiewicz

## **SZUKALSKI – A TRANSGRESSION IN SEARCH OF IDENTITY**

Let us begin with a fairy tale. It is familiar to every one in Poland. For centuries we have been telling it to our children thus including them in the perennial circle of generations. The fairy tale is as old as Poland itself. It talks of events mysteriously connected to this country's birth. One can speculate – in fact, one can be quite sure – that it will continue being told as long as any Poles live here, as long as any Poles are in existence anywhere.

The fairy tale tells the story of King Krak who ruled over the city of Krakow. In the city, in a deep, dark den – the story goes – there lived a Dragon which needed to be killed. The rest is comic. A shoemaker Dratewka makes woollen sheep, stuffs it with tar and sulphur, and puts it in a place where the Dragon can easily find it. The monster eats it and gets a stomachache. To ease the pain he starts drinking water from the Vistula, the river flowing by Wawel, Krak's castle. The Dragon drinks so much that it turns into a gigantic balloon and explodes.

The comic ending changed the fairy tales's import so that today nobody gives the story a thought. The tale has become indecipherable. Repeated from generation to generation, in the endless cycle, it has lost all its depth and terror. The fairy tale has become a fable. Today it is only a story about the poor Glutton and a cunning Shoemaker and the only lesson (it seems) we can learn from it is some dietary advice.

Here, I need to immediately rectify what I have just said. In fact, there was one artist in Poland – and relatively recently too – who took the story of the Dragon seriously and offered a radical interpretation of the fairy tale. The artist was Stanisław Szukalski and the interpretation was his project of Duchtynia.

It was to be a temple in the Dragon's Den, at Wawel, under the castle of the Polish king and the Wawel Cathedral that houses the tombs of monarchs. "To build," Szukalski writes in his project, "a temple above and around the Dragon's Den at Wawel. Break through the den's ceiling to turn it into a cloister and introduce sunlight into the den." In the centre of the temple Szukalski wanted to place a marble pole with, at its top, a statue of the most important deity of the Slavic pantheon, Światowid, who had four faces, each looking at one of the four sides of the world. The artist saw the sculpture as a figurative complex: a group of figures forming a common shape: "Światowid will consist of the 4 greatest, but principally different in character, Polish heroes, sitting on a giant horse." These four heroes are Piłsudski, Casimir the Great, Copernicus and Mickiewicz. Each one was to symbolise one the cardinal directions. From the top of the column "4 reflector lights will shoot through the skylight, so that in the night, on special occasions, one can see the place of worship from afar."

Let us go back to the fairy tale. It is doubtlessly a story of initiation. It talks about the struggle with a primal Evil, an archaic Darkness that crept out of the den under the Wawel, and the vanquishing of which is one of the fabled deeds that history starts with. One can imagine an alternative history (an alternative fairy tale) in which our ancestors treated the Dragon differently – tamed it or made friends with it. There are nations to whom the Dragon means something else than to us; for the Chinese, for instance, it signifies strength and wisdom. The Poles, however, in the order of fairy tale, killed the Dragon, and Poland became the kingdom of Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ. It is a significant and fateful fact that should be pondered over even by clear-headed people who do not believe in fairy tales.

What did Szukalski strive for? Well, according to his declarations, he wanted to set up "The Second Poland." Therefore, he had to repeat the founding gesture and face the Dragon once again, but in a different manner. Szukalski does not dare to go as far as to erect in the den under the Wawel a temple of the Dragon. Still, he certainly wanted to reach out into that darkness and there to find support for the new Poland, to weave a nest for it in the Dragon's Den. In his most important manifesto *Krak's Attack* (*Atak Kraka*), he talks about "the spirit of our race" pounding from the underground of consciousness, because it wants to be let out. "The spirit chased underground in the first days of our Christianity was locked behind a bolted door while each new foreign style made its fashionable invasion on Polish culture;" and further: "the spirit of the race, like an ancient root from a live tree that was cut down, cries for freedom."

Szukalski wanted Światowid's column to be hollow inside. Inside it he planned to place the new Polish coat of arms: the Axeagle (*Toporzel*), a double-bladed carpenter's axe the haft of which ends with an eagle's head, and the rounded blades suggest the eagle's wings. The Duchy's Axeagle was supposed to be a sacred object: "in Światowid's base," the artist writes, "only one Axe-eagle will be placed, which, due to its extraordinary meaning will be called Holyaxeagle (*Świętoporzel*)." One would be able to reach and touch the sacred object through four circular orifices placed in semi-circular niches in the four walls of the square column. Szukalski imagined that Duchy would be visited by people from all over Poland: brothers and sisters, friends and fiancées, politicians from different

parties and national groups “who would enter the base, kneel, and, inserting their right arms in the orifices, touch the Holyaxeagle’s handle and say their oath out loud.” Thus the sacred object will be the source and guarantee of all human relations in the new Poland. The essence of the community, placed in the Dragon’s Den.

The Axeagle was to draw its magical power from a ring of stone tombs surrounding the column among which the artist wanted to place, in the most prominent position, Józef Piłsudski’s sarcophagus in the shape of an oak tree trunk, cut horizontally in two. At the entrance to the temple Szukalski wanted to place a gigantic statue of the Commandant – as Piłsudski was called by Poles – showing him as an ancient Slavic demon in a wooden crown with a pair of wings growing out of his hands.

Duchtynia was clearly meant to be the new Wawel Cathedral, traditional place of the last rest of the Polish kings, yet differently orientated metaphysically, facing not the other world – by the towers pointing to the sky – but the fathomless depths of Polishness. Szukalski was a completely “from this world” mind, devoid of any sense of transcendence. The Duchtynia Światowid, let us repeat, was meant to be comprised of four figures of local heroes. The way I see it, according to Szukalski’s intentions, Światowid is Poland in its supreme articulation; or – another possible interpretation – Światowid is Poland’s soul, its eternal might – manifesting itself in the four faces of our national heroes – that will be worshipped in the Dragon’s Den.

Szukalski was said to have made the following confession during a meeting in the 1930s: “I am perceived as a heretic, even though I am deeply religious, but it is my own religion, truly different. My religion is Polishness.”

Let us note a certain peculiarity of his project, a project that is already exceptionally peculiar. Going back to the origins of Polishness – reaching in that dragon’s Darkness – Szukalski breaks through to a beyond, far away from Poland. His project, and particularly the Commandant’s monument, alludes to Polish folk art; yet, in its entirety, the project seems to have little in common with Polish tradition. In the plans for Duchtynia one senses an unspecified primeval nature, a universal archaism, and its elements seem to draw upon various, primitive cultures remote from one another: Middle Eastern, Asian or pre-Columbian.

Simultaneously, these drawings have something radically modern in them, which only deepens the viewer’s confusion. Looking at them, we might have an impression of seeing a science-fiction movie scenography or drafts for a comic book showing buildings of an extraterrestrial civilisation.

This confusion adds to the wider and deeper entanglements and complications surrounding Szukalski. He seems to be an exceptionally multi-faceted and ambiguous figure. Undoubtedly, Szukalski was a great sculptor and some of his pieces are truly ravishing. Obviously, however, the artist also experimented with ugliness, training himself in its shapes and forms, purposefully creating repulsive works (for instance, the pieces from his Chicago period, like *Law* or *Defence*). And yet, even the works that we find awe-inspiring possess a kind of excess that makes them turn – or threaten to turn – to kitsch. The audience would like that, to be sure. They would like to reach an unambiguous and ultimate verdict. The artist, however, puts his audience to the test, leads them astray, drawing them, it seems, into a trap.



The same is true about Szukalski's ideas. At first glance Szukalski seems to be a serious person (even if we completely disagree with him). This serious appearance results from the scale and radicalism of the artist who attempts to reach somewhere deep – the plan for Duchtynia being a case in point – to the very foundations of reality, undermining its familiar, domesticated shapes. The impression is enhanced by Szukalski's educational projects like “the Tribe of the Horned Heart” (an artistic movement of the young that Szukalski founded in Poland) or “Creative School” (that he tried to found in Krakow). Here is an artist – it seems – who wants to work with human souls, not just with plaster or wood, and who – rising above his own, private ambitions – would like to do something for the community. Such an approach inspires respect.

Yet this first impression quickly fades. Right away Szukalski shows a different, terrifying face. Particularly repulsive is his anti-Semitism which has – it must be openly said – an abject, scatological character. The artist's attacks on critics and sculptors of Jewish origin resemble inscriptions on a toilet wall.

Even the first impression of seriousness is in fact shaky. At times Szukalski seems a mere provocateur and his works and concepts look like baloney or a schoolboy's spoof. An adult audience look speechless at the Tribe of the Horned Heart and see young artists, in Native American or Slavic costumes who are about to shoot arrows at Krakow's Academy Professors.

Yet this kind of hodgepodge and ambiguity in those days, in the 1930s, are nothing exceptional. We find them in some shape in Witkacy's work. They were played with by Gombrowicz. Therefore we should not take them for granted but – on the contrary – we should understand them. Not only because Szukalski was a great artist who deserves a place in the pantheon of Polish art next to Jacek Malczewski whom he valued so much and whose spiritual descendant he is. Also because in this hodgepodge and ambiguity there is something that directly concerns us – today – and may prove important.

Let us start with a question: who was Szukalski? The answer seems simple. Szukalski was a visual artist. It would be hard to question it at all. Yet – at the same time – and also beyond any doubt – he was, or at least wanted to be, more than this. As if art itself and a great artistic talent, were not enough to satisfy his enormous ambition (by the way, Szukalski made little of talent, worshipping instead “wisdom,” which was all the more easy for him since he possessed an abundance of inborn abilities, as his early works incontrovertibly show). Szukalski wanted to be an artist-priest, someone who summons and resuscitates the deities of dead religions; an artist-politician who creates the “Second Poland,” and to do so forms a political party of sorts called “Youth Union;” finally an artist-scholar or sage-artist who portrays himself at the beginning of his career as Copernicus (sculpture from 1914: *Artist's Self-Portrait as Copernicus*), and in the last period of his work he devotes himself to the study of the origins of language and the human species.

We face a phenomenon that break out from the frames of art and consists in crossing the borders and confusing the established orders. One could say that there is nothing special in that crossing the borders, that it perfectly fits the conventions of Romantic art. Adam Mickiewicz, for instance, also wanted to be more than just a poet: the nation's father, a religious prophet, a military leader assembling troops in Italy and

Turkey. Yet Szukalski clearly goes much further. The crossing the borders in his work seems to reach the very essence of his pieces, as if it belonged, or was meant to belong, to an order different than art. In Szukalski's case we can talk about a transgression – the limits of art and its conventions – and reaching over into some remote and as yet undiscovered strange regions.

This is also the reason why Szukalski demands a philosophical commentary. Any other way of explaining his work, psychological or ideological (placing it in the order of the history of ideas), must impose on it predetermined terminological frameworks and interpretative models locking Szukalski in the cage of ready-made meanings. This cage however – let us not harbour any illusions about it – will prove nothing but a muzzle we will be trying to force on him. Szukalski is a dangerous artist. The vortex of meanings we face, the unstable forms and an accumulation of content, hides something very dangerous. Moreover, this feeling is not weakened – on the contrary, it is strengthened – by the comic effect that Szukalski sometimes produces. This effect is an irreplaceable element of this vortex: awe is mixed with disgust, surprise turns into embarrassment, a spoof turns into dread.

The philosophy I have in mind is a radical enquiry. It is about a distance to received notions and accepted perspectives. It does not presuppose – and that makes it different from psychology and the history of ideas – any ready-made meanings. Instead it asks why meanings make sense at all. How are they formed and how they disintegrate? What do their stability and balance consist in? I believe these are the questions one could ask both Szukalski's works, and their audience (that is us, who look at these works, puzzled).

Szukalski knew a lot about himself. In his manifesto *Krak's Attack* we find a consistent exposition of his artistic doctrine where assessing the situation and specifying the essence of art lead the author towards formulating his own programme and creative method.

The starting point of this disquisition is nihilistic. According to Szukalski, Poland does not have its own style or tradition. Even though individual great artists (the following names are mentioned: Matejko, Wyspiański, Malczewski) created original and personal styles, their work did not add up to form a national style. Szukalski voices extremely provocative claims: “the aesthetic heritage of Polish culture,” we read, “cannot be called Polish art;” and then: “until now we have only had art in Poland, but there has been no Polish Art yet.”

The reason for this state of affairs lies in the origins of Polish history. A foreign religion – Christianity – was forced on Poles, while the original religion was destroyed. Szukalski repeats the formulas we know from the writings of Polish Neopagans. Let us reconstruct this ideology: in the 9<sup>th</sup> century Poland became a colony of the West, it was placed – in a sense, it placed itself – in a position peripheral to the centre of Europe which was first the Catholic Rome, then Paris of the Enlightenment era. Poles have never ventured to gain spiritual independence: patterns of behaviour, ways of thinking, styles, even aesthetic tastes are all drawn from outside, instead of being created independently at home. This is the source of our feeling of inferiority to the West that has been present in the Polish identity for ages. Poles feel backwards; how could they feel otherwise, if they put themselves in the position of the audience of culture, and not – its creators?

Szukalski thus rejects – with a single gesture – Rome and Paris, and attempts to find himself and his foundations inside of his own self. He demands Polish national art, independent and self-reliant; he ridicules artistic fashions and fads, and the most recent Paris trends and French inventions.

Szukalski's nihilism is not limited to Polish Art (which, let us say it again, never existed) but encompasses and includes the totality of European art which, as Szukalski claims, had not existed for 400 years, i.e. from the Renaissance era. Even though Poland has managed to overlook it: Polish artists are still sent on scholarships to Paris, the local ones keep imitating French models – Western art is dead. According to Szukalski, the causes of this collapse are demographic. Too many people deal with art. Today, Szukalski writes, artists constitute “a mass of many thousands,” “for one Paris exhibition at the Grand Palais as many as eight thousand works were sent.” The demographic boom, a snowballing in the number of artists has catastrophic consequences for European culture. “Quantitative people” have nothing to say, they are hollow inside, devoid of “human content.” Therefore they naturally decide that art is limited to form. In the West, Szukalski argues, no one understands what art is anymore. Originality is defined as stylistic difference or new painterly techniques and “Cézanne and other nobodies like him” are considered great artists. In fact, however, techniques and styles are only vehicles for the expression of emotions and thoughts. This is where – i.e. in “concepts” – the gist of art lies: “concepts are the essence.”

Therefore Szukalski resolves to fight – against the Nothingness that has enshrouded Polish art for ages; against the decomposition that has become the curse of the Western art. “A mouldy Dragon,” another manifesto goes, “stinking of manure, leaves its den at last (...) to devour the young Krak,” and further: “We understand the symbolism of the myth of our Krak and the dragon. (...) The story symbolises life shooting forth from a putrid corpse. A green branch growing out of a decomposing trunk of an old collapsed willow.” The Dragon stands for the professors of Krakow's Academy, Wojciech Weiss and Józef Mehoffer, who want to devour Szukalski and the little group of his students, but the Dragon is also the entire putrid and decomposing Europe. “We will strive to eradicate,” Szukalski cries, “the pan-European, including Polish, cultural superstitions, ideological gossiping and everything that breathes mould and originates in the Dragon's Abdominal Cavity of putrid Old Europe.”

Only now do we clearly see Szukalski's starting point. Writing about the dragon he is being a little jocular. Yet the humour is lined with dread. The Dragon is something horrible. Just how horrible it is can be best seen in a 1917 sculpture *Struggle between Quantity and Quality*. It shows a hand whose fingers ending with beaks are trying to tear apart the thumb which is opening an angry dragon's jaws. The sculpture's theme – which we know from the artist's commentary – is the struggle of a creative individual with the human mass. What is most important for us here, though, is the fact that humanity is depicted as a many-headed Dragon. Humanity is a hand-dragon emerging from the dark base of an enigmatic plinth, while its fingers-heads are engaged in a deadly struggle.

For Szukalski the Dragon is a symbol of chaos. The chaos – this is how we can now read the project of Duchtynia – lies somewhere deep down at the foundation of Poland, at the beginning of its history, undomesticated and forgotten. The chaos – this

is how I understand *Struggle* – also has a universal meaning: it is the internal Darkness of humankind which can be a creative hand that works in accord and harmony or take the shape of a many-headed dragon that bites itself in spasmodic convulsions. Finally the chaos – let us return to the sentences quoted above – erupts and flows out right now showing its dark face in the current crisis of the West.

The chaos, however, can be given yet another meaning. Each order springs forth from nothingness. Szukalski's thought – this is how I understand his intentions – moves in a circle where the ending becomes a new beginning. Szukalski, while pronouncing his nihilistic claims, simultaneously puts himself in the position of the founder of a new art and a new reality. As we already know he wants to create a "Second Poland." He wants to draw to himself young artists who "in their blood, feel the intention of creating, for the first time in our history, our own art."

To make this project a reality we need Szukalski's method whose principles he presents in *Krak's Attack* and the "Creative School's" Statute. Szukalski argues that a true artist should not imitate the objective reality. One must stop working with a model and abandon the "optical prose," introducing instead exercises for imagination and creation from memory. The Academy's mistake is teaching techniques that have already been developed and perfected while leaving creative work for later; all this based on the belief that one must learn the trade before one can create. As a result the Academy produces skilful imitators, devoid of creative wisdom. None of them, we read, longs to be a great human being even though this is the end (being a great human being) every artist should strive for.

Therefore Szukalski – turning the aforementioned order around – introduces the principle of "Creative School's" teaching: "learning through creation." He believes that technique and style will automatically emerge, in a spontaneous and natural fashion, if the artist has something to say. Therefore, education should focus on the latter. We need a method that "trains the heart and thought from day one;" a method – as I understand it – of educating great and wise people.

Thus Szukalski wants to orchestrate a Copernican revolution (it is not a coincidence, then, that Copernicus was one of the protagonists of his artistic imagination, one of the figures of his creative self-knowledge): for modern art the most important thing was form, for Szukalski, it is content: "beyond form," he writes, "stands art," "concepts" – I already quoted this sentence above – "are the essence." The wisdom he wants to teach at "Creative School" is about inventing concepts: "A creative innovation in concepts is the essence of wisdom." Concepts, in turn, are the expressions of emotions: "Original, individual emotions result in original concepts, which, in turn, force a worker or a priest to give the most suitable form to their thoughts-messengers."

One can gather, then, that the central notion Szukalski uses to understand art and his own activity is the notion of "concept." For Szukalski his own sculptures were actualised concepts. The artist, it seems, uses this word in a completely conventional and colloquial sense. It means "an idea" or "a plan for making something." When we dig deeper – Szukalski does not do it but the reader can – we learn that the word comes from the Latin noun *conceptum*, which originally means "foetus," and from the verb *concipio*, *concupere*, which means "to become pregnant," "to conceive." With this etymology in

mind we should turn first to Szukalski's sculptures – to see directly what sense the notion of “concept” takes on in them. The sense is not given and ready-made but in the artist's hands and under his knife is moulded into a completely new and unexpected shape.

One can risk the following interpretation: in fact, Szukalski understood his works in a quite conventional way, looking at them within the framework of form and content. Yet, he reversed the traditional understanding of this order – according to which form is more important than content – and put into motion a dynamics he, in my opinion, did not fully control and was not able to fully grasp conceptually, and which pushed him towards the transgression that is the ultimate meaning of the whole venture.

Szukalski's works are never merely illustrative. They are not allegories of notions or ideas which one could access and express in some other way. For instance, if we ask what is the “content” of *Cecora* – by the way, one of his masterpieces – we will be confused. The work tells us something. We do not understand much of it, however. The artist's commentary (saying that it shows a warrior drinking his own blood that oozes from a wound on his forehead) does not help us understand it, either. On the contrary, it seems that Szukalski purposely seeks to confuse his audience, and even enhance the confusion by covering *Cecora* – and his other pieces – in rich ornament, full of tiny, intricate details forming a labyrinth of undecipherable signs.

Yet Szukalski's works are not of a decorative character, either. They were not conceived as a pretty accessory to reality, present in an objective manner, a mere external addition. Without a doubt these works have a thematic nature. They tell us something about reality. Yet the wavering of forms and an accumulation of content that we see create an impression that the shape of this reality is yet to come, that something is just being conceived, is looking for its articulation. This impression is connected with Szukalski's sculptures' indecipherability that I just mentioned: we know (more or less) what they are about (we know what happened at *Cecora*), yet we cannot fully understand what the artist is trying to tell us. We feel, however, that we experience a reality the full meaning of which has not yet emerged.

Szukalski wants to be more than just a sculptor: a priest, a politician, a sage or a scholar. But what fascinated him in all those figures was the creative moment: the possibility of inventing new deities (or giving the ancient ones new significance), creating a new state or a new nation, a complete reversal of the received worldview (Copernicus as the one who “stopped the Sun and moved the Earth”). Szukalski was not an artist who adjusts to reality but a creator involved with reality and trying to completely change it from its foundations and shape anew.

Only when we bear all this in mind can we grasp what “concepts” are in Szukalski's creative practice, what the meaning of the term is in his works. Concepts – contrary to what the artist declares – are not free-floating meanings existing independently of forms he gives them. Szukalski treats meanings like malleable material that can be easily formed, like plasticine, into new shapes. Looking at his sculptures we see dynamic form-contents or content-forms that take on all kinds of fantastical shapes before our eyes.

Szukalski's basic strategy is mixing various – historically and geographically remote – forms and meanings which the artist combines to form new clusters, giving Polish topics pre-Columbian, Egyptian or Polynesian shapes. This device is employed

in almost all of his most important works. Szukalski's sculptures appear to be meaning conglomerates, thought clusters or – to use the phrase of American cognitivists, so popular nowadays – conceptual blends. This is why we have the impression that the sculptures tell us something or have something to say: because thinking is about associating ideas and facts. And this is the source of the aforementioned confusion that Szukalski causes in us: surprise, awe, outrage and finally, comic effect. All these feelings, when carefully analysed, have their source in the unexpected collision of remote meanings.

We are face to face with the great mystery of art. Looking at Szukalski's sculptures, we see static, motionless objects. They seem, however, to be alive and teeming with senses; we feel they hide inside something mobile that moves us.

That is how Szukalski puts in motion forces that he doubtlessly cannot control – that actually no one can control, as they are forces that rule over us, people: the powers of Time and the might of History. As we said, Szukalski places himself outside tradition. He wants to start anew, repeat the founding act, face the dragon. The artist had an overwhelming belief – it is clear from his writings – in the historic nature of contemporary art and the entire civilisation. Everything that surrounds us, which we unwittingly take for granted, has been around for only a short time: books, culture, art schools and Academy professors. And everything may – or even should – cease to exist because it is an aberration, a breaking of the natural order present in primitive civilisations and in folk art. Szukalski felt that something really bad is shaking the foundations of civilisation and he wanted to get away from it: by retreating, going back to prehistoric worlds and at the same time, in the same gesture – a circular movement – make an escape to the forefront, towards the unknown possibilities of an uncertain future.

This escape, moving along a circle – the superhuman attempt to get out of his era, whose child Szukalski obviously was – proved somewhat successful. Szukalski breaks free from the order of modern art and reaches the border beyond which the rules of reality change. It is particularly true in the case of his last works that belong to his post-war period (the bust of General Bór Komorowski from 1962, a project for the Katyń monument from 1979, the project for a John Paul II monument, *Thresher*, from 1980) where he draws the ultimate conclusions from his earlier decisions, reaching the logically inevitable finale. The harbingers of this transgression, however, can be glimpsed already in his earlier pieces.

Let us return to *the Duchytynia Project*. Szukalski intended to place in its column an object he called the Axeagle. As we said the sculpture was to be a sacred object. The artist wanted to create something more, or something different, than an ordinary work of art. An object that we should not only look at, but one in front of which we should kneel. An object whose form is subordinate to a ritual meaning and which embodies sacred senses. Such objects used to be once created by totem makers. Szukalski – clearly drawing upon totems – covers his sculptures with rich ornament. Their task is not to make the work of art stand apart from the prosaic reality (that in European culture is the function of an ornamental frame) but – an approach known in primitive cultures – a transformation and sacralisation of matter. Intuitively Szukalski strives for that which Neoplatonic philosophers called *theurgy*; its purpose, Iamblichus writes, was creating “pure and divine matter (...) in order to its becoming the receptacle of the Gods.”

Duchtynia was not realised, after all. Szukalski did not build his temple. His curious plan turned into yet another curiosity. Looking at his latest works we feel as we are encountering the objects of the pop culture – where form is subordinate to content and, simultaneously, content is difficult to disentangle from form. A comic book author draws a history (creates a drawn story the sense of which can be reduced to pictures), the author of computer games presents a narration in the sequence of images (a narration being a sequence of images). The last works by Szukalski look like strange toys or gadgets used in a game the rules of which we do not know, a game played in some faraway islands or on undiscovered continents.

Yet this is how Szukalski becomes a stranger.

The sign of this strangeness, its sensual manifestation, is the peculiar fact that his works can hardly be called beautiful. They are undoubtedly magnificent sculptures; they make a huge impression; they are immensely energetic and exquisitely made. But clearly, that is how I feel, we lack the right words to assess them. But neither do we have the right words to pin down the attraction of pre-Columbian sculptures or the Easter Island statues or – to quote some radically different examples – the Lego building blocks or the *Star Wars* set designs.

The state of being at a loss for words – this curious muteness that overcomes us when we confront Szukalski's works – results from the fact that we still stubbornly experience art (we, modern people) in the way best described by Kant in his *Critique of Judgement*. Thus, in art we look for beauty and the sublime. According to Kant both these terms, and the experiences related to them, have a formal character. Beauty is the harmony of temporal and spatial forms that are the shapes of our pure sensuality. With his expressionism, a purposeful smashing of harmony, and going as far as – let me repeat it – experimenting with ugliness, Szukalski clearly breaks with the Kantian definition of beauty.

Yet Szukalski's works are not sublime either (the Kantian term is popularly seen as describing Romantic and post-Romantic art, and this art can be easily classified as such). We experience the sublime in face of the grandeur or might of nature that transcends all form. This experience can also be brought by a work of art, if it reveals something unfathomable, breaking the harmonic shapes of pure imagination. Once again it is about form, although overcome, which – thanks to this overcoming – lets art express something inexpressible, to encompass infinity in a finite shape.

Yet in Szukalski's work everything is an expression, even if the expression in its excess and intensification eventually becomes illegible. Therefore, there is no space for the sublime. A good example is the 1979 project for the Katyń monument. It depicts ape-man or hyaena-man (in the second version of the work) with Soviet epaulettes on the shoulders and rows of medals on the chest, killing a feathery half-officer half-eagle, from whose mouth an icy breath is exhaled. At first the piece seems verbose. Then the impressions turns into something quite unpleasant – when looking at the Katyń monument, the viewer would rather experience silence. Our despair when we think about Katyń, the feeling of injustice that cannot be compensated for, the lie of the world that proved petty; all of it demands to be expressed and, at the same time, remains inexpressible. Yet Szukalski,

with his cornucopia of details seems to inhabit different emotional registers, his project seems out of place, it could even be called indecent. Szukalski, let me repeat, is a stranger.

This is how I see him: he was an ingenious sculptor, with unequalled formal talent and technical skills who also had an ambition of renewing art and reshaping the totality of our reality, the reality we create. Yet in his work, he reaches the point where art ends, where art – in its modern, European sense, i.e. as a production of objects of selfless aesthetic contemplation – exists no longer. And where a different order reigns.

3. Finally, let us ask: what do we need Szukalski for today? What more could we need him for? Does he have anything important to tell us at all? After all we could deem him a historical curiosity, a souvenir of a remote, no longer comprehensible era that culminated in a monstrous catastrophe: a world war and the triumph of totalitarianism. Szukalski, with his fascination with Mussolini, would only become a kind of minor local monster, a prehistoric beast that should best be locked in a museum cabinet.

Yet he comes back. He returns from his American exile. He resurfaces from the communist oblivion. For the last dozen years or so Szukalski has been talked about with increasing frequency, from the first isolated voices – like Professor Lameński's book – to voices growing in number and in emotional intensity. Szukalski returns and inspires enthusiasm, but also anger and irritation. Once again, as years ago in Kraków and Warsaw, he offends and provokes. (Nb.: an artist like Szukalski does not please everyone and in everything he does. If the gist of his art is transgression, then he must not be liked at all. The power and endurance of an artist like him comes from the scope and depth of emotions he evokes, leading us into unknown directions, towards mysterious horizons).

If we want to understand the return of Szukalski, we must first chart the extent of his failure, as there is no doubt that he was an artist who failed. The most tangible dimension of his defeat is the fact that the majority of his works have been destroyed during the war. We only know these pieces thanks to the photos taken by the artist himself. The photographs are excellent, but – considering the fact that Szukalski was a sculptor of details, that he covered his pieces with a labyrinth of signs and ornaments – they only render a part of their reality. We experience an echo, a distant reflection of the original work, and the fact that it still has an effect on us is a testimony to its original power and explosive energy.

Szukalski's defeat also has a spiritual dimension. Certainly, he failed to succeed in creating what he desired the most: a school that would change Poland's aesthetic outlook, giving the country its own, independent artistic shape. "Creative School" and The Tribe of the Horned Heart were meant to be a creative community that educates inventive craftspeople who are also wise, capable of working out a national style together – while drawing upon (no doubt about it here) Szukalski's genius. Yet, looking at the works of Szukalski's students, it is hard not get the impression that the master has completely dominated his students, while remaining a unique, exceptional and peculiar artist. Szukalski is impossible to imitate; it is difficult to say how to continue his oeuvre, how to develop his work into a common convention.



Szukalski's failure, however, can be written into some wider dimensions, thus unexpectedly embracing and touching us, too. The failure regards us directly – it is a part of our communal defeat.

Szukalski's work was closely tied to the project of the Second Polish Republic. One can read it – this is the interpretation suggested by the artist himself – as an attempt at an aesthetic radicalisation of the 1918 regaining of independence and founding of his own state. In his *Project for building Duchytnia* Szukalski names Józef Piłsudski “the founder of the Second Polish Republic.” The way I understand this formula, Szukalski's actions were supposed to be the continuation of the Commandant's deed. There is a clear connection between political independence on the one hand and aesthetic originality and self-reliance on the other. This is why in the Second Polish Republic artists were looking for a “Polish form” in architecture and art and the support Szukalski received from the independent state was no coincidence.

There is no doubt either that the failure of the Second Polish Republic has its aesthetic dimension as well. The terror of war and the enormity of the genocide perpetrated usually make it difficult for us to see. It is a dimension worth paying attention to, especially when talking about Szukalski. Not only did Poland come out of the war destroyed and maimed but also, as a result of the damage and the ensuing soviet “reconstruction,” it lost all form and all style. If Poles – contrary to Szukalski's provocative assertions – ever had their own form, then now, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, they certainly no longer have any form or style, living instead in an architectural chaos and an aesthetic disharmony.

Thus the first of Szukalski's nihilistic assertions – that Poland has no style of its own – has not become void; in fact, it has become true to a monstrous degree.

The same is the case with the second of his nihilist convictions according to which European art ceased to exist because it limited itself to pure form. The history of European art of several last centuries could be, according to Szukalski's diagnosis, briefly summarised the following way: after an era of the domination of form came a time of its complete rejection – a gesture we know from modern avant-garde productions – transitioning into a postmodern play of empty forms. There emerged a new type of artist who does not create beautiful things, and the cultural audience – turning away from art – seeks fulfilment of aesthetic needs in pop culture with its multiple shapes. Watching this spectacle, the poor European has every reason to worry that the end of art is nigh.

This is, however, the exact point where Szukalski's defeat begins to turn into his victory. Szukalski returns transformed, with a different face, in a new planetary context.

A certain analogy should not be missed. There is a clear similarity between Szukalski and Witkacy. Not just because Stanisław, born in Warta, seems a character straight from Witkacy's *Farewell to Autumn*, being a living proof that Witkacy was a realist writer. The similarity I have in mind is about the place they both occupy in Polish culture as well as the historical order of the reception their works. Witkacy, a writer undervalued before the Second World War, shone like a star only after the Soviet troops invaded Poland; only then the nihilistic experience underlying his work – the experience of the Bolshevik revolution he witnessed first-hand – became comprehensible to his readers. Similarly, Szukalski is the first Polish artist who – as early as the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,

in Chicago – saw the early shape of the emerging global civilisation and tried to find an artistic response to it. Therefore today, when this civilisation has fully emerged and embraced us completely (though it seems it has not yet reached its ultimate consequences), Szukalski proves an ultramodern artist.

What does it mean? Ultramodernity is a new way of experiencing time and space within the realm of civilisational practices. The changes have been dictated by new technologies and means of communication. The space of human life is rapidly shrinking, the distances between continents become shorter, the world becomes small. Simultaneously, the historical time, conversely, seems to expand: the TV audience and internet users interact with remnants of archaic civilisations that emerge from the depths of oblivion to appear on their screens; pre-Columbian sculptures and Easter Island statues are equally close to us, perhaps even closer, than our local folk art. Now it is no longer Stanisław Szukalski, but the Spirit of History that mixes and matches these shapes for us and makes them inhabit our imagination.

These are the surroundings among which Szukalski's works stand before us today. And I feel they have one thing to tell us. Through all these pieces runs through an overwhelming desire for an identity.

Let us turn our attention to the problem of self-portrait in Szukalski's work. Firstly – and this is something I already mentioned – the artist is either looking for himself or inscribing his face in others' faces: for instance, Copernicus'. Secondly, Szukalski's students paint a picture of their master which becomes, contrary to "Creative School" official doctrine, a model (Czesław Kielbiński, *The Portrait of Stanisław Szukalski*, Norbert Strassberg, *Icarus*, Stefan Żechowski, *Untamed*). On the other extreme lie the masks, or rather, anti-masks from the years 1912–1913, entitled *Homo Sapiens*. They depict the human face in the process of disintegration, with the features becoming blurry and losing sharpness. Only one open eye, a hole, is looking at the viewer. Terrifying portraits of chaos. But, as we said, every order emerges from the chaos.

The will for an identity – the desire to have a face – is an existential one. To be means to be oneself. Someone who is, not being himself or herself, exists as if he or she was not really there. Szukalski is driven by an ontological instinct whose most elementary shape is the self-preservation drive, and the most sublime and sophisticated – an artistic desire for one's own form, coming from oneself, expressing its own meaning.

This desire – and that is why it is so moving – constantly confronts the feeling of the world's instability, inscribes itself in the conviction of a constantly moving nature of all form and every meaning (that is why they can be mixed with each other), into the transgression leading to the ultimate limits of culture.

The desire is further a source of an aporia: identity needs community; the meaning of an artist must be accepted by audience and critics, but at the same time – if it is to be a truly self-reliant and independent meaning – it cannot possibly be accepted: it should not be subject to others' judgement. Therefore, a horrible temptation is born: to impose the meaning on the community and to exact it with the use of force.

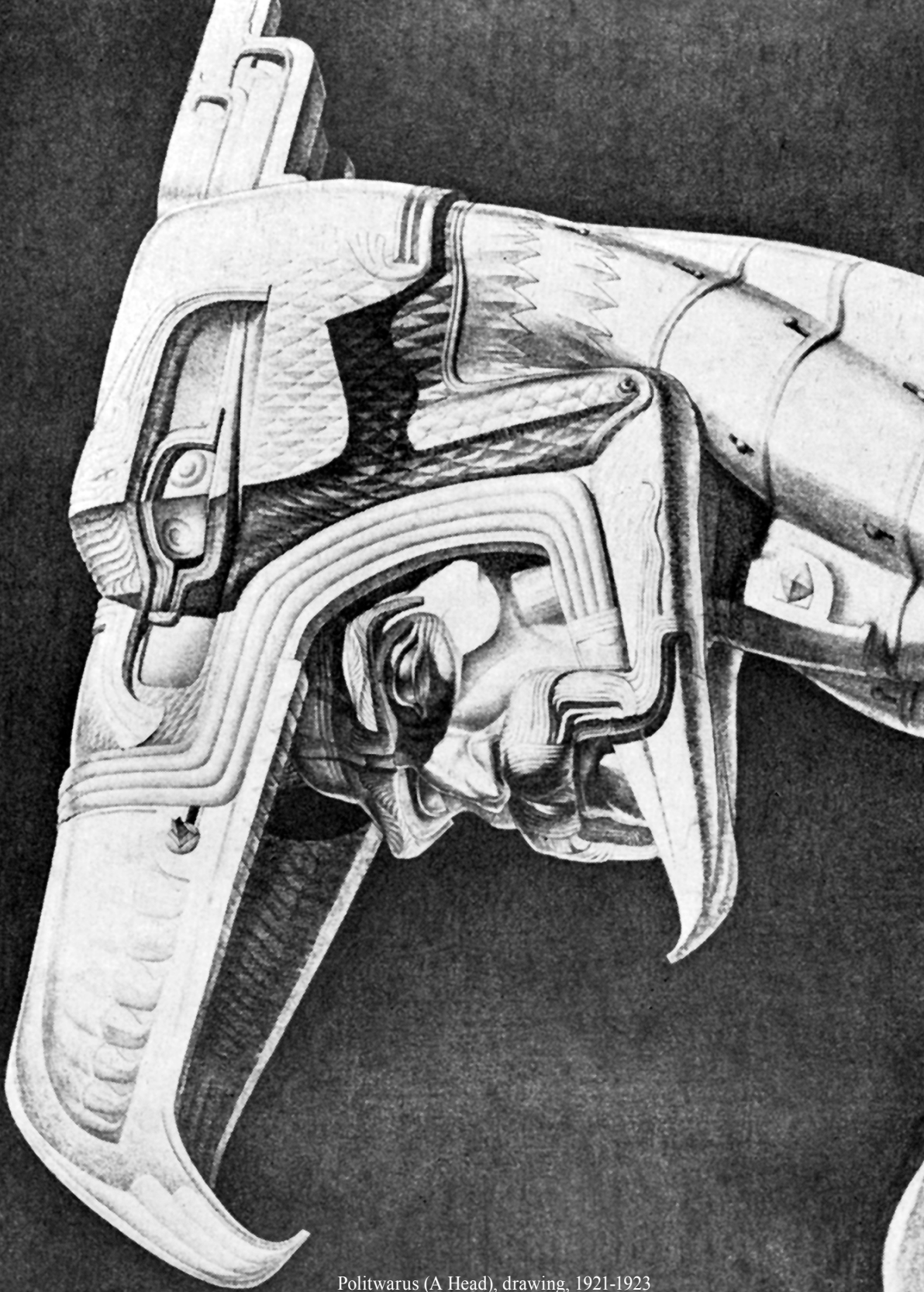
The aporia gives rise to all the contradictions and craziness of Stanisław Szukalski: the mayhem and scandals he caused, the peculiar organisations and societies he founded, his hysterical responses to criticism and mad attacks on critics, his unfeigned fascination

with violence. He provoked in order to be noticed. He wanted to be separate and demanded an unconditional sense of community. He was – in his time – an extremely unconventional artist trying to establish a national convention. He returns today, still dangerous, yet eventually obvious.

Let us get back to the fairy tale. It is still being told so it can tell us something new. The tale tells about the Dragon but also about the city built over the Dragon's Den. The city still stands. It proved surprisingly enduring. Szukalski returned to the project of Duchtynia in 1978, that is almost at the end of his creative path. This time, however, he was not interested in the den and its dark depths. He was thinking of building above it a ship-shaped temple. He wanted it to have a green roof and a bas-relief showing the figure of a goddess-fish. He drew plans for an Arc that would withstand the waves of the Deluge.



Struggle (Between Quality and Quantity), bronze, 1917

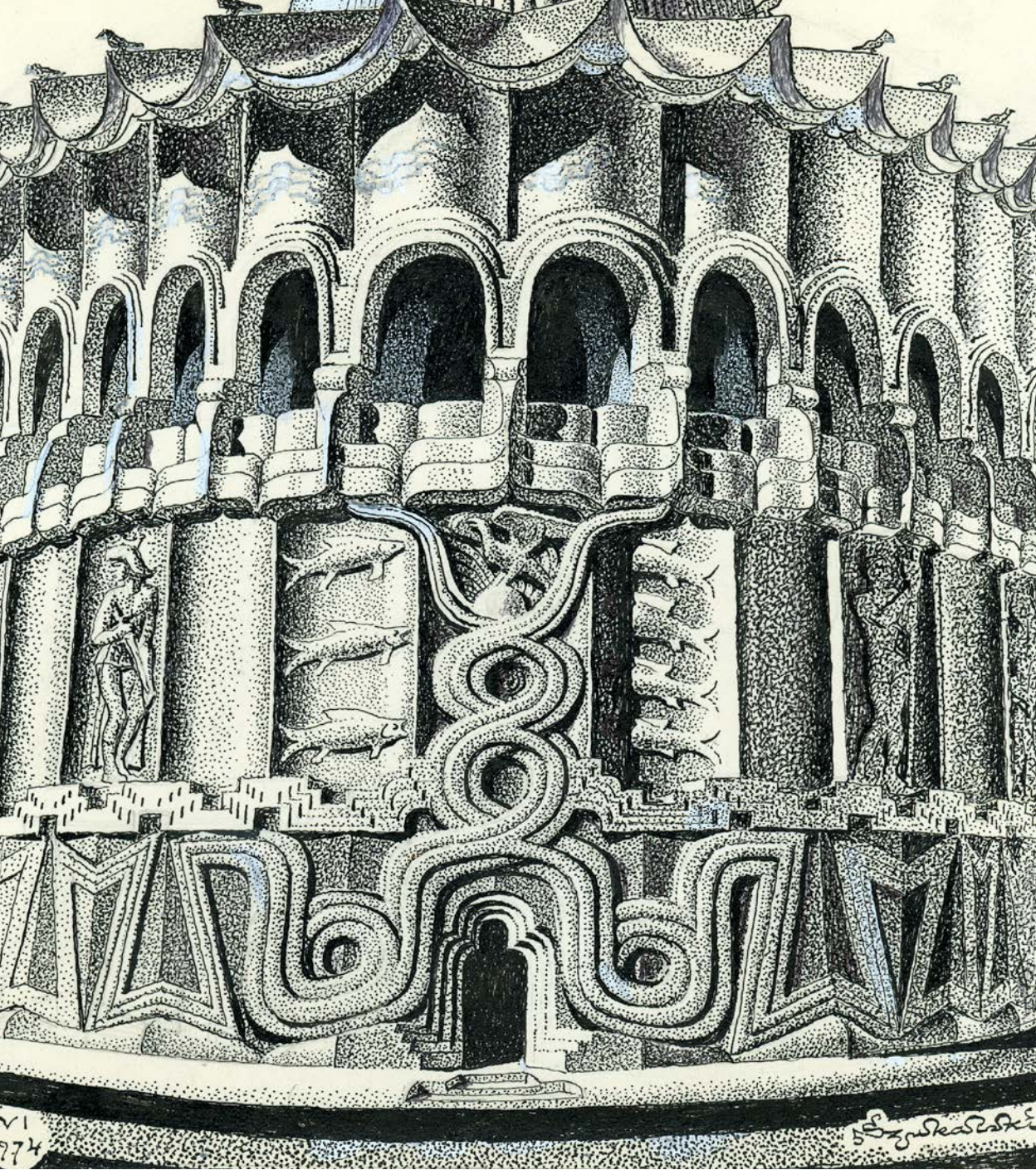


Politwarus (A Head), drawing, 1921-1923









Duchtynia Temple, ink drawing, 1974

André Laks

# ARTICULATING THE *DE MOTU ANIMALIUM*. THE PLACE OF THE TREATISE WITHIN THE CORPUS ARISTOTELICUM

What is the place of Aristotle's *On the movement of animals* (henceforth *MA*) in the *Corpus Aristotelicum*? There are two main entrées to this question. Since the *MA*, admittedly one of Aristotle's latest works, is extremely rich in external references, both explicit and implicit, to his other treatises,<sup>1</sup> one could try analysing these references systematically; the price to pay for such an inquiry, however, would inevitably be a lack of focus. Alternatively, one could ask how the treatise fits into Aristotle's "encyclopedia" of the natural sciences (whose most general scheme we find in the prologue of his *Meteorology*); indeed, this is a very natural question to press, not only because of the treatise's own indications about this, in its last paragraph, but also because of its relationship, both textual and conceptual, with the *De anima* (*de An.*). As I shall suggest, this relationship is crystallized in a difficult sentence occurring in chapter 10 of the *MA*, a sentence which, if my reading of it is correct, also has some bearings on the question of Aristotle's hylomorphism. Thus, asking about

<sup>1</sup> A list of the explicit references is given by I. Düring, *Aristoteles. Darstellung und Interpretation seines Denkens* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 1966), 296, n. 27.



the place of the *MA* in the *Corpus Aristotelicum* will also involve us in what may be Aristotle's ultimate thought about this crucial doctrine.<sup>2</sup>

## 1. PROGRAMMATIC STATEMENTS

Let us start, then, with the indications we get from the ultimate lines of the *MA*. What we learn there is that the treatise was meant, on the one hand, to follow a series of works constituted by *Parts of animals*, *On the soul*, and a group of treatises bearing on sensation, sleep, and memory, and, on the other hand, to be followed by *Generation of animals*.<sup>3</sup> This sequence, which by and large corresponds to the order in which the *MA* has been transmitted in nearly all the medieval manuscripts, raises a series of problems, some of which are easy to deal with, others of which are more difficult.<sup>4</sup> For the present, however, it will be enough to notice that the above-mentioned sequence breaks into two differently ordered segments:

- the segment consisting of *Parts of animals* and *On the soul* is “bottom-up”: we begin with the bodily parts of living beings and end with the principle of the vital functions these parts are the organs of, namely the soul.
- the segment *On the soul*, *Sense and sensibilia*, *On sleep*, *On divination in dreams*, *On memory*, *On the movement of animals*, on the contrary, is “top-down,” beginning from the principle and moving on to two prominent vital functions: on the one hand sensation and other related phenomena, which are the subject of the first four treatises,<sup>5</sup> and on the other hand locomotion, which is considered in the *MA*.<sup>6</sup> This division is of interest, because the pair sensation/movement also has a structuring function in Aristotle's *De anima*, where it provides the organizing principle of the extended doxography in Book I<sup>7</sup> and is then (with a slight variation that need not detain us here)

<sup>2</sup> On the question of (relative) chronology, see *infra*, n. 48.

<sup>3</sup> *περὶ μὲν οὖν τῶν μορίων ἐκάστου τῶν ζώων, καὶ περὶ ψυχῆς, ἔτι δὲ καὶ περὶ αἰσθήσεως καὶ ὕπνου καὶ μνήμης καὶ τῆς κοινῆς κινήσεως, εἰρήκαμεν τὰς αἰτίας· λοιπὸν δὲ περὶ γενέσεως εἰπεῖν* (704a3-b3). The term ὕπνος may perhaps refer not only to sleep proper, but also to connected phenomena, and thus cover *On dreams* and *On divination in sleep*.

<sup>4</sup> Easy: e.g. why are *History of animals* and *On the locomotion of animals* not mentioned? More difficult: e.g. what about the other short treatises belonging to the larger group, which came to be known as *Parva Naturalia*? For a detailed study of the problems involved in the list, see M. Rashed, “Agrégat de parties ou *vinculum substantiale*? Sur une hésitation conceptuelle et textuelle du *corpus aristotélicien*,” in A. Laks and M. Rashed (eds.), *Aristote et le mouvement des animaux: Dix études sur le de Motu Animalium* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2004), 185-202. *HA* and *IA* may be considered as implicitly represented in the list. *IA* is a follow-up of *PA* (cf. the “summary” of *IA* 19, 714b20-23: τὰ μὲν οὖν περὶ τῶν μορίων, τῶν τ' ἄλλων καὶ τῶν περὶ τὴν πορείαν τῶν ζώων καὶ περὶ πᾶσαν τὴν κατὰ τόπον μεταβολήν, τοῦτον ἔχει τὸν τρόπον· τοῦτων δὲ διωρισμένων ἐχόμενόν ἐστι θεωρησάσαι περὶ ψυχῆς); *HA* is presupposed by *PA* (cf. *GA* I 1, 715a9-11), which refers to it at II 1, 646a8-12: ἐκ τίνων μὲν οὖν μορίων καὶ πόσων συνέστηκεν ἕκαστον τῶν ζώων, ἐν ταῖς ἱστορίαις ταῖς περὶ αὐτῶν δεδιήλωται σαφέστερον· δι' ἃς δ' αἰτίας ἕκαστον τοῦτον ἔχει τὸν τρόπον, ἐπισκεπτέον νῦν, χωρισαντάς καθ' αὐτὰ τῶν ἐν ταῖς ἱστορίαις εἰρημένων. *On length and shortness of life*, *On youth, old age, and life* and *On respiration*, on the other hand, cannot be accommodated into the list. *GA* raises specific problems, since it appears to be cut off from *PA*, whereas the introductory lines of the treatise explicitly present it as dealing with further animal parts, in full agreement with the announcement at the end of *PA* 4 (697b27-30).

<sup>5</sup> *PN* 1, according to M. Rashed's designation in “Agrégat de parties ou *vinculum substantiale*? Sur une hésitation conceptuelle et textuelle du *corpus aristotélicien*,” 191.

<sup>6</sup> The last chapter of *MA* also touches upon non-locomotory motions (cf. *infra*, n. 21).

<sup>7</sup> See 2, 403a25-27: “what is animated seems to differ from what is not animated most of all by two features, movement and sensation.”

taken over in a programmatic passage in III 9, where animal soul is “defined” (ὀρίσται) by its two capacities, “critical” and “locomotive.”<sup>8</sup> There is also the crucial passage from III 10 (433b19-26, a passage to which we shall soon return), which retrospectively defines the scope of the *De anima* by contrasting it with that of treatises which bear “on the common achievements of body and soul.” This invites us to regard this sequence of treatises as articulating a program: after *De anima*, which is restricted to an analysis of the soul in its own right, there is a bipartite group of treatises devoted to soul *and* body, one part (*De sensu, De somno et Vigilia, De divinatione per Somnia*) focused on one element of the pair thematized in *De anima* (viz. “sensation” and related phenomena), the other part (*MA*) focused on the other (viz. “movement,” i.e. locomotion).

The suggestion that the “place” of the *MA* is its place in this larger program fits the actual content of the treatise rather well, at a general level. But there are some interesting complications.

A first, minor problem arises from juxtaposing this suggestion with *MA*'s introduction. For, whereas the suggestion is that *MA* is part of an inquiry whose primary focus is on “the common achievements of body and soul,” i.e. on how the soul's functions are implemented from a psycho-physiological point of view, the opening lines of *MA* present it as the continuation of a somewhat different inquiry, viz. as a follow up of previous studies bearing on the *specific* causes of animal locomotion (the main reference is obviously to *On the locomotion of animals*), whose primary focus is on its *common* cause (I, 698a4f.). Here it suffices to point out that the two characterisations of the treatise's primary focus – the movement of animals, now viewed as (i) the joint product of body and soul and as (ii) a phenomenon whose cause may be treated quite generally – may easily be read as alternate descriptions of the same project. Given that animals are hylomorphic entities endowed with body and soul, an inquiry into the common cause of animal movement coincides with an inquiry into how their locomotion depends on the joint working of their soul and of their organic (bodily) parts.

Now, any psycho-physiological explanation will by definition also have to include some psychological considerations. And, as a matter of fact, in addition to taking up (especially in chap. 1, 2, and 8, 702a21 through chap. 10) the (psycho-)physiological questions left aside in *De anima*, the *MA* is not restricted to the (psycho-)physiological level, but also provides an elaborate analysis of the *psychological* factors involved in the explanation of animal movement: Aristotle also deals with perception, intellection (νοῦς), representation (φαντασία) and desire in the *MA* (chap. 6 through 8, 702a21), no less than in *de An.* 3 (chap. 9 through 10, 433b19). Thus, whereas it is in a sense correct to describe the *MA* as *complementing* the *de An.*, it is also the case that the two treatises partly overlap. This does not imply either redundancy or retraction (or doctrinal evolution); rather, psychological considerations are treated in the *MA* from a distinctively psycho-physiological perspective.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> 432a15-17; see also 432b9ff.

<sup>9</sup> This is well brought out in the analysis of the continuous chain of events, starting from the psychological items and ending with the movement of the limbs, as reconstructed by K. Corcilius, *Streben und Bewegen: Aristoteles' Theorie der animalischen Ortsbewegung* (Berlin-New York: De Gruyter, 2008), 330ff. (cf. *infra*, n. 34) and K. Corcilius and P. Gregoric, “Aristotle's model of animal motion,” *Phronesis* 58 (2011), 52-97.

The second, more serious, complication is that the *MA*'s *explicitly* zoological-and-psycho-physiological program is in fact implemented with a view to yet another program, which is broader than that suggested by its place in the sequence of treatises mentioned in its concluding lines. This broader program bears on the relationship between animal locomotion and other types of (mainly local) movement, as well as on the function of immobility in the explanation of movement quite generally.<sup>10</sup> This does not mean that we should not read the treatise as dealing primarily with psycho-physiological or, for that matter, zoological questions. But it does mean that placing it in a series of psycho-physiological works may weaken our sense for the connections, clearly established by Aristotle himself *within* the treatise, between the *MA* and other lines of thought. Indeed, the *MA* actually expands the role of immobility in movement, requiring it not only in the "first" motor of any movement, but also, via the idea of a "joint," as a physiological condition of the material realization of animal locomotion: this "principle of articulation" – viz. that animals must be *articulated* into *joined parts* – plays a prominent role in the *MA* and probably constitutes one of its more brilliant insights. Considered from this angle, the *MA* also has a place in a program whose main elements are *Physics* VIII and *Metaphysics* XII, chap. 6 and 7: part of a theory, in other words, about first movers (not the prime in particular) or, more exactly, how they function. This leads us directly to the question of the unity of the treatise.

## 2. THE UNITY OF THE TREATISE

I take it that the two sections into which the treatise is clearly divided (chap. 1-5 and then 6-10) are best described, again, in terms of bottom-up and top-down: first comes a general description of how limb articulations work in animals (chap. 1-2) and a question about the relevance of this model for the movement of the universe (chap. 3-5, which include some additional side questions); then comes the explanation of how animal movement is properly generated, starting from the psychological components and ending with the movement of the limbs.<sup>11</sup> Thus, whereas the first part does deal specifically with animal movement, it is obvious that the topics discussed in this section extend beyond this particular question. The analysis in chap. 1 and 2 of the role played internally by animal articulation and externally by a supporting element (earth, water, air) in the completion of animal movement (both of which require some kind of relative immobility, that of the supporting part in the joint and that of the external support) leads up, in chap. 3 and 4 (up to 700a11), to a detailed development of the question of whether a crucially important local movement (that of the heavens) needs immobile external support too, which is in turn followed by two sections broaching in a summary way questions about the movement of inanimate bodies such as fire and earth (4, 700a12-25), as well as about the non-local movements of animals such as qualitative change, growth, and generation and corruption (5). One way of reading this sequence – the first to come to mind, in fact – is to assume that chap. 3, 4 and 5 constitute

<sup>10</sup> S. Fazzo ("Sur la composition du traité dit *De motu animalium*: contribution à l'analyse de la théorie aristotélicienne du premier moteur," in A. Laks and M. Rashed (eds.), *Aristote et le mouvement des animaux: Dix études sur le De Motu Animalium*, op. cit., 203-229) has rightly emphasized that the treatise bears on general as well as on animal (regional) kinetics.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *supra*, n. 9.

a digression (a systematic although formally heterogeneous and unbalanced one) which interrupts the inquiry into animal movement initiated in the first two chapters – the latter being then resumed in chapter 6 and pursued until the end of the treatise. But there are other, more interesting, ways to look at the data, all of which suggest that the section about the universe develops a series of puzzles that are at once cosmological *and* zoological and that, considered as such, are integral parts of the treatise and a revealing indication of its proper ambit.

(1) The main consideration is that talking about the universe is not necessarily, from Aristotle's point of view, departing from the subject of animal movement. For the idea that the sky and the celestial bodies are living beings among others is not at all foreign to him.<sup>12</sup> It is true that *MA* does suggest that animals and heavens are two different things, implying that they must be treated on a different footing.<sup>13</sup> However, the fact that there are some obvious differences between “the animals” (in the ordinary sense of the term) and the heavens does not exclude the possibility that the heavens are a living being all the same, and thus an “animal” (ζῷον) in some (non common) sense of the term.

(2) More specifically, one could argue that, although the argument about the universe is not meant to bear *directly* on the movement of animals (in the ordinary sense of “animal”), it is meant to bear on it indirectly, by suggesting that in explaining animal movement too we will need yet another immobile item, beyond those mentioned so far. Moreover, an informed reader would be in a position to infer that this immobile item is the object of desire.<sup>14</sup> For, according to *Metaphysics*, XII 7 (at least as it is traditionally read), the first mover is an object of desire for the heavens. The problem then becomes – assuming that the traditional reading of *Metaphysics* XII 7 is correct<sup>15</sup> – to understand why Aristotle, who later in the treatise virtually says that the question of how the universe is moved has been solved “in his book on first philosophy” (6, 700b6-9), would choose to proceed here in such an allusive and aporetic way.

(3) One can finally argue that, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, the treatise does *bear* on the cause, not just of animal movement, but of movement

<sup>12</sup> See especially *Cael.* II 2, 285a29 and 12, 292a20f., although one could argue that the later comparison of the stars' action to that of animals (*Cael.* II 12, 292b1-25) shows that they belong to two different domains. On this difficult question (which is also a crucial one), see Ch. Rapp, “Aristotle and the Cosmic Game of Dice. A conundrum in *De Caelo* II.12,” *Rhizomata* 2 (2014), 166f. with notes. On Aristotle's overall cautious attitude as to what can be asserted about celestial bodies, see more generally A. Falcon, *Aristotle and the Science of Nature: Unity without Uniformity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 89-97.

<sup>13</sup> The way in which the question of the movement of the whole is introduced at 2, 698b9-12: “not only (...) but also...” shows that the distinction between the two domains is assumed. For further passages implying the distinction between stars and animals in the *MA*, cf. S. Fazzo (“Sur la composition du traité dit *De motu animalium*: contribution à l'analyse de la théorie aristotélicienne du premier moteur,” op. cit., 208 (she mentions 699b32-34; 700a6-8; 700a17-21; 700b11f.; 700b29-32).

<sup>14</sup> This argument is developed by U. Coope and B. Morison in their contributions to the 18th *Symposium Aristotelicum* (forthcoming, see *supra*, n. 1)

<sup>15</sup> It has been questioned in a radical way by E. Berti, most clearly in “The Finality of Aristotle's Unmoved Mover in the *Metaphysics* Book 12, Chapters 7 and 10,” *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition, 10, N°3, 2012, 863-876 (= “La finalità del motore immobile di Aristotele tra *Metaph. Lambda 7e Lambda 10*”, *Humanitas* 46 (2011), 555-567). According to Berti's reading, Aristotle's heavens neither desire nor love the first motor. The object of desire is simply introduced as an *example* of a motor that is immobile. I have expressed doubts about this reading in “Aristotle's Immovable Motors: a sketch,” *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 10 (2015), 1-13.

in general.<sup>16</sup> Now this is certainly true up to a certain point, for the treatise relies on weaving together the question of the common cause of *animal* movement with the general question of the role of *immobility* in the production of movement, an intertwining that (so to speak) materializes in the crucial role devoted, in both parts of the treatise, to the notion of articulation. Indeed, the treatise does sketch the outlines of a possible – and unwritten – treatise about immobility, developing one aspect of the topic, in relation to the question of animal locomotion. Especially telling in this respect are lines 700b4-10, where Aristotle enumerates the points he may presently *skip*, either because, though they do directly concern the topic of immobility, they have been dealt with elsewhere, or because they concern that topic only indirectly and so need not be discussed in the present context. For example, Aristotle claims that the soul’s immobility has been argued for “in the treatise devoted to it [*sc.* the soul],”<sup>17</sup> and that the immobility of the prime mover has been dealt with “before” in the treatises about first philosophy (an obvious reference to chap. 7 of what is our Book XII of the *Metaphysics*).<sup>18</sup> However, these references do not imply that *the proper subject* of the *MA* extends beyond the question of *animal* movement<sup>19</sup> – rather the contrary. The importance given in chapters 3 and 4 to the question of a hypothetical support, whether external or internal, in the case of cosmic movement, is best understood as prompted by the (from Aristotle’s perspective) difficult question of whether or in what sense the heavens are or are not an animal. Seen in this light, what we tend to see as a digression in need of special justification, need not have been apprehended as such by Aristotle.

### 3. RAISING THE QUESTION OF LOCOMOTION IN THE *DE AN.*

Aristotle himself gives us crucial indications about the systematic place of the *MA*, in his *De anima*. In *de An.* III 9, having stated that soul is characterized by the two

<sup>16</sup> This is the view defended by S. Fazzo, “Sur la composition du traité dit *De motu animalium*: contribution à l’analyse de la théorie aristotélicienne du premier moteur”, *op. cit.*; for more precisions, see *infra* n. 19.

<sup>17</sup> This must refer to two passages in *de An.* I (3, 405b31-406b16 and 4, 408a30-b32), which are the only texts – not only in the *de An.*, but in the whole corpus – to deal with this question. In Books II and III, immobility is mentioned only in relationship to the *νοῦς* (cf. III, 9-11 and the occurrences of ἀκίνητος at 432b20 and 433b15).

<sup>18</sup> “Before” (πρότερον) suggests that we are moving within the limits of a relatively homogeneous inquiry; there might be a nuance, in this respect, between “before” and “in other treatises” (cf. 698a9f., where another “before” refers to the general discussion about the principle of movement in *Physics* 8, whereas “in other treatises” (ἐν ἑτέροις) at 698a4 refers to the treatment of specific types of animal locomotion.

<sup>19</sup> S. Fazzo in “Sur la composition du traité dit *De motu animalium*: contribution à l’analyse de la théorie aristotélicienne du premier moteur” recognizes the importance of general kinetics in the *MA*, which leads her to assume (1) that the proem announces a treatise on movement in general, and not specifically on animal movement; (2) that the traditional title *On the movement of animals* is excerpted from the first sentence of the treatise and should not be considered as reflecting Aristotle’s considered intention; and (3) that the treatise as we have it results from the conjunction of two originally independent projects, one of a general nature (corresponding to chapter 1-5), and one specifically bearing on animal movement (from 6 to the end). Point (1) relies on an improbable reading of ὅλως ... ὁποιανοῦν, 698a5; of course, the expression, taken by itself, is general; but the most natural reading of it, taken in its context, is not to take κινεῖσθαι as an impersonal medium (“movement occurs”), but to assume that its subject is taken over from the first sentence, which announces an inquiry on *animals* – a reading which is then confirmed by the following parenthesis; point (3) destroys the continuity between part 1 and part 2, which results from Aristotle’s analysis of articulatory joints. As for point (2), it may well be that the title is not original, but this does not mean that it is not adequate.

capacities of “distinguishing” (τῷ κριτικῷ) and moving (τῷ κινεῖν),<sup>20</sup> he asks whether locomotion depends on a definite part of the soul or on the soul as a whole (432a19-20). Talking about “parts” raises difficulties, because of the implications of the term itself, and because of the great number of parts (“infinite in a way”) it would be necessary to assume, should we stick to the idea that soul possesses parts (432a22-b7). Having implicitly discarded this view, Aristotle restates the question at 432b8: “what is it that moves the animal according to place?” (τί τὸ κινουῦν κατὰ τόπον τὸ ζῷόν ἐστιν;). Dealing with *this* question in the *de An.* apparently needs some justification, however. In what follows, the case of locomotion is contrasted with other types of animal movement – growth and decline, inspiration and expiration, sleep and wake – whose causes Aristotle will *not* be looking into here in the *de An.* (432b8-12). As far as growth and decline are concerned, there is a plausible answer (δόξειεν, 432b10) ready to hand; since these motions belong to all animals, presumably the same is true of their cause, which for that reason is likely to be “the generative and nutritive” (*sc.* function). The case of the other two pairs, inspiration and expiration, sleep and wakefulness, is quite different; about them Aristotle says only that “they too” raise many difficulties, which is his reason for postponing discussing them (ὑστερον ἐπισκεπτέον, 432b12). Now, since this “they too” most probably implies that growth and decline also raise considerable difficulty, even if their dependence on a certain part of the soul is more apparent, presumably we are to understand that growth and decline will also be considered “later” (i.e. “in other treatises”). Thus what Aristotle offers us is in fact the outline of a program, pointing on the one hand to the relevant aspects of *GA*, and on the other to the corresponding treatises of the *Parva Naturalia*, especially *On respiration* and *On sleep*.<sup>21</sup> In any event, there is a contrast between these kinds of movement, which will receive no further attention in the *de An.*, and locomotion, about which Aristotle will say a number of things – the counterpart of what he has said about sensation(s) and sensibles in II 5-12. What is more, from the lines we have been considering, indirect and elliptical though they may be, one can infer that the rationale for the distribution of topics over different treatises is the following. First, by contrast with growth and decline, which is linked to the soul’s nutritive function, there is a question about what might be the *psychic* principle of locomotion; and second, by contrast with respiration and sleep, as well as with growth and decline, all of which raise a number of (psycho-physiological) difficulties and call for specific treatment, locomotion, while also a psycho-physiological phenomenon, can and must be analyzed *at a certain level* independently of the psycho-physiological aspect of the question – which is exactly what happens at III 9, 432b14-10, 433b18. These programmatic indications must be read in conjunction with the later

<sup>20</sup> This takes up, with increased precision, the formulation found at the beginning of the doxography in Book A 2, 403b25-27: animate beings seem to differ from inanimate beings mostly in two respects, namely: movement and perception.

<sup>21</sup> Note, however, that sleep and wakefulness, as well as inspiration and expiration, are also touched upon in the *MA*, whose last chapter deals with non-voluntary movements; and, moreover, that these functions are not presented, in this passage of the *de An.*, *qua* psycho-physiological processes, but rather as kinds of *movement*, on the same footing as locomotion (τῆς κατὰ τόπον κινήσεως, 432b8; τὴν πορευτικὴν κίνησιν, b14) and growth and decline (τὴν ... κατ’ αὔξησιν καὶ φθίσιν κίνησιν, 433b7-9). Thus, it could be that Aristotle is here at least alluding to the *MA* as well, even if he is not properly referring to it.

passage at 10, 433b19-21, where Aristotle defers (sc. *further*) discussion of the cause of locomotion (under the heading “the instrument by means of which desire moves”) to treatises dealing with “achievements (ἔργα) common to body and soul.”

#### 4. DE AN. SUMMARIZES MA (III 10, 433B21-28)

At *de An.* 3.10, 433b13, discussing the role of “the desiderative” (τὸ ὀρεκτικόν) as a moving cause,<sup>22</sup> Aristotle recalls a fundamental principle of his kinetics, according to which every moved object is moved by a mover whose own movement, in cases where it itself is moved, is ultimately caused by an unmoved mover. In general formulations of this principle, Aristotle refers to this intermediate item – the moved mover – as “that by which [sc. the mover] moves” (ὃ κινεῖ); that is, he considers it as the instrument through which the unmoved mover moves the moved object.<sup>23</sup> Here, however, he draws a distinction between moved mover and instrument, no doubt because of the complexities involved in the specific case of animal locomotion. Thus, the usual triad (unmoved mover, moved mover, moved object) is expanded to four terms (433b13-19)<sup>24</sup>:

- 1) First mover (unmoved) = the desired object (here referred to as τὸ πρακτὸν ἄγαθόν)
- 2) Second mover (moved) = the desiderative, the desire (τὸ ὀρεκτικόν, ἢ ὀρεξις)
- 3) Moved object = the animal (τὸ ζῷον)
- 4) Instrument (ὃ ... ὀργάνω) = something bodily (σωματικόν).

Let’s compare this with the quadrapartite scheme that underpins the functionally parallel passage in *MA* 10, 703a4-6. From chap. 8, 702a22 onwards, Aristotle has been engaged in an inquiry about the bodily localization of the principle of movement, and in chap. 9, he has developed an argument to the effect that it must be located in the middle of the animal body (which will eventually be identified with the heart at 10, 703a14). Then, at the beginning of chap.10, in a move which is parallel to that of *de An.* III 10, 433b13, he pursues this: “According to the account that gives the reason for motion, desire is the middle, which imparts movement being moved. But in living bodies there must be some body of this kind” (703a4-6).

Although the mode of presentation differs (it is not enumerative as in the *de An.*), four items are also at stake here: the three implied by the very idea of “a middle,” which occurs in the first sentence, and a fourth referred to explicitly in the second sentence. The underlying scheme thus seems to correspond to that of *de An.*:

- 1) First mover (unmoved) = the desired object (τὸ ὀρεκτόν) (implied)
- 2) Second mover (moved) = desire (ἢ ὀρεξις) (named)
- 3) Moved object = the animal (implied)

<sup>22</sup> Locomotion results from the collaboration between the νοῦς (and the φαντασία), on the one hand, and the ὀρεξις on the other hand. Desire cannot set off movement if νοῦς and φαντασία, which are cognitive capacities, do not provide the necessary information for desire to occur (433a26f).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Phys.* VIII 5, 256b14. For the parallel tripartition at *Metaph.* 12.7, 1072a24 (which is marred by a textual problem), see now S. Fazzo, *Il libro Lambda della Metafisica di Aristotele*, vol. 1 (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 2012), 275-280 and vol. 2 (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 2014), 255ff.

<sup>24</sup> The transition from three to four is noted by Themistius, *In de An.*, 120, 27 Heinze.

- 4) Some body (τί... σῶμα) which is “such” (τοιούτου, *i.e.* according to the most likely and generally accepted interpretation = “which moves being moved”) (named).

The body at stake in the *MA* passage will turn out in the next lines to be the “connate *pneuma*” (σύμφυτον πνεῦμα); it is not described as an *instrument* of desire, but as its bodily counterpart or analogue (if this is a fair way to spell out the vague “such” Aristotle contents himself with). One may wonder whether the absence of the term “instrument” is significant or incidental: that is, whether the “connate *pneuma*” is implicitly considered as an instrument, or whether the absence of the term “instrument” or an equivalent indicates, on the contrary, that the “connate *pneuma*” is not considered by Aristotle as playing an instrumental role.<sup>25</sup> This will have implications for the question of the relationship between this passage and *de An.* III 10. If one assumes (as I do) that the quadripartite schemes of *de An.* and *MA* are indeed related, then the fact that Aristotle names a specific body, and that he underscores the functional similarity between psychic and bodily moved movers, suggests increased precision.

Nevertheless, Aristotle finds it appropriate to say something *within* the *de An.* itself, albeit “summarily” (ἐν κεφαλαίῳ, 433b21), about the psycho-physiology of locomotion. One might wonder why. What I shall in the end (cautiously) suggest is that the analysis of joints developed in the *MA*, to which *de An.* refers, has some important implications for the question of how the soul “itself” contributes to the production of movement – something whose systematic place is indeed the *de An.* (on the same footing as, say, considerations about representation or desire) but could not be said (by contrast with considerations about representation or desire) without anticipating (or referring back) to the *MA*.

Here is the summary<sup>26</sup>:

“As for the instrument which desire (ὄρεξις) uses to produce movement, it is already bodily – hence it must be investigated among the functions (ἔργα) common to body and soul. But to state the matter summarily at present, that which moves as an instrument (τὸ κινουὺν ὀργανικῶς) is to be found where (ὄπου) beginning and end coincide – as in a ball and socket joint (οἶον ὁ γίγγλυμος). For there the convex and the concave sides are respectively an end and a beginning (that is why while the one remains at rest (ἡρεμεῖ), the other is moved): they are different in definition but not separated spatially. For everything is moved by pushing and pulling. Hence just as in a wheel (ἐν κύκλῳ), so here there must be something which remains at rest (μένειν), and from there the movement must originate.”

This passage is cryptic. Since it presents itself as a “summary,” it must certainly be read in the light of the treatise it relates to. As a matter of fact, each of its constitutive sentences, as Jaeger indicated long ago, is echoed in the *MA*.<sup>27</sup> However, while it is true

<sup>25</sup> This is Corcilius’ view, on which see *infra*, 30.

<sup>26</sup> Translation based on the *OCT* (Ross/Barnes) with modifications.

<sup>27</sup> Here is the list given W. Jaeger, “Das Pneuma in Lykein,” *Hermes* 41 (1913): (1) 433b21-22, cf. *MA* 698a16, 698b2, b5; cap. 2 *passim*, 700a12; (2) 433b24-25, cf. *MA* 698a24-b1, 702a30ff.; 702b30-3; (3) 433b25, cf. *MA* 703a19ff.; (4) 433b26, cf. *MA* 698a18ff. (“physiologisch detaillirt”). I have suppressed from this list the mention of chap. 2, which bears on the external support, and that of 700a12, which is inappropriate; moreover, Jaeger takes 433b27ff. to refer to “*MA* 6-8 *passim*” and makes of it a 5th entry; this does not seem to be right: ὅλως μὲν οὖν... at *de An.* 433b27 simply takes up what has been previously established in chap. 9-10, before the question about the instrument of desire.



that the *MA* sheds light on the summary, it is also the case that the relations between the two texts are far from straightforward. Let us try to disentangle the data.

The “summary” in *de An.* III 10 focuses on the idea of articulation or “joint.” Note, however, that the term used here is not *καμπή*, which is Aristotle’s usual word to refer to a “joint,”<sup>28</sup> but *γίγγλυμος* (433b21). The translation of *γίγγλυμος* as “ball and socket joint” clearly takes the term in its anatomical sense. However, *γίγγλυμος* also means the “hinge” of a door.<sup>29</sup> As we shall see shortly, it makes a difference whether Aristotle is giving an *example* of a definite anatomical joint or drawing a *comparison* with a non-anatomical item such as a hinge. What is certain, in any case, is that he is thinking of some kind of articulation, as is clearly shown by the definite description we get of a certain place (*ὄπου*, 433b22), remarkable for its duality, where origin and end coincide and a part of which must remain immobile (*μένειν*, b26) in order that pushing and pulling be possible. This focus on “articulation,” in the summary of the *de An.*, reflects the fact that “articulation” plays a crucial role in the *MA*.

Here are the three main relevant extracts from the *MA*<sup>30</sup>:

### 1. *MA* 1, 698a16-b7

“For there always is, if one of the parts moves, some part at rest; and it is for this reason that animals have joints. For they use their joints like a center, and the whole part containing the joint becomes one and two, straight and bent, changing according to potentiality and actuality [*scil.* from one to the other] because of the joint. And when the part is bending and moving, one of the points in the joint is moved and the other remains at rest, just as if on a diameter point A and point D should remain fixed and B be moved, so as to give AC. But in this case the center appears to be indivisible in every respect (for the motion, as they say, is a fiction they apply to these: for no mathematical entity moves); whereas in the case of joints the center becomes sometimes one, and sometimes is divided, according to potentiality and actuality. In any case, the origin relative to which [*scil.* the movement takes place], *qua* origin, is always at rest when the part below it is moved, as, for example, when the forearm is moved the elbows remains at rest, but when the whole limb is moved, the shoulder. And when the lower leg is moved, the knee, but when the whole leg is moved, the hip. It is obvious, then, that each animal must have within itself too something at rest, which provides the origin of what is moved, and against which it supports itself in order to move both all at once as a whole, and part by part.”

### 2. *MA* 8, 702a21-32

“That which first moves the animal must necessarily be in some origin. But we have said that a joint is the origin for one part and the end for another; this is the reason why nature uses it sometimes as one, sometimes as two. For whenever movement starts from there,

<sup>28</sup> Cf. the passages from the *MA* reproduced below. For further passages on articulation, see also *IA* 3, 705a19-25; 6, 706b18ff.; 9, 708b21-27.

<sup>29</sup> This seems to be the original meaning of the word.

<sup>30</sup> The translation is based on that of Martha Nussbaum, with a number of changes that take into account, among other things, O. Primavesi’s forthcoming edition of the text in the volume mentioned at the end of the present article.

one of the end-points must necessarily remain at rest, and the other be moved – for we have said before that the mover must support itself against something at rest. Accordingly, the extremity of the forearm is moved without imparting movement, while in the elbow-joint there is something which moves and which is moved – that is the whole elbow – while there must also be something unmoved, of which we mean to say that it is in potentiality one point, but becomes two in actuality. So that if the forearm were the animal, somewhere in this joint would be the movement-imparting origin of the soul.”

### 3. *MA* 10, 703a4-16

“According to the account that gives the reason for motion, desire is the middle, which imparts movement while being moved, but in living bodies there must be some body which is such. Now that which is moved but is not of a nature to impart movement is capable of being affected by an external power, but a mover must of necessity have some power and strength. It is clear that all animals have connate *pneuma* and derive their strength from this. How this connate *pneuma* is maintained we have explained elsewhere; but this seems to bear a relation to the psychic origin similar to that which the point in the joints, the one that both imparts movement and is moved, bears to the unmoved.”

Now there is an important question about how exactly these three passages, and especially the third one, relate to the *de An.* summary. The problem stems from the fact that in his summary, Aristotle describes formally, but does not properly identify, the bodily organ or instrument he refers to. Commentators – both ancient and modern – have basically considered two options.

According to a weak or minimalist reading (which I shall call R1), the *de An.* summary tells us only that the instruments by which desire moves the body are joints; and this makes sense, of course, because it fits well the formal description and is also the case; according to a stronger reading (R2), however, the summary tells us that the instrument of desire is, beyond the joints, a bodily part that has or is supposed to have a joint-like structure – this could be either the heart or the “connate *pneuma*.” I shall myself argue, on the basis of the last sentence of text 3 above (703a11-14), which is the sentence whose interest and importance I mentioned at the beginning, that an even stronger reading is possible (R3), according to which the articulation in question is neither simply that between two bones, as in a joint, nor between two bone-analogous parts or items, as in the heart, but between body and soul (R3). A further question will then be whether the crucial sentence is also anticipated or targeted in the *de An.* summary, or not.

R1 represents no doubt the simplest reading of the summary. This is the one which is found, for example, in Hicks’ commentary.<sup>31</sup> According to this reading, the passage only says that the bodily instrument of desire (ὃ δὲ κινεῖ ὀργάνῳ ἢ ὄρεξις) is the joint (namely the complex point where the two parts of a given limb articulate); οἷον, in οἷον ὁ γίγλυμος at line b22, is then taken as meaning “*i.e.*” rather than “like” (as identifying, that

<sup>31</sup> R.D. Hicks, *Aristotle: De Anima* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), 564.

is, rather than comparing) and γίγγλυμος as referring to a specific type of joint, namely a “ball and socket joint.”<sup>32</sup>

One potential problem for this reading is that *if* Aristotle is only thinking here of regular joints, then the passage does not overlap nor indeed connect with the apparently corresponding passage at the beginning of *MA* chap. 10, where Aristotle, having localized the principle of movement “at the center” of the animal, introduces the idea of a bodily counterpart of desire (see above). For there, the item in question is not a joint, but the “connate *pneuma*.” Of course, this creates a problem only if one assumes that there should be such a correspondence between the *de An.* summary and *MA* 10. Now there are two ways one might want to loosen the correspondence, and indeed to deny any direct link between the two passages. First, one could argue that the “summary” refers to “articulation” in general, as represented in texts 1 and 2, rather than to the specific doctrine of *MA* 10 (text 3). Second, one could deny altogether that the two passages should be read together and maintain that the connate *pneuma* in *MA* 10 is simply not the kind of item that *de An.* III 10 targets as the “instrument of desire.”

This last position has been defended by K. Corcilius, according to whom the relation between desire and “connate *pneuma*” in the *MA* is a purely functional one, implying no more than the fact that both are moved motors, or more exactly, putting the accent where required, moved *motors*, which are capable of adding their proper impulse to the movement they receive from the motor they are moved by.<sup>33</sup> This functional similarity is different from, and does not imply in any way, a direct relation, either hylomorphic or otherwise, between desire and the “connate *pneuma*.” These are, rather, two independent factors, each of which has its specific place within the complex causal chain which leads from the initial representation which affects the animal to the eventual movement of its limbs.<sup>34</sup>

This seems to me an improbably weak reading of the first sentence of *MA* 10, which I shall argue against in a moment. But, before doing that, it will be worthwhile to have a look at how ancient commentators handled the *de An.* summary, both because they have been neglected by modern commentators, and also because they provide interesting material for reflecting on the relationship between the two works.

<sup>32</sup> See *supra*, 28.

<sup>33</sup> “Beide sind bewegte Beweger in dem Sinne, dass sie nicht nur Impulse empfangen und weitergeben, sondern über die auf sie wirkenden Bewegungen in dem Sinne hinausgehen, dass sie aufgrund ihrer besonderen Beschaffenheit dem Bewegungsablauf *eigene* Impulse hinzufügen” (K. Corcilius, *Streben und Bewegen: Aristoteles’ Theorie der animalischen Ortsbewegung*, op. cit., 334).

<sup>34</sup> “Die Bewegungen des σύμφυτον πνεῦμα sind Konsequenzen, nicht aber unmittelbare materielle Entsprechungen der Strebung” (K. Corcilius, *Streben und Bewegen: Aristoteles’ Theorie der animalischen Ortsbewegung*, op. cit., 330, 331 and 344, we get the following sequence: Representation accompanied by qualitative change 1 → feeling of pleasure/pain → *Desire* accompanied by qualitative change 2 (thermic modifications: cold/hot) → qualitative modifications 3 (modifications in firmness: hard/supple) around the relevant organic parts → transformation of these latter modifications into mechanical force, thanks to the proper constitution of the σύμφυτον πνεῦμα (modification of volume) → movement of the limb (cf. also K. Corcilius and P. Gregoric, “Aristotle’s model of animal motion,” op. cit.).

## 5. ANCIENT COMMENTATORS ON *DE AN. III 10, 433B21-27*

The three texts are to be found in the commentaries on the *De anima* of Themistius, Simplicius (or Pseudo-Simplicius), and Philoponus (or Pseudo-Philoponus) (I have reproduced the translation of some extracts in the Appendix).<sup>35</sup> Here is an overview of their respective content.

Themistius is the shortest text (and the only one I have reproduced in full). After having repeated, in slightly different terms, Aristotle's abstract description of the "place" where beginning and end coincide, Themistius declares straight away: "such is the place where the heart is; for it is both the beginning and the end of right and left and of up and down, in respect of which animals have movement" (121,7-9). He then mentions that animals, in order to move, need two fixed points, one external, and one internal, "around which they move by pushing forward the right and the left [*scil.* parts] in turn, just as with hinges; for the hinges move around the stable lynch-pin alternately" (121,11-13).<sup>36</sup> The next bit then recalls how locomotion depends on pushing and pulling, but, curiously enough, Themistius does not speak as if this has much – if anything – to do with joints. He is speaking throughout of the location of the heart, as is confirmed by the last sentence of the paraphrase: "So just as in a circle the [*scil.* central] point must be stable and the circumference have the beginning of its movement from that [*scil.* point], so too in an animal something must be stationary at the centre, and the movement of the parts must be both derived from and directed away from it." (121,15-18). (Although Themistius does not say so again here, it is clear that this stationary "center" is the place of the heart.) Thus, Themistius takes the place Aristotle is speaking of in *de An. III 10* to be the place about the heart. And his interpretation, which may be dated to sometime around the mid-4<sup>th</sup> century AD, is of interest because it is the first to reflect a reading of the *de An.* passage that is clearly, if tacitly, developed specifically in the light of *MA 10*, and because Themistius is still largely immune to the influence of Platonic (and Neo-Platonic) readings.<sup>37</sup>

Simplicius (or Ps.-Simplicius), for his part, who explicitly acknowledges that he is reading the summary in *de An.* in the light of the *MA*,<sup>38</sup> mentions (303, 31-33) different organs which fall under Aristotle's description in the *MA* passage, namely (i) the heart, (ii) the "vital *pneuma*" (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ζωτικόν), (iii) "the surface between two opposite parts," and finally (iv) "the life which immanently moulds the form of the animal"

<sup>35</sup> Themistius, 121, 3-18 Heinze; Simplicius, 303, 19-304, 9, Hayduck; Philoponus, 587, 24-589, 26 Hayduck. On the question of authenticity of Simplicius' *In de An. III*, see H.J. Blumenthal, "Alexander of Aphrodisias in the later commentaries on Aristotle's *De anima*," in J. Wiesner (ed.), *Aristoteles: Werk und Wirkung II* (Berlin-New York: De Gruyter, 1987), 90-106 and 93, n. 10 (with further literature); the common view about the commentary attributed to Philoponus is that its author is Stephanus of Byzantium. For a defense of Philoponus' (or one of his pupil) authorship, cf. however P. Lautner, "Philoponus in *De anima III*," *Classical Quarterly*, 42 (1992), 510-522; contra H.J. Blumenthal, *Aristotle and Neoplatonism in Late Antiquity: Interpretations of the De Anima* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 73-90.

<sup>36</sup> Although *περόνη* (*lynch-pin*), like *γύγγλυμος*, also has an anatomical meaning (referring to a bone, mostly the fibula of the leg according to LSJ), Themistius is obviously thinking of a door, to which the physiological mechanism is compared; moreover, the *comparandum* is not a joint, but the joint-like "place where the heart is").

<sup>37</sup> See H.J. Blumenthal, *Aristotle and Neoplatonism in Late Antiquity: Interpretations of the De Anima*, op. cit., 22f. and 56.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. 303, 21-23: "Whether he also speaks of this [*scil.* kind of life] in his treatise *On the Motion of Animals*, be it explicitly or at least implicitly, this must be taken from there."

(ἡ εἰδοποιούσα τὸ ζῶον ἀχωρίστως ζῶῃ). Whereas the last item, which is not bodily, but still instrumental,<sup>39</sup> reflects a distinctively Neo-Platonic interpretation, the first three have good Aristotelian credentials. The phrase “the surface between two opposite parts,” which is clearly meant to be a description of joints, refers to the most common instance of “a place where beginning and end coincide...,” namely to the many joints within the animal body where bodily moved movers transmit movement to further parts of the body. Then comes the interpretation already adopted by Themistius, namely the “heart”; Simplicius also adds *pneuma*, thus making it even clearer that he is reading the passage especially, if not exclusively, in the light of *MA* 10.<sup>40</sup> The difference between Simplicius and Themistius is that whereas Themistius offers a single identification of the “place” in question (“the location of the heart”), assigning the other “places” mentioned in the passage (such as hinges and joints) to the supporting argument, Simplicius retains four possible interpretations or instances, which he assigns to different axiological levels of a Neoplatonic scale extending from “body” to “life.”

Philoponus’ (or Pseudo-Philoponus’) comments, finally, are the longest and also the most structured of the three. He first identifies the instrument with “the *pneuma* which moves from the heart through the nerves (διὰ τῶν νεύρων),” apparently distinguishing it from the “governing” principle (τὸ ἡγεμονικόν) which is said to be in the heart (ἐν καρδίᾳ). He then explains what he clearly takes to be a series of comparisons (each of which is introduced by ἐξεικάζει or παρεικάζει), 1) with a beginning and with an end; 2) with an anatomical joint; 3) with natural and non-natural movement; and eventually 4) with a wheel.<sup>41</sup> The difference between Philoponus and Themistius lies in the increased degree of precision in the identification of the bodily instrument; moreover, Philoponus agrees with Themistius, and differs from Simplicius, in that there is only one answer to the question of what place Aristotle is referring to, not a plurality of possibilities arranged in a hierarchy. What is multiple is not the places referred to, but rather the comparisons invoked to explain fundamental characteristics of a single bodily instrument, the *pneuma*.

One immediate conclusion to be drawn from this brief review is that Greek commentators on the *de An.* read the summary in *de An.* III 10 not only in the light of the *MA* in general, which is only to be expected (and is explicitly acknowledged by Simplicius, as mentioned above), but in the specific light of *MA* 10. That is to say that they went, fundamentally, for what I have called the *strong* reading of the summary (R2), according to which Aristotle does not identify the organ of desire (the “place where...”) with regular joints (or that he does it only at the lowest level, if one takes into account Simplicius’ Neoplatonic hierarchy), but with a bodily organ (or its place) which shares with regular joints a specific feature, viz. that “beginning and end” coincide in it. The question which

<sup>39</sup> Cf. 304, 1f.: “It is more appropriate to understand such a life as the instrument, rather than whatever body.”

<sup>40</sup> Simplicius then goes on discussing whether οἶον ὁ γίγγλυμος, which he clearly takes to be an “image” (εἰκόν), refers to a ring in a chain (which is Plutarchos’ interpretation), or to a hinge (which is Alexander of Aphrodisias’ interpretation). The point is to “disembody” the comparison as much as possible (cf. 304, 36f.: “is it not, as we have said [referring to 304, 7-9] that we should not take the image according to the bodily aspect...?”).

<sup>41</sup> Beginning and end: 588, 1-17; anatomical joints, 588, 17-32; natural movement, 588, 32-589, 9 and non-natural movement, 589, 9-589, 19; wheel, 589, 19-26.

arises at this juncture is, of course, whether there are arguments in favour of this reading, and – should we adopt it – what is in the end the “place” Aristotle is thinking of?

## 6. IS HYLOMORPHISM AT STAKE?

As far as the arguments in favour of a strong interpretation are concerned, it should be admitted that decisive textual evidence is *not* available; the weak interpretation is certainly *possible* – and in this sense, Simplicius' hierarchical scheme, for all its Neoplatonism, includes a reading which gets lost in Themistius' and Philoponus' straightforward identifications. Even if the expression οἷον ὁ γύγγλυμος *had* to be taken in a comparative or metaphorical sense, it would not constitute a decisive argument in favour of the strong interpretation, because Aristotle could simply be saying that a joint functions as a hinge; but we have seen that οἷον ὁ γύγγλυμος may also be taken as simply introducing the example of a specific joint. Thus, reading the summary in the specific light of *MA* 10, that is in the light of Aristotle's *pneumatic* doctrine, rather than in the light of *MA* in general, that is in the light of Aristotle's theory of *joints*, is the result of an interpretive decision. Ancient commentators did not hesitate, as we saw. And the reason for which they did not hesitate is evidently that they took it for granted that the content of Aristotle's *de An.* summary would have to reflect Aristotle's ultimate thoughts about the bodily instrument of desire, and not some intermediate stage of his argument. These ultimate thoughts were to be found in *MA* 10, where Aristotle eventually comes to the bodily location of the psychic principle of animal movement, not in the chapters which lead to it.

In spite of Corcilius' arguments to the contrary, this still seems to me to be the most attractive assumption, as far as the general relationship between the two passages is concerned. Corcilius' main point is to reject the idea according to which Aristotle's talk in the *de An.* of there being an “instrument” of desire (an expression not present in the *MA*, as we have seen) may have something to do not only with the Cartesian question of how soul sets body in motion and with the related idea of a specific bodily organ where the soul directly acts on the body (Descartes' pineal gland), but also with the – undoubtedly Aristotelian – question of hylomorphism.<sup>42</sup> But it seems to me that there is one good reason, in chapter 10, to think that Aristotle is precisely grappling with these questions – both of them, in a sense – namely the one crucial sentence (at 703a11-14) I mentioned right at the beginning of this paper.

Chapter 10 brings *MA*'s main argument to its conclusions. What is at stake here is not any more the intermediary points of transmission provided by ordinary joint articulations in the limbs, but the place where movement originates in the first place, and which is where soul is supposed to be located. At 8, 702a31f., at the beginning of the inquiry about the localization of the principle of movement, Aristotle observed that “if the forearm were the animal, somewhere in this joint would be the movement-imparting

<sup>42</sup> Corcilius wrote to me after the *Symposium*: “Das πνεῦμα wird dort [*i.e.* at *MA* 10] (...) nicht als ὄργανον der ὄρεξις eingeführt – wie wohl diejenigen glauben müssen, die hier eine direkte Referenz zu *de An.* III 10, 433b19f. sehen –, sondern es wird nur eine Analogie zwischen ὄρεξις und πνεῦμα behauptet (...) Ich denke, dass der für moderne Interpreten naheliegende Gedanke, dass es eine Art Zirkeldrüse auch bei Aristoteles geben muss, die „das“ Organ der Strebung ist, die Interpreten dazu verleitet hat, die Analogie in dieser Weise zu interpretieren.” Cf. also K. Corcilius, *Streben und Bewegungen: Aristoteles' Theorie der animalischen Ortsbewegung*, op. cit., 271, n. 35.

origin of the soul.” By the time we have reached chapter 10, we have also reached the place where it all starts. Now what the sentence at 703a11–14 suggests is that Aristotle thinks of this place as being some kind of *articulated point*, on the model of a joint. Its importance is emphasized by the fact that it is contrasted with another question, which concerns the way in which the *σύμφυτον πνεῦμα* is preserved – a question which is not relevant for the present argument and of which Aristotle indicates that it has been dealt with elsewhere.<sup>43</sup> Aristotle’s point in the *MA* is to explain the nature of the relation obtaining between the “connate *pneuma*” and what he calls, in a somewhat underdeterminate way, “the psychic principle” through the following analogy:

“connate <i>pneuma</i> ”	articulatory point, moved and motor
=	
psychic principle	articulatory point, immobile

This is hard stuff. We can begin with a cautionary note, which reflects Aristotle’s own caution: his use of *ἔοικε* at 703b12 indicates, I think, that he is now moving at a somewhat speculative level. But what seems to be unquestionable is that this speculation consists in drawing a comparison between two relations, that of the *pneuma* – which we know is a *bodily* item – to a certain *psychic* item, on the one hand, and that which obtains within a joint between a certain point, which is both moved and motor, and another point, which is immobile. The suggestion clearly seems to be that the psychic item featuring in the first member of the analogy must be immobile, so that it cannot refer to desire (which is a moved mover), but only to soul – soul taken as the (ultimate) principle of movement.<sup>44</sup> Now one important point of Aristotle’s analysis of a joint – not recorded as such in the *de An.* summary, but which features prominently in the first two extracts from the *MA* reproduced above – is that the point of articulation is both one and two, namely one in potentiality, two in actuality.<sup>45</sup> If this is the model for analyzing the relationship between body (in this case, the “connate *pneuma*”) and soul, then it seems that what we have to deal with here is a pretty interesting self-interpretation, on Aristotle’s part, of what an hylomorphic (in this case, hylopsychic) relationship may be.

Without engaging in the question of Aristotle’s hylomorphism as such, it will be useful to recall two of the main models mobilized in the current debate, which I shall call “strong hylopsychism” and “relative hylopsychism.” Strong hylopsychism

<sup>43</sup> There is notoriously no extant work of Aristotle dealing with the subject.

<sup>44</sup> This is (consequently) denied by Corcilius, who goes for a deflationary interpretation of the analogy which makes of it a further expression – an illustrative one, so to speak – of the thinnest possible relation between desire and *pneuma*, that which has already been referred to by the word “such” (τοιοῦτον). Taking things upside-down (or so it seems to me), Corcilius assumes that the psychic principle, for Aristotle, is desire; and since he also assumes (rightly so) that desire is *not* an immobile item (for it is a *moved* mover), he concludes that the point of the analogy cannot be the way in which a moved mover such as the “connate *pneuma*” relates to an immobile item. Rather, the relation that holds true for the two pair of items would be that both the “connate *pneuma*” and the moved-and-mover point “are simultaneously end-point of one movement and starting point of another movement” (K. Corcilius, *Streben und Bewegen: Aristoteles’ Theorie der animalischen Ortsbewegung*, op. cit., 336: “beide sind bewegte Bewegter, die zugleich Endpunkt der einen und Ausgangspunkt der anderen Bewegung sind”).

<sup>45</sup> Cf. the texts quoted *supra*, 28f.

has been carefully described (and attributed to Aristotle) by D. Charles in his 2009 article “Aristotle’s psychological theory.” It relies on the idea of the conceptual (and not only factual) “inextricability” of the two sides of the hylopsychic entity, on the general hylomorphic model of “snubness.” According to this model, which relies primarily on an analysis of *de An.* I 1 (403a29-b19), the correct definition of anger (which serves as a paradigm of all psychic affections, and more generally of all psychic functions such as sensation or desire), is that anger is neither “a desire for revenge” *vel sim.*, nor “the ebullition of blood and warmth around the heart,” but “a-desire-of-revenge-such-as-it-realizes-itself-in-the-ebullition-of-pericardiac-blood,” in one word.<sup>46</sup> In the same fashion, desire would have to be defined according to the *MA* as “a boiling-of-the-blood- type of grasping that something is to be done.”<sup>47</sup> One can then call “relative hylopsychism” a somewhat weaker version of hylomorphism, which maintains a real distinction between the psychic form and the body which, in virtue of the very fact that it functions as its instrument, is at least conceptually distinct from it. This is the position defended by S. Menn in his 2002 “Aristotle’s definition of soul and the programme of the *De anima*,” where the psychic form is identified with the “art,” τέχνη – which is, as a matter of fact, an immobile entity.<sup>48</sup>

There is no need to think that Aristotle ever *chose* between these two models – if they indeed are two distinct models and not just two perspectives on the same hylemorphic view<sup>49</sup> – for some passages favour the first option, others the second one. But it seems to me that one interesting feature of the articulatory analogy, put forward in the *MA*, is precisely that it mediates between these two options. For if what is two in actuality is one in potentiality, then it is both one and two. This leads to the question of how to construe the relationship between potentiality and actuality on both sides of the analogy – a question that exceeds the limits of this contribution.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>46</sup> D. Charles, “Aristotle’s psychological theory,” *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, 25 (2009), 1-29, here 2-3.

<sup>47</sup> D. Charles, “Desire in Action: Aristotle’s Move,” in M. Pakaluk and G. Pearson (eds.), *Moral Psychology and Human Action in Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2011), 75-93, here 90 (and more generally on strong hylemorphism in the *MA*, 84-92).

<sup>48</sup> S. Menn, “Aristotle’s definition of soul and the programme of the *De anima*,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 22 (2002), 83-10. Not surprisingly, these two views of hylomorphism have been attributed to two different stages of Aristotle’s psychology. W.D. Ross, “The Development of Aristotle’s Thought,” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 43, 63-78, here 65, following F. Nuyens, *L’Évolution de la Psychologie d’Aristote* (Louvain: Éditions de l’Institut supérieur de philosophie, 1948), 160f. and 240, thought that the instrumental scheme represented by the *MA*, had preceded integral hylomorphism, which was supposed to be *de An.* considered doctrine. I. Block’s article “The Order of Aristotle’s Psychological Writings,” *American Journal of Philology* 82, 50-77, has been influential in rejecting this view (cf. in particular C. Kahn, “Sensation and Consciousness in Aristotle’s Psychology,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 48 (1966), 43-81).

<sup>49</sup> As is argued by D. Charles, “Desire in Action: Aristotle’s Move,” *op. cit.*, 91f.

<sup>50</sup> This question was raised under different forms by participants on the three occasions I presented, after the *Symposium Aristotelicum*, earlier versions of this text – at the University of Notre Dame (2012), at Toronto University (2013) and at Trinity College, Dublin (2014). Many thanks to all my audiences, especially, among the participants of the Symposium, to K. Corcilius and D. Charles for various bits of information they have provided me with; to S. Fazzo for her many insights and stimulating criticisms; to C. Rapp, who made me useful suggestions on the penultimate draft. My special thanks go to Robert Howton, graduate student at Toronto, for his interest and sharp written comments; and to Sean Kelsey, who very kindly accepted to revise the language of the final text and offered me very valuable comments on this occasion.



**APPENDIX: ANCIENTS COMMENTARIES ON ARISTOTLE'S *DE AN.* III 10, 433B21-28**

Themistius, *In de An.*, 121,3-18 Heinze

...for now it must be stated just summarily that the organ that desire uses to cause movement in respect of place must be located in a part of the body where beginning and end could be the same, these being distinct in definition, but inseparable in extension. The location of the heart is like this: for it is both the beginning and the end of the right and left and of up and down, in respect of which animals have movement. For in order to move an animal needs two things that are stationary and at rest: one on the outside, the resistance of which permits that it moves, the other on the inside, around which it moves by pushing forward the right and the left [*scil.* parts] in turn, just as with hinges; for the hinges move around the stable linch-pin alternately. For all animals move by pushing and pulling, for it is by expanding and compressing the right and the left [*scil.* parts] in turn that they move forward; and this is the pushing and the pulling. So just as in a circle the [*scil.* central] point must be stable and the circumference have the beginning of its movement from that [*scil.* point], so too in an animal something must be stationary at the centre, and the movement of the parts must be both derived and directed away from from it.<sup>51</sup>

Simplicius, *In de An.*, 303,19-304, 9 Hayduck

As is said, there is also some bodily part that obviously moves in an instrumental way. But now Aristotle wants the life that characterizes the instrument as instrument to be “that which moves instrumentally,” which, as he will say, both remains still and is moved. Whether he also speaks of this [*scil.* kind of life] in his treatise *On the Motion of Animals*, be it explicitly or at least implicitly, this must be taken from there. He seems at any rate to discuss the subject also there, for “now,” he says, we have to discuss “in a summary way,” that means in a synoptic way, what is said at greater length in that work. And by “that which moves instrumentally” he clearly means that which, on the one hand, comes *after* desire – for desire does not move as an instrument, but causes itself primarily movement, because, though being awakened by the desirable object, it is from itself borne towards the desirable object, and what serves as an instrument comes after what primarily moves – and, on the other hand, it comes *before* that which is [only] moved, since it is not only moved but is also moving. Of such a kind is what moves as an instrument, it is moved by whatever is the primary mover, it moves what is only moved. Let there be, then, as was said, also some bodily part of that kind, such as the heart, such as the vital spirit (*pneuma*), such as the surface between opposite parts! But there is also the life that specifies the living being inseparably, characterizing it as something moved. Of this life too it must be said that it moves the living being, because the body is moved *according* to this life, though not *by* it, and that it is itself moved by the primary mover, inseparably from the thing moved; this life is as the form of that which is moved and is rather moved *per accidens* than *per se*. For what is *per se* moved is always a body. And it is more proper to understand this type of life as that which serves as instrument than any sort of body. For it is impossible for a body to be with the same part wholly beginning and end – yet Aristotle put this

<sup>51</sup> Translation based on R.B. Todd in Themistius, *On Aristotle's "On the Soul"* (London: Duckworth, 1996), 147f.

clearly forward, as he wanted the same thing, namely that by which [desire] moves, to be both beginning and end – but the life with which [the body] is endowed is wholly as a whole moving the living being, being that principle of movement “according to which” [something is moved], not “by which” [it is moved], and being moved *per accidens* as the formal cause of the moved body. And Aristotle takes the hinge as an image of something that is somehow as a whole wholly in movement and at rest. For the hinge is not taken as a body, but as surface.<sup>52</sup>

Philoponus, *In de An.*, 587, 24-588, 1 Hayduck

He calls “instrumental” the *pneuma* moving from the heart through the sinews. For Aristotle thinks that the ruling part is in the heart. And he calls this instrumental thing both “that by which it is changed,” because it is by the *pneuma* itself that the body is changed, and also he sometimes calls it “that with which it changes,” that is with the *pneuma* the soul changes the body. These are the things that contribute to change. And he starts his teaching with the instrumental in order to preserve the continuity of the discussion, and likens it to a beginning and an end, to a joint, to change in accordance with nature, to change contrary to nature [both of] which he brings under pushing and pulling; and he also likens it to a circle. And we can state the reason why he does this in every case...<sup>53</sup>

This article should eventually also appear (with minor editorial differences) in a volume edited by O. Primavesi and C. Rapp that collects the contributions of the 18. *Symposium Aristotelicum*, which took place in Munich back in July 2011.

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<sup>52</sup> Translation C. Steel in collaboration with A. Ritups, in Simplicius, *On Aristotle's "On the Soul" 3.6-13* (London: Duckworth, 2013), 113

<sup>53</sup> Translation W.C. Charlton in Philoponus', *On Aristotle's "On the Soul" 3.9-13* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), 39f.

# UNHEARD-OF FRIENDSHIP: ON ARISTOTLE

Friendship is a mostly forgotten word in contemporary philosophical reflection, notably in political thought. The phenomena (in the plural) it designates have lost their relevance outside the sphere of individual experience and strictly contingent affairs. For us, late heirs of modern dichotomies sanctioning the separation of the public from the private, politics from ethics, policy from affect, the oblivion of friendship is a matter of obviousness – to the point of being itself forgotten.

To be sure, friendship plays a crucial role in Carl Schmitt's theory of the political. Yet, despite his claim to the ancient Greek ancestry of his thinking, his interpretation of friendship retains little or nothing of the features attributed to it in Plato's or Aristotle's seminal meditation.<sup>1</sup> In Schmitt's hands friendship, confined within the logic of the friend/enemy opposition and subjected to the priority of originary enmity, takes on an ancillary function. It is reduced to a merely negative defensive strategy, a call to unity against the common antagonist. Its defining motivation is self-preservation. Thus would the political be constituted.

Schmitt's reading of ancient philosophical categories, corroborated by a well attested interpretive tradition, is echoed and thoroughly deployed in Derrida's *Politiques de l'amitié*, although for altogether different reasons and aims.<sup>2</sup> Derrida brings friendship back into the scope of philosophical investigation, yet in order to insist on its impossibility ("O friends, there is no friend"). Friendship, *φιλία*, would be suspiciously implicated in the logic of the privileged few, of fraternity, of blood ties as a cipher of sameness (family, clan, identity, against the foreign, the discrepant, the other). *Φιλία* would, from the start, share the phallogocentric prerogatives of *φιλοσοφία* – with the political consequences to be expected.

Derrida's vocabulary has, in turn, become ubiquitous in many philosophical and political debates, well beyond the field of specialized analyses of his work. The attribution of logo- or anthropocentrism to the Western tradition, including the Greek inception, has become a habitual posture in a broad range of debates (particularly, albeit not exclusively, in the Anglo-American world). The growing concern with forms of life other than human

<sup>1</sup> I have highlighted in various contexts the willful distortion that the ancient discourse on friendship undergoes in Schmitt's treatment. I limit myself to mentioning *Amicitia* (Milano: Mursia, 1916), 162-168 and *L'architettura dell'umano. Aristotele e l'etica come filosofia prima* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2014), 340-341.

<sup>2</sup> J. Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié* (Paris: Galilée, 1994).

(leading to the thematization of animality, of plant life, even things inanimate); discourses on gender, race, and social justice; de-colonial and post-colonial thought, along with various critiques of humanism and turns to the post-human – all display the common trait of an increasingly uneasy relation to the past, above all to the Greeks: too “classical,” celebrated to the point of empty rhetoric, too male, too white, too racist, too elitist, embarrassingly incorrect. Thus, whether along the lines of modernity or according to post-modern, anti-modern critiques, in a way the treatment of antiquity remains the same. It involves the assimilation of ancient to modern philosophy, and hence a simplifying as well as deeply troubling unification of the Western tradition (as if it were one and seamless).

But announced in all this may be the foreignness, remoteness, radical alterity of the Greek “moment” (it certainly was no absolute beginning). With concomitant discomfort.

Perhaps the ancient world abides mysterious, closed off to us – mute, as Pierre Aubenque observed, recalling a saying reported by Pico della Mirandola (*Sine Thoma mutus esset Aristoteles*).<sup>3</sup> The saying refers to Aristotle, yet Aubenque’s remarks may well be understood in their broad systematic significance. The commentary tradition, he says, “worryes more about his [Aristotle’s] declarations than about his silences (...). The more Aristotle’s silence deepens, all the more the commentator’s word abounds; it does not comment on the silence but rather replaces it; it does not come to terms with incompleteness but rather completes it; it does not elaborate on the unease but resolves it, or believes to be doing so (...).”<sup>4</sup> Perhaps, then, it might be a matter of unlearning Aristotle, ancient Greek thought at large; of subtracting from the edifice of traditional transmission and conceptual systematization; of emphasizing the impasses, the difficulties, the problems in such investigations. After all, major instances of reticence (or inevitable silences) haunt Greek philosophy. Think of the hyperbole of the good in Plato: the good constitutes the alpha and omega of Platonic thinking, yet its “fugitive” secret remains consistently undisclosed from *Republic* to *Philebus* and beyond. Or consider the astounding reserve of Aristotle’s *voûς*, inarticulate, unmediated, without *λόγος*, yet the locus of clarity and determinacy.

It might be a matter, then, of unlearning “the tradition” (if there is such a thing). Of staying with its silences. At the same time, in the wake of such an experience of the limits and strains of *λόγος*, the task at hand might demand no less the exercise and refinement of the capacity for hearing. In a deep hearing that is also a deep reading, at stake may be learning to hear the heretofore unheard-of, to hear otherwise, anew. In the Greek “moment,” without any nostalgia or commemorative certainty, we might find unsuspected resources for a critique of modernity, for encountering many of the current ecological preoccupations that point beyond the human and its centrality, for a rigorous (if unsettling) conceptual, categorial, and semantic reconfiguration. To recall, in the barest outline, a few of such especially resourceful *τόποι*, often finding in Aristotle epigrammatic formulations: the understanding of the human as “political by nature” and its implicit prescription to think the political (not this or that policy, this or that constitution, but the *necessary fact*

<sup>3</sup> P. Aubenque, *Le problème de l’être chez Aristote. Essai sur la problématique aristotélicienne* (Paris: PUF, 1962), 1 and 506. My translation.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

of politics) in terms of natural inscription, as a natural assignment, yet without naturally given guidelines (the relation of politics to nature should be thought through anew, beyond the constructivist and natural law alternatives);<sup>5</sup> the definition of the human as ζῶον λόγον ἔχον, mandating a serious reflection on λόγος as possessed by the animal, hence properly inhering in the living, in ζωή, and not vice versa;<sup>6</sup> Aristotle's elaboration of σοφία, entailing a discipline of the gaze and not the abandonment of the sensuous and phenomenal, intimating the marginality of the human within the altogether other-than-human cosmos and delineating the human in its utmost accomplishment precisely when it overflows itself, when it opens up in a receptiveness to that which proves excessive (nature, the divine), when it positions itself in such an irreducibility;<sup>7</sup> again, Aristotle's characterization of νοῦς in its uncanny suddenness and extraneousness, haunting animal psychism from outside (θύραθεν).<sup>8</sup> Not to mention Platonic and neo-Platonic visions of the unity of life, of the cosmic animal, of the immense (immensely complex and vibrantly alive) cosmic architecture and, within it, the ongoing ventures of mortal life, shifting and changing, each finite form flowing into every other. These are all variations, at once incisive, precise, and rapturous, on the theme of community and communal bonds; on the connections that draw together even the radically different and recalcitrant; on the harmonized cohesion of the whole, one of whose names is friendship.<sup>9</sup>

We are, thus, returned to the initial theme. The following reflections, admittedly rhapsodic and incomplete, focus on friendship in its political valence and eventually in its natural or cosmic transposition. After a brief proslusion, I examine a few key moments (7 propositions) in Aristotle's discussion on friendship, setting into relief the sentient body no less than the rational prerogatives of the human, ζωή no less than βίος, φύσις no less than πόλις.

## I. FRIENDSHIP

Aristotle's ethical reflection in its entirety, or nearly so, hinges on the quest for measure – not so much measure statically or mathematically understood, but rather as the systematic exercise of balance in encountering circumstances ever changing, unpredictable, incalculable. The cultivation of excellence and, ultimately, the accomplishment of life as such, demand that the fluctuating world we inhabit be reckoned with and that one learn to navigate its turbulent waters, each time anew. The emphasis on the middle is not simply a celebration of the elegance of composure, but crucially exposes the one-sidedness of

<sup>5</sup> Ἄνθρωπος ας φύσει ζῶον πολιτικὸν (Aristotle, *Politics* 1253a3), or φύσει πολιτικὸν (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1097b13).

<sup>6</sup> Aristotle, *Politics* 1253a10, 1332b5.

<sup>7</sup> “And if one were to say that the human being is the best of the animals, this too would make no difference; for there are also other things much more divine in [their] nature than the human being, like the most visible objects (φανερῶτατα) of which the cosmos is composed. From what has been said, then, it is clear that wisdom is scientific knowledge and intuition of the objects which are most honorable by [their] nature. It is in view of this that Anaxagoras and Thales and others like them, who are seen to ignore what is conducive to themselves, are called wise but not prudent; and they are said to have understanding of things which are extraordinary and wondrous and difficult to know and daimonic but which are not instrumental for other things, for they do not seek human goods” (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1141a35-b 8). Here and throughout the present essay, all translations from Greek are mine.

<sup>8</sup> *De generatione animalium* 736b28, 744b22.

<sup>9</sup> *Timaeus* 32c.

extremes, the limited view they afford, the ensuing perils, the diminution of existence they involve. Yet, after developing an analytic of the human phenomenon calling for the exercise of measure in its constant variation, Aristotle abandons this concern and turns to what he considers the crowning achievement in life: friendship. And friendship is an excess.<sup>10</sup> It involves risks. It demands trust. Yet, it is in the experience of friendship that individual and collective life flourishes. A uniquely lengthy discussion in the ethico-political treatises is devoted to friendship. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* alone, two of the ten treatises, Theta and Iota, address this theme.

Aristotle's discussion is ambitious, unparalleled in scope and phenomenological subtlety. It considers friendship between or among different kinds of individuals, within different teleological horizons, friendship in relation to justice and in its political valence, and even friendship as the bond that exceeds the human community and brings together the manifold of humans and gods within the compass of nature.<sup>11</sup>

After Aristotle, friendship will never enjoy a comparable relevance, nor will it be seized in its all-encompassing implications. This alone would warrant the acknowledgment of a dramatic caesura between the ancient, even Hellenistic, experience and later ages.

Two remarkable texts on friendship appear towards the end of the XVI c., by Michel de Montaigne (1580)<sup>12</sup> and Francis Bacon (1597). Afterwards friendship becomes an increasingly unlikely subject of philosophical reflection. Enter Thomas Hobbes, and a new anthropological paradigm is affirmed: the human being would be in essence solitary, dangerous, ferocious, and community would be sustainable only by forcibly deterring such a beast – by a social contract. This is not altogether unprecedented: Plautus reports the ancient saying according to which *lupus est homo homini*.<sup>13</sup> Plato himself is aware of this possible interpretation of the human, but undertakes to call into question its underlying assumptions and alleged self-evidence.<sup>14</sup> Even Francis Bacon, despite his characteristic restraint, considers the incapacity for friendship an aberration: “whosoever in the frame of his nature and affections, is unfit for friendship, he taketh it of the beast, and not from humanity,” he writes. For such a being that lives in “mere and miserable solitude, “the world is but a wilderness.” This is so far from anything human that, Bacon concludes, those who have no friends “to open themselves unto are cannibals of their own hearts.”<sup>15</sup>

However, that which Bacon describes as an aberration, is precisely what Hobbes heralds as the human phenomenon as such, in its normality.<sup>16</sup> The critical fortune of this conception of human nature has been immense, evidently corresponding to deep-seated experiences, convictions, and disenchantments. It has become so influential as to appear obvious, and hence to disappear as a questionable issue. This is still Freud's perspective: the institution of community requires the renunciation of drives at the individual level;

<sup>10</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics* 1158a12, 1166b1.

<sup>11</sup> For instance *Nicomachean Ethics* 1159b27-1160a28.

<sup>12</sup> M. de Montaigne, “De l'amitié,” *Les essays* 1.28. The essay will be published again posthumously, with the addition of Montaigne's manuscript notes, in 1595.

<sup>13</sup> Plautus, *Asinaria* II.IV.495.

<sup>14</sup> Plato, *Republic* 358e-359b.

<sup>15</sup> F. Bacon, “Of Friendship,” *Essays* XXVII.

<sup>16</sup> Th. Hobbes, *De cive* (1642), *Leviathan* (1651).

far from flourishing in communion with others, far from finding in community its own condition of possibility, individual freedom is severely diminished by the presence of others; egoism, self-interest, the motivation of personal advantage are set into relief, making the pain and frustration of individual sacrifice keenly felt. These are also the premises of liberalism, epitomized by the myth of the individual severed from the environment out of which (and thanks to which) it came to be – as if it would not owe anything to anyone and, therefore, experience collectivity as a barely tolerated restriction.

Not even Rousseau constitutes an effective exception here. Much as he posits the human being in its spontaneous and uncorrupted goodness, capacity for empathy, and mildness,<sup>17</sup> in modernity the loving bond loses its public and political significance altogether. The intertwining of public and private, of ethical and political concerns, is itself lost. In modernity friendship is confined to the sphere of private and contingent matters and deprived of its far-reaching relevance. The mystery of amorous and erotic chemistry is likewise marginalized, partly confined within the institution of the family and partly (as Nietzsche observes) codified in the most unapproachable, unattainable idealization.<sup>18</sup> In the public space and in civil coexistence, the orienting paradigms are not those arising from the concrete experience of friendship or love, but instead those of brotherhood, Christian-inflected equality, and ultimately universal human rights. The moral law (Locke, Kant) is the seal of this progressive abstraction.

The dichotomy of egoistic interests and ascetic altruism promotes an understanding of the human as predatory by nature, and hence as a citizen by culture, by taming, or by imposition – never by choice and intimate correspondence. The discontent of civilization (the unease in culture, *das Unbehagen in der Kultur*, diagnosed by Freud) involves precisely this vision of an essentially repressive community, constitutively requiring the sacrifice of individual freedom. In such a scenario, the bestial nature of the human being can only be restrained, covered over, consigned to denial. It has been observed, for instance by H. Marcuse, that absolutizing the shape reached by European/Western humanity in the XX c., turning it into a trans-historical and trans-cultural constant, leaves no room for recognizing the human being as inscribed in an organic whole, inter-dependent and plural in its essence. It likewise forecloses further exploration of human possibility.<sup>19</sup>

A turn to other cultures, or even only to “our” predecessors (whatever “we” might mean here), may reveal an experience of the *ἄνθρωπος* entailing neither contradiction nor incompatibility between my interest and that of others, between selfishness and altruism. For the human being thus situated, relatedness in the friendly mode is a place in which individual self-realization does not undermine anyone else’s self-realization, but rather intensifies it in a solidarity making the whole cohesive and the bond strong. And it is here, in this concrete, lived, singular experience, that the development of a broader outlook (of a universal, if you will) is rooted.

Universality is not a Christian, let alone modern, invention; the ancients know well the perspective *καθόλου*, “according to the whole.” However, *καθόλου* indicates that

<sup>17</sup> Paradigmatically in *Discours sur l’origine et les fondements de l’inégalité parmi les hommes* (1755).

<sup>18</sup> F. Nietzsche, *Daybreak* 503.

<sup>19</sup> H. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955; 1966).

the universal is not attained by abstraction, by way of separation from the manifold of heterogeneous, ever-differing phenomena, and hence by a distancing that homogenizes. Rather, the universal as “according to the whole” comes to be in a broadening of the horizon – in a way of looking that, becoming more comprehensive, contemplates the single irreducible phenomena and, at once, their interconnectedness, their overall composition. In this sense, universality surfaces out of experience, maintaining its roots in concrete vicissitudes, always mutable, yet also seized in their belonging together. Thus, it becomes possible to understand relationship, being together and communing, not as a stricture for the individual, but as a resource. In this light, speaking of the individual no longer leads to the posture of modern individualism. Indeed, the latter is exposed as dangerously delusional: while pretending to exalt autonomy, it splits; while allegedly freeing, it fosters insularity and fragility.

In the following section, by reference to Aristotle, I will test the foregoing hypotheses, attempting to show that, thus understood, friendship offers unexpected resources for the overcoming of the bifurcation of egoism and altruism. It intimates that being together is not a condition to bear resentfully, by contract, with resignation, but rather a pleasure, and an augmented possibility of self-realization. Rather than a limit to my freedom as an individual, the others (“we”) constitute the condition for the possibility of my being – of my being who I am, this very being that I am.

## II. SEVEN ARISTOTELIAN PROPOSITIONS ON FRIENDSHIP

### 1. *Friendship favors (human) becoming.*

Friends help the young in guarding them from error, and they help the old who, because of their weakness, need care and additional support for their actions, and they help those in their prime of life to do beautiful actions, as in the saying: “And the two are coming together,” for with friends human beings are more able (*δυνατώτεροι*) to think (*νοῆσαι*) and to act (*πραῖξαι*). (1155a13-16)

The closeness of friends provides support in every aspect of life, in all manner of action or practice, including the practice of thinking. In other words, through friendship human beings are “more able” to be human, for being human is precisely this – thinking and acting. They may more fully be who they are, become according to their potential. In this sense, friendship is elating, empowering, liberating the possible. Friendship provides the condition and conducive context for the explication of human *δύναμις*, indeed, for the unfolding of life as such. It is “most necessary to life (*τὸν βίον*),” and because of this “no one would choose to live (*ζῆν*) without friends, even if having all the other goods” (1155a4-6).

This bond is irreducible to convention and cultural construct. It regards human beings qua human beings, well beyond strategic estimates, self-interest, and advantage. It is an inclination to tenderness and solidarity welling up from the depths of natural motility, just like the mutual affection drawing “parent towards offspring,” and “not only among



humans but also among birds and most animals; and the same is shown among those of the same kind towards one another, and especially among humans, in view of which we praise those who are friends of the human (τούς φιλανθρώπους)” (1155a17-21).<sup>20</sup>

## 2. *Friendship and justice are essentially connected.*

In travels (ἐν ταῖς πλάναις), too, one may observe how close (οἰκεῖον) and dear (φίλον) every human being is to another human being. Friendship seems to hold a πόλις together (συνέχειν), too, and lawgivers seem to pay more attention to friendship than to justice; for concord (ὁμόνοια) seems akin (ὁμοίον ... ἔοικεν) to friendship, and this they aim at most of all and try their utmost to drive out faction, which is enmity. And when human beings are friends, they have no need of justice at all, but when they are just, they still need friendship; and that which is most just is thought to be done in a friendly way (φιλικόν). (1155a21-29)

On a journey across remote places, human beings tend to recognize and regard each another with sympathy. Not unlike the “birds and other animals” mentioned above, exposed and vulnerable to the perils of their worldly transit, they share mortality, the same susceptibility to the measureless and non-human – to the uncontrollable variations and shifts of this world. Friendship, then, would stem from such an elemental sentiment of solidarity and promote accord within the community. In this way, it encourages like-mindedness, a community “of one mind,” as it were. Here also lies the possibility of envisaging a nascent cosmopolitanism – a cosmopolitanism *sui generis*, based on the commonality of helpless exposure rather than rationality (which will be constant from Stoic to Kantian versions of cosmopolitanism), and hence not limited to the human community but gesturing to the community of the living.

Justice as the text of the law is necessarily late with respect to the most basic, most efficacious gathering force here designated by two nouns: friendship and what is “like” it, concord. A community has always already come together according to some incipient order, when the lawgivers undertake to trace and harness this movement at once unitive and structuring. Friendship and concord, if not altogether pre-political, seem to lie at the root of the political – to indicate the matter of radical politics, the naturalness of politics. And naturalness should not be understood here in the sense of natural right or reductive naturalization, but rather as a figure of excess untraceable, inestimable, not possibly assimilated to the order of constitution and juridical institution. It is such an excess that legality attempts to recapture, never quite catching up with it.

The non-coincidence of justice as such and justice as legality is variously underlined already in *Nicomachean Ethics* Epsilon: even in the best conceived juridical order, the former always exceeds the latter. In its abstract universality, the text of the law cannot fully account for and bring justice to each singular case. At best it asymptotically approximates justice, therefore is and remains infinitely perfectible, keeps requiring the supplementary

<sup>20</sup> Regarding later Stoic developments, Cicero, *de Finibus* 3.62.

work of the judge – the evaluation, each time renewed, of the particular.<sup>21</sup> Justice as such remains infinitely transcendent with respect to justice as normative codification. This polysemy of justice allows us to add: *justice in its juridical dimension* falls behind and is infinitely exceeded by the primordially of friendship and/as concord; but *justice as such* comes to coincide with friendship and/as concord. When Aristotle affirms that friends have “no need of justice at all,” he means they do not need justice in the juridical form for, outside all restraint, they *embody and enact* justice as such.

One further observation. The more minute sense of justice (as the principle of fairness in transactions) undergoes also a decisive development. It is initially outlined as the computation of proportion in exchanges, with its concomitant role in keeping the *polis* coherent, unified, and alive:

in associations for exchange, that which is reciprocally just and holds [human beings] together (συνέχει), is not according to equality but according to proportion; for it is by an action that is reciprocally proportional that a πόλις continues to hold together (συμμένει). For what [human beings] seek is either to return something bad – otherwise they consider their position as one of slavery – or that which is good, failing which there can be no give-and-take (μετάδοσις); and it is by give-and-take that [human beings] hold together (συμμένουσιν). (1132b32-1133a3)

This line of reflection, however, unfolds into an overcoming of the mercantile logic that contemplates the reducibility of all matters exchanged to a price, of all people involved to a quantifiable relevance, and of all exchanges to proportionally equalized giving and receiving. Immediately after stating that it is by give-and-take (by returning what is owed and having back what was given) that human relations are instituted and stabilized, Aristotle adds: “And it is in view of this that [human beings] set up the temple of the Graces in prominent places (ἔμποδόν), so that [human beings] may give back (ἀνταπόδοσις), for a proper mark of grace is this: to return a service to one who has shown grace, and later to take the initiative in showing grace” (1133a3-6). In the most comprehensive sense, then, justice does not simply name returning what was received. Beyond the mere re-balancing of a debt by paying it back, justice, and hence the strength and constancy of a communal bond, bespeaks the availability to giving more, to giving spontaneously, graciously, without owing or being forced to do so. Above and beyond making even uneven exchanges and honoring what is due in transactions, justice names the gratuitous initiative of generosity, the acknowledgment of a togetherness that far exceeds all calculation. The occurrences of grace thus understood hinder the mechanical reproduction of calculable exchange; indeed, they constitute irruptions into (and interruptions of) it.<sup>22</sup>

Qua harmonized being-with, friendship and justice are, in a way, names of peace. The depiction and understanding of peace is worth considering closely, as all too often (and

<sup>21</sup> Consider the ἀπορία of justice and equity, the necessity of adapting the universal formulation of the law to each singular circumstance to be assessed (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1137b12-32). The law always requires (or needs) a corrective operation bringing it to bear on living singularity. On judging, 1132a18-32.

<sup>22</sup> In this connection, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1167b17-1168a27.

unreflectively) it ends up being experienced as a dull, unexciting, uneventful scenario – as if events would properly belong in the order of emergency. Consider Freud’s remarks on love of disaster, addiction to crisis, and excitement out of emergency: exposure to danger seems to give us a renewed sense of direction, focus, purpose.<sup>23</sup> Yet, the challenge would be understanding peace, peaceful co-existence, as the place of an utmost privilege, not to be squandered: the place where becoming finds the most auspicious conditions. Has this been understood?

*3. In its perfection, friendship designates the bond between excellent human beings.*

The friendship between excellent human beings is said to be friendship in its perfect, most accomplished sense. It is the best of 3 kinds of friendship for the sake of excellence ἀρετή, for the sake of material interests, for the sake of pleasures. It involves similarity and reciprocity between or among those involved. Yet, in this context, similarity and reciprocity should be understood beyond measure and calculability. For they do not refer to excellence in terms of conventional recognition, class, or privilege. Least of all do they refer to quantifiable goods, gains, or gratifications. Rather, what is at stake here is likeness and reciprocation with respect to goodness, felicitous character structure.<sup>24</sup>

What is common, i.e., what is involved in such a similarity and reciprocation, is not some accidental, arbitrary feature, but excellence itself. What is common is psychological conformation, i.e., one’s disposition with respect to the good, the very arrangement in virtue of which one may be good and be towards the good. As Aristotle observes, “[p]erfect friendship is between human beings who are good and similar (ὁμοίων) with respect to excellence; for, insofar as they are good, it is in a similar manner that they wish each other the good [things], and such human beings are good in themselves” (1156b7-10). At stake in friendship primarily understood is such a movement towards the good, entailing excellence in psychological formation, which is eminently lovable.

Thus, the similarity between friends is not based on something owned in the narrow sense of the term – a property or possession that could be the object of comparison and comparative evaluation. The friends resemble one another in their being similarly turned towards the good, in their pursuing and striving for the good. What they share is nothing possessed (above all, it is no thing, no reified attribute) but, rather, that which is sought after or loved.

The similarity between friends may be a matter of possession only in the strict sense of the having (ἔχειν) of habits, the best ones. Excellent habituation, i.e., the stabilization of excellent psychological configurations, may indeed be considered a property. Yet, it is that peculiar property that turns the one who has it towards that which exceeds one, that which is not possessed – that peculiar property that turns one to whom it properly belongs beyond oneself, i.e., beyond the structures themselves of propriety, property, and ownership, towards a certain self-dispossession. In this sense, excellent habituation signals that the human being in its culminating manifestation cannot be understood in

<sup>23</sup> S. Freud, “Thoughts for the Times on War and Death” (“Zeitgemässes über Krieg und Tod” [1915], *Gesammelte Werke* 10, 324-55).

<sup>24</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics* 1163a10-23, 1164b1-6.

terms of autonomy, self-enclosure, and self-identity, let alone individualism. In its highest accomplishment, the human being bespeaks constitutive permeability and heteronomous determination. As Aristotle puts it in the *Eudemian Ethics*, “for us [human beings] the good (τὸ εὖ) is according to the other (καθ’ ἕτερον)” (1245b18) and “each one wishes to live together [with one’s friends] within the end that one may be capable of” (1245b8), especially “in the superior good (βελτίονι ἀγαθῷ)” (1245b2), enjoying “more divine pleasures” (1245a39-b1).

Friends, then, share their disposition towards the good: they are similarly turned towards the good, similarly caught in the love of the good. It is such a thrust, such a love irreducible to their love for each other, that is (in) common. Similarity as well as reciprocity must be understood in light of such an excess, of such an openness beyond each of the friends involved, beyond even their relatedness, their tending to be at one, to become one. Aristotle recognizes the exuberance and overflowing character of friendship: friendship is ὑπερβολή, hyperbolic, marked by excess (1158a12, 1166b1). One loves another in virtue of the other’s orientation towards the good, an orientation that one experiences as well. So, in loving the other, each is first of all recognizing him- or herself as other. This is so not only because each recognizes him- or herself through the other, i.e., because one comes to oneself essentially thanks to the departure towards the other, in an ecstatic movement outside oneself that can never allow for a simple return without dissipation. More remarkably still, one recognizes oneself as other because one contemplates in the other an infinite openness to alterity, to an alterity altogether irreducible to another human being as well as to any other being. That one recognizes oneself as other means that one catches a glimpse of oneself as an open structure of receptivity and hospitality, inhabited by, and striving towards, that which is irreducible to oneself. Friendship would entail communing in that which is not owned, but desired – sharing (experiencing, sustaining, finally being) in common the open structure of incompleteness, and the longing thereby implied, neither avoiding nor filling the void. Similarity, thus, bespeaks openness in becoming, and reciprocity comes to mean mutual incitement, support, and motivation.

Thus, in loving the other, each is at the same time projected beyond him- or herself, beyond the other, and beyond their relationship as well. Indeed, friendship cannot be contained within the exchange merely between the friends. For, in loving the other, one is caught in the shared movement towards the good, that is to say, in the movement of living well, of life in its plenitude (in a plenitude that coincides with a yearning for fulfillment). The love of the friend is *at once* a thrust beyond the friend. Such a thrust beyond is essentially involved in the inception as well as the abiding of friendship.

*4. Corollary: Aristotelian reflection cannot simply be interpreted in terms of the historical/ cultural context it reflects and out of which it develops.*

Aristotle’s understanding of friendship cannot be said purely to pertain to relationships between and among free male adults, or, more precisely, between and among citizens belonging to the dominant class – the only ones living a life of political engagement and leisure. While to be sure, in the context Aristotle lived in, only free men, emancipated from stringent necessity, would be in the position of experiencing the bond of friendship in its broad-ranging implications, Aristotle’s thinking is not merely delimited by such

a framework. Here the ἄριστοι are not simply the members of aristocracy, the bearers of titles and privileges transmitted from father to son, but rather those revealing a certain quality of character, a certain way of being. Aristotle's thinking, to be sure, bears the mark of the conventions and customs of his time. Yet, it abides irreducible to them and envisions friendship as the terrain most conducive to human growth, as the relational engagement above all and most fully nurturing the unfolding of human possibility and, hence, exposing the human being in its structural openness, caught in the in(de)finite task of becoming toward the good. Far from being a matter of self-identity or sameness, of identification with and belonging in a certain class or clan, friendship casts light on the experience of excess and calls identity into question in its very possibility, whether at the level of conceptual determinacy, categorial stability, or socio-cultural taxonomy. Friendship rests on sameness of desire – a sameness not definable in its whatness and not possibly resolvable into conformity or conformism.

In this perspective Aristotle's analysis remains alive and vibrant, well beyond considerations of historiographic, archeological, or antiquarian tenor. Vigilance, critical distance, undeterred assessment of received and commonly held views: here we may catch a glimpse of the specificity of the philosophical discourse vis-à-vis other genres – whether sophistical or rhetorical, historical or political. The question whether and to what degree the philosopher could be considered representative of his/her own time and context requires more caution than usually allowed.

##### 5. *The infinite thrust of friendship develops out of finite conditions.*

Perfect friendship develops over a long stretch of time, demands sharing time, “living together,” consuming a great deal of salt together.<sup>25</sup> Thus, in the course of a lifetime, the relationships of this kind are extremely limited in number. “The actual community of sensibility” (ἐνέργειαν τῆς συναισθήσεως), Aristotle affirms in *Eudemian Ethics*, “is necessarily in a small group” (1245b23-4). This means: one will experience the ὑπερβολή of friendship perhaps once, twice, at most very few times in one's life. These remarks on friendship introduce Aristotle's distinction between, (a) friendship in its actuality and corporeality, and (b) the posture or sentiment of benevolence, εὐνοία, possibly towards each and every other. The latter is no mere formality. It is not nothing. Yet, its indefinite extendibility differentiates it from friendship in its embodied enactment (ἐνέργεια), which so sharply stresses the finitude of human life.

The following passage develops the difference between friendship in its practical unfolding and the not necessarily enacted friendly inclination toward someone. The latter may be seen as the incipient of friendship, incipient friendship – its principle:

Benevolence, then, is like the beginning (ἀρχή) of friendship, just like the pleasure of being in love with another by sight; for no one is in love if he or she has not first been pleased by the look (ιδέα) [of the beloved], and the one who enjoys the form of a person is not by this alone in love, unless he or she also longs for that person when absent and desires that person's presence. So,

<sup>25</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics* 1156b25-33.

too, people cannot be friends unless they have first become well-disposed (εὖνους) towards each other, but those who are well-disposed are not by this alone friends; for they only wish what is good for those towards whom they are well-disposed but would neither participate in any actions with them nor trouble themselves for them. Thus one might say, metaphorically, that benevolence is untilled (ἀργήν) friendship; and it is when benevolence is prolonged and reaches the point of familiarity (συνήθειαν) that it becomes friendship, not the friendship for the sake of usefulness or pleasure, for no benevolence arises in these. (1167a3-14)

The posture of kindness towards others is seen as the precursor of perfect friendship, indeed, as the condition for its possibility. However, if not temporally developed and resulting in practical community, it remains uncultivated friendship, friendship suffering from ἀργία (ἀ-εργία), that is, not working, inoperative. Action constitutes the cultivation, the setting-to-work (ἐνέργεια) and refinement of friendship. The posture of benevolence constitutes the impersonal, all-encompassing backdrop of all cultivated, enacted friendship. As perfect friendship “in principle,” however, it is no mere promise, or possibility. It is, rather, the reliable mark of goodness in a human being: the accomplished capacity for seeing others, known or unknown, as possible friends. It is a visionary seeing: it sees others and envisions friends in them, to begin with.

*6. The Aristotelian concept of “political friendship” rests on the experience of “perfect friendship.”*

“Political friendship” is no mere metaphor. The friendship that, according to Aristotle, holds the community together and grants its cohesiveness, is not friendship in a diminished sense, bearing only a pale and distant resemblance to friendship proper, but rather preserves the latter’s structural perfection. The individual experience of perfect friendship, then, constitutes the ground of politics. It inflects political life. In politics it deploys all its presuppositions (above all, a certain outlook, a certain way of perceiving others with sympathy, recognition, solidarity), thus activating a peculiar tenor of the political bond, indeed, calling for a continuing, demanding reflection on the nature and scope of the political.

It might in fact be wise to suspend the automatism according to which politics would be the concern of and with the πόλις. To the extent that perfect friendship (whether practically lived or in principle) involves goodness, its implications will always already have exceeded the boundaries of the state. For to be a good human being is not necessarily the same as to be a good citizen – compliant, conventional, observant (1130b27-29).<sup>26</sup> And it is on the former that Aristotle concentrates his attention. But the former always presents an aspect of subtle transgression: maintaining a critical distance and inquiring posture, hence never simply obeying, never passively adapting to the dictations of his or her context, this kind of human being necessarily points beyond – to increasingly comprehensive

<sup>26</sup> The determination of the best political constitution is the task painstakingly pursued in the *Politics*. However, the best regime without qualification tends to remain a regulative idea or orienting principle.

communal horizons. From a friendship between two or among a few, to a relation among many (gathering many into a πόλις), to a relation among different πόλεις, to a relation among human beings beyond any singular πόλις, and even beyond the human domain, politics comes to be framed in a broadening movement “according to the whole.” In such a movement the universal emerges out of an always singular, earthly root.

The phenomenon of ὁμόνοια, like-mindedness regarding political deliberation, is itself discussed by reference to goodness. Ὅμόνοια is said to designate community of intent, shared vision regarding practical and political matters. It is what Aristotle calls or associates with “political friendship,” πολιτικὴ φιλία (1167b2, 1241a33). As a bond requiring the excellence of those involved, political friendship remains significantly bound to the matrix of perfect friendship in its each time unique, lived, and hyperbolic character – i.e., to the principle of friendship between excellent human beings. The earlier intimations that the experience of perfect friendship remains for Aristotle the root and “measure” of political friendship, find here further confirmation. Political friendship is no generic, expedient, pragmatically modest bond of convenience:

[s]uch concord is in good human beings, for these have the same thoughts (ὁμονοοῦσι) in themselves as well as in relation to one another, resting upon the same [ground], so to speak; for the things wished by such human beings are constant and do not ebb and flow like the water in the strait of Euripus, and they also wish things just and conducive, and these are the things they aim at in common. Bad human beings, on the other hand, cannot have the same thoughts except to a small extent, just as they cannot be friends. (1167b5-11)

In the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle is even more peremptory in noting the dependence of ὁμόνοια on excellence or goodness: “Concord,” he states, “occurs in the case of good human beings (ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν ἀγαθῶν)” (1241a22). Furthermore, since “it seems that, like friendship, concord cannot be said simply,” it follows that “the primary and natural (πρώτη καὶ φύσει) manifestation of it is good (σπουδαία), so that it is not the case that those who are bad can concur (ὁμονοεῖν) in that way” (1241a23-26). Not only, then, does Aristotle not oppose “perfect” friendship, understood as a private affair, and “political” friendship, understood as the alliance through ideological identification for the sake of public prosperity. Quite outstandingly, Aristotle is intimating that political friendship should be considered by reference to the basic phenomenon of individual friendship – to that relationship in the context of which most of all individuals can become themselves and exercise, magnify, and further cultivate excellence or goodness. Political aggregation should be disclosed by reference to this basic experience – even as, in its hyperbolic character, such an experience could hardly provide a reliable paradigm for the erection of ideological programs.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Note that Aristotle, in addressing the question of friendship as a political category, never highlights the language of brotherhood. Even when, towards the end of *Nicomachean Ethics* Theta, he turns to the relation between (a) friendship, (b) the various forms of government (and their respective deviations), and (c) the various kinds of family ties (1160a31–1161b10), his analysis is far from privileging the fraternal bond. The latter is associated with

While εὔνοια and ὁμόνοια do not altogether overlap, they similarly refer to a bond that can potentially be extended indefinitely, even to people far and unknown.<sup>28</sup> Ὅμόνοια, we saw above, is first presented in conjunction with friendship, as resembling friendship in its capacity for holding together. The context of this remark is a reflection on the mutual affection displayed by travelers in unfamiliar settings (the friendly sentiment gathering, if for a moment, foreigners crossing paths with each other in their wandering) and on the even more basic natural sympathy observable in other forms of life as well (1155a17-29).

Benevolence, εὔνοια, in turn, designates the basic awareness that there are others with whom I belong and, consequently, a common good with which I am concerned. It casts light on the fact that the experience of perfect friendship, which cannot be lived indefinitely many times, can be nevertheless be universalized. It can be universalized without thereby turning into mere abstraction, for it rests on the primordial πάθος of commonality and attraction, and expands it. In principle and as a principle, it discloses others (infinitely many others) in friendly terms.

### *7. At the center of political life, friendship lets transpire the animal.*

Meditating on friendship between excellent human beings, Aristotle has come to delineate the human being in a movement beyond itself. Precisely qua human being, it is a figure of excess. Of openness. Of hospitality.

It is in community, in political life, that this being may explore and unfold its broad-ranging potentiality. Political life appears most choice-worthy because of the honor and splendor involved in the participation in public affairs, and, no less, because even contemplative activity is practicable thanks to the σχολή (time freed from the strictures of necessity) granted by political coexistence. Says Aristotle:

The friendship between husband and wife seems to be by nature; for human beings by nature tend to form couples more than to be political, and they do this to the extent that a household is prior and more necessary than a πόλις and that reproduction is more common to animals. Accordingly, associations in the other animals exist only to that extent, but human beings

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timocracy (and its deviated form, democracy), which is certainly said to be more choice-worthy than oligarchy and tyranny, but also less admirable than aristocracy and kingship. The horizontal brotherly bond, in which each does “what one pleases” with no further guidance, induces an ultimately delusional self-determination, seems to suffer from self-referential confinement. Above all, it seems to lack the verticality of bonds with what is not present (what is no more and what is not yet, the ancestors and the unborn); with what is outside (and unlike) the community of brothers; with what is not human (nature, gods) (1160a20-28). It fails to induce solidarity among the generations and a sense of belonging in what cannot be brought back to the self-same. Pace Derrida.

<sup>28</sup> The statement at 1167a21-22 seems to deny this. Ὅμόνοια, it says, is not ὁμοδοξία, for the latter might as well occur with people who do not know each other. However, it should be noted that this distinction serves only to make more perspicuous the kinship between ὁμόνοια and friendship: ὁμόνοια appears to be φιλικόν, in the order of friendship, and because of this requires mutual knowledge, the acquaintance and familiarity characterizing friendship proper. And yet, as soon as ὁμόνοια, in the lines immediately following, is treated as political friendship, the requirement of mutual acquaintance and frequentation is withdrawn: to give an example of ὁμόνοια, Aristotle turns to a scenario in which different segments of the population agree on a given choice, as when common people and the privileged classes alike wish the best one to rule (1167b1). Again, we observe here the rootedness in the lived experience of friendship and the persistence of such an experience across increasingly vaster domains.



live together not only for the sake of reproduction but for other things in life as well. (1162a16-22)

Thanks to communal life, the human being can become what s/he is, realize his/her intrinsic potential, which includes the capacities for contemplating, thinking, and imagining. By the “other things in life,” presumably Aristotle means the range of actions that, beyond reproduction and the things of the other animals, culminate in λόγος. Apparently Aristotle is reverting to the contrast between πόλις and φύσις, freedom and necessity, as if leaving behind the limits and tasks that humans share with the other animals, and finally focusing on the properly human. The “other things in life,” then, would mean the duties and commitments of citizenship, the construction of civic and civilized life. And yet, precisely at the culmination of his long reflection on friendship, Aristotle (re)introduces embodiment, sentient life, and does so with unprecedented determination. He highlights shared life in the sense of ζωή, calls attention to a vitality not having the character of βίος – a vitality that remains impervious to thought and purely cultural construction. In the pleasure of “sensing together,” of a being together even without speaking, the “other things in life” are revealed in their proximity to sheer delight. Such a being together, as friends, is at once politics realized in its sensible, lived, barely speakable ground, and an overcoming of the πόλις in the direction of both animality and divinity. (As we know from Aristotle himself, animals and gods would equally fall outside the limits of the πόλις.)

At the very heart of political life, we find the animal again. Not simply embodied thinking as always already a mode of worldly action: Aristotle’s gesture goes well beyond this and indicates the ineludible character of the sentient body as well as, crucially, the contact of high and low, of physical density and perceptual subtlety. This passage is singular for its delicacy, aesthetic refinement, and rapturous quality:

Now, since living itself is good and pleasant (and this seems to be the case since all desire it, and especially those who are good (ἐπιεικεῖς) and blessed; for it is to these that life (βίος) is most choice-worthy, and the most blessed life (ζωή) belongs to them), and since one who sees senses (αἰσθάνεται) that he or she sees, one who hears senses that he or she hears, one who walks senses that he or she walks, similarly in the other cases there is something [in us] which senses that we are in activity (ὅτι ἐνεργοῦμεν), and so whenever we would sense it senses that we are sensing and when thinking [it senses] that we are thinking. But [to sense] that we are sensing or thinking [is to sense] that we are (for being [for human beings], we said, is sensing or thinking), and sensing that one lives is in itself one of the things which are pleasant (τῶν ἡδέων) (for life is by nature good, and *to sense that the good belongs to oneself is pleasant* (ἡδύ)). Now living is choice-worthy, and especially by those who are good, since being to them is good and pleasant (ἡδύ) (for they are *pleased* (ἡδονται) *by sensing that which is in itself good*). (1170a27-1170b5; my emphases)

Noteworthy here is the convergence of pleasure and happiness or the good. Even more remarkable is the intertwinement of the good and vitality. Being alive means being-in-act, practicing self-realization and accomplishment. Sensing oneself alive is sensing the good, and is itself good.<sup>29</sup> And all of this is a matter of sensation, αἰσθάνεσθαι, in middle voice: sensing oneself be, or rather, resting in the sensation of being, in the movement of becoming – being sensing. Awareness and self-awareness are a matter of sensuous perception, of the delightful perception of being alive and the goodness thereof.

Aristotle goes further. The sensation of the good, of harboring the good in oneself in virtue of being alive, the sensation of one's own living turning upon itself so as to sense itself, is more precisely a matter of sensing along with others, of sensing-with: συναισθάνεσθαι. It is originally disclosed in the proximity of the friend, in a being-with that senses itself as living-with (συνουσία, συζῆν),<sup>30</sup> in the pleasure of a sensing that is at once con-sensing.<sup>31</sup> In the αἰσθησις of being is already inscribed the community of sensing, of consent: a political synaesthesia. Ontology as well as politics inhere in the order of the sensuous, of aesthetics:

and if one who is excellent is disposed towards oneself just as one is disposed towards the friend (for the friend is another self), then one's own being is choice-worthy just as that of a friend, or nearly so. But we said that being is choice-worthy because one senses that it is good [or: because one senses oneself as good], and this sensation is in itself good. Thus, in the case of the friend as well one will con-sent (συναισθάνεσθαι) that s/he is, and this would be attained by living together (συζῆν) and sharing in conversation and thinking. For living together, in the case of human beings, would be taken to mean something like this and not, as in the case of cattle, feeding in the same place. If, then, to one who is blessed being is in itself choice-worthy, for it is by nature good and pleasant, and if the friend's being, too, is almost so, consequently the friend would be choice-worthy (...). Therefore, in order to be happy one will need excellent friends. (1170b6-19)

For friendship is a commonality, and one relates to oneself just as one relates to the friend; thus the sensation of being is choice-worthy regarding oneself, and likewise regarding the friend. (1171b33-35)

<sup>29</sup> Also 1166a11-29.

<sup>30</sup> The language of Plato's Letter VII.

<sup>31</sup> In translating συναισθάνεσθαι as "con-sensing," I am following G. Agamben, *L'amico* (2007) ("The Friend," in *What Is an Apparatus?*, trans. D. Kishik and S. Pedatella [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009]). However, it is perplexing that here Agamben should bring back into play the distinction between being (*quid est*) and existence (*quod est*), a distinction that becomes necessary only once sensing (the experience of con-sensing, of sensing-with) is lost, and λόγος, now severed from sensuousness, can no longer say: being is living (living-with), and living-with well is the good.

In the good life, sensing the bare fact that one is, is pleasant (ἡδύ): sweet, suave, delectable. Friendship is the context of a joyful sharing, in which one may lower defenses and resistance, and simply be: be-with, sense oneself as well as an other, without predicates, definitions, conceptual machinations. Such would be the most fundamental ontology, infinitely prior to any ontological discourse: ontology already fully perceived in sensibility. Already fully sensed-with. There is, indeed, a distinction between this animal and other animals that may simply gather together to graze. But such a distinction cannot be reduced to an opposition human/animal (πόλις/φύσις, λόγος/αἴσθησις, βίος/ζωή...). Rather, such a distinction is internal to the field of animality. The human being is an animal that, to be sure, takes pleasure in sharing discourse and thinking, in celebrating the politically earned margin of emancipation from the realm of harsh necessity. Yet, these distinctive features still belong to a living being, to a being of φύσις, to ζωή. And it is from out of its breathing, its sensuous openness, its embodied finitude and vibrancy, that such a being speaks, and analyzes, and creates, and changes everything.

Even reflectiveness and self-awareness (the awareness letting the sense of the aware I emerge), far from being (as they say today) “second level thinking,” occur at the most elemental level of αἴσθησις, of συναίσθησις. They are not the highest operations of abstract, discursive consciousness, but rather a matter of turning to oneself by way of sensibility, by way of a detour through alterity. Nor do they entail solitary, introverted contemplation, but rather the experience of being with an other, with others, in an openness to the world through which I am disclosed to myself. The most profound apprehending occurs in such circumstances, not in the pretense of a withdrawal from the world or exercise of autonomous ratiocination. In the hospitable spaciousness of friendship, then, converge synaesthesia, ontology, ethics, politics. And a delight that can hardly be further elaborated.

### III. FOLLOWING THE THOUGHT OF ΣΥΝΑΙΣΘΗΣΙΣ: A POSTSCRIPT ON PLOTINUS

Συν-αἴσθησις, συν-αισθάνομαι: we can translate them with the semantic equivalent “consent” (Latin *consensus*, *consentire*). Both the noun and the verbal form indicate the concomitance of several senses, of multiple modes of sensing or feeling.<sup>32</sup> They therefore mean to feel jointly or simultaneously; a convergent, shared feeling; feeling-with, feeling-together. Perception is illuminated in its gathered plurality. The senses, the modes of sensibility (sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste – if indeed the senses are five), overlap without losing or even simply reducing their respective peculiarities. At the same time, feeling bonds and conjoins.

Συν-αἴσθησις means feeling more things at the same time and in various perceptual registers, so that the various perceptions may delineate the same experience and compose a unitary reference (for example, it is not a question of seeing the blue sky and, separately, feeling the noise of passing cars, but rather of feeling my being here under this sky and next to a road). But the term designates no less a perception in which the different sensory

<sup>32</sup> Here I am exceptionally transgressing the rule of translation *verbum pro verbo* and, on occasion, translate αἰσθάνεσθαι and compounds with “feeling,” in addition to “sensing.” I do so because the semantic ranges of “to feel” and “to sense” in various ways overlap. Moreover, “to feel” (etymologically proceeding from Old English and Germanic forms) especially evokes perception through tactile sensation and inflects even emotional contents in terms of touch.

registers, so to speak, feel the feeling of one another: modes of sensing somehow sensing other modes of sensing, in a basic sharing with each other. Receptivity is revealed here as awareness – an awareness that captures both the composite and stratified nature of sensing (and therefore of living) and the condition of commonality, co-belonging and chorality – themselves composite and stratified. It is such a sensing that Aristotle has in mind when, in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1170a-b), he uses the language of αἴσθησις and συναίσθησις to evoke the consciousness of oneself, of the fact that one lives and one is, and of the others with whom one shares the sensing (συναίσθησις) and the living (συζῆν).<sup>33</sup>

In synaesthesia the senses remain differentiated but converge in a sensing where every sense evokes and intensifies the others. This is a convergence in which difference is not only not reduced (rather it is magnified), but is com-posed, con-joined. The experience of such a sensing therefore marks an inner harmonization, a re-composition, so to speak: complexity, even irreconcilable difference, should not be necessarily understood as indicating fragmentation, dis-integration (being “in pieces”). At the same time, this sensing in many registers simultaneously constitutes for the individual the utmost openness, being bound to the surrounding with all the senses activated, in a saturated and shining awareness. Along with inner harmonization, therefore, we observe the work of bonds weaving the individual into the fabric of the whole. We can then speak of com-position at both an individual and a global, systemic level.

Synaesthesia is thus illuminated in its double dimension: in its singular, individual relevance (feeling on several levels, variously and simultaneously) and in its collective meaning (common and shared feeling, feeling-together, συν-πάθος). We may recall Kant’s essay on *Perpetual Peace*, stating that “a violation of rights in a place on earth is perceived everywhere” (Third Definitive Article). But we might as well refer to Plato, to the passage in the *Republic* where Socrates calls for the communion of sensing, the community in which everyone may sense the sensing of others – in particular the pain of others, just as a body in its integrity feels and is involved in the malaise of each of its “parts” (462a-464b). (Of course, it would be crucial to put the concept of “part” into focus, so as not to reduce it to a mere component by addition, an interchangeable unit simply subordinated to the whole – which would be the nightmare or at least the great danger of classical utopia.) Or, in the wake of Plato, especially of the *Timaeus*, we might hear Plotinus’ statement in *Ennead IV*:

First of all it must be said that this whole (τόδε τὸ πᾶν) is a unitary living being that contains all the living beings that are in it and possesses a unique soul that spreads in all its parts, since everything is a part of it (...). What participates only in the soul [of the whole] is absolutely part of the whole; but what also participates in another soul has therefore [the prerogative] not to be exclusively part of the whole; but it suffers (πάσχει) nevertheless the influence of the other parts, in so far as it possesses something of them, in correspondence with those parts it possesses. All this unity, which is also

<sup>33</sup> In this connection *Eudemian Ethics* 1245b2-25 should as well be taken into consideration, just as the Aristotelian conception of “common sense” (κοινὴ αἴσθησις). In Buddhism, attested already in the Pali canon, mind (*mano*) is one of the senses: the sixth, in which the others are synthesized.

living, is a whole joined together by sympathy (συμπαθές) (...). The similar parts in fact are not next to each other, but are spaced by different parts, and yet sympathize (συμπασχόντων) in virtue of their similarity, and so the action exerted by a non-neighboring part necessarily reaches the far one. (IV 4.32)

It is worth noting the distinction between what is simply “part of the whole” and what, itself in turn living, enjoys the privilege of not being “exclusively part of the whole.” Such a being, precisely inasmuch as it is itself a living organism, reflects the whole. In a sense, *it is* the whole, as we shall see.

Here Plotinus develops the theme of correspondence and similarity explicitly in terms of mutual influence, action and passion. He also specifies that it is not a matter of influence by contiguity, as in a mechanical transmission, but a sort of resonance, of vibration by intimate correspondence. Plotinus lingers at length on the theme of sympathy, as when he envisions the earth listening to our prayers, or the sky that, looked at, looks at us.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, this harmonic union (com-position) is always unstable, vulnerable, conflicted – never to be taken for granted:

[The whole] does not present itself [to the eye] only as a unitary living, but also as a multiple being: therefore every single being, inasmuch as it is unity, is saved [preserved] in virtue of its connection to the whole (ὅλω); but as it is also a multiplicity, the single parts, meeting each other, damage [hinder] each other in many ways, because they differ from each other. (IV 4.32)

It is in the context of such considerations that Plotinus, decisively in *Ennead* IV, unfolds a reflection leading from αἴσθησις to συναίσθησις, in which he sees the emergence of genuine awareness. Συναίσθησις, overcoming the one-sidedness of αἴσθησις as a single perceptive/cognitive channel, indicates a chorality of irreducible but connected ways of sensing. This is how feeling-together becomes consciousness – as if the range of sensory registers would not operate according to the logic of addition; as if, instead, the synergy of the senses would heighten each one of them, in a radical, incalculable movement of convergence and transformation. At such a level of transfiguration of sensibility, the language of αἴσθησις and that of συναίσθησις merge to become semantically equivalent. In a way, αἴσθησις is already συναίσθησις. A single perception or perceptual mode (sight, hearing, etc.) never proceeds alone. It is always with, it unfolds in the company of the other

<sup>34</sup> “The knowledge of our prayers occurs [in the stars] by virtue of a certain contact and a disposition that keeps them harmoniously united; and their influence is exerted to that extent (...) these things happen because of a sympathetic connection among powers. If so, why should not we admit that the earth also has perceptions? (...) it can listen to those who pray and fulfill their pleas, but not in our own way. (...) Therefore it is neither absurd nor impossible that the soul of the earth may see. Indeed, it must be admitted that, being the soul of a body that is not vile, it thinks: it is therefore also a god, since the soul [of the earth] must be totally and eternally good” (IV 4.26). “For if we perceive not only external things, but also one part with the other, what prevents that the whole may see, through the sphere of the fixed stars, the sphere of the planets, and by means of these look at the earth and the things that are in it?” (IV 4.24) And again: “sight and hearing can belong, concomitantly, to the sun and the other stars. This is not an irrational thesis, if it is admitted that through these two senses they turn down [towards us]” (IV 4.25).

perceptions and perceptual modes, as if surrounded by a halo, or a field of resonance. Thus understood in its accompaniment, accomplished and fulfilled in its being-with, αἴσθησις comes to indicate consciousness as self-consciousness. Consider the following passage, cryptically addressing nature the cryptic:

so-called nature is a soul, generated by a first [superior] soul, of more powerful life, having in itself a quiet contemplation (θεωρίαν), directed neither upwards nor downwards; it remains where it is, in rest and self-awareness (συναίσθησει), and sees, with this intelligence (συνέσει) and self-awareness (συναίσθησει), the things that are after her, as far as possible, and no longer seeks anything since it has generated an object of splendid and amiable contemplation. If we want to attribute to nature intelligence and awareness (αἴσθησιν), we will say that that intelligence and that awareness are not similar to those of other beings, but could be compared [to these], as we compare the consciousness of someone asleep to that of one who is awake. [Nature] contemplating its object remains at rest, and that object is born in it, since [nature] remains in itself and with itself, and is an object of contemplation: it is a silent contemplation [without sound, unheard], but also somewhat dark. (III 8.4)

I let these passages resonate on their own, without possibly doing justice to their impervious difficulty and without developing further their dazzling suggestions (in particular, nature as “silent contemplation (θεωρία)” that, gathered in itself, feels and feels itself, the sentient place of an other intelligence, the body of a consciousness akin to the strange lucidity of sleep and dream). Here I simply emphasize the overcoming of a restrictive evaluation of sensibility – a development that we can also discern in the following passage as well:

perceptions (αἰσθήσεις) are useful. But even if they are useful for knowledge (γνώσιν), they are given to someone who has no knowledge but for his misfortune has fallen into ignorance, so that he may remember what he has forgotten; therefore not to one who is neither in need nor in forgetfulness. If this is the case, the investigation must not be directed only to the earth, but also to all the stars and especially to the whole sky and to the cosmos (κόσμου) (...). [Because to the cosmos, to the whole] we can attribute an intimate self-awareness (συναίσθησιν), as is the awareness we have of ourselves (συναίσθανόμεθα), but not the sensation always relative to something different. (IV 4.24)

It can be said, with Plotinus, that the whole becomes aware of itself thanks to the joint feeling, which in its fulfilment resolves itself into consciousness – consciousness as well as self-consciousness of individual and cosmos alike. However, the whole cannot in itself perceive anything that is foreign to it, that exceeds it: the interiority of the whole is absolute, prior to any opposition between interiority and exteriority. But, for living beings

like the human being, the perception, even of the self (αἴσθησις, συναίσθησις), translates into consciousness, indeed into knowledge, only to the extent that the being in question does not remain absorbed in its immediate circumstances and opens up to the perception of the other than itself, until it *feels the whole* of which it is part – the invariant.

This is a crucial transition, from partial sensation, always changing, to the expanded and amplified perception of the whole as such, in its connected integrity. This passage clearly marks the transmutation of sensibility into awareness: sensation has rendered good service to knowledge. It is to this end that “the investigation must not be directed only to the earth, but also to all the stars and especially to the whole sky and the cosmos.” In an apparent paradox, it is precisely in this transcendence, in this stretching out beyond itself, that the individual can comprehend him- or herself, literally: far from denying itself, the individual takes itself along as it variously places itself within the cosmos, seizing itself at the same time in its own uniqueness and belonging. Not only do I feel the whole of which I am a part, not only do I look at the starry sky within which I am inscribed: *I am* the whole, the starry sky. I sense the other in its ultimate remoteness, yet it is not a sensation “relative to something different”: there I find myself.

Turning to the sky: in the final analysis, it is an ethical question, a genuine injunction. This would be the task of every being having the privilege of not being only a blind part of the living whole, but of living also its own life (as we saw, the being that partakes of another soul, that is itself a living being, enjoys the prerogative of not being exclusively a component of the broader organism) (IV 4.32). This would, indeed, be the task of those somehow having the privilege of *being* the whole itself. Says Plotinus of the human being:

Certainly, if one remains oneself, then one is completely deprived of the whole for one does not think it. But if this same being is such as to be the whole, then, if it thinks of itself, at once it thinks the whole: so that such a being, looking at itself, sees itself in act and at once embraces all things and, contemplating all things, at once embraces itself. (IV 4.2)

The passage is remarkable for the freedom of movement between language related to thought (νόησις) and language related to sense perception (seeing, ὁράω). But what matters most here is the imperative just illuminated: to turn to the sky, to sense the whole – not only the whole in which one belongs, but the whole that one therefore is. Thus – and here lies the task – one who is potentially the whole must become it. One must abandon oneself, go outside, or (which is the same) take the whole into oneself.

This injunction has to do with the possibility of bringing relief, if not resolution, to the problem of destructiveness, whose necessity and ineluctability remain to be evaluated, but which certainly presents itself unrelentingly at work in virtue of the simple fact of differing, or more precisely, of the illusion of separateness. Let us consider again a passage partially mentioned above and follow its development:

[The whole] does not present itself [to the eye] only as a unitary living, but also as a multiple being: therefore every single being, inasmuch as it is a unity, is saved [preserved] in virtue of its connection to the whole (ὅλω);

but as it is also a multiplicity, the single parts, meeting each other, damage [hinder] each other in many ways, because they differ from each other; and one damages the other also for its own usefulness; and an individual even feeds on another who is akin and at the same time different; and each according to [its own] nature aims only at itself and appropriates that which, belonging to another, can become its own and destroys, by egoism, all that opposes it. And each performs its work and is useful to those able to take advantage of its action, but if they do not have the strength to face the impetus of its action, the other destroys or damages them like fire that, in passing, consumes, or like huge beasts that, in running, overwhelm or trample the smaller animals. (IV 4.32)

Clearly here Plotinus is not referring to the destructive work of the parts of an individual organism – an organism that ages and gets corrupted, and is mortal precisely because of a gradually relaxing cohesion, of an imperfect solidarity between its own elements, whose bonds tend to disintegrate over time as if the joints and connective tissues were not first quality (*Timaeus*). There is perhaps no amendment of these necessities. Nor can it be a matter, in this passage, of a destructiveness suffered by the whole – for the whole cannot undergo destruction or suffer mortality. The single beings are mixed in the whole, their short and traumatic life is consummated (“the other destroys or damages them like fire that, passing, consumes, or like huge beasts that, in running, overwhelm or trample the smaller animals”), but the whole as such remains unmoved – though intimately agitated by the difference in and as which it unfolds. In these pages Plotinus sketches the intertwined destinies of mortal beings and the immortal whole. The latter’s necessity dictates that “[n]othing could persevere unchanged, for the whole would persevere by finding only in movement the condition of its perseverance.” On the contrary, “since they are different from each other,” mortals “can not to hold their contents eternally within a single life.” Such is the necessity governing their fate (IV 4.32).

In this context, however, in addition to the question of necessity in its manifoldness, Plotinus seems to delineate the problem of the suffering, perhaps unnecessary, not inevitable, of the beings that participate in mortal life – that is, the problem of destructiveness in relationships between or among individuals. In other words, Plotinus poses the question of whether difference (*διάρρορα*), non-simplicity, must necessarily mean quarrel, conflict and incompatibility. In this perspective, he wonders if a comprehending glance, an understanding sense perception, could generate the sense (the consciousness) of common belonging, of a shared condition, and hence inflect difference in terms not of conflict but of com-position. He wonders if it is possible to compose, re-compose the difference; and he sees, in the human animal, the ability to understand itself in a purposiveness beyond itself, resolving itself into the whole:

The birth and corruption of all things and their changing into worse or better constitute the life of that one living being, which proceeds without obstacles and according to nature: since it was not possible that individual beings behaved as isolated individuals, nor that, being parts, they tended



to themselves as to their end, which instead is in that whole, of which they are parts (...). (IV 4.32)

In the elaborations of synaesthesia (of joint feeling) as consciousness we perceive the attempt to grasp a higher, common end – containing in itself the different in its irreducible complexity. Perhaps those who “cannot eternally hold their contents in one life” (IV 4.32), those mortals in excess with respect to themselves, overflowing beyond themselves, can approach the fullness of their condition by sharpening their awareness and self-awareness, that is, by refining their sensibility: sensing-with others, in the company of many, feeling the earth that is common and the sky that comprehends – the same for everyone.

Perhaps only in this way, opening up to the whole that, alone, can eternally hold together and contain, could we participate in (indeed, contribute to) the harmonization of every thing, try to caress that harmony that mortals are not given immutably, but always flees, becomes corrupted, must be found again. Perhaps only in this way could we find our measure, in a movement that at the same time returns us to our singularity and situates us in what exceeds us, in the differing – even intimating our identification with it.

In this perspective – it is now clear – it would no longer, or not only, be a matter of *tolerating* difference, as if it were an obstacle as insurmountable as it is unfortunate. Instead, it might be a matter of sustaining difference, of bearing its tension, the complexity that does not lend itself to easy syntheses; it might be a matter of taking delight in it, of sensing its riches, the com-position it contains, and the eternity thereof. For difference is the life of the whole (“[t]he birth and corruption of all things and their transformation (...) constitute the life of that one living being” [IV 4.32]); difference is the life into which our life, everyone’s life, relinquishes itself. And it is in following with vibrant attention the vast unfolding of such a life that one might touch, perhaps, eternity.

# HAPPINESS AS A POLITICAL ACHIEVEMENT IN ARISTOTLE

*Metaphysics* Zeta (VII) has been described as the Mount Everest of Aristotle's works. If there is a comparable peak in his ethical and political works, it is, I suppose, the texts in which the relationship between the practical political life and the contemplative life, and its implications for the nature of Aristotelian happiness, are characterized. This is the mountain I want to try to climb.

In Plato's *Symposium* Socrates agrees with Diotima that "those who are happy are happy through possessing good things" (204d4-205a3), and that "happiness" is the name for whatever it is that puts a stop to the question: Why do you want or wish for that? Once I say, "Because it will make me happy," we supposedly know all there is to know. "Happiness" is thus the name of the final practical end. Everyone agrees to that. What good things the name applies to, however, is hotly disputed, as Aristotle tells us:

About its name, most people are pretty much agreed, since both ordinary people and sophisticated ones say it is "happiness" and suppose that living well and doing well are the same as being happy. Concerning happiness, however, and what it is, they are in dispute, and ordinary people do not give the same answer as wise ones. For ordinary people think it is one of the plainly evident things, such as pleasure or wealth or honor – some taking it to be one thing, others another. (*NE* I 4 1095a17-23)

Indeed to the question of how long we would need to possess the relevant good things in order to be happy Diotima and Aristotle themselves give quite different answers – answers that merit a bit of exploration.

This is what Diotima says: "There is nothing else that people are in love with except what is good (...) But oughtn't we to add that what they love includes their *possessing* what is good? (...) And (...) not only possessing it, but *always* possessing it? (...) In that case (...) we can sum up by saying that love is of *permanent* possession of what is good" (*Smp.* 205e6-12). The ultimate object of our wishes and desires in her view, then, involves eternal life, since in wishing to be happy – in wishing good things to be ours forever – we are wishing to be around forever to possess them.

Now for Aristotle's answer. Having established in the famous εργον or function argument that the good in which happiness consists is "activity of the soul in accord with

virtue and, if there are more virtues than one, in accord with the best and most complete,” Aristotle goes on to add, “furthermore, in a complete life (ἐν βίῳ τελείῳ), for one swallow does not make a spring, nor does one day. Nor, similarly, does one day or a short time make someone blessed and happy” (NE I 7 1098a15-20). What I want to notice in this is simply that happiness and the happy life are not the same. Happiness is “what, on its own, makes a life choiceworthy and lacking in nothing” (1097b14-16), that is, it is what makes a life – a complete life – be a happy one.

Now sometimes a complete life seems to be one that reaches normal life expectancy: “It is correctly said among the majority that a life’s happiness should be judged in its longest time, since what is complete should exist in a complete time and a complete human being” (MM I 4 1185a6-9). But this does not seem to be what a complete life is in the *Nicomachean Ethics*:

It is true of an excellent person too that he does many actions for the sake of his friends and his fatherland, even dying for them if need be. For he will give up wealth, honors, and fought-about goods generally, in keeping for himself what is noble. For he will choose intense pleasure for a short time over weak pleasure for a long one; living life nobly for a year over many years lived in random fashion; and a single noble and great action over many small ones. This is presumably what happens with those who die for others. (IX 8 1169a18-25)

The sort of life (βίος) to which a natural life expectancy belongs, in fact, is a *biological* life – elephants and plants also have life expectancies in this sense. An individual human being’s life, however, is an *agentive* life – the sort that involves planning and deliberate choice. (Children, remember, cannot be happy, because they have no share in such choice.) And an agentive life, Aristotle is implying, can be happy – can be choiceworthy and in need of nothing – even if it is not of normal biological length, provided it contains sufficiently good things for a time sufficiently suited, as it were, to contain them.

Knowing all this, any rational agent eager to ensure a happy life for himself will want to know at least two things: first, what good things happiness consists in, and, second, how to arrange for himself a life suited to containing enough of them over a long enough time to count as happy. We would expect, then, that he would begin his task by assembling a reasonably complete list of good things – or the various sorts of such. And this is how we see Aristotle proceeding:

To tell the truth, as regards one way of dividing them, at any rate, since there are three groups – external goods, goods in the body, and goods in the soul – *no one would dispute that all of them must belong to those who are blessedly happy* (μακάριτος). For no one would say that someone is blessedly happy who has no shred of courage, temperance, justice, or practical wisdom, but is afraid of the flies buzzing around him, stops at nothing, no matter how extreme, when he has an appetite to eat or drink, betrays his dearest

friends for a pittance, and has a mind as foolish and deluded as a child's or a madman's. (*Pol.* VII 1 1323a24-34)

Notice the point on which there is universal agreement: *all* these good things must belong to those who are blessedly happy. Where disagreement arises is not about what the good things are, but rather about what I shall call their *impact* on the happiness of a life. This is how the passage continues:

But while these claims are ones that almost everyone would agree with, people disagree about their quantity and their relative superiority. For they consider any amount of virtue, however small, to be sufficient, whereas of wealth, property, power, reputation, and the like they seek unlimited superiority. (1323a35-38)

But Aristotle does not agree with what most people think:

We, however, will say to them that it is easy to become convinced of these things even from the facts themselves. For we see that the virtues are not acquired and safeguarded by means of external goods, but rather it is the other way around, and a happy life for human beings, whether it consists in enjoyment or virtue or both, is possessed by those who have cultivated their characters and minds to a superior degree, but have been moderate in their acquisition of external goods, rather than by those who have acquired more of the latter than they can possibly use, but are deficient in the former. But to those who investigate the matter on the basis of argument, the point is also easily seen. For external goods have a limit, just like any instrument, and everything useful is useful for something, and in excess must either harm or bring no benefit to their possessors. Where each of the goods of the soul is concerned, by contrast, the more superior it is, the more useful it is – if these goods too should be thought of not only as noble but also as useful. (1323a38-b12)

Notice that none of this unseats the previously agreed conclusion that some amount of all three sorts of goods – of soul, of body, and those that are external – are needed for happiness. It simply assigns them different impacts, different levels of importance. Then, after a brief appeal to the superiority of the soul to the body, comes Aristotle's conclusion:

Let us take it as agreed, then, that each person has just as much happiness as he has virtue, practical wisdom, and action done in accordance with them. We may use the [primary] god as evidence of this. For he is happy and blessedly so, not because of any external goods but because of himself and by being in his nature of a certain quality. This is also why good luck and happiness are necessarily different. For chance or luck are the cause

of the goods external to the soul, but no one is just or temperate by luck or because of luck. (1323b23-29)

The question is, what exactly does this conclusion tell us?

Well, it tells us that external goods do have some degree of impact on happiness. Here is Aristotle registering this:

All the same, it [virtuous activity] apparently needs external goods to be added, as we said, since it is impossible or not easy to do noble actions without supplies. For just as we perform many actions by means of instruments, we perform many by means of friends, wealth, and political power. Then again there are some whose deprivation disfigures blessedness, such as good breeding, good children, and noble looks. For we scarcely have the stamp of happiness if we are extremely ugly in appearance, ill-bred, living a solitary life, or childless, and have it even less, presumably, if our children or friends are totally bad or were good but have died. (*NE* I 8 1099a31-b6)

But though the deprivation of external goods – the inadequacy of their supply – disfigures blessedness (the highest level of happiness), it can never make us positively wretched, it can never make us the polar opposite of happy:

If, however, it is activities that control living, as we said, no blessed person will ever become wretched, since he will never do hateful or base actions. For a truly good and practically-wise person, we think, will bear what luck brings graciously and, making use of the resources at hand, will always do the noblest actions, just as a good general makes the best uses in warfare of the army he has and a good shoemaker makes the best shoes out of the hides he has been given, and the same way with all other craftsmen. If this is so, however, a happy person will never become wretched – nor *blessed* certainly – if he runs up against luck like Priam's. (*NE* I 11 1100b33-1101a8)

Overall, then, we can look at the impact of external goods as being fixed initially by two facts. One, they cannot in any amount make us wretched. Two, beyond an adequate or moderate amount, they cannot increase our happiness.

Next, let us add a further fact, which is to some extent implicit in what we have already seen and is completely explicit in the following texts:

The goods people fight over and believe to be the greatest – honor, wealth, bodily virtues, strokes of good luck, and powers [= external goods and goods of the body] – are good things by nature, but may be harmful to some people because of the states they are in. For neither those without practical wisdom, nor the unjust, nor the intemperate would get any benefit from the use of these, any more than an invalid from the food of a healthy person. (*EE* VIII 3 1248b27-33)

Neither wealth nor strength nor beauty is good for those who are badly disposed in things related to the soul. Instead, the more superior the possession of these [bodily and external] conditions, the more, and the more often, the harm the one who possesses them but does not possess wisdom (*φρονήσεως*) does. The saying “no knife for a child” means “do not give abundant resources to base people.” (*Protr.* B4)

It is because they do not realize this, indeed, that “people consider the causes of happiness to be external goods – as if a lyre rather than craft knowledge were the cause of brilliant and noble lyre-playing” (*Pol.* VII 13 1332a25-27). So the further fact we need to add to the earlier two is: three, external goods cannot make us to any degree happy unless we already have the goods of the soul – the virtues.

But the sword of use cuts both ways. After all, the virtues of character and practical wisdom need external goods in order for them to have something to use well, since merely having these goods of the soul is not enough. If they are to have their impact on happiness, they must be put to use. Here is Aristotle remarking on this fact and drawing the pertinent moral:

Now with those who say that happiness is virtue or some sort of virtue, our argument is in tune, since activity in accord with virtue is characteristic of that virtue. But it makes no small difference, presumably, whether we suppose the best good to consist in virtue’s possession or in its use – that is, in the state or in the activity. For it is possible for someone to possess the state while accomplishing nothing good – for example, if he is sleeping or out of action in some other way. But the same will not hold of the activity, since he will necessarily be doing an action and doing it well. And just as in the Olympic Games it is not the noblest and strongest who get the victory crown but the competitors (since it is among these that the ones who win are found), so also among the noble and good aspects of life it is those who act correctly who win the prizes. (*NE* I 8 1098b30-1099a6)

It is this, indeed, that makes it possible for external goods to have an impact on the happiness of a life.

As a way of summing up the findings of this investigation of external goods and goods of the soul, I shall say that external goods have *low indirect impact* on the happiness of a life, whereas goods of the soul have *high direct impact*. For activity in accord with the virtues of the soul just is happiness. So put some of that in a life and you have put it on the map of happiness, so to speak, put enough of it in and you make it happy – choiceworthy and lacking in nothing.

Suppose we – or Aristotle – stopped there. We would have our answer, wouldn’t we, to the question of what good things happiness consists in? And here again is Aristotle giving a recognizable version of it: “What, then, prevents us from calling happy the person who is active in accord with complete virtue and is adequately supplied with external goods not for some random period of time but in a complete life?” (*NE* I 11 1101a14-16). To be

happy you first and foremost need complete virtue, but you also need an adequate supply of external goods and a complete life – a life suited to containing them.

What I want to notice at this juncture is that the three sorts of goods Aristotle recognizes – those of soul, those of the body, and external goods – are all or most, it does not matter which, what I shall call *social goods*. And what I mean is that they are goods reliably made available in the long term only within a community organized to provide them. In Aristotle’s view this community is the πόλις or “city,” since it is the only completely self-sufficient community. Thus, for example, the virtues of character require socialization, and the virtues of thought – practical wisdom (φρόνησις) and theoretical wisdom (σοφία) – require education (*NE* II 1 1103a14-26). And education and socialization require schools and institutions and teachers, and the societal stability, with its attendant legal and political institutions, necessary to keep these around generation after generation, and – where appropriate – to keep them improving. Health needs doctors and hospitals, and so on.

Providing all those things, it can hardly be controversial to say, itself requires excellent thinking, and so a virtue of thought. And to that virtue Aristotle gives the name πολιτική – the craft or science of politics. It, he tell us – indeed it is almost the first thing he does tell us in the *Nicomachean Ethics* – is the architectonic practical science. And what prompts its introduction is the search for the best good – for happiness – and so for the science or capacity that ensures it:

It would seem to be the one with the most control, and the most architectonic one. And politics seems to be like this, since it is the one that prescribes which of the sciences need to exist in cities and which ones each group in cities should learn and up to what point. Indeed, we see that even the capacities that are generally most honored are under it – for example, generalship, household management, and rhetoric. And since it uses the other practical sciences and, furthermore, legislates about what must be done and what avoided, its end will circumscribe those of the others, so that it will be the human good. (*NE* I 2 1094a26-b7)

Thus it is that we are reminded later in the *Ethics* that it is “the political philosopher” who “is the architectonic craftsman of the end to which we look in calling each thing unconditionally bad or good” (*NE* VII 11 1152b1-3).

What politics does, we see, is to organize all the various practical or productive crafts or sciences into what I call *the craft hierarchy*, a fragment of which has been brought to our attention a few lines previously:

But since there are many sorts of actions and of crafts and sciences, their ends are many as well. For health is the end of medicine, a ship of shipbuilding, victory of generalship, and wealth of household management. Some of these fall under some one capacity, however, as bridle making falls under horsemanship, along with all the others that produce equipment for horsemanship, and as it and every action in warfare fall under generalship,

and, in the same way, others fall under different ones. But in all such cases, the ends of the architectonic ones are more choiceworthy than the ends under them, since these are pursued for the sake also of the former. It makes no difference, though, whether the ends of the actions are the activities themselves or some other thing beyond them, just as in the sciences we have mentioned. (*NE I 1 1094a6-18*)

We can think of politics, then, as organizing all these bodies of knowledge so that they produce the goods in whose possession happiness consists, and then ensuring that they are appropriately distributed to the relevant people, namely, the members of the community that politics governs, who are themselves appropriately prepared by education and socialization to enjoy them, and so to have happy lives.

A quick segue now into *Nicomachean Ethics* VI 8: “Politics and practical wisdom are the same state, but their being is not the same. Of the practical wisdom concerned with the city, the architectonic part is legislative science” (1141b23-25). We may infer, since the text is pretty much a proof text, that politics is a virtue that exercises its control over the city largely through its legislative component. We are used, I think, to privatizing practical wisdom, or “ethicizing” it, so to speak, but for Aristotle it is at heart a political virtue, indeed “the only virtue special to a [political] ruler” (*Pol.* III 4 1277b25-26).

What is true of politics, then, is also true of practical wisdom. It is in the business of providing and organizing good things, and it is through legislation that it will – as architectonic – do much of this organizing and providing. For laws produced by practical wisdom both embody practical wisdom and *propagate* it. At almost the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle reminds us of this:

It is difficult, however, for someone to get correct guidance toward virtue from childhood if he has not been nurtured under laws of the appropriate sort, since a moderate and resilient way of living is not pleasant for ordinary people, most of all when they are young. That is why laws must prescribe their nurture and practices, since these will not be painful when they have become habitual. But it is not enough, presumably, that when people are young they get the correct nurture and supervision. On the contrary, even when they have grown into adulthood they must continue to practice the same things and be habituated to them. And so there will need to be laws concerning these matters as well and, in general, then, concerning all of life. For ordinary people obey force rather than argument; and they obey penalties rather than what is noble. (*X 9 1179b31-1180a5*)

“A sophisticated and free person,” to be sure, “is a sort of law for himself” (IV 9 1128a31-32), since he is governed by his own practical wisdom. But this is so because he has become practically-wise under the guidance of laws that are already the product of someone else’s practical wisdom, which is thus achieved, maintained, and reproduced, socially.



I said earlier that we had our answer, that a person is happy “who is active in accord with complete virtue and is adequately supplied with external goods not for some random period of time but in a complete life?” (*NE* I 11 1101a14-16). But that answer covers over a mountain of a problem, which Aristotle expresses as follows:

It is evident that the best constitution is necessarily that organization in accord with which anyone might be able to do best and live blessedly. But the very people who agree that the most choiceworthy life is the life that involves virtue are the ones who dispute about whether the political and action-involving life is choiceworthy or rather the one detached from all external concerns – some sort of contemplative life, for example, which some say is the only life for a philosopher. For it is evident that these two lives are pretty much the ones that the human beings most ambitious for virtue deliberately choose, both in earlier times and at present. The two I mean are the political life and the philosophic one. And it makes no small difference on which side the truth lies. For the person who thinks correctly, at any rate, must organize his affairs by looking to the better target – and this applies to each human being and to the constitution communally. (*Pol.* VII 2 1324a23-35)

So even though everyone agrees that external goods, goods of the body, and goods of the soul all have an impact on the happiness of a life, there is disagreement between the many and the wise about their relative impact, and a further disagreement, even among the wise themselves, apparently, about which goods of the soul – the ones required for the political life and the ones required for the contemplative life – have the more or most important impact.

Now it is well known, indeed it is a topic of philosophical jokes, that Aristotle seeks the mean or middle way. (How did Aristotle die? The joke goes. The answer: From an excess of moderation.) So it should come as no surprise that he thinks there is some truth on both sides – on both the political side and the contemplative side: “As regards those who agree that a life in accord with virtue is most choiceworthy, but disagree about the use of it,<sup>1</sup> we must say to both sides that they are both partly correct in what they say and partly incorrect” (*Pol.* VII 3 1325a16-18). When he comes to expressing the truth they share, however, this is what he says:

If the things we have said are correct, and we should take it that happiness is doing well in action, then the best life, both for the whole city collectively and for each individual, would be a practical life of action. Yet it is not necessary, as some suppose, for a practical life of action to involve relations with other people, nor are those thoughts alone practical that arise for the

<sup>1</sup> “[One sort of justice] is complete virtue in the highest degree, because it is the complete use of complete virtue. It is the complete use because someone who possesses it is able to use his virtue in relation to another person and not solely with regard to himself” (*NE* V 1 1129b30-33). The disagreement, then, is about whether happiness for a city or an individual lies in the use of virtue in relation to another or in the use of it with regard to himself.

sake of the consequences of doing an action, *much more so are the acts of contemplation and thinking that are their own ends and are engaged in for their own sake*. For doing well in action is the end, and so action of a sort is the end too. And we say that in the strictest sense the ones who above all do actions, even in the case of external actions, are the ones who by means of their thoughts are their architectonic craftsmen. (*Pol.* VII 3 1325b13-23)

It is probably not the answer we expect. For, as we see, Aristotle thinks that the challenge the defender of contemplation must answer is to show that the contemplative life is in fact a life of action, and one, moreover, that it is more practical – more action-involving – than the political life.<sup>2</sup> After all, the function argument has shown that happiness lies in action. No defender of the political life, then, can either reject the contemplative life as one of inaction, or reasonably prefer the political life to it on the grounds of its being more practical – more action involving. To think otherwise, indeed, is to think that the agents are the ones whose bodies move rather than the ones whose architectonic acts of thought work out their plans of action and the prescribe them in laws or decrees (*Met.* I 1 981a30-b6).

Let us briefly take stock before looking for the grounds of these claims about contemplation and politics. A happy human life requires external goods, goods of the body, and, especially, goods of the soul. It requires all of them. These are social goods in the relevant sense. To have them and enjoy them, one must live in a society that provides them. Or, rather, to *reliably* have and enjoy them – to have them as a result of rational planning, as a result of the exercise of politics, or practical wisdom – we must live in a society that provides them. Luck, of course, or the gods, might also enter the picture in various ways – a point we shall be returning to at the end of the paper.

Why does Aristotle think that the activity of contemplating is more practical than the activities that make up the political life for those who contrast it with the contemplative one? The answer lies in the fact that these contemplative activities are their own ends and are engaged in for their own sake in a way that practical political activities are not. For it is a key element in Aristotle's theory of action that actions – at any rate, complete ones – are activities or ἐνέργειαι that, as such, are complete at any moment, so that if φ-ing is a (complete) action, you both are φ-ing and have φ-ed simultaneously (*Met.* IX 6 1048b18-36). One could, I suppose, call this a key element in Aristotle's metaphysics of morals, since pretty much the first thing he does in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is to remind us of a distinction between sorts of ends that in effect marks the distinction between complete activities and incomplete ones: "A certain difference, however, appears to exist among ends. For some are activities while others are works of some sort (ἔργα τινά) beyond the activities themselves. But wherever there are ends beyond the actions, in those cases, the works are naturally better than the activities" (I 1 1094a3-6). It is hardly a step to the conclusion that happiness must be a complete activity. For if it were an incomplete one (which it would be if it had a further work or result beyond it), the work would be better

<sup>2</sup> Thus one major problem with Plato's form of the good is that it is not πρακτόν – not, in contrast to contemplation, doable in action, and so cannot be happiness, since happiness is precisely the highest of goods doable in action (*NE* I 6 1096b32-35).

than it, and so it itself would not be the best end or good. Incomplete activities, by contrast, when they are ends, are ends that are choiceworthy not for themselves alone, but in part for themselves and in part for their further consequences:

Practical wisdom and theoretical wisdom] must be intrinsically choiceworthy (since each is the virtue of one of the two parts that have reason) even if neither of them produces anything at all. Next, they do indeed produce something; not, however, as medicine produces health but as health does. *That* is also how theoretical wisdom produces happiness, since as a part of virtue as a whole, by being possessed and actualized, it produces happiness. (*NE VI 12 1144a1-5*)

Recall Socrates' exchange with Diotima. Nothing could be happiness unless it is the correct ultimate answer to all practical why questions. Express that in terms of Aristotelian ends and what you get is that nothing could be happiness – nothing could be doing well in action (εὐπραξία) – unless it is a complete activity. For, if it were anything else, there would be a further why question, to be answered by appeal to the activity's further – and ipso facto superior – end.

Let us go back now to a notorious problem in the conclusion of the function argument. It lies in the fact that having identified happiness with “activity of the soul in accord with virtue,” Aristotle adds “and, if there are more virtues than one, in accord with the best and most complete.” This has stalled many climbers on the way to the peak. But we need not be among them. For we know that the completeness of virtues has to be reflected in the completeness of their activations – of the activities that are in accord with them. If it were not, why would the activation of the complete one be happiness? That, in effect, is the import of the following brief text: “While movement does seem to be a sort of activity, it is incomplete activity. But the cause of this is that the potentiality it is the activation of is incomplete” (*Met. XI 9 1066a20-22*; also *Ph. III 2 201b31-33*). For a virtue is a state, and a state is a capacity or potential that has been made more steadfast and unchangeable through practice. Hence, as we are about to see, it cannot be practical wisdom or politics (πολιτική) that is the complete virtue, and so it cannot be the amalgam of all the virtues of character, since practical wisdom already involves all of those (*NE VI 13 1144b31-32*).

The next episode in our story, the next stage in our climb up the mountain, lies in *Nicomachean Ethics X 7*: “this activity [namely, contemplation], and only this, would seem to be liked because of itself [alone]. For nothing arises from it beyond having contemplated, whereas from the practical ones we try – to a greater or lesser extent – to get for ourselves something beyond the action” (1177b1-4). Thus, on the supposition that this characterization of contemplation is correct, actions or activities that are not contemplative have a further end, and so are incomplete in the way that contemplative activities are not. Contemplative activity of some sort, then, must be happiness. There is no way around that:

Happiness extends indeed just as far as contemplation does, and those to whom it more belongs to contemplate, it also more belongs to be happy, not coincidentally but, rather, in accord with contemplation, since this is

intrinsically estimable. And so happiness will be some sort of contemplation. (NE X 8 1178b28-32)

But contemplation, as a kind of thinking, can be done well or badly. Hence to be done well, it will need to be in accord with the relevant virtue of thought – and that virtue is theoretical wisdom. So what we can say more exactly is that happiness, as activity in accord with complete virtue, is not just any old sort of contemplation, but the most excellent sort, the sort that is in accord with the relevant virtue, which is theoretical wisdom.

But what activity exactly is that? Here is part of the answer: “Theoretical wisdom must be the most exact of the sciences... [it] must be understanding plus scientific knowledge – scientific knowledge, having a head as it were, of the most estimable things” (NE VI 7 1141a16-17). And this answer is developed for us in *Metaphysics* I 2. For there the search is for the most universal and most exact theoretical science, which *Metaphysics* VI 1 will identify as theological philosophy or science (1026a18-23):

For it was when pretty much all the necessities of life, as well as those related to ease and passing the time, had been supplied that such wisdom began to be sought. So clearly we do not inquire into it because of its having another use, but just as a human being is free, we say, when he is for his own sake and not for someone else, in the same way we pursue this as the only free science, since it alone is for its own sake. It is because of this indeed that the possession of this science might be justly regarded as not for humans, since in many ways the nature of humans is enslaved, so that, according to Simonides, “a god alone can have this privilege,” and it is not fitting that a human should not be content to inquire into the science that is in accord with himself. If, then, there is something in what the poets say, and jealousy is natural to the divine, it would probably occur in this case most of all, and all those who went too far [in this science] would be unlucky. The divine, however, cannot be jealous – but, as the proverb says, “Bards often do speak falsely.” Moreover, no science should be regarded as more estimable than this. For the most divine science is also the most estimable. And a science would be most divine in only two ways: if the god [= the unmoved mover] most of all would have it, or if it were a science of divine things. And this science alone is divine in both these ways. For the [primary] god seems to be among the causes of all things and to be a sort of starting-point, and this is the sort of science that the [primary] god alone, or that he most of all, would have. All the sciences are more necessary than this one, then, but none is better. (*Met.* I 2 982b23-983a11)

When Aristotle gives us a rare piece of practical advice in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, it is this passage that he recalls to our minds:

We should not, however, in accord with the makers of proverbs, “think human things, since you are human” or “think mortal things, since you are

mortal” but, rather, we should as far as possible immortalize (ἀθανατίζειν), and do everything to live in accord with the element in us that is most excellent. For even if it is small in bulk, in its power and esteem it far exceeds everything. (NE X 7 1177b31-1178a2)

Whatever immortalizing is – the verb ἀθανατίζειν is rare enough that its meaning is difficult to tie down – we do it when we contemplate in accord with theoretical wisdom, and that we do when we join with the genuinely immortal god in theologizing – in contemplating that very god (see *Met.* XII 9).

What I want to take from this brief venture into the *Metaphysics* is a challenging fact. It is this. The god referred to is the unmoved mover, the starting-point and primary cause of everything – of *everything*. Including – as their teleological cause – our own deliberately chosen actions. God is his own happiness, the *Eudemian Ethics* tells us, whereas he is ours: “[God] is better than to understand something else beyond himself. And the cause of this is that for us the good is in accord with something else, whereas for *that being* he himself is the good of himself” (VII 12 1245b16-19). So if the contemplative life and the political life have different ultimate ends – different sorts of happiness as their ends – we will face a dilemma that will threaten not just the *Ethics* but also Aristotle’s entire picture of the world. Here are two texts to drive the point home:

This is what we are seeking, namely, what the starting-point of movement in the soul is. It is clear, then, that just as in the universe it is god, so it is too in us. For the divine thing in us in a way moves everything. Of reason (λόγος), however, the starting-point is not reason, but something superior. But what besides god is superior even to scientific knowledge and understanding? For virtue is an instrument of understanding. (*EE* VIII 2 1248a24-29)

Happiness is a starting-point. For it is for the sake of it that we all do all the other actions that we do, and we suppose that the starting-point and cause of what is good is something estimable and divine. (*NE* I 12 1102a1-3)

Hence, in part, the comparison I drew earlier with *Metaphysics* Zeta.

The question to pursue next is what the consequences of all this are for the happy life. And it is here that some delicate footwork is required if we are not to follow other climbers into a crevasse that blocks the final ascent to the peak. As a rational agent, your goal is to achieve a happy life for yourself. This requires thought – indeed, excellent thought. Could the virtue that ensures its excellence be theoretical wisdom? No. “For surely theoretical wisdom will not have a theoretical grasp on any of the things from which a human being will come to be happy (since it is not concerned with anything’s coming to be)” (*NE* VI 12 1143b19-20). So it must, and not just for this reason, be practical wisdom or politics. After all, even the acquisition of theoretical wisdom, as the most exact of the sciences, is a practical, political achievement, requiring teachers, schools, and research institutions like the Academy and Lyceum. But so too, of course, is the leisure needed for its exercise – for contemplative activity in accord with it. Wars and criminals,

blights and famines, ignorant ideologues in places of political power, to mention just a few things, see to that.

Now, the happy life as I have insisted involves all three sorts of goods: goods of the soul (the virtues), goods of the body, and external goods. But these, as we saw, have different impacts on the happiness of a life. And this is the finding that we are now in a position to expand upon. External goods, we saw, have low indirect impact on how happy a life is, whereas the virtues have high direct impact. But these virtues come in two varieties: virtues of character and virtues of thought, which themselves come in two varieties, namely, practical wisdom and theoretical wisdom (*NE* I 13 1103a3-7). So what we must now do is calculate the different degrees of impact of activities in accord with these two virtues on how happy a life is. And the solution to the calculation can be readily inferred from our discussion of complete and incomplete activities. It is this. Activity in accord with theoretical wisdom has the highest-degree of direct impact on how happy a life is, whereas practical wisdom and the virtues of character have both a direct impact and an indirect one.

But honor, pleasure, understanding, and every virtue, though we do choose them because of themselves as well (since if they had no further consequences, we would still take each of them), we also choose for the sake of happiness, supposing that because of them we shall be happy. Happiness, on the other hand, no one chooses for the sake of these things or because of anything else in general. (*NE* I 7 1097b2-6)

That they have a direct impact is registered in the claim that we choose them because of themselves; that they also have an indirect one is registered in the claim that we choose them for the sake of happiness. In the closing sentence of *Nicomachean Ethics* VI 13, the consequences of this for the relationship between practical wisdom and theoretical wisdom is described this way:

[Practical wisdom] does not control either theoretical wisdom or the better part any more than medicine controls health, since it does not use it but sees to its coming into being. So it prescribes for its sake, but not to it. Besides, it would be like saying that politics rules the gods, because it prescribes with regard to everything in the city. (1145a6-11)

That is why the office that supervises the worship of the gods and other religious matter is distinguished from the various political offices at *Pol.* VI 8 1322b17-29. Practical wisdom is, as the *Magna Moralia* felicitously puts it, “a sort of steward of theoretical wisdom, procuring leisure for it and its function” (*MM* I 35 1198b8-20; also I 34 1198a14, 1198b4-8).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Cf.: “Being a master does not consist in acquiring of slaves but in his using them. But there is nothing grand or dignified about this science. For what the slave needs to scientifically-know to do is what the master needs to know how to prescribe. That is why for those who have the resources not to bother with such things a steward takes on this office, while they themselves engage in politics or do philosophy” (*Pol.* I 7 1255b31-37).

Does that mean that the deal Aristotle has brokered between the political life and the contemplative one results in a single life? We shall have to see. When Aristotle introduces us to the three broad kinds of lives in, he writes: “People seem (which is not unreasonable) to get their suppositions about the good – that is, happiness – from their lives. For ordinary people, the most vulgar ones, suppose it to be pleasure. And that is why the life they like is the life of indulgence. For there are three lives that stand out: the one we just mentioned, the political, and, third, the contemplative” (*NE* I 5 1095b14-19).<sup>4</sup> What matter most for our purposes is that the political life, like the life of indulgence and the contemplative life, involves a conception of happiness, so that what we want to say about it is that it conceives of happiness as consisting in honor – in success and the approval of others:

Sophisticated people, on the other hand, and doers of action, deliberately choose honor, since it is pretty much the end of the political life. It, however, is apparently more superficial than what we are looking for, since it seems to be in the hands of the honorers more than of the honorees, whereas we have a hunch that the good is something that properly belongs to us and is difficult to take away. (*NE* I 5 1095b22-26)

Thus the *crudest political life*, as I shall call it, is quickly rejected. Honor is too superficial and too dependent on others to be happiness. But just as the defenders of the life of indulgence are on to something – the happy life really does need the external goods that gratify their appetites and that they (wrongly) think are the best ones there are – so too are the defenders of the crude political life:

Further, people seem to pursue honor in order to be convinced that they are good – at any rate, they seek to be honored by practically-wise people, among people who know them, and for virtue. It is clear, then, that according to them, at least, virtue is better. Maybe one might even suppose that *it* is more the end of the political life than honor is. But even virtue is apparently too incomplete, since it seems possible to have virtue even while sleeping or being inactive throughout life or while suffering evils and bad luck of the worst sort. Someone who was living like *that*, however, no one would call happy unless he was defending a thesis at all costs. That is enough about these issues, since they have also been adequately discussed in the works that are in circulation. (*NE* I 5 1095b27-1096a4)

<sup>4</sup> Cf.: “We can distinguish between sorts of lives. Some of them make no claim to this sort of thriving (*εὐημερίας* [= happiness]), since they are pursued only for the sake of necessities – for example, those concerned with the vulgar crafts or concerned with money-making or vulgar occupations (...) But since there are three things thought to lead to a happy life (the ones spoken of earlier as the greatest of human goods), namely, virtue, practical wisdom, and pleasure, so we also see three lives that all those who have the power to do so deliberately choose to live – the political life, the philosophical life, the life of indulgence. For of these, the philosopher wishes to concern himself with wisdom and the contemplation that is concerned with truth; the politician with the actions that are noble (these being the ones that stem from virtue); and the indulgent person with pleasures that are of the body” (*EE* I 4 1215a25-b5).

Thus of what might call *the cruder political life*, the one that has been further thought through, virtue (of character) not honor is the end, since it is what garners honor and praise of the right sort. But even that is not correct. Instead, *the crude political life*, which is clearly the one so-called in the *Politics*, thinks of action in accord with virtue and practical-wisdom, as its goal.

From now on, then, when I speak of the political life, I mean the crude one. And what I want to ask about it is just this. Suppose you were a champion of it, what would you do? That is, what would practical wisdom have you do? And here we confront a political fact of great magnitude, which is that there are many different political constitutions, both correct and deviant, each with its own conception of happiness, and so with its own views about the virtues that will best promote them: “By pursuing this [happiness] in different ways and by different means each group of people produces different ways of life and different constitutions” (*Pol.* VII 8 1328a41-b2). Hence one thing your practical wisdom will have to do is pick one of these constitutions for you to live your political life in. The question is, how will you select it?

It is in trying to answer this question that you will confront a version of the metaphysical problem that I used in part to connect our mountain to the Mount Everest of *Metaphysics* Zeta. Here is a variant of it. In which constitution will the virtues of character that you acquire by living in it be not just those of a good citizen of that constitution, but of a good human being? In which, since happiness is the activation of genuine human virtue, will you be genuinely thriving, genuinely happy? Here is Aristotle’s answer:

It is correct, then, to call the constitution we treated in our first accounts an aristocracy. For the one consisting of those who are unconditionally best in accord with virtue, and not those who are good men relative to a hypothesis, is the only constitution that it is just to call an aristocracy. For only in it is it unconditionally the case that the same person is a good man and a good citizen, whereas those who are good in the others are so relative to their constitutions. (*Pol.* IV 7 1293b1-7)

It takes no time at all to draw the conclusion that you will want to live in the constitution in which practical wisdom and the virtues of character best further your chances of acquiring theoretical wisdom and of having as much as possible of the leisure needed in which to activate it in actual contemplation. Here again is Aristotle expressing that very view:

Whatever choice and possession of natural goods (whether goods of the body, or wealth, or friends, or any other goods) will most produce contemplation of god, that is the best, and this is the noblest defining mark. (*EE* VIII 3 1249b13-19)

A person should do other things for the sake of the goods that are in himself, and of these the ones that are in the body for the sake of those that are in



the soul, and virtue [of character] for that of wisdom. For this is the highest [good]. (*Protrepticus* B21)<sup>5</sup>

After all, that activity is what the function argument shows us that our genuine happiness consists in. And what makes it yet clearer that this is indeed what the function argument does show is an initially puzzling doctrine about what a human being really is.

First, then, we need to look at the texts in which the doctrine is expressed, and here some identifying numbers will help us keep track:

(1) But just as a city too or any other complex system, seems to be most of all (μάλιστα) its most controlling part, so also does a human being. (*NE* IX 8 1168b31-33)

(2) It would seem too that each person actually *is* this, if indeed it is the controlling and better element. So it would be strange if he were to choose not his own life but that of something else. Moreover, what we said before will fit now as well. For what properly belongs to each thing by nature is best and most pleasant for each of them. For each human being, then, the life in accord with understanding is so too, if indeed this most of all is a human being. Hence, this life will also be happiest. (*X* 7 1178a2-8; also *Protr.* B58-70)

(1) tells us that a human being is μάλιστα (“most of all”) its most controlling element, which (2) identifies with the divine element in him, namely, understanding (νοῦς). (2) initially goes further than (1) in one dimension, since it drops the adverb μάλιστα, and speaks of a human being simply as being – as being one and the same as – his understanding. At the same time, it is more tentative about this identity – “if indeed it is the controlling and better element” – and in the end restores the adverb: “if indeed this most of all is a human being.” Now it is certainly true that we cannot make much sense of one thing being most of all one and the same as another, if this means that it has a very high,

<sup>5</sup> The surviving fragments of the *Protrepticus* provide a picture of the best life that is remarkably similar to the one we find in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Here human beings are identified more than anything with their understanding (B62), which is the only divine element in them (B108-110). Its virtue or excellence, which is variously called φρόνησις (B5, 17, 20-21, 38, 40, 43, 77, 103), σοφία (B27, 29, 53, 94), or φιλοσοφία (B5, 9, 41, 52, 55-57, 95), is the one associated with happiness (B68, 91-95). At the same time, a kind of φρόνησις, recognizably akin to practical wisdom, is distinguished from a kind of σοφία, recognizably akin to theoretical wisdom, and assigned a subsidiary value and role: “Some acts of thinking are choiceworthy solely because of the contemplation itself and are more estimable and better than those useful in relation to other things. The contemplative ones are estimable because of themselves, and the σοφία that is characteristic of understanding (νοῦς) is choiceworthy for them, but φρόνησις is choiceworthy for the sake of practical ones. The good and the estimable, then, lies in acts of contemplation in accord with σοφία, but certainly not in acts of contemplation of every kind” (B27). Implicitly acknowledging that φρόνησις and σοφία are doing this sort of double duty in the account, some fragments speak of “theoretical” σοφία (B29) or “theoretical” φρόνησις (B46), contrasting these with their practical varieties. Thus animals have “some small sparks of reason (λόγος) and φρόνησις but are entirely deprived of theoretical σοφία” (B29). Theoretical φρόνησις, which seems to be the same as theoretical σοφία, is the special possession of the philosopher, who “alone lives with his eye on nature and the divine” (B50).

or the highest, degree of numerical identity to it. For numerical identity, like existence, does not come in degrees, Things either exist or they don't and are either identical to each other or they aren't. However, the fact that (1) mentions a city as an example of the sort of complex system that is most of all its most controlling element gives us a way to understand it in more familiar and less apparently paradoxical terms.

In *Politics* III 6, Aristotle squarely states that (3) “the governing body controls the city everywhere, and constitution is governing body” (1278b10-11). What is revealing about this statement is that, like (1) and (2), it mentions the notion of control, which is itself characterized in terms of degree: “most controlling” in (1) and “controls the city everywhere (πανταχοῦ)” in (3). And the reason it is revealing is made plain in the following two texts:

(4) A person is called “self-controlled” or “lacking in self-control” depending on whether or not his understanding is in control, on the supposition that this is what each person *is*, and it is actions involving reason that people seem most of all to do themselves and to do voluntarily. So it is clear enough that this part is what each person is or is most of all and that a decent person likes this part most. (*NE* X 8 1168b34-1169a2)

(5) Just as in the universe it is god, so it is too in us. For the divine thing in us in a way moves everything. Of reason, however, the starting-point is not reason, but something superior. But what besides god is superior even to scientific knowledge and understanding? For virtue is an instrument of understanding.<sup>6</sup> (*EE* VIII 2 1248a25-29)

Without going into all the details involved in interpreting (5), we can see that together with (4) it licenses us to understand (1-2) as expressing a doctrine that is as much about control as it is about identity.

When contemporary philosophers try to understand human agency, they often find themselves wanting to distinguish actions that originate in – or have their causal source in – the agent from actions that stem from the agent's “real self” or “will” or what the agent “identifies” with. A reforming smoker, for example, may succumb to temptation and exhibit lack of self-control by smoking a cigarette, without thereby returning to being a smoker. Why? Because that action stems from a desire that is no longer a part of his true self, that he no longer wills or identifies with. However precisely we are best to understand the psychology of agency that makes these distinctions fully intelligible, it is attractive to see Aristotle as making an early contribution to it, since this allows us to make good sense of (1-2). For on this way of looking at them degrees of identity have no place in them. We are most of all our understanding because our understanding is our “true self” – the source of those actions that our most our own, that we most identify with. And our function – even though unlike the primary god we are complex beings – is our function

<sup>6</sup> That is, virtue of character, as part and parcel of practical wisdom, prescribes for the sake of theoretical wisdom, which is the virtue of understanding. See *NE* VI 13 1145a1-11, *EE* VIII 1 1246b10-12.

for the same reason. It is, so to speak, the function that is most all ours – the function of what we most of all identify with.

Back now to the choice of lives. A champion of the contemplative life will face the same problem as the champion of the political life, since he will want to know what constitution will best further his chances. And it is no surprise that he must, since practical wisdom is also his best guide, come to the same conclusion. He will want to be a citizen – to have been born and brought up as a citizen – of an aristocracy of virtue. Thus the champions of the political life and those of the contemplative life, guided by the same practical wisdom, will end up as equal citizens of the very same constitution.

Does that mean that the political life and the contemplative are the same? Well, as Aristotle likes to say, in a way they are and in a way they are not. For there is truth on both sides, but also falsehood. We may usefully begin with the falsehood. The falsehood in the position of those who champion the *crude* contemplative life, as we may now call it, and those who champion what we have been calling the crude political life is that each aims to live his respective life in complete separation from that of his opponent. One seeks a life with no contemplation in it, the other seeks a life with no political action in it – no activity in accord with practical wisdom and the virtues of character. The truth that each grasps, on the other hand, is that activity in accord with the virtue he champions – provided of course that these virtues and the relations between them are correctly conceived – is indeed (a sort of) happiness. So what we should say, if we want to put the matter exactly, is that the crude political life and the crude contemplative life are indeed distinct lives, but that the *refined* political life and *refined* contemplative life – the ones from the conceptions of which the falsehood of separation has been removed, so that only the truth remains – are indeed the same. They are one human life with, as we are about to see, two sides, not two separate lives.

I said that the virtues involved in the political life and the contemplative life must be correctly conceived if they are to fit together in the one life that is the refined version of each of these two lives. It is worth spelling out what exactly this means. Because a champion of the crude political life sees it as entirely separate from contemplation, he implicitly (or perhaps explicitly) sees the virtues exemplified in this life – crude practical wisdom, crude virtue of character, as we may call them – as separate from contemplation and its virtue. This is an error, because refined practical wisdom (and the virtues of character), as we saw, is a steward of theoretical wisdom that must see to its coming into being. Similarly, the champion of the crude contemplative life sees the virtue exemplified in his life – crude theoretical wisdom – as separate from practical wisdom and the virtues of character. This too is an error, although its nature is a bit more complex.

The understanding “seems to be born in us as a sort of substance, and not to pass away” (*DA* I 4 408b18-19), so that of all the constituents in the human soul “it alone is immortal and eternal” (*III* 5 430a23). As a result it is separable from the body, and “when separated (*χωρισθείς*)” from it, as it is after the body has passed away, “this alone is just what it is (*τοῦθ’ ὅπερ ἐστὶ*)” (430a22-23). Thus insofar as the champion of the crude contemplative life conceives of the understanding – the possessor of theoretical wisdom and the agent of contemplation – as separable from the body, he is quite correct, in Aristotle’s view. Thus he is also correct in thinking that “the virtue of understanding is

separated (κεχωρισμένη)” (*NE X 8 1178a22*) from the body, as well as from those elements in the soul, such as practical wisdom, which require a body (1178a10-22). The error he makes is in thinking that what applies to the soul when it is actually separated from the body also applies to it when it is not separated. For, as Aristotle puts it, “to the extent that someone is a human being, he will also need external prosperity, since his nature is not self-sufficient for contemplation, but his body needs to be healthy and provided with food and other sorts of care” (1178b33-35).

When we begin to think out what is involved in providing these bodily needs in the best way – in the way that they will be provided in the best constitution, the one that is an aristocracy of virtue – we are quickly led to retrace the route up the mountain that we have already taken. For goods of the body, as we recall, are genuine goods only if combined with, and controlled by, the goods of the soul, including, therefore, practical wisdom and the virtues of character. Thus while theoretical wisdom is indeed separated from the body and from the practical wisdom and virtues of character that see to its needs and care, it is nonetheless true that when the understanding of which it is the virtue is connected to a human body, it does need a body as well as these other virtues of character and thought.

Let us return now to the one life that is the refined political and the refined contemplative life combined, and ask what the day-to-day activities will be of the people – the agents – who live it. Well, slaves will do all of what we would call the real work, leaving the citizens free from all that. So their lives become initially bipartite, where the split is between the unleased part (which is not quite our work world because of the slaves) and the leased part. And it is into the unleased part that the refined political life falls:

Happiness seems to reside in leisure, since we do unleased things in order to be at leisure, and wage war in order to live in peace. Now the activity of the practical virtues occurs in politics or in warfare, and the actions concerned with these seem to be unleased and those in warfare completely so (for no one chooses to wage war for the sake of waging war, or to foment war either, since someone would seem completely bloodthirsty, if he made enemies of his friends in order to bring about battles and killings). But the activity of a politician too is unleased and beyond political activity itself he tries to get positions of power and honors or, at any rate, happiness for himself and his fellow citizens – this being different from the exercise of politics and something we clearly seek on the supposition of its being different. (*NE X 7 1177b4-15*)

That is the main reason, indeed, that the refined political life cannot be the happy – or anyway the happiest – one: “For the person who is being unleased is being so for the sake of some end he does not possess, whereas happiness is an end, and everyone thinks that it is accompanied not by pain [as unlease is] but by pleasure” (*Pol. VIII 3 1338a4-6*).

The refined political life has two distinct parts, moreover, namely, that of the citizens who rule and that of the citizens who are ruled, and thus has two distinct sides to its functioning: “The political life (...) is itself divided into what is useful for war and

what is useful for peace” (*Pol.* I 5 1254b30-32). In many constitutions rulers and ruled, soldiers and administrators, are, of course, distinct groups of people, but in the best one, which we are considering, they are not:

The best city contains both a military part and one that deliberates about what is advantageous and renders judgment about what is just, and since it is evident that these are most of all parts of the city, should these functions also be assigned to distinct people, or are both to be assigned to the same people? [The answer to] this is evident too, because in one way the functions should be assigned to the same people and in another they should be assigned to distinct ones. For since the prime time for each of the two functions is different, in that one requires practical wisdom and the other strength, they should be assigned to different people. On the other hand, insofar as it is impossible for those capable of using and resisting force to tolerate being always ruled, to that extent they should be assigned to the same people. For those who control the hoplite weapons also control whether a constitution will endure or not. The only course remaining, therefore, is for the constitution to assign both functions to the same people, but not at the same time. Instead, just as it is natural for strength to be found among younger men and practical wisdom among older ones, so it is advantageous and just to assign the functions to each group in this way, since this division is in accord with worth. (*Pol.* VII 9 1329a2-17)

What the political life amounts to for someone in the best city, then, depends, among other things, on his age. But it also depends irremediably on luck and chance. How much time will you need to be on active military duty? How much time in political deliberation? Outside the circumstances we would pray for, it all depends.

So much, then, for the unleased part of the refined political in the best city. Now for the leasured one. It is enough to notice that, while contemplation of god is its peak activity, it is far from being the only one. Tired after a long day spent in running the city or serving in the army – “unleisure is accompanied by toil and strain” (*Pol.* VIII 3 1337b39-40) – leasured activities first require that we relax, so we need something to relax us:

“Amusing ourselves so as to engage in serious matters,” as Anacharsis puts it, seems to be correct. For amusement is like relaxation, and it is because people cannot labor continuously that they need relaxation. End, then, relaxation is not, since it occurs for the sake of activity. (*NE* X 6 1176b33-1177a1)

Thus the best city will “introduce amusement, but watch for the appropriate time to use it, as if dispensing it as a medicine [for the ills of unleisure]” (*Pol.* VIII 3 1337b40-42). Once relaxed, we are then ready for leasured activities, which include playing and (especially) listening to music, since “music is for passing the time in leisure” (1338a21-22).

Also included among leisurely activities is philosophical discussion of a variety of sorts:

No matter what existing consists in for each sort of person, no matter what they choose to be living for the sake of, it is *this* they wish to pass their time doing in company with their friends. That is why some drink together, some play dice together, while others train together, hunt together, or do philosophy together, each sort spending their days together in whatever they most like in life. For since they wish to be living together with their friends, they do these actions and share in these things in which they think living together consists. (*NE IX 12 1172a1-8*)

Thus at one point in the *Politics* Aristotle postpones discussion of some topics to “another leisurely discussion” (*Pol. VII 1 1323b39-40*).

Beyond these not strictly contemplative activities, there are also a number of different contemplative ones:

Each type of theoretical knowledge has its attractions. For even if our contact with eternal things is but slight, all the same, because of its esteem, this knowledge is a greater pleasure than our knowledge of everything around us, just as even a chance, brief glimpse of those we love is a greater pleasure than the most exact view of other things, however many or great they are. On the other hand, because we know more of them and know them more fully, our scientific knowledge of things that pass away exceeds that of the others. Further, because they are nearer to us and because their nature is more akin to ours, they provide their own compensations in comparison with the philosophy concerned with divine things (...) For even in the theoretical knowledge of animals that are disagreeable to perception, the nature that crafted them likewise provides extraordinary pleasures to those who can know their causes and are by nature philosophers (...) That is why we should not be childishly disgusted at the investigation of the less estimable animals, since in all natural things there is something wondrous. (*PA I 5 644b22-645a17*)

Of these, contemplation in accord with theoretical wisdom may be the best sort, the one in which the best sort of happiness consists, but the others have delights of their own to offer. In fact, though it is seldom remarked on, contemplation of god – at any rate when embodied human beings do it – seems almost to need these other delights.

In discussing pleasures, Aristotle addresses this need in raising the following puzzle:

How is it, then, that no one is pleased continuously? Or is it that we get tired (*κάννεται*)? For continuous activity is impossible for all things human. So no continuous pleasure arises either, since it is entailed by the

activity. Some things delight us when they are novelties, but later delight us less, because of the same thing. For at first thought is called forth and is intensely active regarding them, as happens in the case of our sight when we look hard at something, but later the activity is no longer like that but has grown relaxed, so that the pleasure is dimmed as well. (*NE* X 4 1175a3-10)

The tiredness that explains why we cannot be continuously pleased might, of course, be the sort a good night's sleep relieves – which is what the verb κάμνειν usually signifies. But the immediate mention of novelties suggests that boredom rather than fatigue may be the issue – especially since the reason no activity pleases us for long is not simply that our batteries wear down:

In no case, though, is the same thing always pleasant, because our nature is not simple but also has another element in it, in that we are mortals. As a result, if one of the two is doing something, it is contrary to the nature of our other nature, and when the two are equally balanced, what we are doing seems neither painful nor pleasant. For if the nature of some being were simple, the same action would always be most pleasant. That is why the god always enjoys a single simple pleasure. For there is not only an activity of moving but also an activity of unmoving, and pleasure is found more in rest than in movement. “Change in all things is sweet,” as the poet says, because of a sort of wickedness. For just as a wicked human being is an easily changeable one, a nature that needs change is also wicked, since it is neither simple nor decent. (*NE* VII 14 1154b20-31)

Contemplation of god may be the peak leisured activity, but human beings cannot stay on the peak for long, without needing to do something else. The refined contemplative life needs to be variegated, in other words, and cannot be monochrome, even if its one color is as dear to us as a loved one. Having climbed Everest, and admired the view, we need to come back down.

Having done so, moreover, and seen not only the view from the peak but also the route to it, we are in a position to see something else of importance, namely, the unhelpfulness of the standard way of understanding Aristotelian happiness as either inclusive of other goods or exclusive of them. For the peak happiness of the leisured part of the life that is both the refined political and the refined contemplative one is exclusivist, whereas its overall happiness is inclusive. For the latter involves the partly-intrinsic, partly-extrinsic, goods consisting in the exercise of those virtues of character useful in leisure, and so the external goods needed for that exercise. The peak happiness of the unleisured part of that life, on the other hand, is also inclusive, but in another way than the leisured one, since it includes the partly-intrinsic, partly-extrinsic, goods consisting of the exercise of those virtues of character useful in unleisure, as well as the external goods they require for their exercise. Here is Aristotle making the requisite division between these two sets of virtues:

Now, courage and resilience are for unpleasure, philosophy for pleasure, and temperance and justice are useful in both, and particularly when people remain at peace and are at leisure. For war compels people to be just and temperate, but the enjoyment of good luck and the leisure that accompanies peace make them wantonly aggressive instead. Much justice and temperance are needed, therefore, by those who seem to do best and who enjoy all the things regarded as blessings – people like those, if there are any, as the poets say there are, who live in the Isles of the Blessed. For these above all will need philosophy, temperance, and justice, to the extent that they are at leisure amidst an abundance of such goods. (*Pol.* VII 15 1334a22-40)

Finally, the happiness of the human life as a whole is inclusive in a yet other way, since it includes the peak happiness of the refined contemplative life as well as that of the refined political life, which is in part lived for its sake and in part for its own sake. Thus the peak happiness of the refined political life without that of the refined contemplative one is deficient in happiness, it is a mountain without its highest peak – a life always conscious, so to speak, of an intrinsic deficiency. On the other hand, without the happiness of the refined political life, there is no mountain for the happiness of the contemplative life to be the peak of.

I end, though, on another note. “It is appropriate,” Aristotle tells us, “for those people to do best who live in the best constitution their circumstances allow – provided nothing contrary to reasonable expectation occurs” (*Pol.* VII 1 1323a17-19). But things can happen contrary to reasonable expectation in two ways – we can be unlucky, but we can also be lucky. So in making a deliberate choice to live in the best constitution, though we are, of course, making the best choice in the abstract, we are not necessarily reaching the best possible outcome in our actual circumstances. Here is Aristotle drawing the relevant distinction in his own terms:

But now there are two questions that need to be investigated. First, which life is more choiceworthy, the one that involves being active in politics with other people and sharing in the city, or the life of an alien, detached from<sup>7</sup> the political community? Further, what constitution and what condition of the city should be taken to be best – regardless of whether sharing in a city is choiceworthy for everyone or for most but not for all? Since [to answer] this question, but not the one about what is choiceworthy *for each*, is a function of political thought and theoretical knowledge, and this is the sort of investigation we have deliberately chosen to undertake now, the first is a side issue, whereas the second is a function of our method of inquiry. (*Pol.* VII 2 1324a13-23)

<sup>7</sup> Ξενικός is often best translated as “foreign,” as, for example, at *Pol.* I 9 1257a31, II 10 1272b20, and sometimes “foreign (ξένος)” is contrasted with “resident alien” (μέτοικος), as at III 5 1277b38 and VII 4 1326a20. Here, however, ξενικός seems to refer specifically to someone who is a resident alien in a city, not to someone who, as “no part of a city” at all, is either “a wild beast or a god” (I 2 1253a28-29). The verb ἀπολύειν (“detached from”) is used at I 9 1257a40 to mean “save themselves from the trouble,” and probably preserves some of that connotation here.



As not self-sufficient a human being needs to live in a community with others (*Pol. I* 2 1253a26-29). But he could do that in two ways: (1) by being a citizen of a city, actively participating in its political life – for example, by serving in the military, attending the assembly, holding office if elected, and so on; (2) by being a resident alien, excluded from such participation. Politics is concerned with the question of which constitution it is unconditionally best for all or most human beings to live in, and so has something to say about (1). But it is not concerned with (2). For what life is best for a given individual depends on the particularities of his nature, character, and circumstances. For him therefore the question is not which life is unconditionally best for human beings universally, but which of the lives actually available to him is best. This might well be the life of a resident alien in, say, a democratic city, or a tenured professor in a good research university.

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# ARISTOTLE'S *CONSTITUTION OF ATHENS* AND THE MEANING OF *POLITEIA*

## I. WHY READ THE *CONSTITUTION OF ATHENS*?

Over the course of the *Politics*, and especially in books three, four and seven, Aristotle makes a whole series of intriguing claims about the thing he calls πολιτεία. He variously identifies πολιτεία with 1) an order (τάξις) of the inhabitants of a city, 2) an order (τάξις) of the offices in a city, 3) the government or governing structure (πολίτευμα) of a city, 4) the form or εἶδος of a city and finally, 5) the way of life of a city, its βίος (*Politics* 1274b38; 1278b8-11; 1289a15-18; 1290a7-8; 1276b27-29; 1295a40). Near the end of the *Politics*, as he returns to questions that had occupied him at the beginning of the book, and in the *Ethics* as well, Aristotle further observes that different πολιτεῖαι have their origin in the different notions men have of happiness and the best way of life (1328a40-1328b2).

Clearly some of these characterizations of πολιτεία cohere more readily with one another than others. If πολίτευμα is taken to mean governmental structure, then “government” and “the order of offices” in a city sound like two ways of describing the same object. But the connection between πολιτεία as an order of offices and πολιτεία as an order of inhabitants is less obvious, and the connection between πολιτεία as government and πολιτεία as way of life is less obvious still. No doubt, if were we to look closely at the context in which each of these characterizations occurs and if were we then to think about them in light of the *Politics* as a whole, we would soon discover that Aristotle’s varying formulations are not only compatible but complementary, each one serving to fill out a different aspect of the meaning of πολιτεία. Still, the very variety of these formulations shows us that we are dealing here with a maddeningly complex object, and I assume I am not the only reader of Aristotle who wishes at times that he would simply *show* us how his different characterizations hang together. Here, I suggest, the *Constitution of Athens* can prove useful. Reading it may not add anything *essential* to the meaning of πολιτεία, but by providing us with a concrete illustration of a city and constitution it may help us to see how the different aspects of πολιτεία hang together or even point to a single underlying object.

This is not the only benefit of reading Aristotle’s little book. The *Constitution of Athens* also lets us peek into Aristotle’s workshop, or at least into a small corner of it. Just as

he is bringing the *Ethics* to a close, and preparing to begin the inquiry we call the *Politics*, Aristotle mentions that his inquiry will be based on a “collection of constitutions,” or literally, “the collected constitutions” (NE 1181b17). According to tradition this collection contained accounts of one hundred and fifty eight different regimes. Bits and pieces of the collection turned up here and there in antiquity, but only the so-called *Athenian Constitution* survives. The text, not discovered until the late nineteenth century, is more or less intact. The beginning and end are missing, but the body of the thing remains and thus gives us a chance to see Aristotle at work, laying out and assembling the material (or at least one one hundred and fifty eighth of the material) from which he will generate the *Politics*.<sup>1</sup> I might add that if the remaining accounts of constitutions had anything like the character of the text we have, we should be impressed and humbled before Aristotle’s positively Germanic industry. Yet we should not be altogether surprised. After all, how many plays must Aristotle have watched, read and absorbed before he wrote his *Poetics*? Surely dozens. Or consider his biological works: *The Parts of Animals*, *The Generation of Animals*, *The Motion of Animals* and so on all rest solidly on Aristotle’s *History of Animals*, a detailed and enormous survey – three volumes in the Loeb – of the animal kingdom. Apparently Aristotle made a similar survey of the human kingdom in preparation for composing what he calls his “philosophy of human things” (NE 1181b15). The *Constitution of Athens* is one little piece of it.<sup>2</sup>

Before turning to that text I want to propose one further benefit of reading *The Constitution* – a benefit that applies, not only to students of Aristotle, but to anyone who considers himself a citizen of a liberal democracy. Chances are that nearly all of us think there is a distinctive way that political life should be carried on in a democracy and that we, as citizens of liberal democracies, regularly engage in this life. Not only that, but in a more or less sophisticated way we trace the roots of our democratic life back to ancient Athens and assume a continuity between political life there and then and our own lives here and now. In this we are not altogether wrong – but we are not altogether right, either. In fact, we are more wrong than right, and it is probably good to be reminded now and then just how strange a place ancient Athens was – and that there is more than one way to be a citizen in a democracy. Reading the *Constitution of Athens* can do that for us. It can awaken us from our dogmatic slumbers. It can make us at once more self-aware and more aware of the range of available political possibilities. In short, reading the *Constitution* can put us in something like the position that Aristotle himself must have found himself

<sup>1</sup> For brief accounts of the number of constitutions in the collection, the discovery and reception of the text of the *Constitution* and so on, see the first few pages of the introductions by Fritz and Kapp, *The Constitution of Athens and Related Texts*, and Mathieu and Haussoullier, *Constitution d’Athènes*. For a much fuller account, including an extensive discussion of the debate regarding the authenticity of the text, see the introduction to the authoritative edition by John Sandys, *Aristotle’s Constitution of Athens*, xvii-lxv. Sandys’s extensive notes on the thorny and often obscure text of the *Constitution* are indispensable reading for anyone intending to do a serious study.

<sup>2</sup> The analogy with *The History* is not meant to be exact. Although I will later argue that *The Constitution* is more reflection-laden than it seems, it nevertheless resembles, and in large part is, a case study of an individual regime. *The History of Animals*, by contrast, is not a collection of animal case studies, although it might well have been based on such a collection; it is rather a preliminary characterization of the entire animal kingdom, rich with detail but also already organized around certain principles and principal distinctions.

in as he was assembling his collection of constitutions: “People do that!” he must have exclaimed, at least now and then.

## II. A CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORY

It is now time for us to see what Aristotle’s text can tell us about πολιτεία, about Aristotle, about Athens and ourselves. *The Constitution of Athens* falls neatly into two parts. The first, consisting of sections 1 through 41, is a constitutional history of Athens, a history that begins with its pre-Theseus origins and ends with the democracy that emerged after the defeat of the Thirty Tyrants. The second part, sections 42 through 69, treats the institutions of that restored democracy in sometimes excruciating detail. This essay will focus on the second, excruciating part. But before we turn to it some observations and reflections on the first part are in order.

To begin with, it is worth noticing that the first part is not the history of *one* constitution, *the* constitution of Athens. It is not even the story of the gradual emergence of one constitution over time and after many setbacks (or at any rate this emergence does not seem to be Aristotle’s primary focus). The title given by scholars to Aristotle’s text is misleading: in the synopsis that Aristotle himself provides at the conclusion of his history he counts off no fewer than *eleven* distinct Athenian constitutions (CA 41.2). The history of Athens is, then, a history of political shape-shifting, of one regime-change after another.

Moreover, Aristotle’s account makes it clear that to speak, as he sometimes does elsewhere, of six regimes, three good and three bad, is to paint the political landscape with too broad a brush (NE 1160a31-1161b12; *Politics* 1279a23-1279b10).<sup>3</sup> At least three of the regimes he describes in his history qualify as democracies – and yet he counts them as three distinct regimes rather than as one.<sup>4</sup> There are, in other words, many kinds of democracy, just as there are many kinds of oligarchy, kingship and so on. This more sophisticated approach to regimes will come as no surprise to students of Aristotle’s *Politics* – or at least to those who read past book three.<sup>5</sup> But it is useful to see that his account in the *Constitution*, gauged at the level of a particular city, accords with the more sophisticated and complex account of regimes that he provides in the later books of the *Politics*.

Another related issue, a kind of counterpoint to the point just made: at several points in his history Aristotle notes that various Athenian regimes have undergone sometimes

<sup>3</sup> Of course, since Aristotle speaks this way himself, he must regard the six regime approach (really the three regime plus three deviations approach) as an adequate starting point for inquiry. In the *Politics* Aristotle begins, as he so often does, with what is known or clear to us and moves gradually toward what is known or clear by nature or simply. See NE 1095b1-4 and *Physics* 184a16-26. In the *Constitution*, on the other hand, we are directly presented, or rather confronted, with an instance of the thing itself, in all its messy concreteness.

<sup>4</sup> A different count might yield as many as five: the constitutions of Solon, Cleisthenes and Ephialtes, the post-Four Hundred constitution and finally the current constitution. I hesitate to go this far. Although Aristotle characterizes Solon’s regime as the ἀρχή, the source or beginning, “from which democracy arose,” he does not explicitly label it a democracy (CA 41.2). The same thing might be said of Cleisthenes’s regime.

<sup>5</sup> In Book 4 of the *Politics* Aristotle lists and discusses four different types of democracy (and four different types of oligarchy) (*Politics* 1291b31-1292a34; 1292b23-1293a13). In the most radical instances of each, the rule of law is abandoned and all governance is through decree: we are left with the tyranny of the few in one and the tyranny of the many in the other, that is, we are left with forms of government that, like tyranny proper, can scarcely be regarded as regimes (1292a31-33; 1292b7-10).

dramatic transformations without, apparently, altering their character as distinct, individual regimes; what he calls the current regime is a case in point, as was the regime under Pericles and the demagogues. What we are being shown here is that the whole task of regime recognition or identification requires real finesse, real discernment, on the part of the student of politics. Put in another way: politics, πολιτική, requires φρόνησις as well as ἐπιστήμη, at least insofar as it studies actual regimes. Shifts that look fairly minor from the outside may signal genuine changes in regime; fairly large and striking alterations may not.

A final point about Aristotle's history of Athens underscores this difficulty. One of the striking features of that history is how many institutions and offices become mainstays of the city early on and remain in force to a greater or lesser degree through most or all of the history Aristotle tells, in spite of all the changes of regime. The various archonships are a case in point, as are many of the military leadership positions. So is the Areopagus.<sup>6</sup> Given this situation, how in the world is one to know whether a regime change has occurred? Aristotle hints at an answer in the course of his history. Take the Areopagus: staffed by former archons, it was originally tasked with keeping an eye on the laws and regime, and even as late as the war with Persia it wielded tremendous authority; but over time it lost that authority (partly thanks to one of its leading members, Themistocles) and its powers were shifted to the law courts and assembly, that is, to the δῆμος.<sup>7</sup> Would-be observers of regimes and regime change must, then, avoid being taken in by appearances, in this case by the appearance of institutional stability; they must instead attend to the relative weight that institutions have and to the powers they wield, as well as to who gets to wield those powers once a shift has occurred. Once again we seem to be back in the orbit of the *Politics* – in this case its identification of πολιτεία with an order of offices and an ordering of inhabitants. Only now we can see with greater clarity that by order, τάξις, Aristotle means, among other things, *rank* – the relative weight of an office vis-à-vis others and the relative weight of the class of people who wield, or come to wield, its powers.

### III. THE CURRENT REGIME

I could go on. Aristotle's history is full of fascinating details – and equally fascinating gaps. But it is now time for us to turn to his account of the current constitution of Athens. First, a warning to the potential reader: Aristotle's account is baffling, hard to get through and even harder to retain. The problem does not lie with Aristotle – he is as lucid as one can be about such matters. Nor is it the fault of the Athenian constitution he is describing, or not exactly. The problem rather lies in the sheer multitude of offices and the intricacy of their connections with one another. There are the usual archonships and generalships.

<sup>6</sup> In Aristotle's telling, the king or king-archon was the first office instituted in ancient Athens. Then came the polemarch (because not all kings are good at leading armies) and after this came the archon proper and others archonships. Out of these arose the Areopagus; composed of elder statesmen, it served as a kind of super-council or senate, issuing fines, punishing offenders against the public order and guarding the regime and laws. To my mind the Areopagus in its original form looks like the ancient Athenian analogue to the mysterious nocturnal council of Plato's *Laws*. In any case, *all* of these institutions – the most ancient Athenian institutions – still exist in some fashion in the current regime.

<sup>7</sup> Aristotle relates the fascinating (and painful) story of the decline of the Areopagus, and Themistocles' part in that decline, in sections 26-29 of the *Constitution*. As usual, Themistocles, the paradigmatic Athenian, comes across as both brilliant and sordid.

There are treasurers of different types. There are auditors and accountants and examiners. There are commissioners who maintain sanctuaries, supervisors of the mysteries, market inspectors, commissioners of weights and measures. There are even people whose job it is to make sure that dung is deposited at a sufficient distance from the city walls and that the corpses of people who die in the streets get cleaned up. The list goes on and on. By my count, there are at least fifty distinct offices and at least three hundred and thirty seven different officials. And this list does not include officers below the rank of general. Nor does it include the five hundred members of the council. There are, in short, upwards of a thousand government officials (if we include council members, who had a great deal of work to do) and most of them, it seems, are unpaid, since pay is only mentioned in the case of attendance at the assembly and on juries, membership on the council and a few other offices (*CA* 62.2).<sup>8</sup> And this for an estimated population of between twenty and thirty thousand regular citizens!

A remarkable picture – and not at all because it resembles a case of French-style bureaucratic overkill. *Au contraire*. Aristotle's portrait of the Athens of his day is remarkable, above all, because the regime he describes assumes an extraordinarily high level of engagement on the part of the citizenry, especially because most offices are assigned to citizens by lot. By my estimate, the average citizen could expect to serve on the council at least once and hold at least one other office over the course of his civic life – in addition to regular attendance at the assembly meetings and the jury meetings where much of the work of governing would get done. I am reminded of Tocqueville's marvelous description of life in the New England township and of his equally marvelous (and marveling) descriptions of the energy and vitality of America's civic life.<sup>9</sup> Something of that vitality, energy and engagement seems to be presupposed by and present in the Athenian constitution as well. And energy and engagement are not the only requirements: discipline and orderliness are, too. Readers of Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War* (not to mention Plato's *Republic*) are likely to think of the Athenian δῆμος as an unruly mob,

<sup>8</sup> Tasks assigned to the council include reviewing applications for entry into the body of citizens (42.2), investigating officeholders (45.2), deliberating in advance about all matters to be put before the assembly (45.4), supervising the upkeep and construction of triremes (46.1), inspecting public buildings (46.2), collaborating with other officeholders in the work of administration (47.1), examining horses and potential cavalymen (49.1) – and of course attending every meeting of the assembly, which convenes roughly every nine days. The council itself meets every day except holidays – no wonder, given the multitude of its tasks.

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, *Democracy in America*, vol. 1, part 1, chap. 5, especially sections 1-5 and chap. 6, section 6. Also vol. 2, part 2, chap. 5. Tocqueville's account of the vitality of democratic life in America and his celebration of what he calls "local liberty" has as its somber backdrop, especially in volume 2, the danger of what he calls individualism, the tendency of men in a state of extreme equality to withdraw from public life into themselves or into "the circle of family and friends." This particular specter does not seem to haunt the Athenian constitution, perhaps because modern anxiety in the face of equality has something to do with sheer size. Athens was tiny. On the other hand, it is at least possible that Aristotle's presentation of the current constitution deliberately abstracts from any possible tension between public and private. At any rate, no mention is made of a domestic or private sphere into which the citizen might retreat. Family life might as well not exist: apart from a few mentions of heiresses, women seem to exist in the *Constitution* only in the form of flute, harp and lyre girls and they are dealt with by the same officials who take care of dung and corpse removals (*CA* 50). The same thing might be said of philosophy: no one seems to be philosophizing in the current regime and Socrates plays no part in Aristotle's history of Athens: Anytus is mentioned, but only as particularly corrupt official (*CA* 28). It is as if the citizens of the current regime were completely absorbed in civic life, as if all their ἔργα and θυμὸς were confined within the public sphere.

easily riled up by Cleon and his like and unwilling to submit to any limits or rule.<sup>10</sup> But that description is not easy to square with the picture we get here of an orderly multitude of intricately intertwined offices, a multitude that seems to presuppose an orderly multitude of citizens willing to attend to their assigned (or rather, allotted) tasks while keeping an eye on the whole.

Where is that engagement and discipline to come from? In part it might come from the holding of office – under the right circumstances the very exercise of an office can bring attachment to it and along with attachment, focus. But Aristotle also points to another, related answer at the outset of his account of the current constitution. Every potential Athenian citizen must first demonstrate his eligibility for citizenship and then undergo four years of rigorous military service – two years of training and two years of garrison duty – under the careful supervision of elected officials. The training is comprehensive, including training in heavy armor, and during the years of service all distractions are deliberately kept to a minimum (*CA* 42).<sup>11</sup> It does not seem hard to imagine that an attachment to the city and an ability to attend to the task at hand might follow readily from such intense, focused training and the accompanying duties, especially because both were merely a preparation for a lifetime of military service. To be an adult male under the current regime was to be ever ready to fight and die for country and constitution.

This leads to a final point about the particular features of the current Athenian constitution. As you probably know, in stark contrast to our present way of thinking about democracy, in antiquity the assignment of offices by lot was generally associated with democracy and the assignment of offices by election with aristocracy and oligarchy (*Politics* 1294b7-9). Now as already observed, most offices in this regime are assigned by lot, and most power is located in the assembly and law courts. So it seems clear that we are dealing with some sort of democracy. On the other hand, certain offices of critical import are elective offices, and all but two of those offices have to do with military matters; moreover, *all* military officers are elected; that feature of the regime, together with the heavy emphasis on military training and military service as conditions for citizenship point in the direction of aristocracy. Are we perhaps dealing with a form of so-called *πολιτεία*, the “good” version of democracy – but one without any sort of

<sup>10</sup> *The Peloponnesian War*, 2.65 and 3.36; *The Republic*, 557a-558c. As his constitutional history makes evident, Aristotle shares Thucydides’ disdain for Cleon: he regards Cleon as a corrupter of the *δημος* and the first in a long line of self-serving demagogues (*CA* 3-5). But there is no mention of demagoguery in his presentation of the current regime; instead we get an emphasis on orderliness and intense civic involvement. Is there something about the latest regime, the current “order of offices,” that renders demagoguery unlikely – or has Aristotle simply chosen to remain silent about the problem?

<sup>11</sup> The ability to “provide heavy armor,” that is, the ability to fight as a hoplite, was once a mark of aristocratic distinction, like being able to supply a horse for war or outfit a trireme. For instance, in the pre-Solonic, decidedly anti-democratic constitution, the ability to provide heavy armor was a condition for full citizenship (*CA* 4.2). The current regime represents a radical departure from that old norm: now every citizen – and the condition for citizenship is simply to have been born of citizen parents – is provided with proper equipment and receives, as it were, a free liberal education in the arts of war. All this will sound strange to our modern ears – we take it for granted that it is the job of the modern state to provide its soldiers with uniforms, equipment, training, food, health care and so on. But viewed against the backdrop of, say, the *Iliad*, the normalcy of the *ancien régime* and the disruptiveness of the new make sense.

property requirement?<sup>12</sup> In any case, it looks, on the whole, as if even the principle of office assignment by lot is not intended here to set the citizenship bar low but to raise it very high. *Everyone* in this regime should be up to performing even the highest tasks (military offices aside) and no one should be spared the lowest ones, not even dealing with dead bodies and dung. We are back to our question about regime recognition, but this time with a focus: what exactly is the Athenian constitution? And how, in the end, does Aristotle want us to think about it?

I have a proposal to make about that. It will require the slight emendation of one of our initial assumptions, the assumption that Aristotle is doing his best, in the *Constitution*, to represent faithfully the current Athenian regime – in other words, the assumption that the *Constitution* is a straightforward presentation of the facts of the matter, as Aristotle sees them. What if this is not quite the case? What if Aristotle sees his constitution-gathering task a little differently – less as a simple fact-finding mission than as an opportunity to reflect on regimes at the level of the ultimate particular? In that case, we might expect to find the kind of reflection we see developed in the *Politics* already taking root in his fieldwork. And in that case it seems at least possible that Aristotle sees contained or embedded in the details of the current Athenian regime a model for a certain kind of δῆμος-centered regime – one that would be tough enough to withstand external shocks but also well-ordered enough to avoid the internal roiling and tensions that tend to undo more single-minded regimes.<sup>13</sup> This, then, is my proposal or conjecture: that in his wide-ranging study of regimes Aristotle remains true to the particulars but also true to what becomes visible in and through particulars, and that he is recording the results of one such inquiry in the *Constitution of Athens*. In so doing he gives us, not the best regime, as in the *Republic*, and not the best regime brought

<sup>12</sup> Πολιτεία is one of two names that Aristotle gives to the positive form of democracy. The other is timocracy, because it has involves a property (*time*) requirement (*NE* 1160a31-34). Note that in the first (and presumably best, that is, closest to πολιτεία) of the four forms of democracy there is also a property requirement, albeit a low one. For a helpful note on the connection between the two senses of πολιτεία, one general, one particular, see the Sachs translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, note 243, pg.155.

<sup>13</sup> To be sure, the complete lack of a property requirement in the current Athenian constitution might seem to suggest that, if anything, it is a democracy at the furthest extreme from πολιτεία. Aristotle's observation that under the current regime the δῆμος has gradually absorbed all power into itself would seem to support this notion, as does the fact that jury members and members of the assembly are paid for their service (*CA* 41; *Politics* 1293a1-13). In addition, a focus on virtue as well as the common good appears to be a feature of all good constitutions – and there is no mention of virtue in Aristotle's account of the current constitution, nor for that matter, any mention of education (*Politics* 1280b5-9). *On the other hand*, Aristotle himself notes that one of the tasks of the political scientist is to investigate the best constitution achievable in a given set of circumstances; he also mentions that in his day cities tend to be large and that in such cities the δῆμος is bound to play a role. Moreover, Aristotle notes that one way to achieve πολιτεία is to blend features from aristocracy or oligarchy with features from democracy; one of the blends he mentions involves instituting elections (an aristocratic feature), but without any property requirement for those standing for election (a democratic feature) – *the very thing* that is done with a number of the important offices in the current constitution (*Politics* 1294b6-14). As for virtue and education, could one not argue that from the very first moment of his enrollment, the life of the Athenian citizen is an education in courage – the very virtue that Aristotle notes is distinctive of πολιτεία (*Politics* 1279a39-1279b5)? I do not mean to insist here that the current regime is in fact a case of πολιτεία – I rather mean to underscore how difficult it is to identify and judge regimes at the level of the particular. Incidentally, one benefit of considering the Athenian regime as a possible case of πολιτεία is that the title of Aristotle's text takes on new meaning: It now means, not simply "the Athenian regime," but "the Athenian version of πολιτεία."



to life in the mists of time, as in the *Timaeus*, and not even a very good regime set in a faraway land, as in the *Laws*; instead he gives us a current regime, set in the here and now, but tweaked and burnished in light of the *Laws* and perhaps the *Republic* as well. In so doing he shows us how the form of a regime, its εἶδος, can order the offices of a city, order the lives of its inhabitants and thus confer on those inhabitants and the city itself a distinctive way of life, one that is vibrant and whole. To borrow freely from Plato's second letter, in so doing Aristotle gives us an Athens that is just a little more young and little more beautiful.

#### IV. ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΑ AS FORM: NATURE AND ART

We have been puzzling over Aristotle's portrait of the current Athenian constitution, wondering what sort of political order it represents and how closely it hews to the Athens of Aristotle's day. But our initial question was not about the Athenian πολιτεία; it was about πολιτεία as such and whether the various features Aristotle ascribes to πολιτεία in the *Politics* hang together or even point to some underlying unity. Has our exploration of Aristotle's constitution of Athens helped us to make progress with this question? I have just claimed that it has – that we are now in a position to see that those features not only cohere with one another, but that their underlying source of unity is πολιτεία as εἶδος. How sound is this claim?

Let us take up the issue of coherence first. It seems easy enough to see that in the current regime the way offices are ordered is directly bound up with an ordering of inhabitants, at least male inhabitants, and that this ordering is in turn bound up with a certain way of life. For example, the centrality of the law courts and assembly directly implies the ascendancy of the ordinary man, as does the eligibility of such men to be chosen by lot for all but a few offices; the broad training in the arts of war implies that every citizen is elevated to hoplite status while at the same time the selection of military officers by vote implies a ranking of citizen-inhabitants in terms of military prowess and intelligence. But implicit, in turn, in this ordering and ranking of citizens is a certain way of life: as we have seen, to be an Athenian citizen under the current regime requires one to be heavily invested and involved in political life, that is, to be conversant with the affairs of the day, on the one hand, and ready both to occupy most offices and do battle on behalf of the regime, on the other.

So much for the linkage between offices, inhabitants and way of life in the current constitution. But it takes only a small step in thought to see that the type of analysis that holds for the current Athenian constitution should hold for *any* constitution. To take just one example, drawn again from Aristotle's little text: When the eligibility for important offices depended on wealth and birth, as it did in early Athens, when the important work was done by archons and the council instead of the assembly and law courts, wealthy and well-born inhabitants were elevated over poor ones, and their lives were accordingly shaped by their involvement in public life – while the lives of the poor were, in turn shaped by their exclusion from public life. In short, the “order of offices,” the “order of inhabitants,” and the “way of life” (βίος) of a city and its inhabitants each mutually imply one another and thus can each serve as a marker or fingerprint for the nature and character of a given regime, at least under normal circumstances and for the sufficiently

astute observer.<sup>14</sup> Hence, we suggest, Aristotle's willingness to freely substitute one for the other in the *Politics*.

What about the remaining regime-markers mentioned by Aristotle, namely, *πολίτευμα* and *εἶδος*? *Πολίτευμα* is the less interesting of the two. It can either mean the structure of government or the group of people currently occupying offices. In the first case, as was mentioned earlier, *πολίτευμα* is synonymous with the order of offices. In the second, it is closely aligned with the order of inhabitants: to single out those who can and do hold and wield power in a given city is to adumbrate the relative rank of the inhabitants of that city. In other words, Aristotle's occasional identification of *πολιτεία* with *πολίτευμα* adds nothing new to the account; its meanings reduce to the markers already discussed.

The identification of *πολιτεία* with *εἶδος* is another matter. Here everything depends on the meaning we ascribe to *εἶδος*. Above I ascribed a certain agency to *πολιτεία* in the sense of form: the form of a regime *orders* offices and inhabitants and in so doing *generates* a certain way of life. Does this way of talking and thinking about *πολιτεία*-as-form make sense? It surely would if cities were like living things, at least if we follow Aristotle's lead. For in the case of animals (and the case of plants is analogous) it is nature in the sense of form that is responsible, not only for the coming into being of animals, but for the organization of their sensory powers and their organs, their different ways of moving and their modes of reproduction.<sup>15</sup> Similarly – if the analogy holds – the constitution of a given city would be ultimately responsible for everything from the organization of the principal powers in the city – the magistracies – to the way citizens view one another and their place in the city, to the work they do and the lives they lead. The constitution in this sense, constitution as form, would be the soul of the city, the primal, animating source (*ἀρχή*) of all the offices (*ἀρχαί*) from which the life of citizen and city flow.

As attractive and plausible as this hypothesis might sound, it is not without its attendant difficulties. In the first place, it assumes that cities are substances (*οὐσίαι*), that is, independent beings – self-organizing, self-sufficient wholes. While this might again appear plausible – self-sufficiency is a feature that distinguishes the city from village and family – cities are obviously composed of human beings, and human beings, too, are self-organizing, self-sufficient wholes (*Politics* 1252b27-1253a1). But Aristotle does not in general entertain the possibility of wholes made up of wholes or substances made up of substances. Indeed, in at least one place he seems to rule them out: The parts of a substance are potencies rather than things, since they are what they are only insofar as they are integrated into the whole; a heart or a hand is a thing only in a manner of speaking

<sup>14</sup> I mention “normal circumstances” because it is easy to imagine situations where, say, the inhabitants in a given city were moving in a democratic direction while the institutions remained aristocratic or oligarchic. In such a case, the two markers would be out of sync. I mention the “sufficiently astute observer” because, as we saw in the case of Athens, institutional structures like the Areopagus can remain in place but alter or lose their meaning. One has to know how to “read” regime structures, just as, for instance, zoologists have to know when to discount the presence of vestigial limbs or organs.

<sup>15</sup> Aristotle takes up these topics in (respectively) *De Anima*, the *Parva Naturalia*, *The Parts of Animals*, *The Motion of Animals*, *The Gait of Animals* and *The Generation of Animals*.

(*Metaphysics* 1040b5-10).<sup>16</sup> On these grounds it would seem strange to start thinking of regimes as forms in an active sense and cities as in-formed wholes.

A second difficulty has to do with time and stability. In nature, forms and the things they inform tend to last. They enjoy relative stability. The now towering oak is already recognizable in the sapling. Its enduring identity remains before us, at work in the tree and on us, as the tree makes its way from season to season, gaining and losing leaves and limbs, growing and changing its shape. The form is there until the moment when the tree topples over or is cut down – and sometimes even beyond, if Antiphon is right (*Physics* 193a12-17). Regimes seem to enjoy no such stability. They come and go like leaves. We can see this in Aristotle's own *Constitution*: the constant shifting from constitution to constitution makes the constitution or rather constitutions of Athens seem much less stable than the city they are supposed to constitute. Perhaps there is some enduring identity to the thing we call Athens, but if so, it seems different from any of the regimes we see coming and going. How, then, can we compare these “forms” of government to the powerful presences at work in the natural world?

A third and final difficulty is closely related to this one. Once again Aristotle's *Constitution* points the way: for what we see when we read his constitutional history is not regimes at work, organizing and ordering the lives of human beings, but just the opposite. We see human beings founding, altering and destroying regimes. Here regimes are not agents or causes but effects, the products of human-all-too-human making. In short, if regimes are forms at all they are forms in the weak sense, with no more agency than the form of a house or the form of a bed. Νόμος rather than φύσις seems to be the basis of politics; regimes are nothing but conveniences, conventions (νόμοι) about who is in charge and what one can do (or get away with) constructed and held by people who happen to live together.

And yet, according to Aristotle cities exist by nature. They represent, or are meant to represent, the natural fulfillment of our most natural and most basic desires, coming into being to satisfy our desire for continuity and security and existing to satisfy our desire for the good life, that is, for happiness – the very thing that, as was mentioned earlier, is the reason for and target of the different regimes human beings adopt (*Politics* 1252a26-31; 1252b27-30; 1328a40-1328b2). It seems difficult to believe, then, that there is simply no connection between πόλις and πολιτεία, on the one side, and nature and form as it manifests itself in nature, on the other. True, Aristotle does not discuss πολιτεία in book one of the *Politics*, the book in which he invokes nature most often and most emphatically proclaims the naturalness of the city – and in fact does not even mention πολιτεία until the end, as he is transitioning into book two (*Politics* 1260b8-24). And true, too, he stops just short of directly identifying πολιτεία with form in book three, choosing instead to let the identification be made via analogy (*Politics* 1276b1-13). But the point is not, I think, to call into question the naturalness of all but the most primitive cities or to drive a wedge between natural form and πολιτεία. Instead Aristotle hesitates

<sup>16</sup> As if to underscore this point, Aristotle no sooner proclaims that the “the city is among those things that are by nature” than he demotes human beings as citizens to the status of mere appendages, who can no more be said to exist apart from the city than foot or hand can apart from the living body (*Politics* 1253a1-25). It looks, at any rate, as if the effect of elevating the city to the status of an independent thing is to deprive man of his thinghood.

or proceeds indirectly in these and such moments in order to make us pause and reflect. Rather than encourage us to treat the city as just another case of a naturally existing composite of so-called matter and form, he wants us to wrestle with and respond to just the sorts of questions we have been raising.

How, then, might we respond? We might begin by noting that there is something slightly misleading about the constitutional history section of Aristotle's *Constitution*. The reader of his capsule history is likely to be struck at first by the appearance of multiplicity, but the eleven shifts in constitution occur over the course of nearly three hundred years and a number of shifts occur in fairly close succession. Consequently many Athenian citizens would have had the experience of living under one regime for their whole lives: some regimes *do* last. And it is precisely in the case of such citizens that *their* current regime had something like the comprehensive force that we detected in Aristotle's account of *the* current regime; for them it would have felt as if their whole lives were shaped, governed, organized and ordered by Athens itself, or even Athena herself. (For a citizen in this condition, the distinction between city and regime and even city and goddess can barely exist.) This surely is what W.L. Newman, the great commentator on the *Politics*, had in mind when he observed that:

every constitution had an accompanying ἥθος, which made itself felt in all the relations of life. Each constitutional form exercised a moulding influence on virtue (...). Each constitution embodied a scheme of life, and tended, consciously or not, to bring the lives of those living under it into harmony with its particular scheme.<sup>17</sup>

It is perhaps difficult for us to imagine, but for such people, people for whom their regime *was* the world, life must have resembled sharing in the being at work of a natural form.<sup>18</sup>

This does not mean, of course, that regimes *are* natural forms or that they involve no artifice. After all, Aristotle's own *Politics* presupposes that constitutions can and should be altered if something is amiss and that there is art involved in the adjustment, repair, and sometimes radical remaking of constitutions. In fact, one of the tasks, perhaps the chief task, of the statesman is to find and, if necessary, bring forth the form, that is, the regime that best suits the material he is working with.<sup>19</sup> But this requires him to do more than understand and incorporate those "natural and most basic desires" mentioned earlier, that is, the longings for security, continuity and happiness that are basic to every city.

<sup>17</sup> W.L. Newman, *The Politics of Aristotle*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Calderon Press, 1887), 209-210.

<sup>18</sup> The sense of being enveloped or embraced by a *régime* may be remote from us – so many people nowadays seem suspicious of their own and perhaps all political institutions-but we are perhaps no less in thrall to certain political notions. We simply operate at a higher level of abstraction. Consider how quickly and how readily all our questions about justice get framed in terms of rights and freedoms. The right to life, the right to choose, gay rights, gun rights, labor rights, property rights: party allegiance makes no difference in this respect; our thought tends to move within the same structures.

<sup>19</sup> This complex and ambitious "practical" aspect of the science of politics, the aspect that makes it at the same time an *art* of politics, is set forth most clearly at the beginning of book four of the *Politics*. See especially 1288b10-1289a13.

“Best suits the material” means understanding the *nature* of the people he is to work with, their geographical situation, their proximity to others cities and so on.<sup>20</sup> Only in light of his understanding of this material in all its particularity and with all its inherent tendencies will he be able to find the regime that will “take,” that is, the regime that will allow his city to function as smoothly and as flexibly as if it were a natural being with its proper form.

There is yet another sense in which art and nature mix in the case of regimes. Reflecting on it will allow us to address, if not fully resolve, the substance within substance difficulty mentioned earlier. It will also allow us to think further about what it means for a regime to “take.” We can begin with the following thought: in all instances of making, materials matter: wooden saws won’t work and walls built with wood below and bricks or stone above won’t work either (*Physics* 199b35-200a15). On the other hand, there is a good bit of flexibility in the case of such arts. Houses can be built of stone or wood or brick or mud; houses, cathedrals, sewers and bridges can be made of stone. The “fit” between form and material is not fixed. Not so in the case of genuine independent beings, true οὐσία. Here the fit is so tight that material in its completely worked up (that is, formed) state is virtually indistinguishable from form: “the last stage of material and the form are one and the same thing”; “whenever [material] is at work, then it is present in that form” (*Metaphysics* 1045b17-20; 1050a15-17).

Cities seem to fall between these two extremes. The same form or regime (the same arrangement of offices) can turn up in many locales, and (more to the point) the same city, or rather, the same populace can take on many regimes. But not all forms or regimes are equal. Consider Athens (one last time). After a certain point in its history, the regimes that tended to last were democratic or quasi democratic; attempts to install tyranny or oligarchy were either on-and-off (Pisistratus and Sons) or short-lived (the Thirty) (*CA* 13-19, 35-38, 41). Though Aristotle does not stress the point, we do seem, after all, to be witnessing the gradual emergence of an ever more democratic form. But this suggests that there *is* some sort of underlying, enduring identity in Athens that is gradually making its way to the surface, a form embedded in the very material of the city, and that the presence of this incipient form makes it resist or shrug off the forms that don’t suit it and embrace the ones that do.

How are we to think about this phenomenon, not only in the case of Athens, but in all cities? Why do cities tolerate some forms and reject or at least resist others? I suggest that the condition for toleration is something like the following. As we have seen, every regime represents or embodies a certain vision of life – that is, an order of offices and inhabitants that implies a certain way of life for the city and for its different parts. But the various inhabitants of a given city also have such a vision, perhaps less worked out than the total vision, perhaps more focused on themselves and those nearest to them – but at any rate a vision of their place within the whole community. Now, when there is sufficient agreement between the regime-vision and that of a sufficient number of inhabitants, the

<sup>20</sup> Aristotle’s clearest treatment of these “conditions” (ὑποθέσεις) is to be found in book seven, chapters four through six, in the preliminaries to his discussion of the best regime. Among other things, he speaks at length about the “nature” of the populace required to form such a regime (*Politics* 1327b18-20; 1328a17-20.)

regime will be tolerable. When there is not, when important groups and individuals feel slighted or left out, it will not, and the mismatch between regime-vision and citizen-vision will begin to generate a simmering sense of indignation, if not resistance or outright rebellion.<sup>21</sup> That's what makes the work of the statesman so difficult and why Aristotle must spend so much time in the later books of the *Politics* talking through the many possible constitutional arrangements: it takes a great deal of work (and probably a good bit of luck) to get the balance right at all, and even more (and more luck) to get it *just* right, to hit, as it were, the constitutional sweet spot.

Several interesting consequences follow from this line of reasoning. First, if art is involved in the establishment of a constitution of a given city – if the constitution has not arisen through a combination of chance, necessity and a clash of warring wills – then the achieving of agreement between regime-vision and citizen-vision can be described as a true meeting of minds. For in such a case the form, the vision, in the intellect of the artisan-statesman is in perfect accord with the forms in the intellects of citizens, even if those forms are only partial versions or expressions of the comprehensive vision of the statesman; in Newman's language, the “ἦθος” and “scheme of life” intended by the legislator exists in “harmony” with the “ἦθος” and “scheme of life” of the citizen. But this means that the form brought forth within the material of the city by the artisan-statesman – which in ordinary cases of craftsmanship would become inert the moment the craftsman was done – is identical to the form severally present within the material, i.e., within the citizens. But this is just the condition that obtains in the case of truly independent beings, where the distinction between material and form falls away, where “the last stage of material and the form are one and the same thing”: in such a case, the city will most resemble an οὐσία, for in this case, as in the case of natural beings, the source of motion, the form, is at work within, not imposed from the outside. Like the doctor who heals himself, the citizens in a regime that “takes” in effect become craftsmen of the whole (*Physics* 199b26-33).

It is here that we find the solution to our wholes within wholes or substance within substance dilemma. The dilemma may be re-expressed as follows. Either the city is the whole, the independent being, and the citizen is reduced to a dependent being, a mere potentiality, an instrument who receives his meaning and being only through the whole. Or the citizen is the whole, the independent being, and the city is reduced to a heap, a dependent being generated and designed to provide, say, comfort or security to the citizen. The solution is to have a whole that is present in and completed by the part and a part that is present in and completed by the whole. But that is just what we have in the case we have been discussing. Our dilemma is resolved, but we should note that its resolution presupposes a further condition, one rooted in our very nature: “Man is by nature a *political* animal (ζῷον),” that is, man is a being whose very being demands that he make his life in cities (*Politics* 1253a2-4). It is because of this demand that human beings need to do more than just live together (συσζῆν) in families and villages that

<sup>21</sup> Aristotle discusses the causes of disaffection and insurrection at length in book five of the *Politics*, chapters one through six. The root cause in most cases is a sense that persons or groups have been treated unjustly – one's sense of what would be equal or fair (ἰσότης) has been violated.

satisfy daily needs. It is because of this demand that human beings have a need to share in the vision of a beautiful life, a life lived together “for the sake of beautiful actions” (*Politics* 1280b30-1281a4). Only when this need is met for a sufficient number, when the statesman’s vision coincides with the citizens’ vision, can real friendship arise between citizen and citizen, citizen and statesman – and with it the truth of the well-worn phrase “consent of the governed.”

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Of course, the scenario I have just been describing, where a particular regime, elicited by an attentive statesman, “takes” because citizens find themselves perfectly mirrored within it, must be exceedingly rare. Constitutions arising through “accident and force” (and, of course, fraud) are the rule; those founded on “reflection and choice” are the exception.<sup>22</sup> But they are still possible – and possible only because someone, in this case Aristotle, has worked out, in all its detail, the craft of regime-making and regime-repair. But this craft, and the regimes it makes possible, is itself possible only because someone, in this case Aristotle again, has done the fieldwork – exemplified by the *Constitution of Athens* – needed to provide the basis for the craft. We are back in Aristotle’s workshop.

This essay is a revised and expanded version of a talk originally given at the University of Dallas in October 2016, on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of its Institute for Philosophic Studies.

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<sup>22</sup> The language is taken from the first paper of the *Federalist*, a text that in some ways does for federalism and the modern representative state what Aristotle did for the ancient city.

# TOO MUCH UNITY IN A CITY IS DESTRUCTIVE OF THE CITY: ARISTOTLE AGAINST PLATO'S UNIFICATION PROJECT OF THE *POLIS*

*But I shall more easily follow up my proposition in describing our own republic to you, in its infancy, its growth, in its adult, and its present firm and robust state; than if I were to create an imaginary one, as Socrates is made to do in Plato.*

*(Facilius autem, quod est propositum, consequar, si nostram rem publicam vobis et nascentem, et crescentem, et adultam, et jam firmam atque robustam ostendero, quàm si mihi aliquam, ut apud Platonem Socrates, ipse finxero.)*

Cicero (1<sup>st</sup> century BC), *Republic*, II, 1

*And don't go expecting Plato's Republic; be satisfied with even the smallest progress, and do not treat the outcome of it all as unimportant.*

Marcus Aurelius (2<sup>nd</sup> century AD), *Meditations*, 9, 29

*Plato's Republics (...), filled with uncountable forms of immortality and uncountable contradictions, are utterly at odds with any political system proper to man.*

*(τὰς Πλάτωνος Πολιτείας (...), μυρίας μὲν γεμοῦσας ἀσελγείας, μυρίας δὲ πρὸς ἑαυτὰ μάχης, καὶ πολεμιοτάτας μὲν πάσῃ ἀνθρωπίνῃ πολιτείᾳ.)*

Photius (8<sup>th</sup> century AD), *Epistle* 187, 1

*Not that we intend to describe a purely ideal and unrealizable commonwealth, such as that imagined by Plato, or Thomas More the Chancellor of England.*

Jean Bodin (1583), *Six Books of the Commonwealth*

*...his system ought only to be considered as the delirious offspring of a heated imagination and a virtuous heart. (...) since nothing is so easy as to invent systems to ensure the happiness of the people, and nothing so difficult as to carry them into execution.*

Jean Barthélémy (1788), *The Travels of Anacharsis the Younger in Greece*



*By now it will be obvious that there has never been a time when the Republic did not succeed in irritating intelligent readers.*

M. Schofield (2006), *Plato. Political philosophy*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Lucian of Samosata tells us the fictional journey of a traveler who, once arrived on an island, attends the Banquet of the Blessed. He lists the renowned figures which he meets at the reception: Anacharsis, Numa, Lycurgus, Phocion, the Seven Sages, Socrates, etc. He then underlines, “Only Plato was not present, for, they said, he dwelled in a city framed (*ἀναπλασθείση*) by himself, observing the same rule of government and laws as he had prescribed for them to live under.”<sup>1</sup>

Clearly, Lucian satirically subjects Plato to the torments of the political system he had conceived and supported. The simple fact that Plato had put together such a project, regardless of the earnestness of his commitment to it, was maybe enough to exclude him from the gathering of the Blessed; who knows? It is, however, certain that for Lucian Plato’s discourse is also fictional; the use of the term *ἀναπλασσω*, which in Greek defines anyone’s freely modeled composition, confirms it without a doubt. Plato has, therefore, modeled a fictional city, following his taste and his desires.

Is, then, such a political model to be taken seriously? It is well-known that this question has always kindled a true debate. One could propose an outline of the possible solutions to this problem and maintain four potential scenarios. *The Republic’s* account is either:

1. Serious but unrealizable (It would, in reality, have an aim which is not political)
2. Serious and realizable (under certain conditions)
3. Fictional but edifying (comprising some elements of truth)
4. Fictional and playful, i.e. not at all *edifying*.

I consider here the last possibility, namely that Plato’s intention was not only to write a fictional text, but also a text that was essentially playful, a mere intellectual amusement without any edifying aim, similarly to Aristophanes’s *Assemblywomen*. As far as I know, no one has ever supported this radical position. In such a perspective, the *Republic* would truly depict a utopia, very much like Thomas More’s *Utopia*, namely an imaginary and ideal world.

Jean Bodin is probably the only author that comes close to this position. Indeed, in his *Six Books of the Commonwealth* (Paris, 1583), Bodin compares Plato’s *Republic* to More’s *Utopia*. He writes: “not that we intend to describe a purely ideal and unrealizable commonwealth, such as that imagined by Plato, or Thomas More the Chancellor of England. We intend to confine ourselves as far as possible to those political forms that are practicable.”<sup>2</sup> According to Bodin, a “purely ideal and unrealizable commonwealth,”

<sup>1</sup> Lucian of Samosata, *A Traveler’s True Story*, transl. A.J. Church, Classical Greek Series (Cambridge: Ontario, 2000), 38.

<sup>2</sup> J. Bodin, *Six Books of the Commonwealth*, transl. M.J. Tooley (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), 2. For Bodin, Plato’s real political project unfolds in the *Laws*, where, in fact, the idea of shared goods, women and children has disappeared. According to Bodin, Aristotle is wrong in attributing to Plato the opinions we can read in the *Republic*, which would only correspond to Socrates’ thought. Bodin claims that Aristotle misrepresented Plato;

namely a genuine chimera, is probably the quintessence of Plato's project. We can find a more recent, but comparable, analysis in Strauss. According to Strauss, Plato's *Republic* is indeed close to a comical fantasy, like a comedy by Aristophanes.

On the other hand, the third suggestion, which assigns a fictional character to the platonic text, but also recognizes its evocative and edifying validity, rich in pertinent elements and analysis for describing the social structure of the city and its possible political forms, has historically been supported by many. In some cases, this hypothesis is presented alongside the fourth, and allows to consider Plato's remarks fatuous in many respects, but also edifying in others. I'll give an example.

In 1788, Father Barthélémy<sup>3</sup> exposes his thoughts about the History of Ancient Greece within the fictional framework of Anacharsis' travels. In this text, Barthélémy summarizes the political project of Plato's *Republic*, and then comments in the following fashion:

When he (Plato) had ended speaking, his disciples, captivated by his eloquence, remained absorbed in admiration; but others of his hearers affirmed that he had raised an edifice more specious than solid, and that his system ought only to be considered as the delirious offspring of a heated imagination and a virtuous heart. Others pronounced sentence with still more severity: Plato, said they, is not himself the author of his project; he has borrowed it from the Laws of Lycurgus, and the writings of Pythagoras, in which he has found almost the whole of it. While he was in Sicily, he wished to realize it in a corner of the island; but the younger Dionysus, king of Syracuse, who had at first granted him his permission, afterwards refused it him. He appears now only to propose his plan with restrictions, *and as a simple hypothesis, but by declaring more than once in his discourse, that it is possible to carry it into execution, he has sufficiently discovered his secret sentiments.*

Formerly, added they, those who sought to correct the forms of government, were sages who, enlightened by their own experience, or by that of others, knew that the disorders of a state are exasperated instead of being cured by too violent remedies; at present they are philosophers who possess more ingenuity than knowledge, and wish to institute a government without defect, and produce men without frailties. Hippodamus of Miletus was the first who, without having had any part in the administration of affairs, projected a new plan of a republic. Protagoras and other authors have followed his example, who will also hereafter be imitated by others, *since nothing is so easy as*

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such had also been the position of the scholars of the Academy: "And, indeed, Aristotle has never passed down Plato's authentic beliefs, but on the contrary he has always disguised them, as the ancient Academicians have justly underlined" (Book 2, Chapter 1). The truth is, Bodin explains, that "Plato builds two Republics, he attributes the first one to Socrates (...). The second Republic is the one that we attribute to Plato himself" (Book 2, Chapter 1).

<sup>3</sup> J.-J. Barthélémy, *Travels of Anacharsis the Younger in Greece During the Middle of the Fourth Century* (Evanston: Northwestern University Library, 1806).

*to invent systems to ensure the happiness of the people, and nothing so difficult as to carry them into execution.*

Perhaps indeed no person is more convinced of the truth of this observation than Plato, who has never communicated his projects of reform to those people who have requested them from him, though he has bestowed them on others who were unable to make use of them. He refused them to the inhabitants of Megalopolis because they would not consent to admit a perfect equality of possessions and honors; and to those of Cyrene, because they were too rich to obey his laws. But if these people had been so virtuous and so regardless of wealth and distinction as he required, they would not have needed the assistance of philosophy. Yet these pretexts did not prevent him from giving his advice to the people of Syracuse, when, after the death of Dion, they consulted him on the form of government which they should establish in their city. It is true that his plan was not followed, though it was much more easy to reduce to practice than that of his republic.

It was thus that many of those who heard Plato expressed themselves, either from conviction or from jealousy, concerning the political projects of that philosopher.<sup>4</sup>

Many aspects of this excerpt would deserve further consideration. The accusation of conceiving “delirious” systems, in any case, appears straightforward, even though Barthélemy himself doesn’t appear to, strictly speaking, back it up. I would not know if he has adopted this accusation from a previous author, or if he has formulated it himself. Clearly, to consider Plato’s account to be delirious goes further than the commonly accepted belief that his account was fictional.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, it is well-known that the hypothesis of a fiction is very ancient. We can already find it formulated by Aristotle, but the mention of something “delirious,” i.e. an outlandish and dangerous fiction, propels us into another – somehow higher – plane. In any case, it is remarkable that Barthélemy underscores the fact that, despite the excessive character of his system, Plato insists on the possibility of his project being “carr[ie]d into execution” in several passages (I will consider this point again in the following pages).

The idea of a fictional, but edifying *Republic* is our third hypothesis and it is, without a doubt, the one that the largest number of specialists still embrace today. Maintaining this hypothesis is, indeed, the best way to clear Plato of those statements which are most untenable for our modern sensibility. This way of thinking has been put in the foreground by Pradeau, who underscores the fact that many commentators try, almost systematically, “to save Plato despite himself.” As he puts it, “These readers act as Plato’s

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 113-114.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, Cicero, in the passage already cited in the epigraph, *The Republic of Cicero*, transl. G.W. Featherstonhaugh (New York: Carvill, 1829), II, 1. “For which reason, as he was wont, so shall my discourse now repeat the origin of people; for I have a pleasure in using the very words of Cato. But I shall more easily follow up my proposition in describing our own republic to you, in its infancy, its growth, in its adult, and its present firm and robust state; than if I were to create an imaginary one, as Socrates is made to do in Plato.”

friends and therefore attempt to protect him from the accusations that his political views have warranted him; to this effect, they attempt to nuance his critique of Democracy in its obvious, virulent and radical aspects.”<sup>6</sup> Elsewhere, scholars maintain that Plato doesn't really say what he says about democracy, or that he doesn't aim at all democracies; at times, the entire project of the *Republic* is depoliticized and considered as an ethical text and as describing a soul's journey, etc.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. ARISTOTLE'S PERSPECTIVE ON PLATO'S POLITICAL PROJECT

Concerning Aristotle, in any case, we cannot have any doubts: he adheres to the first hypothesis about Plato's political views. Such a hypothesis consists in saying that Plato's *Republic* describes a “serious but unrealizable” project. In other words, Aristotle takes Plato's statements literally, but considers them as fundamentally chimerical, unreasonable, or else contrary to nature.

Was Aristotle wrong to believe in Plato's republican program? Nothing is less certain, because in many passages, Plato readily insists on the fact that what he is describing, while difficult to realize, is feasible and worth considering. Of course, in *Republic* 450d2, Plato appears hesitant and uses the expression “wishful thinking.”<sup>8</sup> However, further in the same text and in many other developments he confirms the rigor of his views: “so, we are not legislating impossibilities or mere fantasies (εὐχαιῆς)” (456c, cf. also 473c4). And he seems to come to a definitive conclusion on this matter when he establishes, after considering that either the philosophers become guardians or that the guardians become philosophers: “Now, it cannot be reasonably maintained, in my view, that either or both of these things is impossible. (...) It is not impossible for this to happen, so we are not speaking of impossibilities – that it is *difficult* we agree ourselves” (499c-d, cf. also 540d).

Aristotle, who takes his teacher's statements seriously, both underscores and denounces the unrealistic dimension of the Platonic constitution in at least six passages. In Aristotle's eyes, so to speak, Plato's project is serious, but wrong; this means that Plato has honestly looked for real solutions to the difficulties of the city and that he has consequently proposed daring reforms, which he has presented as both possible and necessary. Now,

<sup>6</sup> J.-F. Pradeu, *Platon, les démocrates et la démocratie. Essai sur la réception contemporaine de la pensée politique platonicienne* (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 2005), 16. Other authors, such as S.S. Monson, M.-L. Desclos, and A. Laks belong to this same cohort of thinkers. Cf. S.S. Monson, *Plato's Democratic Entanglements. Athenians Politics and the Practice of Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); M.-L. Desclos, “Platon et la démocratie,” in *Démocratie ancienne, démocratie moderne (Toulouse, Presses universitaires du Mirail, 2003)*; A. Laks, “Platon,” in A. Renaut (ed.), *Histoire de la philosophie politique, 1; La liberté des anciens* (Paris: Calman-Lévy, 1999), 57-125. Contrary to what we can observe in the main modern interpretative current, Pradeu doesn't see the *Laws* as containing a softer version of Plato's antidemocratic views.

<sup>7</sup> On the moral reading of the *Republic*, see M. Vegetti's striking critique, “How and why did the Republic become unpolitical?” in *Dialogues on Plato's Politeia (Republic)*, ed. N. Notomi and L. Brisson (Sankt Augustin: Academia, 2010), 3-15.

<sup>8</sup> “One might, in fact, doubt whether what we proposed is possible, and, even if one granted that it is entirely so, one might still have doubts about whether it would be for the best. That, then, is why I was somewhat hesitant to bring it up: I was afraid, my dear comrade, that our argument might seem to be no more than wishful thinking.” Plato, *Republic*, 450c-d, translated by C.D.C. Reeve.

according to Aristotle, these solutions are not only unrealizable in themselves, but also undesirable and unworthy of an attempt; the reason for this is that such solutions are based on wrong assumptions. This is, by the way, what I wish to make explicit here: Not only, indeed, are Plato's solutions intrinsically futile, but they are also based on wrong judgments.

## 2.1 SIX UNREALISTIC FEATURES OF THE PLATONIC PROJECT

*Feature 1: It is a regime marked by the research of ingenuity at every cost.*

Already in Book 2 chapter 1 of the *Politics*, Aristotle introduces three approaches in the research about the πολιτεῖαι: 1) the examination of constitutions informed by good laws (εὐνομεῖσθαι); 2) the examination of other constitutions that are, according to some, satisfactory (in these first two cases, it is crucial to determine what may be just and useful in these constitutions); and 3) the examination, which doesn't come about from what appears and which can be improved, but from "seeking something beyond them," and attempting to "philosophize at the expense of truth" (1260b33-34). Therefore, Plato σοφίζεσθαι, he "sophists" in a certain sense, which means that *he subtly invents things, that he manipulates with ingenuity, that he creates sophisticated scenarios that in reality cannot hold together, etc.* Instead of starting with what exists, with what is, in other words, naturally at the beginning of any inquiry and which one could aim to improve or to tweak, Plato twists and turns, and he is the only one that acts in this fashion.

*Feature 2: The constitution as a mirage.*

After criticizing the excessive unity that Plato was seeking in the *Republic* (through the community of women, children, and goods), Aristotle condemns the illusion that such a regime of common property is amenable to bring about: "Such legislation may have a specious appearance of benevolence; men readily listen to it, and are easily induced to believe that in some wonderful manner everybody will become everybody's friend, especially when someone is heard denouncing the evils now existing in society" (1263b11-12). In short, Plato had conceived a completely mythical Eldorado, a world where we would share everything with everybody, and made us forget that it is not the absence of common property but men's perversity, which naturally creates conflicts. We will return later to this central question of the unity of the city.

*Feature 3: A regime against nature.*

Starting with a very simple observation that everybody naturally likes to have something of their own, Aristotle writes, "How immeasurably greater is the pleasure, when a man feels a thing to be his own; for the love of self is a feeling implanted by nature and not given in vain." (1263a40-1263b2) – Aristotle concludes that "the life which they are to lead appears to be quite impracticable" (1263b29).

*Feature 4: A regime without a concrete historical foundation.*

If such a regime was, indeed, good, if it was brought about naturally and was therefore desirable, then it would not have been disregarded by all men for such a long time (cf. 1264a1-6).

*Feature 5: A regime – in the Laws, close to the Republic – without practical awareness.* Supporting five thousand idle soldiers, in addition to women and servants, is a challenge and Aristotle observes that, in order to succeed, such an endeavor would require a territory equivalent to that of Babylon. Further, Aristotle describes Socrates' artificial discourse with some adjectives: περὶ πτόν, beyond the ordinary, beyond the possible, superimposed, extravagant, etc.; κομψόν, clever, ingenious, but in the sense of excessively clever or ingenious; καινοτόμον, innovative, carved in the new, original or eccentric; ζητητικόν, thought-provoking, exploring or, we could say, curious. And from there comes the condemnation "in framing an ideal we may assume what we wish, but we should avoid impossibilities" (1265a17-18). While talking about the fact of producing hypotheses κατ' εὐχὴν, namely "according to our wishes" or "according to our desires," Aristotle uses the same formulation, which Plato had used in order to talk about his project in the *Republic* (e.g. 450d; 456c).

*Feature 6: A purely abstract proceeding and which is unique to Plato.*

Lastly, we can notice that Aristotle isolates Plato's methodology from all the others. Only Plato has reasoned in this fashion, as if starting from nothing: "Other constitutions have been proposed; some by private persons, others by philosophers and statesmen, which all come nearer to established or existing ones than either of Plato's. No one has introduced such novelties as the community of women and children, or public tables for women: other legislators begin with what is necessary (1266a30-36)."<sup>9</sup>

This is, then, summarily the argument about the unrealizable or the utopian character of the Platonic project in its generality. But I haven't yet talked about its unrealizable character or its fundamental impossibility, which according to Aristotle derives from the falseness of Plato's presuppositions.

## 2.2 A JUDGMENT BASED ON FALSE ASSUMPTIONS

As R. Mayhew has notably remarked,<sup>10</sup> amongst all the critiques that one can find in Aristotle, the most important is the one about *the unity of the city*. To determine the role

<sup>9</sup> Aristotle knows that Aristophanes had defended communism in his play *Assemblywomen* (verses 671-727), which was performed in 393-392 BC (cf. R. Mayhew, *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's Republic* [New York-Oxford: Lanham-Boulder, 1997], 4 and 10).

<sup>10</sup> R. Mayhew, *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's Republic*, op. cit., 2: "Almost all of Aristotle's criticism of the *Republic*, in various degrees centers on [the unity of the city]." In Nussbaum's work ("Shame, Separateness, and Political Unity: Aristotle's Criticism of Plato," in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. A. Oksenberg Rorty [Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: University of California Press, 1980], 395-406) we can find a similar statement (396): "the argument both begins and returns repeatedly to a central criticism: the kind of unity that Plato wished to establish in his ideal *polis*." The debate about the unity of the city has always been very lively. See, for instance: E. Bornemann, "Aristoteles' Urteil über Platons politische Theorie" ("Aristotle's Judgement of Plato's Political Theory"), *Philologus* 33 (1924), 70-111; 113-158 and 234-257; D.J. Allan, "Individual and State in the Ethics and in the Politics", in *La Politique d'Aristote, Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classique*, t. XI (Vandœuvres-Genève: Fondation Hardt, 1965), 53-95; R.F. Stalley, "Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's Republic," in *A Companion to Aristotle's politics*, ed. D. Keyt and F.D. Miller Jr. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 182-199; P. Simpson, "Aristotle's Criticisms of Socrates' Communism of Wives and Children," *Apeiron* 24 (1991), 99-113; R.F. Stalley, "The Unity of the State: Plato, Aristotle and Proclus," *The Journal for Ancient Greek Political Thought* 14 (1995), 129-149; M. Vegetti's translation and introduction to Plato's *Republic*: Platone, *La repubblica* (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 2000), cf. also Vegetti's study,

and the weight of the unity in the city is crucial towards understanding more or less all the other components of society, namely:

- the question of authority, which the city needs;
- the question of the relationship of individuals to everything else (the personal desires of the people);
- the question of the individual's happiness within the city;
- the question of racial segregation in the city (*Laws* 756e);
- lastly, the question of the *viability* of the application of this type of unity to the *polis*, and as a consequence that of the realistic or utopic character of the project under consideration.

In Book 2, chapter 2 of Aristotle's *Politics*, we can read this crucial statement about unity:

There are many difficulties in the community of women. And the principle on which Socrates rests the necessity of such an institution does not appear to be established by his arguments. The end which he ascribes to the state, taken literally, is impossible, and how we are to interpret it is nowhere precisely stated. I am speaking of the premise from which the argument of Socrates proceeds, "that the greater the unity of the state the better." Is it not obvious that a state may at length attain such a degree of unity as to be no longer a state? – since the nature of a state is to be a *plurality* (πληθος γαρ τι), and in tending to greater unity, from being a state, it becomes a family, and from being a family, an individual; for the family may be said to be more one than the state, and the individual than the family. So that we ought not to attain this greatest unity even if we could, for it would be the destruction of the state. (1261a10-22)

The essence of the city consists, according to Aristotle, of *multiplicity*, and such multiplicity cannot tolerate any degree of unity. If the Socratic fundamental presupposition consists in saying that the aim of the city and what, at the same time, is best for it, is *being one as much as possible*, then this fundamental presupposition is wrong. More unity doesn't translate into a better realization or a better ending for the city, but into its deterioration.

Of course, whether Plato had indeed aimed at an absolute unity for the city is an open question, and so it is for the question about the possible consequences of such an absolute unity.

Several passages in Plato hint to such *extreme maximization of unity*, where the different elements are there only to attend the *organic unity* of the whole. So, for instance, in *Republic* V, 462a-e:

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"La critica aristotelica alla Repubblica nel secondo libro della Politica", in Platone, *La repubblica*, op cit., 439-453; M. Canto-Sperber, *Éthiques grecques* (Paris: PUF, 2001), 277-304.

As a beginning step toward reaching agreement, shouldn't we ask ourselves what we think is the greatest good for the organization of the city—the one at which the legislator should aim in making laws – and what the greatest evil? (...) Now, do we know of any greater evil for a city than what tears it apart and makes it many instead of one? Or any greater good than what binds it together and makes it one? No we don't. (...) Then isn't the city that is best governed the one in which the vast majority of people apply “mine” and “not mine” to the same things on the basis of the same principle? Certainly.

And isn't it the city whose condition is most like that of a single person? I mean, when one of us somehow hurts his finger, you know the entire partnership – one that *binds body and soul together into a single system under the ruling part within it* – is aware of this, and all of it as a whole feels the pain in unison with the part that suffers. That is why we say that this person has a pain in his finger. And the same principle applies, doesn't it, to any other part of a person, whether it is suffering pain or relieved by pleasure?

In the same fashion as an organism, in which all parts are for the sake of the body in its entirety, the best government would be the one that aims at the unity of the city. In other places, Plato repeats this axiom. In fact, a little later in the *Republic* Plato gets back to this and declares, “But we further agreed that this sharing is the greatest good for a city, *when we compared a well-governed city to the way a human body relates to pain and pleasure in one of its parts*” (464b, cf. also 423d).

Plato's *Laws* do not escape this *organic metaphor* either. I cite below one of the most explicit passages on this topic:

You'll find the ideal society and state, and the best code of laws, where the old saying “friends' property is genuinely shared” is put into practice as widely as possible throughout the entire state. Now I don't know whether in fact the situation—a community of wives, children and all property – exists anywhere today, or will ever exist, but at any rate in such a state the notion of “private property” will have been by hook or by crook completely eliminated from life. *Everything possible will have been done to throw into a sort of common pool even what is by nature “my own,” like eyes and ears and hands, in the sense that to judge by appearances they all see and hear and act in concert. Everybody feels pleasure and pain at the same things, so that they all praise and blame with complete unanimity.* (739c-d; cf. also 636d-e; 664a; 738c).

In opposition to such narrow organic unity, Aristotle insists on the fact that the city is comprised of a *plurality* or *multiplicity* (πληθος), by taking as models three types of unity: the *city*, the *family*, and the *individual*. Because, as Aristotle puts it, “The family may be said to be more one than the state, and the individual than the family” (1261a20-21).

There are many reasons why the family is “more one.” First of all, the members that constitute it are less diversified (father, mother, children, slaves) than those that we find in a city. Moreover, unlike in a government, which Aristotle considers appropriate



to a society of peers, the head of the family doesn't change (1261a30 sq.). Still, the man's authority over his partner is not of the same degree as the authority he holds over his children and slaves (cf. *EN*, 1134b8-18; 1160b32-1161a2). Moreover, love and friendship (*φιλία*), which reign among the members of a family, are naturally more intense and don't come from the simple justice that exists among equal citizens within the city (*EN*, 1134b8-18; 1138b5-13, 1159b35-1160a7). Lastly, for the father, as well as for the mother, the child, before becoming an adult, is "a part of him" (1134b11);<sup>11</sup> from this derives, of course, a greater unity than the one that occurs in the city.

The individual is naturally more one than the family and the city. According to Aristotle, there is no greater unity than that of the sensible substance, of the concrete individual (*τὸδε τι*), in *absolute terms*. It is undeniable that, in the individual, all the parts, the limbs, exist solely for the totality they constitute and that they could not have any other possible function or aspiration.<sup>12</sup> In the Aristotelian corpus, we can, of course, find many and diverse arguments about the doctrine of the absolute unity of substance, which in fact is the cornerstone of Aristotelianism.<sup>13</sup>

Because the individual constitutes a continuous reality, he cannot be detached from his parts in the way in which he can be separated from the other members of a family or a city. His limbs cannot exist *independently* from the body, whereas an individual can leave his city and go live in another one, or he can conduct a relatively isolated life within his own city (1324a14-17). For Aristotle, Plato's considerations about the unity of the city constitute a real *paralogism*.

In Aristotle, the individual substance is, without a doubt, first, in an absolute sense. As Aristotle puts it in the *Categories*, "if the primary substances did not exist it would be impossible for any of the other things to exist" (2b5-6; cf. also *Metaphysics* 1003b17-19).

After underlying the decrease in unity from the individual to the family, and then from the family to the city, Aristotle affirms the reversed increase in autarky. Indeed, the city is both less united and more autarkist. Accordingly, there is in Aristotle a reversal between the order of unity and the order of autarky. Schematically:

UNITY		AUTARKY
+	<i>individual</i>	-
	<i>family</i>	
-	<i>city</i>	+

<sup>11</sup> "...for there is no unqualified injustice in relation to what is one's own, and a man's property, as well as his child until it reaches a certain age and becomes independent, are, as it were, a part of him. (...) So nothing politically just or unjust is possible here, because, as we saw, they depend on law, and exist only among people where law is natural, namely, those who share equally in ruling and being ruled" (1134b11-20). The law regards, then, those individuals that do not belong to one another, even if they all participate in the making of the city.

<sup>12</sup> Aristotle, *Parts of Animals*, 640a34-36; 639b12-15.

<sup>13</sup> See Chapter 6 of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Δ devoted to the question of the one and the many; specifically, *Metaphysics* V 6, 1016b2-4: "what-it-was-to-that-thing is indivisible and cannot separate those things in times, place or account, these most of all are one and especially those that are substances;" *De Anima* II, 1 412b8. For Aristotle, substance comes first in all possible ways (*Metaphysics*, Z 1 *passim*).

If, then, *unity* and *autarky* don't go together, it is useless to require more unity when the city achieves autarky. If the good for each thing is "that which preserves them" (1261b9), which is a principle that Aristotle gladly takes on from Plato (*Rep.*, X, 608e) then what is good for the city coincides with its greatest autarky and not at all in its highest unity.<sup>14</sup>

It is even the opposite. In Aristotle's eyes, the unwarranted intensification of the unity in the community of men reveals itself as simply destructive for the city. Even if we could achieve such unity, we shouldn't attempt to do so. As Aristotle puts it, "So that we ought not to attain this greatest unity even if we could, for it would be the destruction of the state. Again, a state is not made up only of so many men, but of different kinds (εἶδει) of men; for similar (ὁμοίωv) do not constitute a state" (1261a22-24; cf. also 1252a10; 1277a5-11).

From this point on the discussion focuses on the meaning given to such different *kinds*, and therefore to the diversity among members of the city.

Of course, Aristotle's remarks, which still aim at critiquing Plato, cannot be limited to the acknowledgment of the existence of different classes of people: farmers, craftsmen, traders, magistrates, etc. Otherwise, criticizing Plato would not make any sense, as he himself accepts such differentiations within the city. These differences were rigid and unchangeable in Plato, as everyone would find himself linked by essence to their "proper function," according to the famous doctrine of the *οἰκαιοπραγία*.<sup>15</sup> Aristotle's difference in *kind* has to aim at or to imply something completely different than the Platonic one, i.e. the changing relationships between these same functions, namely, deep permutations of a completely different order than that of the fixity of the relationships in Plato's organic city.

First point: *A city isn't simply a big family or a big village*; this is not simply because of the *greater number of individuals*, but also because of the organization that reigns in the city.

Second point: A city is not *a military alliance* either, which aims only at one function – defense – and is satisfied with adding up soldiers, who are not especially different one from another.

What, then, will be Aristotle's account of the multiplicity proper to life in the city? The answer appears unambiguously: By taking as an example the *democratic society* – or at least by considering a *democratic component* – namely a society *formed by equals* in which each citizen takes turns in sharing in the government:

Wherefore the principle of compensation,<sup>16</sup> as I have already remarked in the Ethics,<sup>17</sup> is the salvation of states. And among freemen and equals this is a principle which must be maintained, for they cannot all rule together,

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1252b34-1253a1: "Besides, the final cause and end of a thing is the best, and to be self-sufficing is the end and the best."

<sup>15</sup> Plato, *Republic*, IV, 434c: "That, then, is what injustice is. But let's put it in reverse: the opposite of this – when the moneymaking, auxiliary, and guardian class each do their own work (*οἰκαιοπραγία*) in the city – is justice, isn't it, and makes the city just?"

<sup>16</sup> Cf 1287a10 ff.; 1291b34; 1317b3-4.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. 1132b32 ff.

but must change at the end of a year or some other period of time or in some order of succession. The result is that upon this plan they all govern; [but the manner of government is] *just as if shoemaker and carpenters were to exchange their occupations, and the same persons did not always continue shoemakers and carpenters.* (...) Thus, the one-party rule and the others are ruled in turn, as if they were no longer the same persons (ὥσπερ ἂν ἄλλοι γενόμενοι). In like manner there is a variety in the offices held by them. Hence it is evident that a city is not by nature one in that sense which some person [*scilicet* Platon] affirm. (1261a30-b7)

This passage is Aristotle's concise reply to the excessive unity of Plato's city. The remedy to the excessive uniformity described in the *Republic* and in the *Laws* would then consist in a democracy.<sup>18</sup> It is, indeed, only – or let's say especially – in a democracy that such a rotation of responsibilities happens. This doesn't simply imply switching among similar professions (a tanner, let's say, who would become a weaver), but also sharing in important political responsibilities. Moreover, the language of our passage is typically used by Aristotle later in order to describe the fundamental nature of the democratic regime.

The basis of a democratic state is liberty; which, according to the common opinion of men, can only be enjoyed in such a state; – this they affirm to be the great end of every democracy. One principle of liberty is for all to rule and be ruled in turn, and indeed democratic justice is the application of numerical not proportionate equality; whence it follows that the majority must be supreme, and that whatever the majority approve must be the end and the just. (...)

Another is that a man *should live as he likes* (τὸ ζῆν ὡς βούλεται τις). This, they say, is the privilege of a freeman, and, on the other hand, not to live as a man likes is the ark of a slave. This is the second characteristic of democracy, whence has arisen the claim of men to be ruled by none, if possible, or, if this is impossible, to rule and be ruled in turns; and so it coincides with *the freedom based upon equality*.<sup>19</sup>

In both developments, the emphasis is put on the *equality* among citizens, on their *freedom*, as well as on the alternating of political charges, which Aristotle compares to *exchanging professions*. Moreover, such alternation will coincide with a *becoming other* of the individual. Thus, the single party rules and the others are ruled in turn, as if they were no longer the same persons (ὥσπερ ἂν ἄλλοι γενόμενοι) (1261b4-5).

<sup>18</sup> According to E. Bornemann ("Aristoteles' Urteil über Platons politische Theorie," *Philologus* 33 (1924), 70-111; 113-158; 234-257), the detour on democracy in order to justify difference within the city is ironic because Aristotle appears satisfied to repeat the democrats' slogans without endorsing them. However, if this is true, then why would Aristotle have incorporated such an argument into his account? Bornemann's point of view is surprising, and rests on his implicit belief that Aristotle, while formerly in favor of democracy, had renounced his support.

<sup>19</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, VI, 2, 1317a40-b17.

Other passages in Aristotle's *Politics* confirm this perspective on democracy. For instance, when we read, "Now, from what has been said, it is manifest that, where men are alike and equal, it is neither expedient nor just that one man should be lord of all" (1288a). Similarly, in 1279a8-10 we can read, "And so in politics: when the state is framed upon the principle of equality and likeness, the citizens think that they ought to hold office by turns."

By the way, this type of regime is the one that corresponds the most to the fact of *being a citizen*. Indeed, Aristotle explains that "a citizen in the strictest sense, (...) shares in the administration of justice, and in offices" (1275a22-24). And the Stagirite adds that "our definition is best adapted to the citizen of a democracy; but not necessarily to other states" (1275b5-7).

The citizen by excellence is therefore the citizen of a democracy – one that, in other words, can in turn take a free and active part in public affairs.

The comparison between all these texts allows one to more precisely circumscribe difference in *kind* and *specific* difference (εἶδει, 1261a23; 26) within the city, which Aristotle attempts to preserve against Plato. It is not only the case, as Aubonnet remarked that "because of their different capacities, the individuals exchange services,"<sup>20</sup> but on the contrary it is *despite their different capacities* – those of the farmer, of the construction worker, or of the trader, etc. – that everyone alternately occupies the roles of ruler and of ruled.

In this sense they differ *specifically*, because as Aristotle declares without detours, "the difference between ruler and ruled is a difference of kind" (εἶδει, 1259b37). Moreover, the principle of alternating offices – which is opposed to the very essence of a wise government – informs the notion of democracy,<sup>21</sup> and to a lesser degree the idea of an aristocracy, of an oligarchy, and of the mixed regime, but it doesn't at all match the idea of a Republic of philosophers, destined to rule without sharing their power, i.e. Plato's ideal Republic.

### 3. CONCLUSION

I now come back to the question of the unreality or impossibility of the Platonic project, a project that, as we have seen, Aristotle takes seriously.

For the Stagirite, Plato's city is not only impossible in reality because of human nature, but it is also logically impossible because the aim of the city is the good life and it is impossible, even for the virtuous man, to lead a good life on the basis of Plato's assumptions. This is true if we accept, for instance, the idea of a class of wise individuals who decide alone for everybody else about everyone's happiness, or if we adopt the concept of οἰκειοπραγία, i.e. that everyone has to occupy the same function for the entirety of their lives.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, Books 1 and 2.

<sup>21</sup> Surprisingly, the fundamentally democratic character of Aristotle's remedy to Plato's excessive unity has never been much underlined by commentators. However, E. Schütrumpf underlined that the rotation of office "kann (...) als Grundprinzip der Demokratie angegeben werden (can be considered as the basic principle of Democracy)." Cf. *Aristoteles Werke in Deutscher Übersetzung*, Band 9, Politik, Teil II, translated and commented by E. Schütrumpf (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1991), 170.

<sup>22</sup> This aspect of Aristotle's critique has been underscored by M. Nussbaum, "Shame, Separateness, and Political Unity," *op. cit.*, 409: "non-philosophers will have, in particular, no voice in any political planning that touches

A. Laks considered Plato's project to be really impossible, and suggested<sup>23</sup> – upon considering mostly *Rep.* V, 473a5-b1 and *Laws* IV, 711c; IX, 853c and 875b – that it is nonetheless logically possible, as indeed Plato's point is to introduce a thought-provoking and thinkable ideal, despite its impracticability.

I would like to linger upon this distinction between the really impossible and the logically possible. This opposition can also be found expressed by F. Burnyeat, for instance, who makes the distinction between “a daydreaming wish-fulfilment” or “a daydreaming fiction,” which would correspond to Thomas More's *Utopia*, i.e. something completely fantastic, and “a utopia that is humanly practicable”<sup>24</sup> (p. 782), “a practicable possibility,” or a “practical idealism” (p. 784). In this manner, Plato would reach “the superiority of the absolute, timeless viewpoint of philosophy over the shifting perspectives of ordinary earthbound existence” (p. 787). As Burnyeat will formulate it, Plato's aim consists in “a deliberate attempt to get us to *adopt a non-human, impersonal perspective on the human*” (p. 789) or also “it is a claim about human nature as such, not about the men and women we know, and especially not – this Socrates makes clear at length (495b-496a; 500b; 535c, 536b-c) – about the philosophers we know” (p. 789). We would then arrive at an analysis which is very strange and uncanny, founded upon the human as such and not the human *as the one that we know*, the question would then be to know how from the latter we can attain the former!

What, then, is the theoretical attraction of a project or of a program which is logically possible, but impossible in reality; what is the conceptual solidity of such a logically possible plan which nevertheless rests on conditions of possibility that are not subject to the tests of reality? What is the desirability of a project that would not be alimanted anymore by any human desire? I am under the impression that M. Schofield<sup>25</sup> makes the same mistake when he poses the question of knowing if we have only the choice between an analysis of the real without perspectives or without possible openings (a schema that he identifies with Sophocles's and Thucydides's) and a purely fictional schema without any real implications.

The commentator recognizes then, in agreement with Vidal-Naquet, that Plato (and Socrates with him) is fiercely anti-democratic and that his system already contains all the elements of totalitarian regimes yet to come;<sup>26</sup> he recognizes, moreover, that the theory of the philosopher-kings and the communism that Plato defends are untenable for us, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, at the same time, he considers that Plato conceives his project as possible, realizable, in any case *as not impossible* under certain conditions.

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on their lives;” and 423: “the choice of the good must come from within and not by dictation from without (...). Plato says we do not need deliberative autonomy. Aristotle says we do.”

<sup>23</sup> Cf. “Temporalité et utopie: remarques herméneutiques sur la question de la possibilité des cités platoniciennes”, in *Utopia, Ancient and Modern. Collegium politicum. Contributions to classical political thought*, 6, ed. Francisco L. Lisi (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2012), 19-37.

<sup>24</sup> M.F. Burnyeat, “Utopia and Fantasy: the Practicability of Plato's Ideally Just City,” in *Plato*, ed. G. Fine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 779-790.

<sup>25</sup> M. Schofield, *Plato. Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89, n. 8. Plato is “democracy's most determined enemy,” and citing with appreciation Vidal-Naquet, he adds: “Everything [i.e. key features of modern totalitarian regimes] is to be found here (...).”

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198.

Additionally, he considers that, if the pure paradigm would find itself to be proven impossible to implement, aiming at an approximation of such system would already be useful (cf. 472d-e; 473a-b). From this, according to Schofield, both Popper (who believes that Plato wanted in fact to realize his political program) and Strauss (who believed it to be odd and unrealizable) are wrong. Plato's intention, rather, is situated between the two, because it is not really about choosing between feasibility and infeasibility, but about making the social needs of a community audible, the κοινωνία, "the idea – articulated in all the specific proposals of Book 5 – that sharing is what makes a city a real or a good city" (p. 239). But which one is the sharing here under consideration, what community, one of some things or of all the things; this is the main question that Aristotle<sup>28</sup> poses at once, without which the sharing has neither the same sense nor the same importance? In this same vein, Schofield concludes that "the principal thing the *Republic* seeks to offer is *philosophical understanding*" because "in the nature of things, Socrates goes on to say (473a), speech (i.e. philosophical dialogue) gets more a grip on truth than action does" (p. 239).

By saying this, the commentator actually joins Burnyeat who, we have seen, wanted to describe men not as we encounter and know them in reality, but *men themselves*, as Plato believes to be able to determine and fix abstractly, independently of what they really are and to what they aspire in reality, while entertaining a non-human perspective on the human. This special *non-human perspective* is not only possible, according to Schofield; it would rather be – and on this point he exceeds Burnyeat – the perspective of truth, the only perspective Plato is interested in. Fundamentally, Plato would not even need to prove the truth of his project through its concrete execution, Schofield considers, "because practicability is only a fallible sign of truth, not what it consists in, even in the sphere of ethics and politics" (p. 240).

What should we think about a truth that can exempt facts and proof of practicability? Aristotle, I am convinced, would have refused to enter into this sort of speculation which touches upon *something desirable that no man could actually desire, and that would be true independently of what reality and facts teach, independently of what he desires*. It would have been sufficient for him to think that concrete life is impossible under the conditions Plato considers, in order to conclude that it cannot be judged desirable or true. In Aristotle's eyes, *practicability* is not a *fallible* sign of truth, but a condition *sine qua non*. And, however, while we speculate in this manner about the truth of man in himself, the

<sup>28</sup> In Plato's *Republic*, each person is assigned to a specific function given by the social order and each individual is sacrificed to the general order of the city. Now, the fixity of the functions naturally implies segregation among social classes; the excessive unity of the city follows from the fact that the individuals cannot emancipate themselves from the general social coercion, which confines them to their respective destinies. This extreme prevails, let's remember, regardless of the sharing of women, children, and good. This affects the Guardians and only adds to the already-present unity. In Aristotle, the rotation of offices frees the citizens from their functional affiliations; each citizen can then have a voice in the development of things, as each one is endowed with some autonomy. The *becoming-other* has, indeed, both a social and personal impact. The city reveals itself as less united, not because there is a greater variety of functions, but because of the free development of the individuals within the same functions. Such a city, thanks to the choices that are possible in it, brings about the distinction between the *public* and the *private* sphere, which is a popular distinction among Athenians and is nowhere to be found in other cities such as Sparta.

real questions remain in the hinter ground: is Plato's radical communism only unacceptable for us or has it always been this way? And the *οικειοπραγία*, which legitimizes the idea that the same men are called upon to govern and to serve, and that the knowledge of the wisest is considered to be incontestable, is all this acceptable and defensible?

There is also another factor, fundamental to all this questioning, which is that this type of project is capable of provoking what has been designated as "social engineering," the danger of which we know. The projects for men as they are actually not, transform themselves naturally into projects for men as they should become. We will therefore have wise men, seers, who are dispensed from the approbation of facts and who, armed with their supernatural science will indicate the path to take and, if necessary, constrain us to follow them.

All considered, better off with a real crazy fiction than this!

*translated by Giada Mangiameli*

# SAGACITY OF A MAGNANIMOUS MAN: NOTES ON *NICOMACHEAN* *ETHICS*

Volumnia:

*You might have been enough the man you are,  
With striving less to be so; lesser had been  
The thwartings of your dispositions, if  
You had not showed them how ye were disposed  
Ere they lack'd power to cross you.*

William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*, Act III, Scene II<sup>1</sup>

The protagonist of *Nicomachean Ethics* wants to enter the world with a bang, often becoming the hostage of dreams about the grandeur of his destiny. His virtue seems extreme, and he himself does not speak the language of compromise, he rejects half-measures. Therefore he quickly falls prey to this world or – and this is more likely – becomes the dream a man dreams about himself when he dreams of a better, simpler life.

## THE EGOIST AND DON JUAN

Aristotle's most important work on practical philosophy opens with two remarks: in the first the Stagirite admonishes the egoist, in the second – he chastens Don Juan, as we shall call him here. We just cannot allow it that a human's greatest good is the end of their nose or the contemplation of their navel, be it even Claudia Schiffer's navel. What is a person's greatest good then? A person's greatest good should be the good of the state which is "a nobler and more godlike thing" (1094b)<sup>2</sup> than the good of an individual. It is not just about admonishing a narcissistic egoist but about a fundamental matter: we must not found a law that could support an individual in his strife for enhancing his individual status at the cost of a political community. A lot has changed since then. A contemporary human being does not understand Aristotle's premise because he does not understand the world or himself. He understands it, to be more specific, from his own, personal ("liberal")

<sup>1</sup> W. Shakespeare, eds. J. Bate and E. Rasmussen. *The RSC Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 1580.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, transl. R. Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).



perspective. But it is *his* world, not a *common* one. “No land,” Hegel notes, “was so rich as Greece, alike in the number of its constitutions, and in the frequent changes from one to another of these in a single state; but the Greeks were still unacquainted with the abstract right of our modern states, that isolates the individual, allows of his acting as such (...) This is done in such a way, however, that in no one is there properly speaking either the consciousness of, or the activity for the whole [i.e. the state – PN] (...) all his [the modern citizen’s] concern is the protection of his individuality.”<sup>3</sup> The ancient Greeks, however, not only expelled the selfish citizens from the city so that they could fully enjoy themselves – they indeed made them outlaws.

It seems that Don Juan and the egoist could not be more different. But it is a false impression. If the latter focuses all his attention on himself, Don Juan constantly looks around, like a hunter who loves tracking down a beautiful doe. He lives “believing he ought always to pursue the present pleasure” (1146b). What they above all have in common is an insatiable desire – the egoist cannot get enough of himself, while Don Juan constantly looks for new “prey,” which only boosts his desire for a new victim, and then another one, and so on, indefinitely. He does not know yet that “one cannot live in the company of many people and share oneself between them” (1171a). In the former case as in the latter “this would lead to an infinite progression, making our desire fruitless and vain” (1094a). Promiscuity in particular leads to a false infinity. “[T]he person who enjoys every pleasure and never restrains himself,” argues Aristotle, “becomes intemperate” (1104a). Further on he explicitly calls it an evil “since the bad belongs to the unlimited, as the Pythagoreans portrayed it, and the good to the limited” (1106b).<sup>4</sup> Thus, intemperate tasting and touching, meat dumplings and sex lead us through the looking glass, to where nothing that is human can take place. Because “[t]o enjoy such things, then, and to love them most of all is brutish (...) [f]or the desire of an irrational being for what is pleasant is insatiable and indiscriminate, and the activity of desire will strengthen the tendency he is born with. And if appetites are strong and excessive, they actually expel calculation” (1118b-1119b). It follows then, that every action, and in particular desiring, must have a limit, it must be an action that has an internal border. The inner limit of humanity is *τέλος* – something that we strive for, something we naturally aspire to, the result which we eventually reach, a “limit” of sorts that is equally common to every *human*. This limit is our reason, our rational mind.

<sup>3</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 2, transl. E.S. Haldane and F.H. Simson, M.A. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1955), 208.

<sup>4</sup> In his book on “the phenomenology of philosophical ideas’ reception” Krzysztof Okopień makes an original juxtaposition of Kant’s moral philosophy and the Stagirite’s ethics of action. Let us listen: “To what does man owe evil – the radical one – that Kant ascribes to him? I does not consist in the negation of the moral law, in an absolute following of the anti-law, an evil principle; it is thus not about pure spite – which is a human trait, but the devil’s. Neither does it consist in the absence of the moral law, in living according to nature, instincts and drives – which is not a human trait, but an animal one. Doesn’t it consist then in a state when the moral law is acknowledged but not adhered to, something that Aristotle calls in Book VII of *Nicomachean Ethics* incontinence and differentiates it from intemperance (promiscuity)? If this is indeed evil – why should we call it radical, why shouldn’t we instead agree with Aristotle (who talks here as if he was a citizen of Königsberg himself) that incontinent people (...) are better than intemperate ones and they are not evil in an absolute sense, as they have not lost what is best: the supreme principle”? K. Okopień, *Podmiot czyli podrzutek. O fenomenologii odbioru idei filozoficznych* (Warszawa: Wydział Filozofii i Socjologii Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1997), 95.

Don Juan and the egoist spend their lives in numerous petty pleasures. In their chase for excess they experience “only mild appetite” (1148a). Neither of them can, or maybe they do not wish to, confront the solid substance of the world like, for instance, the intemperate man (“Rogozhin”) who feels more intensely and experiences more. Both of them (Don Juan and the egoist) congeal in an insipid promiscuity, submerged up to their minds in the “pond of the slothful body” (Zbigniew Herbert’s expression). One may ask, however, why the cases of Don Juan and the narcissist-egoist have failed to teach humanity anything? Why are people still so hungry for carnal pleasures? “[I]t is because such pleasure expels pain” (1154a), suggests Aristotle. People want to make love and eat jam to find relief, to ease the pain life inflicts on them “[f]or they have nothing else to enjoy” (1154b). What is it that makes them so glad, what is the source of the highest pleasures? Movement, change, the very pulse of life: “because of a fault of some kind; as among humans it is the faulty ones who are easy to change, so also the nature requiring change is faulty, because it is neither simple nor good” (ibidem).<sup>5</sup>

Now a word about the purpose of these lectures (as *Ethics* is clearly a lecture script) and their addressee. Initially he is defined negatively: it certainly cannot be a young man who is driven by common desires and who, generally speaking, lacks experience. The aim of *Nicomachean Ethics* is thus to prepare one for acting, not acquiring knowledge (1095a). Public life, which is the Greek citizen’s highest purpose, does not consist in theorizing, but is the sum total of actions, both stupid and sagacious. Aristotle dedicates his work to those who want to act, and not sit on a rock and contemplate immovable things. “As in the Olympic Games it is not the most attractive and the strongest who are crowned, but those who compete (since it is from this group that winners come), so in life it is those who act rightly who will attain what is noble and good” (1099a).

### **TO BE HAPPY ONE NEEDS TIME AND SENSIBILITY**

Whenever there is talk of morality, we mean some kind of good. Christianity has made us think about good as of something that, disconnected from particular deeds, constitutes their external, often transcendental measure. No pagan would accept this view of the good. For a Greek person, the good was simply the good of a particular individual within a broader entity (the state). If someone was a good wrestler, he was good, period.

Perhaps someone might think that it would be better to understand it with an eye to those goods that are attainable and objects of action. For with this as a sort of paradigm we shall know better the goods that are goods for us, and if we know them, we shall attain them. This argument has some plausibility, but seems to be inconsistent with the sciences: they all aim at some good and seek to remedy any lack of the good, but they leave to one side understanding the universal good. And if there were such an important aid available, it is surely not reasonable to think that all practitioners of skills would be ignorant of it and fail even to look for it (1097a).

<sup>5</sup> In Book VIII Aristotle actually writes that mutability is the province of children because they grow, of fools, because they keep changing their minds, and of bad people, because they do not really care (1159 b).

Nobody who wants to treat their patients well will go looking for the idea of good, only for the right cure. The same applies to a politician, sculptor, piper – to everyone, with the exception of the philosophizing tenants of Plato's *πολιτεία*, whose eyes are fixed on the invisible idea of good. Once again: an action is good when it is effective, when it leads to a result, an end. It is good in the *amoral* sense.

Usually, the good understood this way was accompanied by happiness (*εὐδαιμονία*). Actually it is happiness that constitutes the highest good. Happiness is never outside ourselves – it belongs inside us. No cheap trinkets or an abundance of material goods can make us happy. Happiness does not lie outside of us, be it up above, or in the ruler's treasury. Happiness manifests itself through virtue, through doing good. Not everyone knows it. "The masses appear quite slavish by rationally choosing a life fit only for cattle; but they are worthy of consideration because many of those in power feel the same as Sardanapallus. Sophisticated people, men of action, see happiness as honour" (1095b) that is a reward for their virtue as citizens. Seemingly, even the populace can be happy, even though they do not do good. As they do not do good, they cannot be happy, because they mistake pleasure for happiness. People are not happy because they are satisfied – they are satisfied because they are happy.<sup>6</sup> The populace, then, are like children because children – according to the Stagirite – must wait for their happiness until coming of age, "since his age makes him incapable of doing such [i.e. virtuous – P.N.] actions. If he is called blessed, he is being described as such on account of the potential he has, since, as we have said, happiness requires complete virtue and a complete life" (1100a). A happy person is an adult, someone who is responsible for his choices, and most importantly – for choosing *his* luck.

In the last sentence of the passage quoted above Aristotle says that to be happy one needs time and a lot of sensibility. Sensibility is necessary to understand and assess our situation – as a condition for ethical courage it is indispensable. But time? Do we need it to live a moment of happiness? Do the happy know the hours? Do they consult their watches to see how many happy minutes passed? According to Aristotle happiness requires more than time in its colloquial understanding. Happiness fills (or it does not) the *entire* human time. Alluding to Herodotus's testimony Aristotle claims that a person should always "mark the end," as at any time life can change a fleeting moment of happiness into hours of pain and misery. "Call him, however, until he die, not happy but fortunate (...) But in every matter it behooves us to mark well the end: for oftentimes God gives men a gleam of happiness, and then plunges them into ruin."<sup>7</sup> We could ask whether Aristotle is not undermining the purpose of his lectures, if we understand them as an attempt to delineate a path to happiness? For only a cadaver can be happy as "he is now beyond the reach of evils and misfortunes" (1100a). Since only he can no longer be bad, unwise or ill, happiness is for the living an unattainable fantasy, a chimera.

## FIRST STEPS

Man is a walking mind. The phrase suggests that a person possesses not only a mind but also legs. And sometimes these legs walk on their own, mindlessly, they walk, simply

<sup>6</sup> W. Tatarkiewicz, *O szczęściu* (Warszawa: PWN, 1979), 63.

<sup>7</sup> Herodotus, *The Histories*, vol. 1, transl. G. Rawlinson (Moscow, ID: Roman Roads Media, 2013), 14.

speaking, wherever they want. It means that people, even though they also use their rational minds, usually trust their fate to their legs, which are guided by their own “logic,” which is independent from the mind. Aristotle says that the person who does this is asleep, his soul is idle. The lethargy he succumbs to is the period in his life when he makes the dumbest, mindless decisions the consequences of which he sometimes has to endure until the very end. A man led by his legs “is not like someone who knows and is attending to his knowledge, but like someone asleep or drunk” (1152a); someone who is distinguished by a manner of “saying the words as the drunk speaks the words of Empedocles” (1147b). The lethargy usually lasts half of life, this is approximately how much time is taken up by taking irresponsible and unwise decisions. “[B]ut clearly there is within them another natural element besides reason, which conflicts with and resists it” (1102b).<sup>8</sup> Like I said, the centre of resistance are the legs: stupid, blind, mindless, they “are carried off in the opposite direction” than the mind’s imperative. But even the legs somehow partake in the rational – “at least” in “the self-controlled person” – the philosopher of the middle path adds. And the fact that they differ from the rational mind “does not matter” (*ibidem*).<sup>9</sup>

In Aristotelian terms we can say that the human soul has a double nature (or even triple if we count the nutritive side): human-animalistic. It consists of the rational soul and the appetitive soul which, when the legs lead us straight to logos is subordinate to the rational faculty. Life held together by the salacious mind yields numerous virtues some of which are called dianoetic (coming straight from reason), others – ethical (including munificence and temperance). The ancient understanding of virtue is thus based on “the unity of the rational and the irrational sides” (Hegel).<sup>10</sup>

## LEARNING VIRTUE

Can one learn virtue? Can the moral side of human personality be shaped in the way we learn (or not) proper table manners? Hard to say. Even though Aristotle himself was a scholar and a web of scholarly commentaries has grown over the ages around his writings, his lectures (both *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics* belong in this category) were meant for practical people – statesmen (Aristotle was Alexander the Great’s preceptor), politicians or free citizens occupied with economy. He claimed that virtues and “skills (...) we learn by doing; for example, we become builders by building, and lyre-players by playing the lyre. So, too, we become just by doing just actions, temperate by temperate actions, and courageous by courageous actions” (1103a-b). In short, virtue is shaped in practice – when we act, risk failure, win. “[I]t is not in order to acquire knowledge that we are considering what virtue is, but to become good people – otherwise there would be no point in it” (1103b).

If that is the case then we should ask whether, while philosophizing, “practicing philosophy,” we can learn virtue, or only the skill of thinking? Philosophy after all, even if it is not *idleness* as such, still seems to be based on it. If virtue is a practical behaviour, in

<sup>8</sup> Further on Aristotle emphatically writes that “the non-rational feelings are thought to be no less part of human nature, so that actions arising from spirit and appetite are also characteristic of a human being” (1111b).

<sup>9</sup> But I think it does matter. If one could tell what this difference is, we would solve the mystery of natural law: what is the relation of the non-rational (non-human) to rational (human, but also – divine).

<sup>10</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, op. cit., 204.

accord with its purpose, then all thinking that takes itself as its goal must be “immobile,” contemplative – “non-aretic.” We can sidestep this difficulty by admitting that practical virtue is “useful,” necessary especially for simple people as it constitutes something of “the science of the simple souls,’ or the conscience, against all kinds of sophistry.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore the activity Aristotle has in mind is the cause of virtue in common citizens, whereas the philosopher is armed in knowledge – more precisely: *self*-knowledge that naturally turns against the sophists’ arguments. Both of them then – the simple man and the philosopher – protect themselves in manifold ways against the threat of diabolical rhetoric: the first one, by acting piously, the second – wisely. This is where a serious discrepancy between Aristotle and his teacher appears. Plato believed that virtue and knowledge go hand in hand, that they are actually inseparable. Yet in *Nicomachean Ethics* we read that the citizen should be virtuous, whereas the philosopher should content himself with wisdom – “[w]ith regard to virtues, knowledge has little or no weight” (1105b). And hence the moral of another great work of Aristotle’s – *Politics*: in the city there is no place for philosophizing freeloaders. In his commentary Hegel goes in a different direction. If virtue is the unity of the rational and irrational sides of the soul, then even if a feeling – for instance love – seems pious and virtuous, it is not, if it derives from the rational mind. Otherwise a “good” person could be, at the most, a good-natured guy, not a virtuous man.

### **ETHICS WITHOUT A CODE**

In the middle ages philosophy was made subordinate to theology, becoming, as they would say, its *ancilla*, a (female) servant. In Greece, however, philosophy was understood, among other things, as a “theory” of morality. Morality was a political behaviour, it was a part of politics. *Nicomachean Ethics*, a work of mature antiquity, did not demand from pagans a certain behaviour, it was not a code. The Greeks did not threaten one another with eternal hellfire, neither did they count on future prizes that God distributes in heaven. Their ethics collected pieces of good advice. The Greeks did not know a code of morality because they “codified” every day anew by proclaiming themselves embodiments of perfection. In ancient Greece “the individual (...) decides on a certain mode of being,” Michel Foucault writes. “And this requires him to act upon himself, to monitor, test, improve, and transform himself. There is no specific moral action that does not refer to a unified moral conduct; no moral conduct that does not call for the forming of oneself as an ethical subject.”<sup>12</sup> A Greek was encouraged to live a moral life not by some fairy tales about the inner voice of pure conscience but by the example of a virtuous friend, someone who with his ways kindled a passion of agonism (which will be discussed later), turning an ordinary citizen into an Olympian. In this way polis was constituted as a locus of ethical behaviour. “The moral virtues cannot be understood as being for the sake of the city since the city must be understood as being for the sake of the practice of moral virtue.”<sup>13</sup> That is the reason why Aristotle could write in *Magna Moralia* that “[w]hosoever therefore would achieve anything in social or political life must be of good moral character; which indicates that

<sup>11</sup> L. Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 262.

<sup>12</sup> M. Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, vol. 2 of *The History of Sexuality*, transl. R. Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), 26.

<sup>13</sup> L. Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 27.

the discussion of character not only belongs to Social science, but is its very foundation or starting-point. And I would go so far as to assert that such a discussion would more fittingly be termed Social than Ethical.”<sup>14</sup> These words regard the philosopher to a limited extent as he, due to the nature of his profession (thinking – *sic!*), does not act or engage in politicking, and even, from time to time, suffers from an almost incurable “agoraphobia.”

### **AUREA MEDIOCRITAS**

Man is predisposed to a certain behaviour. When he restrains himself from sensual pleasures, he is moderate, when he succumbs or experiences them as a burden – promiscuous. To use the contemporary idiom – his “intentions” determine what he is *predisposed* to. Dispositions let a person address his “desires in a proper or improper way.” In other words, the permanent dispositions we read about in *Nicomachean Ethics* are simply virtues. In Book II Aristotle tries to grasp, in a manner at times too monotonous or casuistic, the proper manner of a Greek. He draws a picture of a “personality” that is always right there, a nearly monumental “personality” that “avoids excess and deficiency, and aims for the mean and chooses it – the mean, that is, not in the thing itself but relative to us” (1106b). The above thought demands elaboration as it can be treated as Aristotle’s *Ethics*’ credo. The so-called “golden mean” method consists in choosing the middle path between two extremes, between “either-or.” We should add that the road between the two extreme values is different for every one. In short, it is dependent on every particular human biography. “Virtue is concerned with feelings and actions, in which excess and deficiency constitute misses of the mark, while the mean is praised and on target (...). Virtue, then, is a kind of mean, at least in the sense that it is the sort of thing that is able to hit a mean” (1106b). Let us imagine a taciturn Greek who, when he walks, does not dumbly flail his arms around, who, every second of his existence, is in control and sure of his choices. One can say he provides “a mean between two vices” – of excess and deficiency (1107a). But – what is enormously important – he has to discover *his vices* in *praxis* by exposing himself to critical situations because only as a consequence of this knowledge one can find “the mean” of our behaviour.<sup>15</sup> “Not everyone can find [it] (...), but only the person with knowledge” (1109a), that is someone who acts, because practice here is identical with understanding. One should always look for the mean on one’s own, keeping at arm’s length all the apostles of “the gospel” and the heirs of “the stone tablets.”

### **LIGHTNESS AND SPONTANEITY**

Understanding does not transcend a given, particular circumstance. It is the application of the rule (or rather: a suggestion) pertaining to this, not any other, situation. Being an “application,” understanding is, whether we want it or not, *an action*. A man acts on the advice of reason which is the basis of moral behaviours. Aristotle does not claim,

<sup>14</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, vol. II: *Books 10-14. Oeconomica. Magna Moralia*, transl. H. Tredennick, G. Cyril Armstrong, Loeb Classical Library 287 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), 447 (1181b).

<sup>15</sup> In certain aspects the magnanimous man resembles Eros from Diotima’s tale. Although he does not occupy the position between πόρος, excess and πενία, poverty (if he did, he would be called *temperance*), he knows very well his two extremes. Similarly, the Greek magnanimous man must become his extremes to find the measures of his life.

however, that virtue (ἀρετή), or moral bravery, is identical with knowledge (λόγος). This would be Plato's view. The two are separate, the same way ἔθος and φύσις – *the sphere of moral behaviours and nature – are separate*.<sup>16</sup> Whereas the latter is ruled by immutable natural laws, the former – ἔθος – being in opposition to that which is non-human, knows only “human institutions and human modes of behavior which are mutable.”<sup>17</sup> In a more straightforward way, one could say that a human must be satisfied with the knowledge of human things, whereas the vivisection of “lofty things” arises from excessive pride and leads to divine punishment (the myth of two halves told by Aristophanes is a case in point).

A human experiences the good and pleasure in a particular moment and not “in general.” To experience them he should use his eyes and reason because moments of happiness, being “incomprehensible,” often pass unnoticed. The eyes shine a light for the reason, while the latter lends the situation an objective, “general,” dimension. “[T]he person acting must view the concrete situation in light of what is asked of him in general.”<sup>18</sup> Yet any general knowledge that cannot be used in a particular situation should be discarded because it is useless and as such – “meaningless.” “[T]he person acting must himself know and decide, and he cannot let anything take this responsibility from him.”<sup>19</sup> This is an important thought. No ethics, no “universal law” frees anyone from taking independent decisions by following general principles, outlined by the wise lawmaker. Ethics needs yet to be created, which does not mean that it should oblige others to follow it. It is I, no one else, but I, who should follow it, if I want to be *recognized* at all. If we consistently follow the rules we create, we can be sure we will not be mistaken for anyone else.

A human does not create himself in the same manner household appliances are produced. “Production and action are different” (1140a). Neither is he “a work of art,” because the act of self-creation cannot be one demanding the sweat and tears accompanying the efforts of sculptors or poets. Which means there are no textbooks that could teach us how to live. A human finds the meaning of his humanity not in working on himself but in action. “For while production has an end distinct from itself, this could not be so with action, since the end here is acting well itself” (1140b). The end of acting is the action itself. If there was a *technique* for externally constituting that which is human, the human being would soon become his own kapo: he would most probably create a world straight out of Raskolnikov's nightmares. “Thus,” Hans-Georg Gadamer writes, “it will have to be another kind of knowledge that he has of himself in his moral being, a knowledge that is distinct from the knowledge that guides the making of something.”<sup>20</sup> Aristotle is the first philosopher who differentiated self-knowledge, i.e. the knowledge about who I am, from theoretical knowledge (including – technical

<sup>16</sup> The notion of morality (ethics) is linked to the word ἦθος, meaning temperament, character. Aristotle introduces a subtle difference between ἔθος and ἦθος, taking ἔθος (custom, manners or habit) to be the basis of the form ἦθος, character, personality. Its meaning is close to the Latin *mos*. From this term derive words like morality or mores. Thus, the notion of morality derives from “customs,” meaning ethical habits (dispositions) or simply manners.

<sup>17</sup> H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and method*, translation revised by J. Weinsheimer and D.G. Marshall (London, New York: Continuum, 2004), 311.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 311.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 314.

knowledge). There is a crucial difference. Technical skills – how to use a chisel or a jack-plane – are easily learned but also easily forgotten. We cannot, however, learn moral knowledge, and therefore we cannot forget it. Someone who is simply decent cannot arrive unprepared for the lesson. He must “do his homework” everyday. It does not mean that we possess some kind of pre-prepared knowledge that makes us equipped for socially desired behaviour. Therefore “[w]hat is right, for example, cannot be fully determined independently of the situation that requires a right action from me, whereas the εἶδος of what a craftsman wants to make is fully determined by the use for which it is intended.”<sup>21</sup> There is one main reason for this: human actions are non-instrumental, they take place outside the category of means and end. One can learn to use a knife and fork, but one cannot learn to live. Why? Because “[t]here can be no anterior certainty concerning what the good life is directed toward as a whole.”<sup>22</sup> Aristotle’s moral system refers to what happens *hic et nunc*, it is a sort of “code” always for this one, and not any other, unique situation. It stigmatizes ambiguous behaviour, particularly one resulting from passion. Hence “[t]he opposite of seeing what is right is not error or deception but blindness. A person who is overwhelmed by his passions suddenly no longer sees what is right to do in a given situation”<sup>23</sup> and – similarly to the heir of Gyges’s ring – stops being visible to others or more exactly: honest. If to understand is to judge rightly, then the temptation of desire leads to a stupid, unreasonable life – to a slumber.

### **MAGNANIMOUS MAN**

“The empirical sense,” Aristotle’s trademark, would not let him stop his ethical research at futile speculations. Fortunately. Thanks to it we can enjoy one of the most beautiful depictions of the Greek spirit that is Book IV of *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle rightly suspected that “[w]ithout qualification, no one jettisons cargo voluntarily; but for his own safety and that of others any sensible person will do it” (1110a). Let us leave aside then, at least for a while, our trifles and habits, which – even if it will not “save” us – may help to better understand this improbable “fairy tale” that is the parable of a sagacious magnanimous man.

We usually imagine a Greek the way Homer or Thucydides depicted him: a fearless titan and victor. In the passages devoted to valour Aristotle rectifies (or complicates – depending on the perspective) this picture. Fear – he writes – can be something worthy, or even noble. In any case it is a constitutive ingredient of virtue – an approach that can make us face horrible things, the confrontation of which is still “humanly possible” (1115b). If we examine the sentence backwards, it could transpire that Aristotle was aware of the existence of situations that were simply *inhuman*, ones a person cannot take. Contemporary examples include concentration camps, ethnic cleansings and other horrors the dying history keeps producing. He who has never felt fear, who puts his life on the line in every situation is a fool or a braggart, often lily-livered, especially when he is unable to assess his chances and therefore goes all out.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 315.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 318.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 319.



“The coward, the rash person, and the courageous, then, are all concerned with the same things, but are in different states in relation to them” (1116a), Aristotle observes. This is a sentence we have great difficulty understanding because it is at odds with the currently popular tendency to blame the “situation” for our deeds. It does not matter he did something wrong – we keep hearing. He is justified by “circumstances”: rough childhood, growing up in the street, and so on. We tend to absolve anyone, anytime, and any way. Aristotle suggests an altogether different direction. The behaviour of a free person is not, and can never be, determined by “the situation,” but by rules (virtues) according to which he organizes his life. Only such a person, who belongs to the minority of the virtuous, lives beautifully; he lives beautifully, because he is free and he rules over himself. This is the reason why it so difficult to rule free people – it is infinitely easier to tell a slave to do something.

“And the more he is possessed of virtue as a whole and the happier he is, the more pain he will feel at the thought of death. For life is especially worth living for a person like this, and he knows that he is losing the greatest goods – and this is painful. *But* [emphasis mine – PN] he is no less courageous for that, and is perhaps even more so, because he chooses what is noble in war at the cost of these goods” (1117b). A virtuous man lives a short life and dies a glorious death (1169a).

The Greeks worshipped “the gods and the most godlike of people” (1101b). And we do not mean the human – i.e. doomed from the start – effort of becoming like a god. What Aristotle has in mind is someone who is close to god, someone god cares for because of this person’s virtue. Someone like this, a magnanimous, megalopsychic person, shows his virtue in action, in deeds. Virtue cannot only consist in “not doing what is shameful” (1120a), as it is through his actions that man engages with the world. He treats others with “generosity” that frees him from the prison of his “own self.” The touchstone of generosity is the ease with which he spends money. The expenses he incurs usually slightly exceed the value of the object in question. This is his openhandedness. Such a person has a lot in common with those who know a lot. Yet, what for the common people is sufficient proof of generosity or openhandedness – a skillful squandering of large sums – is not enough to grant access to the club of “the virtuous.” It is not the case that virtues have price tags and this or that virtue can be purchased. But this is something only a noble person knows while the public opinion (including the *nouveau riches*) live their lives believing everything is for sale. The generosity of a magnanimous man manifests itself in the willingness to support the common good – the city (whether it is financial aid or votive gifts). Moreover, he receives foreign guests, presenting them with generous gifts upon their leave – Odysseus has supposedly experienced it from, among others, “the wonderful Phaeacians.”

Let us now take a look at what the rabble usually misses – which is the almost *tangible* morality of the magnanimous man. Even the way he walks makes him stand out from the crowd: “[hi]s movements are thought slow, his voice deep, and his speech measured: since only a few things matter to him, he is not likely to be rushed. And since he puts no great weight on anything, he is not vehement when he speaks; it is rushing and vehemence that make for hastiness and a high-pitched voice” (1125a). It should be noted that here Aristotle focuses on the *appearance* of a Greek, because he knows that

a straight and proportionately built body cannot hide a spiritual crookedness. It is also said that “only a few things matter to him.” First and foremost he cares about universal praise and approval, but – and that’s vital! – not from “just anyone and not because of meaningless deeds,” but from his equals. He responds to the success he enjoys in a wise way – neither relishing it nor thinking he did not get enough of it. He risks his life only to defend a higher goal as “the price of life can be too high.” He shies away from accepting favours because he fears obligations it might create. “And he will repay benefits with interest, so that his original benefactor, in addition to being paid, will have become a debtor and a beneficiary. Great-souled people seem also to remember any benefits they have conferred, but not those they have received (since a beneficiary is inferior to a benefactor, and he wishes to be superior), and to hear of the former with pleasure, the latter with displeasure” (1124b). What is meant here is a sort of contest in gift dispensation and a magnanimous skill of forgetting the favours we received, which is related to an inborn Greek passion for agonism. Aristocrats of the spirit despise any petty bookkeeping of advantages and dependencies. They do not ask for anything, they do not seek their fifteen minutes of fame, but they are ready to fight for “things grand and worth of renown.” They love and hate openly. They cannot lie. They resemble children, which is why their “psychological” life can be so easily read on their faces. Their decisions are usually firm and unchangeable, and they take advice from friends. A person proud for the right reasons can easily forget things, if he wants to, especially when they are not worth remembering. Living in the gap “between past and future” (Hannah Arendt’s expression), he is rooted in eternity, beyond time – hence in a place where there is no distance between a word and an action – that is, in the present moment. That is why being human he is sometimes god, and sometimes – a brute. In others he inspires admiration, but also fear. “*Brutishness*,” Aristotle writes, “is not as bad as vice, though it is more to be feared, because it consists not in the corruption of the superior element, as in human beings, but in its absence” (1150a). Yet what makes the magnanimous man different from cicadas or cyclops is that he does not just live “beyond good and evil,” but that each time he establishes good and evil.

The magnanimous man cherishes every instant because he knows that each moment contains – at once – the whole world. He stops at the surface, has no interest in the depth. He likes beautiful and useless things. Does he chase pleasures? Of course, but only such one can enjoy without shame. He is also moderate when it comes to vengeance, admiration and backbiting. He is “straightforward, and truthful in life and in what he says” (1127a).

### **THE LAW’S MUTABILITY**

Aristotle is not a conventionalist, he does not treat the law as a tool requiring constant perfecting. It does not mean, however, that he supports a law that is set in stone, one that derives its legitimacy from the “nature of the thing.” In the argument between the conventionalists (sophists) and the advocates of naturalism so prominent in Plato’s *Cratylus* he takes, as usual, the middle path. The law, as long as it is immutable, regulates the affairs of gods, not humans. Human law, both conventional and natural, must be *mutable* because the world does not stand still. Is this a conventionalist standpoint? Obviously not. After all there are laws “that do not admit of regulation by mere human convention

because the ‘nature of the thing’ constantly asserts itself.”<sup>24</sup> It does not mean that one can go to a university and learn what the “nature of the thing” is. That is why it is so engrossing to read Aristotle’s meditations on the all too human skill – the difficult art of enacting justice.

At the beginning of *Ethics* (1101b) Aristotle expresses the conviction that the gifts fate sends us had been prepared by gods. And it is the deities who decide whether we are happy or not. Does it mean a person is a mere plaything in their hands? No – but only on the condition that he himself makes decisions regarding his life; in other words, he lays down his law and obeys it. The law cannot, however, be absolute – it is simply not something important for its own sake. Justice, according to Aristotle, is not legalism because it is shaped “in relation to another person” (1129b), and these relations are varied, and above all – mutable.<sup>25</sup> Justice is a virtue we experience on a daily basis – giving it and receiving, therefore it can be called “a mean between committing injustice and suffering it” (1133b).

Following Aristotle, let us look at some examples. Is he who commits adultery, an unjust man? It depends. If he loves in a passionate way then – even though his deed is unjust – he himself is not. To be called unjust it is not enough to have (“bad”) desires – one also needs a decision. Thus a hasty man is “absolved” but not one who premeditates – “injustice is not found among all those who commit injustice” (1134a). What follows is that one can cheat on one’s wife (or seduce someone else’s), but things take a worse turn if it becomes a habit. Because “to act in a cowardly or unjust way is not to do things of this kind, except incidentally, but to do them on the basis of having a certain character” (1137a).

In Book V of *Ethics* Aristotle discusses only two issues – both of Platonic provenance. The first is discussed by Plato in explicit terms in *Gorgias* where Socrates wonders whether it is better to act unjustly, or the other way round: is it more just to suffer an injustice? Here Aristotle seems to remember well the morality lessons from the Academy. “[A]cting unjustly is the worse” (1138a), he concedes. The second issue is suicide, and the very essence of Aristotle’s question is: do we have the right to hurt ourselves like this? This question is also answered in the negative by Plato’s Socrates (in *Phaedo*). The body is not a man’s property which he can use as he pleases. It belongs to the gods, and we give it back only when they ask for it. Aristotle, the pagan theoretician of the state, knows perfectly well that a person who commits suicide harms neither himself nor the gods: he harms the state. That is why suicide leaves him in disgrace.

## ΦΙΛΙΑ

Books VIII and IX of *Nichomachean Ethics* discuss friendship. The last one, Book IX is in a sense autotelic because its subject is thinking, philosophy. Before I start discussing its problems, I would like to come back to “the golden mean,” *aurea mediocritas*, as Horace called Aristotle’s method. I wonder whether one can imagine a kind of behaviour to which “the ethics of the mean” would not apply? It seems we could point to friendship as one can never reproach anyone for being too friendly. I think, however, that even friendship is the “mean” between a blind, idolatrous devotion and a well calculated alliance. And

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 317.

<sup>25</sup> Aristotle leaves no doubt here when he openly writes that *justice is mutable* (1134b).

thinking? Can one think too much? Can one go too far in one's thinking? I do not think so. That is why Aristotle found it very difficult to tolerate philosophers in his polis, precisely because of this peculiar "maximalism" typical of their thinking. But let us proceed one step at a time.

Aristotle starts his deliberations on the nature of friendship – which he calls "an absolute necessity in life" – with a spell: even a ruler and a man of power need friends to know what to do with their money or might. A tyrant and a miser are profoundly unhappy because they lock themselves in the cage of solitude. To find a way out they need a friend, someone with whom they will share both their power and their riches. Otherwise "what use is such prosperity if there is no opportunity for beneficence, which is exercised mainly and in its most commendable form towards friends?" (1155a). Friendship is about a constant preoccupation with others, it is more about giving than about taking. Does it mean it is a just leveling out, an isonomy? Not really. "[W]hen people are friends, they have no need of justice, while when they are just, they need friendship as well" (ibidem). Friendship is elementary, like air or fire – without it one cannot bear the pressure of the world. Above all it is necessary for happiness. No wonder then that "the wish for friendship arises quickly, friendship does not" (1156b). That is why it is so easy to make a mistake, especially when we expect the friendship to yield tangible benefits.

Friendship is the domain of men, their, as someone aptly said, "romanticism." The longest lasting friendships start before the age of thirty as "older people (...) are pursuing what is useful, not what is pleasant" (1156a). The sentiment of friendship – and this is its main characteristics – is by definition a non-profit enterprise, consisting in constant giving away of gifts to friends. To put it bluntly, friendship is a business run at a loss. Each friendship has its beginning and ending. It usually ends when each party wants more than it is getting, when the friendly selflessness succumbs to the disease of profit. It also ends when in ourselves we no longer recognize this original feeling we had for our old friends. What can you do – the world has changed, we have changed, our friends have changed, we need to change friends. One cannot stand still. "But someone who does dissolve such a friendship would not seem to be doing anything odd, because he did not become the friend of a person like this. So if his friend has altered, and he cannot redeem him, he gives up" (1165b). Does it mean that friendship between people depends on the pace of changes in the world? If so, we ourselves are subject to constant change. Therefore, the question should be: can one befriend oneself? Yes, says Aristotle, on one condition: that we do not change because of desires, that we stop acting opportunistically towards ourselves, and finally – that we stop trying to be someone we are not. "[E]ach person wishes for what is good for himself; and no one chooses to have everything if he has first to become someone else (since as things are god possesses the good), but only if he remains whatever he is" (1166a). That is what a Greek says; but would the contemporary "nomad" agree, a person who moves across the human wilderness with no purpose and no lodestars; who treats as his own whatever does not belong to him, not wanting and discarding what is his instead? A change of situation exerts no pressure on only one type of person – a magnanimous man. To him things will always appear the way they used to be always. "He who does not live loving Heaven and Earth and loved by them in equal measure, he who does not live at one in this sense with the element in which he has his being, is by his very nature

not so at one with himself as a Greek, at least he does not experience eternal Beauty as easily as a Greek does,” writes Hölderlin.<sup>26</sup> The spirit of affirmation “one might say (...) has nothing to regret” (1166a) – it cannot apologize for what *is*. Mediocre spirits, however, keep running away from themselves as far as they can. In the company of people to whom they feel indifferent they try to find oblivion and kill time (1166b). They do not know how to be friends with themselves or with others. They are drawn to amusements forgetting that “it would be absurd if our end were amusement, and we laboured and suffered all of our lives for the sake of amusing ourselves” (1176b). A magnanimous man acts in an opposite fashion: he does not perceive his friend as a rag doll he amuses himself with, let alone a powerful patron always willing to spare some change. A friend is his other self, “he stands in the same relation to his friend as to himself” (1166a). He shares his fate in everything, including the miseries sent by gods.

What else can be harmful to friendship? Traveling. Friendship takes it badly because it has bad influence on memory – separation accompanying it makes people “forget their friendship” (1157b). Today, in the era of budget airlines, we look at the problem a little less naively. We are more likely to agree with Shakespeare who wrote in one of his sonnets: “But if the while I think on thee, dear friend, / All losses are restor’d, and sorrows end.” Every thought of the friend restores the memory of events lived through together, in fact, friendship *is* equal with memory. Therefore, Aristotle’s proposition that time kills friendship can only be accepted to a limited degree: true, it kills friendship, but not before it has murdered memory. Therefore a viewpoint closer to contemporary sensitivity would be Seneca’s who in one of his letters to Lucilius wrote: “And we ought to bear the absence of friends cheerfully, just because everyone is bound to be often absent from his friends even when they are present.”<sup>27</sup> Friendship is no more than contemplation of absence, the effort of making present – memory.

Yet another disease threatening to dissolve friendship is flattery. A flatterer always pretends, looks for personal gain, is slimy, deceitful, and eventually – abandons his “friend.” Yet, despite these clear characteristics, he is not easily identified. It is partly due to human vanity which the flatterer skillfully boosts and satisfies. I think it is worth our while to once more refer to Seneca who, in his letter to Lucilius, shares his worry about friendship resembling flattery so much. Flattery “not only apes friendship, but outdoes it, passing it in the race; with wide-open and indulgent ears it is welcomed and sinks to the depths of the heart, and it is pleasing precisely wherein it does harm. Show me,” Seneca asks his friend, “how I may be able to see through this resemblance!”<sup>28</sup>

Only humans can be friends. Patroclus could very well like his horses, yet it is before Achilles that he opened his heart. Moreover, real friendship is usually perpetuated between two people. When we talk about friendship between numerous people, we mean an accord, i.e. a political friendship, founded on mutual kindness. For the citizen of the polis friendship – and it really does not matter whether it arises out of a spiritual kinship

<sup>26</sup> F. Hölderlin, “Hyperion, or the Hermit in Greece,” transl. W.R. Trask, adapted by D. Schwarz, *Hyperion and Selected Poems* (New York: Continuum, 1990), 67.

<sup>27</sup> Seneca, *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*, vol. 1, transl. R.M. Gummere (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1917-25), Epistle LV, 371.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, Epistle XLV, 295.

or from differences and a gaping gap<sup>29</sup> – was above all a category used to describe that which in a human being is the most human, “unnatural.”

The Greeks used the term φιλία for both friendship and love, yet they clearly distinguished between the two. They believed that “love is like an excess” of friendship, that it is a complete acceptance of the other person, his shortcomings, habits, peculiarities – “which is very difficult” (1158a). “For people say that we ought to love most the one who is most a friend, and the one who is most a friend to another is he who wishes goods on the other for the other’s sake, even if no one is to know it” (1168b). Exactly – where are we supposed to look for this sacred friendship Aristotle talks about? In a shop, at the market square? Or maybe in the family that often sticks together only due to some sort of inertia? It is hard not to agree that friendship is a good that is rare, fragile and in great shortage. It only appears when we stop counting on benefits, multiplying gains, subtracting losses. Can we still experience it today, particularly in a world like ours where every major event, every great gesture, vanishes into oblivion at an incredible pace? I do not know. I do know, however, that for Aristotle friendship was not a phantom, and a friend – a “fantomas.” These terms described real people, referred to authentic situations.

### OVER THE FOOTBRIDGE

Early in *The Gay Science*<sup>30</sup> Nietzsche recounts the story of two close friends. When they were separated only by a footbridge, one friend asked the other: “Do you want to cross the footbridge to me?” And there, with this sole question – everything was lost. Two beloved souls turned from each other, never to look at the other again. “Since then mountains and torrential rivers and whatever separates and alienates have been cast between us, and even if we wanted to get together, we couldn’t. But when you now think of that little footbridge, words fail you and you sob and marvel.”

The greatest sin, a mortal sin against a friend, is to commix oneself with the other. Be therefore a friend to me, and do not lose yourself in me, do not lay footbridges over which I would glide into you. If you love truly, do not justify your feelings, do not probe, do not query. Such is the lesson in friendship the Stagirite teaches us.

### THINKING BRINGS HAPPINESS

The philosopher, as Henri Bergson has pointed out, returns to the same thought with near obsession, as long as he lives, constantly. Similarly, the common man essentially strives all his life to achieve a single goal. All other goals turn out sooner or later to be means towards achieving it. That goal is the supreme good. Aristotle, in nine installments, book upon book, sets out before us what this good is. In his eyes, it is happiness. How is one to understand it? What conditions must be fulfilled so that happiness doesn’t pass us by (yet again)? “[A]n activity is worthy of choice in itself when nothing is sought from it beyond the activity” (1176b) – he writes somewhat mysteriously in the last book. Let us examine in turn the different fields of human endeavor. Take, for instance, play: is the ludic occupation

<sup>29</sup> Yet I am aware that for Aristotle “Affection consists in equality and similarity” (1159b).

<sup>30</sup> F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science. With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, transl. W. Kaufman (New York: Vintage, 1974), 90 (Book 1, par. 16).

of men, especially of simple men, a task sufficient unto itself, undertaken for its own sake? Let us try to answer this in the positive: yes, play is autotelic – unlike work, where we climb laboriously towards sometimes indeterminate peaks. In this manner, every creative effort is reduced to an unpleasant pause in the never-ending game that life becomes. Such is the thinking of a child, Aristotle will say. “[B]ut serious work and exertion for the sake of amusement is manifestly foolish and extremely childish (...) amusement is like relaxation, and we need relaxation because we cannot continuously exert ourselves. Relaxation, then, is not an end, since it occurs for the sake of activity” (ibidem). Let us proceed. Does sex bring happiness? I do not ask if it is pleasurable (it is), but does it have the power to turn unhappy people into happy people? It does not have that power. A man shackled by life (a “slave”) no matter how cunning in giving and receiving carnal pleasure, cannot (for this reason alone) be called a happy man. Because happiness is inseparable from action understood as a set of activities having an end in themselves. What are these activities? Above all, thinking. Indeed! – actions are also expressed through thought. Agreed – it is a special kind of action: long-lasting, above all. It can last for as long as we are not deprived of reason. In reality, this type of action endures longer than riding a chariot or composing verse. Besides, thinking is pleasurable. “And we think that happiness must have pleasure mixed in with it; and the most pleasant of activities in accordance with virtue is agreed to be that in accordance with wisdom” (1177a).

To the Master, who first brought us into the antechamber of philosophy, and then into the “fresh air” of wisdom, it is incumbent upon us to give thanks, but this gratitude on our part cannot be eternal. Why? Because thinking (the “contemplative act”) requires isolation, loneliness. Thus the concepts used by the philosopher finally reach their desired autarky – he himself attains freedom, freedom apart from the polis, in another place – in another time, one might to say.

Man is a finite being, and the philosopher, provided he is human, is too. The wise man, however, is someone who *cannot stop*, i.e. cannot interrupt his thinking – and “[f] or nothing human is capable of continuous activity” (1175a) – he ceases to be human. By thinking, mostly away from the city and not about the city, he “falls” outside the cave of human affairs. “Such a life,” Aristotle writes, “is superior to one that is simply human, because someone lives thus, not in so far as he is a human being, but in so far as there is some divine element within him” (1177b). Fortunately, the philosopher is not a wise man. He is a man – an imperfect being, dependent on the world, limited by time. The wise man exceeds all these limitations. But does he thus become equal to the gods? I think such questions are not worth posing. The great thought the Stagirite imparts to us, is based rather on the recognition of the situation in which man appears “divine” to us, viz. when he *realizes his essence*, the essence of humanity, which is not diluted in play or in accidental word- or object-creation (1178a).

The last book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is devoted to two questions: happiness and wisdom, as well as the impossibility of achieving one without the other. It is also a record of the terror which strikes the philosopher when he slowly realizes, or allows the voice of reason to reach him, that he has nothing to do in the city, that the city can get on without his help.

In the beginning of Book IX, Aristotle recalls the anecdote about the cithara player who was promised a large reward for his performance, to be received the day after his concert. The following day, however, the audience all agreed that they only listened to please the performer. Besides, they do not really remember what pieces were played and whether they were pretty, since music is such a flighty, airy substance. And so the philosopher, like the cithara player who releases the pleasure of listening among a curious audience, must be ready to face similar circumstances as those described in the anecdote. Like the cithara player, he provides “immaterial goods” in the form of invisible thoughts and ideas; like the cithara player, he cannot count on his “students,” “audience,” “friends of the arts” to repay the efforts he devoted to thought in the same currency. This is why philosophers are, in a way, professional “exiles,” lonely people, who seek not to please their peers but the gods (1179a). Through the *φιλία* in its name, philosophy resembles friendship, and, like friendship, is a scarce good, hard to acquire, which has yet to bring anyone riches. The philosopher, thus, living his existence far from the din of city life, is his own best friend.



# MORTALITY OF THE SOUL AND IMMORTALITY OF THE ACTIVE MIND (*NOUS POIETIKOS*) IN ARISTOTLE. SOME HINTS

For Aristotle – at least in the dialectical context of the *Sophistici Elenchi* – “most people have no distinct opinion (ἀμφιδοξοῦσιν) whether the soul of animals is destructible or immortal” (*SE* 17.176b16-17; transl. Pickard-Cambridge). In the same vein, we could say that even today many, or perhaps even most, people have no distinct view of whether the soul of human beings, that is, their own soul, is destructible or immortal. Aristotle himself, by contrast, had developed, in the context of *De Anima*, a distinct view, namely that the soul of human beings is destructible, except for the active mind (νοῦς ποιητικός). The paper gives (I) a short introduction to Aristotle’s theory of the soul in distinction to Plato’s and tries again (II) to answer the question of whether the individual or the general active mind of human beings is immortal by interpreting “When separated (χωρισθεῖς)” (*de An.* III, 5, 430a22) as the decisive argument for the latter view. This strategy of limiting the question has the advantage of avoiding the probably undecidable question of whether this active νοῦς is human or divine. The paper closes with an outlook (III) on the Christian belief in the resurrection of body and soul in a spiritual body (σῶμα πνευματικόν) (1 Corinthians: 15, 44) by accentuating the ethical aspect of the belief in individual immortality as a “need of reason” (*Vernunftbedürfnis*) (Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, A 256–258).

## I

What is rather astonishing in the relation of Aristotle (384 BC-322 BC) to Plato (428/427 BC-348/347 BC) seems to me the following: Aristotle entered the Academy at about the age of seventeen or eighteen (368/367 BC) and “attached himself to Plato and stayed with him (παραβαλεῖν δὲ Πλάτωνι καὶ διατριῆναι παρ’ αὐτῷ) twenty years” (*D/L*, V, 9, 18-19; l. 105, Dorandi, cf. *Vita Marciana*: 60-64, *FGRHist* 328 F 223). Aristotle “stayed” so with Plato in Athens from 368/367 until Plato’s death in 348/347 BC – if he not “seceded (ἀπέστη) [also in a spatial sense] from Plato when Plato was still alive” (*D/L*, V, 2, 1). We may not *conclude*, but *guess* from the words “attached himself to Plato and stayed with

him” that he “stayed” also as a member of the Academy for circa twenty years.<sup>1</sup> But we do not know anything exact about his membership. It may even be the case that he was not always present at Athens.<sup>2</sup> Although his writings invite us to form a picture of him,<sup>3</sup> his “scientific works are almost silent about his personal affairs.”<sup>4</sup> In contrast, Plato’s dialogues contain at least three overt allusions (cf. *Ap.* 34a, 38b, *Phd.* 59b) and probably many covert ones (cf. e.g. *Symp.* 217a) about their author.<sup>5</sup> This silence of Aristotle’s is especially true with regard to the form of his membership in the Academy.

Nevertheless, during, or rather shortly after, his supposed “membership” in the Academy from 368/367 until 348/347 BC,<sup>6</sup> Aristotle criticized Plato’s ontology – the theory of transcendent ideas, as e.g. developed in the *Phaedo*: “Further, of the more accurate arguments, some lead to Ideas of relations, of which we say there is no independent class...” (*Metaph.* A9.990b16; transl. Ross/Barnes). This implies a critique of the *Phaedo*, where an idea of a relation – the idea of the equal – is introduced for the first time (*Phd.* 74a, c, e, 75b, 78d).<sup>7</sup> Aristotle developed – despite his well-documented acquaintance with Plato’s *Phaedo* (*Metaph.* A 9, 991b3-7; *GC.* B 6, 335b10-14) – his own psychology, which negates the immortality of the soul.

In contrast, “the Socrates in the *Phaedo*” (ὁ ἐν τῷ Φαίδωνι Σωκράτης) (*GC.* B9.335b10-14; cf. *Pol.* B 2, 1261a6) developed four proofs for the immortality of the soul (*Phd.* 69e-72d; 72e-77d: 80b-80c; 105c-e; 105c-107a), but even the “final proof,” which consists of two parts – a first sub-proof that the soul, since it is the cause of life in the body, is immortal (*Phd.* 105c-e) and a second sub-proof that the soul, since it is immortal, is indestructible (*Phd.* 105e-107a) – did not convince him completely (*Phd.* 107b).<sup>8</sup> In any

<sup>1</sup> Cf. O. Gigon (ed.), *Vita Aristotelis Marciana* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1962): “Daraus ergibt sich u.a. klar, dass Philochoros zwei feste Data besessen hat: das Lebensalter des Aristoteles mit 63 und die Dauer seiner Zugehörigkeit zur Akademie mit 20 Jahren. Über diese Grunddata wird der Historiker (gest. um 260) als jüngerer Zeitgenosse Theophrasts (gest. 286) zuverlässig Bescheid gewusst haben.”

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 43, ad l. 37-40: “Freilich ist auch so vor der Überschätzung der Angabe zu warnen. Sie bedeutet zunächst keineswegs, dass Aristoteles von 367 bis 347 ununterbrochen in Athen weilte, sondern nur, dass er von 367 an ‚eingeschriebenes Mitglied‘ der Akademie war...”

<sup>3</sup> Cf. A.-H. Chroust, “Aristotle’s ‘Self-Portrayal,’” in *id.*, *Aristotle, New Light on His Life and Some of His Lost Works*, I (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), 232-248; C. Natali, *Aristotle: His Life and School*, ed. D.S. Hutchinson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 120-144.

<sup>4</sup> C. Natali, *Aristotle: His Life and School*, op. cit., 20. For a portrayal, cf. A.-H. Chroust, “Aristotle’s ‘Self-Portrayal,’” op. cit., 232-248.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. R. Ferber, “Panta praeitein. Socrate e il bene nella Repubblica,” *Méthexis* 23 (2010), 91-92.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. W. Jaeger, *Aristoteles. Grundlegung einer Geschichte seiner Entwicklung* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1923), 177: “Voraussetzung der Ideenkritik in ihrer ursprünglichen Gestalt ist also ein Kreis platonischer Philosophen, vor dem Aristoteles nach dem Tode des Meisters noch einmal alle Einwände gegen dessen Lehre in schnellem Überblick zusammenfasst, die im Lauf der Jahre die Akademie beschäftigt hatten (...). Einen solchen Platonikerkreis hat Aristoteles nach Platons Tod ausser in Athen, das er bald verliess, nur einmal in Assos um sich gehabt und dann niemals wieder.”

<sup>7</sup> Cf. W.D. Ross (ed.), *Aristotle’s Metaphysics*. A revised text with introduction and commentary by D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), 194, ad loc.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. R. Ferber, “*Deuteros Plous*, the Immortality of the Soul and the Ontological Argument for the Existence of God,” in *Proceedings of the XI Symposium Platonicum, Plato’s Phaedo, Brasilia, 6th to 8th July 2016, International Plato Studies* (Baden-Baden: Academia Verlag, 2018), 221-230, esp. 229-230. Russian translation: “*Deuteros Plous*: The Immortality of the Soul and the Ontological Argument for the Existence of God” (tr. A. Garadja) = “*Deuteros plous*: бессмертие души и онтологический аргумент существования Бога” (пер. А. Гараджи), *Платоновские исследования*, VIII (2018), 11-33.

case, the author of the *Phaedo*, Plato, did not return to the proofs in the *Phaedo* but did develop three other proofs (cf. *R.* 610e-611a, *Phdr.* 245b-246a, *Lg.* 894e-895c, 896a-b). Aristotle seems not convinced by any of them, *inter alia* because arguments in *Phdr.* 245b-246a and *Lg.* 894e-895c, 896a-b, rely on the self-motion of the soul,<sup>9</sup> a contradictory concept (cf. *Phys.* VIII.5.57b26-258a5).

It is true that Aristotle wrote a Platonizing dialogue, *Eudemus*, “in 353 or shortly thereafter,”<sup>10</sup> from which only fragments survive.<sup>11</sup> But here he may be expressing, in the face of Eudemus’ early death in 353 in the form of a *consolatio mortis*, his solidarity with his “classmate” Eudemus of Cyprus and his teacher Plato rather than developing his own theory. This is indicated by the fact, that – if not – he would in the year 353 “adhere *doctrinally* to the philosophic doctrines on the soul advanced in the *Phaedo* – doctrines which by 353 were obviously ‘antiquated’ even for Plato.”<sup>12</sup>

But it is evident from *De Anima*, written probably “after Aristotle’s return to Athens in 325-4,”<sup>13</sup> that Aristotle is not convinced by the arguments of the *Phaedo* for the immortality of the individual soul nor by later arguments: “All, however, that these thinkers do is to describe the specific characteristics of the [individual] soul; they do not try to determine anything about the body which is to contain it, as if it were possible, as in the Pythagorean myths, that any soul could be clothed in any body – an absurd view, for each body seems to have a form and shape of its own” (*de An.* 407b20-24; transl. Barnes).

Aristotle denies especially one presupposition of the Platonic psychology: the existence of the individual soul as a substance that is independent from the body, of which substance predicates can be predicated as e.g. ἀσύνθετον (cf. *Phd.* 78C3), ἀθάνατον τε καὶ ἀνώλεθρον (*Phd.* 88b5-6, cf. *Phd.* 95b9-c1.106d2-9).

For Aristotle, whereas in the *Eudemus* the soul seems to be an εἶδος τι (frg. 46, 52, 29 Rose<sup>14</sup>), it is in *De Anima* an εἶδος τινος, namely the *something* of a body (σώματος δέ τι), without which it cannot exist (cf. *de An.* II.2.414a20-23).

For Plato, on the other hand, there is a hierarchical ordering of reality in the following sense: The individual ideas can exist without sense phenomena, but sense phenomena cannot exist without the individual ideas. In the same way: The individual soul can exist without a (living) body and surely without this or that human body, but this or that human body cannot exist without the individual soul. This ontological

<sup>9</sup> Cf. for a formal reconstruction of the argument in the *Phaedrus*, R. Ferber, *Philosophische Grundbegriffe 2, Mensch, Bewusstsein, Leib und Seele, Willensfreiheit, Tod* (München: C. H. Beck, 2003), 129. Translation into Polish by T.L. Kusak, A. Węgrzecki, *Podstawowe Pojęcia Filozoficzne 2* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2008), 123.

<sup>10</sup> A.-H. Chroust, “Eudemus or on the Soul: A Lost Dialogue of Aristotle on the Immortality of the Soul,” *Mnemosyne: Bibliotheca Classica Batava*, vol. 19 (1966), 17-30, here 20, repr. in id., *Aristotle, New Light on His Life and Some of His Lost Works*, II (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), 43-54.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. O. Gigon (ed.), *Aristotelis opera*, III, *Libroum deperditorum fragmenta* (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 1967), 287-296.

<sup>12</sup> Chroust, *ibid.*, 29, n. 2.

<sup>13</sup> W. D. Ross (ed.), *Aristotle. De anima*, edited, with introduction and commentary by D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 11.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. W. Jaeger, *Aristoteles*, op. cit., 44, n. 3

“Hysteron-Proteron-Structure” (cf. *Met.* V11.1019a2-4), the “fundamental formula of Platonism,” can be understood also as the “fundamental formula” of Plato and his so-called objective idealism.<sup>15</sup>

Unlike Plato, Aristotle does not regard the εἶδος as an independent entity, but only as a dependent predicate: “For it seems impossible that any universal term should be the name of a substance” (*Metaph.* Z13.1038b8-9; transl. Ross). Since I have provided an extended discussion of Aristotle’s theory of substance elsewhere,<sup>16</sup> I will summarize here only some essentials: The first, or concrete, substance is something particular, and only the so-called second, or abstract, substance is something universal (cf. *Cat.* 2a14-16). The universal which is said of the particular has no independent existence, but is only a quality of that particular. For example, when we say “Socrates is a human being,” we refer to a quality of a particular individual, namely the quality of being human or the fact of being a member of the human species. But being human, or a member of the human species, does not mean a particular individual, say, the visible flesh-and-blood Socrates. Rather, it is a quality which distinguishes the human species from others. The Aristotelian substance is – to use an expression of Donald C. Williams (1899-1983) – the “occurrence of an essence” in a particular individual.<sup>17</sup> We can mentally perceive this universal quality in a similar way as we remember or “see” the Platonic ideas. Thus, by a *kind* of induction, we see in Socrates something universal, namely a human being: “Thus it is clear that it is necessary for us to become familiar with the primitives (τὰ πρῶτα) by induction; for perception too instils the universal in this way” (*An. post.* B 19, 100b4-5). In the same vein, we could say that the soul is the “occurrence of an essence” in an individual body, or – to recall the Aristotelian definition of the soul, which became famous under the heading of *anima forma corporis* – “Hence the soul must be a substance in the sense of the form of a natural body having life potentially within it. But substance is actuality, and thus soul is the actuality of a body as above characterized” (*de An.* 412a19-22). Therefore: As soon as the individual body dies, also the form of the body dissolves with the body. We have not an ontological priority of the soul over the body in the sense of the above-mentioned Platonic “Hysteron-Proteron-Structure,” but a coexistence with the body: This or that soul cannot exist without this or that particular living body and this or that living body cannot exist without this or that soul.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. H. Krämer, “Die Idee des Guten. Sonnen- und Liniengleichnis (Buch VI 504a-511e)” in Platon, *Politeia*, ed. O. Höffe (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1996), 179-203, here 200: “Man kann sie geradezu als Grundformel des Platonismus verstehen.” Quoted in R. Ferber, “Auf diese Weise nun gebe ich selbst meine Stimme ab” – Einige Bemerkungen zu Platons später Ideenlehre unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des ‘Timaios’,” *Gymnasium. Zeitschrift für Kultur der Antike und Humanistische Bildung*, vol. 105 (1998), 419-444, here 436, n. 39. Cf. R. Ferber, *Philosophische Grundbegriffe 2*, op. cit., 129-131 (Polish translation: *Podstawowe Pojęcia Filozoficzne 2*, op. cit., 122-125).

<sup>16</sup> R. Ferber, “Die ‘metaphysische Perle’ im ‘Sumpf der Tropen’: Einige Bemerkungen zur aristotelischen Metaphysik, Z 17, 1041b 4-9,” in *Metamorphosen der Vernunft: Festschrift für Karen Gloy*, ed. A. Lazzari (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), 63-82, esp. 70.

<sup>17</sup> D.C. Williams, “The Elements of Being,” *Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 7 (1953), 3-18, here 7: “Santayana, however, used ‘trope’ to stand for the *essence of an occurrence* and I shall divert the word, which is almost useless in either his or its dictionary sense, to stand for, so to speak, the *occurrence of an essence*.” Quoted in Ferber, “Die ‘metaphysische Perle’ im ‘Sumpf der Tropen,’” op. cit., 74.

II

But there is an exception to this coexistence: If the soul is mortal, the whole genus νοῦς is not. Concerning the genus νοῦς, Aristotle makes a new and interesting distinction, namely the distinction between two species: the passive (νοῦς παθητικός) and the active mind (νοῦς ποιητικός). Although Aristotle does not use the expression (νοῦς ποιητικός), but speaks only of another “thought (νοῦς),” “which is what it is by virtue of making (ποιεῖν) all things,” I use it just for convenience and in respect of a long tradition. I quote here from the decisive passage:

And in fact thought (νοῦς), as we have described it, is what it is by virtue of becoming (γίνεσθαι) all things, while there is another which is what it is by virtue of making (ποιεῖν) all things: this is a sort of positive state like the light; for in a sense light makes (ποιεῖ) potential colours into actual colours. Thought in this sense of it is separated (χωριστός), impassible (ἀπαθής), unmixed (ἀμιγής), since it is in its essential nature activity (for always the active is superior to the passive factor, the originating force to the matter). Actual knowledge is identical with its object: in the individual, potential knowledge is in time prior to actual knowledge, but absolutely it is not prior even in time. It does not sometimes think (νοεῖ) and sometimes not think (οὐ νοεῖ). When separated (χωρισθεῖς) it is alone just what it is, and this alone is immortal (ἀθάνατον) and eternal (ἄδιον) (we do not remember because, while this is impassible (ἀπαθές), passive thought (παθητικός νοῦς) is perishable); and without this nothing thinks (νοεῖ). (*de An.* III.5.430a14-26; transl. Smith/Barnes with modifications by R.F.).

The passage has a long history of interpretation: The decisive documents from Theophrastus (c. 371-c. 287 BC) to Stephanus from Alexandria (7<sup>th</sup> century) have recently been collected by H. Busche and M. Perkams.<sup>18</sup> In the Middle Ages, Averroes (1126-1198) and Aquinas (1224-1274), especially, commented on the chapter but, as W.D. Ross remarks rightly, “neither of these confined himself to a strict interpretation of the chapter; they incorporated into their theories elements which belong to Moslem or to Christian theology rather than to Aristotle.”<sup>19</sup> We find a useful survey of ancient and medieval and nineteenth-century accounts of the agent intellect in Brentano’s “Habilitationsschrift” “Die Psychologie des Aristoteles insbesondere seine Lehre vom Νοῦς ποιητικός.”<sup>20</sup> The interpretation of F. Brentano is nevertheless biased in favour of Aquinas and its interpretation of the νοῦς ποιητικός as created by God has been sharply criticized by H. Busche.<sup>21</sup> The present *status*

<sup>18</sup> H. Busche and M. Perkams (eds.), *Antike Interpretationen zur aristotelischen Lehre vom Geist* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2018).

<sup>19</sup> W.D. Ross (ed.), *Aristotle. De anima*, 44.

<sup>20</sup> F. Brentano, *Die Psychologie des Aristoteles, insbesondere seine Lehre vom Νοῦς ποιητικός* (Mainz: Verlag von Franz Kirchheim, 1867), 5-36.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 226: “Fragen wir aber, welcher von den früheren Erklärungsversuchen am Meisten der Wahrheit nahe gekommen, so ist es unläugbar, dass wir dem heil. Thomas von Aquin diese Ehre zuerkennen müssen. Ja, ich weiss nicht, ob ich nicht sagen soll, das er die ganze Lehre des Aristoteles richtig erfasst habe.” Cf. for a critique: H. Busche, *Die Seele als System, Aristoteles Wissenschaft von der Seele* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2001), 67-96,

*quaestionis* may be consulted in the corresponding chapter of C. Shields on *De Anima* and a summary of it in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

I cannot give here again a survey on the long history of interpretation, “a substantial field in its own right,”<sup>22</sup> but rely on C. Shields. He distinguishes correctly, in a typological manner, between a human and a divine interpretation, and enumerates the pros and cons of these two interpretations. In addition to the divine and human interpretation, I distinguish between a general and an individual interpretation and I enumerate in a simplified chart the following essential options:

Divine Interpretation	Human Interpretation
General Interpretation	Individual Interpretation

Roughly stated: Whereas Theophrastus defends the human and individual interpretation, Alexander of Aphrodisias (fl. c. 200), e.g., seems to defend the divine and general interpretation. Thomas Aquinas defends the human and individual interpretation, Averroes the general and divine. But since the text is too underdetermined to rule out either the divine or the human interpretation, intersubjective agreement is difficult, if not impossible, to reach, as more than two thousand years of interpretation confirm.<sup>23</sup>

So, I limit myself, first, to the question: Is the active mind (νοῦς ποιητικός) individual or general? I leave the question open as to whether this νοῦς is divine or human.

To answer this limited question, I limit myself, second, to another limited question: What is the subject of “When separated (χωρισθεις) it is alone just what it is, and this alone is immortal (ἀθάνατον) and eternal (αἰδιον)” (*de An.* III, 5, 430a22-23)?

This small question can, in my opinion, be unanimously answered: It is the νοῦς ποιητικός which is separated, because the expression “When separated (χωρισθεις)...” (430a22) reassumes: “Thought in this sense of it is separated (χωριστός)” (430a17).<sup>24</sup>

This is the hypothesis I start from. From this hypothesis, it follows, first, that the νοῦς ποιητικός is separated (χωριστός). We do not remember it because before our birth, we did not have a νοῦς παθητικός and therefore the νοῦς ποιητικός did not find before

esp. 147 and 91, n. 177. I agree especially with Busche’s critique of Brentano’s thesis that we find in Aristotle an immortal individual soul, cf. F. Brentano, *Die Psychologie des Aristoteles*, op. cit., 122, n. 45: “Dass die Seele, wenn sie nach der Trennung vom Leibe fortbesteht, etwas Individuelles bleibt, ist unzweifelhaft, den das Allgemeine besteht nach Aristoteles ausserhalb des Denkens nicht anders als in Individuen (vgl. *Anal. Post.* I, 11. Princ.) Ebenso ist offenbar, dass sie noch dasselbe Individuum sein muss (...).” This coincides with the interpretation of Thomas Aquinas, “that a distinct agent intellect belongs to each human being, *severing* at death to exist on its own immortally” (V. Caston, “Aristotle’s Two Intellects: A Modest Proposal,” *Phronesis*, 54 (1999), 199-227, here 207).

<sup>22</sup> V. Caston, “Aristotle’s Two Intellects: A Modest Proposal,” op. cit., 209-211 and 200, n. 11.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Ch. Shields (ed.), *Aristotle De Anima* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 312-313, 328-329.

<sup>24</sup> To quote paradigmatically here only two clear testimonies from the last century: W.D. Ross (ed.), *Aristotle. De anima*, 47, writes: “The unnamed subject of the present sentence is plainly the active reason (cf. χωρισθεις, l. 22, with χωριστός, l. 17).” L. Robin, *Aristote* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1944), 203, has written: “Ainsi, l’intellect ‘en acte’ paraît être à la fois quelque chose *en dehors* de nous, et quelque chose *en nous*. Par suite, à la fois, il est ‘séparé’, χωριστός, et il se ‘sépare’, χωρισθεις; et c’est quand il s’est de la sorte séparé de nous qu’il a sa véritable ‘quiddité.’”

our birth any εἶδος or immanent form from sensible things, which we could remember from the time before our birth. The last sentence, “and without this (ἄνευ τούτου) nothing thinks” (*de An.* III, 5, 430a25), can now have two interpretations: Either without the νοῦς ποιητικός nothing thinks or without the νοῦς παθητικός nothing thinks. Since the νοῦς ποιητικός, as separated νοῦς, thinks anyway and incessantly, and the “this” in “without this” (ἄνευ τούτου) refers therefore to the νοῦς παθητικός, we can conclude: Without the νοῦς παθητικός, nothing thinks. The νοῦς παθητικός is thus the necessary but not sufficient condition of our thinking. This is also implied by the thesis that our soul “never [thinks] without mental images” (*de An.* III.7 431a.16-17). But the νοῦς παθητικός which receives images of sensible things is a personal one.

The question now remains: Is this νοῦς ποιητικός also individual, or is it general and impersonal? When it is mixed with the νοῦς παθητικός, the νοῦς ποιητικός is also individualized or personalized because it finds the mental images which the individual παθητικός νοῦς receives through our sensory organs. After the death of the body and its παθητικός νοῦς, the ποιητικός νοῦς survives only as “impassible” (ἀπαθές) and is, therefore, immortal only in a depersonalized or deindividualized form, because it now has no personal mental images to work on.

So, the answer to our limited question is: The active mind is immortal only in a deindividualized general form; but when it is mixed with the passive mind and its mental images, it also exists in a “mixed” form and it is mortal only in this “mixed” form, as the passive mind. To spell the decisive sentence out: “When separated (χωρισθείς) it is alone just what it is, and this alone is immortal (ἀθάνατον) and eternal (αἰδίων)” (*de An.* III.5 430a22-23): When the νοῦς ποιητικός is separated (χωρισθείς), it is solely just what it “essentially”<sup>25</sup> is and, therefore, is not individualized by images, and this deindividualized νοῦς ποιητικός alone is immortal (ἀθάνατον) and eternal (αἰδίων).

Although we have no ontological priority of the soul over the body, in the sense of the above-mentioned Platonic “Hysteron-Proteron-Structure,” but a coexistence with the body, we have nevertheless a modified and weakened Platonic “Hysteron-Proteron-Structure” concerning the νοῦς ποιητικός and the νοῦς παθητικός: The νοῦς ποιητικός can exist without the νοῦς παθητικός, but the νοῦς παθητικός *may exist in the embryo, but cannot fulfil its function to see “all things” (πάντα) (430a15) without the “light” of the νοῦς ποιητικός.*

The decisive conclusion is, therefore, that there is, in Aristotle, no personal immortality of the individual, but only of the depersonalized νοῦς ποιητικός on the one hand and the eternal species on the other hand. The νοῦς ποιητικός exists as a general νοῦς, be it divine or not; the eternal species exist by reproduction of the individuals: “an animal producing an animal, a plant a plant, in order that, as far as its nature allows, it may partake in the eternal and divine” (*de An.* II.415.28-415b1). The survival of one individual soul, with its images, we have only in the shadowy memory of its progeny. Although the textual evidence for this interpretation is small, the complete mortality of human beings and their souls is in accordance with the picture, in Aristotle, of a soul as *forma corporis*.

<sup>25</sup> I owe “essentially” to Caston, “Aristotle’s Two Intellects: A Modest Proposal,” op. cit., 211.

## III

So, the immortality of the personal soul remained for Aristotle, in *De Anima*, and in distinction to Plato – as it was for his Socrates in the *Meno* (81a10-b7) – *not* “an old and holy saying” (παλαιῶς τε καὶ ἱεροῦς λόγοις) (*Ep.* VII, 335a3) to be obeyed. Nevertheless, the Platonic Love (cf. *Smp.* 207d-208d) in the sense of a “*désir de l'éternité*”<sup>26</sup> did not die in Aristotle:

But we must not follow those who advise us, being men, to think of human things, and, being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can (ἐφ' ὅσον ἐνδέχεται), make ourselves immortal (ἀθανατίζειν), and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us; for even if it be small in bulk (τῷ ὄγκῳ σμικρόν), much more does it in power and worth surpass everything (δυνάμει καὶ τιμιότητι πολὺ μᾶλλον πάντων ὑπερέχει). This would seem, too, to be each man himself, since it is the authoritative and better part of him. It would be strange, then, if he were to choose not the life of his self but that of something else. And what we said before will apply now; that which is proper to each thing is by nature best and most pleasant for each thing; for man, therefore, the life according to reason (κατὰ τὸν νοῦν) is best and pleasantest, since reason more than anything else is man. This life therefore is also the happiest (*EN*, X10, 1177b30-1178a8; transl. Smith).

This desire for immortality by assimilation of ourselves to the νοῦς, echoes not only the follow-up of the Platonic formula ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας, namely πρεσβεία καὶ δυνάμει ὑπερέχοντος (*R.* 509b9-10), since the νοῦς “in power and worth surpasses everything” (δυνάμει καὶ τιμιότητι πολὺ μᾶλλον πάντων ὑπερέχει). It echoes also the phrase “becoming as like God as possible” (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν) (*Th.* 176b1-3, cf. *Ti.* 90d4-9) in the sense of a ὁμοίωσις νῶϊ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν.

But this “*désir de l'éternité*” nevertheless leaves open the question of post-mortem justice regarding our moral or immoral behaviour as long as we are alive. This is unsatisfactory because even if the just are *simpliciter* happy and the unjust unhappy (*Grg.* 470c-471d, *R.* 618e-619b, *Lg.* 662b-e) in this life,<sup>27</sup> the just may nevertheless have in a qualified sense a miserable life and may, like Socrates – “the best of that generation we've ever encountered, the wisest, too, and the most just” (*Phd.* 118a; transl. Rowe) – be condemned to death, whereas the most unjust may survive. But then a “need of reason” (*Vernunftbedürfnis*) (cf. *Critique of Practical Reason*, A 256-258) remains unfulfilled, namely that the just also have on earth a happy life or that virtue also pays in the end

<sup>26</sup> L. Robin, *La théorie platonicienne de l'amour, nouvelle édition avec préface de P.-M. Schuhl* (Paris: s.n., 1964), 188: “L'amour n'est pas seulement (...) l'amour de la possession éternelle du bon; il est l'amour de l'éternité même, parce qu'elle est un bien et même notre bien.”

<sup>27</sup> Cf. R. Ferber, “Was und wie hat Sokrates gewusst?,” *Elenchos* 28, 2007, 38: “Sokrates' ‘semantischer Monismus’, dagegen würde darauf insistieren, daß die Ausdrücke ‘glücklich,’ ‘gerecht’ und ‘gut’ nur auf *eine* Art und Weise korrekt verwendet werden oder nur *eine* korrekte Bedeutung haben und alle anderen Verwendungsweisen inkorrekt sind: Der Gerechte ist *simpliciter* glücklich, der Ungerechte dagegen *simpliciter* unglücklich, (...) und das Angenehme ist *simpliciter* nicht das Gute.”



in terms of (conventional) happiness in this life. In Kantian terminology, it is a “need of reason” that the good will or *bonum supremum* is supplemented by the *bonum consummatum*, that is, that the good will is supplemented by happiness (cf. *Critique of Practical Reason*, A 198-203).

It is the Christian belief in the resurrection of a “spiritual body” (σῶμα πνευματικόν) (1 Corinthians: 15, 44) – to be judged for one’s good and bad deeds in life (cf. 2 Corinthians: 5, 10) – after the *complete* annihilation of body and soul<sup>28</sup> which has the advantage of giving substance to this “need of reason” in a new form. But with this “spiritual body” (σῶμα πνευματικόν), we would leave the limits of philosophy, since this resurrection of my “psychic body” (σῶμα ψυχικόν), which will be buried, in a post-resurrectional “spiritual body” (σῶμα πνευματικόν) (cf. 1 Corinthians: 15, 44-45) – which is nevertheless numerically identical with my “psychic body” – cannot be proved by reason any more than its presupposition – the resurrection of Christ – can be proved by direct evidence (cf. 1 Corinthians: 15, 12-14). It remains a testimony-based “knowledge,” in Platonic terms, a belief without knowledge (ἄνευ ἐπιστήμης δόξα (c.f. *R.* 506c6) – that is, a belief (δόξα) transformed by St. Paul into a *faith* (πίστις) on the same scale as hope (ἐλπὶς) and love (ἀγάπη) (cf. 1 Corinthians: 13, 13).

But even if the testimony is false, the resurrection in a “spiritual body” remains – like Plato’s myths of the beyond (*Gr.* 523a-527a, *Phd.* 107d-114c, *Plt.* 614b-621b; cf. also *Lg.* 903d-903e) – a reasonable myth, whose reasonable core, in the sense of a “need of reason”, transformed into a firm hope, had long before Kant already been formulated by “the Socrates in the *Phaedo*”: “that there is something in store for those who have died, and – as we have been told since antiquity – something much better for the good than for the bad” (*Phd.* 63c5-7; transl. Rowe with small alterations by R. F.). Perhaps this reasonable hope of a post-mortem justice, effected by a post-mortem tribunal, consisting – in a secularized form – of the judgments of future generations of children “asking to be born” (Leonard Cohen), will enhance justice here and now in this life, at least for the part of mankind who believe in future generations of children. But, in distinction to a belief in a post-resurrectional “spiritual body” (σῶμα πνευματικόν), a belief in future children is true of (almost) everybody.

To vary the motto of Goethe’s *Farbenlehre* (“*Post fata nostra pueri qui nunc ludunt nostri iudices erunt.*”): “*Post fata nostra infantes nondum nati nostri iudices erunt.*”; or, translated freely: “After our fortunes, the children not yet born will be our judges, regarding our fortunes and deeds.”<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Cf. O. Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead? The Witnesses of the New Testament* (London: Epworth Press, 1958).

<sup>29</sup> An earlier version of the paper was given at the National Research University “Higher School of Economics,” Moscow, April 2017. I thank very much Olga Alieva for her invitation, two commentators and Hubertus Busche for their helpful comments.

# “INTENTIONALITY” IN PLATO AND PLOTINUS: PLOTINUS’ CRITIQUE OF ARISTOTLE’S INTELLECT

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In this work I want to assess what Plato and Plotinus might have thought about intentionality and, partly on this basis, determine why Plotinus might have rejected Aristotle’s account of Intellect as a thinking of thinking<sup>1</sup> or, since Plotinus never mentions this famous phrase directly, why he might reject thinking “of” thinking as a first principle. I take it as axiomatic that Plotinus develops his theory of the “hypostases”<sup>2</sup> – the One or Good, Intellect and Soul – from Plato’s *Republic*, *Symposium*, *Parmenides*, *Second Letter*, etc.<sup>3</sup> What I am interested in uncovering here by contrast is why, on Aristotelian grounds, thinking or understanding, for Plotinus, cannot be primary.

First, we should determine what the modern notion of intentionality might be. According to common views, intentionality is: 1) the fact of being deliberate or purposive; or 2) the quality of mental states (e.g., thoughts, beliefs, desires, hopes) that consists in their being directed toward some object or state of affairs.<sup>4</sup> But since intentionality does not necessarily involve deliberation, perhaps a better definition is as follows: 3) Intentionality is the power of minds to be about, to represent, or to stand for, things, properties and states of affairs (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*).<sup>5</sup>

In other words, is intentionality the peculiar quality of mental states (e.g., thoughts, beliefs, desires, hopes) that consists in their being directed toward some object or state of affairs, or the quality of being directed to objects, as the second definition puts it? Or is it not only object-directedness (since I can see, think, imagine objects that do not exist physically), but also thought-object directedness, that is, the power of minds to be about, to represent, or to stand for, things, properties and states of affairs, as the third definition from the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* has it?

<sup>1</sup> *Metaphysics* 12, 9, 1074b34-35: καὶ ἔστιν ἡ νόησις νοήσεως νόησις.

<sup>2</sup> For the sense of ὑπόστασις in Plotinus, see H. Dörrie, “Hypostasis, Wort und Bedeutungsgeschichte,” in *Platonica Minora*, ed. W. Fink (Munich, 1976), 35-92; and for recent overview, J.-M. Narbonne, M. Achard, L. Ferroni, *Plotin. Oeuvres Complètes. Introduction, Traité 1 (I 6), Sur le Beau* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, Vrin, 2012), xcvi-ccxlviii.

<sup>3</sup> For Plotinus’ own account of this see *Ennead* V 1 (10) 8.

<sup>4</sup> <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/intentionality>.

<sup>5</sup> P. Jacob, “Intentionality,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/intentionality/>.

Or is it something broader still, namely, the quality of attention we give to anything – objects, states-of-affairs, emotions, imaginations, the content of mental states or concepts, understandings, etc.? Does intentionality also depend upon receptivity – for instance, the sense-capacity, as in Aristotle, to receive the form without the matter, and are there different levels of receptivity?<sup>6</sup>

Could x be intentional in one focus and non-intentional in another? Or, another way of putting it might be this: is there a power for thought or perception that is notionally or really different from actually thinking of things? And which is primary: the intentional or the non-intentional? Does intention require deliberate purpose? Could there be a non-deliberative intentionality?

Is self-referentiality properly intentional – for example, self-knowledge or seeing oneself reflected in the best of the soul of the other that, according to *Alcibiades I*, provides self-knowledge, knowledge of the other and the whole of the divine as the proper prerequisite for intelligent action?<sup>7</sup> Or, again, is self-gathering or self-concentration away from the body as in the *Phaedo*<sup>8</sup> and other dialogues a form of intentionality, that is, an attention to oneself or an intention upon the Form or both? Again, how are we to think of Aristotle's famous characterization of the Unmoved Mover's life as "thinking of thinking" or understanding of understanding? Is divine thought primarily intentional or self-referential, that is, in some sense a thinking of itself, and is this the proper model for human thinking and, indeed, for all activity?

Finally, is thinking that is identical with the object of thought intentional? Perhaps not, if intentionality requires otherness. Richard Sorabji<sup>9</sup> draws the following conclusion, for instance, in relation to Plotinus: "the intelligibles are not thought-dependent. Sometimes they are treated as identical with intellect, sometimes as prior. None of this draws attention to "aboutness" or intentional objects. The priority implies instead a realism about intelligibles" (114). But of course, for Plotinus the identity of intellect and intelligible does involve otherness, and not only otherness, but an intelligible and proto-intelligible medium to discern sameness-in-otherness and an intelligible object "to lean on" for the purposes of seeing.<sup>10</sup> So I am not sure about the correctness of Sorabji's judgment.

<sup>6</sup> For Sorabji's interpretation of this, against Brentano, as a physiological process, see R. Sorabji, "Aristotle on Sensory Processes and Intentionality. A Reply to Myles Burnyeat," in D. Perler (ed.), *Ancient and Medieval Theories of Intentionality* (Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 2001), 49-61, here 59 and n. 7. For the Stoics and the broader history of interpretation (which is beyond the scope of this work), see V. Caston, "Something and Nothing: The Stoics on concepts and universals," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 145-213; R. Sorabji, "From Aristotle to Brentano: the development of the concept of intentionality," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, Supplementary Vol. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 227-259.

<sup>7</sup> See Plato, *Alcibiades I* 133b-134d; and in favor of the dialogue's authenticity, most recently, N. Denyer, *Plato: Alcibiades*, Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 14-26; K. Corrigan, *Love, Friendship, Beauty and the Good: Plato, Aristotle and the later Tradition* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, Series: Veritas 26, 2018), 51-80; and against, M. Burnyeat and M. Frede, *The Pseudo-Platonic Seventh Letter*, ed. Dominic Scott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> For example, *Phaedo* 66b and following; *Republic* 6, 485b-486b; 490a-b.

<sup>9</sup> R. Sorabji, "Aristotle on Sensory Processes and Intentionality. A Reply to Myles Burnyeat," op. cit., 114.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, V 5 (32) 7, 2ff. (I refer to the *Enneads* in the following way: V 5 is the Ennead number (Roman) followed by the treatise number (arabic); the number in square brackets is the chronological number according to Porphyry in his *Life of Plotinus*, followed by the chapter and line numbers): "take the eye as an example, for it has one object of sight which is the form of the object perceived by the sense, and one which is the medium through

Dominic O'Meara,<sup>11</sup> on the other hand, argues for something like intentionality within Neoplatonic realism: "If the objects of discursive thought are prior to it and independent of it, it [discursive thought] thinks them all the same in a way corresponding to its nature, as concepts. These concepts in their differentiation, multiplicity, operational productivity, correspond to the dynamic character of discursive thought, while constituting, so to speak, an inner speech about, an image of, the objects that transcend it. This makes these concepts, on some accounts at least, intentional objects" (124). If I understand O'Meara correctly, this would mean that intelligible objects are "intentional" for discursive thought in the sense that such thought thinks "of" or "about" them mediately by means of concepts. This doesn't have to be entirely practical, because it obviously extends to all phenomena, practical and theoretical: loving, willing, and deciding what to have for breakfast tomorrow morning.

If we push this further, we should probably have to say that intelligible reality is intentional for us in the sense that the soul desires *understanding*. So Victor Caston<sup>12</sup> identifies the outward-directedness that fundamentally characterizes *intentio/attentio* in Augustine as not at all restricted to practical intentions: "In order for *intentio*'s roots to flower in this way [i.e., across all forms of *intentio* – practical intentions as well as will and love], it must possess some aspect of these states in germinal form, and Augustine identifies this as the drive towards transcendence" (45). This is certainly true of Plato and Plotinus, since desire "for" or "of" something is simply fundamental to Platonism and Aristotelianism. The deepest impulse of the soul, Plotinus says, is for that which is greater than herself.<sup>13</sup>

Nonetheless, if intentionality is a notion we can find in the Ancient World, ranging from Plato to Athanasius' Anthony<sup>14</sup> and thence to Augustine, it is also a nineteenth century notion from Brentano and Husserl<sup>15</sup> – and the nineteenth century world-view is very different from that of Plato or Plotinus. The nineteenth century distinguishes objects or things out there as independent of subjects (even if, on the Kantian or post-Kantian accounts, subjects somehow constitute them). For Plato, by contrast, this world is a "blessed

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which the form of its object is perceived, which is also itself perceptible to the eye; it is different from the form, but is the cause of the form's being seen; it is seen concurrently in the form and with the form; this is the reason why it affords no clear perception of itself, since the eye is directed to the illuminated object; but when there is nothing there but the medium, the eye sees it by an instantaneous immediate perception, though even then it sees it based upon something different, but if it is alone and not resting on something else the sense is not able to grasp it" (ὄταν δὲ μηδὲν ἄλλο ἢ παρ' αὐτό, ἀθρόα εἶδε προσβολῆ, καίτοι καὶ τότε εἶδεν ἐπεριεδόμενον ἄλλω, μόνον δὲ αὐτὸ γενόμενον, μὴ πρὸς ἐτέρω, οὐ δύναται ἡ αἴσθησις λαβεῖν).

<sup>11</sup> D.J. O'Meara, "Intentional Objects in Later Neoplatonism," in D. Perler (ed.), *Ancient and Medieval Theories of Intentionality*, op. cit., 115-125, here 124.

<sup>12</sup> V. Caston, "Connecting Traditions: Augustine and the Greeks on Intentionality," in D. Perler (ed.), *Ancient and Medieval Theories of Intentionality*, op. cit., 23-48, here 42-45.

<sup>13</sup> I 4 (46) 6, 17-18.

<sup>14</sup> Intention is evidently a word derived from the Latin *intentio/attentio*. In Augustine, I have argued elsewhere (K. Corrigan, "The Soul-Body Relation in and before Augustine," *Studia Patristica XLIII: Augustine, Other Latin Writers* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 71-78), the term is related to forms of προσέχειν in Athanasius's *Life of Antony*. The desert tradition, like the Stoic, espoused proper attention or mindfulness. In Augustine again, intention is related to conscious agency.

<sup>15</sup> See T. Crane, "Intentionality," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. E. Craig (London: Routledge, 1998); F. Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, trans. A.C. Rancurello, D.B. Terrell and L.L. McAlister (London: Routledge, 1995).

god” made dynamically in the light of the Living Paradigm.<sup>16</sup> In the modern world, we desire and intend things, and other animals desire things much less so either because we have domesticated them or because we see little to no evidence of our rationality in them. The earth, rocks and stones don’t desire anything. But for Plato, *everything* desires the Forms; it is not just our desire that makes participation real, for Plato, but instead our experience makes us realize that all material things aim for or desire greater perfection and yet, at the same time, fall short of it. As Socrates puts this early in the *Phaedo*: “Then we must have had knowledge of equality before that time when, seeing equal things for the first time, we came to have it in mind that all these things aim/desire to be like equality, but fall short of it” (ὅτι ὁρέγεται μὲν πάντα ταῦτα εἶναι οἷον τὸ ἴσον, ἔχει δὲ ἐνδεεστέρωσ) (74e-75a). This means, I think, that while we can find intentionality, in the sense of about-ness or of-ness, in Plato and Plotinus, their worlds are thoroughly transfixed by intentionality as desire in ways that our world simply is not. About-ness can be relatively uninteresting in our world since things can’t do anything that our science doesn’t predict; but for Plato and Plotinus there is no material world at all without the dynamic forms that make all things, participate, grow, weave a story “about” something that we can come to recognize. For Plato, in fact, the Good is “*that by which* just things and the rest become useful and beneficial” (*Republic* 505a3-4: ἧ δὴ καὶ δίκαια καὶ τᾶλλα προσχρησάμενα χρήσιμα καὶ ὠφέλιμα γίνονται).<sup>17</sup> In other words, things in the world have a real about-ness to them because of the Good. In the Good, they become really useful, beneficial and interesting so that *we can learn from them*, not just the other way round. I think this is true for Aristotle – despite necessarily acknowledged differences, since the entire hierarchy of forms in Aristotle’s cosmos is transfixed by love, desire or simple impulse in movement in many different ways.<sup>18</sup>

Plotinus goes further still: even intelligible things are simply boring without the light of the Good. In VI 7 (37) 22, for instance, Plotinus makes the remarkable statement that the beauty of Intellect is “boring,” “inactive,” “before it takes light of the Good;” the soul falls flat on its back, numbed with boredom. But when the light is there, it gains strength, wakes up, and though moved with passion for what “lies close alongside it, it is lifted up to another (...) by the giver of love” (22, 10-20;<sup>19</sup> cf. *Phaedrus* 246aff). For the modern world, one might say, it’s more about the subject – whatever the subject is, not about what makes things be. For Plotinus too, the subject *is* important; the “we” and the larger self are, indeed, real agents; but we are nothing without the Good and equally nothing on the other side of the issue, that is, in relation to objects or things in the physical

<sup>16</sup> *Timaeus* 34b.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Philebus* 11b-c: “wisdom and thought and *memory* and their kindred, (...) are for those who can partake of them (...) the *most beneficial* of all things.”

<sup>18</sup> For two different perspectives, love and impulse, ἔρωσ and ὁρμή, see *Metaphysics* 1072b3 and *Eudemian Ethics* 1248a23-41.

<sup>19</sup> *Ennead* VI 7 (38) 22, 10-20: πρὸ τοῦδε οὐδὲ πρὸς τὸν νοῦν κινεῖται, καίπερ καλὸν ὄντα: ἀργὸν τε γὰρ τὸ κάλλος αὐτοῦ, πρὶν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ φῶσ λάβη, ὑπτία τε ἀναπέπτωκεν ἡ ψυχή παρ’ αὐτῆς καὶ πρὸς πᾶν ἀργῶσ ἔχει καὶ παρόντος νοῦ ἐστι πρὸς αὐτὸν νοθήσ. ἐπειδὴν δὲ ἦκη εἰς αὐτὴν ὥσπερ θερμασία ἐκεῖθεν, ρώννυται τε καὶ ἐγείρεται καὶ ὄντως περοῦται καὶ πρὸς τὸ παρακειμένον καὶ πλησίον καίπερ ἐπτοημένη ὁμῶσ πρὸς ἄλλο οἷον τῆ μνήμη μεῖζον κουφίζεται. καὶ ἔωσ τί ἐστιν ἀνωτέρω τοῦ παρόντος, αἶρεται φύσει ἄνω αἰρομένη ὑπὸ τοῦ δόντος τὸν ἔρωτα.

world, despite all of our intentional being, *unless the thing enters our soul and makes us its intention*, as it were. As Plotinus says in III 8 (30): "for if they [thinker and object thought] are two, they will be two different things that lie beside each other, and this pair have not yet been brought into relation just as when speeches/rational principles dwelling in the soul do nothing; for this reason the speech/logos must not be from outside, but must be united with the soul of the learner until it finds that it is its own. The soul then when it has become akin and properly disposed, nonetheless speaks it forth and handles it in front of it (...) and what it utters, it utters because of its deficiency with a view to examining it, trying to learn thoroughly what it possesses."

So my view is that our modern notions of intentionality are a reduced boring subset of the larger world of "about-ness" that Plato and Plotinus, I think, inhabited. We in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century live in a different world. Here I shall take just a few examples from Plato and Plotinus and I will argue that the rich intentional world of both thinkers is ultimately dependent upon pure non-intentionality that is at the root of all thinking and of every other activity such as reasoning, opining, imagining and perceiving, dependent ultimately upon thinking and contemplation. This I will argue is at the root of Plotinus' rejection of Aristotle's Intellect as thinking of thinking. I shall start with Plato. Rather than conduct a comparative analysis of various terms that might fit the modern term intention derived from the Latin (see note 14 above), I shall concentrate instead upon a power's being "of" something or directed "to" something in Plato and Plotinus and then go on from this to what I take to be Plotinus' critique of Aristotle's Intellect as a thinking of thinking.

## 2. PLATO

In the *Parmenides* (132bff.), the Stranger insists that the Forms are merely thoughts existing only in souls, and thoughts (νοήματα) must be "of something." Presumably, even in a critique of Forms, νοήματα refer approximately to what we mean by concepts or thoughts, generally speaking, and such concepts are intentional, that is, "of" something. But surely an intentional concept existing in souls cannot be a property of Forms. Forms are simply themselves. They are not "of," "in," or directed "to" anything. So Socrates, perhaps weakly, affirms the difference against Parmenides' criticism: "but Parmenides, I think the most likely view is, that these ideas exist in nature as patterns, and the other things resemble them and are imitations of them" (132d). So by contrast with Forms, it is characteristic of things and selves to want to be "of" or desire the Forms. Particular things strive for or desire the Forms, as we have seen in the *Phaedo* (at 75a2; b1). If this is so, intentionality, that is, the capacity to be directed at something, must be a kind of state or activity of all things. It is certainly a feature of souls or selves, as we readily recognize; in the *Phaedo*, the soul too "desires what is real" (65c-d: ὀρέγεται); in the *Symposium*, ἔρωσ or desire cannot simply be free-floating, according to Socrates's elenchus of Agathon: ἔρωσ must be "of" something, and "of" something we lack or need (199c-201c). This something, however, need not be a definite object. It can be a focus of attention that can be turned to or upon anything, as Socrates argues in *Republic* Book 6: a single fount of energy that can be directed laterally as well as above and below.<sup>20</sup> And this focus, like

<sup>20</sup> *Republic* 6, 484d-e.

that of participation itself, ranges from the particular to the whole of wisdom.<sup>21</sup> The verbs μετέχειν, and ἔχειν, for instance, typically govern the genitive and mean “to have of” something, where “what is had” is not quantified. I can participate or “have of” wisdom, but I am also prone to participate or “have of” folly (*Republic* 539c5-6).<sup>22</sup> The amounts of wisdom or folly do not have to be specified, and they are also susceptible of being more or less. By contrast, if one participates in a certain physical quantity, such as a piece of cake, then one uses μετέχειν with the accusative or adds the “having of” a definite part – as in the phrase: μετέχειν or ἔχειν μέρος τι (cf. *Euthydemus* 306b). The former indefinite usage accounts for the sheer range of participation and participants in Plato. Unlike the case of participation in physical objects, one can participate in courage and excellence without taking that excellence away from others. If participating “of” x or y is analogous to the Parmenides’s νοήματα or concepts of something, then while intentionality can be “of” something determinate, such as a definite individual thought, color, or person, intentionality as such seems to have a broader application, coextensive with participation. And at the highest range of such participation, intentionality is intensified into a “touching upon” Being or upon the Beautiful.<sup>23</sup>

In *Republic* 6 and the *Symposium*, Socrates describes this as an intensifying ascent that brings about a new view of ordinary things. In *Republic* 5, first, the person who *partakes* (μετεῖναι) in true philosophy (489e-490a), by contrast with most philosophers, must have the following dynamic features: a) he must be *constantly in pursuit of the truth as his guide* (490a1-3); b) his ἔρωσ will not be blunted or quenched (490b2) before he *touches upon* the nature of “each itself what it is” *by that capacity of soul* by which it is fitting to *touch upon* it, namely, its *kinship* (490b2-4); and c) by virtue of this, *approaching and mingling with* that which really is, d) he *generates mind and truth* so that he *knows, lives truly, nourishes and is nourished* or reared, and *ceases from birth pangs* (490b5-7). The “intentionality,” expressed in the above passage by ἐφάπτεσθαι, gives birth to mind, truth, life and development, if we can so characterize this dynamic process. In other words, the intentionality of perception is transformed into understanding by touching upon the real so that one can be a truly intentional being, that is, someone who really pays attention. A similar transformation occurs in later books, in *Republic* 6 and 7, when the higher cuts on the divided line from Book 6, understanding and reasoning, are first distinguished in Book 6 from one another, as understanding to reasoning, but then in Book 7 are both called νοήσεις or *understanding* in light of synoptic dialectic.

Even more famously, in Diotima-Socrates’s speech in the *Symposium*, there is a similar dynamic ascent, of course, that at every level leads to the birth and rearing of λόγοι, but only at the highest level leads to the birth of real things by “touching upon” the Beautiful (211e-212a). Here especially, the “intentional” “touching upon the Beautiful” is the culmination of an ascent that includes a notional transformation of the bodies and souls Diotima started from at the beginning of this final ascent. Many scholars have noted that “participation” is absent from the *Symposium*, but it in fact does occur only once

<sup>21</sup> E.g., 6, 489b-490b.

<sup>22</sup> Compare *Phaedo* 93e5; 94a1-6; *Phaedrus* 247b3 (by comparison with 249e3-4); 272d4-5 (and 252e7-253a5).

<sup>23</sup> See *Symposium* 212a3-4; *Republic* 6, 490b2-4.

and strikingly *at the highest point of ascent*, where bodies, souls, observances become *participants*: the apprentice, guided by ceaseless love, sees both the Form itself and the participants and, explicitly here, sees them as clearly distinct, yet related. Diotima says to Socrates at the top of the ladder: “this is that for the sake of which all previous toils were (...) *itself by itself with itself*, always singular in form, while *all the other beauties participate in That*” (211b1-3: αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτὸ μεθ’ αὐτοῦ μονοειδὲς αἰεὶ ὄν, τὰ δὲ ἄλλα πάντα καλὰ ἐκείνου μετέχοντα). Only at the level of the whole, is it possible to see the thing for what it is: *a participant*, that is, *an entity whose entire being depends on the Form*.

So my thesis here about Plato is this: intentionality, if we can call it this, is never a single object/thought relation but a multi-level grasp of what the participant is in the light of its clearest presentation or self-presentation as a whole. Otherwise, one’s perception, imagination or thought of x is empty or next to empty (that is, merely δόξα or εἰκασία, in the “cuts” along the divided line).

Two corollaries. First, the self-gathering of the self into self-dependent unity that is characteristic of the *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Symposium* is simultaneously non-intentional and intentional: non-intentional in so far as it moves away from the grasp of concepts, images or things; intentional, not in so far as it brackets individual objects but rather in so far as it comes to see them in a new way and also in so far as this new intentionality is actually part and parcel of an intentionality focused upon, and therefore directed by, the Forms. The two, in fact, go together: the broader the new focus, the broader the capacity to be other-directed in an appropriate way, that is, without undue particularization. In order to walk, to play the violin, to talk to you, to contemplate, I cannot be thinking about how to do these things and what is involved in them. I *can* think about these things obviously, but such thought will get in the way of doing them successfully because I am putting the “how to” and the “of what” first.

Second, something of this extension of intentionality seems to be operative in the case of “caring for” something in general or particular. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates says – however enigmatically – that “all soul” or every soul “cares for that which is without soul and ranges about the whole heaven” or universe “coming to be now in one form, now in another” (*Phaedrus* 246b6-7). Whatever the meaning of this sentence, it seems relatively clear that the care or attention/intention of every soul is to animate and care for body. How does it do this? Not by identifying with the body and therefore losing its capacity to care for something other than itself, but by removing itself from undue care or attention, that is, by treating it with appropriate intentionality: by organizing the body to do its own tasks and leaving the soul free to care for it in the appropriate way.

### 3. PLOTINUS

This is the way Plotinus sees the proper function of the world soul, and individual souls in that light – “having a soul not *of* it but *to* it,” a thought that is truly intentional in the sense of directive and caring, but that does not, by belonging to the thing, become incapable of caring for it. It is, like any faculty or power in *Republic* 6,<sup>24</sup> directed *to* its appropriate object and to that degree perhaps it may be said to be “of” it, but the object is not the

<sup>24</sup> Plato, *Republic* 6, 507c-509b; cf. 5, 477b-d.



possessor; intentionality is really in the other direction: the thing is rather *in* the soul, and in the mind's potentially broader focus, which does not mean that the intentionality is somehow at one remove, for one may rightly conclude that it is actually closer and more concrete than the perception or thought that naively takes the object to be all that is and, therefore, has to prove who is in charge.

There came into being something like a beautiful and richly various house which was not cut off from its builder, but he did not give it a share in himself either; he considered it all, everywhere, worth a care which conduces to its very being and excellence (as far as it can participate in being) but does him no harm in his presiding over it, for he rules it while abiding above. It is in this sort of way that it is ensouled; *it has a soul which does not belong to it, but is present to it; it is mastered, not the master, possessed, not possessor. The universe lies in soul that bears it up, and nothing is without a share of soul.* It is as if a net immersed in the waters was alive, but unable to make its own that in which it is. The sea is already spread out and the net spreads with it, as far as it can; for no one of its parts can be anywhere else than where it lies. (IV 3 (27) 9, 29-43: γενόμενος δὴ οἶον οἶκος τις καλὸς καὶ ποικίλος οὐκ ἀπετμήθη τοῦ πεποικηκότος, οὐδ' αὖ ἐκοίνωσεν αὐτὸν αὐτῇ, ἀλλὰ πανταχοῦ πᾶς ἄξιος ἐπιμελείας νομισθεὶς ὠφελίμου μὲν ἑαυτῷ τῷ εἶναι καὶ τῷ καλῷ, ὅσον δὴ τοῦ εἶναι δυνατόν ἦν αὐτῷ μεταλαμβάνειν, ἀβλαβοῦς δὲ τῷ ἐφεστηκότι· ἄνω γὰρ μένων ἐπιστατεῖ ἔμψυχος τῷ τοιοῦτῳ τρόπῳ, ἔχων ψυχήν οὐχ αὐτοῦ, ἀλλ' αὐτῷ, κρατούμενος οὐ κρατῶν, καὶ ἐχόμενος ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔχων. κεῖται γὰρ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ ἀνεχούση αὐτὸν καὶ οὐδὲν ἄμοιρόν ἐστιν αὐτῆς, ὡς ἂν ἐν ὕδασι δίκτυον τεγγόμενον ζῶν, οὐ δυνάμενον δὲ αὐτοῦ ποιῆσθαι ἐν ᾧ ἐστίν· ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν δίκτυον ἐκτεινομένης ἤδη τῆς θαλάσσης συνεκτέταται, ὅσον αὐτὸ δύναται· οὐ γὰρ δύναται ἀλλαχόθι ἕκαστον τῶν μορίων ἢ ὅπου κεῖται εἶναι).

For Plotinus, in fact, to take the object naively to be all that is, is not to get it entirely wrong since it still bears the semblances of its seeming; it is, however, not really to see it at all – because one doesn't see it as it actually is, that is, as a substance, but only as a collection of rather limited accidents. Plotinus calls this in his famous and difficult work about Aristotle's categories and the genera of being (VI 1-VI 3 (42-44)), “so called substance (...) made out of non-substances [i.e., post rem accidents] (...) not true, but imitating (...) shadow and seeming.” The categories as post rem abstractions or collections of accidents cannot, in fact, for Plotinus support a real theory of intentionality, for the object of an intention in this case is not substance but qualities or accidents in matter, incapable in themselves of generating real thought.

And there is no need to object if we make sensible substance out of non-substances; for even the whole is not true substance but imitates the true substance, which has its being without the others which attend on it, and the others come into being from it, because it truly is; but here what underlies is

sterile and inadequate to be being, because the others do not come from it, but it is a shadow, and upon what is itself a shadow, a picture and a seeming. (καὶ οὐ δυσχεραντέον, εἰ τὴν οὐσίαν τὴν αἰσθητὴν ἐξ οὐκ οὐσιῶν ποιούμεν· οὐδὲ γὰρ τὸ ὅλον ἀληθῆς οὐσία, ἀλλὰ μιμούμενον τὴν ἀληθῆ, ἥτις ἄνευ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν περὶ αὐτὴν ἔχει τὸ ὄν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἐξ αὐτῆς γινομένον, ὅτι 35ἀληθῶς ἦν· ὡδὶ δὲ καὶ τὸ ὑποβεβλημένον ἄγονον καὶ οὐχ ἰκανὸν εἶναι ὄν, ὅτι μηδὲ ἐξ αὐτοῦ τὰ ἄλλα, σκιά δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ σκιά αὐτῆ οὔση ζωγραφία καὶ τὸ φαίνεσθαι). (VI 3, 8, 31-37)

Let me come back in my final section to the first definition of intentionality that I mentioned at the beginning: “the fact of being deliberate or purposive.” Being deliberate or purposive implies that reasoning must be involved somehow for anything to be recognizably intentional. However, if God doesn’t reason, does this mean that God’s acts are not intentional? Or when I understand something, like a thesis, a book, a painting, a piece of music, a dance that I have been concentrating all my attention on for twenty years, when I *understand* it so thoroughly and completely – not *seriatim* but *tout d’un coup*, as it were, could my understanding be described in any meaningful way as intentional? Or when I put the puck in the net from an impossible angle without any thought – for thought would just get in the way, is this intentional? Cross, Sorabji and O’Meara all assume a dianoetic or discursive reasoning model for intentionality. Are they right? Could not simple understanding or even non-understanding be intentional or pre-intentional or both, on this account?

What I have in mind here is Plotinus’s problem with Plato’s description of the Demiurge as making the world by taking forethought, by deliberating, that is, in other words, making or creating by intending. Of course, Plotinus argues, the Demiurge cannot deliberate or reason, as Plato represents this in the *Timaeus*. A Divine Being cannot need to deliberate, plan or reason, for this is a defect. Instead, what is unfolded or explicate in our experience as beings subject to the time-space continuum is “earlier” enfolded or implicate in the complete activity of the Divine Intellect;<sup>25</sup> we can see this even in our present discursive experience of forms in nature, Plotinus argues: “if you unfold the form to itself, you will find the reason why.”<sup>26</sup> Even in the sensible world the mutual implicative causality of all things that we can work out by discursive reasoning manifests the total simultaneous implicate nature of Divine activity in the explicate order.<sup>27</sup> Here then at the

<sup>25</sup> VI 7 (38) 1, 45-58: οὐ μὴν ἀλλ’ εἰ δεῖ ἐκάστην ἐνέργειαν μὴ ἀτελεῆ εἶναι, μηδὲ θεμιτὸν θεοῦ ὅτιοῦν ὄν ἄλλο τι νομίζειν ἢ ὅλον τε καὶ πᾶν, δεῖ ἐν ὄφουσιν τῶν αὐτοῦ πάντα ἐνυπάρχειν. δεῖ τοίνυν καὶ τοῦ αἰε εἶναι. δεῖ τοίνυν καὶ τοῦ μέλλοντος ἤδη παρόντος εἶναι. οὐ δὴ ὑστερόν τι ἐν ἐκείνῳ, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἤδη ἐκεῖ παρὸν ὑστερον ἐν ἄλλῳ γίνεται. εἰ οὖν ἤδη πάρεστι τὸ μέλλον, ἀνάγκη οὕτω παρεῖναι, ὡς προνοηθέντων εἰς τὸ ὑστερον· τοῦτο δὲ ἐστίν, ὡς μηδὲν δεῖσθαι μηδενὸς τότε, τοῦτο δὲ ἐστὶ μηδὲν ἐλλείποντος. πάντα ἄρα ἤδη ἦν καὶ αἰεῖ ἦν καὶ οὕτως ἦν, ὡς εἰπεῖν ὑστερον τὸδε μετὰ τὸδε· ἐκτεινόμενον μὲν γὰρ καὶ οἷον ἀπλούμενον ἔχει δεικνύναι τὸδε μετὰ τὸδε, ὁμοῦ δὲ ὄν πᾶν τὸδε· By “earlier” Plotinus means not in time, but logically earlier, that is, what is enfolded in the intelligible world “can show this after this, but as all together it is entirely this; and this means having its cause also in itself” (1, 56-58).

<sup>26</sup> VI 7 (38) 2, 18-19: ὁ γὰρ ἐστὶν ἕκαστον, διὰ τοῦτο ἐστὶ. λέγω δὲ οὐχ ὅτι τὸ εἶδος ἐκάστῳ αἴτιον τοῦ εἶναι – τοῦτο μὲν γὰρ ἀληθές – ἀλλ’ ὅτι, εἰ καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ εἶδος ἕκαστον πρὸς αὐτὸ ἀναπτύττοις, εὐρήσεις ἐν αὐτῷ τὸ “διὰ τί.”

<sup>27</sup> VI 7 (38) 2, 1-37; cf. also VI 8 (39) 14, 16-31.

intelligible level, and from our experience of discursive reason in the sensible world, there is a model for understanding how one order of complex coming-to-be can in reality be unfolded out of a higher and simpler order of being *without any reasoning or deliberation*.

But still one might ask: if there is no deliberation or reasoning, how does God *intend* creation? Does creation happen automatically, *faute de mieux*? And how is the power of the Good a recognizable form of agency? I shall not comment directly on what is evidently a problem for Plotinus alongside Jewish, Christian and Gnostic models according to which God wills or intends creation (because John Turner and I have just published a philosophical commentary on VI 8 (39), the next tractate after VI 7 (38) – evidently prompted by just such questions<sup>28</sup>) – except to say that by means of a double act model Plotinus links human willed agency through intellect to the Good (VI 8, 13, 7-8: οὐ γὰρ ἀβουλῶν ἐνεργεῖ): so that the “Good is primarily the kind of thing it is by its own agency, by which the other things also are able to be by their own agency” (ὡς ἐκεῖνο ἂν εἴη ἑαυτῷ τοιοῦτον πρώτως, ᾧ καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἑαυτοῖς ἐστὶν εἶναι – or: “so that That [Good] is primarily as it is *to itself*, *by virtue of which* the others are *to themselves*” (13, 26-27). If I understand this passage at all, I take Plotinus to mean that there is not so much any intentionality in the Good as occurs in our experience, but rather a kind of to-itself-ness about the Good that acts as the formal or paradigmatic cause (ᾧ καὶ) of all other things being *to themselves*. This to-itself-ness or by-itself-ness is what interests me, even if, in VI 8 chapter 13 and the following chapters, Plotinus emphasizes that he is not speaking properly about the Good. What I want to do here instead is to go back to VI 7 (38) where I propose this “to-itself-ness” is articulated in a model of thinking that allows for a kind of hyper-intentionality beyond reasoning or beyond deliberation that links non-intentionality (namely, an activity that is not about the content or object of thought) with intentionality (namely, an activity that is “of” something) within a single act of existence and substance. What is particularly interesting for my purposes here is that Plotinus applies this model to *all thinking*. Elsewhere Plotinus uses the term συναίσθησις to indicate an intentional or quasi-intentional intimation either of unity or implicit multiplicity in intellect or pre-intellect.<sup>29</sup> Here in VI 7, chapters 2 and 40 – and only here – he uses the term συνυπόστασις. In VI 7, 2 what is created or comes-to-be in the sensible world as *logos* forms a *co-reality* in and with the Divine Intellect. And in VI 7, 40, Plotinus argues that all thinking manifests this co-reality.

How does Plotinus view this co-reality? Thought, for Plotinus – as for Aristotle,<sup>30</sup> is a single activity that articulates within itself power, form and potentiality. As in seeing, Plotinus argues, so there are two moments in the generation of thinking, one described as

<sup>28</sup> K. Corrigan and J. Turner, *Plotinus Ennead VI 8: On the Voluntary and on the Free Will of the One*, Translation, Introduction and Commentary (Las Vegas/Zurich/Athens: Parmenides Press, 2017), especially 18-43.

<sup>29</sup> For instances, see V 4 [7] 2, 18; V 1 [10] 7, 11-13; III 8 [30] 4, 19-20; IV 3 [27] 26, 44-46; VI 7 [38] 16, 19-22; V 3 [49] 13, 13; and see H.-R. Schwyzer, “Bewusst und Unbewusst bei Plotin,” in E. R. Dodds et al., *Les sources de Plotin. Entretiens sur l’antiquité classique 5* (Geneva: Hardt Foundation, 1960), 341-90; Th. Szlezák, *Platon und Aristoteles in der Nuslehre Plotins* (Basel: Schwabe, 1979), 164, n. 539; F.M. Schroeder, “Synousia, Synaesthesia, Synesis in Plotinus,” *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 36:1 (1987), 677-699; J. Bussanich, *The One and its Relation to Intellect in Plotinus: A Commentary on Selected Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 23-25, 116.

<sup>30</sup> On this see Ch. Rutten, “La Doctrine des Deux Actes dans la Philosophie de Plotin,” *Revue Philosophique* 146 (1956), 100-106; A.C. Lloyd, *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 98-101; and for

“self-dependent generative power” and the other as the “completion” of the substrate that is “potentially” the fully formed thinking of Intellect proper. In his great commentary on VI 7, Pierre Hadot sees these two moments as referring to the different character of thought in Intellect and Soul respectively,<sup>31</sup> but even though Plotinus speaks in terms of persuasion here (that is, a persuasion that characterizes an address to soul), the two moments characterize *all* thinking, since this is what Plotinus actually says; they also parallel the two powers of Intellect in relation to its mystical ascent that Plotinus has argued for a few chapters earlier (VI 7, 35, 19-23: the power by which intellect/soul thinks/loves its source and the power by which it thinks itself),<sup>32</sup> and, furthermore, they explain how something purely *self-dependent* or self-standing, such as unrestricted beauty, can be the first moment of Intellect’s being, as Plotinus had argued in VI 7, chapter 33, 34-39.<sup>33</sup>

Plotinus articulates this double-structure as follows in VI 7, 40:

all thinking is from something and of something (νόησις πᾶσα ἔκ τινός ἐστι καὶ τινός); and one thinking, *being together with that from which it is, has as its substrate that of which it is the thought* (καὶ ἡ μὲν συνοῦσα τῷ ἐξ οὗ ἐστὶν ὑποκείμενον μὲν ἔχει τὸ οὗ ἐστὶ νόησις) and itself *becomes so to speak overlying, being its substrate’s activity and filling what is potentially [in power] but does not itself generate* (οἷον δὲ ἐπικείμενον αὐτῇ γίνεται ἐνέργεια αὐτοῦ οὔσα καὶ πληροῦσα τὸ δυνάμει ἐκείνο οὐδὲν αὐτῇ γεννῶσα), for it is only a perfection, as it were, of that of which it is. But *the thinking that accompanies substance* and has brought substance into being could not be in that from which it came to be (ἡ δὲ οὔσα νόησις μετ’ οὐσίας καὶ ὑποστήσασα τὴν οὐσίαν οὐκ ἂν δύνατο ἐν ἐκείνῳ εἶναι, ἀφ’ οὗ ἐγένετο); for it would not have generated anything if it were in that. But *being a power of self-dependent generation it generated* (ἀλλ’ οὔσα δύναμις τοῦ γεννᾶν ἐφ’ ἑαυτῆς ἐγέννα) and its activity is substance, and is *together with it too in the substance* (καὶ σύνεστι καὶ ἐν τῇ οὐσίᾳ) (40, 5-18).

Although there are two notionally different dimensions to thinking, Plotinus emphasizes that both powers, the second and the first self-dependent power, are “together with that from which it came” and “together in the substance.” The two aspects articulate a single reality: self-dependent power (like light) and a compound of form and intelligible matter as a single substance. Both together make a *συνυπόστασις* at 40, 46-49 (cf. VI 7, 2, 37). While the filling of the ground or substrate makes thinking concrete – that is, “of something” or, in modern terms “intentional,” there remains in thought a purely self-dependent, non-intentional generative power. It cannot be *in* the Good (and, therefore,

differences, E.K. Emilsson, *Plotinus on Intellect* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 55-60 (and generally, 22-68). For Aristotle, see *Physics* 202a13-21.

<sup>31</sup> P. Hadot, *Plotin. Traite 38 (VI, 7)*. Introduction, Translation, Commentary and Notes (Paris: Cerf, 1987), 360-64.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. VI 7 (38) 35, 19-23.

<sup>33</sup> VI 7 (38) 33, 34-39: οὔσα δὲ κάλλους ἀρχὴ ἐκείνο μὲν καλὸν ποιεῖ οὗ ἀρχή, καὶ καλὸν ποιεῖ οὐκ ἐν μορφῇ: ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ γενόμενον ἀμορφεῖν, ἄλλον δὲ τρόπον ἐν μορφῇ. ἡ γὰρ λεγομένη αὐτὸ τοῦτο μόνον μορφή ἐν ἄλλῳ, ἐφ’ ἑαυτῆς δὲ οὔσα ἀμορφον. τὸ οὖν μετέχον κάλλους μεμόρφωται, οὐ τὸ κάλλος.

must be distinguished from the Good's power) or else it would not have generated anything. This moment then is a kind of ambiguity in the heart of self-dependence, that is suggested elsewhere when Plotinus makes the otherwise unfathomable statements that “thinking does not think” (VI 9 (9) 6, 53-4; V 6 (24) 6, 9-10)<sup>34</sup> or where he speaks of περινόησις (VI 9 (9)), ὑπερνόησις (VI 8 (39)) or simply βλέψις (VI 2 (43) 8, 14-15: Ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἐνέργεια ἢ εἰς αὐτὸν οὐκ οὐσία, εἰς ὃ δὲ καὶ ἀφ' οὗ, τὸ ὄν· τὸ γὰρ βλεπόμενον τὸ ὄν, οὐχ ἢ βλέψις).<sup>35</sup>

Pure unrestricted power, as for instance in the highest power of thought in the above passage, is where activity and power coincide. If the activity that is thought or perception has to “lean on something”<sup>36</sup> in order to think or see any object or even light, then purely self-directed activity must be unrestricted power for existence without any need to “lean” on anything, distinguished from the One only because such power is ultimately a creative act *in* the thing caused.<sup>37</sup> What is worth emphasizing here is that this double structure is a function of *all* thought – in fact, of everything, since thought for Plotinus is not what it seems to be for us, namely, a human achievement. A horse is a “thought” in its own way, for Plotinus.<sup>38</sup> Thought includes everything. How this is to be conceived is, of course, problematic, but it provides a window for us to understand the fluidity between levels of being in both ascent and descent, on the one hand, and to see how one level of being can be unpacked, as it were, out of a higher level, on the other, or to see how indivisible reality can in some sense pre-contain what is divided in time and space, and turn out to be a feature of all thought.

#### 4. PLOTINUS'S CRITIQUE OF ARISTOTLE'S INTELLECT

Two features of the above passage need unpacking.<sup>39</sup> First, the “power of self-dependent generation” is obviously a principal if unnoticed part of Plotinus' philosophy. But it is also implicitly an analogue to the highest unique function of thought in Aristotle's Unmoved Mover. In other words, it is analogous to the “thinking of thinking” that is Aristotle's definition of the Unmoved Mover's activity, that is, this thinking is not the thinking of an object, but the highest self-reflexive power there can be. Plotinus, in the course of his argument with Peripatetics over these chapters of VI 7 culminating in chapter 40 implicitly concludes that there cannot

<sup>34</sup> VI 9 (9) 6, 53-4: Νόησις δὲ οὐ νοεῖ, ἀλλ' αἰτία τοῦ νοεῖν ἄλλῳ. Thus, we can reconcile the idea that a power at one level possesses pre-eminently what the effect has derivatively with the idea that the higher power does not have what it gives to the effect: the cause does not *have* x; it *is* x supremely; the effect has x in its own way (V 6 (24) 6, 8-10).

<sup>35</sup> VI 9 (9) 11, 22-5: “another mode of seeing (...) περινόησις πρὸς ἐφαρμογὴν;” VI 8 (39) 16, 32: (“waking up and hyper-thinking” are the act of the Good (as it were)).

<sup>36</sup> V 5 (32) 7, 9-10.

<sup>37</sup> On this passage, see K. Corrigan, *Plotinus' Theory of Matter-Evil and the Question of Substance: Plato, Aristotle and Alexander of Aphrodisias* (Leuven: Peeters, 1996), 285-289. Compare συναίσθησις in V 1 (10) 7; VI 7 (38) 16, 19 (cf. 41, 27), and Plotinus' de-spatializing experiments, with hand and light-sphere, to indicate what an experience of pure power might be like in VI 4 (22) 7.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, VI 7 (38) chapter 9.

<sup>39</sup> The duality or plurality of Intellect that disqualifies Intellect as a first principle for Plotinus is evident – see for instance VI (10) 9; VI 7 (38) 37-39. I concentrate instead here upon Plotinus' less obvious, though related critique that has received little or no attention and that goes to the heart of his understanding of activity, movement and intellect from within Aristotle's own thought.

strictly speaking be a "thinking of thinking,"<sup>40</sup> however, there is in Intellect a purely reflexive activity that does not belong to or is not strictly "of" the compound; nonetheless, it must be linked to the compound and cannot be self-standing in a primary sense.

Second, Plotinus' argument in VI 7 (38) 40 is an implicit but precise critique of Aristotle's view of intellect *on Aristotelian grounds*. The first sentence of the passage cited above: "all thinking is from something and of something" (40, 6: νόησις πᾶσα ἔκ τινός ἐστι καὶ τινός) is an adaptation of Aristotle's own language about *movement* in *Physics* 224b1-2: Ἐπεὶ δ' ἔστι μὲν τι τὸ κινῶν πρῶτον, ἔστι δέ τι τὸ κινούμενον, ἔτι ἐν ᾧ (ὁ χρόνος), καὶ παρὰ ταῦτα ἐξ οὗ καὶ εἰς ὃ (πᾶσα γὰρ κίνησις ἔκ τινος καὶ εἰς τι· ἕτερον γὰρ τὸ πρῶτον κινούμενον καὶ εἰς ὃ κινεῖται καὶ ἐξ οὗ). Unlike movement or kinesis, thought is not an incomplete activity – not qualitative, quantitative, spatial, or even substantial change. Thought contains its end in and of itself. It does not need to move "to something;" it is always already "of something." On the other hand, like any activity or movement, it must be caused, that is, it not only has its cause within itself; it must also be "from something," that moves or causes it. If then it is both caused and self-caused (cf. Aristotle: ἕτερον γὰρ τὸ πρῶτον κινούμενον καὶ εἰς ὃ κινεῖται καὶ ἐξ οὗ)<sup>41</sup>, there must be a self-standing causative power in it that is an integral part of its full being. For Aristotle, then, there cannot be a movement of a movement (cf. *Physics* 225b14-35), and there is no motion in respect of substance (225b10). But the regress has to stop somewhere and there must be an appropriate economy of explanation. Instead of motion or genesis of substance, Aristotle argues at *Physics* 224b1-2 that there is no coming to be or generative movement of the excellences of things or of the states of the soul, especially, thought or the one who knows (247b10). Indeed, such substantial activities are immediate *perfections* of their subjects, exactly as Plotinus argues in VI 7, 40: "it is only a *perfection*, as it were, of that of which it is." What is different in Plotinus is his insistence there is a generative or motive power *in* substance that is self-dependent, a power not "of" something, but a power unrestricted and non-intentional. But this makes sense, even in Aristotelian terms, if the power of God is a single power or activity: that is, an in-itself-power, from one perspective, that of God, and an in-itself-power in something else, from a derivative perspective. God's power is separate but *not distinct except by otherness* – namely, the otherness and sameness of thinking itself [as Plotinus indicates of the Good at VI 7, 39, 2-6: "But since there is

<sup>40</sup> This is a corollary of Aristotle's view, from which Plotinus adapts his theory of νόησις in VI 7, 40, that there cannot be a movement of a movement. In VI 7, 37, 1ff. for instance, Plotinus argues – in relation to *Metaphysics* 1074b17-35 – as follows: 1) it is absurd to some (unnamed) critics that those who attribute thinking to the good (Aristotle's own language: *Metaphysics* 12, 10, 1075a10-15) should deny it knowledge of the other things; 2) that they (Peripatetics) give it thinking of itself (νόησιν αὐτῶ αὐτοῦ) on the grounds that νόησις gives it more honor; but 3) if its worth must be by virtue either of itself or of thinking, then surely the good must be worthy or complete in itself before thinking; and 4) if they give it νόησις because it is activity, not potentiality/power (δύναμις), it is still two – οὐσία and νόησις – and not simple; and 5) "if they say that he is in actuality, because he is activity and thinking, being thinking he would not think, just as movement is not in movement" (VI 7, 37, 15-18: εἰ δ' ἐνεργεῖα λέγουσιν, ὅτι ἐνεργεῖα ἐστὶ καὶ νόησις, οὐκ ἂν οὐσα νόησις νοοῖ, ὥσπερ οὐδὲ κίνησις κινεῖτο ἑν). Plotinus will then go on to show in chapter 40 how there must be a self-dependent thinking *in* intellect that allows for "intentionality" or perfection "of" intellect's substrate while requiring a prior pure unity to account for the fact that it is a duality *in* intellect itself.

<sup>41</sup> For adaptation of complementary language from Aristotle's *Physics* to intellect elsewhere in Plotinus, see III 8 (30) 8, 38-48.

no distance, so to speak, or difference in regard to itself” (οὐκ ὄντος οἷον διαστήματός τινος οὐδὲ διαφορᾶς πρὸς αὐτὸ), what could its attention be other than itself? Therefore Plato rightly understands that there is otherness and sameness where there is intellect and substance” (trans. A. H. Armstrong, modified)]. In intellectual activity, Plotinus agrees with Aristotle that there is a single activity (not two motions) of mover and moved *in* what is moved, as in the case of teaching and learning and just as “the same distance (διαστήμα), one to two and two to one,” is a single actualization of both termini (*Physics* 202a18-21), and “as the road from Thebes to Athens and from Athens to Thebes (...) is the same in being” (202b13-16).

One may well object that the contexts of VI 7, 40 and *Physics* 202a-b and 224b are entirely different: Plotinus is not talking of movement or change in the Aristotelian sense, but about thinking itself. I suggest, however, that for Plotinus this is not an adaptation from physics to metaphysics, but rather the reverse: thought, understanding, contemplation *must be* the paradigm for all subsequent activities and movements, not vice versa; and this for Plotinus ought to be a principle for Aristotle too. Thus while thought is not a movement or change like walking or making something, and while it comprises a kind of double activity or movement of a different, non-spatial kind, thought cannot involve two distinct activities or an infinite regress, an activity of an activity or a movement of movement (the same rule should apply even to a generative movement, in other words). Plotinus, in fact, makes this point explicitly in this chapter: “For it did not act before it generated activity; for then activity would have been there before it came to be; nor did it think before it generated thought; for then it would have thought before thought came to be” (40, 30-33).

Here then in VI 7, 40, we effectively have Plotinus’ answer to, and implicit critique of, Aristotle’s Unmoved Mover. The self-dependence of the Good that is beyond Intellect is the first self-dependent power of Intellect’s own being, which must be other than the Good only because it leads generatively within Intellect to the coming-to-be of Intellect itself. There is no thinking of thinking – an activity of an activity, but a single activity, like teaching and learning – according to Aristotle’s example in the *Physics*.<sup>42</sup> In an earlier work, III 8 (31), Plotinus had argued that contemplation is the real productive power in the universe, not πρᾶξις or even ποιησις, and that contemplation as self-living is unrestricted in itself, and yet also a power to make a form by filling all things with itself.<sup>43</sup> Contemplation itself is infinite – not object focused.<sup>44</sup> The mystical, non-dualistic vision is what makes things, but it makes while not being “of” them. This is what we find too in VI 7, 40: the self-gathered power of contemplation, infinite in itself, like love, is what really makes a world of intentional subject-objects on different frequencies: a horse, a human being, a plant – or as Plotinus puts it in III 8, different kinds of (intentional) thought refracted across the cosmos.<sup>45</sup> In an earlier chapter of the later work under principal consideration here, that is VI 7 (38) chapter 35, Plotinus famously articulates this higher power as the power of love: “intellect (...) has one power for thinking by which it looks at the things in itself, and one by which it looks at what transcends it (...) the one is the contemplation

<sup>42</sup> Aristotle, *Physics* 202b5-22.

<sup>43</sup> III 8 (30) 3, 1-23; 7, 18-22; 8, 11-14.

<sup>44</sup> III 8 (30) 5, 30-37.

<sup>45</sup> See III 8 (30) 7-8, especially 8, 12-24.

of intellect in its right mind, and the other is intellect in love (...) drunk on the nectar (...) better for it to be drunk (...) than (...) more respectably sober.<sup>46</sup> Desire, love – even the undoing of its own sober nature – are crucial then to the being and the coming-to-be of Intellect from the One, that is, the creative emergence from effortless contemplation, in which non-intentionality and hyper-intentional creativity coincide, of a layered world transfixed by about-ness, directed-ness by virtue of the love that makes them “better to be drunk (...) than (...) more respectably sober.”

Plotinus' fundamental objection against the Aristotelian entelechy view of the soul-body relation in one of his earliest works, IV 7 (7), is a related objection to that in VI 7 (38) 40. The soul, Plotinus argues, is not an inseparable entelechy in the sense of being a form “of” body, since it is prior to becoming the form of “this” thing (IV 7 (7) 8<sup>5</sup>, 40-42:<sup>47</sup> οὐκ ἄρα τῷ εἶδος εἶναι τινος τὸ εἶναι ἔχει, ἀλλ' ἔστιν οὐσία οὐ παρὰ τὸ ἐν σώματι ἰδρῶσθαι τὸ εἶναι λαμβάνουσα, ἀλλ' οὕσα πρὶν καὶ τοῦδε γενέσθαι). Since the Peripatetics make the soul effectively the perishable entelechy of the body, Plotinus argues, they are effectively forced to introduce a second entelechy (intellect) in order to account for the first entelechy of the soul-body relation (IV 7 (7) 8<sup>5</sup>, 16-17: διὸ καὶ αὐτοὶ [i.e., the Peripatetics] ἄλλην ψυχὴν ἢ νοῦν εἰσάγουσιν, ὃν ἀθάνατον τίθενται). If one cannot then reduce this two stage entelechy to a single material explanation, why should we not be appropriately economical and take proper account of form by interpreting soul in the light of intellect, as makes better sense of Aristotle's own thought? If so, a single entelechy is all that is needed. In other words, if a movement of a movement makes little sense, neither does an entelechy of an entelechy. We only need a single activity or power in two modulations, the activity of the substance and the activity from the substance, to account for the unity of substance. These two activities are really a single activity experienced from different points of view. Thought at its highest cannot be intentional in the way Aristotle seems to frame it: a thinking “of” thinking. Instead, non-intentionality must be the self-dependent power in thinking that makes thinking capable of being intentional.

This criticism and yet adaptation of Aristotle goes much deeper, of course, into Plotinus's broader thinking. On one level, the hypostases – One, Intellect and Soul – seem to multiply levels of reality, but on another, what is substance in the soul is consubstantial with all substance. There is no substance without all substance. The full substantiality of intellect that includes soul is that which directly makes me and all other primary substances substantial. It is only when we see individual substance as a collection of accidents and

<sup>46</sup> VI 7 (38) 35, 19-27 (trans. A.H. Armstrong): καὶ τὸν νοῦν τοίνυν τὴν μὲν ἔχειν δύναμιν εἰς τὸ νοεῖν, ἢ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ βλέπει, τὴν δέ, ἢ τὰ ἐπέκεινα αὐτοῦ ἐπιβολῆ τι καὶ παραδοχῆ, καθ' ἣν καὶ πρότερον ἑώρα μόνον καὶ ὁρῶν ὑστερον καὶ νοῦν ἔσχε καὶ ἔν ἐστι. καὶ ἔστιν ἐκείνη μὲν ἡ θεὰ νοῦ ἔμφορος, αὐτὴ δὲ νοῦς ἐρῶν, ὅταν ἄφρων γένηται μεθυσθεὶς τοῦ νέκταρος· τότε ἐρῶν γίνεται ἀπλωθεὶς εἰς εὐπάθειαν τῷ κόρῳ· καὶ ἔστιν αὐτῷ μεθεῖν βέλτιον ἢ σεμνοτέρῳ εἶναι τοιαύτης μέθης. Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* 244d2-5; 245a5-9.

<sup>47</sup> The unusual superscript in the *Ennead* reference – IV 7 (7) 8<sup>5</sup>, 40-42 – reflects some chapters missing in the manuscript archetype that were fortunately recovered by the chance testimony of Eusebius' *Preparatio Evangelica* (PE) XV, 10 and 22. In PE XV, 10, 1-9, Eusebius provides the text for IV 7, 8<sup>5</sup> (as numbered by Henry-Schwyzler) against the Aristotelian soul-entelechy theory, and in PE XI, 22, 1-67, the text for IV 7, 1, 1-8<sup>4</sup>, 28, against the Stoic corporeal soul theory. In almost all the manuscripts, the lacuna extends from 8, 28, δικαιοσύνη, up to 8<sup>5</sup>, 49, τοῦ ὄντος, while in MSS J, M, V (and a copy of M, *Barberinus graecus* 275) alone, it extends from 8<sup>4</sup>, 28, ἀρμονία up to 8<sup>5</sup>, 49, τοῦ ὄντος.



matter that we are dealing with “substance” in a derivative sense, that is, substance as imitation.<sup>48</sup> The less intensive unity of soul is only a unity because of Intellect. Soul and soul-body cannot be cut away from Intellect-substance without being destroyed. The One, Intellect and Soul are not three separate unities as if we could count or add them together.<sup>49</sup>

## 5. SOME CONCLUDING SUGGESTIONS

1) It is an unsuspected irony of history, I suggest, that Neoplatonism, which came in later Medieval thought to be associated with the problem of a plurality of substantial forms, actually understood itself in Plotinus’s thought to be a more logical, realistic, and economical form of philosophy than that of Aristotle, a philosophy that insisted on the following views: that intellect cannot be primary because it is double; that the doubling of thought as a primary intentional substance contradicts the basic premises of Aristotle’s philosophy; that the soul cannot be perishable because Intellect must ultimately determine its real nature; and that even individual sensible compounds exist, live or think because the divine power is immediately and intimately active in them – even if this power is experienced as activity of different kinds in different modulations of being. Aristotle would not have agreed with Plotinus’s conclusions, but Plotinus developed his profound understanding of Plato on some of the most important principles of Aristotle’s thought and thereby took central tendencies in Aristotle’s physics and metaphysics to their logical conclusion.

2) For Plotinus, it would appear, all secondary being is inflected both by to-itself-ness and by being-of-ness, that is, by non-intentionality and intentionality. Both are features of a single activity that can evidently become separate in practice. I can either act by virtue of and through this immediate “to-itself-ness” or I can forge my own to-itself-ness and my own intentionality, that is, act by the divine power in my act or make myself and other things in accordance with my own image and model.

3) Nonetheless, the to-itself-ness or non-intentionality in beings at their highest is inflected by the Good, not merely as final cause or even as paradigmatic and formal cause, but also by something perhaps more intimate still – by the to-itself-ness of the Good that is power in every activity and action. Infinite, unrestricted contemplation (III 8 (30)) and the infinite love for the Good in the soul (VI 7 (38) 35) are the real creative force in the world, for Plotinus – beyond the doing and the making in which we put so much stock, however rightly. This seems to be the opposite of ways in which we habitually think, that is, in terms of deliberate intention in doing, making and acting (the paradoxical nature of this Plotinus makes clear in the early chapters of III 8 (30) 1-4). Agency as doing or acting, however, is intentional or object-directed, that is, it does not have its end in itself. By contrast, creative contemplation or pure understanding at their simplest already possess their end in themselves and, thus, do not involve self-awareness or object-directedness:<sup>50</sup> like any true activity, thought and even its derivatives to a lesser degree, like walking or

<sup>48</sup> Cf. VI 3 (44) 8, 30-33.

<sup>49</sup> As Basil of Caesarea, for instance correctly insists, on implicit Plotinian grounds, in his critique of an arithmetical account of the Neoplatonic hypostases – in favor of a Christian Divine *monarchia*, in the *De Spiritu Sancto* XVI-XVIII. For this see K. Corrigan, “*Ousia* and *Hypostasis* in the Trinitarian Theology of the Cappadocian Fathers: Basil and Gregory of Nyssa,” *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 12 (2008), 123-125.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. I 4 (46) 9-10.

dancing, at root simply make by being themselves. Of course, walking and dancing have to be learned and they involve effort, sometimes prolonged effort, but as contemplative activities complete in themselves they are non-intentional, that is, not about or of anything, but free and unconstrained. Real human freedom extends to action, as Plotinus makes clear in VI 8 (39) 6, but springs directly from self-dependent power in self, soul, intellect and the Good – separate only by dint of the otherness each secondary being adds.

4) Reason and purpose in us are both achievement and defect, an achievement that we *are in fact capable of* reasoning and intending, but a defect by contrast with *understanding* that does not need reason and especially by contrast with divine demiurgic understanding in which thought is non-deliberative, but nonetheless intends and wills in a non-discursive way by virtue of intellect's self-dependence transfixed by the unrestricted power of the Good.<sup>51</sup>

5) In the modern world, we take intentionality to be a feature of human beings primarily and of other sentient beings derivatively. The Platonic cosmos is utterly different: since being is reflection, yearning, and mirroring, all beings are other-directed, all things manifest "about-ness." So my intentionality reflects not only my thought but also other-directedness in all beings, even their capacity to be "about" me – to wake me up to them and to myself. Even the Good, at the other end of the scale, so to speak, turns out to be strangely in our power: the Good is kindly, gracious and gentle, Plotinus says, and present to anyone whenever anyone wishes/wills (V 5 (32) 12). From one perspective, the Neoplatonic world is hierarchical and top-down; from another, free intentionality transfixed by non-intentionality/self-dependence pervades everything by virtue of the power of the Good that turns hierarchy on its head, in the sense that the Good is always already there before hierarchy: it therefore escapes and yet also constitutes hierarchy. As Aquinas, following Dionysius the Areopagite, will later note:<sup>52</sup> to say that God is cause of goodness does not exhaust what we mean when we say God is good. Without hierarchy and intentionality, there is only violence or chaos, unrecognizable in itself; without the Good and non-intentionality, there is no "to-it-self-ness" and no creative self-dependent power to make a world in the first place.

I want to thank Robert Berchman for the opportunity to present an earlier version of this paper, alongside his own paper on Aristotle, at the annual meeting of the Foro di Studi Avanzati Gaetano Massa in Rome, May, 2017.

<sup>51</sup> See VI 8 (39) chapters 13-21, principally, and see K. Corrigan and J.D. Turner, *Plotinus Ennead VI 8: On the Voluntary and on the Free Will of the One*, op. cit., ad loc.

<sup>52</sup> *Summa Theologica*, I. Q.13, art. 2, Respondeo: Sic igitur praedicta nomina divinam substantiam significant, imperfecte tamen, sicut et creaturae imperfecte eam repraesentant. Cum igitur dicitur Deus est bonus, non est sensus, Deus est causa bonitatis, vel Deus non est malus, sed est sensus, id quod bonitatem dicimus in creaturis, praeexistit in Deo, et hoc quidem secundum modum altiore. Unde ex hoc non sequitur quod Deo competat esse bonum in quantum causat bonitatem, sed potius e converso, quia est bonus, bonitatem rebus diffundit, secundum illud Augustini, *de Doct. Christ.*, in quantum bonus est, sumus.

# FIRE AND FLESH: THE ROLE OF ANALOGY IN ARISTOTLE'S *DE ANIMA*

The problem of self-knowledge hovers in the background of Aristotle's explication of the soul found in his *De Anima*. For, how could one claim to have obtained complete self-knowledge in accordance with the Delphic command to "know thyself" without an adequate account of the human soul? What I seek to explore in this essay are Aristotle's oft-touched upon analogies to the organs of sense outlined in Book II of *De Anima* in order to illustrate and clarify his investigation into the intellectual soul which occurs in Book III. Although on its surface this analogy seems to function merely as a useful tool in helping the reader to understand the basic structure and function of the intellectual soul, its repeated use throughout Book III suggests a deeper significance.<sup>1</sup> In a way, Aristotle's attempt to achieve adequate knowledge of the intellectual soul in Book III stands as an exemplary case of the philosopher's endeavor to obey the Delphic imperative. Despite the apparent disconnect between the intellectual soul and the material realm, Aristotle's frequent use of the analogy to sense suggests that the distinction between sense and the intellect is not so clear-cut. As I will show, the recourse which Aristotle takes to this analogy indirectly demonstrates the inherent intelligibility of the objects of sense in his system and exhibits complete self-knowledge as a fundamental limit with respect to the philosopher's pursuit of truth.

In order to grasp the full significance of the analogy, one must first understand Aristotle's concept of the sensitive process presented in *De Anima* II. Even in his brief account of the nutritive soul in this section, Aristotle is aware of a historical tendency to account for the soul in material terms. He refutes the natural philosophers who believe that fire is the cause of all growth and generation amongst living beings.

[Fire] is in a sense a contributory cause, but not absolutely the cause, which is more properly the soul; for the growth of fire is without limit, so long as there is something to be burned, but of all things naturally composed there

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<sup>1</sup> P. Massie, "Touching, Thinking, Being: The Sense of Touch in Aristotle's *De Anima* and its implications," *Minerva* 17 (2013), 74. Massie suggests that the consequences of Aristotle's analysis of touch will have both ontological and epistemological import. "The sense of touch testifies to the physical presence of material beings and provides an empirical verification of substance's essential feature, namely, self-reference." My claims here attempt to expand upon Massie's conclusions.

is a limit or proportion of size and growth; this is due to the soul, not to fire, and to the essential formula rather than to matter.<sup>2</sup>

The soul itself is the essential limit of the functioning capability of the ensouled body; however, Aristotle does not do away with material reference in his further qualification of the nutritive soul.

As is the case with the sensitive and intellectual souls, our way into understanding of the essential aspects of the nutritive soul leads primarily through our recognition of its proper object. The proper object of the nutritive soul is food.<sup>3</sup> In the process of nutrition, Aristotle distinguishes between “the thing fed, the means by which it is fed, and the feeding agent.” Respectively, the three correspond directly to the body/soul compound, food, and the nutritive soul. For now, leaving aside the further teleological qualification that soul is “that which reproduces another like itself,” we are left with a nutritive soul simply defined as “the feeding agent.”<sup>4</sup> For Aristotle, the proper activity of the feeding agent is to preserve the ensouled body insofar as it is a unified individual substance so that it may grow and reproduce. This activity is the taking of undigested food which is substantially contrary to the ensouled body and making the food like the individual feeding substance through the process of digestion. Furthermore, “since nothing is fed which does not share in life, that which is fed must be the body which has a soul, *qua* having a soul, so that food is related to that which has a soul, and that not accidentally.”<sup>5</sup> The key point here is that although the soul is distinct from body in a sense, it is *essentially related* to its body, and other embodied substances which it encounters in the world. At the level of nutrition, the soul as form needs *both* its own body *and* the presence of other substantial composites in order to preserve its own unity and to perpetuate this unity through the creation of self-likenesses. The close intimacy of the three participants in this relationship is demonstrated by Aristotle’s very attempt to think them separately. He can only really describe the activity of nutritive soul in terms of food.

In turning to Aristotle’s treatment of the sensitive soul, it is imperative that one bears in mind the essential unity in the hierarchy of souls as Aristotle proceeds along the hierarchy in contemplation. At the end of Book I, Aristotle claims that “the first principle in plants, too, seems to be a kind of soul; for this principle alone is common to both animals and plants. It can exist in separation from the sensitive principle, but nothing can have sensation without it.”<sup>6</sup> That is, the nutritive soul will be contained within the sensitive soul inseparably as one of its parts. The higher degree of complexity found in the sensitive soul requires a more complex philosophical treatment than does the nutritive soul; however, as we shall see, Aristotle’s description of the various powers of sense bears a striking resemblance to his account of nutrition. Although the two kinds of soul are distinct with respect to their proper objects and functions, the way in which these functions are carried out in relation to their proper objects are indeed analogous.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *On the Soul*, transl. W.S. Hett (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 91, 416a 15-19.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 92, 416a 19-24.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 93-95, 416b 20-30.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 93, 416b 4-10.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 64, 411b 25-30.

Aristotle begins his formal discussion of the sensitive soul with the claim that “sensation consists, as has been said, in being moved and acted upon; for it is held to be a sort of change of state.” There is an essential passivity which belongs to the senses, but this passivity is problematic insofar as it raises the question “as to why we have no sensation of the senses themselves; that is, why they give no sensation apart from external objects, although they contain fire and earth and other elements which (either by themselves, or by their attributes) excite sensation.” Sensation functions with respect to material objects, but its activity must be wholly potential since the material elements which compose sense-organs do not cause sensation to occur.<sup>7</sup> The implication seems to be that in the absence of an external composite substance, sensation will not work.

Interestingly enough, at this point in the text Aristotle brings back the notion of fire as an image of sensation, having dismissed fire as being the material principle of the soul only moments before in the discussion of nutrition. “So it is like the case of fuel, which does not burn by itself without something to set fire to it; for otherwise it would burn itself and would not need any fire actually at work.”<sup>8</sup> This indicates that the sensitive faculty by itself does not have the capacity to carry out its work. Just as the nutritive soul requires contact with external material composites in order to perform its function, so too does the sensitive soul. The nutritive soul is not fire *qua* fire, but it becomes *like* fire when it consumes food. Analogously, the sensitive soul becomes *like* fire when it encounters *its* proper objects – material composites along with their properties which carry the potential to be sensed. This point is illuminated as Aristotle develops his account of sensation further.

The inherent passivity of the senses is paradoxical insofar as their passivity *is* their essential activity.

To begin with, let us assume that being acted upon and moved is the same as exercising the function; for movement is a form of activity, though incomplete (...). But everything is acted upon and moved by something which produces an effect and *actually exists*. Therefore (...) a thing is acted upon in one sense by like, in another by unlike; for while it is being acted upon it is unlike, but when the action is complete it is like.<sup>9</sup>

The language indicating a passage of unlike to like in the process of sensation mirrors the language used to describe digestion. The nutritive soul is the active agent in the process of making unlike things like. As we shall see, the operation of the senses inverts this relationship to external objects due to the passive nature of sense. Here it is important to note that this account of the relationship between active and passive agents allows Aristotle to make an ontological claim about things in the world. If something is being acted upon, it is necessary that the active agent in the relationship *actually exists*. This robust ontological implication does not – and perhaps cannot – follow from the activity of the nutritive soul upon the objects which serve as its food.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 95, 416b 33-417a 7.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 417a 8-10.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 97, 417a 12-15, emphasis mine.

In a way, both the nutritive and the sensitive soul suffer from the same limitation. Unlike thought, which allows the intellectual being to call things to mind at will, nutrition and sensation are subject to the adventitious nature of their proper objects. "It is not in [the human being's] power to experience sensation; for the presence of the sensible object is essential."<sup>10</sup> This leads Aristotle to conclude that "the sentient subject (...) is potentially such as the object of sense is actually. Thus during the process of being acted upon it is unlike [its object], but at the end of the process it has become like that object, and shares its quality."<sup>11</sup>

The introduction of the intellectual soul will make the relationship between the particular soul, its matter, and the material composites which it encounters more problematic. I shall argue that the ambiguity with respect to external objects is overcome if the analogy from intellect to sense, and from sense to nutrition, is kept in mind throughout Aristotle's account of the intellect. It is necessary, however, that the ambiguity between the finite intellectual soul and its body never be erased.

Aristotle's account of the intellectual soul begins with an instance of the analogy to sense. "This part, then, must (although impassive) be receptive of the form of an object, i.e., must be potentially the same as its object, although not identical with it: as the sensitive is to the sensible, so the mind must be to the thinkable."<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, although the senses are inherently passive, they are impassive insofar as they are able to maintain their unity despite the qualitative changes they undergo throughout the process of sensation; however, the impassivity of the senses is limited. One cannot see in absolute darkness, nor can one look directly at the sun without destroying the eyes. But the mind is able to think all things. The greater the intelligibility of the object of thought, the more clearly it is understood by the mind. Therefore, the capacity of the mind exhibits an unlimited impassivity whereas the senses do not.<sup>13</sup>

The mind is also unmixed with bodily things:

[F]or the intrusion of anything foreign hinders and obstructs it. Hence the mind, too, can have no characteristic except its capacity to receive. That part of the soul then (...) has no existence until it thinks. So it is unreasonable to suppose that it is mixed with the body; for in that case it would be somehow qualitative; but in fact it has none.<sup>14</sup>

The only characteristic which Aristotle ascribes to the intellectual soul at this point is that it is "the place of the forms," which "occupy it not actually but only potentially."<sup>15</sup> Like the senses, the mind receives the forms of things apart from their matter.<sup>16</sup> Unlike

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 101, 417b 24-25.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 418a 4-6.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 165, 429a 15-18.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 165-166, 429a 28-429b

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 165, 429a 18-23.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 28-30.

<sup>16</sup> S. Benardete, "Aristotle, De Anima, III. 3-5," *Review of Metaphysics* 28 (1975), 611-622, at 615: "If mind, therefore, is to be receptive of every thing noetic, either everything noetic must be all of a piece or mind itself

the senses, it does not take on the qualities of the objects it works with in any real sense; however, just because the intellect is not mixed with bodily objects does not imply that it is not essentially related to them.

This is demonstrated by Aristotle's treatment of a dual aporia which arises toward the end of Book III, Ch. 4.

If the mind is a simple thing, and not liable to be acted upon, and has *nothing in common* with anything else (...) how will it think? For it is when two things have something in common that we regard one as acting and the other as acted upon. And our second problem is whether the mind itself can be an object of thought. For either mind will be present in all other objects (...) or else it will contain *some common element* which makes it an object of thought like other things.<sup>17</sup>

I argue that the solution to these difficulties lies in the analogy to sense (and by implication, the analogy to nutrition). The essential activities of the nutritive and sensitive souls are dependent upon their nearness to the otherness of things in the world. The intellectual soul achieves such a degree of distance from material things that what it seems to lack is an inherent sense of *community* with them. Because the proper object of thought is unclear, it is difficult to find an adequate inroad into the proper function of thought. As Aristotle has shown, the intellectual being has the ability to provide an adequate account of both nutrition and sensation (up to the limit of the flesh) because the intellect can readily discern the proper objects of each. This is not the case when the thinking individual attempts to contemplate thought itself.

The problems which arise in Aristotle's account of the intellectual soul are a literal image of this very struggle. Furthermore, these difficulties are compounded rather than clarified by the much-disputed Book III, Ch.5. In this section Aristotle distinguishes between mind in its active and passive aspects. As in the treatment of the nutritive and sensitive souls, the image of light (and perhaps indirectly, fire) re-emerges.

Mind in the passive sense is such because it becomes all things, but mind has another aspect in that it makes all things; this is a kind of positive state like light; for in a sense light makes potential into actual colors. Mind in this sense is separable, impassive, and unmixed, since it is essentially an activity; for the agent is always superior to the patient, and the originating cause to the matter.<sup>18</sup>

In its flight from matter, the particular embodied intellectual being begins to think in a somewhat confused way about the material composites which it encounters as well as the source of reality.

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must lack all singularity. Mind is that part of nature which has no one nature. It is nothing but possible. It is neither a being in itself nor any of the beings it thinks before it thinks them. It is the "so-called mind of soul."

<sup>17</sup> Aristotle, *On the Soul*, op cit., 169, 429b 25-32, emphasis mine.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 430a 15-21.

What is not explicitly re-stated in Aristotle's use of the analogy, and what I believe might lead to incorrect interpretations of this passage, is the idea of the medium. Recall that in Aristotle's account of sight, light is not that which makes colors what they are. Instead, it is merely the activity of the transparent medium. Presumably, the seer, the medium, and the object seen must all actually exist as they are in the absence of light. Light simply activates the relationship between them. If the analogy is to succeed, then these three elements must be present in the mind in an analogous way. This becomes apparent when Aristotle draws a further analogy between the mind and the sense of touch.

Far from bestowing intelligibility upon the objects of thought, in its creation of propositions, negations, and genera, the active intellect seems to render things somewhat unintelligible in its attempt to form complex judgments. In attaining to more universal judgments, the intellect opens up a greater possibility for error;<sup>19</sup> however, as in the case of the senses, the greater the risk of error, the greater the potential reward. The question remains, then, what is the proper object of thought if not the universal completely removed from matter? In Book III, Ch.8 Aristotle draws the crucial analogy between the intellectual soul and touch.

The soul, then, acts like a hand; for the hand is an instrument which employs instruments, and in the same way the mind is a form which employs forms, and sense is a form which employs the forms of sensible objects. But since apparently nothing has a separate existence, except sensible magnitudes, the objects of thought – both the so-called abstractions of mathematics and all states and affections of sensible things – reside in sensible forms. And for this reason no one could ever learn or understand anything without the exercise of perception, so even when we think speculatively, we must have some mental picture of which to think; for mental images are similar to objects perceived except that they are without matter.<sup>20</sup>

In Book III, Ch. IV, at the very beginning of his account of the intellect, Aristotle presented the possibility that the mind is either separate from its material body in space or in thought alone.<sup>21</sup> I take this analogy to signal that Aristotle has pursued the possibility that mind is separable from body in thought alone to its furthest limit.

The proper object of thought is the image, and the image is directly related to the object of sense.<sup>22</sup> Recall that the object of sense is the external form-matter composite. Therefore, I take this turn back to the image of the flesh on Aristotle's part to signal a turn back towards immediate contact with the actually existing external objects of sense. This allows us to make better sense of the earlier analogy to sight. The active intellect does not make sensible things intelligible. Rather, it uses the images present in the passive intellect, which are themselves already intelligible, in order to see more clearly what is essentially unintelligible from the human perspective.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 430b 25-32.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 181, 432a 2-11.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 163, 429a 10-11.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 1-5.



In *De Anima*, Aristotle pursues his account of the senses as far as the limit of the flesh. Furthermore, he thinks the intellect as distinct from body to the greatest extent possible before falling back on an analogy to the flesh. Although this contemplative movement is not circular, it could be likened to the movement forward and backward along a divided line, with the division lying on the flesh itself. Taken as a whole, what Aristotle's *De Anima* represents is not an example of a finite, embodied, intellectual being thinking itself actually, but at least potentially through the mediation of images – the corporeal image of the prime mover.

# ARISTOTLE: METAPHYSICS AS THE ANTHROPOLOGY

## I. INTRODUCTION

What follows is a speculative development of ideas presented in *Aristotle: Man and Metaphysics*, a profound but still unpublished work by the late Jonael Schickler,<sup>1</sup> and *Aristotle's Man: Speculations upon Aristotelian Anthropology*,<sup>2</sup> by Stephen R. L. Clark.

Aristotle's philosophy is governed by a structural tension that is, in certain ways, akin to what John Milbank has called *transorganicity*: "an integral yet discontinuous unity, (...) an integrity sustained despite an interruptive leap."<sup>3</sup> This discontinuous unity involves an "addition' that is seen as paradoxically essential."<sup>4</sup>

Schickler mentions three main instances of this structural tension: the relation between the intelligibly ordered cosmos and God, the relation between the human being's psycho-somatic constitution and νοῦς, and the relation between the four elements and vital heat. To this, one can add, among others: the relation between the act of perception and its elements, and the relation in ἐπαγωγή (usually, and misleadingly, translated as "induction") between particular perceptions and the resulting universal.

Schickler argues that this structural tension is most clearly articulated in Aristotle's philosophical anthropology, since "this is the location of his most important and philosophically revealing attempts to find the central conclusions of his metaphysics mirrored in the structure of the empirical world."<sup>5</sup> He suggests that the focal tension in Aristotle's thought is to be found not in the relation between divine νοῦς and the cosmos, but rather in the relation between divine νοῦς and the human being.

In Aristotle's anthropology, the basic pairs form/matter, activity/potency, and soul/body, are translated into a more articulated four-fold structure: a human being is a structurally and functionally unified whole comprising a physical body, a vegetative soul, a sensitive soul, and νοῦς. This need not imply there are separate souls, since the

<sup>1</sup> This text was to be a chapter of Schickler's doctoral dissertation, published as J. Schickler, *Metaphysics as Christology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005). Tragically, Schickler died in a train crash before submitting his completed dissertation.

<sup>2</sup> S. R. L. Clark, *Aristotle's Man: Speculations upon Aristotelian Anthropology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

<sup>3</sup> J. Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order: The Representation of Being and the Representation of the People* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 137-138.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>5</sup> J. Schickler, *Aristotle: Man and Metaphysics* (unpublished text), 4.

higher levels subsume the lower. However, since soul is present even in the case of natural entities lacking either  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  or sentience, these levels are clearly ontologically distinct. Insofar as we treat the human soul as unified, the structure becomes tripartite: body, soul and  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ . Although Schickler provides a very original account of how the vegetative and sensitive souls may be reconciled with Aristotle's broader ontology, this lies beyond the scope of my argument.

I focus on the most fundamental instances: the relation between God and the cosmos, and the relation between  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  and the human being as a psycho-somatic whole. I will refer to these as macrocosmic and microcosmic transorganicity, respectively. It will be suggested that the forms of microcosmic transorganicity other than the relation between  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  and the human being are subordinate to the latter.<sup>6</sup>

I suggest that the resolution of the problems implicit in these two relations, requires the postulation of a single exemplary instance of union between the human and the divine, a  $\theta\epsilon\acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\varsigma$ , in relation to whom all other human beings – as integrally living, sentient and noetic – would be teleologically ordered, as to their final cause. Thus, though I argue that  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ , in both the *Metaphysics* and *De Anima*, is divine, rather than a power of the human soul, I will criticize the view that, in cognitive activity, a single divine  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  is identically active in all human beings alike. The postulated exemplary instance would be the primary intra-cosmic substance, and fulfill the criteria for substance in a way that avoids the twin extremes of pantheism and theopanism.<sup>7</sup>

Schickler suggests that a “philosophical system is perhaps best understood at its boundaries, at those points where it suffers strain under the weight of its own logic or raises questions incapable of being answered in its own terms.”<sup>8</sup> I want to suggest that the exemplary instance is present in Aristotle's thought by its absence, insofar as it shines a clearer light on various problems in his thought, while at the same time pointing beyond them.

I move beyond Schickler, in articulating the distinctive logic implicit in the relation between God and the cosmos, and  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  and the human being. In each case, a structural tension seems to demand a fundamental rethinking of the relation between universal and particular, in terms of the exemplary instance. The relation between the exemplary instance and particulars is such that the exemplary instance lies, to draw on William Desmond, “in-and-beyond.” It is, as Desmond suggests with respect to the meaning of “meta,” both “in the midst” of the particulars and “beyond” them.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> In other words, the relation between God and cosmos cannot be accounted for at the level of the physical elements, living organisms, or living and sentient organisms (including human beings), but only in the entire, and ultimately fully individuated, transorganic relation between these and  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ .

<sup>7</sup> The distinction is drawn from Erich Przywara, but used in a less nuanced sense. By *pantheism* I mean a conception of the relation between God and the cosmos that sees them as two distinct but interdependent aspects of a single dialectical process. On this view, God would be nothing more than the organic wholeness of the cosmic process, and would be related to the cosmos as soul to body. By *theopanism*, I mean a view that conceives of the transcendence of God in such a way that the cosmos becomes, ultimately, a realm of illusory alienation from God, rather than a positive theophany. Cf. E. Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, trans. J. R. Betz and D. Bentley Hart (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> J. Schickler, *Aristotle: Man and Metaphysics*, op. cit., 4.

<sup>9</sup> W. Desmond, “On Evil and Political Theology,” *Political Theology* 16:2 (2015), 93-100, at 99.

## II. MACROCOSMIC TRANSORGANICITY

One might assume that the fundamental divisions of Aristotle's metaphysics cohere supremely at the macrocosmic level, in the relation between God and the cosmos. I will suggest why this is not the case, before proceeding to discuss why the coherence of Aristotle's metaphysics can be secured only at the level of the microcosmic.

Macrocosmic transorganicity is evident in the fact that Aristotle's God is both the immanent intelligibility of the cosmos, and its transcendent end. Aristotle clearly wants to affirm both together. This is perhaps most clearly expressed in *Metaphysics*, Book XII, Chapter X:

One must also consider in which of two ways the nature of the whole contains what is good and what is best, whether as something separate, itself by itself, or as the order of the whole of things. Or is it present in both ways, just as in an army? For its good condition resides in its ordering but also is its general, and is more the latter; for he does not depend on the order but it on him. And all things are in some way ordered together, though not all similarly, the things that swim and fly and grow in the ground; yet they are not such that nothing that pertains to one kind is related to another, but there is some relation. For they are all organized toward one thing (...).<sup>10</sup>

The tension between immanence and transcendence is crucial. The cosmos is related to God as to its immanent order *and* its transcendent and focal τέλος. The relation between immanent order and focal τέλος is asymmetrical: the immanent order depends on the focal τέλος, but not vice versa. While all intra-cosmic beings are ordered by a single immanent order and to a single transcendent focal τέλος, they are neither all ordered in the same way, nor in completely different ways. The elements, plants, animals and human beings are all somehow related to one another in a way that does not destroy their integral natures, but which is nevertheless subordinate to their ordering to their single focal τέλος.

Aristotle seems torn between a conception of God as the active intelligibility of the cosmos itself, and a conception of God as a pure, immaterial activity independent not only of the sensible, but even of any distinguishable content. A good example of the former conception is found in Werner Marx's interpretation. Marx argues that, for Parmenides, the "role and task of man [is] to assist in the unveiling of the order, to bring about the self-transparency of the kosmos."<sup>11</sup> This, he suggests, is also Aristotle's view: "Man fulfils his role of assisting in the unveiling of the kosmos only if and when he actually thinks, i.e., intuitively apprehends."<sup>12</sup> An extreme example of the second tendency is found in those interpreters who argue that Aristotle's God has no knowledge of the world, but is instead engaged in a perpetual self-contemplation.<sup>13</sup> A view lying somewhere between

<sup>10</sup> *Metaphysics*, 1075a13-24. See also, *On the Heavens*, 279a30-31: "Upon it depend, in some cases more distinctly, while in others more dimly, the being and life of other things."

<sup>11</sup> W. Marx, *The Meaning of Aristotle's Ontology* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1954), 12.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>13</sup> W. D. Ross, *Aristotle* (London: Routledge, 1923), 183: "For him [Aristotle], that God should know Himself, and that He should know other things, are alternatives, and in affirming the first alternative he implicitly denies the second."

these extremes is suggested by Kahn, who argues that Aristotle's God is "simply the formal-noetic structure of the cosmos as conscious of itself."<sup>14</sup>

There are two distinct questions here. Firstly, what is the nature of God's noetic activity in relation to the cosmos? There seem to be three possible answers: a) God knows only himself; b) God knows the cosmos in knowing himself; c) God knows only the cosmos.<sup>15</sup> Secondly, what is the locus of the manifestation of the intelligible structure of the cosmos? Again, there seem to be three possible answers: a) the intelligibility of the cosmos is not realized intra-cosmically at all, but only in the transcendent divine νόησις; b) the intelligible order of the cosmos is realized within the cosmos independently of the human being, who participates in this theophany but does not uniquely mediate it; c) the intelligible order of the cosmos is realized in the cosmos only insofar as the human being mediates between God and cosmos.

These problems are so difficult to resolve, because Aristotle never adequately articulates the relation between the form/matter distinction as it manifests in the case of beings that do not cognitively participate in νόησις (the elements, plants and non-human animals), and as it manifests in those that do (human beings). It is insufficient to propose that form – as realized in matter – stands to immaterial form as the potentially intelligible to the actually intelligible. For Aristotle, potentiality is always relative to activity, thus one can speak of the form of a natural entity as intelligible only relative to an activity of intellection.

Strictly speaking, although non-human natural entities are, at their own ontological level, ends in themselves and integral wholes, this wholeness is ultimately dependent on νόησις. As Joe Sachs puts it, in his summary of the argument of *Metaphysics* Book X: "Wholeness in its most complete form belongs to that of which the thinking is one, and hence the cause of such wholeness rests ultimately upon an act of thinking."<sup>16</sup> Thus, form and activity, in their properly cognitive sense (νόησις) are not an inessential addition to a cosmos of natural beings able to realise their own integral wholeness independently of a merely

E. Zeller, *Aristotle and the Earlier Peripatetics*, vol. 1, trans. B. F. C Costelloe & J. H. Muirhead (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1897), 401: God is "self-conscious Spirit (...) and confines his thought within the limits of an isolated self-contemplation." R. Majithia, "The Relation of Divine Thinking to Human Thought in Aristotle," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 73 (1999), 380: "I argue that Thought Thinking Thought is not thinking in the sense that requires an object in any ordinary sense, but is in fact the activity of pure unconditioned consciousness." B. Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1961), 180-181: "God does not have the attributes of a Christian Providence, for it would derogate from His perfection to think about anything except what is perfect, i.e. Himself (...). We must infer that God does not know of the existence of our sublunary world." K. Oehler, "Aristotle on Self-Knowledge," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 118:6 (1974), 501: "The text of chapter 9 [of the *Metaphysics*] clearly excludes from the Prime Mover any knowledge of something which is not itself. This appears to exclude from the Prime Mover all knowledge of the world." W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Greek Philosophers: From Thales to Aristotle* (London: Methuen, 1976), 139: "The conclusion is that the only possible object of the eternal thought of God is himself, the one full and perfect being (...). He is 'wrapped in eternal self-contemplation'."

<sup>14</sup> C. Kahn, "On the Intended Interpretation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*," *Werk und Wirkung*, ed. J. Wiesner (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1985), 127; also, 327-328: "Aristotle's god is (...) identical with the formal structure of the world considered sub specie aeternitatis, that is, under the aspect of unqualified actuality, where there is no real distinction between cognition and its object."

<sup>15</sup> This would amount to the claim that God's thinking is so utterly identified with its content, somewhat like a person whose attention is completely given over to contemplating something, that there is no room for an accompanying reflective moment, or any incidental self-consciousness. I am not aware of anyone who actually defends such a reading.

<sup>16</sup> J. Sachs, *Introduction*, in *Aristotle's Metaphysics*, trans. J. Sachs (Santa Fe: Green Lion Press, 1999), xliv.

secondary noetic realization.<sup>17</sup> However, this renders ambiguous the metaphysical status of non-noetic wholes – in other words, all of nature up to and including the non-noetic aspects of the human being (the physical body, vegetative soul and even the sensitive soul).

It is difficult to see how Aristotle can coherently avoid either pantheism or theopanism. While the first would deny the transorganic character of all wholes up to and including the cosmos, which would therefore become a closed immanence, governed by an endless dialectic between form and matter, the latter would dissolve all of nature into divine νόησις, reducing it to the status of a mysterious illusory appendix to God.

The former is not an option for Aristotle. The latter, while clearly at odds with Aristotle's deep engagement with the dynamic sensible cosmos, in all its richness, is not so easy to reject, within the framework Aristotle provides. The only way to directly bridge the gap between form as realized in matter and form as noetic activity, without affirming the mediatory role of the human being, is to suggest that form as realized in matter (ultimately, the sensible cosmos) *just is* divine noetic activity, which only “appears” as potentially intelligible sensible form. But then the obvious question arises: appears to whom? Clearly, form as realized in matter, form as only potentially intelligible, cannot itself be the “content” of νόησις.<sup>18</sup> The attempt to unify the cosmos and God by means of the claim that sensible form and noetic activity are simply two aspects of the same reality, solves nothing, since the very attributes that distinguish sensible form from noetic activity – its potential intelligibility and its changing multiplicity – cannot be present on the divine side of the horizon of phenomenality. This would reduce nature, including the non-noetic parts of the human being, to a sort of dream, in relation to which divine νόησις would represent full waking consciousness.<sup>19</sup>

Aristotle defines the meta-cosmic God in such a way that his role as τέλος can be (macrocosmically) reconciled with his role as immanent intelligibility only by conceiving of God as a two-faced Janus, uniting in an unsatisfying manner active noetic intelligibility with potential sensible intelligibility, roughly akin to a Spinozist *Deus sive natura*.

God is noetic activity without remainder: “a thinking of thinking.”<sup>20</sup> One must avoid a few major misunderstandings here. Firstly, νόησις is not a reified “mind” that in addition engages in activity; it is nothing but this activity. Secondly, νόησις is not

<sup>17</sup> Cf. O. Blanchette, *The Perfection of the Universe According to Aquinas: A Teleological Cosmology* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 271: “Without knowing beings in the universe (...) [t]he universe would be less of a universe, and more like a mere juxtaposition of beings, each perfect in itself, perhaps, but always imperfect in comparison to others and to the whole of which it is only a part. The universe has to be thought of as somehow relating to human sense and intelligence in its ultimate perfection.” See also, 300: “Without the human being's knowing activity, nature remains essentially incomplete.”

<sup>18</sup> S. R. L. Clark, *Aristotle's Man: Speculations upon Aristotelian Anthropology*, op. cit., 221: “Certainly it [the Prime] has no perception of the world of our senses.”

<sup>19</sup> Although beyond the scope of this essay, this possibility is given an interesting articulation in A. P. Bos, “A ‘Dreaming Kronos’ in a Lost Work by Aristotle,” *L'Antiquité Classique* 58 (1989), 88-111. Bos discusses the motif of a “dreaming Kronos,” which Tertullian ascribes to Aristotle, and which Bos connects with motifs in the Corpus Hermeticum and elsewhere. This is the fascinating suggestion that nature is, in some sense, a sleeping god, subordinate to the ever-wakeful νοῦς.

<sup>20</sup> *Metaphysics*, 1074b36. L. Elders, *Aristotle's Theology: A Commentary on Book Lambda of the Metaphysics* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1972), 259, suggests that it is best to interpret the genitive νοήσεως as “a genitive of contents (‘consisting of thinking’) or an objective genitive (‘concerning thinking’).”

a reflective subject.<sup>21</sup> Thirdly, in the context of human knowledge, νόησις is not an inner, private, subjective sphere of merely empirical psychological experience. Indeed, strictly speaking, νόησις is not experienced, if by this one means that it is itself an object of consciousness.<sup>22</sup> Fourthly, νόησις is neither multiplied in itself, when it is realized in individual human beings, nor is it either itself generic or an instance of some more generic category.<sup>23</sup> The relation between νόησις and the categories in which being is articulated might be expressed as follows: there is no single generic being in which all beings participate, or under which they fall; rather, one category, substance, is primary and is ultimately defined as νόησις. Thus, substance as νόησις must itself be both “in and beyond” the categories. Fifthly, νόησις is not structured by relations between thinker, thinking and what is thought. If God as thought (νοῦς) were really distinct from God as the activity of thinking (νόησις) then it would be possible for νοῦς to exist without being in act, which would directly contradict Aristotle’s claims that God is pure activity.<sup>24</sup> The transition between a merely potentially thinking νοῦς and its activity (νόησις), would need to be accounted for, either in terms of the potentially thinking νοῦς actualising itself, or in terms of νόησις actualising νοῦς. The former is impossible. The latter is also problematic, since it not only posits a duality in God (between a merely potentially active νοῦς and an active νόησις), but is also contradicted by Aristotle’s claim that the noetic possession of an object of thought is superior to that object as potentially intelligible.<sup>25</sup> Such a duality would introduce a hierarchy within God, between a superior νόησις and a subordinate νοῦς. Nor can one draw a real distinction in God between thinking (νόησις) and the object of thinking. This would involve positing the co-existence in God of a merely potentially intelligible content and the thinking of that content. One would then have to account for the transition from the one to the other, either in terms of the object affecting the activity (which is impossible) or in terms of the activity actualising the object. In the latter case, there is no good reason to maintain a real distinction, since the activity (νόησις) has in any case implicitly been elevated to priority with respect to the object.

The priority of νόησις, with respect to any division between thinker, thinking and object of thought, does not mean that νόησις thinks nothing, or nothing but itself (as

<sup>21</sup> *Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, trans. J. Sachs, op. cit., 248, f.n. 28: “This is not the structure of self-consciousness but just the opposite. The activity of the divine intellect is nothing over and above its content, and none of its content is unassimilated into its activity. It is not a doubled thinking that turns around to look at itself, but a fusion of activity with that upon which it works.”

<sup>22</sup> C. Kahn, “The Role of Νοῦς in the Cognition of First Principles in Posterior Analytics II 19,” *Aristotle on Science: The Posterior Analytics*, ed. E. Berti (Padova: Editrice Antenore, 1981), 413: “We can grasp the active intellect, if we grasp it at all, only in its activity in us, and this in turn only by reflection upon its objective realization in actual knowledge. Hence the Agent Intellect is not a principle of which we can be directly conscious at all (cf. 430a23f. ‘we do not remember’).”

<sup>23</sup> Cf. S. Menn, “Aristotle and Plato on God as Νοῦς and as the Good,” *Review of Metaphysics* 45 (1992), 553: “Aristotle tries to express what the first principle is by saying that it is νοῦς (...). Aristotle does not mean to say that God is simply one instance of νοῦς among others, even the first and highest instance (...) God must be νοῦς in such a way that God is the only being which can be called νοῦς in that sense of the word.”

<sup>24</sup> L. Elders, *Aristotle’s Theology: A Commentary on Book Lambda of the Metaphysics*, op. cit., 259: “The term νόησις is well chosen: it signifies the actuality of the thinking of the supreme νοῦς. Aristotle does not write ἡ αὐτοῦ νόησις [the thinking of itself], probably to avoid creating the impression that the first being is composed of a thinking subject and its activity.”

<sup>25</sup> *Metaphysics*, 1072b22-26.

merely the empty form of a reflexive self-consciousness).<sup>26</sup> Rather, it means that the true substance of all content is activity, and that the distinction between subject, object and activity, only appears intra-cosmically. Νόησις certainly does contain all content, but that content is present in its metaphysically prior form, as *activity*.

Thus, νόησις cannot be directly present in the cosmos, if by cosmos we mean the ultimate horizon of sensible phenomenality – which, as such, is only every potentially intelligible – with one exception, namely, the human being as participating in νόησις.<sup>27</sup> If νόησις were directly present in the cosmos beyond its human locus, one would need either to introduce a duality of activity and object into God (ruled out, for reasons already stated), or one would need to dissolve the “object” (the cosmos) into the divine νόησις, in which case the cosmos would cease to exist in any positive sense.

Thus, attempting to resolve the tension between transcendence and immanence at the macrocosmic level leads to theopanism, in which the cosmos becomes a fundamentally mysterious illusory appendix, whose problematic status is exacerbated by Aristotle’s claim that the cosmos is a unique, complete, eternal and ungenerated whole.<sup>28</sup> Since there is nothing “outside” the cosmos, except νόησις, there is no way to account for the status of the potentially intelligible cosmos. At least in the surviving works, Aristotle provides no philosophical or mythological account of the “origin” of the difference between God and cosmos.

### III. MICROCOSMIC TRANSORGANICITY

I now turn to the microcosmic perspective. I argue that Aristotle’s thought becomes more coherent if the human being (or, as I will ultimately argue, the *theanthropic* exemplary instance) is seen as mediating between the meta-cosmic deity and the cosmos. What, at the macrocosmic level necessarily falls apart into either pantheism or theopanism – thereby resulting in a rending duality, rather than an “integral but discontinuous unity” – at the microcosmic level results in a proper transorganicity.

Though Aristotle never unambiguously affirms this, the relation between the cosmos and God is best understood as mediated by an anthropocentric (and ultimately a theanthropo-centric) teleology. This is not the crude idea that the non-human natural order is subservient to human interests, nor that non-human nature acts according to conscious purposes, either as immanent to natural beings themselves, or as implanted in them by a divine designer. Non-human nature does not operate by means of conscious purposes, and Aristotle’s God is not a creator. Rather, the anthropocentric teleology I have

<sup>26</sup> *Metaphysics*, 1074a20-21: “For if it thinks nothing, what would be solemn about that? Rather it would be just like someone sleeping.” Cf. S. R. L. Clark, *Aristotle’s Man: Speculations upon Aristotelian Anthropology*, op. cit., 178: “The author of the *Magna Moralia* contemptuously observes that ‘whoever is preoccupied with himself is counted as insensible. A god like that would be absurd’ (MM 1213b4f).”

<sup>27</sup> I intentionally ignore the noetic activity of the celestial intelligences, since they are – in the context of the problems I am discussing – effectively separate from the sublunary world, and so cannot account for the intelligibility of that world. They can, at most, account for the intelligibility of the supralunary planetary spheres, through their own distinct “embodiment” in the aether. In relation to the sublunary, they can play a mediatory role only in relation to motion.

<sup>28</sup> *On the Heavens*, 281b26-28: “Anything then which always exists is absolutely imperishable. It is also ungenerated, since if it was generated it will have the power for some time of not being.” See also, 279a9-11: “neither are there now, nor have there ever been, nor can there ever be formed more heavens than one, but this heaven of ours is one and unique and complete.”



in mind is the more fundamental notion that (morphologically) the human form serves as the focal τέλος of all other natural forms, and that (cognitively) the human being is the focal mediator between the intra-cosmic natural order and the transcendent deity.<sup>29</sup> I focus exclusively on the latter cognitive teleology. However, before proceeding to this more subtle conception, I will briefly consider the cruder variant, which Aristotle also endorses, at least in some form:

For some animals bring forth, together with their offspring, so much food as will last until they are able to supply themselves; of this the vermiparous or oviparous animals are an instance; and the viviparous animals have up to a certain time a supply of food for their young in themselves, which is called milk. In like manner we may infer that, after the birth of animals, plants exist for their sake, and that the other animals exist for the sake of man, the tame for use and food, the wild, if not all, at least the greater part of them, for food, and for the provision of clothing and various instruments. Now if nature makes nothing incomplete, and nothing in vain, the inference must be that she has made all animals for the sake of man.<sup>30</sup>

However one interprets this passage, it is not compatible with the idea that Aristotle's God has *created* the other animals in order for them to be used by human beings. Rather, the teleology implied is structured by hypothetical necessity:

Plainly, however, that cause is the first which we call that for the sake of which. For this is the account of the thing, and the account forms the starting-point, alike in the works of art and in works of nature (...) Now in the works of nature the good and that for the sake of which is still more dominant than in works of art, nor is necessity a factor with the same significance in them all (...) For there is absolute necessity, manifested in eternal phenomena; and there is hypothetical necessity, manifested in everything that is generated as in everything that is produced by art, be it a house or what it may. For if a house or other such final object is to be realized, it is necessary that first this and then that shall be produced and set in motion, and so on in continuous succession, until the end is reached,

<sup>29</sup> S. R. L. Clark, *Aristotle's Man: Speculations upon Aristotelian Anthropology*, op. cit., ix: "Man is the most natural of living beings. This claim, and certain other oddities in the biological works (...) can be explained on the assumption that Aristotle was a believer in devolutionary transformism, either in the full sense – that Man is the First Ancestor of all life – or in the modified sense, that the universe is itself, in a way, human. In either case man, particularly the perfect man, is the τέλος of the world." J. Schickler, *Aristotle: Man and Metaphysics*, op. cit., 101: "Aristotle's man is the centerpiece of his whole philosophy (...). His organization unites form and matter in a remarkable way: like the higher intelligences – the celestial bodies – he can think, and like animals he has a sensitive soul and so can perceive; like plants he has a vegetative soul and is alive and able to reproduce, whilst his physical frame contains the true geometry of the cosmos within it. At each level of his being, man thus reflects aspects of the cosmos as a whole. Aristotle's man is also the metaphysical substance of the natural world, since he is both its formal and its final end."

<sup>30</sup> *Politics*, 1256b10-22.

for the sake of which each prior thing is produced and exists. So also is it with the productions of nature.<sup>31</sup>

One must consider this from the perspective of the ultimate τέλος of nature, since everything in its own way strives to imitate God. The question is whether the affirmation of an anthropocentric teleology undermines the teleological integrity of the subordinate ends which it would integrate into a more encompassing whole. While understandable, this concern is based on the problematic assumption that this integrity can only be safeguarded by treating all natural beings as imitating God on the same, flat, ontological plain, in a manner that negates the distinction between properly noetic participation and lower forms of imitation.<sup>32</sup>

Here, it is helpful to consider another objection to the view that Aristotle's work contains an anthropocentric teleology. David Sedley<sup>33</sup> notes that a strong objection to an anthropocentric teleology is that it would contradict Aristotle's modest assessment of the cosmic status of the human being.<sup>34</sup> He responds as follows:

The heavenly bodies produce seasonal change in the sublunary world, not because they are subordinated to it in the cosmic hierarchy, but so as to allow all sublunary living things to fulfill their natural goals. And those goals are organized as follows.

First, all living things aim, beyond their own ephemeral existence, at the attainment of immortality through reproduction. And in this they are striving to imitate the motions of the heavenly bodies, and through them the divine nature (*GC* ii.10, *GA* ii.1; cf. *DA* ii.4, 415a25-b7). And second, all elements and living things have the aim, indirect or direct, of promoting the interests of man, whose own highest aim is, in turn, the partial achievement of godlike immortality through contemplation. Thus when the heavenly bodies aid the natural system of the sublunary sphere, this is not the better acting for the sake of the worse. Rather, just as they are themselves moved by love of god, so too they organize other, lower beings towards the same ultimate end, the imitation of the single best being in the universe. That is the substance of Aristotle's remark in *Metaphysics* Λ 10 that "all things are jointly arranged in relation to *one* thing."<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *On the Parts of Animals*, 639b15-34.

<sup>32</sup> *On Generation and Corruption*, 336b28-36: "Now being (...) is better than not-being: but not all things can possess being, since they are too far removed from the principle. God therefore adopted the remaining alternative, and fulfilled the perfection of the universe by making coming-to-be uninterrupted: for the greatest possible coherence would thus be secured to existence, because that coming-to-be should itself come-to-be-perpetually is the closest approximation to eternal being."

<sup>33</sup> D. Sedley, "Is Aristotle's Teleology Anthropocentric?," *Phronesis* 36:2 (1991), 179-196.

<sup>34</sup> Specifically, the objection is that an anthropocentric teleology would seem to make the supralunary realm – the celestial spheres and their movers – subordinate to what is metaphysically inferior to them, i.e. the human being and sublunary nature.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

However, Sedley fails to identify a crucial point: namely, that while all non-human natural entities – at least in the sublunary sphere – imitate God indirectly, because non-noetically, the human being is capable, if only intermittently, of participating directly in divine νόησις, as transorganically united with the entire human psycho-somatic constitution. This is the key idea required to explain how non-human sublunary nature realises itself most fully not only in pursuing its own immanent ends, but also by being teleologically ordered to the human being, and through the human being to God.

Only the human being integrally unites all the levels of the natural order, while also, in a certain sense, bridging the difference between the cosmos and God, thus achieving something that is not possible even for the movers of the celestial spheres.<sup>36</sup> Non-human nature can only achieve the highest and most perfect participation in the divine, in and through the highest end of the human being, contemplative participation in divine νόησις. Rather than being a mere transcendence of the natural order, the highest realisation of the human being involves the mediatory unification of what is otherwise torn by a rending tension.

However, defining this mediation is difficult. It cannot be an apotheosis of nature from below, as if it were a plant whose immanent formative activity flowers in νοῦς. Aristotle has no doctrine of creation, and cannot account for the divine origin of matter. Nor can it be described as a noetic incarnation from above, since Aristotle lacks any notion of emanation. Rather, νόησις seems akin to a metaphysical magnet, a vanishing point of active unity and intelligibility, eliciting forms from the pure potency of matter and drawing them upward, through a hierarchy of increasingly refined form-matter wholes, which converge on the human being, through which they participate in νόησις.<sup>37</sup>

Another model might be derived from Aristotle's comparison of νοῦς to light. It cannot be the case that νόησις merely *reveals* an intelligibility already present in the sensible qua sensible, nor that natural entities themselves generate their own noetic phosphorescence, as from rotting wood.<sup>38</sup> Rather, Aristotle seems to imply that, for νόησις, which is always active, all is always already illuminated, and that the transition from our ordinary, unenlightened condition to those infrequent moments of θεωρία, is akin to waking from a dream; although, in another sense, νόησις seems to be connected with a certain sleep of the lower faculties.<sup>39</sup> But here a question arises: who, exactly, is waking

<sup>36</sup> This is because they are embodied, if at all, only in the supralunary aether and relate to sublunary nature only as intermediate movers. In contrast, the human being is fully incarnated in the world and unifies all the ontological levels of sublunary nature – the four elements, the vegetative soul and the sensitive soul – in the highest and most refined integral whole, which is itself open to, and perfected by, cognitive union with νοῦς.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. J. Milbank and C. Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2001), 10: “Since the tree only transmits treeness – indeed, only exists at all – as imitating the divine, what we receive in truth is a participation in the divine. To put this another way, in knowing a tree, we are catching it on its way back to God.” In Aristotle, of course, since the tree is not created, it is simply rising up to God, rather than returning.

<sup>38</sup> To appropriate an image from Hölderlin's *Hyperion*.

<sup>39</sup> The author of *Problems* suggests that wakefulness is caused by those activities, “in which the mind searches and finds difficulties rather than in those in which it pursues continual contemplation” (*Problems* 917b1-2). See also, 917a29-32: “But in those who are in a natural condition, when the intelligence is fixed on one thing and does not keep changing from one subject to another, every function in that region (the inactivity of which involves sleep) is at a standstill. (Similarly during a rout, if the leader halts, all the forces under his command halt also.)” Cf. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 4.3.30.8f.: “The intellectual act is one thing and the apprehension of it another, and we are always intellectually active but do not always apprehend our activity.”

up? These problems arise because of unresolved ambiguities in Aristotle's account of substance, and in particular in the relation between the two criteria of intelligibility and self-standing individuation. These ambiguities appear first at the level of sentience, and more acutely at the noetic level.

#### IV. THE PROBLEM OF THE SENSITIVE SOUL

Schickler argues that Aristotle requires an ontological account of the sensitive soul, to ground the prior actuality of perceptible objects. For Aristotle, the highest actuality of a perceptible thing (qua perceptible) is being actively perceived. Hence, the apparently separate elements of perception are relative to active perceiving. Active perceiving cannot arise via an extrinsic interaction between an external perceptible object, a mediating medium, the organ of perception, and the sensitive soul. These elements are only distinguishable – as potencies which stand to active perceiving as matter to form – relative to the teleologically prior activity of perceiving.<sup>40</sup>

However, human perception is receptive and, therefore, affected by something. The problem is that this “something” cannot be a brute “external object,” existing in complete independence of perception.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, this applies equally to both the medium and the organ of perception. To assume that active perceiving arises from an interaction between ontologically prior and non-sentient elements, is to the claim that form can arise *from below* by a mere combination of material elements. This is impossible given the asymmetrical interdependence of form and matter in the sublunary realm, and in terms of the ultimate priority of form. However, the prior actuality that serves as the form for the matter of the elements of perception cannot be the particular act of perceiving of any particular human being, since perception is receptive and any particular act of perceiving is limited and, thus, unable to account for the prior actuality of all perceptible, but not currently actively perceived, objects.

These considerations lead Schickler to conclude that Aristotle's theory of perception requires a substance (a sort of world soul) in nature that actualizes sensible properties, prior to their secondary actualization in beings that perceive (i.e. human beings and animals).<sup>42</sup> The sensitive soul in the human being would be the individualization of this substance in a single conscious organism.

However, Schickler's argument contains a crucial ambiguity. Although active perceiving transcends its elements as their teleological unity, it is not independent of them. There is no human perception without an animate physical body possessed of a sensitive soul. The postulation of a sensitive world soul that grounds the prior actuality of sensible properties, requires that they be actualised by the world soul at a level higher than that of their perception by an individual human perceiver. But then, instead of active perceiving being the joint actualisation of the object perceived and the individual human

<sup>40</sup> J. Schickler, *Aristotle: Man and Metaphysics*, op. cit., 46-47.

<sup>41</sup> S. R. L. Clark, *Aristotle's Man: Speculations upon Aristotelian Anthropology*, op. cit., 199: Aristotle does not connect “the internal-mental and the external-physical together by philosophical fiat, for the whole notion of the abstract external, the world constructed for special purposes by technicians and since hypostatized as ultimate reality, is alien to his thought.”

<sup>42</sup> J. Schickler, *Aristotle: Man and Metaphysics*, op. cit., 52.

perceiver, which occurs in the perceiver, the primary locus of activity would seem to be the world soul itself.

The problem is that Aristotle's theory of perception makes two apparently irreconcilable claims: firstly, that the perceptible is prior to actual perceiving;<sup>43</sup> secondly, that actual perceiving is teleologically and formally prior to the perceptible. The prior actuality of perceptible qualities in nature, which affect an appropriately placed human perceiver, cannot be some merely material fact, which then miraculously gives rise to an actually perceived quality when it affects a human perceiver.<sup>44</sup> Both object and perceiver are simultaneously realised in the same activity; however, this actualisation takes place within the perceiver. But the perceiver, as potentially perceiving, is himself a perceptible object, relative to the activity of perceiving. In other words, the perceiver seems to occupy two positions at once: on the one hand, as the potential perceiver, who is himself a potentially perceptible object (as far as those aspects of his constitution lower than the sensitive soul are concerned), which must be brought to actualisation by something actual; on the other hand, as the locus of that actualisation itself. Thus, the duality between the actuality of sensible qualities as realised in the act of perception and those qualities as inhering in what is not actively perceiving, is present in a particularly intimate way in the human constitution itself.

While Schickler has identified a fundamental issue, his account suffers from two major weaknesses. If one tries to bridge the abyss between the sentient and the non-sentient, in order to affirm the real existence of sensible qualities in non-sentient nature, by positing a sort of ontological field of sentience, one has to make a choice: either the world soul is itself perceiving, or else sensible qualities inhere in it as anonymous qualia. If we opt for the first view, then we seem to be claiming that actual perceiving could exist independently of its foundation in an individual animate organism. In the second case, we would claim that perceptual qualities exist in a sort of anonymous quasi-objectivity in the world soul.

Whether we think of this world soul as actually perceiving, or as a quasi-objective realm of unmoored sense data, we undermine Aristotle's account of perception. The latter would involve the incoherent claim that sensible qualities inhere in the world soul precisely as they manifest in active perceiving, yet in a higher form that is not actively perceived. If, on the other hand, the world soul is actually perceiving, then perception would not be the joint actualisation of potential perceiver and potential perceived. It would instead be the passive reception by the potential perceiver of the higher actuality of the world soul. This would mean either that each perceiver as actively perceiving is identical with the world soul, or that each individual participates in only a part of the

<sup>43</sup> *Metaphysics*, 1010b30-1011a1: "And, on the whole, if the sensible alone exists, there would be nothing if ensouled entities were not; for there would be no sensing. The view that neither the objects of sensation nor the sensations would exist is doubtless true (for they are affections of the one perceiving), but that the substrata which cause the sensation should not exist without sensing is impossible. For sensation is surely not the sensation of itself, but there is something beyond the sensation, which must be prior to the sensation (...)"

<sup>44</sup> Cf. V. Kal, *On Intuition and Discursive Reasoning in Aristotle* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), 113: "Aristotle places the human mind on the same level as the object of its cognition; just as this object owes its existence in sense-perceptible reality to the mind of God, so the human mind owes its (initially potential) existence in the embodied soul to the knowledge which the mind gains of the object of its knowledge, and thus ultimately to the mind of God which is active in this object."

world soul (namely, the particular “object” that actualised their perception). The former would negate the embodied, perspectival, character of perception, and would also seem to imply a conception of the sensible world that is not compatible with Aristotle’s views about the cosmos. Put simply, for Aristotle the cosmos as a whole cannot, even potentially, be an object of perception. It is not in space, and there is nothing outside it.<sup>45</sup> It is simply not the sort of thing that could be a perceptual, as opposed to a noetic, whole. Thus, it cannot be contained perceptually within a single act of perceiving. The latter would still require us to explain why the individual perceiver is affected by that particular “part” of the world soul.

What can we conclude from these reflections? Firstly, the sensible cosmos, as Aristotle conceives it, cannot be a unified “perceptual” whole. This is another way of saying that it can only be considered as a whole relative to νόησις. Aristotle’s cosmos, like Aristotle’s man, seems to involve a hierarchical nesting of ontological levels: the material elements being contained within the formative principles of life, which are in turn contained within the sphere of sentience, which is in turn contained within νόησις, which constitutes, while transcending, the boundary of the cosmos. A certain interruption occurs once we reach the level of sentience, which is not present in the same way in the case of life, though even here there is a certain qualitative difference and discontinuity.<sup>46</sup> Aristotle’s theory of perception requires that the act of perception be considered as more ontologically fundamental than its elements. However, this becomes unacceptable if we identify this priority with any particular embodied human perceiver. The attempt to resolve this problem by positing a sensitive *anima mundi* also cannot solve the problem.

In fact, a response to the problem raised by Schickler is suggested by Jonathan Lear’s argument that species form emerges as the primary sublunary substance of Aristotle’s metaphysics. As Lear puts it:

*Human soul* is thus the form of the species *man*. There is one such form per species. You and I differ in matter, but we are the same in form: each of us is human soul embodied in this or that matter (...). Strictly speaking, there is only *one soul* animating numerically distinct human bodies. Now Aristotle can, if he wishes, talk about your soul or my soul: he can, for example, insist that it is my soul, not yours, that is the principle of life for me. But this is just an elliptical way of saying that it is human soul embodied in *these* flesh and bones which is a principle of life for me.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> *On the Heavens*, 279a15-19: “But in the absence of natural body there is no movement, and outside the heaven, as we have shown, body neither exists nor can come to exist. It is clear then that there is neither place, nor void, nor time, outside the heaven. Hence whatever is there, is of such a nature as not to occupy any place, nor does time age it (...).”

<sup>46</sup> At the vegetative level, form appears only in the organic wholeness of the formative processes that govern the growth, nutrition and reproduction the embodied members of a species. In some ways, Aristotle’s account of the nature of the cosmos as a whole, is also organicist. In other words, his descriptions of the nature of the cosmic whole correspond most closely neither to the level of inanimate materiality, nor to that of sentience, but rather to that of a finite, integral, organic whole that contains all its proper matter.

<sup>47</sup> J. Lear, *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 275.

While Lear is on the right track, the status of species form as substance cannot be accounted for independently of the relation between soul and νοῦς. Considered solely at the vegetative level, soul as species form accounts only for the morphological wholeness of the formative activity operative in living organisms of a certain species; considered at the level of sentience, it leaves unresolved the problems already mentioned. The human soul, as integrally vegetative and sensitive, cannot be characterised as fully individuated, either at the level of species form, or at the level of particular embodiment. Both are locked in a relation of mutual interdependence: no individual human organisms without species form, and no species form without individual human organisms. Individual human organisms are not individuated insofar as they are form/matter composites, since that would be to treat species form as a universal, individuated by matter. But neither is the species form itself fully individuated.

Soul lies at the very boundary between the sensible and the intelligible. None of the transitional stages leading to the boundary of the intelligible – perception, φαντασία, memory, experience – by themselves account for full individuation: either of the perceived “object,” or the perceiving “subject.” Even experience, in which the universal comes to a stand, and ἐπαγωγή (the process of “being brought face-to-face with”<sup>48</sup> the universal in the particular) cannot be separated from νόησις. On the noetic side, species form cannot be merely a noetic “object,” nor can it be reduced to the constructive activity of discursive thinking; in other words, it cannot be seen as both individuated and intelligible independently of νόησις. While the soul grants a certain ontological wholeness at the level of species, and a certain phenomenological wholeness in the increasing approximation to intelligibility visible in the development of perception through memory, imagination and experience, it does not, strictly speaking, grant either full individuation or intelligibility. Thus, independently of νόησις, neither the particular composite nor species-form can count as substance.

Considered in abstraction from their participation in νόησις, human beings as psycho-somatic wholes are, like other animals, unable to achieve full individuation, which would involve the complete noetic identity between the particular composite and the species form itself, a unity that cannot be achieved at the level of soul alone. No particular human being, as a psycho-somatic whole, exhausts what it is to be a human animal, either at any point in time, or in separation from others. If that were the case, the very distinction between species form and particular embodied form would dissolve. Sublunary species reproduce precisely because any perishable particular is incapable of persisting in the unity of the species form that is realised only in νόησις. Nor does humanity, considered as a single, but multiply embodied species form, achieve full individuation and intelligibility. If it did, this would negate any genuine embodiment, since the single species form would then merely hover over its shadowy embodiments, which would be unnecessary for its individuation or its intelligibility. This is why, to return to my fundamental thesis, individuation is achieved only if humanity, which is itself suspended between species unity and composite particularity, is fully individuated by participation in νόησις. The second part of my primary thesis, that this is possible only in the case of a single, exemplary instance, will be clarified next.

<sup>48</sup> J. Sachs, *Introduction*, in *Aristotle's Metaphysics*, op. cit., liii.

## V. ΝΟΗΣΙΣ AND INDIVIDUATION

Joseph Owens has noted that from “both epistemological and ethical viewpoints, the notion of self is exceptionally difficult to clarify in Aristotle. With him there is no term for ‘person.’ Likewise he has, strictly speaking, no noun for ‘self,’ even though his phraseology may come close to it at times.”<sup>49</sup> This lack of clarity is present both at the level of the human being as a psycho-somatic unity – where the most that can be discerned is a relation between species unity and composite particularity – and at the level of νοῦς, which functions as the paradoxically essential addition that fully individuates the species form, and yet must at the same time be unique, and unmixed with matter.

At the level of νόησις, one must choose between two options: a) the one, unique νόησις individuates the embodied species form identically in all its particular instances, or b) νόησις individuates a single exemplary instance, which in some sense collapses the division between specific unity and composite particularity, such that humanity is united with νοῦς uniquely in a human individual, who is, in the strict sense, the only *fully realized* human individual. On this latter view, νόησις fully individuates only the exemplary instance, while all other instances acquire individuation dynamically, through a participation in, or imitation of, this primary instance.

The positions of Lear and Mure reveal the problems with the first option. Both scholars recognise that the identity of divine νόησις and the intelligible structure of the cosmos grounds the possibility of human cognition.<sup>50</sup> On this view, although for us the world appears, for the most part, as something other than νόησις, the ultimate goal of cognition is, in a sense, self-knowledge,<sup>51</sup> though not as the human being’s self-perception as an empirical subject. Rather, *qua* knower the human being is not merely an empirical subject, but is simultaneously, as Mure puts it, a “universal subject.”<sup>52</sup>

The concrete content of an act of perception is a τὸδε τι, “both (a) singular and so signifiable by ‘this’ and (b) possessed of a universal nature, the name of which is an answer to the question τὶ ἐστὶν in the category of οὐσία.”<sup>53</sup> In the intra-cosmic context, the Aristotelian substance is a unity of the sensible and intelligible, of particularity and universality, and is not simply the natural entity as a supposedly purely sensible particular.

<sup>49</sup> J. Owens, “The Self in Aristotle,” *Review of Metaphysics* 41 (1988), 707.

<sup>50</sup> C. Kahn, “The Role of Νοῦς in the Cognition of First Principles in Posterior Analytics II 19,” *op. cit.*, 410: “if the formal structure of the Intellect were not identical with the formal structure of the world, we could not acquire true scientific knowledge.” S. Rosen, *The Limits of Analysis* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), 59: “Being is knowable because of an underlying unity between the knower and the known.” L. P. Gerson, *Ancient Epistemology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 150: “Plotinus seems to be offering a sort of transcendental argument: understanding is possible only if certain conditions obtain. Among these are: the existence of paradigmatic intelligible reality with which the intellect is actively cognitively identical, the existence of an ability in us to access this activity and hence its contents (...) [this] is also what Aristotle suggests in his identification of intellection with primary being and in his claim that embodied thinking must be able to access intellect.”

<sup>51</sup> Cf. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, trans. T. F. Geraets et al. (Indiana: Hackett, 1991), 296: “The finitude of cognition lies in the presupposition of a world that is found to be there already, and the cognitive subject appears here as a tabula rasa. People have ascribed this representation to Aristotle, although there is no one further removed from this external interpretation than Aristotle himself. Finite cognition does not yet know itself as the activity of the Concept, which it is only in-itself but not for-itself. Its behaviour appears to itself as passive, but it is in fact active.”

<sup>52</sup> G. R. G. Mure, *An Introduction to Hegel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), 40.

<sup>53</sup> J. A. Smith, “ΤΟΔΕ ΤΙ in Aristotle,” *The Classical Review* 35 (1921), 19.



Because actual knowledge is identical with its object, the actual knower is also a τὸδε τι – indeed, cognitively, the same τὸδε τι. As Mure writes,

If so, the “this” is equally and also this momentarily active “I,” and the “such” is equally and also a *universal* subject. Hence the perceptive function of a conscious subject is not a casual multiplicity of separate acts, and the privacy of the percipient’s function is less inviolable than common sense is apt to suppose. The *whole* world of possible total perceptum, and a correlative *universal* subject capable in principle of perceiving it, are implied and operative in any supposedly separate and private act of sense-perception.<sup>54</sup>

For Lear also, cognition culminates in a kind of self-knowledge. To understand something is to grasp its essence. The forms of natural entities acquire a higher realisation in human cognition than they possess as embodied forms. In coming to understand the forms embodied in the world, we come to understand the divine νόησις at work in them. But in *thinking of thinking*, in other words, in contemplating our own contemplative activity, we grasp this divine activity itself in its highest intra-cosmic manifestation. However, the active thinking by which we understand active thinking is itself divine. Hence active thinking is not only a divine activity that we grasp, but also the means by which we grasp it. Now the highest and most essential activity of the human being is active thinking. Hence in *thinking of thinking* we also understand our own essence as human beings, which is primarily to be active knowers actively understanding the world. As Lear puts it:

It is only through investigating the world and coming to understand it that one comes to understand what mind is. Such investigation and understanding, the complete satisfaction of the desire to understand, ultimately constitute the highest form of self understanding. That is, once we have penetrated deeply into the world’s intelligible structure, we come to understand God – or, equivalently, God’s understanding. But divine understanding simply *is* the divine ground of the world.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>54</sup> G. R. G. Mure, *An Introduction to Hegel*, op. cit., 40: “In explicitly perceiving ‘this and (incidentally) myself, I implicitly perceive ‘this-such,’ and recognise it as ‘this-such’ for any percipient. For ‘this’ clearly implies more than ‘this-for-me’; it is ‘deictic,’ and to point is to assume the identity of other percipients with oneself. Indeed if this were not so, sense-perception could never develop into imagination and thought. For the universality of the subject becomes more explicit in imagination and still more explicit in thought; and clearly this development is only possible if the subject of sense-perception is already *in posse* universal. The other condition of its possibility is that on each level of conscious function there is some imperfection: the union of subject and object is not complete, and function at the higher level can never quite dispense with function at the lower.”

<sup>55</sup> J. Lear, *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand*, op. cit., 316-317. See also, 302-303: “It is by the very activity of understanding the world that we come to understand ourselves. We could never understand ourselves simply by turning our intellectual gaze inward. It is only in understanding and contemplating the essences found in the world that we can come to understand who we are.”

The problem with both these accounts, is that they implicitly treat νόησις as universal. Such an account of the relation between νόησις and the individual human knower is torn between two irreconcilable extremes: either the individual human knower possesses a νοῦς that is a particular instance of the universal νοῦς, in which case νοῦς is somehow identically repeated in each individual human knower, or the individual human knower merges, at the noetic level, with a single νοῦς, which reduces both human beings and the rest of the natural world to a realm of illusion.

But what is the alternative? I propose that it is the θεάνθρωπος, as exemplary instance. In other words, Aristotle requires one fully individuated instance of unity between humanity (as multiply embodied species form) and νόησις. The self-knowledge of the θεάνθρωπος, in its fully individuated presence in humanity (as multiply embodied species form) would simultaneously be the νόησις of the intelligible order of the cosmos as a whole; and, insofar as non-human nature is teleologically ordered to human nature, the ensouled “body” of the exemplary instance would simultaneously be human species form in its multiple particular embodiments, and the body of the cosmos.

From the beginning, interpreters have disagreed about the relation between the νοῦς ποιητικός (to use the later term) of *De Anima*, and the divine νοῦς of the *Metaphysics*. But any division between νοῦς ποιητικός and divine νόησις is wrongheaded. To postulate more than one νοῦς undoes the whole logic of Aristotle’s metaphysics. If there were a distinct νοῦς in each human being, one would have to account for the relation between these νόεξ<sup>56</sup> and the divine νοῦς. Any merely representational relation would undermine the fundamental doctrine of knowledge by cognitive identity with the form of the thing known. Also, while the postulation of individual νόεξ might be motivated by a desire to make each individual human being a true cognitive subject of their noetic acts, it would instead have a quite different consequence. In so far as those individual νόεξ were not active, they would be like merely potentially intelligible objects and, as active, they would be identical with divine νόησις, and thus not in any meaningful sense individual.

The relation between νόησις and cosmos, which grounds the intelligibility of the latter, requires that what affects the human soul and “causes” actual knowledge be none other than νόησις as active in that object. But this raises the fundamental problem of how νόησις can be present as merely potential. The postulation of multiple particular νόεξ cannot resolve this problem. For what would be the source of the light of the individual νοῦς that illuminates the potentially intelligible sensible object? Given the intermittent nature of human participation in νόησις, in what sense would it be possible to affirm that the cosmos has a unified and coherent intelligible structure, rather than consisting of haloes of intelligibility, cast by separate lamps in a vaster night of material unintelligibility?

Thus, it is problematic to assimilate νόησις to the human soul, as being merely its highest power, rather than, as Aristotle says, something that comes from “outside” and in

<sup>56</sup> S. Menn, “Aristotle and Plato on God as Νοῦς and as the Good,” op. cit., 554. Menn notes that the plural of νοῦς is “so rare that it is unclear whether the classical nominative would have been *noi* or *noes*.” See also, 554: “You and I each have a mind, and we together have two minds, but it would be extremely unusual to say that we have two *nouses*.”

which the soul participates.<sup>57</sup> Precisely what ultimately unifies and even individuates both the species form and the particular composite is the very element that is not an immanent part of the human psycho-somatic constitution. The human being is only complete by participating in divinity.<sup>58</sup>

However, this does not mean that a single transcendent active intellect is identically repeated in individual human knowers. The question is: can one make sense of Aristotle's thought, on this fundamental structural issue, by assuming a model according to which one separate  $\nu\omicron\delta\zeta$  illuminates multiple human beings, as purely psycho-somatic entities who merely participate in  $\nu\omicron\delta\zeta$ , rather than possessing an individual  $\nu\omicron\delta\zeta$ ? I would argue that one cannot, since such a suggestion seems to require either the identical repetition of the one  $\nu\omicron\delta\zeta$ , or the denial of the unity of any individual human being. If  $\nu\omicron\delta\zeta$  is nowhere present individually, as the true cognitive subject of a human psycho-somatic constitution, then the human composite becomes, like all other intra-cosmic entities, merely a noetic object in relation to the transcendent divine  $\nu\omicron\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$ . For reasons already stated, such a noetic object must, from the divine perspective, dissolve into  $\nu\omicron\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$ ,<sup>59</sup> which, in a theopanic manner, reduces the human being to the same illusory status as the rest of the cosmos. If, on the other hand,  $\nu\omicron\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$  is said to be identically repeated in each particular human being (the same, one  $\nu\omicron\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$  simultaneously present as many complete  $\nu\omicron\epsilon\varsigma$ , which are nevertheless identically the same one  $\nu\omicron\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$ ) then  $\nu\omicron\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$  must be individuated by matter (which is impossible). Of course, the single  $\nu\omicron\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$ , which just is the intelligible structure of the cosmos, cannot itself be multiplied. So, the multiplicity of its identically repeated appearance in particular human beings would be explicable only in terms of material distinction, not in terms of a multiplicity present within  $\nu\omicron\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$  itself. Thus, while the identical repetition of  $\nu\omicron\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$  in many individual human beings might seem to offer some hope of granting to the individual human being the status of a genuine cognitive subject, it cannot in fact do so.

In fact, such a notion makes sense only if one implicitly thinks of the relation between the one  $\nu\omicron\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$  and its multiple identical repetitions as a relation between a universal and its particular instantiations. This, however, is prohibited by Aristotle's claim that primary substance is not a universal.<sup>60</sup>  $\text{N}\acute{\omicron}\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$ , as the ultimate principle of unity, must be more

<sup>57</sup> *Generation of Animals*, 736b22-28: "Plainly those principles whose activity is bodily cannot exist without a body (...). For the same reason also they cannot enter from outside (...). It remains, then, for the reason alone so to enter and alone to be divine, for no bodily activity has any connexion with the activity of reason."

<sup>58</sup> *Protrepticus*, B 110: "For  $\nu\omicron\delta\zeta$  is the god in us (...) and mortal life contains a portion of some god." Cf. *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1169a13-21: "just as a city or any other systematic whole is most properly identified with the most authoritative element in it, so is a man; and therefore the man who loves this and gratifies it is most of all a lover of self. Besides, a man is said to have or not to have self-control according as his intellect has or has not the control, on the assumption that this is the man himself; and the things men have done from reason are thought most properly their own acts and voluntary acts. That this is the man himself, then, or is so more than anything else, is plain, and also that the good man loves most this part of him."

<sup>59</sup> Here, I do not mean that the individual  $\nu\omicron\delta\zeta$  would disappear into some formless, ineffable unity. The point is rather that the logic of Aristotle's conception of  $\nu\omicron\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$  seems to preclude the existence of more than one absolute centre of cognitive activity. Without this principle of unity, implicit in the priority of activity over content,  $\nu\omicron\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$  would become nothing more than a quasi-objective field of anonymous noetic objects.

<sup>60</sup> It is revealing, at this point, to compare Mure's claims about the universality of the subject, with *Metaphysics*, 1087a36ff: "For knowledge, like knowing, is spoken of in two ways – as potential and as actual. The potential, being, as matter, universal and indefinite, deals with the universal and indefinite; but the actuality, being definite,

individual than either the species form or particular composites, since these – including the human being, considered as a merely psycho-somatic entity – never, if considered in abstraction from νόησις, achieve either intelligibility or full individuation. As the preeminent principle of unity, νόησις does not unify cosmos and the entities contained therein as a universal, or as an idea in any way independent of an activity of thinking, but precisely as an activity of thinking. There is no more encompassing context which would allow us to define νόησις as a mere particular and thus as an instance of some more general class.

If, as Lear argues, soul is species form (here humanity) this does not mean that there is a universal human soul, of which individual embodied souls are particular instances. Rather, it means that there is a single active soul which is active only in multiple composites. The fact that soul as the principle of life for me is embodied in “these flesh and bones,” does not answer the question of soul’s fundamental unity, which cannot be separated from νόησις. Soul, unlike νόησις, is not identical with the principle of its unity. It only participates in this unity: in a lower sense by means of the cycle of reproduction, by growth, perception, imagination etc., and pre-eminently in θεωρία. The soul, considered abstractly, in independence from νόησις, does not stand apart from its phenomenal manifestations, it is the totality of those manifestations, which approximate to the unity of νόησις in the only way possible for soul and for composite entities, namely, by means of the eternal round of reproduction, growth and decay, by limited and perspectival perception, by φαντασία, memory, experience and even discursive reasoning.

Thus, as already stated, Aristotle’s thought seems to require a single, exemplary, *theanthropic* instance, in whom the species-form of humanity – which is never a separate universal, being always only expressed in the totality of its embodiments, and never achieving full individuation – is individuated. Insofar as humanity in some sense contains the whole of non-human nature, as its focal end, this amounts to the individuation and noetic illumination not only of humanity, but also of the cosmos, in and through humanity.

This speculative suggestion does require a radical transformation of Aristotle’s metaphysics. I have attempt to show that Aristotle’s criteria for substance (intelligibility and self-standing, fully individuated being) can only be realised in two forms: either in the direction of a theopanism, in which only the transcendent νόησις is substance, and the cosmos becomes an illusion; or as the exemplary θεάνθρωπος. While the former is more easily reconcilable with letter of Aristotle’s metaphysics, it seems to me that the latter is far more compatible with his commitment to the cosmos in all its particularity and change. To opt for the latter is to suggest that natural beings, including human beings, only dynamically imitate this exemplary instance, both in the varied levels of the cosmic order, and in their own constitution. This emphatically does not mean that particular human beings, or for that matter other natural beings, are lacking in their proper being. It only denies that this proper being demands the attainment of an impossible identity which

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deals with a definite object, – being a ‘this,’ it deals with a ‘this.’ But *per accidens* sight sees universal colour, because this individual colour which it sees is colour; and this individual *a* which the grammarian investigates is an *a*. For if the principles must be universal, what is derived from them must also be universal, as in demonstrations; and if this is so, there will be nothing capable of separate existence – i.e. no substance. But evidently in a sense knowledge is universal, and in a sense it is not.”

would, in fact, reduce them to the status of mere appearance, instead affirming that their proper being is precisely in becoming.

But how does this suggestion relate to Aristotle's account of human knowledge? I will mention only one aspect of this. The idea that divine νόησις grounds the possibility of knowledge is important in relation to the account of the cognitive process given in *Posterior Analytics* 2.19. The cognitive process recounted there can be described as a process of increasing unification and information. Starting from a relatively vague and indeterminate sensible manifold it moves through stages of progressively greater articulation and unification. The process described in *Posterior Analytics* 2.19 is not *constructive*, but *re-constructive*. On the macrocosmic reading, cognition is, ultimately, the re-integration of the knower into a world that appears initially fragmented, and in which the intelligible order is initially veiled, but which is always already actively thought by God. The increasing clarity, structure and unity that characterize the progressive stages of the cognitive process are, ultimately, the progressive unveiling (from a particular human point of view) of an intelligibility which is always already active. On the microcosmic, *theanthropic* reading, cognition<sup>61</sup> becomes, as it were, the imitative participation in the θεάνθρωπος, not through *noetic* identity (ruled out by the arguments against conceiving of νόησις as universal), but as embodied soul. In relation to the distinction between the νοῦς that makes all things, and the νοῦς that becomes all things,<sup>62</sup> this means that the latter must be fully assimilated to the soul. The notion of the exemplary θεάνθρωπος is, in a sense, a radicalisation of Clark's claim that,

The life-world of the fully developed man, the Aristotelian saint, who best knows what it is to be human, is the absolute reality from which all other ways of experiencing reality are diminutions or abstractions (cf. II.2.28). It is in terms of the principles of intelligible being intuited (occasionally) by the saint that all other principles, beliefs, and habits are to be explained.<sup>63</sup>

The θεάνθρωπος suggests a different reading of the military simile Aristotle uses to describe the way in which the active state wherein the universal is known arises: it arises "from sense perception, just as, when a retreat has occurred in battle, if one man halts so does another, and then another, until the original position is restored."<sup>64</sup> This should be read in relation to the passage I cited earlier.<sup>65</sup> Reconsidered, in relation to the

<sup>61</sup> For lack of space, I ignore the question of how this relates to other aspects of Aristotle thought: his ethics, his political thought, his biological works etc.

<sup>62</sup> *De Anima*, 430a10-14.

<sup>63</sup> S. R. L. Clark, *Aristotle's Man: Speculations upon Aristotelian Anthropology*, op. cit., 200. See also, 197: "This intuition, this audience with the god, this increasing seeing from the god as centre (...) defines the sort of world and thereby the sort of man who may justly be taken as standard (...). In seeing with the god, we see with our own eyes but in a certain way, and in seeing thus, momentarily, we meet not a self world ordered by our pleasures and pains, but the World. Not as an object over against us, but enthusiastically – for *enthousiasmos* is in origin inspiration and possession by the god. Reality is not the dead world of myth (II. 3.29) but the realized, actualised world of human living, and its core is the realization of the divine."

<sup>64</sup> *Posterior Analytics*, 100a10-13.

<sup>65</sup> *Metaphysics*, 1075a13-24.

exemplary instance, the meaning of the earlier passage would undergo a subtle shift. On a macrocosmic reading, the “leader” is God as transcendent νόησις. The intelligible order of the world, here represented in the image of the disciplined (and hierarchical) order of an army, ultimately depends on νόησις, while νόησις does not depend on it. But an exclusively macrocosmic reading of the military image in this context, raises all of the problems I have already discussed. Aristotle writes,

Thus the states neither belong in us in a determinate form, nor come about from other states that are more cognitive; but they come about from perception – as in a battle when a rout occurs, if one man makes a stand another does and then another, until a position of strength is reached. And the soul is such as to be capable of undergoing this. What we have just said but not said clearly, let us say again: when one of the undifferentiated things makes a stand, there is a primitive universal in the mind (for though one perceives the particular, perception is of the universal – e.g. of man but not of Callias the man) (...). Thus it is clear that it is necessary for us to become familiar with the primitives by induction; for perception too instills the universal in this way.<sup>66</sup>

Human beings possess no *a priori* knowledge, as would be the case if they were, from the first, cognitively identical with the intelligible structure of reality as realized in νόησις. Rather than involving a turn inward and upward, towards the inner vanishing point of νόησις, human knowledge develops from perception.<sup>67</sup> Yet, as we have seen, perception is not an extrinsic relation between the perceiver and a mere external object; nor is it representational. On the microcosmic reading, the progressive integration, coherence and intelligibility emerging in the movement from perception to νόησις is the integration, at a level higher than the physical elements or the formative processes of organic life, of the sensible cosmos into the θεάνθρωπος. As Clark writes, “the universe is itself, in a way, human (...) man, particularly the perfect man, is the τέλος of the world.”<sup>68</sup> But, as already argued, the human being cannot be thought of as perfected in some closed immanence, as already fully human independently of the relation to νόησις.

The exemplary θεάνθρωπος is presented as a purely philosophical and speculative development of certain aspects of Aristotle’s metaphysics, theory of knowledge and philosophical anthropology, in response to problems immanent to Aristotle’s thought. My argument has been that the Aristotelian criteria for substance (active intelligibility and individuation) can only be realised in a single exemplary instance. The claim is not that the human aspect of the θεάνθρωπος lacks some element integral to humanity as such (i.e. that a human νοῦς is replaced by a divine νοῦς). This is because, on my argument, it is not possible, in the context of Aristotle’s thought, to coherently ascribe νοῦς (which is

<sup>66</sup> *Posterior Analytics*, 100a10-100b5.

<sup>67</sup> Νόησις must, of course be implicated in this process. There are no prior, “more cognitive,” states only in the sense that particular human beings are not always already, in some innate but implicit manner, identical with νόησις.

<sup>68</sup> S. R. L. Clark, *Aristotle’s Man: Speculations upon Aristotelian Anthropology*, op. cit., ix.

always divine) to more than one exemplary instance. However, the exemplary instance is neither merely one among others (neither a particular composite), nor merely species form united with νόησις. The exemplary instance cannot be a particular composite, who just happens to be united with the divine νοῦς in a way which is lacking in all other particular human beings. The interpretation of Aristotelian soul as multiply embodied species form implies that substance (individuality and intelligibility) cannot be found at the level of soul at all (either as species form or as particular composite). Soul is one only as an internally differentiated activity of imitation. As the *only* cosmic substance, the θεάνθρωπος would also be the only fully perfected human being (since for Aristotle, human nature is perfected only in relation to νόησις), and would function as a formal and final cause for the internally differentiated activity of imitation that is the multiply embodied human species-form, and through this, for the rest of the cosmos.

The attentive reader will have noticed that my argument leads to a sort of aporia. The logic of Aristotle's account of substance seems to lead to either a theopanism, in which the only true substance is the meta-cosmic νόησις, or to the θεάνθρωπος. However, in the Aristotelian context, the θεάνθρωπος seems to be suspended in an ambiguous space between the species form and the particular composite human being. The θεάνθρωπος cannot, it seems, be fully incarnated, as it were, as a particular human being, but only in the interdependent whole of species-form as multiply embodied, and would function only as final and formal cause, both for humanity and for the cosmos. It is not clear to me that this aporia can be resolved, within the limits of Aristotle's thought. It seems to require a radically different metaphysical and theological context: namely, Christology proper.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Obviously, the problems I have examined here, take a fundamentally different form in the context of a Christian metaphysics, which relates to history in a way Aristotle's metaphysics does not, which speaks of a Trinitarian God, a doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, the fall, resurrection, and so on. Nevertheless, some of the issues I have discussed here are dealt with, in a different context and in a much more sophisticated and nuanced manner, in S. Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, trans. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008). See also, J. D. Wood, *That Creation is Incarnation in Maximus Confessor*, PhD diss. (Boston College, 2018), 17: "If creation itself is divine Incarnation, then we must find a way to understand that and how Maximus's proper Christology really *is* his metaphysics or cosmology. Christ, I mean, must be the paradigm of creation, the perfect microcosm of the world."

# **“COMPLECTITUR OMNEM”: DIVINE AND HUMAN HAPPINESS IN ARISTOTLE AND IN AQUINAS’ SUMMA THEOLOGIAE**

Aquinas concludes his questions on “the unity of the divine essence” with the inclusive perfection which is the divine happiness.<sup>1</sup> Just as “the divine perfection includes every perfection (divina autem perfectio complectitur omnem perfectionem),” so “the divine happiness enfolds all happiness (divina beatitudo complectitur omnem beatitudinem).”<sup>2</sup> The happiness which creatures seek, truly or falsely, and possess, God also has in his own proper way. Aquinas follows Aristotle’s fundamentals on divine and human happiness, as an article earlier in Question 26 of the *Summa theologiae* (Whether God is called happy, because of intellectual actuality?<sup>3</sup>) makes evident.

Combining *Metaphysics* I,1 and XII, 7, *De Anima* III, 5, and *Nicomachean Ethics*, X, 7 and 8, in their most straightforward sense, and as Aquinas understood them, those fundamentals are the following. Happiness belongs to intellect. God’s substance is the perfect actuality of self-thinking thought and, therefore, God is by nature eternally happy. Although the human is not intellectual substance, because it by nature knows and desires to know, it can be perfectly happy and is, in fact, perfectly happy to the degree that its life is the life of divine intellect.

“Complectitur” confronts us, however, with a profoundly important difference between the medieval Latin Christian theologian and his Hellenic master, separated by a millennium and a half of philosophical, theological, and religious change. What belongs to the effect of the divine causation has been separated out from God and is then explicitly drawn back in. The principal source for the logic at work in this movement in Aquinas

<sup>1</sup> For inclusive perfection and its role in structuring Aquinas’ *Summa theologiae*, see my “The Conversion of God in Aquinas’ *Summa theologiae*: Being’s Trinitarian and Incarnational Self Disclosure,” *Dionysius* 35 (2017), 132-170 at 146 and my *God in Himself. Aquinas’ Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae*, Oxford Theological Monographs / Oxford Scholarly Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987/2000), 111-112.

<sup>2</sup> Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, [hereinafter *ST*] I<sup>a</sup> q. 26 a. 4 s. c. Textum Leoninum 1888 editum, *Corpus Thomisticum* online. I use the *Corpus Thomisticum* online texts for Aquinas, except when otherwise indicated.

<sup>3</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 26, prolog.



comes about midway along the journey from Aristotle: Proclean remaining, *exitus, reditus*. This was authoritatively communicated to Aquinas through the *Dionysian Corpus* and the *Liber de causis*, attributed to St Paul's convert and Aristotle respectively, before he read *The Elements of Theology*, translated in 1268. This Neoplatonic structure of all except the One, Aquinas unites with Aristotle as he understands him and profoundly modifies both.<sup>4</sup>

Divine life and its effects in Aristotle is circular self-relation, as Joseph Gerbasi has shown in his treatment of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.<sup>5</sup> Constructing and connecting these within a continuous systematic structure of going out and return, Aquinas radicalizes the self-othering or self-differentiation, so much so that the Trinity and Incarnation are present in principle from the beginning. From the perfect actuality of *esse* structured by and manifest through Neoplatonic conversion, the *Summa theologiae* moves by a series of interconnected spirals which might be figured as ellipses. The resulting differentiation and reinclusion as essential to the difference between Aquinas and "The Philosopher" is the primary subject of this paper.

## I. PLACING THE HUMAN

Currently dominant popular prejudice with its equation of the Middle Ages and the Dark Ages and a vague memory of the Renaissance as a leap back over them to Classical humanism, is unlikely to share Sir Richard Southern's judgement:

Thomas Aquinas died in 1274 and it is probably true that man has never appeared so important a being in so well-ordered and intelligible a universe as in his works. Man was important because he was the link between the created universe and the divine intelligence. He alone in the world of nature could understand nature. He alone could use and perfect nature in accordance with the will of God and thus achieve his full nobility.<sup>6</sup>

In constructing such a humanism Aquinas was required to move away from the Hellenic tendency to break down the difference between the divine and the human, and, in Aristotle, to assimilate the human acme to the divine. I have just published an outline of the problematic with a survey of texts from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, *De Anima* and *Metaphysics*, the *Consolatio philosophiae* of Boethius and Aquinas and shall not rehearse that here.<sup>7</sup> Instead, I give some cruxes in order to set up the particular consideration of this paper.

<sup>4</sup> On how this concord works, see my "The Concord of Aristotle, Proclus, the Liber de Causis & Blessed Dionysius in Thomas Aquinas, Student of Albertus Magnus," *Dionysius* 34 (2016), 137-209.

<sup>5</sup> J. Gerbasi, "The Metaphysical Origin of the Two-fold Conception of Human Selfhood in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*," M.A. Thesis (Department of Classics, Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS, 2014), 36-39, writes: "Since, for Aristotle, a substance in the fullest sense is that which is self-related, imperfect substances are imperfect through being imperfectly self-related. This explains why Aristotle transitions from his introduction of the cosmic, governing actuality to a description of nature as cyclical. (...) A living being is self-related through an other "as though" a self. (...) Aristotle believes that the self-related activity of God descends even to the most simple and basic beings."

<sup>6</sup> R.W. Southern, *Medieval Humanism and other studies* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 50.

<sup>7</sup> See my "Placing the human: Reason as Participation in Divine Intellect for Boethius and Aquinas," *Res philosophica* 93: 4 (October 2018), 1-33.

In the *Metaphysics*, beginning with "all humans by nature desire to know,"<sup>8</sup> Aristotle goes on to describe the highest knowledge, that which will most fully satisfy the human quest. Here, as in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and in the *De Anima*, what best satisfies what by nature we seek is not, by its nature, ours. Properly wisdom, "concerned with the primary causes and principles," rules. "Knowledge of the most knowable and the best," it is "the only free science, since it alone exists for its own sake." Therefore "its possession might justly be supposed to be not human (...) nor is any other form of knowledge more honourable; for what is most divine is most honourable." It "alone must be in two ways most divine: God especially has it, and it is the knowledge of divine things." As the peculiar possession of God and concerned with divine matters, this science is alone most divine.<sup>9</sup>

God's life is described in *Metaphysics*, XII. There the kind of relation of the divine and the human we saw in Book I reappears, with the addition of the religious tradition that the life of the gods is happiness.<sup>10</sup> "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, since its actuality is also pleasure. (...) And thinking in itself deals with that which is best in itself. (...) Active thinking is most pleasant and best." God has always what we have sometimes.<sup>11</sup> Intellectual actuality is divine. Because the intellect is formed by what it knows, when they attain that actuality, humans possess briefly the divine life and happiness.<sup>12</sup>

The difference between the kinds of actuality of the human soul and of divine intellect is worked out in the *De Anima*. Soul as the form of a living body is first actuality. Lower levels of actuality are potentialities for the higher ones; the levels of actuality are distinguished in terms of ways of knowing. The highest, relative to which all the lower ones are defined, is the complete activity of the self-thinking Divine Intellect.<sup>13</sup>

Book III of the *De Anima* brings us to intellect, both human and divine, and to the likeness and difference between them. As in the *Metaphysics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, humans, without simply being intellects, are intellectual, and can attain contemplation. Intellect and soul conform to the hylomorphic structure of being. The difference between form and matter, forms of actuality and potentiality, occurs in soul and mind: "There is one sort of intellect (νοῦς) by becoming all things, and another sort by making them all, as a kind of possession."<sup>14</sup> Agent, or productive, or completely actual and active mind in the highest sense is God:

<sup>8</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, 1 980a1. For the texts of Aristotle I use the Greek of Perseus online, modifying translations as required.

<sup>9</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, 2 982a-983a.

<sup>10</sup> See R. Bodéüs, *The Theology of the Living Immortals*, trans. J. Garrett (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), 22-29.

<sup>11</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, XII, 7 1072b14-b25.

<sup>12</sup> My interpretation owes greatly to A. Kosman, *The Activity of Being: An Essay on Aristotle's Ontology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 211-54, which reworks his "Metaphysics Λ 9: Divine Thought," *Aristotle's Metaphysics Lambda, Symposium Aristotelicum*, ed. M. Frede and D. Charles (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 307-26.

<sup>13</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima*, II, 1 & 2, 412a. I have accessed the Greek text at <http://mikrosapoplous.gr/aristotle/psychs/contents.html> comparing it to the Oxford Classical Texts edition (W.D. Ross, 1956).

<sup>14</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima*, III, 5 430a.

Mind (νοῦς) in this sense is separable, impassible, unmixed, being in its essential nature activity. (...) Actual knowledge is identical with its object: in the individual, potential knowledge is in time prior to actual knowledge, but in the universe as a whole it is not prior even in time. But it is not the case that sometimes it is actually thinking and sometimes it is not. Separated, this alone is just what it is and this alone is immortal and eternal (...) mind in this sense is impassible, [in contrast] mind as passive is destructible, and without it nothing thinks.<sup>15</sup>

Significantly for Aristotle's ambiguity, the two millennia-long scholarly, philosophical, and theological debate is as to whether what is described here is divine or human intellect.

I have adopted the interpretation of Eli Diamond. He differs from Aquinas, who judged that Aristotle was describing human intellect in this passage and attributing immortality to it. In contrast, Dr Diamond writes:

The full active awareness of our thinking apart from the receptive aspect of human mind is identical to the divine thinking activity, with the difference that active human thinking is the activity of some independently underlying potential for that activity, while divine thinking is pure activity completely devoid of any potentiality and without anything underlying it.<sup>16</sup>

Among those, like Gerbasi with Aquinas on the other side, Lloyd Gerson believes that he has shown that:

[W]hat is said about intellect (...) is (...) a crucial continuation of what has hitherto been said about it. No second intellect is being introduced. (...) [It] has little to do with divine intellect and (...) everything to do with Aristotle's analysis of human thinking.<sup>17</sup>

Is this intellect divine? Or is it human? Or is it the divine intellect of the human soul by which it is made immortal? We shall find ourselves in the same dilemma when we try to understand *Nicomachean Ethics*, X, 7. Aquinas, together with the Neoplatonists generally, finds the third of these alternatives to be the right one and he accomplishes this by means of the notion of participation in God as uncreated light.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>16</sup> E. Diamond, *Mortal Imitations of Divine Life* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015), 201.

<sup>17</sup> L.P. Gerson, *Aristotle and Other Platonists* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 152. See my "God's Indwelling: Aquinas' Platonist Systematization of Aristotelian Participation," *Participation in the Divine*, ed. D. Hedley and E. King (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, in press; a draft may be accessed at <https://dal.academia.edu/WayneHankey>).

<sup>18</sup> See W.J. Hankey, "Participatio divini luminis, Aquinas' doctrine of the Agent Intellect: Our Capacity for Contemplation," *Dionysius* 22 (2004), 149-78.

The *Nicomachean Ethics* concerns the good, and, within that inquiry, human happiness.<sup>19</sup> This is the activity in accordance with virtue of what makes us what we are. Thus, defining the human is part of the treatise. This occurs first when it considers the practical, which requires choosing between diverse goods, and prudence, the form of knowing necessary to good choices. The result is the greatest difference between, on the one hand, the divine which moves as final cause, and is neither practical nor productive, and, consequently, does not have the moral virtues, and the human, on the other hand. So midway through the *Ethics* we get the human defined relative to the kinds of reasoning.

The rational (λόγον) part of the soul has two faculties: one contemplating "those things whose principles are invariable, and one those things which vary." The second brings us to choice and the human: "Choice is either desiderative reason (ὀρεκτικὸς νοῦς) or ratiocinative desire (ὄρεξις διανοητική) and such an origin of action is a human being."<sup>20</sup> The human understood in this way has a proper happiness treated in Book X: the happiness of the practical human being is based in moral virtue. Relative to this end, less perfect than the other, reason, as a diminished or qualified form of intellect, defines the human. The other way of defining the human appears with the end which gives the highest happiness.

When, in the last Book of the *Ethics*, the theoretical life, its basis and happiness, are considered, the ambiguities we have been uncovering return. Aristotle concludes his search for human happiness maintaining that if, from a living being, we "eliminate practice, and thus production, only contemplation (θεωρία), as an activity, remains." These are removed from God: "Thus, the activity of God, who is transcendent in blessedness, is the activity of contemplation; and therefore among human activities that which is closest to it will be the happiest."<sup>21</sup>

Just before these arguments, in *Nicomachean Ethics*, X, 7, Aristotle considers in what sense contemplative happiness is for humans:

If happiness is activity in accordance with virtue, it is reasonable that it should be in accordance with the strongest; this will be that of the best thing in us, whether it be intellect (νοῦς) or something else that is this element which is thought to be our natural ruler and guide and to take thought of things noble and divine, whether it be itself also divine (θεῖον) or only the most divine element in us (τὸ θεϊότατον), the activity of this in accordance with its proper virtue will be perfect happiness. That this activity is contemplative (θεωρητική) we have already said.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> I am only considering the *Nicomachean Ethics*, herein after *Ethics*, because it alone was known to Aquinas. I interpret in line with J. Gerbasi, "The Metaphysical Origin," op. cit., 14, with Aristotle "theoretical wisdom remains the end, the systematic aspiration and absolute fulfillment, of practical life. (...) [P]ractical wisdom is contained within theoretical wisdom, i.e. it is known through theoretical wisdom. Paradoxically, then, Aristotle's discovery of a properly human good comes about within an affirmation on the dependence of the human good on its divine, and (...) transcendent, source."

<sup>20</sup> *Ethics*, VI, 2 1139a.

<sup>21</sup> *Ethics*, X, 8 1178b.

<sup>22</sup> *Ethics*, X, 7 1177a.

Is the contemplative life too high for humans? Aristotle teaches that to live the contemplative life requires “something divine” in the human. “By so much as this is superior to our composite nature, its activity is superior to that which is the exercise of the other kind of virtue. If reason is divine, then, in comparison with man, the life according to it is divine in comparison with human life.”<sup>23</sup> Then, however, he asserts the other side – the contemplative life is also human life:

But we must not follow those who advise us, being human, to think of human things, and, being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and do everything we can do to live in accordance with the most powerful in us; for even if it be small in bulk, much more does it in power and worth surpass everything.<sup>24</sup>

Intellect defines the human and therefore life in accord with it brings happiness:

This would seem, too, to be each human himself, since it is the ruling and better part of him. (...) that which is proper to each thing is by nature strongest and most pleasant for each thing; therefore, for the human, this is the life according to intellect (νοῦν), because this is most specifically the human. This life therefore is also the happiest.<sup>25</sup>

Intellect is proper to the divine, but, the composite, where it is diminished and weakened, is understood through the strongest and ruling part. When ruling the individual, it makes the person wise, powerful, commanding, free, and self-sufficiently happy. The identity of activity and object characteristic of intellection requires that in it, the divine and the human are of necessity one. Humans enjoy this actuality periodically rather than always, and come to it from a passive potentiality which is theirs and not God’s. It would be hard to find a greater ambiguity. However, looking back to *Metaphysics* Λ, and passing on to the question of whether the divine self-knowing includes knowledge of what it causes, all which is not itself, the continuing millennia-long division of the commentators maintains this two-sidedness. It returns to the question of the relation of God’s knowledge and happiness to creatures.

At *Metaphysics*, Λ,9, Aristotle investigates questions concerning intellect (νοῦς) considered as “the most divine of things (θειότατον).”<sup>26</sup> It cannot think nothing but if it thinks something then it would depend upon its object: “Therefore intellect thinks itself, since it is the most powerful of things; and its thinking is a thinking of thinking (νόησις νοήσεως νόησις).”<sup>27</sup> This formulation created rather than solved the problem for Aristotle’s successors. The greatest names in scholarship, philosophy, and theology took up opposed positions on whether this self-thinking is a solipsistic narcissism or

<sup>23</sup> *Ethics*, X, 7 1177b.

<sup>24</sup> *Ethics*, X, 7 1177b-1178a.

<sup>25</sup> *Ethics*, X, 7 1178a.

<sup>26</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, XII, 9 1074b15.

<sup>27</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, XII, 9 1074b34-35.

a thinking of all else in God's knowledge of himself as cause.<sup>28</sup> A list hinting at the length, level, and extent of the discussion includes Diogenes of Apollonia, Alexander Aphrodisias, Themistius, Simplicius, Avicenna, Averroes, Aquinas, Hegel, Brentano, Zeller, W.D. Ross, Joseph Owens, Lloyd Gerson, Richard Bodéüs, Remi Brague, Thomas de Koninck, Eli Diamond and Joseph Gerbasi. That it is unresolved is indicated by the fact that, in the authoritative *Aristotle's Metaphysics Lambda, Symposium Aristotelicum*, only Chapter Λ,9, has two commentators, Jacques Brunschwig and Aryeh Kosman, and that they differ fundamentally. Kosman finesses the question by making the thinking which is divine unreflective after the manner of the Platonic good beyond being,<sup>29</sup> and the One of Plotinus.<sup>30</sup> Aquinas, firmly and without concern to establish his position against rival views, takes the third possible position here. In his mature *Sententia libri Metaphysicae*, he wrote:

Since this [the first] is the noblest and most powerful, it must understand itself; and in it intellect and thing understood must be the same. (...) It does not follow, however, that all things other than himself would not be known by him; for by understanding himself he understands all other things (intelligendo se, intelligit omnia alia). (...) The more perfectly a principle is known, the more perfectly is its effect known in it; for things derived from principles are contained in the power of their principle. Therefore, since the heavens and the whole of nature depend on the first principle, which is God, God obviously knows all things by understanding himself (Deus cognoscendo seipsum, omnia cognoscit).<sup>31</sup>

The doctrine Thomas ascribes to Aristotle here is his own.

Thomas' interpretation of Aristotle and his adoption of the doctrine he attributes to The Philosopher are central to this paper. Because God knows creatures in his knowledge of himself (and loves them in his love of himself), he can possess the happiness which they enjoy in his delight in himself. This is not my only interest in Thomas' interpretation of *Metaphysics*, Λ,9 and we may miss the forest for the trees here. Crucial is that, whether or not Aquinas' interpretation (or the Neoplatonic finesse) are right or wrong at least two millennia of reflection by the best minds on Aristotle leaves open the question as to whether his God knows creatures. The opposite is true of Aquinas, because Aquinas' God is by nature self-othering. It is this self-othering deity which enjoys as his own the

<sup>28</sup> For a survey and defense of Aquinas' position see P. Atherton, "The Validity of Thomas' Interpretation of ΝΟΗΣΙΣ ΝΟΗΣΕΩΣ (NOESIS NOESEOS) (*Metaphy.* Λ 9, 1074 b 34-45)," *Atti del Congresso Internazionale Tommaso nel suo settimo centenario*, I (Napoli: Edizioni Domenicane Italiane, 1975), 156-62. A metaphysical argument is detailed in J. Gerbasi, "The Metaphysical Origin," op. cit., 25-41. See also, Th. de Koninck, "Aristotle on God as Thought Thinking Itself," *The Review of Metaphysics* 47 (1994), 471-515.

<sup>29</sup> Plato, *Republic*, VI, 509b (Perseus).

<sup>30</sup> A. Kosman, *The Activity of Being*, op. cit., 215 and 225; id., "Metaphysics Λ 9: Divine Thought," op. cit., 310-11 and 318-19.

<sup>31</sup> Aquinas, *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 12 l. 11 n. 14 – n. 16.

happiness of creatures. His happiness “complectitur” theirs. To that understanding of God and creatures, largely in the *Summa theologiae*, I now turn.<sup>32</sup>

## II. AQUINAS’ “COMPLECTITUR” GOD.

That God is perfect actuality as self-differentiating Being does not emerge as necessary to the first principle in Aristotle, only when the νόησις νοήσεως νόησις is placed within a Neoplatonic emanational hierarchy is this manifest.<sup>33</sup> What most obviously separated Aquinas from Aristotle when building his system is the notion of participation. In the first book of his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle commences his criticism of Plato by an attack on participation, an idea he judges Plato to have taken over from the Pythagoreans. Remarkably, however, in his *Sententia Metaphysicae*, Aquinas does not see here a criticism of the doctrine; for him Aristotle’s critique falls only on the Pythagoreans. In contrast to them, the Platonists taught the doctrine. Certainly Aquinas did. In his magisterial *La Participation dans la philosophie de S. Thomas d’Aquin*, Louis-Bertrand Geiger OP gives evidence that μέθεξις, and its verb μετέχειν, are extremely rare in Aristotle. Indeed, they are not found in the places in Aristotle’s writings we have treated. In contrast, in them, Aquinas speaks of participation. Fr Geiger wrote: “With Aquinas, on the contrary, the terms: *participatio*, *participare*, and their derivatives are found on nearly every page.”<sup>34</sup> Aquinas used *participatio* to reconcile the divinity of intellect with its being the characteristic of the truly human.

### A. AQUINAS ON ARISTOTLE: REASON PARTICIPATES INTELLECT

Aquinas uses the whole – part distinction for dealing with our problem:

What is totally something does not participate in it, but is the same as it essentially. In contrast what is not something totally, because it has something other added to it, is properly said to participate in that thing.<sup>35</sup>

Other notions are employed as well. Borrowed is one of them.

In the first Question of the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas teaches that the philosophical disciplines “treat matters according as they are knowable by the light of natural reason.” One of these is “the theology which is part of philosophy,” e.g. Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* and the *Liber de causis*.<sup>36</sup> For Aquinas, this theology does not comprehend God who is beyond the human because of the inadequacy of its form of knowing with its necessary starting point, the sensible, to the First.<sup>37</sup> When commenting on the introduction to the

<sup>32</sup> The *Summa theologiae* is privileged because, as Aquinas makes clear, in this work form and content are one. This unity is essential to understanding God’s happiness in and through creatures and the corresponding understanding of the happiness of creatures in and through God.

<sup>33</sup> See my “The Conversion...”, op. cit.

<sup>34</sup> L.-B. Geiger OP, *La Participation dans la philosophie de S. Thomas d’Aquin*, 2nd ed., Bibliothèque thomiste 23 (Paris: Vrin, 1953), 9. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I.6 987b10-13; Aquinas, *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 1 l. 10 n. 6.

<sup>35</sup> Aquinas, *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 1 l. 10 n. 4.

<sup>36</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 1 a. 1, arg. 2 & ad 2.

<sup>37</sup> See *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 12; *ST*, I<sup>a</sup>-IIae q. 5 a. 5 draws the consequence for human happiness. On Thomas’ negative theology see my “The Concord,” op. cit., 198-203, Aristotle is reconciled with Dionysius.

*Metaphysics* (I, 2), Aquinas faces the assertion of "certain poets" reported by Aristotle (following Plato) that God would jealously keep for himself the knowledge proper to him. In the first argument of the *Summa*, he gives a Biblical version, taken from Ecclesiasticus, III.22, of the poetic warning, thus translating into Christian form the pagan religious objection which Aristotle confronted in order to begin theology.<sup>38</sup> In his *Sententia Metaphysicae*, Aquinas sides with Aristotle (and Plato) against the poetic and prophetic warning maintaining that, because "every good flows from his goodness as from an unfailling spring, (...) there is no envy of any kind in God." However, the other side of this generosity also emerges in Thomas' answer: the human knowledge of God is not "our own possession but borrowed from Him."<sup>39</sup>

Commenting on Aristotle's assertion in *Ethics*, X, 7, that the contemplative life is divine not human, Aquinas explains:

Since the human being is composed of soul and body, having a sensitive and intellectual nature, the commensurate life would seem to consist in this: the human being directs by reason (secundum rationem) his sensitive and bodily affections and activities. But to engage solely in intellectual activity (operationi intellectus) would seem proper to the superior substances in which only an intellectual nature is to be found; humans participate this by intellect (participat secundum intellectum).<sup>40</sup>

However, "each thing seems most strongly (potissime) to be what is more primarily (principalius) its constituent, since all others are tools of this." In consequence Aquinas returns to Aristotle's ambiguity: the intellectual life "is most proper (propriissime) in respect to the human in so far as this is the most principal thing (principalissimum) in the human. This life is most perfectly found in the superior substances, but imperfectly and by kind of participation (imperfecte et quasi participative) in the human."<sup>41</sup> Simplicity and incorporeality go together in the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition. In the same part of his *Sententia Ethicorum* Aquinas refutes again the poetic warning about divine jealousy, and explains that, by describing intellect as the smallest part of the human, he means it is incorporeal and most simple.

Does this make the soul immortal? Despite following Aristotle on the soul as the form of the human body, as a Christian theologian, Thomas needed to show that humans had an immortal life which survived their corporeal disintegration in death. In his *Sententia libri De anima*, written at the same time as the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas confronts this question. Whether Aristotle taught individual immortality involved the same question as *Nicomachean Ethics*, X: is intellect divine or human? When expositing *De Anima*, III, 5, Aquinas argues that humans are only able to know conceptual realities because this intellect is possessed by us:

<sup>38</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 1 a. 1, arg. 1.

<sup>39</sup> Aquinas, *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 1 l. 3 n. 13.

<sup>40</sup> Aquinas, *Sententia Libri Ethicorum*, ed. Fratrum Praedicatorum, Commissio Leonina: vol. 47, 2 (Rome, 1969), X, 11, 587, l. 83-588, l. 94.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 129-60.



It is an active immaterial capacity able to make other things similar to itself, i.e. to make them immaterial objects of understanding. In this way it renders the potentially intelligible actually so, in the way that light makes colours actual without having in itself all particular colours. Because this active force is a certain participation in the intellectual light from separated substances (*luminis intellectualis a substantiis separatis*), the Philosopher compares it to a ‘state in the way light is’; which would not be an appropriate way of describing it if it were itself a separated substance [like God or the angels].<sup>42</sup>

In fact there are diverse manners of participation in the Divine Wisdom: intellectual substances, humans, beasts:

There are many ways to participate in the same divine perfection: so participation of the divine wisdom (*sapientiae divinae*) has one form in intellectual substances (*intellectualibus substantiis*), another in rational beings, namely humans (*rationalibus, scilicet hominibus*), and it even extends itself to the beasts who have sensible apprehension (*sensitivam cognitionem*).<sup>43</sup>

There are three modes of human participation in the divine light: by nature, by grace, and by glory:

The first mode is inasmuch as humans possess a natural aptitude for understanding and loving God; and this aptitude consists in the very nature of the mind (in *ipsa natura mentis*), which is common to all human beings. Another mode is according as humans actually and habitually know and love God, though imperfectly; and this image consists in the conformity of grace. The image in the third mode, when humans actually know and love God perfectly, consists in the likeness belonging to glory. Wherefore on the words, “The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is stamped upon us,” the gloss distinguishes a threefold image of “creation,” of “re-creation,” and of “likeness.” The first is found in all men, the second only in the just, the third only in the blessed.<sup>44</sup>

To these the modes of human happiness correspond.

As we have seen, the first mode leads only to an imperfect happiness because of our natural incapacity for the knowledge of God. However, Aquinas makes an exception. “Celebrated geniuses” among non-Christian philosophers are led to a real, even if

<sup>42</sup> Aquinas, *Sententia libri De Anima*, ed. Fratrum Praedicatorum, Commissio Leonina: vol. 45, 1 (Rome-Paris, 1984), III, iv, 221, lines 157-65.

<sup>43</sup> Aquinas, *Scriptum Super Sententiarum*, lib. 1, d. 44, q. 1, a. 2, ad 3. Textum Parmae (*Corpus Thomisticum* online).

<sup>44</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 93 a. 4 co.

incomplete and anguished,<sup>45</sup> felicity in the contemplation of God, to which philosophy and the lives of her servants are ordered.<sup>46</sup> Because "it is by their own very nature that humans love God more than themselves, by the love which makes friendship," devoting themselves to contemplation as the "reason of their lives,"<sup>47</sup> philosophers can develop "friendship love" for God. In turn, "God, (...) if he loves the pagan sage, gives sanctifying grace (*gratia gratum faciens*) to him" in order to make this friendship a mutual reality.<sup>48</sup> Note the place here of friendship love. It belongs to God's self-differentiation as creator.

The second mode of knowledge of God and the consequent happiness by grace in the just, appears in at least two outbursts of joy in the *Summa theologiae*. One belongs to the Mission of the Trinity in the *Prima Pars*. Because of its crucial place in the structure I treat it below. The other, rapture, has some of its characteristics. It touches the essence of God in this life.<sup>49</sup> Yet, although rapture is vision of God's essence, it falls short of perfect happiness. In that "the mind of man will be joined to God by a single, continuous, and everlasting operation. But in the present life, insofar as we fall short of the unity and continuity of such an operation, so far do we fall short of perfect happiness."<sup>50</sup> Since rapture must cease, it cannot be perfect happiness.

The third mode of knowledge and happiness by glory in the blessed has the characteristics the second mode lacked. To bring humans to this is the aim of Sacred Doctrine and the *Summa theologiae*; to it I now return.

In this treatment of participation, we have not been able to fully escape Aristotle's ambiguities. Borrowing, participation, partial intellectuality in a composed being, stamping, and imaging, would not seem to make for a strong human possession of effective rationality. If we look at the structure of the *Summa theologiae*, ordered to securing human happiness by participation in a divine happiness which includes ours, the sense of the whole changes.

## **B. SACRED DOCTRINE: GRACE ESTABLISHING REASON'S QUEST FOR HAPPINESS BEYOND ITS POWER**

*Sacra doctrina* is subordinate to, and dependent on, the knowledge and blessedness God possesses, shared with those in beatific union with God.<sup>51</sup> It derives from God's own theology "by the light of divine revelation," as "a certain impression of the divine knowing" on ours.<sup>52</sup> Yet, as rehearsed in the *Summa theologiae*, it is a very large and complete (in plan and scope) work. It covers in the mode of human reason, i.e. scientifically, argumentatively,

<sup>45</sup> A. Oliva OP, "La contemplation des philosophes selon Thomas d'Aquin," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 96 (2012), 585-662, at 638, citing Aquinas, *ScG*, lib. 3 cap. 48 n. 16.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 588, citing Aquinas, *In I Sent.*, prol., a. 1.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 603, citing Aquinas *In III Sent.*, dist. 29, q. 1, a. 3, co.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 613.

<sup>49</sup> *ST*, 2<sup>a</sup>2<sup>ae</sup> q. 175. For rapture see D. Crowell, "Divine and Human Happiness in Aristotle and Aquinas' *Summa theologiae*," M.A. Thesis (Department of Classics, Dalhousie University, Halifax, N.S., 2018), 70 (note 234), 92-93, 119, 134.

<sup>50</sup> *ST*, 1<sup>a</sup>2<sup>ae</sup> q. 3 a. 2 ad. 4.

<sup>51</sup> *ST*, 1<sup>a</sup> q. 1 a. 2.

<sup>52</sup> *ST*, 1<sup>a</sup> q. 1 a. 3.

discursively,<sup>53</sup> the whole of reality: material, spiritual and their composite, as it comes out from the First Principle and returns to that again. It is a real human possession. Indeed its *de homine* (the massive *Secunda Pars*), on what humans make in their rational freedom seeking happiness, was by far the most used, becoming a handbook for confessors.

Sacred Doctrine, in distinction from philosophical theology, is required for the happiness of rational beings because humans are directed to God (*ordinatur ad Deum*) “as to an end which exceeds the comprehension of reason.”<sup>54</sup> Sacred Doctrine gives the revealed truths surpassing the comprehension of reason so that humans, in accord with the rational freedom they possess as the divine image, can direct their desires, intentions, and actions to the supernatural end, which alone makes them perfectly happy. We are again with Aristotle’s paradox, what best satisfies what by nature we seek, and that by which we seek it, is not by its nature ours. However, Aquinas softens the harshness of the clash by the ways grace and nature interact, and by the ways what is ours by participation becomes a possession which cannot be taken back.

The inadequacy of human reason to divine intellect can be improved upon by philosophy, a natural participation in divine light. The *Summa theologiae* depends on the strengthening of the human reason to make it capable of understanding revelation: “this science is able to accept something from the philosophical disciplines (...) because of what is lacking in our intellect.”<sup>55</sup> “In effect, what we know in virtue of the natural exercise of our reason facilitates our access to the supernatural realities.”<sup>56</sup>

Sacred Doctrine describes an outwardly oriented circle which moves from God back to God, via creation, especially the human, and Jesus Christ, who, as human, brings the fallen creature back to its source. The circle participates divine knowing in two ways: in its descent from revelation and in its philosophical rise from creatures by the light of natural reason. The principle by which philosophy is maintained alongside and within what surpasses it is expressed in the formula: “grace does not destroy nature, but completes it (*perficiat*).” Aquinas ultimately derived this from Proclus via Dionysius.<sup>57</sup> Grace is relative to nature and must preserve it. This principle will have stunning results for Aquinas’ treatment of the beatific vision with which we shall conclude.

The two ordering logics meet with the proof for the existence of God in Question 2. The combination of philosophy and Scripture occurs in the article which contains Thomas’ Five Ways for proving the existence of God. First we have the ultimate authority for God’s existence. God speaks: “It is said in Exodus, III by God in person, I am who is.”<sup>58</sup> Then come the philosophical proofs. Thus the way down and the way up, enabling, satisfying, and strengthening reason, are united at, and from, the beginning.

Final cause, the human desire for happiness, justifies the *Summa* as a whole: fulfilling what is natural to reason but which rational human nature cannot realize on its

<sup>53</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 1 a. 2.

<sup>54</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 1 a. 1 co.

<sup>55</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 1 a. 5 ad 2.

<sup>56</sup> R. Imbach and A. Oliva OP, *La philosophie de Thomas d’Aquin* (Paris: Vrin, 2009), 152.

<sup>57</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 1 a. 8 ad 2; see R. Schenk OP, “From Providence to Grace: Thomas Aquinas and the Platonisms of the Mid-thirteenth Century,” *Nova et Vetera* 3:2 (2005), 307-320.

<sup>58</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 2 a. 3 s. c.

own. However, nature cannot be vain. Aquinas writes, when treating the vision of God face to face which is our end: "If the understanding of the rational creature should not be able to reach the first cause of things, its natural desire will remain vain (inane desiderium naturae)," something "alien to faith" and "similarly also against reason."<sup>59</sup> In consequence, right at the start, "the principal aim of Sacred Doctrine" is said to be "to transmit the knowledge of God, not only as He is in Himself, but also as He is the beginning and the end of things and especially of the rational creature (specialiter rationalis creaturae)."<sup>60</sup> Fr Adriano Oliva gives us this sketch of the *Summa theologiae*: "the connection between the Second and the Third Parts appears already. In effect, after having shown in the Second Part the way in which the human, as rational creature, is capable of returning back towards his end, in the Third Part, Thomas shows us how this is possible within our actual human reality, through Christ and the mysteries of his human life, and through the sacraments which he has left us."<sup>61</sup>

The "inclusive perfection" of this system depends on its source in the desire of human as rational for an end beyond its grasp, on the nature of God as self-differentiating conversion, and, in the end, on the hypostatic union, by which we come to God through the humanity of Jesus Christ. Inclusive perfection is the end as return to source, or beginning, but with this difference, the beginning as end includes what is traversed between the source and the end. Thus, God as end, attained in the return, "to God all is converted,"<sup>62</sup> through Christ, "who as human is our way of being drawn into God,"<sup>63</sup> is inclusive perfection vis-à-vis God as remaining, "everything is contained in God."<sup>64</sup> Fr. Oliva writes: "Christ, in that he is human, is the way of our return (*tendendi*) to God, and, in that he is God, he is the goal of this very return."<sup>65</sup> That is, God again, but now known as containing and redeeming, by the life, death, and resurrection of the Son of God and Man, the Fall into alienated existence with its consequences.

At the start of the Second Part, the structuring finalities are taken up again strongly, as Fr Oliva indicates: "The treatise on the human in the First Part ends with the study of man as the image of God (q. 93), a dynamic image in respect to final causality: this image is destined to fulfil itself in face to face vision [with God]." Part Two, reiterating the First Part, reaches out immediately to happiness at its opening.<sup>66</sup> The world of the *Prima* remains in God, because it either is God, or, if it is what God makes, it rests within the Divine Governance. In the *Secunda*, Aquinas substitutes human virtues and vices for that divinely created cosmos. In its place is the vast world the human image of God makes through freedom seeking happiness. Freedom, inherent operative power, and the finality, which is their condition, are laid out. After a prologue "on the image of God," where, like God,

<sup>59</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 12 a. 1 co.

<sup>60</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 2 pr.

<sup>61</sup> A. Oliva OP, "La *Somme de théologie* de saint Thomas d'Aquin: Introduction historique et littéraire," *χώρα* REAM 7-8 (2009-2010), 217-253, at 245.

<sup>62</sup> Aquinas, *In Librum Beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus Expositio*, ed. C. Pera, cap. 13, l. 3. Textum Taurini 1950 editum (*Corpus Thomisticum* online).

<sup>63</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 2 pr.

<sup>64</sup> Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, cap. 13, l. 3.

<sup>65</sup> A. Oliva OP, "La *Somme de théologie*," op. cit., 250.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

the human is “source of its own works, having freedom of choice and power over what it makes,” Aquinas takes up “the ultimate goal of human life,” “complete happiness.”<sup>67</sup>

The paradoxical character of our goal, “something which constitutes the ultimate happiness of humans, but exceeds the human,” is, as Fr. Oliva explains, what: “unites humans to the first cause, God Himself, and, under a certain aspect, unites the human to the whole of creation, because every creature ultimately seeks God.”<sup>68</sup> We must continue to signal that, in spite of this surpassing of human power, the unifying foundation is the natural desire of the rational creature belonging to it as image of God, inherent “source of what it does,” not “compelled by anything other.”<sup>69</sup> The fall, treated in the *Secunda*, does not destroy the operative logic. That fall is a consequence of our pursuit of our good, happiness, a quest which, crucially, also contains the possibility of our return. Thus the Second Part is named by motion: “the motion of the rational creature.”<sup>70</sup> As a creature seeking happiness, it “is converted to its own good” (as Oliva puts it), ultimately God, in the human case, according to reason.

That the salvation treated in the *Summa theologiae* is primarily of the rational creature, and only derivatively of others, comes out again in the place of truth in the *Tertia Pars*. Its prologue says that “after the consideration of the ultimate end of human life and of the virtues and vices,” “for the completion of the whole business of theology,” its consideration of Jesus Christ will be as the way of truth “through which we are able to arrive at the blessedness of immortal life by resurrection.”<sup>71</sup> “Jesus Christ,” as “way of truth for us,”<sup>72</sup> includes and strengthens our character as rational with its proper freedom. Recollect: “The goal must be known in advance to humans, who ought to order their intentions and actions in relation to the goal (*ordinare in finem*).”<sup>73</sup> Free choosing rational beings must cooperate in their becoming happy as purposeful knowers if the happiness is to be properly their own.

### C. ARRIVING AT DIVINE HAPPINESS

The inclusive finality which generates and moves the systematically connected spirals of the *Summa theologiae* appears first in the circular movement from the question On the Simplicity of God to the one On the Unity of God (q. 3 to q. 11).<sup>74</sup> Most radically and foundationally for the whole, it governs the conversion of the divine essence upon itself in the movement of the Trinity from the Father to the Spirit. In the Trinitarian going out and return, the other is the divine essence in relation to itself which is opposed to itself as given and received. The conversion of God upon Himself in this complete self-differentiation is

<sup>67</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup>-II<sup>ae</sup> pr. et q. 1 pr.

<sup>68</sup> A. Oliva OP, “La *Somme de théologie*,” op. cit., 248.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 250, citing Aquinas, *Super Epistolam B. Pauli ad Romanos lectura*, cap. 2 l. 3.

<sup>70</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 2 pr.

<sup>71</sup> *ST*, III<sup>a</sup> pr.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>73</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 1 a. 1 co.

<sup>74</sup> A hint of the importance of the movement from source to final cause is given in the *Quinque Viae* of proving God’s existence. In them, Aquinas, in distinction from Aristotle, places form and matter between the moving and final causes. See W.J. Hankey, *God in Himself. Aquinas’ Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae*, op. cit., 42, 55-56, 139-142. For the result within the Five Ways, see W.J. Hankey, “The Conversion...,” op. cit., 148.

the basis of the *exitus* and *reditus* of creation and redemption.<sup>75</sup> I refer here to some points where the going out to creatures within God is essential for our present consideration of inclusive divine happiness in the *de Deo*.<sup>76</sup>

Q. 4, On Perfection, belongs to the remaining, begun with q. 3, On Simplicity. Its teaching, "the perfections of all things are in God,"<sup>77</sup> is echoed in On the Divine Happiness. God "in one existence possesses all things in advance."<sup>78</sup> "The nature of God, being itself," is not in a genus.<sup>79</sup> God is uniquely "his own being subsisting through itself," can have no proper likeness, and thus, creation is "participation," i.e. "according to a certain analogy."<sup>80</sup> By q. 8, "The Existence of God in things," the *exitus* with the circular motion has reached the extreme where God exists in all things "intimately" and "immediately," "just as every acting cause is present in that in which it acts." God is everywhere and in everything, "giving to them being and power and activity."<sup>81</sup> Thomas comes back to this in On the Divine Missions when he contrasts the happiness conferred by God's gracious indwelling with what belongs to his presence in everything. Q. 11, bringing the circle of names predicated "of the divine substance" back to its beginning in simplicity, is On the Unity of God. Because "one is mutually convertible with being," everything possesses being to the extent that it is also one. This unity is above things, because of God's simplicity; in things, "because of the infinity of the divine perfection"; and of things, because from it comes the unity of the world.<sup>82</sup> Unity is, thus, an inclusive perfection, containing the difference between simplicity as the exclusion of all composition, and the many and varied beings which, implicit in it, came out from it. Unity is the beginning as goal.

Next in the divine self-differentiation comes God's circling upon himself in self-knowing and self-loving. In the questions on the activities, q. 12 to q. 26, we step out of the Proclean-Dionysian circle dominated by the One, into self-reflexive knowing. After the perfect activities which "remain in the one who acts," is q. 25, "On the Power of God," treating the "activity which goes out into an exterior effect."<sup>83</sup> God's happiness, as another inclusive perfection, concludes the "consideration of what belongs to the divine essence."<sup>84</sup>

Aquinas' structure requires thearchy, an articulated hierarchy within God, with an ever widening and strengthening of differentiation.<sup>85</sup> Both knowing and willing in the simple Being require self-relation. "What knows its own essence returns upon itself."<sup>86</sup>

<sup>75</sup> G. Emery OP, *La Trinité Créatrice. Trinité and création dans les commentaires aux Sentences de Thomas d'Aquin et de ses précurseurs Albert le Grand et Bonaventure* (Paris: Vrin, Bibliothèque thomiste XLVII, 1995).

<sup>76</sup> I have treated the principles of this structure again recently in "The Conversion...". Consult it for explanations and citations not given here.

<sup>77</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 4 a. 2 co.

<sup>78</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 4 a. 2 sed contra.

<sup>79</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 4 a. 2 arg. 3, adopting McDermott's reading in Blackfriars *ST*, 2, 1964.

<sup>80</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 4 a. 2 co.

<sup>81</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 8 a. 1 co.

<sup>82</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 11 a. 3 co. See Aquinas, *In De divinis nominibus*, I, ii, § 55, & XIII, ii, § 980 and Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 6 with M. Vanderkwaak, "Matter and the One in Proclus," M.A. Thesis (Department of Classics, Dalhousie University, Halifax, N.S., 2018), 30-31.

<sup>83</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 14 pr.

<sup>84</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 26 pr.

<sup>85</sup> See W.J. Hankey, "The Conversion...", op. cit., 155-58.

<sup>86</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 14 a. 2 ad 1.

Life which requires motion is attributed to “self-sufficient being” because knowing is motionless motion. Knowing is not, however, ecstatic: “it has to do with creatures as they are within God.”<sup>87</sup> In contrast, his will regards creatures as they are “in themselves.”<sup>88</sup> Thus, the procession of things existing in themselves outside God’s essence requires the will of God. With will, God is moved by himself as if by an other: “When the principal object of the will is a good outside the will, the will must be moved by another.”<sup>89</sup>

Different modes within the divine correspond to and cause the differences between creatures. Aquinas distinguishes God’s “knowledge of vision” (of what actually is) from “knowledge of simple intelligence” (of what could be but never is),<sup>90</sup> and the love which creates irrational creatures, the “love of desire” (quasi concupiscible), from the “friendship love,” creating rational creatures with whom God can enter into friendship.<sup>91</sup> That rational creatures require a different form of creative love points us backwards, to the human “natural desire” which moves the *Summa*, and forwards, to the culminating conclusion of Aquinas’ treatment of the *de Deo*, the invisible missions of the Trinity. There sanctifying grace consummates the divine-human friendship when humans love God by God’s own subsistent love.

The “many Ideas”<sup>92</sup> also bring multiplicity to the divine knowing. This plurality in God is allowed because “the relation, by which the ideas are multiplied, is not caused by the things [outside God] but by the divine intellect comparing its own essence [which is the cause of things] to the things [it makes].”<sup>93</sup> This comparing within God advances with God as truth. As judgment, it requires reflective comparing: “truth is defined as the conformity of knowing to what it knows.”<sup>94</sup> As truth, the divine intellect circles around itself to compare what goes out from it to itself. The enjoyment of the result is part of the felicity of the divine beatitude.<sup>95</sup>

Thus we come back to the beginning of this paper – inclusive divine happiness (“complectitur omnem”). Its consideration returns us simultaneously to the first positive name of God’s simple substance and to knowing, the beginning of the operations: Beatitude is “the perfect good of an intellectual nature.”<sup>96</sup> Further Aquinas joins God’s beatitude to the origin of the *Summa* in the natural desire of reason: “To God we must attribute blessedness on account of intellect, and also to all the blessed who are called ‘blessed’ by assimilation to his happiness.”<sup>97</sup>

Specifically, happiness is presented as an intellectual activity containing will and power (...). Happiness knows the good it possesses – or, put otherwise, it

<sup>87</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 14 a. 15.

<sup>88</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 14 a. 15 ad 1 & *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 19 a. 3, ad 6.

<sup>89</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 19 a. 1 ad 3. Gilby’s reading in Blackfriars *ST*, 5, 1966.

<sup>90</sup> See *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 14 a. 9 co.

<sup>91</sup> See *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 20 a. 2 ad 3.

<sup>92</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 15 a. 2 co.

<sup>93</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 15 a. 2 ad 3.

<sup>94</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 16 a. 2 co.

<sup>95</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 26 a. 4 co.

<sup>96</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 26 a. 1 co.

<sup>97</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 26 a. 2 co.

is by knowledge that will enjoys its self-possession as its own end or good. Further, the intellectual nature, which is happy, is, as will, the source of good or evil, and has power over its acts. Intellect is the origin of will and power (...) and they are also thus the perfections of intellect (...). Beatitude is intellect knowing and enjoying its will and power.<sup>98</sup>

Comparably to unity, as the inclusive conclusion of the circle constructed by the names of the divine substance, happiness draws "everything that is desirable, whether true or false" into the divine perfection. "From contemplative felicity, God keeps the perpetual and unending contemplation of himself and everything else, and, from the contrasting felicity of practical life, he retains that which belongs to the government of the whole universe." As to "earthly happiness," "from delight, he keeps joy in himself and everything else; instead of wealth, he has the self-sufficiency of every kind which riches promise; for power, he has omnipotence; for dignity, every rule; for fame, the wonder of the whole creation."<sup>99</sup> The ground of creation in divinity has been laid both implicitly in the gradual self-differentiation of God and explicitly in its content. Here, what has been distinguished is drawn back in: "complectitur omnem." This mode of exposition will continue.

The treatise on the Trinity immediately follows the divine happiness. The radical divine self-diremption, the infinite essence opposed as given and received, leads to creation, whose ground is the coming forth of the persons. As at the beginning of the *Summa*, we have what is common to the divine *esse*, but now it is known to be acting according to its Trinitarian nature by knowledge and love: "To create is not proper to any Person, but is common to the whole Trinity. Nevertheless the divine Persons, according to the structure of their procession, have causality in respect to the creation of things."<sup>100</sup> Crucially, however, before the emanation of creatures, in the treatment of the divine mission, placed at the end of the treatise *de Trinitate* (q. 27-q.42), we return to happiness. This time humans possess God's.

#### **D. THE HUMAN PARTICIPATIONS IN DIVINE HAPPINESS**

With the gift of God Himself by way of the grace of the Holy Spirit, we have arrived at one mode of the destination Sacred Doctrine seeks: our direct participation in God's own knowing and loving. Like rapture, treated in the *Secunda Pars*, the union of the divine and the human in time, treated here, anticipates the perfect happiness of contemplation of God in glory after this present life. Both the temporal and eternal ends exceed the comprehension of reason.<sup>101</sup> Nonetheless, the reasoning creature arrives at his end beyond nature in accord with his rational nature. This essential principle appears here because the divine human fulfilling activities are those of intellect and will:

God is said to be as the known in the knower and the beloved in the lover.  
And because, by these acts of knowing and loving, the rational creature by

<sup>98</sup> W.J. Hankey, *God in Himself. Aquinas' Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae*, op. cit., 112.

<sup>99</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 26 a. 4 co.

<sup>100</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 45 a. 6 co.

<sup>101</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 1 a. 1 co.



its own activity touches God Himself, according to this special mode, God is not only said to be in the rational creature, but to dwell in him as in his own Temple.<sup>102</sup>

This question on the Sending of the Divine Persons gathers in what precedes. Besides reminding us of reason's quest for what exceeds its grasp, it takes us back first to the "common mode" of participation: God in all things immediately and intimately. Then, it recalls the friendship love which creates the rational creature who is also fulfilled by it. By this new mode of the presence of God, in which humans touch God and He inhabits them as his temple, they "possess" the "power of enjoying a divine Person": "It is the Holy Spirit who is possessed and who inhabits humans. Also it is the Holy Spirit itself which is given and sent."<sup>103</sup> Fr Camille de Belloy OP writes of the soul to whom this gift comes:

without leaving its temporal and created condition, [it] receives by grace the Son and Holy Spirit according to the immanent mode in which these persons eternally proceed, one as Word, the other as Love within the uncreated Trinity, and by which each of them does not cease, in a movement without change, to return to the Father, but also to bring back there, in time and as its final end, the rational creature whom they have chosen for a dwelling place.<sup>104</sup>

This happiness is experienced in this life. Aquinas wrote: "this knowing and perception of the divine Person in this gift which is appropriated to Him and by which He accomplishes a true joining to God according to the mode proper to the Person sent is a knowing of an experiential kind (*cognitio ista est quasi experimentalis*)."<sup>105</sup>

### III. THE "COMPLECTITUR" GOD PRESERVES HUMAN NATURE IN ITS CONSUMMATION

Reason would be annihilated by being joined to the infinite divine knowing as its object. To enable the happiness of glory God adds the light of glory to the human intellect's natural powers making it capable of the divine vision.<sup>106</sup> The human mind is such that it can be strengthened for the vision of God so that, by this gracious elevation, the integrity of human nature is preserved in a human happiness. Aquinas explains this by "connecting our final state to the form of knowing peculiar to us, that by abstraction."<sup>107</sup> Because our intellect

<sup>102</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 43 a. 3 co.

<sup>103</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 43 a. 3 co.

<sup>104</sup> C. de Belloy OP, *Dieu comme soi-même. Connaissance de soi et connaissance de dieu selon Thomas d'Aquin: l'herméneutique d'Ambroise Gardeil*. (Paris: Vrin, Bibliothèque thomiste LXIII, 2014), 13.

<sup>105</sup> Aquinas, *Super Sent.*, lib. 1 d. 14 q. 2 a. 2 ad 3: "quasi experimentalis." See C. de Belloy OP, *La visite de Dieu: Essai sur les missions des personnes divines selon saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Genève: Ad Solem, 2006), 74-79.

<sup>106</sup> *ST*, I<sup>a</sup> q. 12 a. 5.

<sup>107</sup> W.J. Hankey, *Participatio...*, op. cit., 29.

is, to some extent, elevated above matter according to its nature, it is able to be elevated above its own nature through grace to something higher (...).Therefore, since the created intellect through its own innate nature can apprehend concrete form and the concrete act of being in abstraction, by way of a certain resolution, is able through grace to be elevated so that it knows subsisting separate substance and subsisting separate being.<sup>108</sup>

As I put it elsewhere:

the knowledge of God given by the light of glory far beyond our natural limits adapts itself to the way humans naturally participate in God's uncreated light so that the ladder of the *Lex divinitatis* is not broken. Every difference is maintained, and every extreme is mediated. We shall be made "deiformis," by means of the light of glory without ceasing to be human.<sup>109</sup>

Explicitly and definitely Aquinas founds the creature both in and from the thearchy. What is preserved can be included. So the divine happiness "complectitur omnem" and the human happiness is vision of the very essence of God in which all is contained.

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<sup>108</sup> *ST*, 1 q. 12 a. 4 ad 3.

<sup>109</sup> W.J. Hankey, *Participatio...*, op. cit., 29-30.

# ARE BRENTANO'S *HABILITATIONSTHESEN* ARISTOTELIAN? TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY

## INTRODUCTION

This paper is meant to be a commentary on Franz Brentano's 25 *Habilitationsthesen*<sup>1</sup> that, along with *The Psychology of Aristotle*, make Brentano's "habilitation project." Liliana Albertazzi<sup>2</sup> claims that Brentano obtained his habilitation on July 15<sup>th</sup>, 1866, in Würzburg, after he had defended the theses in question. July 15<sup>th</sup> was the day of his *Probevertrag* and the session of university senate. Open defence of the theses in Latin took place on July 14<sup>th</sup>.<sup>3</sup> Rolf George and Glen Koehn, in *Brentano's relation to Aristotle*,<sup>4</sup> state that Brentano had submitted his *Habilitationschrift: Die Psychologie des Aristoteles, insbesondere seine Lehre vom nous poietikos* (for some reason the English translation omits the second – and crucial – part of the title<sup>5</sup>) already in 1865. Wolfgang Huemer, on the other hand, dates this book to 1867<sup>6</sup> (and so does George in the foreword to the English translation of the work). This discrepancy may follow from the fact that George and Koehn give the date of submission and Huemer (and George) – of publication. What is interesting, is the fact that the book most probably had been ready before the theses were defended and thus naming it their follow-up (which is very common) can be called into question. Brentano's *Preface*

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<sup>1</sup> F. Brentano, *Über die Zukunft der Philosophie nebst den Vorträgen: Über die Gründe der Entmutigung auf philosophischem Gebiet, Über Schellings System sowie den 25 Habilitationsthesen*, ed. O. Kraus (Hamburg: Verlag von Felix Meiner, 1968). All further in-text references refer to this edition.

<sup>2</sup> L. Albertazzi, *Immanent Realism. An introduction to Brentano* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006). All further in-text references refer to this edition.

<sup>3</sup> See C. Stumpf, "Erinnerungen an Franz Brentano," in O. Kraus (ed.), *Franz Brentano. Zur Kenntniss seines Lebens und seiner Lehre. Mit Beiträgen von Carl Stumpf und Edmund Husserl* (Munich: O. Beck, 1919), 87-149. All further in-text references refer to this edition.

<sup>4</sup> R. George, G. Koehn, "Brentano's relation to Aristotle," in D. Jacquette (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Brentano* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 20-44. All further in-text references refer to this edition.

<sup>5</sup> The full title is even longer: *Die Psychologie des Aristoteles, insbesondere seine Lehre vom Nous Poietikos. Nebst einer Beilage über das Wirken des aristotelischen Gottes*.

<sup>6</sup> W. Huemer, "Franz Brentano," available at: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/brentano/>, accessed November 30, 2018.

is dated July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1866 – the exact day of his defence. So, it is reasonable to claim that he had worked on the theses and the book simultaneously. Both Albertazzi and George/Koehn<sup>7</sup> claim that habilitation was a *sine qua non* of conducting classes at the university and I find this crucial, since teaching was Brentano's great mission.<sup>8</sup>

As to Brentano's habilitation Wilhelm Baumgartner says:<sup>9</sup> "First, [Franz] Hoffmann, a scholar of Schelling's and Baader's philosophy, had supervised Brentano's habilitation and had suggested that Brentano should deliver his habilitation lecture<sup>10</sup> on Schelling's philosophy. Brentano did so, but in a rather critical attitude towards Schelling." Elsewhere Baumgartner says:

When the young Brentano began his philosophical career in Würzburg, he pronounced in his famous fourth habilitation thesis that "the true philosophical method is the same as the method of natural science." The following habilitation lecture, "On Schelling's philosophy," made quite clear what he meant with the thesis, *ex negativo* and *ex positivo*. Schelling, Brentano emphasizes, is to be criticized for "intending what is impossible." Schelling had attacked Hegel for the same reason, and he was right to do so, but the same held for Schelling himself. His tragedy was that "his great artistic genius was like giants in their endeavor to reach heaven by heaping mountains on mountains." Schelling's philosophy of history tried "to grasp individual historical facts from the perspective of the whole as their end." Unfortunately, he was unable to show the whole. After this critique, Brentano laid down his positive program for the "renewal of philosophy as science." The main points are to conduct a sober empirically based investigation of details; to be modest and patient in the attempt to solve problems; to develop a "philosophy of facts" rather than following "trembling heroes" or engaging in "Schelling's speculative fantasy"; and to apply a strict scientific method and "to ask questions in the appropriate way." Brentano tried very hard indeed to perform these scientific tasks. In doing so, he continued the scientific tradition developed in the post-Schelling decade at the University of Würzburg, finding a paradigm in the medical faculty.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> R. George, G. Koehn, "Brentano's relation to Aristotle," op. cit., 25: "In 1865 Brentano submitted his 'Psychology of Aristotle' to the University of Würzburg as Habilitationsschrift, a requirement for the right to give lectures."

<sup>8</sup> For more on the so-called school of Brentano see: B. Smith, *Austrian Philosophy. The Legacy of Franz Brentano* (Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company Chicago and LaSalle, 1994).

<sup>9</sup> W. Baumgartner, *The young Carl Stumpf. His spiritual, intellectual, and professional Development*, in *Philosophy from an empirical standpoint. Essays on Carl Stumpf*, eds. D. Fissette and R. Martinelli (Amsterdam: Brill / Rodopi, 2015), 71.

<sup>10</sup> *Über die Hauptentwicklungsstufen der Philosophie Schellings und den wissenschaftlichen Wert der letzten Phase ihrer Gestaltung* (see C. Stumpf, "Erinnerungen an Franz Brentano", op. cit.). Kraus speaks of a written assignment: *Darstellung und Kritik der Lehre Schellings in den drei Stadien* (O. Kraus, "Anmerkungen des Herausgebers," in F. Brentano, *Über die Zukunft der Philosophie*, op. cit., 143-183).

<sup>11</sup> W. Baumgartner, "Franz Brentano: the foundation of value theory and ethics," in J.J. Drummond and L. Embree (eds.), *Phenomenological Approaches to Moral Philosophy. A Handbook* (Dordrecht / Boston / London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002), 124.

These rather lengthy quotations are important for at least three reasons: they show where Brentano's well-known aversion towards German idealism may have come from, they shed light on the origin of the fourth – most famous – habilitation thesis, and finally – they are the proof that according to Brentano Aristotelianism was always the best remedy for idealism.

### **OUTLINE, LIFE AND WORK, ARISTOTELICA**

I wish to present the habilitation theses in light of a bigger whole, i.e. the entire habilitation project. For Brentano, psychology was always the crown achievement of a science, it doesn't matter if his own science (descriptive psychology) or someone else's, in this case – Aristotle's. Νοῦς ποιητικός is for Brentano the noblest element of human psychology and a tool / platform to contact the Deity. This is why I believe that thesis 15 (*Nous poietikos Aristotelis non cognoscens sed efficiens vis est*) is the most important one. In fact, the whole *Habilitationsschrift* can be understood as its explanation. Nevertheless, it is the fourth thesis (*Vera philosophiae methodus nulla alia nisi scientiae naturalis est*) that is the most famous and many have referred<sup>12</sup> and are referring to it as a Brentanian trademark, alongside his most famous book *Psychology from an empirical standpoint (PES)*. Thesis 4, no doubt, is reflected in *PES*, but not in *Aristotelica* where Brentano's Thomism comes to the fore.

Oskar Kraus, in the publisher's afterword<sup>13</sup> says:

Shortly after his habilitation, *The Psychology of Aristotle* was published – a sovereign mastery of the material by means of memory, that enables him to establish relationships even between the remote parts of Aristotle's works, the clarity of presentation, the astuteness, that not only sheds light on what is obscure, but also fills in what is lost, guesses what is not said, is shown in a really impressive way. From there, it is obvious that also the theses bear an Aristotelian mark.<sup>14</sup>

Naturally, all of the following theses have something to do with Aristotle, directly or indirectly. Some are strongly and visibly rooted in him, some are inspired by him, some are only loose references to Brentano's master helping him criticize other views. This is typical of all Brentano's works: a constant reference to the Stagirite. Although, to thoroughly discuss each of these theses in light of Brentano's Aristotelian works would be valuable, it would also be in a sense chronicle-like. I have thus decided to take a more promising road, I believe. I will concentrate on Aristotle's psychology (for the reason given above), or – in Brentano's words – *Seelenlehre*, and choose the theses that have it as their subject. I will be abundantly referring to the series *Aristotelica* (see below) to achieve my goal.

I will concentrate on the following theses: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15. As to the theses: 5, 8, 9, 10, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25, I will briefly comment them

<sup>12</sup> The Austrian philosophers, the Lvov-Warsaw School, or even phenomenologists, e.g. Richard von Mises (as the motto to his *Kleines Lehrbuch des Positivismus*, The Hague: Van Stockum & Zoon, 1939) or Roman Ingarden (*Z badań nad filozofią współczesną*, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1963, p. 201)

<sup>13</sup> Trans. S. Kamińska here and below.

<sup>14</sup> O. Kraus, "Anmerkungen des Herausgebers," op. cit., 166.

and refer the reader to a place in “Brentotle” (somewhere either in Aristotle or Brentano), where one can hope for their explanation or follow-up.

For the purpose of my argument, I believe it would make sense to provisionally include *Habilitationsthesen* 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 15 into the *Aristotelica* series, because they strongly correspond with *The Psychology of Aristotle* belonging therein. The series in question consists of: *Von der mannigfachen Bedeutung des Seienden nach Aristoteles* (1862),<sup>15</sup> the already mentioned *Die Psychologie des Aristoteles, insbesondere seine Lehre vom nous poietikos* (1867),<sup>16</sup> *Über den Creatianismus des Aristoteles* (1882), *Aristoteles Lehre vom Ursprung des menschlichen Geistes* (1911) – a reprint of the essay on creationism, *Aristoteles und seine Weltanschauung* (1911),<sup>17</sup> and finally the so called *Nachlass – Über Aristoteles* (1986). And we have not seen the last of Brentano in these works as there is still a large number of manuscripts waiting to be edited.<sup>18</sup> Reportedly, in 1903 Brentano was hoping to prepare a collective edition of his Aristotelian works, but due to his loss of vision and past operations he lost his enthusiasm and gave up on the project.<sup>19</sup>

Brentano loved challenges. This is why, when he was only 24 years old, he decided to take on the subject of Aristotle’s ontology and the ambiguity of the notion of being in his Ph.D. – *Von der mannigfachen Bedeutung des Seienden nach Aristoteles*. This book is by far the most famous representative of *Aristotelica* (written under Franz Jakob Clemens and dedicated to Friedrich Adolph Trendelenburg). Another work, *The Psychology of Aristotle* is the only book written while Brentano was a Catholic priest (he had taken the holy orders in 1864, but despite that he continued his work at the University in Würzburg). It is a fascinating and exhausting, both historically and hermeneutically, analysis of the concept of νοῦς ποιητικός, i.e. the active intellect, which finds its culmination in the book *Aristotle and his World View*. Brentano claims that thanks to νοῦς ποιητικός we become “truly thinking subjects,” which is a necessary and sufficient condition to establish a relationship with the Deity (for Brentano: theistic God; an obvious Thomistic inspiration). Strong religious accents are present in both works. Taken both together and apart, these books are an expression of a firmly established worldview. In both we can find something that we already know from Thomas Aquinas, namely a method of agreeing philosophical discourse with the theological one, often at the expense of the first one (this is why theses 3 and 4 will come as a surprise). The years 1864-1873 are the time of priesthood in Brentano’s life, the time interrupted by Brentano’s conflict with the Church about the dogma of papal infallibility (Vatican Council I, 1869-70). Although Brentano had been against it, his final break up with the church took place sometime later, in 1879. In 1880 Brentano had to give up his professorship awarded in 1874 in Vienna (1874 is also the year of his most famous work, namely *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*). This happened because he had

<sup>15</sup> F. Brentano, *On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle*, trans. R. George (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975). All further in-text references refer to this edition.

<sup>16</sup> F. Brentano, *The Psychology of Aristotle*, trans. R. George (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977). All further in-text references refer to this edition.

<sup>17</sup> F. Brentano, *Aristotle and his World View*, trans. R. George and R.M. Chisholm (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978). All further in-text references refer to this edition.

<sup>18</sup> The most famous editors of Brentano’s posthumous work were Alfred Kastil, Oskar Kraus and Franziska Mayer-Hillebrand.

<sup>19</sup> For more on this issue see: L. Albertazzi, “A Life, a Novel,” op. cit., 5-42.

gotten married which was forbidden even for the former priests. After he had decided to get married Austrian authorities did not allow this matrimony due to earlier priesthood of the suppliant. This is why Brentano had given up Austrian citizenship and took the Saxon one. Finally, he married Ida Lieben, a friend's sister who hailed from the family of bankers, in Leipzig in 1880. Around that time *Über den Creatianismus des Aristoteles* was published, an essay being a manifesto of a theist and creationist, features very alien to Aristotle. This essay was reprinted in 1911 with minor changes and additions as *Aristoteles Lehre vom Ursprung des menschlichen Geistes*. Brentano and his wife Ida had a son Johann Christian Michael, diminutively called Giovanni (born 1888). Until 1895 he lived in Vienna where he worked as *Privatdozent*. Edmund Husserl, in his memoirs<sup>20</sup> often stresses how unhappy Brentano was because of living at the margin of academic life. In 1897, three years after Ida Brentano's death, Brentano remarried: his second wife was Emilie Rueprecht. In that time, he had been living for two years in Florence, where he stayed until 1915. After Italy had joined world war one he left for Zurich where he stayed until his death in 1917.

After this brief synopsis of Brentano's life and work let us move to the theses and see what they are hiding. I will be presenting and immediately commenting each thesis.

Let me just quote Oskar Kraus before I start: "If one wants to acknowledge these theses fairly, one has to bear in mind, that the philosopher was only 28 and that he had not yet overcome his church affiliation."<sup>21</sup>

## THESES AND COMMENTARY

*1) Philosophy must protest against the division of sciences into speculative and exact ones, and the justification for the protest is the right of its existence itself.  
Philosophia neget oportet, scientias in speculativas et exactas dividi posse; quod si non recte negaretur, esse eam ipsam jus non esset.*

In his commentary to the theses, Oskar Kraus says: "Philosophy is a science and as such it must protest against being counted among speculation as opposed to exact science."<sup>22</sup>

Kraus goes a step further than Brentano: not only does philosophy have to protest against the division of sciences as such (Brentano's claim). It has to protest against being unjustly numbered among speculative sciences.

Edmund Husserl, in the abovementioned memoirs says, that Brentano was thinking of himself as a creator of a new *philosophia perennis*. I shall continue in this vein while commenting on the fourth thesis.

Let me just add one more observation here. Ironically, after Brentano had lost his professorship, the Vienna Circle appeared on the stage and Moritz Schlick took the chair that could have belonged to Brentano. The Vienna Circle famously included metaphysics into... poetry.

<sup>20</sup> E. Husserl, "Erinnerungen an Franz Brentano," in O. Kraus, *Franz Brentano. Zur Kenntniss seines Lebens und seiner Lehre. Mit Beiträgen von Carl Stumpf und Edmund Husserl*, op. cit., 153-167.

<sup>21</sup> O. Kraus, "Anmerkungen des Herausgebers," op. cit., 165.

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem.

2) *Philosophy must protest against the unreasonable imposition to infer its principles from theology, and the assumption that only through the existence of a supernatural revelation fruitful philosophizing is possible.*

*Philosophia et eos, qui eam principia sua a Theologia sumere volunt, et eos rejicere debet, qui, nisi sit supernaturalis revelatio, eam omnem opera perdere contendunt.*

Yet, another thesis urging philosophy to protest. Young Brentano looks like a genuine rebel here. I am however afraid that the protest will prove apparent in light of thesis 3.

This thesis is in the spirit of Christian Aristotelianism. It reflects Thomistic division between knowledge and faith, philosophy and theology, *revelabile* and *revelatum*. Funnily enough, Brentano often denied his Thomistic descent, whereas in fact there is a lot of evidence in *Aristotelica* that his interpretation of the Stagirite was indeed a Thomistic one. In the foreword to the abovementioned essay on creationism from 1882 reprinted in 1911 he tried to assure the readers that he was not – or not only – a descendant of Doctor Angelicus. About consulting Aquinas who did not know Greek and used the translations by William of Moerbeke he said: “[it] seemed so paradoxical to most [Aristotle scholars], that they (...) formed the suspicion, suggested by my position in the Catholic Church, that (...) I had introduced Thomistic doctrine into Aristotle, and that I was less interested in explaining Aristotle than in adding more glory to the reputation of the Doctor Angelicus.”<sup>23</sup> Here, Brentano is no doubt shaking off his Thomistic coat, which he was happily wearing on many other occasions. He is also thankful to his teacher Friedrich Trendelenburg and his life-long opponent Eduard Zeller<sup>24</sup> for seeing in him an independent thinker and Aristotelian in his own right.

It is said that also the *PES* of 1874<sup>25</sup> was meant to serve as a fig leaf for Brentano's Thomism and present him as a modern scientist and thus enable his Viennese professorship.<sup>26</sup>

There are two strong currents in Brentano's philosophy of mind, shaped by his two main interests: one Aristotelian and one genuinely Brentanian. By Aristotelian I do not mean the Aristotelian influences we find in the published<sup>27</sup> parts of *PES* (e.g. the conviction reflected in the fourth thesis that science should rely on experience), but the contents of *Aristotelica* series. In each case Brentano understands the soul differently. In *Aristotelica* – as a substratum, a substance accompanied by manifold attributes (mental phenomena). In *PES* he eliminates the substratum, which sets him alongside adherents of the so-called

<sup>23</sup> *Aristoteles Lehre vom Ursprung des menschlichen Geistes* has not been translated into English. I quote after R. George and G. Koehn, “Brentano's Relation to Aristotle,” op. cit., 37.

<sup>24</sup> *Aristoteles Lehre vom Ursprung des menschlichen Geistes* is a polemic with Zeller.

<sup>25</sup> I am adding “of 1874” because Brentano did not publish the whole book then. For more about the published parts and the manuscripts for the unpublished ones see: R.D. Rollinger “Brentano's ‘Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint’: its Background and Conception” in I. Tănăsescu (ed.), *Franz Brentano's Metaphysics and Psychology. Upon the Sesquicentennial of Franz Brentano's Dissertation*; S. Kamińska, “Two Views on Intentionality, Immortality, and the Self in Brentano's Philosophy of Mind,” *Polish Journal of Philosophy* VIII: 2 (2014), 25-42.

<sup>26</sup> In March of 1873 Brentano resigned from his Würzburg professorship because it was formally connected with his priesthood. In 1874 he was awarded a professorship in Vienna. It is said that it was required that he seemed to be a modern scholar, not a descendant of scholasticism. Hence – the undertone of the published parts of *PES*. For more about the circumstances of publishing *PES* and the manuscripts for the unpublished parts see: R.D. Rollinger, “Brentano's ‘Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint’: its Background and Conception,” op. cit.

<sup>27</sup> The unpublished ones are more in the spirit of *Aristotelica*.



bundle theory of the soul (e.g. D. Hume, F.A. Lange, W. Wundt, and G.T. Fechner). In the first case, there is *sui generis* “being in the head.” In the second one – the famous “psychology without a soul” (a chain of psychic acts, phenomena without an underlying substratum). I believe that the content of *PES* is in many respects closer to what Aristotle claims in *De Anima* than the contents of *Aristotelica* are.<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, although Brentano wanted to be regarded as an Aristotelian, his vision of God (a person and a creator) was entirely different from the one we find in the Stagirite (disinterested νοήσεως νόησις). Thus, the science of God (theology) means something different in both cases.

Theses 1 and 2 can be commented together as they are strongly intertwined. In fact, the first three theses seem a prelude to the fourth one.

This courageous, almost bold, attitude that Brentano is taking here (in 1 and 2) weakens significantly in the third thesis.

*3) Nevertheless, it is true that the theologically established truths are suitable to serve as guidelines for philosophical research.*

*Nihilominus verum est, sententias Theologia probatas eas esse, quae philosophis quasi stellae rectrices sint.*

Let me start by quoting Oskar Kraus: “His theological convictions, his still held belief, force him towards this one concession: theologically established truths are suited to serve as ‘guidelines’ for philosophical research. However, in order to protect this concession from an incorrect interpretation, he adds: ‘The true method of philosophy is no other than the one of natural sciences.’”<sup>29</sup>

At first glance, this seems hard to reconcile. Does Brentano claim that science could be observing theological guidelines and remain science? Is this a contradiction or maybe another Thomistic trait, namely that there is no disagreement between philosophy and theology, no double truth, and that revelation, although different from natural knowledge, supplements it in ways unachievable for reason?

Susan F. Krantz in her edition of *On the existence of God* quotes Brentano’s letter to his agnostic friend (1909). This letter concerns Brentano leaving the Catholic Church: “What is religion but a substitute for a philosophy which traces the world back to its ultimate, divine cause and makes clear the purposes of its order?”<sup>30</sup> Krantz continues in this vein:

That this philosophy which traces the world back to its ultimate, divine cause should be rigorously scientific was of utmost importance to Brentano. One might even go so far as to say that the one and only fault he could not abide in Catholicism (and in Christianity generally, though he considered it the best of religions) was that it was not rigorously scientific in his sense

<sup>28</sup> For more on this issue see: S. Kamińska, “Two Views on Intentionality, Immortality, and the Self in Brentano’s Philosophy of Mind,” op. cit.

<sup>29</sup> O. Kraus, “Anmerkungen des Herausgebers,” op. cit., 166.

<sup>30</sup> F. Brentano, *On the existence of God: Lectures given at the Universities of Würzburg and Vienna, 1868-1891*, ed. S. F. Krantz (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1987), 4.

of science; some of its propositions did not yield to his analytic scrutiny. And yet something of the spirit developed in his youth and in his years as a priest was needed in order to pursue that rigorously scientific philosophy right back to the ultimate, divine cause.<sup>31</sup>

In the abovementioned letter Brentano writes that his worldview is theistic, because only such vision guarantees the certainty of cognition. Brentano agreed with Francis Bacon, that half of knowledge leads one away from God, but the whole of it leads one back to him again. He claimed that theism can give us encyclopedic knowledge about the world, but it does not provide philosophical explanation of its nature. A somehow funny consequence of such a statement is that despite it all Brentano believed theism to be a *sine qua non* of a philosophical description of the world.

I believe it is now obvious that religion and philosophy were inseparable for Brentano. And in fact, he did not worry about religion influencing philosophy (although he called that unreasonable in the previous thesis). He was just anxious that his favorite religion could be imperfect in some respects. And this is problematic in light of thesis 2.

Let me quote Carl Stumpf: "Together with philosophical education he had religious reinforcement of his students at heart. He attached extraordinary significance to meditation, i.e. a quiet, pensive deepening of the mysteries of religion and the transmitted facts thereof, like asceticism and mysticism of the middle ages did."<sup>32</sup>

And thus, by enabling religion to influence philosophy, he proceeds to the famous thesis 4 which, together with the preceding ones, can be seen as a fig leaf, at least in some respects.<sup>33</sup>

*4) The true method of philosophy is none other than that of natural sciences. Vera philosophiae methodus nulla alia nisi scientiae naturalis est.*

I have already muddied the waters and presented the controversial context of this thesis. Let me now concentrate on its essence. First of all, we must bear in mind that the method of natural sciences is not what our contemporary science uses. Brentano's rigorous science is based on direct experience, on inner observation of mental phenomena.<sup>34</sup>

Brentano believed that the method of natural sciences should be used as a tool for assessing philosophical theories. If a philosopher applies it – he will be counted among those belonging to the first phase of philosophy, if not – he will most probably be counted among these who contributed to philosophy's decay (mystics being the worst case).<sup>35</sup> According to Brentano,

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>32</sup> C. Stumpf, "Erinnerungen an Franz Brentano," op. cit., 93 (trans. S. Kamińska).

<sup>33</sup> See also: W. Baumgartner, "Franz Brentano: the foundation of value theory and ethics," op. cit., 71. He calls Brentano "a disguised Jesuit" and "a mediaeval scholasticist."

<sup>34</sup> For more on this issue, especially on distinguishing Brentano's descriptive psychology from naturalism or logical empirism see: W. Huemer, "Vera philosophiae methodus nulla alia nisi scientiae naturalis est. Brentano's conception of philosophy as rigorous science," *Brentano Studien* 10 (2018), 53-72.

<sup>35</sup> F. Brentano, "The Four Phases of Philosophy and Its Current State," eds. B. Mezei and B. Smith, *The Four Phases of Philosophy* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998).

each philosophical period can be divided into four phases, one phase of development and three phases of decline (interest in practical issues, skepticism and mysticism).

Rolf George and Glen Koehn in their paper *Brentano's relation to Aristotle* claim, that towards the end of his life Brentano believed to have started another, fourth cycle of the four phases of philosophy, because he was concerned with the same problems as the Stagirite and other philosophers who crowned the other cycles, most probably St. Thomas and Leibniz.<sup>36</sup> In the same paper George and Koehn also quote Brentano's words from *Abkehr vom Nichtrealen*.<sup>37</sup> Brentano claims there that he was born in the time when philosophy was in a very bad condition which made him miserable and depressed. Aristotle came as a remedy for this predicament. And because it was a demanding reading – he reached to Aquinas (whom he had read first, inspired by F. J. Clemens) for help. And this is how the fascination with these two philosophers begun. I also believe it was the reason why the two of them were inseparable in Brentano's head.

Let me quote Oskar Kraus: "It is Aristotle's 'first philosophy', the metaphysics, whose method occupied him first of all, and whose mistreatment *via* the speculating system-builders caused him disgust."<sup>38</sup>

Husserl, in his memoirs says that Brentano had little appreciation for thinkers like Kant and German idealists (Fichte, Schelling, Hegel) and saw in them a kind of degeneration: they lacked in clarity and distinctness, they weren't at all scientific thinkers.<sup>39</sup> This observation can also be used in the case of theses 6 and 7.

Oskar Kraus<sup>40</sup> stresses the fact that *Die Rede über die Zukunft der Philosophie* refers to the fourth thesis. Brentano's listeners were – reportedly – enraptured with it. They understood it as a declaration of war against *Konstruktionsphilosophie*. Needless to say, *Konstruktionsphilosophie* means Kant. Brentano, on the other hand, claims therein that his examiners were not as happy with it as his students were and that the fourth thesis was criticized.

Let me now present a quotation from Barry Smith that can be used in the context of thesis 4, but also thesis 1. I believe it sheds some new light on the first thesis:

Brentano held that the method of the natural sciences is common to all the sciences, so that he is, in this respect an advocate of the unity of science and a critic of Dilthey's view according to which the so-called *Geisteswissenschaften* or human or moral sciences would somehow call for a special method of "understanding" or *Verstehen*, as opposed to the "explanation" of the natural sciences.<sup>41</sup>

I will now supplement this quotation with one from Brentano's *Die Rede über die Zukunft der Philosophie*, in W. Huemer's translation:

<sup>36</sup> See R. George, G. Koehn, "Brentano's relation to Aristotle," op. cit., 21.

<sup>37</sup> F. Brentano, *Die Abkehr vom Nichtrealen. Briefe und Abhandlungen aus dem Nachlass*, ed. F. Mayer-Hillebrand (Bern: Francke, 1952).

<sup>38</sup> O. Kraus, "Anmerkungen des Herausgebers," op. cit., 166.

<sup>39</sup> E. Husserl, "Erinnerungen an Franz Brentano," op. cit., 27.

<sup>40</sup> O. Kraus, "Anmerkungen des Herausgebers," op. cit., 165.

<sup>41</sup> B. Smith, *Austrian Philosophy*, op. cit., 31.

Natural science, thus, requires in no way, as the argument presupposes, that we should proceed everywhere in the same manner and in the way we do in the simplest cases of mechanics. On the contrary, it teaches and instructs us to change our procedure [*Verfahren*] in accordance with the particular nature of the objects and to sometimes raise, and in other times lower, our standards, in order to gain, in the former case, a fuller success, and, by giving up on the impossible, to reach the scientifically possible in the latter case.<sup>42</sup>

This quotation is very Aristotelian in spirit. Unfortunately, Brentano does not follow this rule in his *Aristotelica*. In the preface to the German edition of *Aristoteles und seine Weltanschauung* from 1977 Roderick M. Chisholm stresses that it was Brentano's mission to prove that Aristotle's work is coherent. And though Aristotle believed that we should not demand greater accuracy from an issue than the one this issue enables, Brentano always went a step further. I shall say more about this in my commentary to thesis 18.

5) *The multitude of things (in the world) contradicts pantheism, and the unity (in it) – atheism.*

*Rerum multitudo pantheismum, unitas atheismum refutat.*

Kraus<sup>43</sup> claims that Brentano has two kinds of pantheism in mind. One can be traced back to Spinoza, and the other to Neoplatonic philosophy. For Spinoza God and world were identical. For Neoplatonism world was God's emanation. By the multitude of things, he understands – Kraus continues – the real multitude of spatial things. However, in this multitude there is a unity to be seen. And this unity in multitude serves as a refutation of atheism, because there must be a Creator and a cause of order.

For more one can see Brentano's *Aristotle and his World View*, where these issues appear repeatedly. One can also see Aristotle's *Metaphysics XII*, often mentioned by Brentano in this book.

6) *Kant is wrong, when he claims, that physico-theological proof does not prove any efficient intelligence, even if an ordering one.*

*Errat Kantius, cum dicit, argumento physicotheologico non creatricem intelligentiam effici, licet ordinans efficiatur.*

According to Kraus<sup>44</sup> Brentano was defending cosmological (physico-theological) proofs against Kant's critique. He even uses the German word *Angriff*, meaning *attack*.

Cosmological proofs begun with Aristotle who started from examining the physical world and made his way up towards the Absolute. Aquinas's *quinque viae* (five ways<sup>45</sup>)

<sup>42</sup> W. Huemer, "Vera philosophiae methodus nulla alia nisi scientiae naturalis est. Brentano's conception of philosophy as rigorous science," op. cit., 60.

<sup>43</sup> O. Kraus, "Anmerkungen des Herausgebers," op. cit., 168-169.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>45</sup> There is a controversy as to whether they can be called "proofs" at all.

are an instance of physical / cosmological proofs as well. The first three ways (*ex motu, ex ratione causae efficientis, ex possibili et necessario*) are variants of Aristotle's proof and were criticised by David Hume and Immanuel Kant. What is important here is that for Aristotle the Absolute was not an efficient intelligence but a final one. It was Aquinas who interpreted it as an efficient one and Brentano is a Thomist in this respect.

When Brentano says *even if an ordering one*, I am sure he means Aristotle's dependency (even if critical) upon his great predecessor Anaxagoras, who came up with an idea of an ordering Νοῦς (ruler and guide); see book I of *Metaphysics* and Brentano's *Appendix to The Psychology*:

the high praise that he bestows upon him in book 1 of the *Metaphysics*, 1.3 984 b15: "When one man said, then, that reason was present – as in animals (cf. *Physics* 2.4. 196a28), so throughout nature – as the cause of order and of all arrangement, he seemed like a sober man in contrast to the random talk of his predecessors." Here too the words themselves, the immediate sequel (984b22), and the review in chapter 7 (988a33) all show that Aristotle was well aware that Anaxagoras envisaged the divine *nous* as active principle. (Cf. also *Metaphysics* 12.6. 1073a5 in conjunction with 9.8.).<sup>46</sup>

For theses 6 and 7 see also: Josef Seifert, *Über das notwendige Dasein Gottes. Eine kritische Antwort auf Franz Brentanos Kritik des ontologischen Gottbeweises*; and Brentano, *On the existence of God*.

7) *And further, he is also wrong, when he says, that if God was to be proven as the creator, his infinite perfection would not follow.*

*Errat idem et in eo, quod dicit, si Deum creatorem esse probatum sit, inde infinitam ejus perfectionem non sequi.*

This is a continuation and a specification of the previous thesis. Let me quote the *Appendix to The Psychology*, where one can find arguments against Kant and in favour of thesis 7:

according to Aristotle's doctrine, the pure intelligences and the heavenly spheres are created by God. This becomes clear especially from those passages that describe the deity (the word being taken in its most proper sense in which it designates only a single substance) as the absolutely first principle and the principle of all being. Thus, for example, in *Metaphysics* 11. 2. 1060 27a: "Further, if there is a substance or principle of such a nature as that which we are now seeking, *and if this is one for all things, and the same for eternal and perishable things*, it is hard to say why in the world some of the things that fall under the principle are eternal, and others not eternal; this is paradoxical." In 1064a35: "And if there is any such thing in the world (i.e.,

<sup>46</sup> F. Brentano, "Of the Activity, Especially the Creative Activity, of Aristotle's God," in *Aristotle's Psychology*, op. cit., 163-164.

separate and unmoved), here must surely be the *divine*, and this must be the *first and most dominant principle*.” (It should be noted that such a principle is “cause of being qua being,” 4. 1. 1003a26.) In *Metaphysics* 12. 8. 1073a23, the deity is called “the first principle and primary being.” Compare 10. 1075b22, 24, and 1076a3 (where he objects to the many principles of Speusippus and teaches the unity of the ultimate cause for all being); finally, 5. 1071a36, where that which is first in complete reality [*proton entelecheia*] is declared to be the common cause for all genera of being. Thus, according to Aristotle, the deity is the first principle of all being.<sup>47</sup>

It is also worthwhile to look into the speech *Über die Zukunft der Philosophie* where he is a bit nervous about what he calls “Darwinian hypothesis.” He asks whether in light of this hypothesis it would be possible to maintain teleology in the world without a creative mind. Let me just say that I believe Brentano was obsessed about creationism. If only he had the courage to let go of his Thomistic views for a while, he would clearly see that what Aristotle proposes is in fact a teleology without a creative mind, a teleology with Deity understood not as efficient but as final cause. He repeats his doubts about Darwin more explicitly in *Aristotle and his World View*. Funnily enough, in *The Psychology of Aristotle* Brentano speaks of so-called *Zwischenglieder* – additional intermediaries between the three basic levels of the soul. They are there because sometimes a complicated plant bears more similarity to an animal than it does to a simple plant, and a higher animal is more like humans than – let’s say – a tadpole. This theory serves to reflect the fact that Aristotle distinguished more capacities of the soul than the basic ones (nutrition, perception, reason, locomotion, imagination and desire). It means that many living organisms share capacities, and thus bear similarities, and thus are related. Aristotle’s view is in full agreement with the theory of Charles Darwin and so is Brentano’s when he advocates the *Zwischenglieder*.

8) *There is neither an infinite number or at all a multitude of worlds, nor is this world of infinite extension.*

*Est neque infinitus numerus aut omnino mundorum multitudo, nec mundus infinitae extensionis est.*

Aristotle believed that actual infinity is impossible. He also believed that our world is the only one. He claimed that it is eternal (neither did it come into being, nor was created), hence there was no world before it and there will be none after. It was physically limited, because every element has its own place in the world and there was no void (empty space with no matter). Because there is no space beyond its borders other parallel worlds are impossible.

In this thesis Brentano repeats almost *verbatim* what Aristotle claimed. The problem however is that elsewhere Brentano modifies this theory to serve his own purposes. He agrees with Aristotle that the world somehow indicates the Absolute, because there must

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

be the first principle (no infinite causal chains, etc.). Here, Brentano follows in Aquinas's footsteps trying to insert creation into Aristotelian picture and thus he absorbs the notion of *creatio continua* that is supposed to reconcile eternity with creation, which presupposes theistic God (impossible for Aristotle). Moreover, Brentano aims at a kind of theodicy and says that we live in the best possible world, explicitly juxtaposing Aristotle with Leibniz. For all these issues see: *Aristotle and his Worldview* and *Aristoteles Lehre vom Ursprung des menschlichen Geistes* (not translated into English).

9) *The assumption of an empty space like the one that the older and newer atomism teaches [us] is impossible, not only because the term of an empty space contains contradiction, but because effect is impossible through an empty space.*

*Fieri non potest, ut sit vacuum spatium, quale id esse philosophi et antiquiores et recentiores, qui atomorum doctrinam sequuntur docent, non tam propterea quod vacui spatii nomen contradictionem habeat, quam quod per vacuum spatium nihil effici possit.*

Brentano must be referring here to Aristotle's *Physics IV*, where he argues against the existence of the void that movement in it would be impossible. "If people say that the void must exist, as being necessary if there is to be movement, what rather turns out to be the case, if one the matter, is the opposite, that not a single thing can be moved if there is a void."<sup>48</sup>

10) *Zeno's paralogisms, to be exact the first three of them, deceive by treating continuum as a discrete value.*

*Zenonis paralogismi, vel ut accuratius dicam, eorum, tres priores eo fallunt, quod continuum tanquam magnitudinem discretam tractant.*

Brentano must be referring here to Aristotle's *Physics* (V, VI) as well as *Categories* (6). See also Brentano, *On the Existence of God*, 176.

11) *Whoever presupposes the immortality of animals, he must also assume, that there exist animals with many, even infinitely many souls.*

*Qui brutorum animalium animam immortalem esse dicit, idem dicat necesse est, esse bestias multis atque adeo innumerabilibus animis praeditas.*

Let me quote Brentano's *The Psychology of Aristotle*: "In general, no one can really separate the vegetative and sensible parts of an animal, while the intellectual part of man is indeed separable from the remainder and is in fact severed from it in death."<sup>49</sup> And:

Thus, for example, if this opinion were correct it would be possible that any matter whatever be ensouled, indeed with any soul whatever – for why should not an animal soul enter into a human body and a human soul find room in an animal or plant body, or even in a stone? But experience

<sup>48</sup> Aristotle, *Physics IV*, 214b, trans. R.P. Hardie and R.K. Gaye (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930).

<sup>49</sup> F. Brentano, *The Psychology of Aristotle*, op. cit., 47.

teaches us that only bodies of a certain constitution have a soul, and indeed a particular kind of soul, in such a way that if the body suffers a change that destroys its nature, from that point the soul is no longer found in it. But whence this phenomenon, whose universality attests sufficiently to its necessity? For us the answer is easy: the soul itself determines the nature of its body since it is nothing but the actuality of the living body. Indeed, it is just as impossible that the soul of one living being should inhabit the body of another as that the nature of a flute should enter into a violin so that one could now play flute upon the violin.<sup>50</sup>

These quotations, I believe, speak for themselves and do not require any comment to be explained. The only thing one could ask is whether Brentano had anyone specific (who believed in the immortality of animals) in mind?

*12) There are as many capacities of imagination as there are capacities of the senses, and the imaginary pictures are in the senses themselves.*

*Sunt tot imaginandi quot sentiendi facultates, et imaginationis species in sensibus ipsis insunt.*

Let me quote *The Psychology of Aristotle*:

Of imagination [*Phantasie*]: 15) Sensation in the narrow sense is not the only operation of the sensitive part through which it participates in other forms; for even without sensory perception we have sensible forms objectively (as representations) within us. They are called images [*phantasmata*], and the capacity to have images is called imagination. Images considered in and by themselves differ in no way from the pictures that are present in us during sensory perception; just as these are divided into several genera, depending on whether they are perceived by means of the eye, the ear, or another sense instrument, and depending on whether colour, or tone, or another proper object of sensation is their active principle, so also the images are divided into several precisely corresponding genera. There are images in which colour, others in which tone, and still others in which other sensible properties form the basic determination. There are also images that have the peculiarity of that inner sense which is directed towards sensations themselves; in particular, we have images of this kind whenever we remember; for one remembers having heard or seen something at an earlier date, etc.; hence we remember previous seeing or hearing and have their representations within us even though they do not now actually exist and cannot now actually be sensed. It is evident that since the images and sensations are altogether alike, they are in the same powers and in the same subject. Hence, the images are also in the senses and in the first sensory organ as such.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.



16) We had to acknowledge a difference between imagination and sensation; in what does it consist? Both are agitations of the same senses, affections of the same kind. However, they differ in that sensation is the result of the action of the present sensible object (every affection being at the same time an action), while imagination has its grounds in earlier sensations. (...) Whatever occurs in imagination was previously received in sensory perception, even if in different combinations.<sup>51</sup>

These words, I believe, as was the case for thesis 11, speak for themselves and do not require any comment to be explained. As we will see below, not only imagination, but also mind is fed by the senses. I really enjoy and admire the connection between theses 12 and 13.

13) *There is nothing in the mind which was not first in the sense; except the mind itself.*  
Nihil est in intellectu, quod non prius fuerit in sensu, nisi intellectus ipse.

This thesis is about the so-called passive/potential intellect, νοῦς παθητικός/δυνάμει. The active one is described in thesis 15.

Let me begin with a bunch of useful quotations. Paul Weingartner, in his *Introduction* says: “According to Brentano there is no a priori knowledge of facts (*Tatsachenerkenntnisse*), only a priori intellectual cognition (*Vernunftkenntnisse*).”<sup>52</sup> Also, Baumgartner<sup>53</sup> says, that in Brentano everything begins – funnily enough – from an empirical standpoint. Kraus: “A worldview based on experience was the goal of his scientific research from the very beginning.”<sup>54</sup> Kraus: “Here, Brentano seems to appropriate the famous rider by Leibniz ‘nisi intellectus ipse’ (...).”<sup>55</sup>

The famous concept of mind as *tabula rasa* (blank slate) is as old as the hills and present in the works of many philosophers (Aristotle, Aquinas, Duns Scotus, empiricists – to mention just a few). It is also a concept that is an opposition of nativism (Plato, Descartes, Kant, even – to some extent – Brentano’s great master Leibniz). The most important source of inspiration for us, in the context of the present paper, is of course Aristotle’s *De Anima* and this confirms my point that *Habilitationsthesen* are Aristotelian, with psychology in their center. Theses 13 and 14 find their development and explanation in thesis 15.

In the final lines of *De Anima* 3.5 Aristotle says about passive reason “And without this, nothing reasons (transl. Shields) / thinks (transl. Smith)” – thus stressing the indispensability of passive intellect. The relation between passive and active intellect is described in the commentary to thesis 15. Νοῦς παθητικός/δυνάμει receives intelligible forms and νοῦς ποιητικός acts upon what is received.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 67-68.

<sup>52</sup> P. Weingartner, “Einleitung von Paul Weingartner,” in F. Brentano, *Über die Zukunft der Philosophie nebst den Vorträgen: Über die Gründe der Entmutigung auf philosophischem Gebiet, Über Schellings System sowie den 25 Habilitationsthesen*, ed. O. Kraus (Hamburg: Verlag von Felix Meiner, 1968), ix.

<sup>53</sup> W. Baumgartner, “Franz Brentano: the foundation of value theory and ethics,” op. cit., 125.

<sup>54</sup> O. Kraus, “Anmerkungen des Herausgebers,” op. cit., 166.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 177.

As to the present thesis, let me quote *The Psychology of Aristotle*:

Since thinking is in this way similar to sensing, it will have to be an affection by the intelligible, in that improper sense of affection which we have ascertained for sensation; in general, the intellect will be related to as sense is to the sensible. Hence it is without affection, but capable of receiving the intelligible forms, just as sense is capable of the sensible forms. It is potentially all intelligible things without, as Empedocles had believed, in reality being any of these objects (...). But we must agree with Anaxagoras, who says that the intellect is unmixed, for in itself it is free from all forms, in order to be able to receive all of them. If anything were actually in it by nature, then this would become an obstacle for other objects and would, as it were, block their entry. It would be as if one wanted to use a filled page instead of a writing tablet, since the latter should not of itself contain any writing but should be free of all signs so that one can write anything – sometimes one thing, sometimes another – upon it. Hence before it thinks the faculty of the soul which we call the intellect is none of the things in actuality, and its nature is simply to be potentiality.<sup>56</sup>

*14) Some will deny the humans every cognitive power except for senses; the others will ascribe to humans a multitude of super sensual cognitive powers. Both wrongly. Sunt qui homini praeter sensum omnem cognoscendi facultatem denegent; alii ei plures, quae sensuum fines supergrediantur, cognoscendi facultates tribuunt; utriusque errant.*

Theses from 12 to 15 are beautifully linked: from senses and fantasy, *via* passive intellect to the coexistence and co-dependence of passive and active aspects of thinking. This particular thesis is about the balance between sensual and intellectual powers. Brentano is against the domination of either, and so is Aristotle. I believe this thesis is at the same time against idealism, sensualism, and mysticism. The entirety of *Habilitationschrift* can be seen as a war against mysticism. It is visible already in the opening of the book, where Brentano lists the philosophers who – in his opinion – interpreted νοῦς ποιητικός rightly (Eudemus,<sup>57</sup> Theophrastus, Aquinas) and wrongly (Alexander of Aphrodisias, Avicenna, Averroes<sup>58</sup>).

However, one more track is possible. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century there were two opposing conceptions of human nature: somatism / materialism and spiritualism. St. Thomas was not only against materialism, but against both of them. Spiritualism (of Neoplatonic provenance) was very popular in the Middle Ages, whereas materialism was marginalized – both as

<sup>56</sup> F. Brentano, *The Psychology of Aristotle*, op. cit., 75-76.

<sup>57</sup> Eudemus was a mystic in some respects. For more on this issue see: S. Kamińska, “Rational vs. Mystical Readings of Aristotle’s *Nous Poietikos*. Introduction to the Subject and Overview of Central Positions,” *Analiza i Egzystencja* 39 (2017), 19-35 and “Philosopher’s Theoretical Life vs. Auto-deification? Possible readings of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book X,” *Analiza i Egzystencja* 39 (2017), 37-47.

<sup>58</sup> Averroes must have been the most problematic one for Brentano, because for him passive mind was sensual and human soul mortal.

a consequence of the platonic view that body is a prison for the soul. Aquinas claimed spiritualism to be a caricature of Christianity. According to Aquinas a soul as such is not a person. A person is a being that has a soul and a body, a psycho-physical compositum (the soul is nobler, of course, but the body is not a prison anymore, rather a valuable vehicle). This is a thought to which Brentano seemed very attached. He repeats it on numerous occasions in his *Aristotelica*, especially in his last book.

15) *Aristotle's νοῦς ποιητικός is not a cognitive, but an efficient power.*  
*Nous poietikos Aristotelis non cognoscens sed efficiens vis est.*

This thesis is not as trivial or innocent as it seems. It is a common mistake to understand νοῦς ποιητικός alone as a cognitive power (see below), especially when one uses the term νοῦς to denote both: νοῦς παθητικός/δυνάμει and ποιητικός. Brentano's Aristotle – if I may say so – however stresses that we have one cognitive faculty and it has two powers. One of them is passive (see *De Anima* III.4), the other active (see *De Anima* III.5).<sup>59</sup>

Let me quote Oskar Kraus: “Already, in the year 1867 Brentano's work *The Psychology of Aristotle* was published (...). The book is devoted to proving this thesis, but at the same time contains an unrivalled interpretation of Aristotelian psychology.”<sup>60</sup> And: “thesis 15 deals with one of the most disputed problems of Aristotelian psychology, the theory of νοῦς ποιητικός, which has a historical significance and even today is usually wrongly interpreted.”<sup>61</sup>

Let me quote the following fragments from Brentano's *The Psychology of Aristotle* that can serve as an expansion of the thesis:

1. For the fact that the intellect can act with consciousness upon the bodily part does not exclude the possibility of an unconscious influence.<sup>62</sup>
2. Thus, it has become more and more obvious in what way the assumption of an unconsciously acting intellectual power, analogous to the unconscious powers of the bodily part, was in fact a necessity for Aristotle. It is this power of which he speaks in the fifth chapter of the third book of *De Anima*; it is none other than the active intellect [νοῦς ποιητικός] which is active before all thought, since it is the active principle of intellectual cognition.<sup>63</sup>
3. Firstly, the intellect of man is a passive, form-apprehending faculty analogous to the senses and is by nature the pure potentiality of thought, so that it, like the senses, requires a principle that leads it to actuality. Secondly, this faculty is not a faculty of the ensouled body, but of the soul alone, so

<sup>59</sup> This is the dominant line of interpretation. Some philosophers, however, tend to believe that the active intellect does not belong to humans, at least not to particular ones, not to individuals. It is rather a pool of noetic acts a.k.a. knowledge (MacFarlane, Polansky) or the Deity itself (Alexander of Aphrodisias, Eduard Zeller, Victor Caston, et al.).

<sup>60</sup> O. Kraus, “Anmerkungen des Herausgebers,” op. cit., 178.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>62</sup> F. Brentano, *The Psychology of Aristotle*, op. cit., 48.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 50.

that the intellect receiving the thought, the νοῦς δυνάμει, is spiritual and immortal. This will be of importance especially for the determination of the union of the νοῦς δυνάμει and the νοῦς ποιητικός; in Aristotle's view the latter is indubitably a spiritual thing. Thirdly, man has only a single faculty of intellectual knowledge, since actual cognition is not given to the human mind by nature, and since there is only one single intellect that is the potentiality of intellectual cognition. This proposition is of special importance, because it keeps us from espousing the widespread error of taking the νοῦς ποιητικός for another faculty of intellectual cognition in man.<sup>64</sup>

4. (...) the first of them [difficulties concerning dependency of our intellectual knowledge on senses – SK] points to that power through which the intellective part consciously intervenes in the sphere of the sensitive, and the second points to the active intellect [νοῦς ποιητικός], which is the proper active principle of our thoughts.<sup>65</sup>

5. Like the magnet that attracts the iron filings and is then touched by them, it must exercise an attractive influence upon the sensitive part so that, in a way, the sensitive part strives toward it and in turn brings forth in it that change to which the origin of the concept is tied. Hence in order to understand the influence of the sensitive upon the intellectual part we must assume in the latter a further active power. For obviously it is not the activity of the will from which this influence upon a sensitive part proceeds, for this influence is not subject to our will and takes place unconsciously, as it is presupposed in all intellectual cognition. This power will have to be called the ποιητικόν [productive agent] for the intellect, as Aristotle similarly called the sensible quality the ποιητικόν for the senses; this power is the so-called νοῦς ποιητικός; it forms the fourth of the intellectual powers of the soul, or if one considered the will and the consciously moving faculty of the intellect to be one, it would form the third.<sup>66</sup>

*16) It is not true about kind and difference that the one cannot contain the other. Rather, every specific difference contains the kind, and the last difference is identical with the whole definition.*

*Falsum est, ut in genere differentia non sit, ita in differentia genus esse non licere; omnis potius differentia specifica genus continent, et ultima differentia toti definition par est.*

Brentano must be referring here to Aristotle's *Categories* 5. See also: Kraus, "Anmerkungen des Herausgebers," p. 178. See also Brentano, *On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle*.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 107.

17) *There is no definition for accidents in the strict sense of the word, but to define a substance is – for us – totally impossible.*

Accidentia, si verbi vim urgeas, definitionem excludunt; definire substantiam prorsus non possumus.

Brentano must be referring here to Aristotle's *Categories* 5. He also mentions these issues in *Aristotle and his Worldview*, in the chapter: *The transcendence of substantial definition*. See also Brentano, *On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle*.

18) *People do not think exactly what they say and even the most logical minds tend not to do so, even in the most rigorous arguments.*

*Non plene, quod loquimur, cogitamus; et ne ii quidem, qui acerrime cogitant, quantumvis accurate argumententur, id facere consuerunt.*

I must admit, I find this thesis rather bewildering and enigmatic. What was the point of bringing it up in a habilitation? Does it say anything about Brentano himself? Is this a way of defending himself against any potential charges? Or maybe it is a way of defending Aristotle (as he does on manifold occasions elsewhere)? Needless to say, there are many “plot holes” in *Corpus Aristotelicum*. Brentano's attitude towards this matter was a specific one (see the comment on thesis 4). He felt entitled to fill in the gaps in Aristotle, to guess what was missing, to – let us be honest – sometimes jump to conclusions. He felt he had a right to do so. Not many understood Aristotle according to Brentano: Eudemus, Theophrastus, Thomas Aquinas, F. A. Trendelenburg and... himself. This special insight was based upon a very peculiar conviction that he was somehow related to his Master. He even described himself as his third son, the younger brother of Eudemus and Theophrastus. This is what he wrote in the album of one of his Viennese students:

You who claim noble descent, hear who my ancestors were!  
 I am from Socrates seed through whom Plato came into being.  
 Plato begat the Stagirite whose strength has never abated,  
 Nor has faded the bride whom he selected in love.  
 Two millennia have passed but the marriage still strengthens and blossoms.  
 Even today I can claim that I am from its issue.  
 Welcome Eudemus, you pious, welcome O brother, and you,  
 Godlike in speech, Theoprast, sweet as the Lesbian wine.  
 Since I was given him late, youngest of all his descendants  
 Loves my father me most, more tenderly than all the others.<sup>67</sup>

\* \* \*

<sup>67</sup> F. Brentano, “Preface,” in id., *Aristotle and his World View*, op. cit., xii.

Kraus's comment, on the other hand, based on Brentano's notes in the margin, is much more down to earth. He says: "The sense of this thesis lies in the fact that often linguistic signs function as surrogates for thoughts."<sup>68</sup> Thus, Brentano states that language is imperfect and that it cannot express our thoughts precisely.

*19) Contrary to what Herbart claims, that speech works for us only as a vehicle, but causes us problems while thinking, it rather constitutes essential help also for the thinking of an individual.*

*Adeo non, id quod Herbarto videbatur, oratio nobis commercio tantum est, in cogitando autem impedimento fit, ut etiam singulorum cogitationem egregie adjuvet.*

This thesis too is somewhat enigmatic. Is it linked to the previous one? How can one connect it with Aristotle? This is a possible line of thinking: Herbart was an heir of German idealism. Brentano would often juxtapose idealism with Aristotelianism, in favor of the latter.

But the more probable thread is that it is not Aristotelian. For the discussion Brentano – Herbart go to: *PES and The Origin of Knowledge of Right and Wrong*.

*20) Disjunctive judgment is a compound, hypothetical judgment. Thus, a disjunctive syllogism is therefore no specific form, but an imperfect presentation of a hypothetical syllogism.*

*Judicium disjunctivum est compositum iudicium condicionale; quare syllogismus disjunctivus non propria forma, sed nihil nisi imperfecta syllogismi condicionalis enuntiatio est.*

Brentano deals with disjunctive judgments in two Appendices to *PES*, 1924: 1) *Appendix to the Classification of Mental Phenomena*. The essay is called: *On Genuine and Fictitious Objects*; 2) *Additional Essays from Brentano's Nachlass concerning Intuitions, Concepts and Objects of Reason*. The essay is called: *On ens rationis*.

*21) There exist conclusions from one premise.*

*Sunt conclusiones ex una enuntiatione praemissa natae.*

For this issue see: P. Simons, "Judging correctly: Brentano and the reform of elementary logic," in *The Cambridge Companion to Brentano*, ed. D. Jacquette (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 45-65.

*22) It is not true that humans are by nature selfish, that they cannot love anything else more than they love themselves.*

*Falsum est, hominem natura sic sui amantem esse, ut nullius rei quam sui ipsius amantior esse possit.*

<sup>68</sup> O. Kraus, "Anmerkungen des Herausgebers," op. cit., 179.

Here, Brentano must be referring to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, book VIII and to his own lecture *The Origin of the Knowledge of Right and Wrong*. These are so to say "obvious" sources to learn about the issue in question. One less obvious, and a highly interesting one, is Brentano's last book, *Aristotle and his World View*, and especially the chapter, *The Deity and the Alleged Impossibility of Disinterested Will*.

23) *Many – like Spinoza – wanted to refute – via metaphysical deliberations – the automatically self-imposing faith in the freedom of will. On the contrary – metaphysical investigations serve to confirm this faith.*

*Considerationibus metaphysicis multi, sicut Spinoza, arbitrii libertatis opinionem, quam vix effugeris, refellere conati sunt; at contra considerationes metaphysicae hanc opinionem confirmant.*

Brentano not only believed in the freedom of will, but he also believed that it was indispensable for the perfection of the universe (for his theodicy see: *Aristotle and his World View*, especially the chapter *This world as Preparation for the World Beyond with Universal Bliss and Just Compensation for All*).

It seems worthwhile to stress that Brentano saw a connection between  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  and  $\delta\omicron\rho\epsilon\acute{\xi}\varsigma$  in Aristotle, mind and wanting. This can be found in his *Habilitationsschrift* and in his last book. Let me quote the *Psychology of Aristotle*: "Aristotle also assumed a power of intellectual desire, a will. (...) And if it is correctly comprehended, then the understanding of the  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  ποιητικός will be very greatly facilitated."<sup>69</sup>

24) *The notions of good and beauty are distinct in this way, that we call something good when it is worthy of desire; beautiful on the other hand – when its apprehension is worthy of desire.*

*Boni et pulchri notiones sic inter se differunt, ut bonum id quod expetendum, pulchrum autem, cujus apprehensio expetenda sit dicamus.*

The wording of this thesis very much resembles the way Brentano analyses notions of truth and good in his *The Origin of Knowledge of Right and Wrong*. This book, which is originally a lecture, is in its essence very Aristotelian. Paragraph thereof 23 says: "We call anything true when the recognition related to it is right. We call something good when the love relating to it is right. That which can be loved with a right love, that which is worthy of love, is good in the widest sense of the term."

Let me also quote *The Psychology of Aristotle*:

Thus it is with all intellectual cognition that is related to action; and it will not be different with cognitions that are merely theoretical, for the following reason: the theoretical intellect says that something is true or false, the practical that something is good or bad; in these two cases we do not have different genera of intelligible forms; the difference is merely that theoretical

<sup>69</sup> F. Brentano, *The Psychology of Aristotle*, op. cit., 100.

truth holds absolutely, practical truth holds only in relation to some person.  
What is theoretically true is true for all, but what is good is not good for all.<sup>70</sup>

When it comes to Brentano's aesthetics as such, one has to bear in mind that from the three classes of mental phenomena (presentations, judgments and emotions) presentations are the crucial one. Aesthetic is based on them. Something is beautiful, when its presentation results in a correct positive emotion.<sup>71</sup> What does this psychologism of early Brentano have to do with Aristotle? Let us take a look at his ontology / metaphysics for a while: it is no doubt a form of conceptualism that was characteristic for Aristotle.<sup>72</sup> So, maybe the word "apprehension" Brentano uses<sup>73</sup> in this thesis is in fact his "presentation" (*Vorstellung*) which we know from *PES* – a basis for subsequent judging and / or feeling.<sup>74</sup>

The presentation is "worthy of desire." If we continued in this vein, we would undoubtedly land with Brentano's intentionality that has both Aristotelian and Thomistic roots, but this is beyond the scope of this paper.

*25) Main and specific incentive to tragic presentations is firstly the insight into the inner beauty of humans and in the reign of some higher, divine power. However, second come the movements, which – in the soul of the contemplating [subject] – are painfully awoken, and despite that they give a double pleasure, firstly because they are noble and elevated, then also because the suppressed sadness spills inside them and finds relief.*

*Praecipue ac peculiariter hominum animos tragoediae primum eo delectant, quod interiorem hominis decorem et majoris cujusdam potentiae divinae numen introspicendi potestatem faciunt; deinde autem eos motus delectant, qui in eorum, qui spectant, animis cum dolore excitati duplicem tamen voluptatem praebent, tum quod generosi ac sublimes sunt, tum, quod dolor, qui intus haeret, in eis effunditur et levatur.*

As Kraus claims in his afterword,<sup>75</sup> here lies the core of Brentano's future theory of the tragic. What I find interesting is the fact that what is left of Aristotle's *Poetics* is the part on tragedy.

## CONCLUSIONS

Surely, Brentano's theses are Aristotelian. But, from what we have seen, there are two Brentanos, both in a way referring to Aristotle: a Thomist in *Aristotelica* and a modern scientist in *PES*. And this is perfectly reflected in the theses. On the one hand, these two philosophers are in perfect agreement, like in theses 1-4 and 11-15. On the other hand,

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>71</sup> For more see: W. Huemer, "Brentano on Beauty and Aesthetics," in U. Kriegel (ed.), *Routledge Companion to Brentano and the Brentano School* (London & New York: Routledge, 2017), 202-209.

<sup>72</sup> For more see: A. Chrudzimski, B. Smith, "Brentano's Ontology: from Conceptualism to Reism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Brentano*, op. cit., 197-220.

<sup>73</sup> Latin: *apprehensio*, German translation: *Erscheinen*.

<sup>74</sup> See A. Chrudzimski, "Brentano, Marty, and Meinong on Emotions and Values," in B. Centi, W. Huemer (eds.), *Values and Ontology: problems and perspectives* (Frankfurt: Ontos-Verlag, 2009), 171-189. See also K. Mulligan, "Brentano on the mind," in *The Cambridge Companion to Brentano*, op. cit., 66-97.

<sup>75</sup> O. Kraus, "Anmerkungen des Herausgebers," op. cit., 183.



sometimes they contradict each other, like – funnily enough – in theses 1-4. I believe that the essence of *PES* is more Aristotelian in spirit. But, definitely, the contents of *Aristotelica* were closer to Brentano's heart. Brentano was famous for changing his mind (as to ontology, intentionality, time-consciousness). But he never changed his mind when it came to Aristotle. I believe that it is wrong that we hardly ever stress how emotional Brentano was. We want to see him as this scientist figure. Whereas Husserl in his abovementioned memoirs gives an account of Brentano as a very romantic spirit. And, in this vein, I believe that Aristotle was the love of his life.

As a closing remark let me quote Wolfgang Huemer: “Unfortunately, Brentano did not comment his twenty-five habilitation theses, nor do we have, as far as I am informed, a detailed report of the defense, so we have to rely on circumstantial evidence – such as the testimony of his students or lecture notes from the period – when it comes to understand what exactly he had in mind when he formulated them.”<sup>76</sup>

But, for sure, there are three things that Brentano swears by in his entire work: 1) Aristotle (*via* Aquinas), 2) scientific method, 3) reasoning in opposition to idealism and mysticism.

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<sup>76</sup> W. Huemer, “Vera philosophiae methodus nulla alia nisi scientiae naturalis est. Brentano's conception of philosophy as rigorous science,” op. cit., 57.

# WHY AUTHORITY?

Why do we seem to need authority? These are exceedingly simple questions. But they are also rarely asked. To be sure, we frequently interrogate certain kinds of authority: Why do the police have the authority to search my house? Or: Why does the professor have the authority to evaluate a student's assignment? Or: Why does the Koran have the authority to direct how I should live my life? Yet, in each case, only a certain kind of authority comes into question. What remains concealed in these questions is a more sweeping and probing question: Why do we have these various kinds of authority in the first place? Why authority?

In his celebrated tragedy, *Oedipus Rex*, Sophocles makes a connection between authority and salvation. At the very beginning of the play, we learn that a terrible plague is afflicting the city of Thebes. The people are bewildered by the plague and frightened by the destruction it brings. They supplicate their king, Oedipus, to return to Thebes to protect them from the plague. They hope that his superior insight will discover a remedy. The connection is clear: the people call on a certain kind of authority in the face of suffering and death. The people seek authority for protection and, ultimately, for salvation from a threat.

The connection between authority and salvation appears to be very intimate. Authority is precisely what it is because it offers relief, protection, salvation from threats to our survival and welfare. The king, who in theory should seek the welfare of his people, is in effect like a father seeking the welfare of his children, another connection frequently made, and is in this sense a savior. Indeed, when Freud refers to religion as an "infantile neurosis" he is referring precisely to this more profound stream of authority born of the struggle to resist disease and death.<sup>1</sup>

In what follows, we deepen this very preliminary account of the reasons why we seem to need authority, in order to put that need itself into question and the concept of the political that derives from it. In short, we attempt to imagine a politics not predicated on the assertion of a supreme authority or, on the other hand, a thoroughgoing absence of authority. To the contrary, we seek to imagine a politics that is indifferent to authority.

We proceed first by an orienting discussion of the surprisingly small number of philosophical works that deal directly with the problem of authority in the twentieth century, this being itself a remarkable circumstance since it is hard even to find specific philosophical works on authority written prior to the twentieth century and all of them,

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<sup>1</sup> S. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, trans. J. Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1961), 42-43.

interestingly, appeared after the collapse of Nazism.<sup>2</sup> We then consider those works in light of one of the most far-reaching critiques of authority, which is to be found in the work of Martin Heidegger, particularly, in his most radical work of the 1930s. We wrap up the essay by pressing what we identify as Heidegger's most revolutionary proposal in regard to authority.

## I

Three relatively short works make up the most explicit dedicated considerations of the concept of authority in the twentieth century: Hannah Arendt's "What is Authority," Herbert Marcuse's short book, *A Study on Authority*, and finally, the equally short and until recently unpublished manuscript of Alexandre Kojève, called *The Notion of Authority*. Let us discuss each of these works in turn.

In 1955, Hannah Arendt delivered a lecture, "The Rise and Development of Totalitarianism and Authoritarian Forms of Government in the Twentieth Century," that became the basis of a series of essays on authority that she published shortly thereafter. The culmination of which is a lengthy essay, "What is Authority," that she included in *Between Past and Future*, a collection of essays published in 1961 just before she turned her attention to Adolf Eichmann. While totalitarianism obviously prompted her reflections on authority – indeed she briefly attempts in the beginning of the essay to distinguish between tyrannical, authoritarian, and totalitarian regimes – Arendt casts her net more widely to provide a broad historical overview of the issue of authority since the ancient period. This historical approach lies at the center of her argument that "authority as the one, if not the decisive, factor in human communities did not always exist."<sup>3</sup> Instead, she suggests that authority came into existence in the West as a product of the western metaphysical tradition stretching back to Plato.

What is authority? This is the central question that Arendt seeks to answer. Authority compels obedience or assent. It is "whatever makes people obey."<sup>4</sup> But authority does so in a specific manner. Authority relies neither on physical force nor on persuasion to compel obedience. Authority is beyond both physical violence and dispute. Whereas the employment of physical force to command obedience marks the collapse of authority, the engagement in a persuasive exchange of arguments and reasons implies an egalitarian order controverting the very nature of authority itself that rests, above all, on a hierarchy between the one who commands and the one who obeys. The nature of this hierarchical relationship is central to authority. Both the master and slave recognize the hierarchy that forms the essence of their relationship as legitimate and permanent. Authority rests on the establishment of a legitimate and permanent hierarchy that governs all aspects of political and social life.

With this basic understanding of authority in mind, Arendt then proceeds to ask two sets of questions: What kind of "authority" grants legitimacy and permanency to the

<sup>2</sup> Nazism prompted interest in the topic of authority especially in the nascent field of modern German history; see, among other titles, Th.W. Adorno, E. Frenkel-Brunswick, D. Levinson, and N. Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1950).

<sup>3</sup> H. Arendt, "What is Authority," in *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin, 1993), 104.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

hierarchy of master and slave? In other words, what is the “authority” of authority? And whence emerged in Western history the impulse to establish an authoritarian relationship in the first place? For Arendt, the answers to these questions are entangled with each other in a singular event: the “rebellion” of Plato against persuasion among equals in the polis and against the violence of military might.<sup>5</sup> The origin of authority lies in Plato’s revolt against Socrates *and* Alcibiades, in his philosophical rebellion against the egalitarian exchange of opinions in the polis and the brute assertion of power through the threat of physical violence. Authority emerged in the Western tradition from an overtly political attempt by Plato to create a hegemony of reason in the person of the philosopher-king. Distressed by the failure of Socratic persuasion after his teacher’s death and opposed to the dominance of the warrior, Plato at one and the same time sought to free philosophy from enslavement to the opinions of the masses and to the whims of the general.

But “freeing” philosophy meant bringing the masses and the ruler under the control of the philosopher – education becomes the discursive form of physical coercion. This for Arendt is a fateful error on Plato’s part that sets up a model of dominance and coercion based on the assertion of a notion of authority or truth that reigns unquestioned and unquestionable, like a god. Plato asserted such a notion of authority by claiming that truth exists outside time and that only the genuine philosopher can know the truth. The authority of the philosopher cannot be questioned because the philosopher has knowledge of the truth and the truth cannot be doubted because it “exists” in a realm outside this world. By invoking a non-temporal, non-human authority, the philosopher seeks to establish an indubitable regime of truth that rules over the polis. The philosopher wields his knowledge of the truth, of the ideas, as “instruments of domination” in full awareness of the fact that authority can only be “authoritative” if it comes from a source outside the ruckus of the polis.<sup>6</sup>

Put somewhat differently, Arendt suggests that Plato understood that the philosopher could not possibly have any authority simply on his own. He needed something else that could compete with those who may have greater skill at violence. He needed an authority beyond himself, beyond the world, that would immediately command obedience without the philosopher doing anything, that is, without the philosopher resorting to either persuasion or force: “Plato himself ironically concludes that no man, only a god, could relate to human beings as the shepherd relates to his sheep.”<sup>7</sup> He needed a god, and a god he created in the form of the ideas. Though Plato’s god does not command as the Judeo-Christian God does, the hierarchical relationship Plato set up between the non-temporal being of the idea and the temporal being of the human was decisive: the ideas provided the authority for the creation and implementation of a series of measures and laws that ruled the polis.

This Platonic model of authority has remained authoritative in Western history for over two millennia:

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 93 and 107.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

Plato's doctrine of the ideas had the greatest influence on the Western tradition (...). The essential characteristic of specifically authoritarian forms of government – that the source of their authority, which legitimates the exercise of power, must be beyond the sphere of power and, like the law of nature or the commands of God, must not be man-made – goes back to this applicability of the ideas in Plato's political philosophy.<sup>8</sup>

Arendt's point is that the essence of the Platonic model of authority rests on the invocation of a non-temporal authority or, as she puts it even more clearly elsewhere, *of a non-political authority* that governs the polis beyond agreement, dispute, opinion, or consent.<sup>9</sup> This non-political authority has appeared in many different manifestations over the course of European history. Arendt cites in the passage above two of the most common forms of authority in the West, the Christian God and the concept of "nature," but she also discusses the Roman reliance on the "sacredness" of the unrepeatable, unique "foundation" of the city of Rome from which the authority of the living derives, as well as Niccolò Machiavelli's creation of the "nation" as an ostensibly non-political, sacred community that the ruler invokes as the apparent basis of his power.<sup>10</sup> In other writings, Arendt discusses other kinds of authority that hold sway in the modern era such as the authority of the unmediated, uninterested "fact" that cannot be debated or the authority invested in the "leader" who commands blind obedience from his subservient underlings.<sup>11</sup>

Whichever kind of authority it might be, Arendt's overarching interpretation and critique of authority remains consistent: the Platonic model of authority rejects the democratic, Socratic presupposition of equality that is based on the authority of the absence of assigning final authority to any one person or group of persons. In the absence of a final authority or absolute truth, no one is more entitled to rule than another and no one worldview is entitled to impose itself as authoritative – we engage in conversation with each other, as Socrates did, without seeking to assert a final truth in acceptance of the "truth" that no final truth is forthcoming for mortal beings such as us.<sup>12</sup>

Whereas Arendt places the origins of authority with Plato, Marcuse provides a different genealogy, in *A Study on Authority* (1936), that centers on the emergence of what he calls a bourgeois articulation of authority that he largely traces back to Martin Luther's understanding of freedom.<sup>13</sup> According to Marcuse, Luther's concept of freedom views the individual as simultaneously free and unfree – free in the "inner" sphere of the individual through God's grace but servilely obedient in the "outer" sphere to the earthly authorities that be. Marcuse argues that this dualistic interpretation of the individual as both free and submissive has shaped Western thought ever since Luther. Indeed, he traces

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 110-111.

<sup>9</sup> H. Arendt, "Truth and Politics," in *Between Past and Present*, op. cit., 240. See also H. Arendt, "Civil Disobedience," in *Crises of the Republic* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1972), 49-102; H. Arendt, "Philosophy and Politics," *Social Research* 57:1 (1990), 73-103

<sup>10</sup> H. Arendt, "What is Authority," op. cit., 120-122.

<sup>11</sup> H. Arendt, "Truth and Politics," op. cit., 241; H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, intro. A. Elon (New York: Penguin, 2006), 143.

<sup>12</sup> H. Arendt, "Philosophy and Politics," op. cit., 84.

<sup>13</sup> The original German title is *Studien über Autorität und Familie*.

this dualism throughout European history until it was finally shattered by Karl Marx who offers a revolutionary concept of freedom that liberates the individual from the yoke of Luther's impoverished view of man as a fallen, sinful being that must rely on God's grace for her individual, spiritual salvation.

If Arendt sees liberation in the absence of final truth, Marcuse sees it in the final truth of the Marxist vision of a Communist society freed from material necessity. According to Arendt, this Marxist vision of freedom merely reprises the metaphysical, Platonic model of authority and tyranny whereby the philosopher brings the masses to the "truth" of the Communist future that ends up reducing the human to a being concerned with nothing else than the satisfaction of material needs.<sup>14</sup> But Marcuse would respond to this critique of Marxism in part at least by turning the metaphysical charge on Arendt, arguing that her concept of freedom is metaphysical insofar as it envisions the liberation of the individual through the internal activity of thinking.

The central difference between Arendt and Marcuse turns on which "metaphysical authority" is to be critiqued and overcome.<sup>15</sup> Marcuse sets his sights on the metaphysical authority of what he calls the "authority relationship" that renders the individual both free and unfree. Or, put more succinctly, he targets the authority of the concept of metaphysical salvation that, while culminating in Luther's thought, he identifies as ultimately originating with Plato's dual world theory which understands salvation as freedom from suffering and death – a duality that Paul's division between spirit and flesh made central to Christianity.<sup>16</sup> The Platonic hostility to the body and to this world of appearances established the basic model of salvation (or freedom) that has remained authoritative in Western history. The model understands salvation in a threefold manner: 1) the vertical relationship with the immortal ideas or God; 2) the liberation of the individual from death; and 3) the salvation of the individual in a non-temporal and non-human realm.

These three aspects of the Platonic-Christian model of salvation derive from an "ideology of death" that scorns the world and seeks to escape from it. Although Catholicism's doctrine of good works mitigated some of Plato's hostility to the world, a world after all that the Christian God benevolently created, Luther's dark interpretation of the world brought Platonic hostility back with a vengeance, for Luther aligned salvation exclusively with individual freedom from death through faith in God's grace. For Luther, all that mattered was the internal liberation of the soul from this depraved world. The upshot of this Protestant view is that the world cannot possibly be saved. Since freedom can never result from action, the Christian must accept the world as it is and do nothing to change it. The dutiful Christian must simply suffer and obey as she waits liberation through death in a transcendent realm that is non-human.

This Protestant model of salvation was secularized by Immanuel Kant in his attempt to reconcile the antinomy between individual and community. Marcuse centers his critique on the tension between the unconditional autonomy of the rational individual and

<sup>14</sup> Arendt develops this critique of Marx in *The Human Condition*, 2nd Edition (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1998).

<sup>15</sup> H. Marcuse, *A Study on Authority*, trans. J. De Bres (New York: Verso, 2008), 10.

<sup>16</sup> H. Marcuse, "The Ideology of Death," in *The Meaning of Death*, ed. H. Feifel (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), 64-76.

the establishment of norms and laws that restrict the individual in the creation of a general community. The tension Marcuse identifies in Kant is a classic one: the free individual must obey the laws of the community. If this obedience for Kant is not pernicious because the laws of the community were self-imposed by free individuals and thus they possess universal validity, for Marcuse they are pernicious in the specific case of Kant's thought because they are not "truly universal."<sup>17</sup> On the contrary, Kant's "universality" advances the particular interests of the bourgeois preservation of property ownership and thereby sanctions in law an external sphere of unfreedom. The universal validity of Kant's laws turns out to be an "apparent universality" that justifies inequality by invoking the authority of laws created by a general community of ostensibly free individuals.<sup>18</sup> Kant's freedom creates and justifies an unfree society.

Marcuse sees much of the same in Hegel who, like Kant, views civil society as "a universal coercive order for the safeguarding (of the property of) free private property owners."<sup>19</sup> Yet the main target of his critique concerns Hegel's elevation of the state to an authority that dominates the individual to such an extent that the individual seems to be subsumed almost entirely into the general will of the state in a way not dissimilar from the vertical concept of freedom that largely governs the Christian tradition. The particular gives way to the universal in Hegel's concept of freedom. In Marcuse's view, Hegel comes off as hardly interested in individual freedom but rather in justifying an order of servitude that leads to the overcoming of the human as a free creative individual.<sup>20</sup>

It is only Marx who finally breaks free from the bourgeois authority structure that Luther had initiated by locating freedom in the material existence of human life through the creation of a revolutionary new society. This new society overcomes the dualism of the bourgeois concept of freedom by liberating the individual from the necessity of labor in order to increase one's free time – freedom ultimately comes down to making leisure available to all in Marcuse's interpretation of Marx.<sup>21</sup> But does not this "liberation" of the individual require obedience to the authority of the Communist revolutionary? It does as Marcuse admits unequivocally: "Revolutionary subordination in one's own ranks and revolutionary authority towards the class enemy are necessary prerequisites in the struggle for the future organization of society."<sup>22</sup> In the end, then, Marcuse supports an authority relationship so long as it advances a kind of salvation that entails revolutionary change in the world and the establishment of a Communist order.

Alexandre Kojève's short, unpublished work, *The Notion of Authority* (1942), also focuses on identifying primary forms of authority rather than inquiring into the reasons why there is authority in the first place.<sup>23</sup> Kojève isolates four primary theories of authority

<sup>17</sup> H. Marcuse, *Study on Authority*, op. cit., 44.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 52-53.

<sup>20</sup> In *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* (1941), Marcuse offers a different reading of Hegel that aligns him more closely to his own interpretation of the human as a free creative individual.

<sup>21</sup> H. Marcuse, *Study on Authority*, op. cit., 86. See H. Marcuse, "The Foundation of Historical Materialism," in *Studies in Critical Philosophy*, trans. J. de Bres (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1973), 3-48; H. Marcuse, "On Hedonism," in *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory* (London: MayFlyBooks, 1968), 119-149.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>23</sup> A. Kojève, *The Notion of Authority (A Brief Presentation)*, trans. H. Weslati (New York: Verso, 2014).

in his manuscript, those pertaining to 1) the divine or theological, 2) equity or justice; 3) wisdom or knowledge; and, 4) the master in the master and slave relation. These theories correspond in turn to four primary types or models of authority, that of 1) the father; 2) the judge; 3) the leader; and 4) the master. Kojève admits no other basic model of authority, though he offers many possible combinations of these basic types. If one group or person obeys another under duress or on pain of death, however, that group or person has no authority – Kojève insists time and again that force does not constitute authority. To the contrary, having recourse to force shows a failure of authority since authority is nothing else than the power to command obedience without having to do anything: those who obey do so freely (or voluntarily) and without reservation, not on account of any threat of physical coercion.

In all these cases, authority is precisely the power to command obedience without recourse to physical coercion, persuasion or discussion. According to Kojève, this is the basic proposition that distinguishes authority from legal right for which physical coercion is always a necessary possibility. Hence, like Arendt, Kojève is careful to distinguish authority from the exercise of physical force, though he also insists that the egalitarian order is the creation of precisely the figure Arendt accuses of destroying that impulse, Plato.

In simpler terms, we might say that Kojève's account of authority is more generally unlike that of both Arendt and Marcuse in its insistence on the plurality and complexity of forms of authority. Indeed, it seems quite evident that Kojève would find both Arendt and Marcuse too reductive or not structurally incisive enough to discern the differing kinds of formal relations. Moreover, Kojève's account of authority has a strongly (and some might say strangely) mathematical inclination, in so far as Kojève wants to suggest that only the four primary shapes of authority are possible and can be combined only in certain ways. In this respect, Kojève seeks to show not only that there are a plurality of distinct and "atomic" forms of authority, but that these forms can only be developed in a certain number of ways. The upshot is that Kojève gives us no sense of relying on one line of history but rather on multiple lines that together exhaust the forms of political organization, in so far as all political organization requires authority.

Before moving on, we should pause briefly to consider another attitude to authority that has garnered a lot of attention over the last twenty or thirty years: Carl Schmitt's theory of sovereignty. Schmitt outlines this theory in *Political Theology*.<sup>24</sup> His basic proposition is deceptively simple: "sovereign is the one who decides on the exception." The exception both reveals and demands the sovereign. It does so because the exception is not recognized or developed in a given legal regime. Where the law does not rule, a decision is demanded – a decision outside the law by definition. The one capable of making this decision is the

<sup>24</sup> C. Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. G. Schwab (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 5. See also, G. Agamben, *State of Exception* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005); M. Foucault, *On the Government of the Living*, trans. and ed. G. Burchell, A.I. Davidson (New York: Picador, 2014); and A. Mbembe, "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15:1 (2003), 11-40. The striking difference between Schmitt's concept of authority and the others suggests Schmitt's affinity with Heidegger in so far as both he and Heidegger seem to agree that "war is the father of all things." But, as we shall see, the direction of conflict is markedly different: for Schmitt conflict remains directed towards finding a "correct" view, whereas for Heidegger it comes down to freeing ourselves of a need for that kind of view.



sovereign who is in this sense “beyond” the law. Here authority is expressly identified, as against all the preceding thinkers, as the power to act outside or beyond the law. Authority, thus, must resort to violence since there is, by definition, no command to give within the contexts of a regime of commands. The sovereign has authority because she is literally beyond the law and may choose to act as she sees fit without fear of reprisal. Schmitt is unusual in not accepting that authority and force are incompatible – indeed, Schmitt returns us to a start of conflict and violence, as the origin of authority not as something outside of it.

Nonetheless, as in the case of Arendt, Marcuse and Kojève, Schmitt does not consider the possibility of a political organization or, indeed, even a historical narrative that does not reflect or assume one primary shape of authority or combination of shapes of authority. This far more radical point is neglected in all these accounts of authority – it is the major possibility that they do not consider.

## II

Outside the Marxist tradition, Heidegger is arguably the one thinker in the twentieth century who considers this possibility without succumbing to the assertion of a “negative norm,” transforming the failure of authority into a guiding norm itself.<sup>25</sup> While he dedicated no specific text to the question of authority, the issue courses through his large body of work as a central problem to overcome: Heidegger seeks to liberate us from the slavish need for authority that he views as deriving from a fearful reaction to death.<sup>26</sup> Heidegger develops this point perhaps most directly in his lecture course on Parmenides, delivered at the University of Freiburg during the fateful winter semester of 1942-1943, where he makes a central distinction, as he does throughout his writings of the 1930s, between truth as disclosure and truth as conformity or correctness. Heidegger suggests that the Greek openness to truth as disclosure decayed into an imperial regime of correctness first under the Romans and then under the Christians, both of whom sought to impose a rigid set of normative standards on the world. This crucial devolution into normativity becomes the central issue in Heidegger’s account of authority or domination (*Herrschaft*).

Heidegger asks a basic question: Why did the notion of truth change from disclosure to correctness? Or more broadly: Why do we seek to impose norms in the first place? To consider these questions Heidegger turns to the historical context in which normativity emerges. The historical context is the Roman empire where Heidegger links truth or normativity with imperialism. Imperialism is only possible with the concept of truth as correctness. It is not brute force but rather the assertion of truth as correctness that makes imperialism possible. “I am right; you are wrong” is the essence of imperialism, insofar as imperialism consists in both the issuance of and obedience to a command (*Gebot*). The essential ground (*Wesensgrund*) of imperialism is the assertion of a command and that assertion has to assume correctness.

<sup>25</sup> The relevant names are legion, from Arendt to Badiou and the absent whole.

<sup>26</sup> Two important works on the issue of authority in Heidegger’s thought are the following (we will address Heidegger’s putative “anarchism” in the last section of this essay): R. Schürmann, *Heidegger. On Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy*, trans. Ch.-M. Gros (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); P. Trawny, *Freedom to Fail: Heidegger’s Anarchy*, trans. I.A. Moore and Ch. Turner (Cambridge/Malden, MA: Polity, 2015).

If the colonizer did not believe in the correctness of his position, would he ever struggle to ensure its triumph? Would there be any struggle at all in the absence of a cause to fight for? Would the colonizer demand obedience without believing that he in some manner was more correct than the colonized? Heidegger does not think so since correctness assumes superiority: X dominates Y by claiming at one and the same time that X is right and Y is false. The assertion of correctness elevates X to the superior position of commanding and forces Y into the servile position of obeying the order. Therein lies the essence of imperialism, of the *imperium*, of the command:

Command is the essence of domination; which is why a clearer and more proper translation of *imperium* is “high command.” To be superior is part and parcel of domination. And to be superior is only possible through constantly remaining in the higher position by way of a constant surmounting of others. Here we have the genuine *actus* of imperial action. In the essence of the constant surmounting of others there resides, as the valley amid the mountains, the holding down and the bringing to a fall.<sup>27</sup>

The colonizer holds down and brings to a fall the colonized not only through the threat of physical force but, more powerfully, through the weapon of the truth as certain and correct. The assertion of correctness, Heidegger suggests, is the most powerful and pernicious form of domination:

Truth is, in the West, *veritas*. The true is that which, on various grounds, is self-asserting, remains above, and comes from above; i.e., it is the command. But the “above,” the “highest,” and the “lord” of lordship may appear in different forms. For Christianity, “the Lord” is God. “The lord” is also “reason.” “The lord” is the “world spirit.” “The lord” is the “will to power.”<sup>28</sup>

Truth in the Western tradition is normative. It commands what is right and what is wrong. “Thou shalt not,” “Thou shalt.” This command structure always involves obedience to an authority, to a lord, to a *Herr*. Truth and authority are thus deeply entangled with each other: there is no truth without an authority and there is no authority without truth.

This point may not seem all that novel after having already discussed Arendt, Marcuse, and Kojève. But Heidegger goes much further than merely describing the imperial structure of authority to ask: Why do we obey the authority of correctness? What is it about the “authority” of truth that compels obedience without reservation? As Heidegger notes in the passage above, the Western concept of truth comes from the Latin language of the Church, *verum* and *veritas*. These words, he suggests, hold two important meanings: 1) keeping one’s position, standing firmly (*Standfestigkeit*); and 2) sheltering, protecting, closing off for the sake of “security” (*Sicherung*) as in a gate or a door.<sup>29</sup> These

<sup>27</sup> M. Heidegger, *Parmenides*, trans. A. Schuwer and R. Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 45.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-48.

two points could be expressed more simply by saying that truth offers salvation; the power of truth in the Western tradition, the power of authority, comes down to salvation and salvation means liberation from death. The fear of death pushes us to truth as shelter from the pure transience and ephemerality of our mortal being. The impulse to stand firm, to close oneself in the vestibule of truth, flees, in fear, from the uncertainty and fragility of our mortal lot.

This fearful need for truth and authority is a symptom of a problem for Heidegger. The problem is the metaphysical reaction to death that has dominated the Western tradition at least since Plato. If “metaphysics” for Heidegger can be summarized in a phrase, it would be that metaphysics scorns finitude. It despises the “fact” that we humans are not permanent like the gods are. Metaphysics despises time and seeks all kinds of shelter from time. Truth as correctness is one such shelter, in the sense that it provides a permanent rampart countering the buffeting waves of time.

Salvation, certainty, shelter sound very alluring. Who does not want security? Wanting salvation, however, comes at a high price – the acceptance of domination, the slavish relinquishment of freedom to an authority. The authority to which the master and slave both submit themselves is the “authority” of salvation. If the slave obviously obeys to save himself from the fatal consequence of disobedience, what possibly governs the master who otherwise seems so “free”? It is the allure of salvation or freedom that enslaves the master. The master fears death and seeks salvation from it through the possession of power, through the power to issue commands that the slave obeys. The possession of power is salvific in the sense that it gives the master the illusion of having the capacity to bend fate to his will. The master becomes habituated to the seductive illusion of liberation, from the humiliating fate of death, that power offers. Power flatters the vain hope of overcoming human fragility; it flatters the vain hope that the human is more than death, that the human is different from other dying creatures in somehow being able to combat the pure evanescence of its being.

Heidegger challenges us to move beyond the need for authority, to react to death in an entirely different way than the metaphysical tradition has instructed us to do. Heidegger beckons us to end our enslavement to fear and, in so doing, he strikes at the essence of authority.

### III

By putting into question correctness, Heidegger undermines what is arguably the most important pillar of authority in the Western tradition. For, if there is no correct or right way, what way is indeed left to us? This question takes on increasing urgency in Heidegger’s work of the 1930s. Heidegger’s response is a curious and intriguing one. In tandem with his critique of correctness, Heidegger develops a notion to which he refers alternatively as the “open” (*das Offene*) and “openness” (*die Offenheit*). The open is precisely a spatial term or metaphor that points to the absence of definition or reductiveness (or, for that matter, negation): the open is a space that denies the standard apprehension of space, because it does not and cannot lend itself to restriction (negation again). In this sense, the open is a space beyond space or a space whose essence is not to be a space within any conventional description of space, since the latter requires some manner of limitation. We may have

to ask whether it is not problematic to employ a spatial term to describe an ostensibly unlimited space, but, for the moment, it is likely sufficient to address the Heideggerian open as a kind of infinite, unbounded or free space, even though these combinations have the same problematic status. The open is, then, an absence or want of definition, whose limits, for that very reason, obviously cannot be defined. The open is neither identity nor non-identity, but somehow beyond both. While the open, as such, can be like the “negative” whole or the lacking whole that denies authority to all, this is for Heidegger a metaphysical interpretation of the open which fails to grasp its full import as moving beyond concerns for authority. As we shall see, the event that opens the open to us does not end with the assertion of a new normativity, though it can be read that way through the lens of metaphysics, i.e., through a lens that cannot think in terms not fundamentally oriented to determining an authority for determination.

Heidegger introduces the open in one of his most important shorter writings, “On the Essence of Truth,” first published in 1943. The text from 1943 is a substantially revised version of the original talk of the same name that Heidegger presented at various sites in 1930.<sup>30</sup> Judging from Heidegger’s comments in both his lectures and unpublished works of the 1930s, this talk played a crucial role in his thinking at that time. William Richardson grants the talk enough significance to warrant dividing Heidegger’s thinking into two primary periods, that of “Heidegger I” up to the year of the talk and “Heidegger II” for all of Heidegger’s subsequent work.<sup>31</sup> Whatever be the accuracy of such classifications, the talk represents quite clearly a new focus or emphasis in Heidegger’s thinking that is not only signaled by the polemic against correctness but also by the identification (or creation) of the open as an apt description of the essence of the truth, an essence that in rejecting correctness as foreground also rejects any notion of authority based on correctness – and can we imagine any other notion of authority? What does Heidegger suggest we do in response to the failure of authority – what is, then, Heidegger’s alternative to authority?

To get a sense of this alternative, let us first rehearse the function of the open in “The Essence of Truth” and other writings of the 1930s. The basic argument of “On the Essence of Truth” is that truth is not essentially the imposition of a standard but rather grasping the origin of that standard – what is true is not the product of a given account of things but rather what makes that product possible in the first place. Heidegger sets out with a simple question as to what pertains to true statements so as to render them true. If there are many particular truths pertaining to particular fields, such as cooking, physics and soccer, what is it that ties them all together as truths? What is the truth of truth? Heidegger answers this question, as we have noted already, by suggesting that the truth of truth is not itself *a* truth. To the contrary, the truth of truth is something quite separate from the truths that fall under it. Heidegger describes this difference as one between truth understood as normative or regulatory – in short, truth as correctness – and truth

<sup>30</sup> M. Heidegger, “Vom Wesen der Wahrheit” in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976), 177-202; See also M. Heidegger, *Vorträge: Teil 1: 1915-1942* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2016), 329-428. This latter volume contains four versions of the talk, three from 1930 and the fourth from 1940.

<sup>31</sup> W. Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1963).

as disclosive or originary. The awkwardness of these latter terms is itself an indication of their problematic nature when considered from the point of view of truth as normative.

Indeed, normative truth must deny that it arises from an origin or from a particular set of rules and axioms that create its condition of possibility. Normative truth requires that we come to a correct view, and since a view is only correct if it cannot be gainsaid at any point, that view must also be final. The normative is so because it cannot be claimed to be wrong in the final account. Thus, a given view is only correct if it cannot be contradicted or if contradictions cannot be drawn from inferences that flow from that view. Yet, what view as *a* view cannot be contradicted?  $2 \times 2 = 4$  cannot be contradicted – but only in respect to the system of rules that create the possibility of such an equation. Is that system itself correct or, indeed, does it make sense to speak of that system as being correct? Is mathematics as a whole correct? Who can judge? And how?

This is a more profound problem than it may seem at first. Is philosophy correct? Is correctness correct? These are the sorts of questions Heidegger begins to ask in the truth essay, if not elsewhere in the 1930s, and his response to them has to be difficult for those who insist on correctness, a final view, a governing normativity or authority. His response is that any one view arises from and within a particular circumstance or encounter – it has an origin, and this origin is itself an assurance that it cannot be absolutely correct because absolute correctness assumes a view without an origin or a view capable of effacing its origins in its end, the end turning us to a new beginning free of doubts. What view could possibly efface its origins?

Heidegger observes that particular truths collapse under the pressure of being made unconditionally or absolutely true or correct. They require a set of conditions to be true, while absolute truth is unconditional – this unconditioned absolute is what Heidegger calls the open. The open is true in and of itself because it is not limited. What emerges as true in the end is that normativity is itself not true in this unlimited sense. Normativity is always limited and limiting. Normativity is correctness, which in this context amounts to a generous way of saying that it is a constructed untruth merely because it asserts a particular view as being complete when we know full well that that it cannot be complete in and of itself. It can be complete only within a given system of rules and, even in that case, completion may be unattainable. The truth is rather the open or an inevitable openness – closure as in finality is never finally available. Truth is thus an avoidance of limitation, since all limitation has a part in normativity. Limitations are inherently normative. They impose one way of looking at something as opposed to another. Heidegger's open reveals the precariousness of authority. If no authority may claim finality, to be correct, then all authority collapses under the pressure of its unconditional demand for obedience. To be sure, there may be regional authorities in regulated systems but on the level of adjudication among diverse systems, the failure of authority seems to be far more pressing. Heidegger behooves us, in fact, to consider a life not restricted to given frameworks or local authorities. He behooves us to consider a life that moves beyond those authorities, a life that refuses to close itself off or to seek salvation in closure of possibility, in a system that gives rules that are complete and final (if one such could indeed exist).

To accept this kind of life would be to come to another important aspect of Heidegger's thinking: the event. The moment of acceptance of non-finality, of the open, is

itself the first step toward the event,<sup>32</sup> the transformation according to Heidegger of the *animal rationale* into Da-sein. We may act without authority or the need for authority. Does this not mean, however, that we plunge ourselves into the merely arbitrary, whimsical or mad? If norms fade, what replaces them – is this not nihilism? Heidegger might agree that it is but only for those who insist on authority or who cannot free themselves of the notion or habit of authority and, ultimately, of the notion of salvation that gives rise to authority in the first place. To live without guarantees of salvation – is that not truly the beginning of a new epoch, an other beginning to rival the first? Heidegger certainly seemed to see it as such and urged us in several of his writings of the 1930s to take on the burden (*Not*) of destiny (*Geschick*) without recourse to standard salvation narratives, if not, to any governing narratives drawn from the Western tradition or, indeed, any other. Most strikingly, Heidegger points to a non-narrative way of living, or a way of living that does not seek to define itself or leave a pattern for posterity.

How, then, are we to “be” the event, to act without authority or a given narrative? How may we be in the open? The questions themselves seem problematic. They all point to a normative response – one achieves the life without authority in this or that way. And, of course, by giving an answer to this question, we end up offering a normative or normalizing response – we indicate a way forward. There is thus a way of living without authority. But does it make sense to answer the question about authority in that way?

We may provide an alternative provisional response that suggests two ways of proceeding to live without authority. One the one hand, we can recommend what we might refer to as the provisional, “Socratic” life – all norms being equally contingent – we may live in the knowledge that the way we live is also contingent and subject to modification at any time. Since we all know that we are equally justified and unjustified in regard to the ways we act, we are sensitive to conflicts and seek to resolve them in a way that does not assert one view over another, but that seeks to form a harmonious compact or synthesis of the otherwise differing ways of acting. We may call this view syncretic because it seeks to weave together differing views and refuses to come to conflict because the putatively main source of conflict – the assertion of exclusivity or absolute correctness – has been dismissed as impossible. One the other hand, we can recommend a far more radical kind of life that insists on the poverty of all norms, that rejects living normatively *in toto*.

This possibility seems to beggar the imagination. Is it even possible for us to conceive of a life without norms of any kind? While Heidegger might lean in the direction of this kind of life, he appears to step back. For example, his pursuit of an other beginning in the 1930s is qualified by his stress on a *transition* (*Übergang*) from our habits of thought fundamentally shaped by the need for authority to thinking that has completely freed itself of that need. Heidegger vacillates.<sup>33</sup> We can see why. What

<sup>32</sup> For example, Heidegger develops a term, *Verhaltenheit*, in one of his major treatises of the 1930s, the *Contributions to Philosophy*, to describe a resistance to conclude, to create doctrines for our purposes.

<sup>33</sup> As he puts it in the rectoral address of 1933: “the Greeks took three centuries just to put the *question* of what knowledge is upon the right basis and on a secure path.” See M. Heidegger, “The Self-Assertion of the German University: Address, Delivered on the Solemn Assumption of the Rectorate of the University of Freiburg,” trans. K. Harries, *The Review of Metaphysics* 38:3 (1985), 478.

would be a thinking freed of norms? A thinking freed of norms would have to be freed of language or any language as we know it as well, and language in this respect provides us with a proper test case, since language is the most basic form of normativity that we have – we certainly could not discuss any norms if the medium of that discussion did not itself contain norms whereby different people could come together. Language is thus arguably the most powerful and implacable normative framework – could language give itself over to the open in the most radical way?

Obviously not – if language became wholly free of norms we would have a result much more radical and estranging than *Finnegans Wake* or *Zettel's Traum*. From this perspective alone, it seems that we cannot escape a measure of authority if we are even to speak of authority, and, in that case, the final paradox is revealed by the fact that we cannot discuss anything akin to the open without contradiction – the means of that discussion show us the manifest impossibility of living in accord with the open unless we regress to pure silence, giving up language once and for all. While Heidegger's most experimental works of the 1930s test the limits of language, both in his discussions of poetry and in his own attempt to create a German that would be recalcitrant to standard approaches to language, he does not, for all that, write what would have to be total gibberish to be accepted as truly free of normativity – as long as we speak we are unable to free ourselves of servitude, and finally, of authority or correctness. We do not ascend to that vaunted position beyond correctness – the other beginning is, somewhat like Rousseau's state of nature, an impossible goal.

#### IV

Where there is life, there is authority – or so it would seem. No attempt to overcome authority can achieve final success, unless it remains silent. To live beyond or without norms means finally not to be willing to give an account of oneself. The moment we give an account of ourselves, we insist on a kind of authority – language – no matter how radically we try to undermine authority. Moreover, the account that we may provide through language has to be generalizing and thus takes away from the self that we sense ourselves to be – that is, to give an account of my “I” is to present an account that negates my own life as its condition of possibility – I lose myself in one sense to become myself in another. The salvation that seems to be mine turns away from me as an individual.

In this respect, it may seem that we have forgotten our earlier connection between authority and salvation. Nothing could be further from the case. If we refer back to Rousseau, we find that he connects all authority with salvation since his first level of authority, language itself, is born from the struggle for salvation. Rousseau explicitly links the departure from the natural state with language. We use language because we cannot survive on our own. Language, like property and so many other elements of Rousseau, is imposed on us by our need to survive, to overcome our mortal frailty. Yet, this salvation is riven with irony for it is not individual but oriented to a whole, and a generalizing whole at that. To save myself I lose myself. I become a stranger to myself, a thing – the price of salvation is reification.

Heidegger counters these assumptions about authority with an approach that may well bypass the assumptions pertinent to authority, as we have addressed them up

to this point. Heidegger gives a succinct and pregnant description of this approach at the beginning of the *Contributions*:

In philosophical knowledge, on the contrary, the first step initiates a transformation of the person who understands, and this not in the moral-“existential” sense, but rather in relation to her Da-sein. That is: the relation to being, and always prior to that, the relation to the truth of being, are transformed in the mode of a displacement (*Verrückung*) into Da-sein itself. Since in philosophical knowledge everything is in each case displaced at once – the being of humans into standing in the truth, the truth itself, and thereby the relation to being – an immediate representation of something objectively present is never possible, and on that account philosophical thinking will always seem strange.<sup>34</sup>

This short text outlines an approach that is not really an approach. One cannot reduce this approach to a method, though it is obviously a variant of the hermeneutic approach Heidegger discusses at such considerable length in *Being and Time* and elsewhere. The hunger for method, a hermeneutic, that one may be tempted to identify with Heidegger’s focus on hermeneutics and the hermeneutic tradition in general is lacking in this brief passage, however. To the contrary, Heidegger sets out the most radical variant of hermeneutic practice possible because it is a practice that cannot congeal into a practice. The continuous displacement that Heidegger refers to tellingly as a “*Ver-rückung*,” is not only a displacement. The term also carries with it a hint of madness, that is, of moving forth (*vor-rücken*) into a “place” of silent speech in regard to the hitherto understood. Heidegger’s point is to make this silence speak but never so that it speaks according to a code or model – a fixed grammar, thus returning to exactly the framework that it puts in question, and, if one reads the passage carefully, it puts *all* frameworks into question. For the passage suggests that a fixed grammar is not possible, only a differential grammar without a clearly identifiable differential. One may be forgiven for considering this kind of talk extravagant nonsense, and Heidegger takes that risk openly. What is it to speak of a differential without any differential pattern?

The difference Heidegger describes is radical and usefully contrasted with Derrida’s difference, which in its emphasis on deferral imposes the notion of the whole in its negative form, as that which shall never be fully present. Here is a variant, albeit a very complicated one, of the negative whole as having normative force – the normative is the absence of the definitively normative. While one may read Heidegger in this fashion, and as the proper predecessor to Derrida, we think that Heidegger seeks to move more elusively to question the impetus to give an account itself. Not only does Heidegger maintain that philosophical thinking is constantly in a process of change, he is also indicating that this process cannot be reduced to a narrative – to do so would be to undermine the process itself. We thus end up with a notion of mutual implication that does not follow any model, but for which no

<sup>34</sup> M. Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, trans. R. Rojcewicz and D. Vallega-Neu (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 13.



model may also be relevant – a model of the process is a rejection of that process. In this respect, no matter how vehemently Derrida argues that difference cannot become a kind of method, one wonders if it does not decay into a repetition of failure prescribed by the very temporality in which it is inscribed. The distinction that is operative here is precisely that between the assumption of a whole, even if “negatively present,” as seems to be the case with Derrida, as opposed to the irrelevance of that assumption for Heidegger. Indeed, what is most radical in Heidegger’s brief text is the sheer irrelevance of a whole, that is, the irrelevance of a taking account of the whole as being in the end the foundational assumption of philosophy.

This rejection of the whole is also a rejection of the framework of authority that assumes proper grounding – that it is essentially incontestable. With this rejection, Heidegger also rejects temporary or “provisional” forms of authority. Authority is indeed irrelevant in Heidegger’s text, and it raises most pertinently the question of why authority may not simply be discarded.

We all know the objections. They are primarily practical: How can one manage a community without a concept of authority? Will that not lead to anarchy? What about criminality and violence? What exactly would a community without authority look like? Such objections might gladly agree that Heidegger’s notion of displacement is a kind of *Ver-rückung* in the sense of madness or the *verkehrte Welt* to which the “common man,” in Heidegger’s parlance, consigns the philosopher. Yet, Heidegger’s notion of displacement is hardly comical if we take seriously its questioning of why we need set patterns or narratives or models – the whole panoply of Platonic idealism – that create authority as a correct pattern to impose or obey. Not only does Heidegger thus attack the notion of governing pattern or model, but also the obedience that such a pattern or model is supposed to create. Rather than claiming merely that there is no authority, he moves well beyond that claim to question why authority should emerge in the first place.

His main answer – which we have glossed as the need for security or salvation – is that our habit of thinking, in order to establish a pattern of behavior or relation with others and things (broadly put), is the result of thinking deployed in the service of completion or conquest of a given reality, as if it could be brought to submit to rules clear to us. The reflection on our actions that philosophy might seem to be, and which it certainly is in the post-Kantian German tradition, is precisely the problem. Thinking as reflection is taken as a distance from our participation in the world with the intent of classifying it – yet why? Why do we want to separate ourselves from the world or the primary questions that arise in it? Why would we want to grasp the world as a world, complete and plain and clear? To reflect on my life is to try to overcome or complete it while I am still living it!

The fount of authority for Heidegger is this reflective impetus – to stand away or above the world (like a god). In contrast, Heidegger bids us to enter the world and think within it in a manner that genuinely participates in our various activities, by learning to think them, and is itself a dynamic activity that cannot amount to an algorithm or pattern. He suggests further that a genuinely dynamic community may do the same. Community does not consist of an abstract structure or whole, of a longing for a final identity or cohesion. Indeed, if the need for salvation is suppressed, community need no longer be the slavishly expeditious creation it currently appears to be, as a product of social

contract or communal engineering to attain a new salvation. Heidegger rejects community on this model and, in its stead, proposes something akin to a common exploration – or world creation – that takes its own course but never its own identity, since the need for identity is itself a decay into authority, into a way of being, into an end not a continuously renewing beginning. But what is this continuously renewing beginning, an awkward expression to be sure?

Heidegger devotes a text – one of his celebrated “Ereignis-manuscripts” from 1941 – to this notion, what Heidegger refers to variously as “beginningness” or “inceptuality” (*Anfänglichkeit*) or the “inceptual” (*das Anfängliche*). Both these terms are as outrageous in German as they are in English, and they point to the same problem – the fact that nominalization tends to reduce a singular happening or occurrence to an abstract idea capable of being reliably repeated as a rule or pattern, thus distancing ourselves from any experience of that happening – the language of the beginning suppresses that beginning, its dynamic, unpredictable character so that we end up with unusual nominalizations or neologisms simply to address what has so long been suppressed in language. Heidegger’s language itself continuously raises these issues and, in so doing, appears to constitute a process of “thinking-in-action” most notably documented in the Ereignis-manuscripts and the recently released *Black Notebooks* at their best. These texts avoid ascriptions of identity, though they constantly invite them too, with their series of repeated “guiding terms” (*Leitworte*) that, in their profusion, frustrate the transformation of language, as the very medium of thought, into a stable network of communication or a space of reasons or a forum for discursive action. Heidegger accomplishes or attempts to accomplish in language exactly what he describes in the *Contributions*, a differential without differential, a process of displacement that is not a process – the negatives continue. As we have claimed previously, Heidegger seems not so much to be concerned with negation or position but with getting beyond the assumptions that ground both. Rather than wanting to know where we are vis-à-vis what confronts us, Heidegger advocates a kind of involvement with the world that does not seek to put it aside or away as something for or against us – our encounter with the world is naturally ironic.

In the end, Heidegger recommends something like a dialogic relation to things in the world that cannot be reduced to a governing notion of what dialogue is, because the dialogue is multi-lateral and depends on an ability to remain open akin to *Verhaltenheit*. To remain open is to act, or refrain from acting, as if one were carrying on various conversations at various levels at the same time, without a desire to reduce them to one governing conversation for the purposes of comprehension in a final hierarchy (as we might have in any number of computer or email organizers that create threads of various kinds.) Is this a kind of multi-tasking as we are wont to call such an attitude? Again, this characterization seems unlikely since it depends on a definition of identity of the various tasks, or of the one engaging in them, that seems foreign to the sort of mutual transformation and renewal that are crucial to Heidegger.

## V

The pressing question needs to be posed again – is there a Heideggerian politics that dispenses with authority? What is the 300-year period Heidegger mentions in his rectoral

address, and the *Black Notebooks*, good for?<sup>35</sup> The transition Heidegger advocates, the new path that has no precedent, is not even a path by our standards, and one wonders if we can free ourselves from the habits of two millennia if that path is already so difficult to explain within our habitual explanatory vocabularies. Karl Löwith quipped over seventy years ago that Heidegger exhorted his students to revolution but, in the end, had no goal in mind for them to achieve – a revolution without a goal being, by Löwith’s standard, a paltry if not ridiculous thing.

While one may contest Löwith’s interpretation, it is fair to say that the political dimension of Heidegger’s attempt to dispense with authority is most problematic because it depends on our current thinking in order to bypass it. The striving for another beginning, a transition, exploits the teleological structures that are central to the very constructs of authority Heidegger attempts to overcome. Though Heidegger’s particular goal – the dispensing with a goal – seems to promise a collapse of authority, it does so at such a level of abstraction that it is hardly surprising that Heidegger would turn to resistance in the form of releasement or letting go (thereby exploiting another common vocabulary) in the post-war period.

The great question in Heidegger remains: How do we get to the new community from here? Heidegger’s later answer – that only a god might save us – is a curious use of salvation language to bring about freedom from salvation. The use is curious, we might add, because it suggests to what degree Heidegger was chary about our capacity to free ourselves from the grip of salvation, a liberation to which Heidegger devoted so much of his thought.

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<sup>35</sup> M. Heidegger, “The Self-Assertion of the German University,” op. cit.

# THE SPACING OF IMAGINATION AND THE ELEMENTAL IN NATURE

My intent is to engage imagination, to re-enact descriptively, theoretically, its most distinctive engagement with nature and with a certain range of art that is oriented in a particular respect to nature. This engagement will be carried out in relation to a series of natural scenes, of landscapes: from the lakes and woods of New England, to a narrow valley in the Black Forest, to a high, rocky outlet not too distant from Dresden, to the mountains of the northern heartland of China. Along this itinerary we will rely on descriptions, on paintings, and in every case, necessarily, on our own imaginative capacity.

## 1

Imagine a crystal clear mountain lake glistening in the bright sunshine of a fall day. Suppose that the lake is fairly narrow and its sides lined with trees that blend into the forest spreading up the mountainside, but that it is quite elongated, so much so that, standing at one end and looking out across the lake, its surface appears to fade into the distance. In imagination transport yourself to this scene and picture yourself there by the lake at a time when there is almost no wind and the surface of the water is perfectly smooth. As you cast your gaze out upon the lake, its surface will be conspicuous as the bright rays of sunlight strike it and spread their glistening across it, thus marking the level of the surface while also, to some extent, preventing that surface from actually being seen as such. Yet as you observe the surface, you will also see through the surface into the depth of the water; indeed you must, in some measure, see through into the depth in order to see the surface as a surface, since it belongs to the very sense of surface that it covers a certain depth. Thus, as you gaze out over the lake, apprehending this scene in its expanse and its concreteness, there will be a doubling of your vision, as it is directed both to the surface of the water and into the depth.

If it should happen that the scene is pictured as being in New England at the time when the fall foliage has just reached its peak so that the trees are ablaze with their fall colors, then the doubling of vision will be all the more conspicuous. For as you gaze upon the smooth surface of the water, you will also observe that it is a mirror in which you see reflected, as if into depth, the colorful spectacle of the surrounding woods. In this case the doubling of vision is quite manifest: in order to apprehend the full scene, vision must be directed both at the surface and at the image reflected by it, the image that, in turn, is an inverted double of the scene of the woods itself, to which vision may also be diverted.

In the vision of such scenes, it is not simply a matter of simultaneously having two images present to one's view; first of all, because, in strict terms, what one sees are not mere images but things. What one has before one's vision is the look of things, and even in the case of a reflection from the smooth surface of the water, what one sees are not merely images but rather reflections *of things*, reflections in which the look of the things reflected, the look of trees ablaze with their fall colors, is manifest. Yet even with such insistence on the intentionality of vision, there is still more required for the accomplishment of such vision: it is not even just a matter of having the looks both of surface and of depth present to one's vision. Rather, in order to see such scenes in their full expanse and concreteness, it is necessary that the looks of the things seen be held together in their very difference. It is necessary that the look of the lake's surface, glistening under the intense sunlight, be apprehended in its connection with the look of the recession into depth; and as these looks, both conveyed by the water of the lake, are yoked together, they must also be apprehended in their difference. It is necessary that the smooth, mirror-like surface be apprehended in a way that binds it together with the woods as this panorama of color is reflected in the lake; and yet the apprehension must be such that the difference between surface and reflection is retained and recognized. What occurs as one apprehends such scenes is not a mere perceptual reception of the look of things, much less of mere images; rather, there must occur also a holding together of these looks, a gathering of them in which nonetheless their difference remains intact. What occurs is a doubling, the posing of a dyad of looks that, in their affinity, in their bearing on one and the same thing, remain still distinct. This doubling, this holding or drawing together, is irreducible to mere receptivity. It is, rather, the accomplishment of what, taking up and extending a long tradition, may properly be called imagination. It is imagination that holds together in their difference the looks of surface and depth and of surface and reflection. In order to draw them together while respecting their difference, imagination must hover between them, circulating from one to the other.

This example, understood along the lines suggested by this analysis, has broad and significant implications. Most notably, it shows that imagination does not operate only in isolation from other capacities but that its operation can be central to others such as perceptual apprehension. Nothing could have been more distortive and reductive than the rigid separation that much of modern philosophy imposed between imagination and perception. For this separation had the effect of reducing perception to the mere reception of images and of distorting the common conception of imagination to the point that its only remaining function was to call up images in the manner of phantasy. Yet today rigorous phenomenological analysis has demonstrated that, as in the example just discussed, both imagination and perceptual apprehension extend beyond these narrow limits and involve structures and operations that are much more complex and far-reaching than those attributed to them by the modern reductive theories.

Even in the allegedly simple case of phantasy, the operation of imagination is more complex than was previously supposed. Consider a situation in which one imagines a dragon, that is, imagines seeing such a mythical creature. In such a case the look of this creature must come before one's inner vision, must be present to – as we say – the mind's eye. Yet something merely imagined in this way is distinguished by the fact that

it is not perceptually given but rather must be brought forth by the activity of imagining or, more specifically, of phantasizing. Thus, while it is intuitively given, while it is present to the inner vision or intuition, the givenness of something merely imagined is produced precisely in and through the imagining; in such an instance the imagination gives *to itself* that which is imagined, brings it forth in such a way that it, in turn, is given to the inner vision that belongs to imagining. Once the imagined scene has been brought forth, it must be sustained if it is to remain intuitively present to one's inner vision; and yet, there is little or nothing to sustain it other than the self-giving. It must, then, be continually brought forth in extended repetitions of the autodonation. This character of being unsustained by anything perceptual, by any outer receptivity, this character of needing to be continually brought forth, belongs to the very constitution of the scene as one of phantasy. The dragon must be held in phantasy, must be continually brought forth and intuited; and this character of being held in phantasy belongs to it as phantasized. In this complex operation a doubling is evident: for, in and through the imagining, the phantasy scene is both brought forth and intuited. In such cases the operation of imagination must be such as to hold together the two moments involved, the productive and the intuitive, even though otherwise they are quite opposite, at least in their basic directionalities. Imagination must hover between these two opposed operations so as, in and through this hovering, to draw them together.

Such structures and operations are implicit in the definition of imagination that Kant gives in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. According to Kant, "Imagination is the power of representing in intuition an object *that is not itself present*."<sup>1</sup> In drawing out the full sense of this definition, it is imperative to observe that in order to represent an object in intuition, in order to be positioned to intuit it, the object must in some manner be present; for, as a purely receptive power, intuition is open only to what is present before it. Thus in an operation of intuiting an object that is not itself present, that is not present in and through itself, the object to be intuited must be brought to presence, made in some sense present. It must be brought forth by imagination in conjunction with the operation in which, thus brought forth, it is intuited. Thus, in the Kantian conception there is already implicit the requirement that imagination hold these two moments together.

Comparable operations prove to be involved if we turn back to the ancient Greek conception of what subsequently came to be called imagination. Consider, specifically, the capacity that the Greeks called εἰκασία. The root word εἰκόν does not signify image in the modern, psychological or epistemological sense, but rather in the sense of a copy or semblance, as, for instance, a picture of a person is a semblance of that person. Correspondingly, εἰκασία is the name given to the capacity to recognize in an image the original of which it is a copy or semblance, as when, for instance, in a portrait of Simmias one recognizes the look of Simmias himself.

This capacity is the primary theme of the Platonic discourse developed around the figure of the divided line. According to the account in the *Republic*, this line represents primarily the course of the movement by which, beginning with the most remote images, the would-be philosopher proceeds toward ever more original things. The movement

<sup>1</sup> I. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B151.

consists precisely in reiterated passage of vision through an image to the original of which it is a copy or semblance. The capacity required for this movement is that of catching a glimpse of the original in the image and then extending one's vision to an apprehension of the original. Thus, one's vision would move repeatedly through image to original, each original being recognized as itself an image of a still more original original. Yet, in seeing through the image to the original, one recognizes, at the same time, that the image is an image, not an original. Thus, just as one's vision presses ahead from image to original, it also circles back to the image in the recognition of its character as an image. Here, then, there is a double operation, that is, two operations with opposite directionalities that must, in and through the operation of εἰκασία, of imagination in this ancient sense, be held together.

Thus, in each case, regardless of the extent and manner of its involvement with perception, imagination is operative in holding together moments that in one way or another are opposed. Such a dyadic gathering occurs regardless of whether these moments are different looks of things (for instance, of surface and depth, surface and reflection), or different modes in which the looks come forth (as produced or as intuited), or the oppositely directed movements across the difference between image and original. In each case imagination poses a dyad in which the opposed moments are yoked together. In setting out this dyad, in holding the moments together in their apartness, imagination opens the space of its own operation, the space in which surface and depth, surface and reflection, can be apprehended together, the space in which a phantasy scene can appear, the space across which εἰκασία can move between image and original. Opening the space of its own operation, imagination also, in each case, configures this space in the way appropriate to the particular kind of operation in which imagination is engaged. It is, for instance, from the space configured for εἰκασία that the Platonic discussion condenses the figure of the divided line. But in every case, no matter how the operation takes shape, what is decisive is the spacing of imagination.

## 2

The spacing of imagination remains decisive even beyond the domain of things and their looks. In Greek philosophy this “beyond” was taken as constituting the being of things; it was construed as the origin (ἀρχή) of things. The fundamental question of philosophy had to do solely with this “beyond” from which things had their being, from which they originated. The question to which philosophy was required to respond was the question as to how the being of things was to be thought – whether it was to be thought from nature, that is, by reference to the so-called elements such as fire or air; or whether it was to be thought by reference to the look of things themselves, by reference to what, beginning with Plato, was designated by the word εἶδος. Even where, as in the latter case, a certain remoteness, an apartness, was granted to the being of things, the operation of space and spacing was not eliminated, not restricted solely to the domain of things. One has only to consider the discourse in Plato's *Sophist* dealing with the highest kinds – with being, sameness, difference, etc. – in order to observe how, even apart from things, spacing remained in operation. Yet even prior to the spacing between kinds, a spacing must already have come to set the kinds apart, to constitute the apartness of the eidetic.

Today it goes almost without saying that the history of Western philosophy from Plato to Nietzsche has both posited this “beyond” ever more apart from things and, through that very gesture, rendered such apartness ever more questionable. Nietzsche’s declaration that God is dead calls philosophy back to things and their looks. It requires that philosophy now bind itself to the sensible and forego positing any “beyond” that is not a “beyond” *of the sensible*. Whatever is now set beyond the sensible must also be such that it belongs to the sensible, even if it is not simply reducible to sensible things and their characteristic looks. If, in turn, one ventures to recover possibilities deriving from the early history, the Presocratic history, of Western philosophy, then the most evident theme to explore in the search for a truly sensible “beyond” is that of the elements. The Greeks called these στοιχεῖα or, in the case of Empedocles, ῥιζώματα, and designated them by the words πῦρ, αἰθήρ and ἀήρ, ὕδωρ, and γαῖα. We translate these words as *fire*, *air* (upper and lower), *water*, and *earth* and yet lose almost everything in translation. For in the beginning these were not regarded as chemical elements, as the constituents of which things are composed. It would come closer to their sense if they were to be thought of as natural regions: the fiery region of the heaven, source of light and heat; the expanse of the air extending up to the silvery light of the heaven; the expanse and depth of the sea; the spread of the dense, supportive earth on which human beings build their dwellings and in which they bury their dead. Even with Aristotle, who in many ways is quite remote from the early philosophers, each of the στοιχεῖα is still thought as intrinsically related to a certain region (τόπος).

Granted the provocation of early Greek thought, how are the elements to be thought today in a consequential way? How must they be conceived so as to constitute a kind of “beyond” of the sensible that nonetheless belongs to the sensible, that at least is adherent to the sensible even if by nature different from sensible things? For such a conception, the early Greek thinkers, interpreted in an originary way, provide a decisive clue: just as sensible things are regarded, not in terms of their composition, but in reference to their look; so, likewise, the elements are to be considered, not as the make-up – ultimately as the matter (ὑλη) – of things, but rather in reference to the way in which they show themselves in connection with the appearing of the look of things. As such they take the form of the elemental in nature; that is, they show themselves as various elementals that belong to nature without themselves being natural or sensible things. The most comprehensive of these elementals are earth and sky. These delimit the space in which sensible things come to pass and become manifest; and while earth and sky do not show themselves as sensible things, they also do not belong to a domain other than and apart from the sensible. They show themselves as being *of* the sensible without being themselves sensible things. They belong to nature, grant natural things an expanse in which to appear, yet they show themselves to be such that they are irreducible to mere things.

Yet what is it about elementals, what is it in their way of becoming manifest, that distinguishes them from things? How is it that earth and sky, wind and rain, sea and forest, thunder and lightning are elementals and not merely things, not merely congeries of things?

While things can indeed surround us, elementals are encompassing, each in its own distinctive manner. This character is perhaps most evident in the case of the multiple encompassings that belong to a storm. Let me recall, descriptively, a thunderstorm that I once experienced in a narrow valley in the Black Forest. At the eastern end of the valley



is the Belchen, one of the highest mountains in the Black Forest. From that point the valley extends westward, with steep, mostly tree-covered slopes on each side, and finally opens out onto the Rhine plain.

I ask that you imagine yourself there, that you transport yourself imaginatively to this scene of the storm. Accordingly, I will describe it in the present, as if now at that scene it were coming upon us.

As the storm approaches up the valley, the low, black clouds move in and form a canopy covering the landscape so that the entire valley comes to be encompassed by the storm. Though some living things may find shelter from the onslaught of the elements, the very sense of taking shelter attests to the encompassing character of the storm, that it cannot be escaped but must – in the best way available – be endured. The wind sweeps through the entire valley, encompassing it, though in a way different from the clouds and the rain. The lightning also has its own way of encompassing, namely, by the manner in which its flash momentarily illuminates the entire valley. The rolling thunder echoes from the hills in such a way that its sounding and resounding outline the contours of the valley, tracing the way in which the earth is shaped into this particular site. The storm brings these various elements together, and, while each of them encompasses the site in its own special way, they also intersect, overlap, and envelop one another. Indeed the storm occurs precisely in and through the coincidence of these elements and their characteristic encompassings. The storm is nothing but the running-together, the concurrence, of these elements.

Another distinctive character of elementals consists in their not being determinately bounded in the way that things are. Even though the storm is not completely unlimited in its extent, it has a certain indefiniteness. One cannot readily say just how far the storm reaches, unless, bringing meteorological measures to bear, one begins to level out the very difference at stake. Not only are the elementals indefinite in extent, but also they display a certain gigantic, almost monstrous, character, for they exceed, virtually without measure, the proportions of natural things and of those beings who bring measure to bear on nature. The gigantic earth, only remotely imaged in the giants who once (so the stories say) strode upon it, exceeds in its unmeasurable measure all the measured things that come to pass upon it; and yet, it is the abode of these things, not something alien to their nature. Also gigantic is the lightning flash, which exceeds in unmeasurable measure all the fires that humans kindle and all the lanterns that they light.

Elementals are thus distinguished in various ways from the sensible things to which our perceptual apprehension is largely directed. For the most part, elementals are apprehended only marginally, at least as long as a concurrence of them does not obtrude, as in the case of a storm. Yet, though their apprehension remains largely marginal, it is essential to the self-showing of things; certain elementals must, in some measure and in some mode, be made manifest so as to be effective in their relation to things, even if remotely. It is most conspicuous in a natural setting that earth and sky delimit the space in which things come to pass and come to appear as they are. Supported by the earth's firmness and nurtured by its bounty, natural things come forth into the light and find their way within the enchorial space that opens toward the sky. The lives of animate things and the stability and visibility of all things are regulated by what comes to pass in and from the sky: the alternation of day and night, the course of the seasons, the promise of light and the threat of the storm.

Yet even when, as humans, we take refuge from nature and install ourselves in shelters that we have built, even in situations that exclude even the most minimal apprehension of earth and sky, these elementals remain – and must remain – in a certain way manifest and effective as bounding the sphere of all appearance. And yet, how can they be manifest in situations where they are not – perhaps cannot be – perceptually apprehended? How can something unseen be nonetheless in some way manifest? Comparison with phantasy – as in the phantasizing of a dragon – is helpful in showing how such elemental awareness is possible: for what is required in order that the scene of the dragon, though not present to intuition, nonetheless appear is the operation of imagination, which brings the scene forth in and to the inner vision. The parallel is even closer in the case of perception: awareness of the unseen elementals is comparable to that of the unseen profiles of an object, which are brought into connection with the presently seen profile through an operation of imagination. In the case of perception, the imaginative operation has a constancy that is lacking in the case of phantasy; whereas phantasy occurs sporadically, imagination is *always* operative in drawing forth the unseen profiles of things. In the case of the elementals, especially earth and sky, there is not only constancy in the imaginative operation but also antecedence: imagination will *always already* have brought these elementals forth as bounding the space of the self-showing of things. Imagination will always already have brought them forth, not in such a way that they are present like a perceptual object or even intuited like a phantasy scene, but rather in such a way that their bounding function, their delimiting of the space of appearance is and remains effective. In this way imagination opens – and holds open – this space, circling or hovering between its limits through engagement with earth and sky.

The spacing of imagination is operative not only in opening the enchorial space bounded by earth and sky but also in granting to each elemental its own defining limits, its space. The clear, daytime sky meets our vision as we gaze upward toward it. It is present to our vision with such constancy and intensity that its color virtually defines what is meant by blue. And yet, it is also sheer recession. Its depth is so peculiar that it almost seems to have no depth, at least not of the sort that things have. But it is not simply surface, but rather recession, unlimited, absolute recession. What is thus required in its perceptual apprehension is an operation by which imagination conjoins these opposed features while leaving their opposition intact.

If you imagine once more the small, clear mountain lake glistening in the bright sunshine of a fall day, then you can sense how imagination bestows on the sea its space. Though the small mountain lake surrounded by colorful woods lacks the gigantic and indefinite character that belongs to the truly elemental, its perceptual apprehension nonetheless requires, in a limited scope, the same operation that comes into play before the spectacle of the sea at large. Both lake and sea present both surface and depth, and it is this dyad that defines the space of each, requiring thus the spacing of imagination.

### 3

Let us now move on, eastward, to a site – seemingly wild and uninhabited – somewhere, it seems, not too far from Dresden. The site is one where elemental nature is strikingly manifest, and one could imagine oneself standing there at the optimal lookout point

gazing out at the mountain peaks, their separation from the everyday enforced by the obscuring clouds and fog. Yet one need not simply imagine oneself there: for the site is precisely the one depicted in Caspar David Friedrich's work *The Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*. In this work Friedrich paints the elemental; and, as in all such painting, the artwork serves to let the character of the elemental become manifest *as elemental*, in contrast to the way in which in everyday experience it remains marginal, framing the appearance of things while remaining itself unapparent. Thus the painting re-enacts overtly what imagination will always already have accomplished covertly in bringing forth the elemental. Furthermore, in the case of Friedrich's painting, the very engagement through which the elemental could be brought to stand out – in a way comparable to that of painting – is itself depicted in the painting.

The title, *The Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, appears to describe quite accurately what the painting depicts. The wanderer is standing on rocks that rise above the surrounding fog and that presumably form the pinnacle of the mountain up which he would have made his way. He is facing directly away from the viewer so that his face is not visible at all. His walking stick, held in his right hand, helps secure his stand on the irregular rocky protrusion while also serving as a kind of attribute like Jupiter's eagle or Heracles' club. His wind-blown hair calls attention, by contrast, to his stance: he stands firmly, motionless, atop the rocks, looking out across the fog that conceals the precipitous gaps separating the various protruding peaks. His gaze appears to be set on the distant landscape dominated by a dome-shaped mountain, itself partly veiled by fog. It could readily be supposed that the solitary wanderer utters not a word, his silence echoing the dampening effect of the fog. Standing motionless on the rocks, completely absorbed in his vision, he is, in the painting, no wanderer at all, and to this extent what the painting depicts is at variance with what the title says. Moved only within, he simply beholds the spectacle of the gigantic elements.

Two features of this painting need especially to be noted. The first is the inclusion, within the work, of a depicted viewer whose view would, in some measure, be doubled by the viewer of the painting. This feature is almost certainly linked to the direct or indirect influence of Schelling's thought, specifically to his philosophy of art and of nature, which likely was familiar to Friedrich through his friend von Schubert, whose exegesis of Friedrich's art in general linked it to this source.<sup>2</sup> According to Schelling, a landscape painting on which is depicted merely the appearance of objects remains completely empirical and aesthetically inferior; only if it is composed in such a way as to include a reversion to the subject is it elevated above mere depiction of nature to the level of genuinely spiritual art. Thus, Schelling writes that landscape painters have been prompted "to give this form objective meaning by enlivening it with people." Yet Schelling stresses that the natural site must not be disturbed or deprived of its unity through the humans whom the artist brings to inhabit it. Hence, Schelling continues, "the people in a landscape either must be portrayed as indigenous, as autochthonous, or they must be portrayed as strangers or wanderers recognizable as such by their general dis-position, appearance, or even clothing, all of which is alien in relationship to the land-scape itself."<sup>3</sup> What came

<sup>2</sup> See J.L. Koerner, *Caspar David Friedrich and the Subject of Landscape* (London: Reaktion Books, 2009), 253.

<sup>3</sup> F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1966), 190 (546).

to be called the *Rückenfigur*, a human figure with his back to the viewer, as in Friedrich's painting, provides a still further means by which to ensure that the human intruder remains alien and does not disturb the integrity of the natural scene pictured in the work.

The other major feature to be noted in Friedrich's work is the artistic employment of obscuring effects. In particular, the obscuring effected by the fog serves to conceal, except for their pinnacles, the mountains across which the wanderer gazes; it produces also a visual coalescence of the trees atop the mountains so that the individual trees drift away at certain points into indiscernibility. The contour of the large mountain toward which the wanderer casts his gaze is rendered indistinct on almost its entire left side by what is indistinguishably either fog or cloud, and the other, more distant mountains fade into utter indistinctness, completely obscuring the horizon.

The dual character of the painting, as both depiction of a natural landscape and reversion to the subject, is mirrored in the twofold aim that the artist assigns to such painting in which the obscuring effect of fog is a dominant feature. Friedrich himself writes: "When a landscape is covered in fog, it appears larger, more sublime, and heightens the strength of the imagination and excites expectation, rather like a veiled woman. The eye and fantasy feel themselves more attracted to the hazy distance than to that which lies near and distinct before us."<sup>4</sup> Thus, such a painting both enhances the aesthetic character of the landscape and enlivens the imagination in the viewer whose double is actually there in the picture, most effectively as *Rückenfigur*.

#### 4

Let us move on, finally, to the mountains of the northern heartland of China, which was the scene of the unprecedented accomplishment in painting during the Sung dynasty.

It is quite remarkable that more than seven centuries before landscape painting gained full recognition in Europe, it was highly regarded and pursued by the most celebrated painters in China. Yet in taking up landscapes as a subject of painting, the ancient Chinese, to an even greater extent than their later European counterparts, occupied themselves with depicting earth, stone, forests, water, and, above all, mountains. Indeed the Chinese words for *landscape*, *shan-shui* and *shan-chuan*, mean literally *mountains-and-waters* and *mountains-and-streams*, respectively. Here already, in the words, a different sense of landscape is announced. For the Chinese a landscape is not an expanse of land correlative to the gaze of a subject and determined by the horizon laid out by that gaze. Rather, the Chinese sense of landscape is that of a gathering of opposing yet cor-responding elements; it is, then, the dynamism within and between these elements that the painter's brush is called on to capture. Though in this respect quite heterogeneous with most European painting, Chinese painting – especially during the Sung dynasty – has in common with such painters as Friedrich the attempt to catch the appearance of the elemental in its very appearing.

Foremost among the artists of this period was Guo Xi. Though most of his works are lost, those that are extant – especially the work *Early Spring* – make it abundantly clear why he has been regarded as the master of landscape painting. Guo Xi is considered one of the so-called literati, a type of painter that is virtually unique to Chinese art. Such

<sup>4</sup> Cited in J.L. Koerner, *Caspar David Friedrich and the Subject of Landscape*, op. cit., 212.

artists were thoroughly trained not only in the techniques of painting but also in poetry and calligraphy. The literati were prone to regard painting in its relation to these other arts – to such an extent that Guo Xi once wrote: “There is no difference between the study of painting and the study of calligraphy.” He advises painters to read the poets in order to attain “the disposition that makes for painting’s vitality.” These citations come from Guo Xi’s treatise entitled *The Lofty Powers of Forests and Streams*,<sup>5</sup> which is widely considered the most important Chinese treatise on landscape and landscape painting. To gain – from our distance – some insight into the traditional Chinese approach to the elemental as it appears on the natural landscape and some understanding of the way in which it is revealed through the imagination of the Chinese painter, there is perhaps no better means than to take to heart this painting and to regard it in relation to Guo Xi’s venerable treatise.

Yet what is immediately most striking to Western eyes are the various inscriptions on the work, a feature almost never found in European art prior to the twentieth century. Even more remarkable from a Western point of view is the fact that most of these characters were inscribed by people other than the artist himself and at a much later date. Though some of the smaller seals are illegible, the only inscription that definitely stems from the artist himself is the vertical column of small black characters in the middle of the left side. The two characters at the top of the column give the title of the work: *Early Spring*. The six, even smaller characters below these read: “The year of Ren-Zi [1042 AD], painted by Guo Xi.”

At the top of the painting, to the right, there are eight columns of characters. The first six, counting from right to left, constitute a poem. The other two columns (on the left) read: “The year of Yi-Mao, the month of Spring, regal inscription.” From this, scholars conclude that the poem can be attributed to Emperor Qian Long of the Qing Dynasty. Thus the poem was added almost 700 years after the painting was done, though in style and content it seems that it is appropriate to the painting. Here is a translation of the poem<sup>6</sup>:

Leaves have sprouted from the trees and the ices  
 on the creeks have broken open.  
 Among all the edifices and lofts, the top levels  
 must be the dwellings for the divine.  
 With no need for the decoration of peach and  
 aspen trees in between,  
 The mountains are already displaying the  
 steaming aura of the Spring.

The large, somewhat imposing seal at the top, to the left, is the seal of the Emperor. It reads: “Qing Long, Royal Inspections’ Treasure.” This is an example of the common practice in which the owner of a painting would put his seal on the work. More generally,

<sup>5</sup> See my discussion and the pertinent references in *Senses of Landscape* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015), 121-35.

<sup>6</sup> I am grateful to Professor Huaiyu Wang for this translation and for his assistance with the other inscriptions on the work.

the various seals and columns of characters demonstrate the practice of filling up the more or less empty spaces on the surface of the painting – all of this quite independently of any expressed intention of the painter himself.

But aside from these inscriptions, what is to be said of the work itself as painted by Guo Xi? What I can offer here are only a few brief indications. In order to situate them, as much as possible, within a context appropriate to Chinese – rather than Western – painting, I will extract a series of five short citations from Guo Xi's treatise and let these direct our vision to what is to be seen in the painting.

The first citation concerns mountains and draws us immediately to the painting: "Mountains (...) may be massive and thick, bold and brave; they may reveal a living spirit, and be majestic and strong." He concludes: "Therefore the manner of painting which transmits the breath of life and movement is the foremost." In the painting the massiveness of the huge stones that form the base of the mountain is manifest, as is the majesty of the soaring heights above. Yet what is more remarkable is the way in which the huge boulders turn and twist as if the mountain were a living creature. The same dynamism and rhythm can be seen in the shapes of the trees toward the base of the mountain; this dynamic quality is all the more conspicuous by contrast with the smooth, undisturbed water at the foot of the mountain.

The second citation is about trees: "Trees on the mountains with their light and shade divide the far from the near." In the painting the depiction of the trees at the base of the mountains as dark and heavy contrasts in just this way with those toward the top. By means of this difference, Guo Xi accomplishes the representation of depth, of distance, without at all employing perspective in the Western sense. The same kind of representation can be seen in the depiction of the distant mountains on the left side of the painting. Here Guo Xi brings to perfection the technique of atmospheric perspective in which the appearance of space and distance is achieved by depicting objects in progressively lighter tones as they recede into depth, suggesting the intervention of atmosphere between them and the viewer.

In painting mountains – as did so many traditional Chinese painters – Guo Xi already broaches what we call the elemental in nature. This orientation is accentuated, though indirectly, by the third citation: "Mountains without mist and clouds are like Spring without flowers and grass." In affiliating mists and clouds with the mountains (and one sees this in *Early Spring*), the painter is not referring to a meteorological fact but rather to a feature that is highly characteristic of Chinese landscape painting from the Sung Dynasty on. This feature is clearly expressed by the contemporary French Sinologist François Jullien: he says of "the haze, wisps, or storm clouds" that "in [their] coming about 'between,' in washing over the outlined forms and dissolving their borders, they turn things evasive, begin to obliterate them, and open them onto their absence." In another passage Jullien is even more succinct: "Painting, therefore, tends not only toward making visible, or more visible, but also toward covering over and 'concealing.' The painter is as likely to hide things away, 'block from view,' as to show." It is for this reason, then, that, as Guo Xi attests, mists and clouds belong to the mountain, that is, to the mountain as the subject of painting: they obscure, render absent, conceal. One could hardly conceive of a stronger contrast with the luminous transparency of a Greek landscape, where the

forms of things stand in sharp relief and display a fixed self-identity that can be construed as their enduring look or essence. On the Chinese landscape it is otherwise: things grow dim, they are obscured, they become indistinct, they are caught up in transitions such as that of day to night.

Despite the gigantic, even monstrous, character of the elements, concealment belongs intrinsically to them: it is precisely through this elemental withdrawal that objects come to stand out and become the focus of our attention. Painting can reverse this everydayness, and Chinese painting, in particular, is – as Jullien expresses it – engaged “in opening things onto their absence.” Guo Xi himself puts it in much more concrete terms in the fourth of the citations: “When a mountain is totally visible, not only will its tall silhouette not elegantly stand out, but how could it be distinguished from the figuration of a mortar for pounding rice? Similarly, if the entire course of the water appears, not only will it not meander off into the distance, but how could it be distinguished from the figuration of an earthworm?”

In both word and deed, Chinese landscape painting is oriented, not primarily to things, but to the elements; and these it depicts in the very withdrawal, the concealment, that belongs to their elemental character. The final citation expresses this orientation with utter directness. Guo Xi writes: “Whenever you are planning to paint, you must first correlate the sky and the earth (...); between them one should (...) spread the scenery.” One could hardly conceive a more eloquent statement – eloquent in its very simplicity and in its accord with the painting. For it directs the painter – as well as those who would be perceptive of his work – to the elementals, earth and sky, that bound, that delimit, the space within which all showing takes place, both of visible things and of other elementals. It is to this enchorial spacing that the painter and those who take his work to heart are bound to attend.

# ON AESTHETIC ENGAGEMENT, PRAGMATISM, AND THEIR ROMANTIC INSPIRATIONS

## I. INTRODUCTION: THE SEARCH FOR THE MUSE WITHIN THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

As critics of contemporary art and culture, among them Maarten Doorman and Thomas Streeter, observe, the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century can be understood in terms of its multifaceted bond with Romanticism. Several contemporary artistic manifestos have *mutatis mutandis* repeated or re-enacted (rather than continued) the post-Romantic rebellion against “the rational oppression” represented by technology and technicization of the human environment. This rebellion began with the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Romantic contestation of the Enlightenment and industrial revolution and was carried forward first by the Victorian aestheticians and Morris’s Arts and Crafts movement in interior design, and then by some of the 20<sup>th</sup>-Century avant-gardes, and the ’68 social movements.

Contemporary aesthetic anti-rationalist and anti-technological revivals rely on a number of assumptions that parallel those vital for Romanticism. For the sake of simplicity, they might be phrased as follows: the notion of “human nature” carries no less “nature” than “humanity”; the appropriate social environment for a human being is founded in the freedom of self-expression; the evaluation of creativity is an invention of the society that uses such judgment for the benefit of its overpowering elites; creation and destruction are two sides of the same process; senses of contact (as much as the senses of distance) constitute a natural realm of creation; and “the truth” is created rather than discovered.<sup>1</sup>

These and similar assumptions have been developed (although in different ways and with divergent scopes) by several contemporary aesthetic concepts – in particular by post-Pragmatist aesthetics, somaesthetics, every-day aesthetics, and evolutionary aesthetics, as well as by the vast and sophisticated field of empirical aesthetics.

One example of such theories that will be a focus of this inquiry – Arnold Berleant’s philosophy of engagement construed as environmental aesthetics – is a contemporary thought that is informed by the existing propositions concerning not only the (large and pluralistic) class of artistic phenomena (such as objects, activities, and types of experience)

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<sup>1</sup> On the relationship of the neopragmatists to Romanticism, especially as reflected in Rorty’s thought, cf. T. Milnes, “Rorty, Romanticism and the Literary Absolute,” in *Pragmatism Today* 2:2-3 (2011), 24-33.



but also creativity as a wider notion defining life and based on sensibility. It traces art's and aesthetics' relation to existence and perception in every-day life and to non-artistic creative phenomena, from the point of view of the *agent* in a wider sense than the *artist* in the modernist tradition. It also, though indirectly, deals with the problem of *inspiration* in a way that appears to be close to the original ancient concept of *enthusiasm* or *inspiration* understood as exchange with the realm surrounding the agent – in antiquity, the realm of the gods,<sup>2</sup> and in this case, the natural and technological environment. At the same time, as a performative proposition rather than a historical study, aesthetics of engagement has claims to being universally applicable. Berleant's aesthetics consciously and intentionally identifies itself with both philosophical Pragmatism, and especially its Deweyan heritage, and with Romanticism, as a movement involved with *creativity* (and more specifically its inspiration, or *muse*, from the perspective of the artist), *natural environment*, and *civilization*, in their impact on individual life.

In particular, this text aims to explore how this post-Pragmatist orientation affects its own recognition of the sources of creative and aesthetic activity. Thus, Berleant's environmental aesthetics is of particular interest to us from the perspective in which the human being defines himself through his bond with the natural environment and physical and biological conditioning, as well as in an ambiguous relation to the civilization-related environment – social-educational, economic and technological.<sup>3</sup> The main question is how, for the aesthetics of engagement, human beings' belonging to the natural environment is combined with the environment conceived as human-dependent, and how this complicated condition provides a source of *inspiration* for transformative activity.

First, we will investigate Pragmatism in its genetic although not univocal relationship to Romanticism, and then the implications of this relationship for a possibility of applying the idea of *inspiration* to creativity construed in the Pragmatist way. Then we will situate Arnold Berleant's idea of aesthetic engagement<sup>4</sup> and his concept of the *negative sublime* within this context.

## II. THE TRAGEDY OF PRAGMATISM

Pragmatism is a peculiar theory for the fact that it is – on many levels – not descriptive but normative.<sup>5</sup> As Sidney Hook remarks, the normativity of original Pragmatism (especially that of James and Dewey) is conceived not as a practical philosophy of social reform, as a program proposing to transform reality, but as a theory normative about its own practice.<sup>6</sup> In this sense Pragmatism, as a norm of thinking, is a philosophy *par excellence*. Its normative character – based on the assumption that ideas are acts and should be treated

<sup>2</sup> In the manic sense understood as an amalgam of the Apollonian, following Plato's *Ion*, and the Dionysian sense, as described by Euripides in his *Bacchantes*. Cf. also G. Colli, *La nascita della filosofia* (Milan: Adelphi, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> The idea of the aesthetic field and environmental engagement as based on evolutionary naturalism has been present in Berleant's writings for many decades; it has been shaped most radically especially recently in his book *Aesthetics Beyond the Arts. New and Recent Essays* (Farnham/Burlington: Ashgate 2012), 47-130.

<sup>4</sup> For a synthetic overview of Berleant's theory of aesthetic engagement, cf. A. Berleant, "What is Aesthetic Engagement?," *Contemporary Aesthetics* 11 (2013).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. S. Hook, *Pragmatism and the Tragic Sense of Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), 8-9.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Cf. also J. Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty: A Study of the Relation of Knowledge and Action* (New York: Minton, Balch & Company, 1929), 110ff.

as acts, not as reflections disassociated from reality – is the very seat where the Romantic character of its mission presides: every philosophical act possesses an inadvertently creative potential; a thought necessarily *does* something with the world.<sup>7</sup> Although, to paraphrase John Ryder, Pragmatist-naturalist constructivism cannot be uncritically identified with the radical stand presented in 1978 by Nelson Goodman in his *Ways of Worldmaking*,<sup>8</sup> nevertheless, “constructivism surely there is.”<sup>9</sup> It is so, firstly, because Pragmatism recognizes an openness of the natural world to human manipulation – a non-determinism of the future either by natural or divine causes<sup>10</sup> – and secondly, because it transforms the objectified *world-as-it-stands-before-me* into environment, human environment. Ryder argues: “For its part, naturalism as it developed came to approach the constructivist side of pragmatism (...). Thus, pragmatic naturalism, (...) bridges objectivism and constructivism.”<sup>11</sup> It is by following this line that Arnold Berleant, in his prolific criticism of Kantian aesthetics, attacks the notions of *disinterestedness*, *distance* and impartiality as objectifying nature and becoming the source of ethical misunderstandings, neglect of vital elements of human experience, and general evil in the world. Berleant’s call for social and aesthetic *engagement* in the environmental field – one that recognizes human *interest* and unavoidable *connection* as a particular ethical and philosophical stand – strongly adheres to constructivist naturalism.<sup>12</sup>

What follows is that Pragmatism is normative not in the traditional or conservative sense<sup>13</sup> – as its methods are fundamentally anti-absolutist and anti-dogmatic – but in a liberal sense, through its adherence to (even radical) empiricism and, recently and more specifically, to somatic or environmental experience (represented by Shusterman and Berleant, respectively). As is widely known, the first generation of Pragmatists, especially James and Dewey, conceived of the liberal aspect of philosophy directly in a Romantic – Emersonian or even Thoreauvian – fashion.<sup>14</sup> This attitude promoted liberty for the individual to subjectively construct experienced reality through study and thought, to the

<sup>7</sup> “Indeed, pragmatism is at its heart an affirmation of the creative power of human intellect and imagination. To embrace a pragmatic model of experience is to affirm the open-ended plasticity of both the self and the environment.” J.M. Albrecht, *Reconstructing Individualism: A Pragmatic Tradition from Emerson to Ellison* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 130.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. N. Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Cambridge, MA: Hackett Publishing Company, 1988), 1-22, 99ff.

<sup>9</sup> J. Ryder, *The Things in Heaven and Earth: An Essay in Pragmatic Naturalism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 96.

<sup>10</sup> “Pragmatism was regarded as a distinctively American philosophy, despite its European congeners, because it stressed three things: the universe was open – therefore possibilities were real; the future depended in part upon what human beings did or left undone – therefore man was not a slave of scientific or theological necessity; ideas were potentially plans of action – therefore thinking could and did make a difference to human affairs.” S. Hook, *Pragmatism and the Tragic Sense of Life*, op. cit., 3.

<sup>11</sup> J. Ryder, *The Things in Heaven and Earth*, op. cit., 96.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. A. Berleant, *Aesthetics Beyond the Arts*, op. cit., 39ff. and 171ff.

<sup>13</sup> Regardless of the fact that there have been many versions of conservatism, this political and philosophical perspective from the onset maintained a reference to certain imponderabilia of a persuasive nature that needed to be actively promoted. It is, however, worth noting that the place where Pragmatism and conservatism meet, which is by Pragmatists themselves often overlooked, is their common mistrust towards reason and absolutist rationalisms. Cf. F.C. Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism: The Genesis of Modern German Political Thought, 1790-1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 282-284.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. J.M. Albrecht, *Reconstructing Individualism*, op. cit., 25-52.

extent of becoming the ultimate responsibility of every human for bringing to fruition the ameliorative postulate.<sup>15</sup> This assertion entails two further problems also inherited from Romanticism: the inevitability of a conflict of values and the inevitability of losses (considered in depth especially by James). Critics call this common denominator *a tragic sense of life* – not with reference to the existentialist inevitability of death (as in, e.g., Miguel de Unamuno<sup>16</sup>) but to the inevitability of doing harm despite best practices for seeking to reconcile what is, from the individual's point of view, right (as in, e.g., Kantian deontology) with what is good for the community (as in, e.g., utilitarian formulae).<sup>17</sup> In this respect, Pragmatism finds itself analogous to the classical Greek meaning of *the tragic*, although for different reasons.

### III. FEMME FATALE OR DONNA DIABOLICATA: THE ROMANTIC MUSE AS EVIL EXTERNALIZED

It is worth noting here that historically, Romanticism – especially in its European manifestations, but not only<sup>18</sup> – was a combination of naturalism and liberalism with idealism (inherited from, *mutatis mutandis*, Kant and Schiller<sup>19</sup>). It was a combination inherently self-defying, dialectical. As a consequence, it produced among other things an artistic mood commonly described as *decadent*, which creatively sublimated its inner contradictions in an artistic style that exalted deformation, depravation, and a propensity for the perverse. As Mario Praz famously presented in his *La carne, la morte e il diavolo nella letteratura romantica* (“Flesh, Death, and the Devil in Romantic Literature,” 1930), such *evil* became nearly an obsession of the Romantics and post-Romantics, a symbol of sublimity and transcendence present, in fact, in art pieces by creators from Beethoven to Wagner, from Shelley to Baudelaire. In a sophisticated game with the Romantic individualist moral obligations (predominantly to serve freedom), it was the perverse, the demoniac, the *femme fatale*, which became the symbol of the artistic *muse* for the Romantics. This was, obviously, a caricature of the once-exalted Dantesque Beatrice, regarded by the Romantics as a candy-coated representation of suppression imposed by political, scientific, or religious powers.

<sup>15</sup> “Rejecting the dualistic metaphysics that has dominated the Western philosophical tradition in favor of a pluralism that stresses interconnection and process, pragmatism places entities often thought of as transcendent – Truth, Reason, the Soul or Subject, Reality – within the processes and changes of experience; and in so doing does not diminish them as merely material, finite, or changing, but affirms their sufficiency for our human needs. (...) And hence, as both James and Dewey stress, to be a pragmatist is to reject absolutism and dogmatism for a thoroughgoing experimentalism: to reject views that see either human nature or reality as fixed (or undergoing changes determined by fixed ends), and to treat truths not as names for some unchanging reality, but as tools to employ in our ongoing efforts to remake both our world and ourselves.” J.M. Albrecht, *Reconstructing Individualism*, op. cit., 130.

<sup>16</sup> M. de Unamuno, *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1994), 79-95, 154ff. Cf. also M. Gołębiewska, “Zagadnienie tragiczności w filozofii Miguela de Unamuno,” in J. Michalik (ed.), *Nieświadomość i Transcendencja* (Warszawa: Eneteia 2011), 495ff.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. S. Hook, *Pragmatism and the Tragic Sense of Life*, op. cit., 5-6.

<sup>18</sup> On the European Romantic inspirations of American Romanticism and Pragmatism, cf. R.B. Goodman, *American Philosophy and the Romantic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), ix-x, 34ff., and 58ff.

<sup>19</sup> On Schiller's notion of aesthetics as recognition of the intrinsic freedom of self-formation in nature, cf. W. Welsch, “Schiller Revisited: ‘Beauty is Freedom in Appearance’ – Aesthetics as a Challenge to the Modern Way of Thinking,” in *Contemporary Aesthetics* 12 (2014).

Curiously, it is difficult to detach the figure of the counter-muse from the reality that constitutes *the Romantic reality* or Romantic metaphysics. This new muse is no longer a goddess; she is not transcendent. She is – as recreated later in Aubrey Beardsley’s graphics or Gustav Klimt’s modernist paintings – a rather concrete element of reality, one that makes part of its totality and represents its totality. For the Romantics, their *femme fatale* resembles a chthonic goddess, although she is not a personified deity but a deified human. What is more, she is typically not selected from an existing range of choices but, like an inverted Dulcinea, is *made* to become the demoniac persona by the voracious artist, who must on the one hand give form to and objectify his own demons, and who on the other hand requires these demons to originate from “outside” of him, in order that they be morally distinguishable from himself.<sup>20</sup> While being a sublimation of his own evil, “she” really *is* an existing person – in his art, portrayed as the source of his evil as much as of his creative drives; thus, *she* is his seducer.<sup>21</sup> Paradoxically, this transcendentalism of the muse is essential to the Romantic vision of creativity, which in this regard adheres to the Kantian notion of *genius*. However, genius here is not understood as a *finder* or *discoverer* of what objectively *exists* (as in science) or is imaginable (as in Kant’s aesthetic theory), but as a demi-divine corrector of the flawed natural world of which his human creative nature is an ameliorative part.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the artist, the genius, becomes for the Romantics what Nietzsche later inherited: a mock-Christ trapped in the insoluble circle of the tragedy of choices between one bad and another – a state that can be summarized as *being an immoral moralist* and, through that, *a redeemer*.

#### IV. DEGENERATE CIVILIZATION AND UNTAMED NATURE: THE ROMANTIC ENVIRONS

Following this paradigm, the Romantic attitude to the relation of “nature versus civilization” (the latter represented by politics and economy and its output, which is technology) becomes similarly ambiguous. As a flawed construct, a product of the flawed human artisan, what appears in the form of society and its degenerate civilization is, to the Romantic *genius*, both despised and (yet) indispensable. He needs civilization to play its role as his opponent and frame of reference, as a landscape that provides more than a backdrop: namely, his environment. In his quest for individuation, the Romantic oscillates constantly between isolation and *belonging* to the rotten industrialized bourgeois society, which he needs to go back to once he has distinguished himself from it, in order to transgress it again on another level of individuation. This paradoxical cycle keeps him, in fact, from ever really making a change in the society and its evil civilization, as he would then lose his *raison d’être* as a genius who differs and distinguishes himself from his environment. This is why he resorts to creating art, fiction, as-ifs and poetic fantasies, and does not engage in a real-life everyday struggle to improve reality – just as he is unlikely to change

<sup>20</sup> Cf. M. Praz, *La carne, la morte e il diavolo nella letteratura romantica* (Firenze: G.C. Sansoni Editore, 1966).

<sup>21</sup> Étienne Gilson presents a detailed analysis of this dynamic of creation of the muse by the artist who remains under her spell to create. The artist is shown to be at the same time hermaphroditic and male, the one who conceives within himself due to her impact, while in fact her impact is enacted by him, as a male, in the first place. Cf. É. Gilson, *Choir of Muses*, trans. Maisie Ward (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1953), 170-176.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. J. Ryder, *The Things in Heaven and Earth*, op. cit., 97.

the impact inflicted on him by his *muse*, the stimulating *evil* that he critically fantasizes about and needs for his creative drama.

On the other hand, biological nature – as a resource of his vigorous energies, including the negative ones represented by nature’s *sublimity* understood in a Burkean sense (i.e., the delayed or distanced danger<sup>23</sup> exemplified by works like those of Caspar David Friedrich or Herman Melville, which invoke fearful adoration of a numinotic character) – becomes a tool and a weapon for the Romantic.

It is important to note that the *nature* we are talking about here is not the “tamed” or cultivated nature, represented by the figure of the garden or of agrarian culture, but *distant nature*,<sup>24</sup> the unknown (therefore not Kantian) and untouched (therefore not Nietzschean or Schopenhauerian) one; it is the one Thoreau referred to in his *Walden*. As is known, the Romantics were children neither of peasants nor of nobility and landowners: they were children of the bourgeoisie for whom nature was a mystery, and they were, in general, truly ignorant of it. Nature was a dangerous force, one which – in their anthropic view – was ambivalent and thus worthy of respect, in its dual aspects of the constructive-destructive, of *good-AND-evil*. As Harold Bloom remarks in one of his works on Emerson, the hatred of the culture of the American South played an important role in Emerson’s political and critical theories – based mostly on his opposition to slavery, though not to vehemently violent power as such. This hatred extended to the whole agrarian culture, to activity that is collectivistic and immersed in collaboration with nature that to the Southern people did not seem alien or sublime but familiar and friendly.<sup>25</sup> In contrast to them, the Romantics treated nature and the natural environment with the same awe with which the avant-gardes treated an openness to the unknown, best expressed in their propensity for the sublime rather than beauty.<sup>26</sup>

## V. THE MONISTIC TURN IN ENVIRONMENTAL-PRAGMATIST AESTHETICS

Throughout his works, Arnold Berleant frequently makes references to his Romantic antecedents or inspirations. However, a careful reading of his publications – from his 1970s promotion of the “aesthetic field” and “aesthetic engagement” with the environment to recent books on the leading role of sensibility and the senses of contact in aesthetic experience<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> E. Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. A. Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 36ff.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. O. Marquard, *Aesthetica und Anaesthetica: Philosophische Überlegungen* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2003), 33: “Die romantische Ästhetik löst sich aus dem Zusammenhang des geschichtlich-politischen Problems und bestimmt sich durch das Verhältnis zur „fernen Natur“. Es könnte das ihre Aporie sein, ihre Gefahr und ihre Abstraktheit und das, was sie als Ausweg disqualifiziert.” (Italics as in the original.)

<sup>25</sup> Cf. “Nothing is more American, whether catastrophic or amiable, than that Emersonian formula concerning power: ‘it resides in the moment of transition from a past to a new state, in the shooting of a gulf, in the darting to an aim.’ Throughout his own lifetime, Emerson was ambiguously on the left, but then the crusade against slavery, and the south, over-determined his political choices. Much as I love Emerson, it is important to remember always that he valued power for its own sake. If he is a moral essayist, the morality involved is not primarily either humane or humanistic.” H. Bloom, “The sage of Concord,” <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2003/may/24/philosophy>.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. J.-F. Lyotard, “The Sublime and the Avant-Garde,” trans. G. Bennington and R. Bowlby, in id., *The Inhuman. Reflections on Time* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 89-107.

<sup>27</sup> A full bibliography of books by Arnold Berleant can be found at: <http://www.autograff.com/berleant/pages/pubs.html>.

(where he ever more frequently returns to Dewey), and especially his aforementioned recent volume *Aesthetics Beyond the Arts* – gives every reason for viewing his Pragmatist-aesthetic program as a theory that moves a quite few steps further than 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Romantic ideas. Unsurprisingly, these steps lead, as he says, “beyond” the arts – or, in fact, away from art conceived of as a field of activity whose scope is to create objects that could in some degree provide an axiological measure for all other objects (which even in Dewey’s theory was art’s vocation<sup>28</sup>).

All along, one of the biggest concerns of Bearleant’s post-Romantic / post-Pragmatist aesthetics has been to overcome the modernist emulation of Cartesian duality, on the one hand, and the Kantian *purposiveness without purpose* that is associated with the universalizing postulate of aesthetic *disinterestedness*, on the other.<sup>29</sup> Berleant attributes both of these aspects of pre-Pragmatist aesthetic theories to the *rational harness* in which human creativity had been captive. He says, regarding the Kantian shift in aesthetics: “It is an ironic liberation to free art from the strictures of religion, politics, and morality only to harness it to the logical constraints of a rationalistic philosophical system.”<sup>30</sup> At the same time Berleant keenly uses a quotation from Thoreau’s *Walden* which suggests that creativity ought to be a practice of shaping the “quality of the day” directly rather than through the medium of art (as art can be evaluated and, in consequence, accepted or not): “It is something to be able to paint a particular picture, or to carve a statue, and so to make a few objects beautiful; but it is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere and medium through which we look, which morally we can do.”<sup>31</sup> Together with quotations from Nietzsche complaining about Kantian aesthetics conceived of as a theory for the spectator (as opposed to the need of a theory of desire and “interest” for the “doers of reality”), Berleant openly concludes that aesthetics ought to be a theory *liberating* creation from the imaginary or the “apparent” – or, to put it in the Kendall Walton’s terms, the “make-believe.” For Pragmatist aestheticians, aesthetics as a boundless and “democratic” sphere of creativity is what directly produces the tissue of life.

It is not surprising, then, that Berleant employs eco-aesthetics and (again, Deweyan) evolutionary naturalism as a (however implicit) metaphysics for his aesthetic-ethical ideas. This choice is aimed at a far-reaching avoidance of the rationalistic and the idealistic – both identified by him as radically dualistic notions. As much as Romanticism was in fact obsessed with dualism and even pluralism (through its somewhat problematic adherence to idealism), what the aesthetics of engagement proposes is a system that becomes an instrumentally reliable and forceful program based on evolutionary materialistic monism.<sup>32</sup>

The implications of this radically monistic turn must necessarily also include – apart from abandonment of the traditional aesthetic axiology or hierarchy of aesthetic

<sup>28</sup> J. Dewey, “Art as Experience,” in id., *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1925-1953*, vol. 10: 1934, ed. J.A. Boydston (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), 52ff.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. A. Carlson, “Ten Steps in the Development of Western Environmental Aesthetics,” in *Environmental Aesthetics: Crossing Divides and Breaking Ground*, eds. M. Drenthen and J. Keulartz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 16.

<sup>30</sup> A. Berleant, *Aesthetics Beyond the Arts*, op. cit., 151.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, reverse of the title page.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter: “Evolutionary Naturalism and the Abandonment of Dualism,” 171ff.

values – an abandonment of the mimetic character of human creation. In fact, despite the lack of explicit acknowledgment of this fact by Berleant, most “as ifs” and fantasy are thus reduced (as they also are to some extent in, e.g., Shusterman’s therapeutic somaesthetics) to certain modes of natural reality. If one wants to be congruent with the basic assumptions of the naturalistic theory, then symbolization and representation are also similarly impossible (as independent qualities) in a system where every intellectual or creative act, being its own end, is in fact a new entity equal to any other entity that preexisted independently of the creating human or his act. In other words, in Berleant’s environmental-Pragmatist aesthetics, whatever human beings produce is not *in a relation to a preexisting reality*, but belongs to reality as another product of *its* evolving history – or its ongoing organic processes.

Once the creator as an external commentator on reality (both admiring it and criticizing it) is removed from the picture and instead inserted as a strictly practical, integral agent of this reality, there is no space for dialogue or relationship between the human being and what Berleant calls the “environment.” Everything, as he asserts, becomes environment: “Environment thus does not consist of a relation between humans and their environment as distinct and separate entities. Environment rather *includes* the human as an interdependent and engaged constituent. One of the most important lessons we can draw from ecology is that there is no environment apart from and distinct from humans.”<sup>33</sup>

## VI. FROM ROMANTIC “EVIL” TO THE PRAGMATIST “NEGATIVE SUBLIME”

From this perspective, the rise of technology and civilization must be regarded as but a more advanced stage in natural evolution, an inevitable result of human environmental conditioning. All its aspects, both positive and negative, are to be appreciated in an aesthetic opening to the field of perception (Berleant describes instances of this kind of experience minutely in various essays devoted to the city and the forest alike<sup>34</sup>).

Paradoxically, this is the point where Pragmatist aesthetics radicalizes the Romantic quest for an individualist liberalization of practice: we are now expected to embrace and appreciate phenomena that are characterized by what Berleant calls the “negative sublime”<sup>35</sup> as legitimate objects of our aesthetic explorations. These include not only natural disasters but also terrorist attacks, genocide, or other mass atrocities which – although morally negative – are subject to our aesthetic involvement (mostly through their perception-awakening character<sup>36</sup>) on an equal basis with “healthy” or pleasing experiences.

This ambiguity may be interpreted as a Pragmatist version of the inclusion of *evil* that so attracted the historical Romantics in their individual experience of global responsibility.<sup>37</sup> The important difference between these two approaches that ought to be emphasized is that for the naturalist aesthetics of engagement, the individual becomes

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 94ff, 104ff.

<sup>35</sup> A. Berleant, *Sensibility and Sense: The Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2010), especially chapter 10: “Art, Terrorism and the Negative Sublime,” 185ff.

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>37</sup> Which inadvertently – as another paradox of Romanticism – turned into an irresponsibility.

practically *dissolved* in the network of threads that the human environment, as a unified historical organism, constitutes, while the Romantic ultimately distances himself from it through his art and his position as an individuated, distinguished genius who sublimates the *evil* by attributing it to an actual muse (whose ontological status admittedly remains ambiguous).

Thanks to its homologous metaphysics, however, the embodied and environmentally mediated interpresence of the human-natural-organic network cannot free itself of ambiguity and power struggles. On the contrary, it constantly undergoes tensions between its parts, especially from the socioeconomic and political perspectives. One cannot overlook the fact that even if Pragmatist aesthetics of the environment and of the body tend to advocate bringing the human perspective closer to the environmental level, the actual situation in which this is being implemented is nothing but the opposite: it is the environment that becomes social<sup>38</sup> and civilizational. As, for example, Bruno Latour points out in his text devoted to political aspects of climatic change, what dominates the contemporary human condition is the appropriation of the natural environment by politics.<sup>39</sup> There is no *natural* environment left, in which the human being should learn to participate as an integral part. There is instead a politicized environment whose morphology, physiology, and dynamics are constantly and non-locally transformed through political-technological decisions. Arnold Berleant is acutely aware of this, too. Technology and its massive, politically steered scale of impact traps his naturalist-Pragmatist ideal in a tragic circle similar to that experienced by the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Romantics – and there is nowhere to run to, as the frame of reference remains stretched between the human as biological and the biological as meta-human.

A striking instance of this trap can be found among the inheritors of 1968's revolutionary ideals: namely, contemporary "Romantics" belonging to counterculture groups of young hackers who, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, would put their energies to activities whose end was their free and independent practice itself, but whose achievements bordered on havoc or disasters. Many were, incidentally, ultimately pragmatic when it came to the pecuniary value of their activity (not to mention the fact that all along they enjoyed middle-class bourgeois privileges provided by their parents), while, as Thomas Streeter points out, leading the lives of uncivilized and "wild" hermits who, like Thoreau, celebrated civil disobedience and a return to the natural state of intellectual activity<sup>40</sup> – as though they were returning to the wild of technologically mediated virtual environments: that is, the organic IT labs improvised in the basements of their parents' houses. It can be argued that these young people were doing what Berleant calls "aesthetically engaging" in the environment – i.e., actively participating in one's experience of everyday life for

<sup>38</sup> On Berleant's transformation of the "aesthetics of the environment" into "environmental aesthetics" cf. Ş.-S. Maftei, "The 'Environmental' Model as a Philosophical Framework for Analyzing Everyday Aesthetics as Environmental Communication," in M. Micle and C. Mesaros (eds.), *Communication Today: An Overview from Online Journalism to Applied Philosophy* (Budapest: Trivent Publishing, 2016), 307-321.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. B. Latour, "War and Peace in an Age of Ecological Conflicts," lecture given at the Wall Institute for Advanced Studies, Vancouver, <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/node/527>, last accessed on 27<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2017.

<sup>40</sup> Th. Streeter, *The Net Effect: Romanticism, Capitalism, and the Internet* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 51ff.



the sake of co-activizing both the human and non-human aspects of the environment. The game played between their directly experienced situation (of dirty clothes, untidy lab spaces, etc.) and a truly immersive though “virtual” sphere of impact and power (which was neat and orderly) seems at least analogous – although in part conversely – to that of the aesthetically engaged agent who manipulates the chaotic environment while *really* still existing in his privileged position of the human who overpowers the surrounding domain, despite his declarations of equality with it.

## VII. THE PARADOX(ES) OF NATURALIST PRAGMATIST AESTHETICS

As was mentioned at the beginning of this text, naturalist Pragmatist aesthetics and aesthetics of engagement propose to transgress the notion of art for the sake of bringing the aesthetic experience to life itself. Our initial question must therefore be asked in a slightly different way: for a naturalist Pragmatist aesthetician, what is the source or *inspiration* of creativity conceived of as *aesthetic practice* that encompasses the political sphere as natural and the natural sphere as political?<sup>41</sup> The answer to this problem seems to form another circular notion: according to the basic assumptions of Pragmatist aesthetics, there is not and cannot be any transcendent inspiration for creative activity. Less still can a notion of a personalized “muse” (another human being or a deity impacting a person in one or other activity) be accepted in all seriousness here, unless as an aspect of the environmental experience of reality. As all acts and practices are creative here – just as they are all aesthetic – which is a natural characteristic of the environment, it follows that it is the environment itself that is capable of inspiring itself.<sup>42</sup> Let us call this characteristic *the capacity for self-enhancement of reality*, which is a more radical version of the Deweyan ameliorative ideal of the Pragmatist culture.<sup>43</sup>

It is certainly not our intention to discard the findings of Pragmatism, especially those that strip absolutist ideologies drawing on Descartes and Hegel of their dubious appeal. It is also not our intention to defend the place of the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century academic understanding of art, unfortunately still promoted (also in its caricatured forms) by art curators struggling to stretch the hegemony of museums and art galleries further and further.

However, one should not turn a blind eye to the inconsistencies that Berleant’s naturalist pragmatic aesthetic theory invites. There are at least two obvious problems with such an approach. First of all, as something capable of creativity, self-inspiring, the environment must thus be transgressive – either in time or space – in order to justify the

<sup>41</sup> Maftei provides an in-depth analysis of the identification of the *aesthetic* environment with the *social* environment (or communication) that replaced the natural environment that was formerly idealized by the Romantics and put in an ambiguous position by the Enlightenment. Cf. Ș.-S. Maftei, “The ‘Environmental’ Model as a Philosophical Framework for Analyzing Everyday Aesthetics as Environmental Communication,” op. cit., 311ff.

<sup>42</sup> In his later works, Berleant re-invites the category of *beauty* and its axiology into environmental aesthetics, as an organic, so to speak, natural factor of the amelioration of what he differentiates from it as harmful kitsch, for example. Cf. A. Berleant, *Aesthetics Beyond the Arts*, op. cit., 216ff.

<sup>43</sup> The pivotal term for the aesthetics of engagement, i.e. *aesthetic experience*, carries within its meaning (as Maftei argues) the element of transgression toward the *extraordinary*. This interpretation suggests that Berleant – as did Dewey – recognizes the ecstatic potential of the environment, the fact that it includes elements that are at the same time external. Cf. Ș.-S. Maftei, “The ‘Environmental’ Model as a Philosophical Framework for Analyzing Everyday Aesthetics as Environmental Communication,” op. cit., 316-318.

presence of axiology. The Pragmatists, as noted above, do in fact use the term *progression* or *amelioration* for this sort of transgression. However, the question “What is the basis for our evaluation of a given experience as an ‘ameliorative’ process rather than as something else or nothing at all?” remains unposed here. How, therefore, can Berleant’s engaged aesthetic creator distinguish between the beautiful, the sublime, and the negative sublime without falling into error or faltering from a lack of evidence? The organic explanation is still insufficient, for if a phenomenon is to be perceived and discriminated on the basis of the environment’s growth rather than decline (as Berleant seems to suggest), then what is the criterion for identifying growth or decline within the environment’s (spatial as well as temporal) totality? It is impossible to assess without contradicting the assumption of equality of all actors in the environment. For example, if human beings are to be considered not as receivers of the environment but as an equivalent factor with all other agents in it, then from the environment’s point of view even the processes of evolution that led from early primates to the Australopithecines to *Homo sapiens sapiens* as we know him now must be considered ambiguous, if not harmful, for it has brought about an impoverishment in the variety of archaic human and non-human species in the environment; this would appear to mean that the environment is self-harming and not self-enhancing. Similarly, the examples given by Berleant of aesthetically negative phenomena, such as disasters or terrorism, do not sustain within themselves a justification of their negativity, unless seen from an external perspective – one exterior to that of the environment itself, as a totality. For how do we know that from the environment’s point of view they are negative, destructive, or detrimental in some way? They may, in fact, create spaces or displacements of matter in the environment that are necessary for the future development of aesthetic qualities unimaginable for us now, like extraordinarily complex, dynamic, and multifunctional biological or non-organic formations that will enrich the environment with new actors. It seems compelling that within this theory of radical naturalist aesthetics either there is no privileged point of reference for making any such axiological evaluations – and therefore all aesthetic perceptions must be equivalent (not *positive* or *negative*) – or this theory is internally incongruent.

The second problem that Berleant and his followers’ environmental view creates (but does not give a clear reply to) is: how does one deal with the quite real, non-metaphoric, non-representational, and non-mimetic – but authentic – act of creating performed, for example, when a theory is formulated by a philosopher: like the Kantian system produced by Kant, or the collective act of creation of the theory of the transcendent? Does not each of these acts demand to be considered an entity that – on the basis of the metaphysical equality proposed by Berleant – simply *is* and, as such, constitutes a part of the environment and, indeed, one that is much less ambiguous than the examples of the negative sublime that he invites into aesthetics? Or should we treat such processes and their products as examples of the self-destructiveness of the environmental field? If so, then how ought we to reconcile their presence with the fact that such a reality (including the human being as part of it) is supposed to be inherently self-enhancing? Is it then a matter of applying quantitative rather than qualitative (and therefore metaphysical) criteria of differentiation? If so, then the naturalist pragmatic aesthetic theory is of a utilitarian character; it becomes reducible to purely physical or mathematical figures that represent proportions of entropy, and which

in turn brings the whole project back to the Cartesian dualism – as well as back to the specifically *human* perspective as its privileged point of reference, as opposed to that of the environment as a whole.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

As the questions formulated above demonstrate, the monistic project of environmental aesthetics proposed by Berleant suffers from a problem analogous to that of the Romantic ideal of the genius artist, only shifted from the realm of fantasy to the realm of everyday life: on the one hand, the *negative* of reality (the destructive, aesthetically displeasing, and unhealthy) is identified as that which originates in the objectifying intellectual approach to the environment, one that positions itself outside of it. On the other hand, just as the Romantic artist positioned both the positive and the negative element within the inspiring *muse*, in the aesthetics of engagement, the environment conceived as a monistic entity comprising both the active subject and his co-active realm must comprehend within itself also the negative element, in order to comply with the postulate of monistic completeness. In view of this, the environmental aesthetics of engagement seems stuck with an unenviable choice between recognizing and welcoming irrationality as a norm (and thus accepting its own inconsistency) or inviting back the banished systems of differentiation of the subject and the object, based on aesthetic contemplation.<sup>44</sup> It does not want to take either step, and so it maintains the *status quo* of its condition, making impossible a fulfillment of its ameliorative mission and ensuring that its mission remains necessary in perpetuity – a gesture with a rather Romantic degree of conflict.

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<sup>44</sup> On the possibility of maintaining a disinterested contemplation without objectifying the environment, cf. D. Dönmez, “Saving ‘Disinterestedness’ in Environmental Aesthetics: A Defense against Berleant and Saito,” in F. Dorsch and D.-E. Ratiu (eds.), *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics*, vol. 7, 2015 (Fribourg: ESA, 2015), 172-187; M. Budd, *The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature: Essays on the Aesthetics of Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 111.

Piotr Nowak

## THE POLISH SCHOOL OF ESSAY

[*Four Decades of Polish Essays*, ed. Jan Kott, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1990, 403 pp.]

The essay, as opposed to perfect forms – the novel, the sonnet, Spinoza’s *Ethics* – is the marking of that which is fleeting. The essay makes no claims about universally found, i.e. absolute, meanings. It is an attempt – always tentative, burdened with the risk of failure – at recording an experience that, being casual, often personal, historical, usually passes unnoticed. The beginnings of the essay can be traced back to Plato’s dialogues, Seneca’s letters or Plutarch’s *Moralia*. The essay as a literary genre in its own right took shape as late as early modernity in the writings of Montaigne who, in his *Essays*, tried to depict the world’s beauty in its noble aspects (writing of love, remorse, friendship) as well as in those more trivial (when he sang praise of asparagus leaves or the mores of a cannibal). Essays, however, consist of more than the writer’s swinging moods and shaky views; history also has a say here. The essay, often scrawled hastily, in turbulent times, under the pressure of the forces of history, “feeds” on the fleeting nature of reality – a turmoil of history is more of an ally than an enemy. A case in point is the anthology’s opening essay, Jerzy Stempowski’s *The Smuggler’s Library*. Talking about the books read during the war, which had the greatest impact on him, Stempowski observes that the importance of this or that work did not in his case depend on the work’s content, but on the circumstances he read it in. Life, it seems, is also made up of moments when it does not matter what we read, only that we are able to keep up the ability to read at all. When going to bed in a -20 degrees centigrade cold, ill, with no medicine available and not enough food, the main issue is not the choice of books (although, surprisingly, the smugglers’ winter hideout did not lack these), but the effort not to lose the sense of continuity of one’s self. “A wartime

reader must rely first and foremost on his memory. At the end of the road he will be left only with what he remembers. (...) Sitting in the dark room I made inventories of things I remembered. These were miserably poor inventories.”

During his wartime wanderings Jerzy Stempowski forced his way through the Eastern Carpathia inhabited at the time by Lemkos, Ukrainians, Poles and Jews. It was a time of genuine multinational coexistence, not forced by anyone; the more mysterious, the more it remains unexplored and unclassified. In an essay on the Hasidic religiosity (*An Encounter with the Hasidim*) Stanisław Vincenz gave the mystery an additional, “Hutsul,” dimension. For him – a Hutsul gentile – the Hasidim were not ordinary neighbours. He saw them as eulogists of personal freedom, Jewish “Sarmatians.” Hasidism was the religion of the poor, almost out of reach for the educated. It postulated turning away from a rigorous formalism, questioning the value of fasting and asceticism. Hasidic ideas were suffused with an air of tolerance, the readiness to forgive each other. You could see the Hasidim engrossed in a joyful prayer, dancing, or drinking. About their opponents they would say that they pray without any warmth, which makes them cold as ice, as if they were keeping vigil over the dead, “whereas the hearts of the Hasidim grow inflamed during prayer and that is why a living human being must drink vodka.” They partook in the life of everything living and breathing, experiencing life to the fullest. Their vibrancy broke with conventions. They lived the truth of existence as well as inside of this truth: “The Hasidim’s decision to keep their distance from educated people and education in general inevitably brought them close to the local population, who spoke Polish or Ukrainian. The Hasidim Jews spoke, wrote, and prayed in Yiddish, but as their links with peasants became stronger, they adopted elements of the local language.”

Not much later the Poland written about by Stempowski and reminisced about in Stanisław Vincenz’s work, was gone. The most important Polish writers – Gombrowicz, Czapski, Mackiewicz, Herling-Grudziński, Vincenz, Bobkowski, and so many others – chose emigration. The pros and cons of creative work in exile are analyzed in Józef Wittlin’s beautiful, moving essay (*Sorrow and Grandeur of Exile*).

A writer who has been driven out of his country by political circumstances is in danger of living with that which is no longer there, he is prone to interact with the ghosts of the past who paralyze his creative imagination; he is condemned to “pining for trifling things whose real or alleged charm has gone forever.” A writer left to his own devices weakens, blackens, walks around bloated with memories. He does not know yet that cherishing every bygone moment makes it difficult to select the memories that can be used creatively. Therefore Wittlin advises that in the new world the writer has to learn to sidestep his personal history. Yet the writer’s biggest misery is the desire to be universally liked, a trait typical of ghettoized communities where appreciation, often illusory, based on obsolete hierarchies, translates into material fruit. A writer whose position in the literary world was made stable by virtue of his place in social milieus and café societies, suddenly has to learn to spell his name as it does not mean much abroad. These afflictions may, however, prove a blessing whenever the writer desires to constitute himself anew, without the “historical” context and old associations.

The first part of *Four Decades of Polish Essays* where the Polish writer is shown against the changing backdrop of history (regaining independence, wars, revolutions,

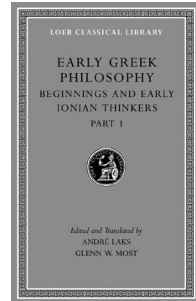
sudden changes of artistic paradigm, etc.), makes a very good impression. Then things get hard-going. Jan Kott, who collected all the texts and grouped them according to his own taste and calculations, decided to gift-wrap them in decorative foreign paper. I suspect he did so to smooth over our “immaturity” and lack of nurture, to prepare them – washed clean and perfumed – for the worldly prancing and curtsying. So when Schulz explains to Witkacy the connection between his painterly work and the beauty of Drohobych’s “cinnamon shops,” Jan Kott places his work against the background of Kafka’s writings as if Schulz’s work was not strong enough to express its contents. He adopts a similar approach to the essays of Czapski, Miciński, Kubiak, and many others. If Miciński, then from the perspective of “a work of nature” that Kant was; if Czapski, then in Bonnard’s shadow; if Kubiak, then a hollow Kubiak, at most adorned with quotes from Pascal, and the most hackneyed ones at that, constantly repeated as “words of wisdom” or, rather, platitudes. (Here is an example of Kubiak’s verbiage: “the Bible is something entirely different from all the systems of philosophy. I am at a loss how to put it into words but I feel very strongly: to my mind, the Bible is above all a record of experiences and not a record of any kind of thesis.” No less interesting than this fragment is the very ending of the essay: “Throw [my musings] into the fire unless they can be of some use to someone”). Letting slide the impossible pomposity of some of the essays, I still get the impression that their very selection shows Kott’s incredible parochialism: he prefers to discuss universal issues using a foreign voice, elucidate their meaning through the terminology used elsewhere, instead of tackling them from his own perspective, without an intermediary.

Naturally everyone in Kott’s place would put together a different anthology, chosen different texts, used different selection criteria. And yet the absence of authors such as Andrzej Bobkowski, Ryszard Przybylski, Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz, Kazimierz Brandys (as we know him from *Charaktery i pisma*) or Krzysztof Michalski and Bronisław Łagowski – is typical of this selection. And I am afraid it means that Kott, when preparing the second part of the anthology which includes essays by Wojciech Karpiński, Adam Michnik or Jerzy Grotowski (for the love of God, Grotowski was an outstanding artist but not an essayist!), instead of being in touch with the most vibrant currents of contemporary Polish culture, only explored its surface, that which was most publicized but only consisted of wind and a little smoke.

Despite the reservations I made, I consider *Four Decades of Polish Essays* a success. Thanks to it Polish readers will learn that the Polish school of essay was shaped after the war, and mainly abroad, and Americans – or rather: the several American weirdos interested in Polish culture – will learn that the essay is our national sport.

Christian Wildberg

## TWO NEW EDITIONS OF THE PRESOCRATICS – AND WHAT TO DO WITH THEM



[A. Laks, G.W. Most (eds.), *Early Greek Philosophy*, 9 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016); A. Laks, G.W. Most (eds.), *Les débuts de la philosophie* (Paris: Fayard, 2016)]

I wish to thank the organizers of this colloquium<sup>1</sup> for inviting me and giving me the opportunity to both honor and discuss one of the most exciting and important new publication in the field of classical philosophy, the recently published nine-volume Loeb edition of *Early Greek Philosophy*. Even though this was not part of my charge, I would like to point out that the publication of the nine Loeb volumes coincided, more or less, with an equally impressive French edition by the same two scholars entitled *Les débuts de la philosophie*, and already in its second printing. The English and French editions are organized along the same editorial principles and do not differ in substance or spirit. The main difference between them, apart from the modern target language, is the fact that the French version is bound as one single and expansive volume, shiny and white, with delicately fine pages filled with Gallic intellect, the other, English version is many, compact and green, that is to say, robust bundles of Anglo-Saxon materiality. It is as if the former served as Platonic paradigm for the latter, but that would probably be a case of attaching too much importance to appearances – not a philosophical thing to do and completely wrong.

<sup>1</sup> This is a slightly revised transcript of a talk given on October 14, 2017 at Columbia University.

What is not wrong is that those of us who ruin pens and pencils – not by writing down freely flowing streams of thoughts but by forever chewing on the utensils' ends, in the vain hope of masticating some inspiration out of them – are likely to be awestruck by the fact that these two eminent scholars have simultaneously published 10 important and highly complex books, juggling not only the four obvious languages Greek, Latin, and then either English or French, but also Arabic and Hebrew, of which there are welcome snippets here and there. Moreover, we find marked improvements over earlier treatments of the Pre-Socratics, in terms of content and scope. For example, we now have the new Empedocles reunited with the old; the sophists receive much more detailed and informative attention; and the inclusion of the Derveni Papyrus is a terrific bonus that should galvanize scholarship on this unique text. *Early Greek Philosophy* is not only a publication of enormous complexity at the cutting edge of classical scholarship, it is also an impressive monument to scholarly collaboration. Every footnote, reference, translation and editorial decision had to be proposed, discussed, and agreed upon. I can barely imagine how many of such philological decisions must have been made and remade in the course of this veritably Herculean task. The combined result, nine fully-fledged Loeb's and a French doorstopper are, it's no exaggeration to say, a miracle to behold. As Jack London once pointed out, there are two kinds of miracles: those you have to see to believe, and those that you cannot believe even *after* you have seen them. The publications we celebrate here today belong to the latter kind, especially since the awe they inspire does not diminish when one spends time with them, as I have been doing over the past few weeks and months. On the contrary.

To anticipate my overall verdict: This is a publication that, in its significance, far exceeds that of any typical Loeb publication, and it will define Presocratic scholarship for years to come. It might well acquire the authoritative status that the scholarly community up to now accorded the original collection of Presocratic fragments by Hermann Diels and Walter Kranz, first published well over a hundred years ago, in 1906. I thought it might be good to say a few words about this vaunted predecessor publication, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*,<sup>2</sup> if only to give voice to a faint but distinct feeling of nostalgia. Does the arrival of the Anglo-Franco synopsis of early Greek philosophy mean that we now have to say good-bye to Diels-Kranz? It seems so. Progress comes at its price, and not just monetary. When I acquired my very own DK as a graduate student, I put the three stately ultramarine volumes in a privileged spot on my bookshelf. It felt like a *rite de passage*. Their covers bound the same pages that towering scholars such as John Burnet and William K.C. Guthrie or Wolfgang Schadewaldt and, alas!, Martin Heidegger had mulled over, and to what effect! To me, there was no doubt that these opaque messages from the past reflected an enchanted lost world of brilliant intelligence and insight, transmitted over the space of many centuries, and of course refracted by the twists and turns of appropriation and misunderstanding. Nevertheless, the enigmatic fragments within had the nimbus of profound truths and original wisdom. It was glorious.

Now all that is just another Loeb. The regal anapaests of *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* have yielded to the pedestrian trochees of *Early Greek Philosophy*. To be sure, with André Laks and Glenn Most, the scholarly world has taken a huge step forward,

<sup>2</sup> Volume I of DK was published in 1906, volume II in 1907, and the index by Walter Kranz in 1910.



but if their labor also means that we are now phasing out Diels and Kranz, something subtle, intangible, and magical will have been lost.

But this is probably just me getting soft. No stroke of nostalgia should blind us to the enormous opportunity afforded by this new edition, in that it makes the Presocratics accessible to a much wider range of scholars. So far, the study of the Presocratics was pretty much an enterprise of a highly educated elite; to be sure, you could read Kirk-Raven and Schofield, but if you wanted to do it right, you had to work your way through the Greek, Latin, and German of Hermann Diels and Walter Kranz. Now, classrooms full of Loeb-Trotters will be able to tour the Presocratics with André and Glenn as their reliable guides. Mind you, I am not using the term Loeb-Trotters in any way disparagingly; there is an enormous number of intelligent, careful, and imaginative students of philosophy out there who have not had the opportunity, or the necessary dose of masochism, to learn Greek, Latin, and German to the required level. And who would blame them? Yet despite this fact (or perhaps rather because of it), their minds seem fresher, with keener philosophical acumen. And so, there is hope that they will come up with novel and insightful interpretations of this difficult material. With the publication we celebrate today, I expect Presocratic scholarship to take off once again with the same kind of energy and benefit that followed the pioneering work of Diels and Kranz.

Now, I have used the word “Presocratic” several times, and I understand that André Laks and Glenn Most want to step away from this label. As they state in the introduction to their collection (vol. I, 6):

The term “Presocratics” is often used for the authors collected here. We have not prohibited ourselves from using the term when refusal to have recourse to it would have been artificial; but we avoid it as far as possible because of its undesirable connotations.

In a way, I fully agree, even though I don’t think there is much harm done, nor confusion sown, if we continue to use the P-word. To be sure, the label “Vorsokratiker” or “Presocratic” is an invention of 19<sup>th</sup> century historiography and has become a matter of convention. In a similar way, “Neoplatonism” is the same sort of misnomer, given that the revival of Platonism in the Roman Empire freely borrowed from Aristotle, the Stoics, and for good measure from Egypt (or so I think). I am inclined to adhere to the designation “Presocratic” for the same reason that I would retain the label “Neoplatonic.” We all know what is meant and are, at the same time, well aware that some of the so-called Presocratics were actually contemporaries of Socrates. But Socrates himself features in the new Laks-Most collection, and one can understand that for this reason alone the editors much prefer the designation “Early Greek Philosophy,” just as Daniel Graham had done before them in his eminently user-friendly CUP edition of the fragments.<sup>3</sup>

But I submit that I find that label of “earliness” equally dissatisfactory. No one would file away Euripides or Thucydides under the label “Early Greek Drama” or “Early

<sup>3</sup> See D.W. Graham, *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy*. Parts I and II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Historiography.” There is nothing particularly early about Empedocles (c.490-430), let alone the sophists or Democritus (c. 460-370). We are squarely in the Classical period and beyond. Democritus must have died around the time that Plato opened his Academy. The timeline does not really provide us with a compelling criterion. Similarly, the traditional tale that it was Socrates who first brought humanity into philosophical focus fails us: To be sure, Socrates may have abandoned natural speculation (*pace* Aristophanes) in favor of moral reflection, but it is not the case that moral and legal considerations were absent from Greek thought until then. Think of Hesiod’s *Works and Days* or Solon’s *Elegies*, or the undoubtedly flourishing tradition of Greek wisdom literature. Moreover, there is the intriguing fact that a great many of our early philosophers of nature were actually active as lawgivers and political advisers. No, it is with Plato that entirely new phenomena come into being: the systematic organization of knowledge, the exclusive community of scholars, the establishment of philosophy as an institution of elite education with classroom instruction and public relations in the form of published and performed dialogues. It is at this time, too, that the relationship between philosophers and political power seems to be changing. It is now much cozier than in the days of the archaic tyrannies. So, in many ways the designation “Pre-Platonic philosophy” might overall be more useful and accurate, and it is this label that I shall use from now on.

But enough of generalities! I have a couple of modest proposals to make. They are modest in the sense that they result in a plea to delete one word in Volume II and to change the translation of one word in Volume III and one in Volume V. My remarks concern first Thales, then Anaximander and Heraclitus, and finally Parmenides. And although the proposals made here may seem like matters of detail, I hope you will find them to be not entirely insignificant. On the contrary, I should think that they may have momentous implications, ideally pointing into new directions of possible future research on the Pre-Platonists and what to do with them.<sup>4</sup>

## 1. THALES

According to archeologists, the one and only Greek colony in Egypt, Naucratis, was founded around 625 BC. Herodotus reports it was turned over to Greek administration by Amasis II in 570 or shortly thereafter, when the Greek mercenaries who had fought in the civil war between Pharaoh Apries and his general and successor Amasis were to be settled there. Amasis, we may note by the way, was in political allegiance with Croesus, the Lydian king whom Thales accompanied as army engineer when he sought to destroy the Persian empire. That, at any rate, is the story.

Now, in his *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient*, Martin West states categorically:

Byzantine writers say that Pherecydes visited Egypt, but this was said of many “philosophers” from Solon and Thales to Plato, and cannot be taken

<sup>4</sup> I should warn the reader at this point that the following remarks, although taking cues from textual observations in the first printing of the Loeb edition, really originate from a broader interest in the origins of philosophy on my part. The critical and the speculative are not clearly marked and separated.

very seriously, even if Egypt was one of the most interesting objects of foreign travel for an inquisitive man of the sixth century.<sup>5</sup>

There seems to be a bit of twisted logic in play here, betraying, possibly, ideological bias. For could one not just as well reason that “Byzantine writers say that Pherecydes visited Egypt, *and* this was said of many ‘philosophers’ from Solon and Thales to Plato and *should* be taken very seriously, *since* Egypt was one of the most interesting objects of foreign travel for an inquisitive man of the sixth century”? What hard evidence do we really have either way? In any case, even though West explicitly deals with the Orient and its influence on early Greece, none of the many reported travels to Egypt play any role in his analysis. His index has an entry “Egypt, alleged visits by philosophers,” 253), but the sole reference is to the deflationary passage just quoted. Importantly, the general attitude on display here is not one at all unique to Martin West; in fact, it is shared by quite a few scholars of this period, including, it seems, the two that are being discussed here.

In Volume II, Part 1, 212-215, dealing with Thales, we read the subtitle: “Alleged Education in Egypt (P3-P5).” There follow three reports, one by Diogenes Laertius, one by Ps.-Plutarch (lifted from Aëtius), and another from Iamblichus (none of them a “Byzantine writer,” by the way). All of them speak of Thales’ sojourn in Egypt: “No one showed him the way, except that he went to Egypt and spent time with the priests” (Diogenes); “After he had practiced philosophy in Egypt, he came to Miletus as an old man” (Aëtius); “(Thales) exhorted him [i.e. Pythagoras] to sail to Egypt and to spend time above all with the priests of Memphis and of Diospolis [i.e. Thebes]. For it was from them that he himself had obtained what made most people regard him as a sage.”

To be sure, Thales’ education in Egypt is being “alleged” here. But what is the connotation of “alleged”? I think it would be unfortunate if it signaled to modern readers that they are confronted with something like a “false fact.”<sup>6</sup> Bear in mind that Diogenes Laertius actually links Thales to Egypt on three further occasions. He first quotes Pamphila of Epidaurus (mid 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E.) “who stated that having learnt geometry from the Egyptians, he (i.e. Thales) was the first to inscribe a right-angled triangle in a circle, whereupon he sacrificed an ox” (DL I 24). A few pages further down we learn that Hieronymus of Rhodes (3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.E.) reported that Thales measured the height of the pyramids (DL I 27); and, finally, we hear that Thales had developed a theory concerning the overflow of the Nile (DL I 37). Hence, it is on four separate occasions that Diogenes draws his readers attention to Thales’ Egyptian connection. That in itself should be significant, but it is even more remarkable when one remembers that Diogenes, unlike West, wanted to play *down* any possible outside influences on Greek philosophical thinkers in order to corroborate his claim of Greek cultural and intellectual exceptionalism.<sup>7</sup> But committed to this view as he was, he did not go so far as to brazenly suppress what must

<sup>5</sup> See M. West, *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971, rep. 2002), 3.

<sup>6</sup> The French edition uses “supposes” at this point, which is certainly less open to misunderstanding.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Diogenes’ *Prologue* to his work, esp. I 3. After mentioning ancient accounts that attribute the invention of philosophy to anyone but the Greeks (Persians, Assyrians, Indians, Celts, Gauls, Phoenicians, Thracians,

have been an only too well-known datum of Thales' biography. And it stands to reason: Egypt was indeed an "interesting object of travel," but it was more than that: with its architecture, writing system, record keeping, astronomical observations, medical practice, age-old wisdom, and religious lore, it was a land of terrific allure, a land in which any inquisitive young Greek, once he stepped off the boat in Naucratis, could learn a ton of stuff wholly unavailable elsewhere.

To my mind, there is possibly a lot to be learned if we, as scholars of Early Greek philosophy, turned our collective attention a bit more towards ancient Egypt, and less towards Babylonia and the supposed territories, languages, and poetics of nebulously reconstructed Indo-Europeans. And in any case away from the wholly untenable feel-good mantra that "our" Greeks did it all by themselves, in that miraculous axial age of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. To be sure, the Greek philosophers did something quite remarkable, inventing a new high-brow pastime for the elites, but I do not doubt for a moment that these early proponents of bold new cosmogonies and physical theories that challenged the baronial narratives of traditional myth and religion stood on the shoulders of nameless earlier giants – foreign ones, no doubt – and that they drew vital encouragement from them.

But, to return to Thales for a moment, who has been strangely difficult to come to grips with: is he a philosopher at all, or rather an engineer in His Majesty's service? To be sure, he was counted among the wise men of Greece and has a few *bon-mots* to his credit, but he is also the clumsy coot who falls into a well as he is gazing at the sky, to determine the date of the next eclipse, presumably. Moreover, by Greek standards, even by the standards of an Anaximander, Thales' metaphysics (water!) is of embarrassing simplicity, and the dictum that all things are full of gods leaves one to suspect that the Greek enlightenment miracle had not quite kicked in yet. Think of the ox that had to die just because Thales had inscribed a triangle into a circle! Thales does not really get us off to a good start, one might think, and the question what precisely to make of him has given historians of philosophy the occasional headache.

But then consider this: the Thales puzzle, along with the headaches, vanishes as soon as we allow Thales to travel to Egypt and stay there for a while, as in fact Hieronymus, Pamphila, Diogenes, Iamblichus, as well as Aëtius and his source do. Because then, all of a sudden, Thales becomes a coherent figure with considerable historical plausibility. There could not be a more Egyptian metaphysics than combining the postulate of gods everywhere with the claim that all things come from water. Egyptians firmly believed in the divinity of the natural world, and they experienced every year the creative power of water with the flooding of the Nile. Next, because everything in Egypt depended on the flooding of the Nile, and because that event followed closely upon the summer solstice, it was of paramount importance for them to observe the heavens if they wanted to have a reliable agricultural calendar. Observing the sky over long periods of time would alert a stargazing culture quite naturally to past, present and future conjunctions of the two major planets. Thales predicted, so his biography states, the eclipse of 585, when he

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Libyans, and Egyptians), Diogenes declares: "These authors forget that the achievements which they attribute to the barbarians belong to the Greeks, with whom not merely philosophy but the human race itself began."

was presumably in his mid-fifties. Could Thales really have made enough astronomical observations in his own lifetime to allow him to make that prediction,<sup>8</sup> especially when one considers all the other worthy endeavors that preoccupied his prodigious mind, such as pronouncing words of wisdom, renting out oil-presses, and diverting the flow of water (another quintessentially Egyptian activity, by the way)?

And then there is the mathematical genius. I am not sure what you all make of Thales' theorem, that a triangle inscribed in a circle with the diameter as its base is always going to be a right triangle. This looks like a cool fact that children learn in Geometry 101, only safely to forget it as soon as possible. But they shouldn't. For the theorem is really cool if you want to build something, a house, a deck, or, let's say, a pyramid or a temple. In all these cases it is absolutely paramount to make the sides of the foundation meet at right angles exactly. Now, all you need is a rope and a couple of sticks, and you have just the tools required to get the sides and angles of your foundation spot-on, every time. Nothing could be easier: Draw parallel lines to demarcate two opposite perimeter sides of your foundation, select a corner point on one of them, stretch a rope from there across to a point on the opposite perimeter line at a decent angle (it does not matter which), find the midpoint of the rope by doubling it up upon itself, and finally, with the rope now half its length draw a semicircle about that midpoint. At the intersection of the circumference and the perimeter line you have your second corner at 90° exactly. I ask: What is historically more plausible, that the Egyptian builders did not know this, but Thales did, or that the latter learned it from the former?

A similar story can be told about the other ostensibly Thalean "discovery," viz. that the base angles of an isosceles triangle are the same. Where might one need that sort of theorem? Perhaps when one wants to build a pyramid and doesn't want to be embarrassed by its tip being out of whack, for everyone to see from far and wide? Quite possibly, I should think. Here again, if we look for a plausible "Sitz im Leben" for Thales' famous mathematical achievements, the inquisitive mind is led to Egypt, the land of a millennia-old tradition of monumental precision architecture. I would bet a large amount of social capital that the master architects of the Pharaohs were using Thales' theorems all the time, and long before anyone in Greece knew what a trowel was.

Can one prove any of this? Of course not, but proceeding along this line is suggestive and fruitful. It also has a fair amount of historical plausibility to its credit. I would therefore plead with the editors of *Early Greek Philosophy* to be bold and speak, in the case of Thales, simply of "Education in Egypt" and strike the "Alleged," because that participle does something else besides signaling prudent caution: it harks back to the problematic insistence on Greek exceptionalism, an attitude that is so much part and parcel of that odious and increasingly untenable glorification of "our" Western civilization. Let me be clear: I am not pointing fingers, as there can be no doubt that the editors did not intend anything of this sort. I am rather wondering if the discipline of ancient philosophy is not collectively equipped with some pretty solid blinkers of "Westernism" that impair our historical vision from time to time. And I don't think I have to say this explicitly: my

<sup>8</sup> Although total solar eclipses occur about every 18 months somewhere on earth, to observe one at any given location one might have to wait for hundreds of years.

proposal is of course not simply a minor point about Thales, but it concerns our general attitude towards, and interest in, the cultural forces that forged early Greek intellectual history. Egypt plays a huge role in this story, not just as the undeniable backdrop for Hellenistic literature and culture, but much more broadly so both in antiquity, and doubtlessly in the earliest period of Greek philosophy and science.

## 2. ANAXIMANDER / HERACLITUS

One of the most memorable and significant pieces of information we have about Anaximander, Thales' alleged "successor," is that he was the first philosophical prose author, or even the first Greek prose author full stop – depending on what one is inclined to think about Pherecydes. Let us set aside the question who deserves pride of place. It cannot be settled anyway. There are three remarkable facts connected with this prose authorship claim. The first is quite simply that someone who flourished before the middle of the sixth century, on the coast of Ionia and quite out of the blue, should have undertaken such a project. Who did he think his audience was going to be? Who would even be interested enough to read, if he could read, a vernacular tractate on nature, and in what social context?

The second fact is connected to this but concerns modern scholarship: Here Anaximander is given a good pat on the back for his literary innovation, and then scholars quickly move on to the ἄπειρον or his theory of the elements or seasons (or whatever it may be that he was talking about) and their interlocking transformation according to some elusive law of retribution. No scholar even pauses to reflect on the cultural incongruity of Anaximandrian prose breaking into the song culture of archaic Greece.

And the third astonishing fact is that there is actually evidence, and evidence no less well attested, as far as I can see, that Anaximander too was a poet and singer, evidence that is completely ignored. Researching this topic, I, at any rate, have reached the conclusion that, if we take all the evidence into account, Anaximander may well have been, *before* he became a prose author, an ἀοιδός – just like any other Hellenic intellectual of the time. Here is just one piece of evidence, again from Diogenes Laertius:

They say that while he (i.e. Anaximander) was singing, the young servants (τὰ παιδάρια) were making fun of him; when he found that out, he said: "I must sing better, then, for the sake of (διὰ) the servants."<sup>9</sup>

Diels and Kranz printed this text in parenthesis and declared in a footnote: "auch diese Anekdote ist falsch bezogen."<sup>10</sup> In consequence of this dismissal, no one in the long line of scholars on Anaximander has ever commented on this bit of information, nor made the vaguest reference to it. To my knowledge, Diels never justified his condemnation; nevertheless, we would of course be ill advised not to take his intuition seriously. I suspect

<sup>9</sup> In Laks-Most, this anecdote is tucked away as the last entry in section P (for "Person"), see vol. II, 278f. (P 11). They translate τὰ παιδάρια with "children," but the other attested sense of the word ("servants") seems more likely. It is easier to imagine Anaximander's servants overhearing him as he composed his poem than him performing in front of children. In what context?

<sup>10</sup> See H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6th ed. (Berlin, 1951), vol. I, 82.

that the main consideration that alerted him to the possibility that this anecdote was spurious is the fact that the story clashes with the general picture we have of Anaximander: prose-authors don't sing. Perhaps Diels also noticed that *παιδάρια* is not a word attested before the fifth century, and Anaximander, or anyone else before that time, is unlikely to have used it, as he probably would also not have used *διά* + accusative to express purpose, something that we find in Thucydides, but not much earlier than that.<sup>11</sup> If this is a story that has indeed something to do with Anaximander, as I still think it does, we must assume that it has been considerably rephrased as it was told and retold from one generation to the next. Which is actually unsurprising. The important fact is that it was an integral part of the doxographical tradition concerning Anaximander.

Moreover, this story does not stand in isolation. There are other bits of information that point into the same direction: that many of Anaximander's words can fit into an hexameter (*ἀρχή, γένεσιν, δίδωσιν, ἄπειρον, ἀνώλεθρον, πρηστήρ*, etc.) is probably neither here nor there, but Simplicius explicitly draws attention to the poetic nature of Anaximander's narrative (*In phys.* 24, 18-23): according to that commentator, Anaximander was "saying these things in this way, in rather poetical words."<sup>12</sup> It is of course possible that Anaximandean prose as such happened to be especially florid, but it is also possible, and perhaps more plausible, that the poetic character of what Simplicius read was a legacy feature carried over into it from the genuine poetry it once was. There is another significant detail that could point into that direction.

About Anaximander's treatise we also learn the following, again from Diogenes relying on Apollodorus of Athens (2<sup>nd</sup> cent B.C.):

(Anaximander) made a summary exposition of his opinions, which Apollodorus of Athens seems to have come across.<sup>13</sup>

The important phrase here is *κεφαλαιώδη τὴν ἔκθεσιν*, a summary exposition. This suggests that Anaximander did not write or publish his "complete works," but some kind of synopsis or outline in a summary fashion. But a summary of what? If Apollodorus and Diogenes can be trusted, Anaximander's text had the character of dependency on something else, a larger and presumably more detailed body of thought. And I am suggesting that the full exposition of his doctrines took the form of a poem, in fact the form of epic poetry, just as in the case of Parmenides and Empedocles some two or three generations later.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Cf. LSJ s.v. B III 3.

<sup>12</sup> ποιητικωτέροις οὕτως ὀνόμασιν αὐτὰ λέγων (LM D6; formerly B1 in DK).

<sup>13</sup> Translation by Laks and Most, Anaximander D2 (= DK A1). The Greek text reads: τῶν δὲ ἀρεσκόντων αὐτῷ πεποιήται κεφαλαιώδη τὴν ἔκθεσιν, ὡς (Cobet ἦ) που περιέτυχεν καὶ Ἀπολλόδορος ὁ Ἀθηναῖος. Cobet's proposed emendation of ἦ που for the manuscripts' ὡς που, universally accepted, does not seem to be necessary, since *περιτυγχάνω* can mean "encounter" in a metaphorical sense, e.g. encountering something in a text (= reading), which is how Diogenes uses the word elsewhere (cf. DL II 97.9; V 11.11; V 69.4). My preferred translation would be: "Anaximander made a summary exposition of his opinions, as in fact Apollodorus of Athens read somewhere."

<sup>14</sup> This leads to another observation: if Apollodorus' report is indeed trustworthy, we may add another interesting fact about Anaximander, one that has gone unnoticed up to now, viz. that Anaximander was not only the first philosophical prose author, but also the first gnomologist.

Again, this is almost pure speculation, but that an intellectual of the early sixth century was a performing singer has a high degree of plausibility, more so at any rate than that he was a prose author and only a prose author, as current orthodoxy would have it. Noteworthy as this new reading of Anaximander may be in and of itself, it also opens a window that brings a much more significant historical question into view. For one might ask the question what difference does it make whether or not Anaximander was a poet or not?

My answer would be that it makes an enormous amount of difference, one that may dramatically modify our broader understanding of the trajectory of early Greek intellectual history.

For if this is right, and if Anaximander was a performing poet and during his lifetime propagated his work in the context of polis festivals and aristocratic symposia, then he was, in addition to having been a proto-scientist, also a *public* figure, a prominent voice in the polis. Keep in mind that Miletus in the 6<sup>th</sup> century was torn by political strife. The political culture was dominated by strongmen such as Thrasybulus, tyrant of Miletus at the time of Anaximander, who gave his fellow-tyrant Periander the advice to chop down any stalk of corn that stood above its neighbors (Herodotus V 92f). If we think of Anaximander, in the first instance, not as the natural scientist but as a public intellectual/poet, it becomes natural to begin to wonder about any possible political dimension of his thought, and once one does that his famous sentence invoking punishment and retribution according to the order of time appears in an entirely new light. Might it not just as well contain an encoded political message? Scholars have puzzled endlessly over what Anaximander may have been referring to when he says that “they give one another justice and retribution for their injustice.” Did he mean worlds, elements, or seasons? My own view would be that the importance of determining the cosmological subject matter of this sentence pales in comparison with the political implications of the claim. What fascinates about Anaximander’s fragment is that, if it was indeed part of a public discourse, we would see him employ a political metaphor to describe a natural process, and then project this conception of the cosmos in political terms back into the public sphere. The message to the powerful elites and tyrants is at once veiled and obvious. The *universal* claim that everything that asserts itself in its existence will pay retribution for its injustice is a clear menetekel for the tyrants of Miletus, or any other autocrat who should be listening: no act of injustice will remain without its corresponding act of retribution.

But the story of course does not end with Anaximander. It is not difficult to find evidence that the other Pre-Platonic philosophers were also political thinkers and activists. Heraclitus was constantly at loggerheads with his Ephesian contemporaries; Empedocles seems to have supported democratic ideals and opposed the quintessentially aristocratic ritual of largescale animal sacrifice; the Pythagoreans took a lot of political heat in their communities, quite literally; and we hear time and again of Pre-Platonic philosophers being forced into exile or traveling from place to place on their own accord. One could even claim that the rarified metaphysics of Parmenides had its political point: reality is unified, and distinctions, including social ones, merely deceptive appearances. In any case, my hunch is that all these early philosophers were pretty much cut from the same cloth as the other great political figures and legislators of the archaic age, such as Hesiod,



Solon, and the Seven Sages as a group. It seems that the grim political reality in Greece under the tyrants provoked novel totalizing narratives, credible alternatives to the old aristocratic mythologies, and that these narratives in turn, as they evolved and spread, gradually changed the political landscape along with them. In a nutshell, it was not the democratization of the polis that made philosophy possible (as Jean-Pierre Vernant and others would have it), but the other way around: the rise of what we now call “philosophy” engendered, and perhaps even necessitated, a more egalitarian transformation of the socio-political realm.<sup>15</sup>

Good support for this thesis comes from a hitherto completely ignored ancient testimony. One Diodotus of Ephesus (of whom we know next to nothing) once made the intelligent remark that Heraclitus’ work was not about nature, but about πολιτεία (Diogenes IX 15). Diogenes says:

the commentators on (Heraclitus’) work are very numerous, including as they do Antisthenes and Heraclides of Pontus, (...), and, among the grammarians, Diodotus. The latter affirms that it is not a treatise upon nature, but upon government (περὶ πολιτείας), the physical part serving merely for illustration.<sup>16</sup>

I have made just this claim about Anaximander, and indeed one could make it about Pre-Platonic philosophy in general, including the sophists. We are missing something important if and when we keep on following Aristotle and read the extant fragments exclusively as examples of proto-science. If that is right, and if the Pre-Platonists were as political as Plato, there is an enormous amount of work to be done in this area, dissertation upon dissertation, and it can be done more easily now, thanks to André Laks’s and Glen Most’s edition. But once it has been done, I think our understanding of the rise of philosophy in Greece, why it developed in the way it did and when it did, and what precisely its relationship to the invention of democracy was, all of this will become much clearer.

I shall leave this vast topic at this point, but not before making a modest proposal for a change in the translation of the relevant passage in Volume III of *Early Greek Philosophy*. For according to Laks and Most, Diodotus said that Heraclitus’ “treatise is not about nature but about the *constitution*.” (my italics)

To translate περὶ πολιτείας with “about the constitution” in this instance seems not only bizarre, it also obfuscates Diodotus’ astute observation. The constitution of what? When we speak about “the constitution” today, we mean the constitution of the United States, or any other state perhaps, but I don’t think Diodotus meant to say that Heraclitus’ obscure pronouncements concern the constitution of any particular city, let alone Ephesus. That would make no sense at all as an interpretation of Heraclitus. Taking πολιτεία here in the sense of “constitution” therefore seems quite wrong, because it robs Diodotus’ remark

<sup>15</sup> The advantage of this view of the matter is, among other things, that it does not run into problems of chronology of actual historical developments in ancient Greece. Philosophy preceded democracy.

<sup>16</sup> Diogenes Laertius IX 15 (trans. R.D. Hicks); LM Heraclitus R 3b (= vol. III, 204f).

of its intended point. For what he meant to say, clearly, was that Heraclitus' treatise is, despite appearances, a treatise about citizenship and good government, what we might now call "politics" broadly conceived.

The obvious objection to a political reading of Pre-Platonic philosophy as proposed here is of course that Plato and Aristotle do not seem to have read their early predecessors as political but as natural philosophers. To defuse this objection might require some argument that goes well beyond the scope of this paper. But here is one consideration I would pursue: if it is true that early Greek philosophy challenged the ruthless policies of overlords and tyrants in tandem with their attendant myths and ideologies, both Plato and Aristotle, who enjoyed excellent relationships with contemporary autocrats (Plato in Syracuse, Aristotle in Assos and Macedonia), would have rendered their own agendas a disservice by highlighting and deciphering the code of political discontent inherent in Pre-Platonic philosophy. *That* might have seriously obstructed their own flourishing as anti-democratic court philosophers. It was therefore much safer, especially for someone like Aristotle, to integrate the philosophic predecessors into a sanitized narrative of natural science and metaphysics. But who knows what the truth of the matter is? Which leads me, finally, to Parmenides.

### 3. PARMENIDES

Let me use another textual detail as a peg on which to hang a question of the even greater historical consequence, a question that is again not merely academic. In line 22 of Fr. B8 DK (now line 27 in Fr. D8 ML) Parmenides says, as part of his famous deduction, that correct thinking and speaking about the truth entails that what is real not be "divisible" (thus the translation of LM and similarly any other translation I know). The word Parmenides uses is ἀδιάρητον, and scholars have struggled to understand why it is that Parmenides thought it followed immediately from reality's being whole, one, continuous, and eternal that it should also be indivisible. Rather, one might think, adopting an Aristotelian intuition of continuity, that such a continuous entity ought to be divisible anywhere, at least in principle. But the point Parmenides makes is of course not about (physical) indivisibility at all; his point is one about (conceptual) indistinguishability. For his entire deduction is about what can be thought and said truly about Being, and what Parmenides denies is that Being can be truthfully divided in thought. When it comes to Being, there is no way to make a conceptual distinction between one part of it and another, and this actually makes a lot of sense. It is also the reason why Parmenides (or his goddess) warns us against introducing any such distinctions (which invariably involve an is/is not dichotomy) into our inquiry and discourse about reality – if we want them to be reliable and true.

So, I propose that line 27 in Fr. D8 ML should rather read: "Nor is it distinguishable, since as a whole it is similar." There are two further points to be made in this context.

Firstly, the observation that the Western tradition, which has always professed to be deeply indebted to the metaphysical groundwork laid by Parmenides, has also, and in an important sense, parted ways with Parmenides. For instead of spelling out the further implications and consequences of metaphysical monism, Parmenides' successors pursued what Parmenides could only have regarded as the deceptive path of making is/is-not

distinctions of the kind outlined in the second, merely persuasive part of his poem. Yet Parmenides had warned us sternly *not* to do such a thing, for that is the path of backward turning, a *παλίντροπος κέλευθος*, on which judgments passed about the world tend to fall back on us and lead us into epistemic confusion. In whichever way exactly each single verse of Parmenides' magnificent poem has to be translated, the overall message is clear enough: the only rational, secure, and defensible view of reality, he insisted, is a monistic one. There are no distinctions that stand up to philosophical scrutiny, since they are all a matter of deceitful appearance. I am inclined to believe that Heraclitus, whether he was influenced by Parmenides or not, understood precisely what Parmenides meant, only that he chose to express that same view in a different register and from a different perspective. But that was it. The rest of the philosophers revealed in, first, all kinds of ontological and, later, moral distinctions, invented numerous principles and causes, and thereby embraced what we now call "Eleatic pluralism," as if there could be such a thing.

Now, in the natural sciences, which speculate about the principles and causes of the phenomenal world, it does perhaps not matter so much how we proceed: nature will eventually correct our misconceptions. Parmenides himself proposed a minimal sort of distinction that would be useful for us to navigate the world of appearances. But in practical and political matters, i.e. in the social world that we create for ourselves, introducing distinctions and regarding them as real facts is the starting point of a slippery slope on which we all too easily slide towards judgment, bias, prejudice, differentiation, division, discord, discrimination, repression, subjugation, persecution, and genocide, all invested with the bogus aura of an accurate discernment of reality.

Secondly, it is quite noteworthy that Parmenides' insistence on monism and epistemic skepticism is startlingly similar to the pronouncements of certain towering figures of the Eastern philosophical tradition such as Zhuangzi (4<sup>th</sup> cent. BCE), Nagarjuna (2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> cent. CE), and Sengcan (6<sup>th</sup> cent. CE). Sengcan, for example, begins his famous poem *Xinxin ming* like this:

The Perfect Way is only difficult for those who pick and choose. / Do not like, do not dislike, and all will be clear. / Make a hairbreadth difference, and Heaven and Earth are set apart. / If you want the truth to stand clear before you, never be for or against. / The struggle between "for" and "against" is the mind's worst disease (trans. Conze 1954).

Obviously, I cannot discuss the profound similarities and superficial differences between Parmenides and the Eastern sages in this context, but it is an open question if one of the more pressing future tasks of historians of philosophy is not going to be the necessity to find ways to understand and teach the histories of both Western and Eastern philosophy together in the same encompassing humanistic curriculum. I suspect that Parmenides might provide us with at least one arch to support a serviceable bridge. Counterfactually speaking, there is at least a fair chance that the western tradition, had it taken Parmenides' warning to heart, might not have looked so different from its Eastern counterpart.

To sum up: I am proposing, firstly, to stop toning down the ancient evidence that the early Greek philosophers, in particular Thales, had far-reaching experience of Egyptian

technology, wisdom, and culture, and instead to explore more honestly what this Egyptian background might mean for our understanding of the rise of philosophy in Greece.

Secondly, I am proposing to investigate the possible political dimension of Pre-Platonic thought as it develops, and to relate that dimension more closely to the sophistic movement on the one hand and to the historical transformations of the Greek city states on the other, in particular the rise of democracy in Athens.

Finally, I am proposing to re-examine the relationship in which Parmenides stands to the rest of the Western tradition of metaphysical speculation. Far from having been its founding father, there is a real possibility that those who thought and professed to follow his precepts were in fact ignoring his most momentous message, i.e. monism and the unreality of heuristic distinctions, and that Parmenides' *Way of Truth* might help us to arrive at a more global narrative of the history of philosophy that encompasses both East and West.

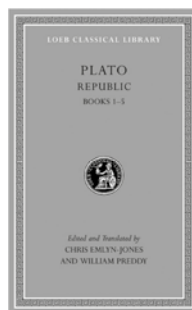
But my time is up. Nothing could be more apt at this point than to recall Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, who once remarked about Diels' and Kranz' *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*: it is a work "indispensable for each philologist and for each philosopher, a work incomparable in its kind." The new Laks-Most Loeb and (French) editions of the Pre-Platonists may not be incomparable in its kind (after all, one can compare them to Diels-Kranz), but I predict that they will prove to become equally indispensable for any Loeb-trotting philologist and philosopher – anyone really who wishes to examine the first shaky steps in our vaunted intellectual history. It is, simply put, a monumental achievement, and we must all be extremely grateful for it.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> I in turn would like to express gratitude to Jennifer Whiting, Carrie Swanson as well as André Laks and Glen Most for critical comments on this essay.

# ON THE NEW LOEB *REPUBLIC*

[Plato, *Republic*, ed. and tr. C. Emlyn-Jones, W. Preddy, 2 vols.  
(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013)]



The new edition of Plato's *Republic* in the Loeb Series, volumes 237 and 276 of their entire Greek Series, translated and edited by Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy (Cambridge 2013), is intended, under the General Editorship of Jeffrey Henderson, to replace the two volumes of the same numbers produced by Paul Shorey decades ago. Unfortunately, that great edition will have been replaced by a version less than adequate.

The sheer quantity of the errors in the text and translation should have disqualified the manuscript from publication, at least in its present form. The nature and spectrum of those errors, moreover, suggests that the authors were unqualified to do the work. In addition to hundreds of basic translation errors that a third-year student might make, their work reveals specific ignorance of Greek idiom and insensitivity to Plato's semantics and to his use of syntactical structures. The work even suggests a deficiency in the conceptual apparatus requisite to understanding what Socrates is saying, especially when the so-called Theory of Forms comes into the conversation. And as to the pages on the left side, the fundamental errors made in presenting the text itself reveal methodological confusions and simple carelessness.

Only extensive documentation could justify such alarming and disappointing assertions. This I have presented on the internet, at <http://www.onthenewloebrepublic.com>, where about fifteen hundred defective passages are isolated and described, and coded as to their kind, in the order of volume and page. The present article describes and exemplifies the kinds of errors I have found, and for remedial purposes reminds my reader of the importance of getting these sorts of things right in the case of Plato. The categories are: Greek Text, Platonic Semantics, Platonic Syntax, Conceptual Apparatus, Problems of Idiom, and Ungainly Expression. References to "Quandt" in the following paragraphs refer to my translation and commentary on the *Republic*, available at <http://www.onplatosrepublic.com>.

## 1. THE GREEK TEXT

We may start with the presentation of the text itself. The Loeb authors have chosen on the whole to present the text of the 2003 OCT edition of the *Republic* by S.R. Slings (cf. Loeb vol. 1, 4, n.1; 1, 16, n.2; 1, 26, n.4; 1, 58 n.6; 1, 74, n.8; 1, 148, n.6; and 1, 437, n.6 where Burnet's reading is listed but not Slings's, which instead is reported in the text without attribution). Certain idiosyncrasies of Slings's OCT edition have therefore affected

the presentation of the text here. First, despite the advances in the technology of digital printing, the line numbering of the Slings edition differs from that of Burnet by a line or two at any time. The authors of the Loeb sometimes cite a passage in accordance with the Burnet numeration (e.g., 1, 188, n.57 citing 376B11, and 1, 201, n.69 citing 377D10) or sometimes in accordance with that of Slings (1, 375, n.29 citing 428B5 and B8), without warning the reader, themselves probably unconscious of the discrepancy. Second, Slings's "letter by letter" method of printing the text introduced certain disfigurements of presentation that have unfortunately been brought over into the Loeb, even though in most cases they did not need to be reproduced, since although the Loeb authors have almost everywhere printed Slings's square and pointed brackets they have very seldom included a corresponding note in their apparatus – even when the text they follow Slings in printing has no ms. authority and is just a *delevit* or a *scripsit* of Slings's (as for instance his relatively gratuitous emendations, which they print without comment at 1, 124; 1, 136; 1, 150; 1, 170; 1, 236; 1, 256; 1, 394). If one forgoes to present a critical note at the foot of the page there is little reason to insert the brackets above. In other instances where the Loeb authors do include a note in the apparatus they might, or might not, import all or part of Slings's own apparatus, including his editorial remarks and his quirky way of displaying variants. Three examples will reveal the spectrum of problems brought on by this close reliance on Slings:

1) At vol. 1, 184, n.10, on 375B10.

Here is Burnet's text and his apparatus:

Πῶς οὖν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ὦ Γλαύκων, οὐκ ἄγριοι ἀλλήλοις τε ἔσονται καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις πολίταις

b9 τε F Stobaeus: om. ADM b10 ἄλλοις F: ἀλλότριος ADM Stobaeus

Here is Slings with his apparatus:

Πῶς οὖν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ὦ Γλαύκων, οὐκ ἄγριοι ἀλλήλοις ἔσονται καὶ τοῖς †ἀλλοτρίοις† πολίταις

b10 ἀλλήλοις AD: ἀλλήλοις τε F Stob. b11 ἀλλοτρίοις AD: ἄλλοις F Stob. (MA): ἀλλήλοις Stob. (S), fortasse πολίταις secludendum aut {τοῖς} legendum

And here is the Loeb with its apparatus

Πῶς οὖν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ὦ Γλαύκων, οὐκ ἄγριοι ἀλλήλοις ἔσονται καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις πολίταις

ἄλλοις F Stob.: ἀλλοτρίοις AD: ἀλλήλοις Stob. {τοῖς} πολίταις fortasse legendum Slings

So much ink for so little: ἄλλοις (adverbial) is the reading, with Ast, Stallbaum, Jowett-Campbell, Adam, Shorey, and Chambry – and now the Loeb editors. But the student looking across will wonder why Stobaeus contradicts himself and why Slings wants us to insert τοῖς into the text between τοῖς and πολίταις.

2) Here is Burnet's text and apparatus at 411E4, identical to all previous editions:

Ἐπὶ δὴ δὺ' ὄντε τούτῳ, ὡς ἔοικε, δύο τέχνα θεὸν ἔγωγ' ἄν τινα φαίην  
δεδοκέναι ἀνθρώποις

e4 ἐπὶ δὴ scr. recs.: ἐπειδὴ AFDM

Here is Slings with his apparatus:

Ἐπ[ε]ῖ δὴ δὺ' ὄντε τούτῳ, ὡς ἔοικε, δύο τέχνα θεὸν ἔγωγ' ἄν τινα φαίην  
δεδοκέναι ἀνθρώποις

e4 ἐπὶ δὴ Laur. 80.19pc: ἐπειδὴ ADF δὺ' ὄντε AD: δυοῖν τε F

And here is the Loeb with its apparatus – i.e., none.

Ἐπ[ε]ῖ δὴ δὺ' ὄντε τούτῳ, ὡς ἔοικε, δύο τέχνα θεὸν ἔγωγ' ἄν τινα φαίην  
δεδοκέναι ἀνθρώποις

(fehlt)

The Loeb provides no critical note to go with this *rara avis*, Ἐπ[ε]ῖ, and the student will look to the foot of the page and become doubly confused. Then he will be trebly confused when he reads the translation on the right: “Since it seems then that there are these two types, I myself would say that god has given men two faculties,” which reads ἐπειδὴ and does so at the expense of treating ὄντε as a finite verb. I cannot say what happened here, but in case the authors of the Loeb have printed one thing and translated another, this will not be the only time. Cf. 395A3, where Slings and they have printed [τᾶ] but the article is translated; 407B8 where Slings posits a lacuna (disfiguring the text with [\*\*\*]) but the translation has no gap; 412D5 where they follow Slings and others in deleting ὅταν μάλιστα but then appear to translate it; 433B7, where Slings posits a lacuna in order to avoid the meaning that the translator nevertheless gives to the sentence; 472D4, where Slings deletes ἄν but the translation says “*would* you think” (there are several more instances in the second volume); 473E5, where Slings reads dative ἄλλῃ from the Monacensis, and the Loeb prints the nominative ἄλλῃ but translates Slings's dative. The student will be left high and dry by these careless discrepancies.

3) The Ugliness at 1, 92 (349B7).

Burnet's text and apparatus:

οὐδὲ τῆς δικαίας, ἔφη.

b7 τῆς {πράξεως τῆς} δικαίας Adam vetante etiam Stobaeo

Slings with his:

οὐδὲ {ταύ} της [δικαίας], ἔφη.

b7 ταύτης scripsi: τῆς ADF Stob. δικαίας ADF Stob.: secl. Wilamowitz:  
δικαίας πράξεως Stallbaum

And here is the Loeb with its apparatus:

οὐδὲ {ταύ} της [δικαίας], ἔφη.

b7 {ταύ} της Slings: τῆς ADF Stob. δικαίας ADF Stob.: secl. Wilamowitz:  
δικαίας πράξεως Stallbaum

The Loeb authors have introduced Slings’s peculiar way of citing the text *into their apparatus*, which even Slings did not do. It is something of a relief to turn to Shorey’s old text and see οὐδὲ τῆς δικαίας with no critical note, translated, with swift elegance, “Not that either.”

Besides these problems that come from the reliance on Slings there is evidence of a general failure to distinguish between textual evidence and editorial opinion, of which I will give only one example here. At 613E2, Au. prints εἶτα στρεβλώσονται καὶ ἐκκαυθήσονται (without dashes before and after as supplied by Burnet) and appends this critical note (n.6):

εἶτα στρεβλώσονται καὶ ἐκκαυθήσονται Jowett-Campbell, Burnet; secl.  
Ast, Slings

The note is peculiar for listing four editors’ opinions without even citing the mss. What he has printed is in fact the unanimous testimony of the mss. and he has chosen to read it, so no critical note is needed. He might well add a note to the translation about editors’ doubts but these doubts are not textual evidence. Slings and Burnet both record in their apparatus that Ast deleted the words so that we have the early editor Ast deleting with one modern editor accepting his deletion and the other refusing it. But then how does Jowett-Campbell come into the picture? Why not mention Adam’s deletion, or Chambry’s in the Budé? And what did Shorey do? If we look at Shorey’s Loeb, which this text is meant to replace in the Series, Shorey tells us that Ast deleted it and was followed by Hermann and Stallbaum but that Jowett-Campbell and Burnet read it. This, then, is where Au. got the reference to Jowett-Campbell! Compare Au.’s use of Shorey’s outdated report of Adam’s opinion about 556D7, noted above *ad 2*, 254, which Shorey got from his text of 1900 and not his famous commentary as any unsuspecting reader would assume, where in fact he reversed himself! Shorey had mentioned J-C only because that was a major edition at the



time of his writing (indeed he had published a fairly detailed review article of the edition when it came out: *AJP* 16 (1895), 223-436). This continual confusing of editorial opinion with historical evidence is the error of an amateur.

It is instructive to recall what Shorey had said over a hundred years ago, in the edition that the present edition will replace: “The text criticism of Plato to-day is a game that is played for its own sake, and not for any important results for the text itself or the interpretation.” Then he lets a few heads fall: “Nothing whatever results from the hundred and six pages of *Textkritik* in the Appendix to Professor Wilamowitz’s *Platon*.” Adam, he notes, repeatedly changed his mind about the readings; Jowett and Campbell devoted, on his counting, “a hundred pages of costly print to what are for the most part unessential and uncertain variations.” In closing he quotes a passage from his even older 1895 review of that edition that I think can be counted prescient of the work of Slings and its effect on the Loeb that ironically will be replacing his own: “There is something disheartening in the exiguity of all this toil (...) The game must be played strictly according to the rules, but when it is played out we feel that it was hardly worth the midnight oil.”

## 2. PLATONIC SEMANTICS

The methods and content of Plato’s thought, though not the ultimate purpose of his entire project, are new. He has not only built a raft in the ocean but in a sense has created the ocean at the same time as the raft. Among the means at his disposal were the semantics and syntax of his language, and the reader of Plato soon learns how heavily he relies upon both semantical and syntactical devices, in large matters and small, to pull this off. Among semantic strategies are his use of synonyms, antonyms, metonymy, *figurae etymologicae* and strategies of verbal anticipation and restatement, to involve his reader in the thought he is expressing. One is very often surprised by an unexpected word but then very soon is rewarded for noticing it, by an explanation that he would not have recognized as such without having felt the surprise a moment before. The course of the thought often culminates in the coining of a new term supported not by the previous knowledge and experience of Greek but upon what has just now been reached in argument for the first time (an example close to hand is the coining of “philodoxer” at the end of Book Five). Under this heading I collect passages in the Loeb translation that seem to me inadequately to bring across such *semantic* support in Plato’s expression; the younger student might even profit from going through this part of the collection on my website, as a guide to recognize the claims I have just made about reading Plato.

For instance, at 375A2-3 Plato uses an *hapax*: ἢ οἶει (...) διαφέρειν φύσιν γενναίου σκύλακος εἰς φυλακὴν νεανίσκου εὐγενοῦς. The sound play needs a more playful translation than the Loeb’s “a well bred dog (...) and a young man of good family” to make the analogy seem less far-fetched than it is, or needs at least a note (Shorey: “well-bred hound (...) well-bred lad” / Quandt: “the noble hound and the son of a noble”).

At 478D5/D8, the logic of the argument relies upon φανεῖη and τὸ (...) φανέν meaning the same thing but they are translated “could be shown” (subjective) and “it would apparently” (objective). In both cases it is objective and means “plainly is.” The sense is that if something came into view (...) then the faculty applying to it would be neither knowledge nor ignorance, whereupon the thing (faculty) correlatively comes into view

as a thing between knowledge and ignorance. Socrates's reliance on this sense and use of φαίνεσθαι is then emphatically acknowledged and corroborated by πέφανται in both question (D11) and answer (D12).

At 538D4, the fact that Socrates is making an analogy to the father indicates that the etymon of *πάτρια* should be brought across. Not “traditional” but “teachings of their fathers” (Shorey), *vel sim.*

At 603E8, “get under control” for μετριάσει fails to produce the etymon Socrates is interested in, upon which the argument depends (μέτρον), “moderate” (Shorey) is closer.

### 3. PLATONIC SYNTAX

In addition to his “astigmatic” use of language, where words shift their meaning as the thought discovers and shifts to new ground, Plato relies heavily upon word order, syntactical structures, discourse markers, and a variety of transitional devices to keep the reader abreast of the thought-events. His problem – and therefore our problem – is that he has chosen to represent conversation in a natural style. Careful distinctions might suddenly be made at any moment but the character of the language always remains casual and naturalistic and indeed positively refuses the expedients of technical terminology and slavish parallelism. When the suggestions that are conveyed by the Greek syntax, as for instance by emphasis, do not come across in the translation, the reader finds himself outside the discussion and consequently the movement of the argument seems to him arbitrary or forced or both.

For example, at 364A1-4, ὑμνοῦσιν ὡς καλὸν μὲν ἢ σωφροσύνη τε καὶ δικαιοσύνη, χαλεπὸν μέντοι καὶ ἐπίπονον, ἀκολασία δὲ καὶ ἀδικία ἡδὺ μὲν καὶ εὐπετέες κτήσασθαι, δόξη δὲ μόνον καὶ νόμῳ αἰσχρὸν is translated, “They harp on about moderation and justice as fine things but hard and laborious while licentiousness and injustice are pleasant, easily acquired and regarded as shameful only by common repute.” The virtual shift out of indirect discourse loses the balance within the thought, which is presented with supercilious hypocrisy; and the management of μὲν answered first by μέντοι but then also by δέ does not come across in the tr. Better, “They aver that self-control and justice are without question fine (though mind you harsh and toilsome), whereas their opposites are pleasant and ready to hand, with opinion only and convention calling them vile.” The speaker (Adeimantus, telling us what he hears literature telling him) *concedes* the importance of virtue (the two main ones of the cardinal four slapped together with τε καί, verging on an expression like “temperance ‘n’ justice”) but then burdens them with a clause in μέντοι instead of, and stronger than, δέ. But then δέ does come (we had thought that the contrast between the good and the struggle it costs was done), and we realize there is an alternative: the uncomplicated truth that the opposite of virtue is attractive in itself whereas the attitude we just conceded is merely a conventional obfuscation.

At 416C6-7: καὶ τὰς οἰκήσεις καὶ τὴν ἄλλην οὐσίαν τοιαύτην παρεσκευάσθαι ἥτις (...) is a καί (...) καί construction. τοιαύτην points forward (incorporating both οἰκήσεις and οὐσίαν) and is correlative with ἥτις. Socrates is generalizing (with ἄλλην) from the mention of beds to the principle involved, articulated in the relative clause. The logic does not come across in the translation “we must provide accommodation for them and all other material needs of this kind which will neither prevent them (...) nor induce them

(...)” Better: “their shelters and all other possessions or property to be provided them must meet the criteria that they not impede their progress toward becoming the best guards they can, and not arouse (...)” (Quandt).

At 500A4-5: ἢ οἶει τινὰ χαλεπαίνειν τῷ μὴ χαλεπῷ ἢ φθονεῖν τῷ μὴ φθονερῷ ἄφθονόν τε καὶ πρῶτον ὄντα is not “Or do you think that anyone who is generous and mild-tempered will be annoyed at someone who is not difficult or will resent someone who is ungrudging?” but, according to the word order, “Or do you fancy anybody is offended by an inoffensive person or envious of an unenvious one, as long as he himself is without envy and harshness?” The former puts the burden onto the generous person to perform rather than saying it is only the lack of generosity that might cause trouble.

#### 4. CONCEPTUAL APPARATUS

It is a hard saying that the Authors of this edition might have missed distinctions that are present in the language of Plato, but when the semantics and the syntax of a passage are clear I see no other way to explain how its sense did not make its way across to the translation, an outcome which is gravely detrimental to the reader. The deficiencies I have in mind occur most densely in passages where the Theory of Forms has become the vehicle of the argument (as for instance at the end of Book Five and the end of Book Six), but not only there. By the end of my reading, for instance, I came to realize that the translators treat a construction like “I am looking for that which has (...)” (restrictive relative clause) as equivalent to “I am looking for something which has” (where “something” is an expletive serving to provide an antecedent for the relative). I do not think these constructions have the same meaning, but in current English they may have come to, and if so the reader needs to know this. Some ninety-eight cases of conceptual confusion of one kind or another are presented on the website.

#### 5. PROBLEMS OF IDIOM

Problems of idiom encountered in the Loeb were of two kinds, Greek and English. As to idioms of the Greek that had to be translated non-literally, we all know there is no systematic way to teach or to learn them. They are either known or not, and all of us are learning more of them all the time. By reviewing on my website the cases of Greek idiom that (I believe) the Authors have missed, the younger student might again profit to learn some more. As to the English used to translate the Greek, the Authors have adopted fixed idioms for translating certain Greek expressions that often give the wrong sense or at least the wrong impression. I will present five such “idioms of translation” here.

1) “you see” is very often used for γάρ and even καὶ γάρ (1, 303, 613D, 620A), which can be distracting (as at 1, 85 top); also 500A5-6 (“I press the question because I think you will agree” is the sense), 550D10, 562A8 (γάρ is programmatic here, as also at 613D1), 598A5, 607B3 (a continuation of the apologia). At 606C5 “you see” (without comma: is it a typo?) becomes the governing construction! At 611A6 it introduces a purely logical inference from which the formula “you see” can only distract. At 620A1 it introduces an alien voice into Er’s narrative, which is being quoted.

2) “Then again” for αὖ is often adequate but almost as often not really correct (426D1, 435B, 435C, 477A, 510B, 524A, 581D6, 585D2 [echoing 585B4]). Au. translates it “moreover” at 580C3, where “again” would have been correct!

3) As for Au.'s habit of translating enclitic *που* with "I think," this is almost always wrong (at 572C1 it is alright), since *που* means "we all presumably think" – that is, it presents an idea as presumable by the speaker, whereas "I think" often has the sound of asserting a (falsifiable) belief (problems at 337A, 362E, 379A, 485D, 486A, 491D, 520D, 527A, 564E6, 596A6, 596B1, 598B6, 599D1 (much too subjective here), 605C8, 611A5). Conversely, "surely" is just right, at 604B9.

4) οὐκοῦν is not inferential nearly as often as the translator takes it to be, seemingly by habit (380E, 507C (*bis*), 510D, 562A10, 573A4, 573D7, 574B9, 576B6, 576C10, 581B12, 582D15, 583D3, 584C9, 585D1, 588A7, 589A6, 590C8, 596B6, 598D, 601D4, 604A10, 604D5, 604E1, 609A5) – so also οὖν (cf. e.g. 536D6, 580C6, 584D1).

5) Finally, Au. seems to underrate the ubiquitous tendency of the *μέν* clause to be concessive (539A9-B1ff and 591A7 are two examples among many).

## 6. UNGAINLY EXPRESSION

That a mediocre translation of this very important work of Greek Literature has been published in this Series will tarnish the work's reputation, but that such a version should be allowed to replace so great a translation as Shorey's is an incalculable loss – in my view, at least, who have learned so much from Shorey. Of the fifteen hundred errors of all kinds I have assembled, Shorey committed less than ten, but a quantitative comparison pales when one compares the general quality of the new translation with that of the one it will replace, one of the finest translations of anything Greek into English. To illustrate the relative inferiority of the new translation, even when it is defensibly "correct," I have included in my collection of errors hundreds of passages where the ungainly new translation is vague, awkward, or slovenly instead of what had been elegant, graceful, and clear.

The problem may just be a creature of current fashion. James Loeb's original goal was to present a reader of limited Greek with a good English version. As he put it,

To make the beauty and learning, the philosophy and wit of the great writers of ancient Greece and Rome once more accessible by means of translations that are in themselves real pieces of literature, a thing to be read for the pure joy of it, and not dull transcripts of ideas that suggest in every line the existence of a finer original from which the average reader is shut out, and to place side by side with these translations the best critical texts of the original works, is the task I have set myself. (taken from the Loeb website)

It is conceivable in the present day that the patently less elegant and less fine translation presented herewith was deemed to fulfill Loeb's wishes that the reader should not regret missing something more fine in the original, and conceivable that the informality it exhibits was thought to make the text more "accessible," as we now say. But by the same token the translation has turned out to be something less than what Loeb had called "a real piece of literature."

Au. seems in fact to have respected Shorey's translation enough to use it as a pony but then in his attempts to improve upon it has often lost the sense it made (cf. my website *ad* 334C5, 494C1-2, 539C1-2, 546D3-5, 564E6, 571D3-4, 586A6). *Sic transit gloria*.

Here I present a few mild but representative examples of degraded quality, quoting the two translations in tandem for comparison.

1) 409A

Δικαστῆς δέ γε, ὃ φίλε, ψυχῇ ψυχῆς ἄρχει, ἣ οὐκ ἐγχωρεῖ ἐκ νέας ἐν πονηραῖς ψυχαῖς τεθράφθαι τε καὶ ὠμιληκέναι καὶ πάντα ἀδικήματα αὐτὴν ἠδικηκυῖαν διεξεληλυθέναι, ὥστε ὀξέως ἀφ' αὐτῆς τεκμαίρεσθαι τὰ τῶν ἄλλων ἀδικήματα οἷον κατὰ σῶμα νόσους.

Now the judge, my friend, governs the soul with a soul, which cannot be brought up from childhood and have dealings with base souls, and experience every kind of wrongdoing when it has gone wrong itself, so that it can make shrewd inferences from its own experience as to the wrongdoing of others in the same way as it experiences physical illnesses. (New Loeb)  
REPLACES

But a judge, mark you, my friend, rules soul with soul and it is not allowable for a soul to have been bred from youth up among evil souls and to have grown familiar with them, and itself to have run the gauntlet of every kind of wrong-doing and injustice so as quickly to infer from itself the misdeeds of others as it might diseases in the body. (Shorey)

2) 479A

τούτων δὴ ὑποκειμένων λεγέτω μοι, φήσω, καὶ ἀποκρινέσθω ὁ χρηστὸς ὃς αὐτὸ μὲν καλὸν καὶ ἰδέαν τινὰ αὐτοῦ κάλλους μηδεμίαν ἠγεῖται αἰεὶ μὲν κατὰ ταῦτά ὡσαύτως ἔχουσαν, πολλὰ δὲ τὰ καλὰ νομίζει...

With these assumptions I will say: let the worthy man speak and answer my question – the man who thinks there is nothing actually beautiful and no Form of beauty itself that is consistent in the same respects, but thinks there are many kinds of beauty...

REPLACES

This much premised, let him tell me, I will say, let him answer me, that good fellow who does not think there is a beautiful in itself nor any idea of beauty in itself always remaining the same and unchanged, but who does believe in many beautiful things...

3) 504D8-E3

ἢ οὐ γελοῖον ἐπὶ μὲν ἄλλοις μικροῦ ἀξίους πᾶν ποιεῖν συντεινομένους ὅπως ὅτι ἀκριβέστατα καὶ καθαρώτατα ἔξει, τῶν δὲ μεγίστων μὴ μεγίστας ἀξιοῦν εἶναι καὶ τὰς ἀκριβείας;

Or isn't it ridiculous to spend all our energies on things of little worth to make them the most precise and pure but not consider the most important things which are worth the greatest effort to determine with precision?

REPLACES

Or would it not be absurd to strain every nerve to attain to the utmost precision and clarity of knowledge about other things of trifling moment and not to demand the greatest precision for the greatest matters?

4) 591C5ff

Ἐπειτά γ', εἶπον, τὴν τοῦ σώματος ἕξιν καὶ τροφήν οὐχ ὅπως τῇ θηριώδει καὶ ἀλόγῳ ἡδονῇ ἐπιτρέψας ἐνταῦθα τετραμμένος ζήσει, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ πρὸς ὑγίειαν βλέπων, οὐδὲ τοῦτο πρεσβεύων, ὅπως ἰσχυρὸς ἢ ὑγιής ἢ καλὸς ἔσται, ἐὰν μὴ καὶ σωφρονήσιν μέλλη ἀπ' αὐτῶν...

Then, I said, with regard to his physical condition and his regime, he'll not only not give himself over to any irrational animal-like pleasure and live with his attention turned in that direction, but he won't regard his health either, or even pay it special attention as to how he can be strong, healthy, and handsome, unless he's going to gain temperance from these qualities...

REPLACES

And then I said, he not only will not abandon the habit and nurture of his body to the brutish and irrational pleasure and live with his face set in that direction, but he will not even make health his chief aim, nor give the first place to the ways of becoming strong or healthy or beautiful unless these things are likely to bring with them soberness of spirit...

5) 612D3-9

Ἐπειδὴ τοίνυν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, κεκριμένα εἰσί, πάλιν ἀπαιτῶ ὑπὲρ δικαιοσύνης, ὥσπερ ἔχει δόξης καὶ παρὰ θεῶν καὶ παρ' ἀνθρώπων, καὶ ἡμᾶς ὁμολογεῖν περὶ αὐτῆς δοκεῖσθαι οὕτω, ἵνα καὶ τὰ νικητήρια κομίσηται, ἀπὸ τοῦ δοκεῖν κτωμένη ἃ δίδωσι τοῖς ἔχουσιν αὐτήν, ἐπειδὴ καὶ τὰ ἀπὸ τοῦ εἶναι ἀγαθὰ διδοῦσα ἐφάνη καὶ οὐκ ἐξαπατῶσα τοὺς τῶ ὄντι λαμβάνοντας αὐτήν.

Then, since they have been judged, I said, on behalf of justice, I demand by way of return the reputation that it actually has among both gods and men, and we should agree that that is how it is seen, in order that the prizes can be awarded which it acquires from its reputation and which it gives to those who have it since it has been shown that it bestows the good things which come from the real justice and does not mislead those who in actual fact adopt it.

REPLACES

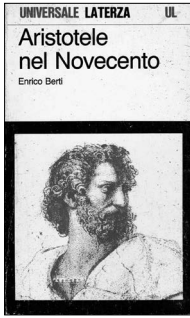
Well, then, now that they have been compared and judged, I demand back from you in behalf of justice the repute that she in fact enjoys from gods and men, and I ask that we admit that she is thus esteemed in order that she may gather in the prizes which she wins from the seeming and bestows on her possessors, since she has been proved to bestow the blessings that come from the reality and not to deceive those who truly seek and win her.

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Deficiencies in the physical production that mar these volumes are also fundamental since they were easily avoidable. These include cybernetically-produced typographic errors and faulty smart-quotes, the absence of the Stephanus page number in the upper left corner (renewing the Loeb's erstwhile distinction of being the only standard edition of Plato that forces the reader to thumb back and forth to find out what Stephanus page he is on), the presence of a useless vertical stroke in the Greek text about halfway through each Stephanus page, the confusion of exegetical and critical notes since both are now being designated by concurrent sequences of arabic numerals (Shorey used numbers and letters), and the unnecessarily ugly page layout, *passim*.

The fuller documentation presented at <http://www.onthenewloebrepublic.com>, does not claim to be exhaustive, nor to be a formal review of the publication. The merits and faults of the supplementary notes and introductory matter in these volumes, though they will influence the unwary, are at this point for me side issues. The Author's very shallow bibliography (almost nothing outside of English or earlier than 1980) has already been noted in N. Bloessner's review of Emlyn-Jones's ed. of *Republic 1* (*Gnomon* 85 (2013), 19-25).

I submit this work (1) on behalf of scholars, to dissuade them from relying upon these volumes in their courses; (2) on behalf of students, as a prophylaxis in case they can no longer get their hands on the Shorey Loeb and perhaps a guide to better understanding; and not the least (3) in hopes that those in charge of the Series might not let this go on in future "modernizations" of the Loeb Plato.



# STONE ON STONE OR THE TOWER OF A TREACHEROUS HERITAGE. REVIEW OF ENRICO BERTI'S *ARISTOTELE NEL NOVECENTO*

[E. Berti, *Aristotele nel Novecento* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1992)]

«Ὁ Αἰὼν παῖς ἐστὶ παίζων, πεττεύων· παιδὸς ἢ βασιλῆϊ»· Τελεσφόρος διελαύνων  
τοὺς σκοτεινοὺς τοῦ κόσμου τόπους, καὶ ὡς ἀστὴρ ἀναλάμπων ἐκ τοῦ βάθους,  
ὁδηγεῖ «παρ' Ἡελίοιο πύλας καὶ δῆμον ὀνειρώων».<sup>1</sup>

In an interview released in September 1982,<sup>2</sup> one of the twentieth century's most important female philosophers and psychoanalysts, Marie-Louise Von Franz, tells us how passionately she had accepted her master's invitation to build a tower in the countryside of a very little town in Switzerland called Bollingen. This would not appear so curious if we were to take heed of these two details: (1) the master at issue was Carl Gustav Jung, one of the most important fathers of psychoanalysis and symbolic inquiry of the twentieth century; and (2) many years ago, from 1923 until 1955, and indeed not very far from Von Franz's, he had first built a tower there – which can still be visited nowadays. Concerning the curious invitation, at the very core of Von Franz's acceptance there was the hope of achieving an experience marked by loneliness, in order to release that wild part of her soul which wanted to be freely expressed – as she herself confesses during the interview. Philosophy allows forms of imagination, manipulation, re-flection, and production – thinking of the

<sup>1</sup> “‘Time is a child – playing like a child – playing a board game – the child's realm.’ This is Telesphorus, which runs through the dark regions of this cosmos and lights up like a star out of the depths. He points the way at the gates of the sun and the land of dreams.” This inscription appears on a squared stone Jung placed in front of his tower in Bollingen. For a more explanatory description, see A. Jaffè (ed.), *Memories, Dreams, Reflections of Carl Gustav Jung* (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1961), 279.

<sup>2</sup> *Stiftung Für Jung'sche Psychologie*, De Rham D. (RI), Selhofer F. (DIR). September 4th, 2018, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=58atjWlZYA4&t=194s>.



immense work represented by the Jung's Red Book.<sup>3</sup> For, construction as historical process means, symbolically, to build one's own tower; and it seems to belong to the philosophical investigation in its broadest and most authentic sense.

But in this short episode, we can also get a glimpse of the big archetypal issue of the comparison with the master, in the awareness that inheritance always implies a betrayal, a dance of approaching and taking distance from the master. Even history, never comprehensible in singular form, appears as nothing more than an unstoppable circular river in full, always harbinger of new materials to integrate and, besides, making the backdrop ever more layered, ever less faithful to itself.

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This long preamble is intended to introduce Enrico Berti's *Aristotele nel Novecento*<sup>4</sup> as an attempt to build the sacred tower of Aristotle's works' treacherous heritage, at least with regard to how it was perceived in the twentieth century. Berti analyses the testimonies of those philosophers who, stone by stone, have contributed to delineating how Aristotle's investigations have been taken in the tradition and developed, or, in general, what is still at stake when we speak about (post)modern Aristotelianism. Right from the first pages and with an impeccably clear and defined style, effort is required of the reader, to understand how all of those thinkers have been first heirs and witnesses of their time, since they shaped the understanding of the Greek philosopher as human beings, before being intellectuals or filling academic roles. On the one hand, they gave continuity to the symbolical passage from master to pupil, on the other, they have modelled this heritage in the sign of adaptation of their own existential and biographical movements – consider just the example of Heidegger, who will completely change his way of dealing with Aristotelian texts after being married to a Lutheran woman, Elfride Petri, and definitely after converting to Protestantism in 1918.

Again, the continuity of inheritance is inevitably a betrayal, because it touches other lives in becoming, and hence is subordinate to the renewal.

The Italian philosopher explained how, as early as the nineteenth century, we witness a vigorous rehabilitation of Aristotelian thought, above all by Hegel (and partly in Leibniz) who will take a clear stand against the transfiguration of Aristotelianism throughout the

<sup>3</sup> C.G. Jung, *The Red Book. Liber Novus*, ed. S. Shamdasani (New York: Norton & Company, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> I will refer to the first Italian publication of this work: E. Berti, *Aristotele nel Novecento* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1992), although it has been more recently reprinted in 2008 by the same publisher. However, it must be considered that Berti's contribution to Ancient Philosophy is so vast – not only in the field of Aristotelian studies, of course – to make limited and reductive any attempt at examination. For this mine, I really would like to thank Luca Grecchi, an Italian philosopher of great stature and intellect, as well as one of Berti's great scholars and pupils, who has amicably supported my research, among other things, suggesting to me that I consider two other works of Berti's, as to have a broader view. In Italian these two works are: *Aristotelismo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2017) and *Incontri con la filosofia contemporanea* (Pistoia: Petite Plaisance, 2006). For other works by the same Grecchi, which deepen the relation between Ancient Philosophy and its heritage in the last centuries, see also: E. Berti, L. Grecchi, *A partire dai filosofi antichi* (Saonara: Il Prato, 2010) as well as L. Grecchi, *Occidente. Radici, essenza, futuro* (Saonara: Il Prato, 2009). Having focused my discourse on the above-mentioned work, I would like to leave this wise suggestion to the reader. From now on, I will refer exclusively to the first quoted work, where not otherwise specified, including the page in square brackets. Where the text is directly quoted, note that translations are mine.

course of medieval scholasticism, and against the anti-Aristotelian polemics during the Enlightenment, reaching up to Kant. Hegel, especially, whose logic is strongly influenced, if not affected, by Aristotelian metaphysics, will valorise the Stagirite's *Physics*, *Psychology* and *Ethics*, in which he sees the advance of his "phenomenology of the spirit," having overlaid the Aristotelian ἦθος with his *Sittlichkeit* (ethical life) and πόλις with *Stadt* (State), albeit not always rightfully, according to Berti; and he will prepare the field for the advent of all the future investigations on Aristotle – here, it suffices to mention Trendelenburg, Feuerbach, Marx and Kierkegaard. From then on, philosophers will no longer be able to avoid the importance of the Aristotelian rehabilitation that occurred during the century, consequently having the complicated task to carry it on. In which form then?

Berti orders the treatise in four important parts, necessary to reconstruct a complexly-structured historical panorama of such a complex heritage: (1) the role of German Neo-humanism; (2) Heidegger's work and life; (3) the proposal of the English school of Analytic Philosophy; (4) the rebirth of the Practice of Metaphysics in the German and Anglo-American territories. The first two appear to deserve greater relevance for our treatise and from the historical point of view. Indeed, these two necessary interpretative keys will allow us to disclose, understand and enhance all the other more recent hereditary movements.

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Even though it showed an interest more philological than philosophical in a general sense, Neo-humanism is the first movement at the beginning of the twentieth century within which "the presence of Aristotle is massively manifested" (15). Jaeger's *Aristoteles*, published in 1923, is the first work that "strongly imposed the philosophy of Aristotle on the attention of the philosophical debate of the new century, outside utilizations and philosophical reinterpretations of it given by the neo-scholastics" (15). Berti shows how it is necessary to recover the authentic pedagogical and political values of the text, not disclaiming either historical-descriptive or ideological inflections, but at the same time not reducing the former to the latter. On the one hand, far from the fathers Goethe, Schiller and von Humboldt, accused of having suffered an excessive influence from the rationalism of the eighteenth century, the "new living humanism" of Jaeger would be founded on the Greek-Latin education of youth, a necessary tool for the movement to "throw a bridge between historical science and current life and allow us to understand the still current value of the ancient idea of man, through the historical knowledge of its actual reality" (16). On the other hand, disappointed by the liberal-conservative ideology of the Weimar Republic, in which he had wrongly seen the possibility of a Platonic State founded on philosophy, Jaeger will arrive at an exquisitely Aristotelian view of Western history, in an attempt to "intensely relive the motifs of a thought or a philosophy in the totality of an epoch, that is, in its relations with science, religion, education, law, State" (28). In fact, following Berti's discourse, Jaeger would have reinterpreted ἐντελέχεια as a very specific historical/political process of ancient elements flowering within modern institutions – in Christianity first. In dialogue with the critical readings of the Italian philosophers Vegetti and Gentile, he argues that Jaeger's *Aristoteles* would have been completely misunderstood by the later Neo-humanists: the Stagirite reduced to a philosopher-bridge between Plato

and Christianity, detached from the historical-biographical instance, even scotomized or abused to witness a positivistic (counter)evolutionism – from the *Metaphysics*' theology to the *Physics*' empiricism – within all Western thought. On the other hand, he shows how the recurrence of the “classic” couldn't be disengaged from a radical and necessary historical-genetic approach to the matter, as the only possible flight towards the philosophical authentic understanding.

Only, in fact, if we know how and why a certain philosophy has arisen, that is, if we are able to reconstruct its relationship with previous or contemporary philosophies, with the cultural, political and social situation in which it has developed, with the biography and the psychology of its author – all things that Jaeger has tried to do even if not convincingly – only in this way is one able to judge whether this philosophy is or is not adequate to solve certain problems (30).

Actually, pursuing the footsteps of his medical father, Aristotle introduces a rigorous analytical incisiveness into philosophical inquiry, dissecting reality as if it were an anatomical vivisection, that is, a dismemberment, part by part, of a living body. This is the methodology that will represent, to cite Berti's quote from Jaeger, “the birth of science in the modern sense of the word” (31). Aristotle's attempt to understand with his gaze – a limitedly human gaze, always un-veiling and re-vealing its openness to receive the inspection of philosophy and, of course, its ἀπορίαί – the profound reality of phenomena, so as to find himself never unanchored, never uprooted from them. Nevertheless, the Aristotelian treatises remain absolutely problematic, opened, lacking homogeneity, focused on διαρεῖν rather than συνίσταται – creating differentiations rather than pulling together the threads of speech – and consequently lacking a systemic organicity, a strong internal dialectical bone structure.

Berti applauds the identification of this method within what the German philosopher defines as “critical *Metaphysics*,” since it would shatter the accusation of positivism or logical rationalism, moreover conducted but unsolved either by Kantian dogmatism nor by neo-Kantian influences, although these latter would still have frequently turned to the Aristotelian *opera omnia*. Aristotle's attempt would, therefore, “scientifically establish the vision of the world inherited from Plato, that is, of a theological and substantially religious kind” (33), not so as to justify it, but rather to capture “the effective character of metaphysics” which “arises from experience of the physical world as a requirement for a complete rational explanation” (35). In fact, Jaeger will say, with regard to the relation between *Physics* and *Metaphysics*, that the latter is nothing other than “the necessary conclusion of the theoretical system of natural becoming, built on experience's foundation” (35).

However, in Jaeger as well as in all the German Neo-humanists – Natorp and Stenzel above all – the scotomization between “theology,” as a particular science studying immobile being, and “ontology,” as the universal science of the living being in its becoming, remains a shockingly unpaid debt to contemporaneity. This scotomization is often attributed to Aristotle – rather than to his readers – as one of his deepest ἀπορίαί, perhaps the one that has remained unbearably unresolved, more than any other. If for Jaeger the detachment is

clear-cut, the conciliation impossible, by contrast, the ontology for Berti is included in the *Metaphysics*, which, precisely for this reason, can be a φιλοσοφία πρώτη.

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Yet, contemporary to the diffusion of Jaeger's *Aristoteles* in the nineteen-twenties, the very protagonist of the Aristotelian texts' hermeneutics will be Heidegger. Once again, Berti sheds light on the impossibility of exhausting the complexity of the Stagirite's presence, reducing it to a single and singular position. In this sense, history appears rather as a collection of testimonies. In other words, while the Aristotelian material lends itself infinitely to ever new re-readings and ethereal hermeneutical flights, the heirs creep almost invisibly into history's innards, following the course of their own unpredictable biographies, somehow contributing to an historical anti-determinism and, of course, to the impossibility of fixing the interpretations once and for all. The inheritance itself, and its collective perception in the course of history, leave no way out; and we are immediately catapulted into the exquisitely ethical problem of the one-many. As Primo Levi, having survived Auschwitz and then died by suicide, has said,<sup>5</sup> history, even when "simple," does not lend itself to the kind of simplification that we would want and like. And in fact, in Berti's work, philosophy and life appear inseparable.

Brentano's work *Von der mannigfachen Bedeutung des Seienden nach Aristoteles* (Eng. trans. *On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle*, 1862), no doubt one of most faithful masters of the radical Catholic and Scholastic reinterpretation of Aristotle, would have been the first and unique starting point for Heidegger's philosophical education. And subsequently, the main purpose offered within that work off – the priority of the investigation on the "fundamental guiding sense" among the many that Aristotle identified primarily in *Metaphysics* – has also represented the beginning of Heideggerian studies. Until 1916, that is, until his conversion to Husserlian Phenomenology, he will adhere to the belief that substance, οὐσία, is the most inclusive and main sense of being, the only one capable of gathering and giving meaning to all the others. Berti points out how this is not at all a minor detail since, after that turn and for the rest of his life, Heidegger will busily criticize Aristotle for the primacy accorded to οὐσία, but, moreover, wrongly attributing it to Aristotle himself rather than to Brentano's interpretation of Aristotle. Moreover, Brentano not only presents two types of reduction, ἀναγωγή: the first, from the four senses of being in *Metaph.* Δ 7 – let us recall that we are speaking about (1) accidental being, (2) being as such, (3) referring to truth and (4) referring to potency and actuality – to the all-encompassing being as such; the second, reducing this latter to οὐσία. But further, Brentano was convinced that the Aristotelian equivocity of being, ὁμωνυμία, could have been approached by both kinds of analogy – analogy of proportionality and of attribution – and again reductively identified it with the ὁμωνυμία πρὸς ἓν, as reference to the substance for all the categories. Nevertheless, Berti remarks how typical it is, in the

<sup>5</sup> P. Levi, *I sommersi e i salvati* (Torino: Einaudi, 2003), 24-25. For an English version, *The Drowned and the Saved* (New York: Simon&Schuster Paperback, 2017).

scholastic tradition, to become confused between ὁμωνυμία πρὸς ἓν and the Neoplatonic concept of analogy of attribution.

This was the way Heidegger carried on his own investigations in the first “Catholic” phase, according to Berti, even till the lectures on Aristotle in 1931 at Freiburg, where, however, Heidegger will locate the main sense of being no longer within οὐσία – considered by him to be insufficient in the face of the various ways to speak of being, πολλαχῶς – but in that one referring to potency and actuality. From here, the step to the Heideggerian conception of an “ontological difference” between Being (*das Seine*) and beings (*das Seiende*) is evidently very close, as well as the reconsideration of *Metaphysics*’ tension between theology and ontology – so clearly distinct and irreconcilable within Scholasticism, so much rejected and connected in the widespread “ontotheological” Heideggerian theoretical structure. These issues will be more circumscribed further on.

At stake here is not only the abandoning of theological studies in order to dedicate himself to the philosophical ones, but also the raising of awareness that “Catholicism doesn’t adapt to the modern philosophical method,” as he will write in 1913 to his friend Ernst Laslowiski.

The most powerful and decisive push to avoid the Scholastic supremacy of οὐσία will occur with these two important biographical episodes, already mentioned. The first is the arrival of Husserl at the University of Freiburg: it would have helped Heidegger to develop a gradual practice towards “the phenomenological seeing” and would have provoked a shift of focus toward the sense of being referring to truth, understood as an unveiling process, a manifestation of being as an immediate intuition, literally, ἀλήθεια. The second is the marriage, taking place in 1917, with the protestant Elfride Petri, and the definitive conversion to Protestantism in 1918. These acquisitions will bring Heidegger to his most precise and well-known way to interpret Aristotelian texts, even when, following Berti’s view, he will immoderately focus on the conception of being as production (“The sense of being originally consists in its being produced. Entity exists, originally, only for the practice that produced it,” 60), neglecting the primacy of φύσις over τέχνη, so often recalled from Aristotle, and somehow reducing εἶδος to the mere substantial aspect of the thing, again, to οὐσία in a non-religious sense. Effectively, the German philosopher will drift apart from Aristotle’s theological philosophy and ontology, endorsing a θεῖος, a sense of divine, completely understood as an “ontological radicalization of the Being-in-movement” (62), rather than as an expression of the Aristotelian categories – being, substance, form and act – exactly where it was intended within the Scholastic theology.

In this direction, Berti draws an interesting panorama, describing how the tension between an inevitable scholastic education and the Lutheran-biographical element has been of the utmost importance in being a treacherous heir of Aristotle. This tension explodes in leaving also the Scholastic “ontotheological structure,” in order to constitute his own, especially in his lecture course, *Basic Concepts of Ancient Philosophy* (1926), where, deepening the philosophical research on “being qua being” in *Metaphysics* Book Γ and E, he will match it to an investigation on the “modes of beings,” namely, the ways a being can be. In other words, Being cannot represent a genus, neither a category, on its own account, just because it means always and already being in certain ways, with certain qualities and characteristics – always and already settled and located within the context.

Even οὐσία does not mean substance but a way of being, namely, the particular condition of the “being being,” beingness (*Seiendheit*). But again, specifying it as an “idea of being,” Berti shows how much Heidegger will remain influenced by his scholastic education, though always trying to reject it. Mostly, the tension will be manifest with regards to the conception of God: Heidegger will refrain from exposing a clear position about this latter, by limiting himself to the consideration of God as the most important concretion of οὐσία, remarking that the Aristotelian comprehension of the divine says nothing about the relation between God and man, and so distancing once again theology from ontology. In a general view, Berti notes how much the Heideggerian scholastic echoes will provide him with the possibility to create, on the one hand, a certain image of Aristotle such as to refuse it *en bloc* at a later time; on the other hand, the counterproject of a different *Metaphysics*, with an undeniable hermeneutic attitude such as to break the historical and biographical boundaries, making Aristotle an innovative speaker to contemporaneity, reciprocally confusing the words of each. It will assist a further turn, that began during the Freiburg lectures on *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (1929-30) and will ever more strongly progress in the posthumous writings – for example the *Introduction to “What is Metaphysics?”* (1949). Here, Heidegger, constantly in dialogue with his masters Kant, Jaeger and Natorp, and having been the successor to Husserl’s chair as Professor, will take a sharp position, opposing himself to the Aristotelian *Metaphysics*, considering it a theologically characterised ontology, hence, not lacking “thought, even representation of the being” (74). Comparing the Apostle Paul’s first letter to Corinthians, he will say:

«Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?» (*I Cor.*, 1, 20). But the σοφία τοῦ κόσμου is what Greeks search for, “Ἕλληνες ζητοῦσιν (*I Cor.*, 1, 22). Aristotle calls even ζητούμενη (the one searched for) the πρώτη φιλοσοφία (philosophy in its proper sense). Will the Christian philosophy decide again to take the Apostle’s word seriously and consequently philosophy as a madness? (76).

Instead, from the Heideggerian point of view, the ontological reduction or the solution within theology, taken in its extreme form, has brought God to silence, making him disconnected from the relationship with the human. Once again, we are in front of a philosopher who is confronting his roots, according to Berti’s judgement, since the Aristotelian reduction is a typical Neoplatonist, then Scholastic, then also Modern (mainly Spinozist) treacherous heritage.

Even regarding the problem of ἀλήθεια, the German philosopher will state that the dianoethical virtues shield the unity of the Being as unconcealedness, not only in the order of the already mentioned τέχνη – to which ἐπιστήμη is subjected by him – but also as actuation of νοῦς, by him understood as “the pure perceiving as such.” Even φρόνησις, “the proper prudence of caring,” and σοφία, “the authentic contemplative comprehending” participate in νοῦς, inasmuch as they are the actuations thereof. The unconcealedness/truth of Being has nothing to share with rationalisms and judgements, if not in subsequent forms next to what is primarily manifested to the senses as immediate – without mediation – and intuitive. These are simple exemplifications of what, according to Berti, will permeate all

the Heideggerian work, especially the so-called youthful work, *Natorp-Bericht*. Berti has a specific opinion about that:

But it's remarkable that, through these stretches, Heidegger appropriates Aristotle's thought, makes him say what he wants to be able to present his thought as Aristotle's thought. (...) In short, when he is detached from the traditional Aristotle, that is the Aristotle of Scholasticism, who has also been "his" Aristotle, Heidegger doesn't want to give up Aristotle and he builds again one other Aristotle, this time all and only "his," through which he expresses his thought. This ambivalent attitude towards Aristotle, simultaneously of destruction and appropriation, characterizes *Natorp-Bericht* (...) (82).

There seems to remain here the issue of understanding how any kind of interpreter could be other than a dancer between destruction and appropriation of the master's work, a translator/traitor in a different language, but at the same time ever different meaning, as far as, in any case, a strictly adherence to the materials.

Meaning reversals would again be shown by Berti in his lectures in Marburg, *Logic: The problem of truth* (1925-6), especially in two directions: (1) the interpretation of λόγος understood as ἀπόφανσις, "manifestation" or "unveiling," rather than as "judgement"; and (2) truth as "presence," that is, as Being at the same time dealing with present time and eternity.

No less than from Husserl, Heidegger will start a slow process of emancipation, with the development of the "hermeneutics of effectiveness" or "facticity" that aims to represent a whole "human life's ontology" and that will culminate with *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*). According to Berti and Volpi's statements, Heidegger will distance himself, since the later Husserlian phenomenology would have been much more oriented towards a transcendental idealism, quite colliding with his purpose of an always more persisting practical placing of the being within the world, the well-known *Dasein* ("being there"). With this formulation, it seems to be clear how much Heidegger has taken from the practical philosophy and from the Aristotle of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, much more than from *Metaphysics* – because it is there that they are analysed as fundamental ways for the human being to be, and the corresponding register of knowledge. Berti agrees with and deepens contrasts and resonances in relation to Volpi's numerous correspondences between Aristotle and Heidegger. Among these, as an example, consider that if, on the one hand, we have the Aristotelian θεωρία, ποιησις and πράξις, on the other hand, we will have the Heideggerian *Vorhandenheit* (literally the "Before-the-hands-hood"), *Zuhandenheit* ("usability"), and *Dasein* ("being there" in the sense of things that "have to be"); the same thing is true with ὄρεξις, partially overlapping with *Sorge* – desire as care; or φρόνησις as *Gewissen* (consciousness) and προαίρεσις as *Entschlossenheit* ("resoluteness").

Yet, Heidegger will remain forever worried about seeking the fundamental meaning of Being and will not be satisfied with the analysis of the substance referring to the truth. For this reason, after the "turn" and in the final works, he will try to identify it in the last of the senses, discerned by Aristotle in *Metaphysics* Δ 7, that is "referring to potency and act"

with a specific attention to the relation between δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in regard to κίνησις and to ἐντελέχεια, and the Heideggerian – again not Aristotelian – priority of δύναμις.

In its entirety, we have seen that Heidegger has given one of the most original – as well as treacherous, according to Berti, who frequently insists on this – contributions to interpreting Aristotle. Within a long process, actually inseparable from biographical contingency, this process has consisted in reconsidering the theoretical philosophy, especially in the effort to overcome his education in reading the Aristotelian *Metaphysics* within Scholastic categories. It has also involved embracing a more Lutheran way of interpreting the Stagirite, from whom Heidegger will absorb the political, ethical and practical attitude.

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Since the second half of the nineteenth century in England, the interest in Aristotle's works, especially the *Nicomachean Ethics*, had never been extinguished, being to some extent imported from a part of German Philosophy – Brandis, Bekker, Trendelenburg, Bonitz, Zeller and others. Already at the beginning of the twentieth century, Aristotle's presence will be massively felt with the proposal of Analytic Philosophy, which had the purpose to examine language in its ethical, esthetical, political rather than in its scientific orientation. Since before, with Moore in Cambridge, and then with his pupil Wittgenstein in Oxford, the perennial fire of Aristotle studies will be continuously fed. Here, the “dialectical method” of Grant (1854) and Burnet (1900) is remembered and the “statistical method” of Stewart (1892), Joachim (1903) and Bywater, who also founded the “Aristotelian Society.” Nevertheless, it is of the utmost importance to mention the “Oxford moralists,” a group of philologists and philosophers who focused their attention not only on one of the works of translation of the entire *corpus aristotelicum* – the one brought out by Smith and Ross from 1908 to 1951 – but, even more, for the fact that they – Ross, Wilson and Prichard among them – concentrated on denying the possibility of grounding Ethics in a scientific or rigorous knowledge.

Berti will discuss, in more depth, five aspects of Analytic Philosophy. The first is John Austin and the Oxonian Aristotelians' School, whose main characteristic, besides the foundation of the publishing house (Oxford University Press) and collection (the Clarendon Aristotle Series), was an accurate and detailed analysis of texts, meanings and words' paradoxes, as source of inspiration for the linguistic method, proceeding line by line, and then gathering together knowledge of the Ancient Greek language with an exquisite philosophical taste. Austin himself is even considered to be one of the founders of the “speech act theory” and many other important contributions to the Philosophy of Language, but all of those works, as Berti notes, are completely influenced by Aristotle – not only by the *Ethics*, but also by *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*. The Italian philosopher will also linger on the inheritance of Austin's School, especially with the work of Owen and Ackrill, who will focus on the linguistic method as genuinely “dialectical,” that is, able to produce scientific results.

The second exponent, belonging to the Oxonian School, is Austin's colleague Gilbert Ryle, differing from him in (1) a particular argumentative method of his own



philosophy that aims to deeply explain *reductio ad absurdum* and non-senses; and (2) a specific Ancient Philosophical taste, that brings him, especially in the last part of his work, to overlap logic and “dialectical method,” stating that the authentic philosophical Oxonian task is identical to the Aristotelian philosophy. This would be about studying “trans-departmental” truths and concepts, in order to achieve a systemic connection among particular sciences – but this is evidently much more Neo-positivistic than Aristotelian.

The third exponent is the Oxonian Peter F. Strawson and his proposal of a “descriptive Metaphysics.” Strawson’s interest is authentically theoretical, since he followed the last Wittgenstein of the ordinary language description about true and false characters. But his very courage, going against the first Wittgenstein, Russell and Neo-positivism, is to call “Metaphysics” the necessary communicative condition of the language to be referred to a thing as to make possible the construction of the reality, although making precise the “descriptive” character of that. Berti draws an interesting in-depth analysis, describing down to the smallest detail all the Aristotelian resonances in Ryle’s work, but also will itemize the treacherous heritage of Analytic Philosophy, since it will reduce the utilization of Aristotle to the *Categories*’ descriptive method, leaving out the biggest part of his ontology.

Infact, the fourth and fifth aspects, typical of this English School, are not exponents, but rather: the problem of identity, faced by Kripke, Wiggins and Hamlyn and the “practical inference” of Anscombe and Von Wright. What remains disconcerting about Berti’s analysis is the way in which he clarifies how the Aristotelian treatise always and again reconfigures itself and, with more or less awareness on the part of his heirs, continues to forge even the most modern theories and recent authors, while preserving a certain level of malleability, such as to lend itself very adherently to currents different from each other. We have just seen, in this remark, the Analytic School and now we are going shortly to look at the Practical Philosophy, recognising how different they are, although both arose from the same soil.

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A rebirth concerning Ancient Practical Philosophy occurred during the 1960s and 1970s, as an upswing of the philosophical reflections on *πραξις*, from an economic, political and ethical perspective. Special attention will be given to Plato’s and Aristotle’s “political philosophy” first, keeping Heidegger as master, from some German philosophers subsequently emigrated to the USA like Leo Strauss, Eric Voegelin, Hannah Arendt, as well as from the popular Post-Marxist “critical theory” – although reductively devoted to Classics rather than to a strong polemic against the modern concept of science and capitalism – of the first generation of the Frankfurt School with thinkers like Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse, but also very important are the reinterpretation of Apel and Habermas.

This rehabilitation of the Practical Philosophy has spread throughout all European and American countries for about twenty years, with very strong echoes still being felt. Within this movement – Berti points out – political philosophy is understood as neither methodological nor logical, but rather as exquisitely dialectical and moral, namely, it is the

one capable of questioning about the best way to reach a good education to citizenship, coexistence among human being practically organized in structured forms – let's add that young citizens' education is the very literal task attributed by Plato to philosophy in the Πολιτεία, usually translated as *Republic* rather than as the more faithful *Citizenship*. In this sense Philosophy must be practice, a “popular treatise” (191), although it's very important to remember that it doesn't mean that it is split from the spiritual, metaphysical, noetic. For example, a large part of Voegelin's work is dedicated to the investigation on the political seen as an “existential virtue,” a form of intimate connection to the origin, as in Plotinus or in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* – here noetic knowledge as an issue of μετάληψις, participation. Hence, even considerations about νοῦς and other forms of intuitive knowledge or knowledge as a whole, are rooted in “a previous genetical disposition between divine and human νοῦς” (195). Hannah Arendt too, Heidegger's pupil, in her *The Human Condition* (1958) is essentially interested in find, within practical life and the Heideggerian “being together” or “among all,” the very identity of the Aristotelian “political animal,” individuating in πράξις as a way of life, βίος πρακτικός or πολιτικός. Berti shows, however, that none of these authors were able to develop thoughts involving not a hierarchical but rather a dialectical order between θεωρία and πράξις. It's also true that probably they were influenced by a certain way of understanding rationalism as well as science and technicism. Let's add – though drawing on Berti's statement – that this counterpoint is extensively treated by Claudia Baracchi's<sup>6</sup> *Aristotle's Ethics as First Philosophy*, where, in a few words, she proposes to understand Practical Philosophy without a hierarchal relation between θεωρία and πράξις about the two, but rather with an intense passionate movement towards what Ancient texts are saying, in their numerous meanings, about the precise position of Ethics as the very φιλοσοφία πρώτη.

Returning to Berti's analysis, he continues describing Gadamer's contribution to this wave of Philosophy of practice and politics and, more in general, what occurred in the Germany of the second half of the twentieth century. His *Truth and Method* (1960) will distinguish itself with a severe description of a hermeneutical Aristotelian model and aim, and by a specific work of φρόνησις, from which he draws the characteristics of practical knowledge, even coming to call it “knowing-how, knowing oneself, knowing for oneself.” Yet, according to the Italian philosopher, the connection between politics and φρόνησις are not specifically Aristotelian, but rather Gadamerian, although in turn influenced by his master Heidegger and other major German thinkers such as Nietzsche, Natorp, Cassirer, Dilthey. Berti speaks about a reduction of the entire Aristotelian Philosophy to practical value and towards the indication of the hermeneutical value of φρόνησις. Within the decisively more contemporary Anglo-American Philosophy, starting from the 1970s until nowadays, Berti states the importance of considering the frame of a certain

<sup>6</sup> C. Baracchi is Professor of Moral Philosophy and Philosophical Practices at the University of Milano-Bicocca. Eclectic philosopher and philosophical analyst, among her vast works, it is here recalled the aforementioned *Aristotle's Ethics as First Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008). This work is also translated and expanded in the Italian version of 2013, *L'architettura dell'umano. Aristotele e l'Etica come filosofia prima* (Milano: Vita & Pensiero, 2013). See also the fundamental C. Baracchi (ed.), *The Bloomsbury Companion to Aristotle* (London-New York: The Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013).

practical Aristotelianism, represented by MacIntyre, Williams, Sen, Jonas and analyses, once again, the consequences of their sublime treacherous heritage. Yet, Aristotle endures and is subject to time and to always new elaborations because of it. In the last part of the twentieth century we can imagine how history has radically changed the way we read Aristotle, just think of the birth of Protestantism, the Holocaust, the Second World War and the Nuclear Bomb, The Nietzschean Death of God, Capitalism and Consumerism, and – in a psychoanalytical sense, the end of Patriarchalism, and the birth of Individualism. All these have inevitably changed the way to interpret and look at the past, in order to remodel the future – which now involves paying great attention to the issue of freedom, choice, and to the new reformulation of rhetoric and the ethics of discourse; as well as to death and limit, responsibility, happiness and human conditions.

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New considerations will be brought forward which discuss the development of twentieth century philosophy up to the emergence of “New Epistemology,” a new concept of science, developed by thinkers from Bachelard, Popper, Feyerabend to Kuhn and Prigogine, which valorise the new method of “trial and error” and place attention on the perceptive priority of observing nature. The last line of thought Berti considers is the decisive Aristotelian influence on “classic metaphysics,” with reference to the Italian philosopher Marino Gentile’s precise position. In fact, Gentile will elaborate an important contribution endowed with a “classical,” that is, imperishable value, from which to push the understanding of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* and pure act as a way to reconsider the sense of experience, eventually lost in the later Plato – with the doctrine of numbers and ideas. According to Berti’s Gentile, a Thomistic reading will also be passed by in favour of recovering an historical effectivity as well as of sewing ontological and theological moments, since the “true knowledge is knowing through causes.” Gentile will note that Aristotle’s overcoming of Plato will be due to the authentic philosophical problem of complexity and absoluteness – the broadest philosophical problem of questioning – rather than the inadequacy or insufficiency of the Platonic teachings. Exactly in this sense, Aristotle’s knowledge about the thing is always a knowledge about the causes, the first causes, and this continuously permeates the experience, saving its problematicity, fluidity, variety. “This is the reason why, his metaphysics, as an affirmation of the problematicity of experience and a demonstration of the principles’ transcendence, is classical” (259). It seems to be very hard to imagine a philosopher more actual and more fertile for the twentieth century of Aristotle, with regard to dynamic unity.

Which is then the sense of such an illustration of Aristotle’s presence throughout the twentieth century, besides that, completely obvious, of providing a stream of information? Why, in other words, is Aristotle still so present, after all the bad (and the good) that has been said for 2300 years? Because, I answer, Aristotle’s philosophy is an instance, almost unique throughout history, of an “open system” – namely, an instance of a philosophy that, on the one hand, is a true system, an articulated and

organic complex of parts, endowed with a extensive internal differentiation, but also with a certain unity; and, on the other hand, it is an open system, that means that it is susceptible of continuous integrations, even, of numerous uses, given its great versatility, attested to by one of the longest fortunes of which we have a record and by a massive presence, as we've already seen, in the same twentieth century's philosophy (262).

What is, according to Berti, the worthiest element in this dynamic system is the willingness to bring philosophy under everyone's eyes, not being obscure – as Heraclitus was, for example – but rather by formulating thoughts starting from the common sense, and returning to this, as many times as possible – not to flatten discourse but to make it accessible, unhinging shared beliefs. This doesn't mean that Aristotelian language is easy, to the contrary, he fairly plays with words, treats them as rings of a chain to be disassembled and again reassembled, creating new ones, dismembering language as a body, but doing so only when he recognizes – and appropriately thematizes – the insufficiency of the common language, insofar as it is philosophical, or even when he really silences philosophical contents. Another cause of his imperishable charm is the enthusiasm for experience and senses – the erotic thrust to touch, see, taste, smell and listen. Here the multiplicity becomes a river in flood, comprehensible only if a sense of unity is sought, in the sign of respect for what must remain mysterious, if not secret, knowing that argumentation can only be applied to those phenomena that permit to be investigated either with a scientific or even a poetic attitude.

This review has been edited by Professor Michael Deckard, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Lenoir-Rhyne University, Hickory, NC. Here, I would like to thank him for his friendship and teachings and, above all, for his patience in editing this work.

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Wawrzyniec Rymkiewicz

## **SZUKALSKI – A TRANSGRESSION IN SEARCH OF IDENTITY**

Szukalski, an important but neglected 20<sup>th</sup> century Polish sculptor, painter and designer, was, or at least wanted to be, more than an artist. He wanted to be an artist-priest, someone who summons and resuscitates the deities of dead religions; an artist-politician who creates the "Second Poland," and to do so forms a political party of sorts called "Youth Union;" finally an artist-scholar or sage-artist who portrays himself at the beginning of his career as Copernicus, and in the last period of his work he devotes himself to the study of the origins of language and the human species.

We face a phenomenon that will not be contained within the realm of art and consists in crossing the borders and confusing the established orders. One could say that there is nothing special in this crossing of the borders, that it perfectly fits the conventions of Romantic art. Adam Mickiewicz, for instance, also wanted to be more than just a poet: the nation's father, a religious prophet, a military leader assembling troops in Italy and Turkey. Yet Szukalski clearly goes much further. The crossing of the borders in his work seems to reach the very essence of his pieces, as if it belonged, or was meant to belong, to an order different than art. In Szukalski's case we can talk about a transgression – of the limits of art and its conventions – and reaching over into some remote and as yet undiscovered strange regions.

André Laks

## **ARTICULATING THE DE MOTU ANIMALIUM. THE PLACE OF THE TREATISE WITHIN THE CORPUS ARISTOTELICUM**

What is the place of Aristotle's *On the movement of animals* (henceforth *MA*) in the *Corpus Aristotelicum*? There are two main entrées to this question. Since the *MA*, admittedly one of Aristotle's latest works, is extremely rich in external references, both explicit and implicit, to his other treatises, one could try analysing these references systematically; the price to pay for such an inquiry, however, would inevitably be a lack of focus. Alternatively, one could ask how the treatise fits into Aristotle's "encyclopedia" of the natural sciences (whose most general scheme we find in the prologue of his *Meteorology*); indeed, this is a very natural question to press, not only because of the treatise's own indications about this, in its last paragraph, but also because of its relationship, both textual and conceptual, with the *De anima* (*de An.*). As I shall suggest, this relationship is crystallized in a difficult sentence occurring in chapter 10 of the *MA*, a sentence which, if my reading of it is correct, also has some bearings on the question of Aristotle's hylomorphism. Thus, asking about the place of the *MA* in the *Corpus Aristotelicum* will also involve us in what may be Aristotle's ultimate thought about this crucial doctrine.

Claudia Baracchi

## **UNHEARD-OF FRIENDSHIP: ON ARISTOTLE**

Friendship is a mostly forgotten word in contemporary philosophical reflection, notably in political thought. The phenomena (in the plural) it designates have lost their relevance outside the sphere of individual experience and strictly contingent affairs. For us, late heirs of modern dichotomies sanctioning the separation of the public from the private, politics from ethics, policy from affect, the oblivion of friendship is a matter of obviousness – to the point of being itself forgotten. The theme of friendship plays a crucial role in Carl Schmitt's theory of the political. Yet, despite his claim to the ancient Greek ancestry of his thinking, his interpretation of friendship retains little or nothing of the features attributed to it in Plato's or Aristotle's seminal meditation.

Schmitt's reading of ancient philosophical categories, corroborated by a well attested interpretive tradition, is echoed and thoroughly deployed in Derrida's *Politiques de l'amitié*, although for altogether different reasons and aims. Derrida brings friendship back into



the scope of philosophical investigation, yet in order to insist on its impossibility (“O friends, there is no friend”). The growing concern with forms of life other than human (leading to the thematization of animality, of plant life, even things inanimate); discourses on gender, race, and social justice; de-colonial and post-colonial thought, along with various critiques of humanism and turns to the post-human – all display the common trait of an increasingly uneasy relation to the past, above all to the Greeks: too “classical,” celebrated to the point of empty rhetoric, too male, too white, too racist, too elitist, embarrassingly incorrect. Thus, whether along the lines of modernity or according to post-modern, anti-modern critiques, in a way the treatment of antiquity remains the same. It involves the assimilation of ancient to modern philosophy, and hence a simplifying as well as deeply troubling unification of the Western tradition (as if it were one and seamless).

C.D.C. Reeve,

## **HAPPINESS AS A POLITICAL ACHIEVEMENT IN ARISTOTLE**

*Metaphysics Zeta* (VII) has been described as the Mount Everest of Aristotle’s works. If there is a comparable peak in his ethical and political works, it is, I suppose, the texts in which the relationship between the practical political life and the contemplative life, and its implications for the nature of Aristotelian happiness, are characterized. This is the mountain I want to try to climb. In Plato’s *Symposium* Socrates agrees with Diotima that “those who are happy are happy through possessing good things,” and that “happiness” is the name for whatever it is that puts a stop to the question: Why do you want or wish for that? Once I say, “Because it will make me happy,” we supposedly know all there is to know. “Happiness” is thus the name of the final practical end. Everyone agrees to that. What good things the name applies to, however, is hotly disputed, as Aristotle tells us: “The ultimate object of our wishes and desires, then, involves eternal life, since in wishing to be happy – in wishing good things to be ours forever – we are wishing to be around forever to possess them.”

For what life is best for a given individual depends on the particularities of his nature, character, and circumstances. For him therefore the question is not which life is unconditionally best for human beings universally, but which of the lives actually available to him is best. This might well be the life of a resident alien in, say, a democratic city, or a tenured professor in a good research university.

Eric Salem

## **ARISTOTLE’S CONSTITUTION OF ATHENS AND THE MEANING OF POLITEIA**

Over the course of the *Politics*, and especially in books three, four and seven, Aristotle makes a whole series of intriguing claims about the thing he calls πολιτεία. He variously identifies πολιτεία with 1) an order (τάξις) of the inhabitants of a city, 2) an order (τάξις) of the offices in a city, 3) the government or governing structure (πολίτευμα) of a city, 4) the form or εἶδος of a city and finally, 5) the way of life of a city, its βίος. Near the end of the *Politics*, as he returns to questions that had occupied him at the beginning of the book, and in the *Ethics* as well, Aristotle further observes that different πολιτεῖαι have their origin in the different notions men have of happiness and the best way of life. Clearly some of these characterizations of πολιτεία cohere more readily with one another than others. Still, the very variety of these formulations shows us that we are dealing here with a maddeningly complex object, and I assume I am not the only reader of Aristotle who wishes at times that he would simply show us how his different characterizations hang together. Here, I suggest, the Constitution of Athens can prove useful. Reading it may not add anything essential to the meaning of πολιτεία, but by providing us with a concrete illustration of a city and constitution it may help us to see how the different aspects of πολιτεία hang together or even point to a single underlying object.

Jean-Marc Narbonne

## **TOO MUCH UNITY IN A CITY IS DESTRUCTIVE OF THE CITY: ARISTOTLE AGAINST PLATO’S UNIFICATION PROJECT OF THE POLIS**

It is well-known that the question whether the political model of Plato’s *Republic* is to be taken seriously has always kindled a true debate. One could propose an outline of the possible solutions to this problem and maintain four potential scenarios. The *Republic*’s account is either:

1. Serious but unrealizable (it would, in reality, have an aim which is not political)
2. Serious and realizable (under certain conditions)
3. Fictional but edifying (comprising some elements of truth)
4. Fictional and playful, i.e. not at all edifying.

I consider here the last possibility, namely that Plato’s intention was not only to write a fictional text, but also a text that was essentially playful, a mere intellectual amusement without any edifying aim, similarly to Aristophanes’s *Assemblywomen*.

Jean Bodin is probably the only author that comes close to this position. He compares Plato’s *Republic* to More’s *Utopia*, describing it as a “purely ideal and unrealizable commonwealth,” a genuine chimera. We can find a more recent, but comparable, analysis in Strauss. According to Strauss, Plato’s *Republic* is indeed close to a comical fantasy, like a comedy by Aristophanes.

Concerning Aristotle, he adheres to the first hypothesis about Plato's political views. Such a hypothesis consists in saying that Plato's *Republic* describes a "serious but unrealizable" project. In other words, Aristotle takes Plato's statements literally, but considers them as fundamentally chimerical, unreasonable, or else contrary to nature.

Piotr Nowak

## **SAGACITY OF A MAGNANIMOUS MAN: NOTES ON "NICOMACHEAN ETHICS"**

The protagonist of *Nicomachean Ethics* wants to enter the world with a bang, often becoming the hostage of dreams about the grandeur of his destiny. His virtue seems extreme, and he himself does not speak the language of compromise, he rejects half-measures. Therefore he quickly falls prey to this world or – and this is more likely – becomes the dream a man dreams about himself when he dreams of a better, simpler life. At the beginning of Book IX, Aristotle recalls the anecdote about the cithara player who was promised a large reward for his performance, to be received the day after his concert. The following day, however, the audience all agreed that they only listened to please the performer. Besides, they do not really remember what pieces were played and whether they were pretty, since music is such a flighty, airy substance. And so the philosopher, like the cithara player who releases the pleasure of listening among a curious audience, must be ready to face similar circumstances as those described in the anecdote. Like the cithara player, he provides "immaterial goods" in the form of invisible thoughts and ideas; like the cithara player, he cannot count on his "students," "audience," "friends of the arts" to repay the efforts he devoted to thought in the same currency. This is why philosophers are, in a way, professional "exiles," lonely people, who seek not to please their peers but the gods. Through the *φιλία* in its name, philosophy resembles friendship, and, like friendship, is a scarce good, hard to acquire, which has yet to bring anyone riches. The philosopher, thus, living his existence far from the din of city life, is his own best friend.

Rafael Ferber

## **MORTALITY OF THE SOUL AND IMMORTALITY OF THE ACTIVE MIND (NOUS POIETIKOS) IN ARISTOTLE. SOME HINTS**

For Aristotle – at least in the dialectical context of the *Sophistici Elenchi* – "most people have no distinct opinion (*ἀμφιδοξοῦσιν*) whether the soul of animals is destructible or immortal" (*SE* 17.176b16-17; transl. Pickard-Cambridge). In the same vein, we could say that even today many, or perhaps even most, people have no distinct view of whether the soul of human beings, that is, their own soul, is destructible or immortal. Aristotle himself, by contrast, had developed, in the context of *De Anima*, a distinct view, namely that the soul of human beings is destructible, except for the active mind (*νοῦς ποιητικός*). The paper gives (I) a short introduction to Aristotle's theory of the soul in distinction to Plato's and tries again (II) to answer the question of whether the individual or the general active mind of human beings is immortal by interpreting "When separated (*χωρισθεῖς*)" (*de An.* III, 5, 430a22) as the decisive argument for the latter view. This strategy of limiting the question has the advantage of avoiding the probably undecidable question of whether this active *νοῦς* is human or divine. The paper closes with an outlook (III) on the Christian belief in the resurrection of body and soul in a spiritual body (*σῶμα πνευματικόν*) (1 Corinthians: 15, 44) by accentuating the ethical aspect of the belief in individual immortality as a "need of reason" (*Vernunftbedürfnis*) (Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, A 256–258).

Kevin Corrigan

## **"INTENTIONALITY" IN PLATO AND PLOTINUS: PLOTINUS' CRITIQUE OF ARISTOTLE'S INTELLECT**

In this work I want to assess what Plato and Plotinus might have thought about intentionality and, partly on this basis, determine why Plotinus might have rejected Aristotle's account of Intellect as a thinking of thinking or, since Plotinus never mentions this famous phrase directly, why he might reject thinking "of" thinking as a first principle. I take it as axiomatic that Plotinus develops his theory of the "hypostases" – the One or Good, Intellect and Soul – from Plato's *Republic*, *Symposium*, *Parmenides*, *Second Letter*, etc. What I am interested in uncovering here by contrast is why, on Aristotelian grounds, thinking or understanding, for Plotinus, cannot be primary. I shall take just a few examples from Plato and Plotinus and I will argue that the rich intentional world of both thinkers is ultimately dependent upon pure non-intentionality that is at the root of all thinking and of every other activity such as reasoning, opining, imagining and perceiving, dependent ultimately upon thinking and contemplation. This I will argue is at the root of Plotinus' rejection of Aristotle's Intellect as thinking of thinking. I shall start with Plato. Rather than conduct a comparative analysis of various terms that might fit the modern term intention derived from the Latin, I shall concentrate instead upon a power's being "of" something or directed "to" something in Plato and Plotinus and then go on from this to what I take to be Plotinus' critique of Aristotle's Intellect as a thinking of thinking.

Stephen Mendelsohn

## **FIRE AND FLESH: THE ROLE OF ANALOGY IN ARISTOTLE'S *DE ANIMA***

The problem of self-knowledge hovers in the background of Aristotle's explication of the soul found in his *De Anima*. For how could one claim to have obtained complete self-knowledge in accordance with the Delphic command to "know thyself" without an adequate account of the human soul? What I seek to explore in this essay are Aristotle's oft-touched upon analogies to the organs of sense outlined in Book II of *De Anima* in order to illustrate and clarify his investigation into the intellectual soul which occurs in Book III. Although on its surface this analogy seems to function merely as a useful tool in helping the reader to understand the basic structure and function of the intellectual soul, its repeated use throughout Book III suggests a deeper significance. In a way, Aristotle's attempt to achieve adequate knowledge of the intellectual soul in Book III stands as an exemplary case of the philosopher's endeavor to obey the Delphic imperative. Despite the apparent disconnect between the intellectual soul and the material realm, Aristotle's frequent use of the analogy to sense suggests that the distinction between sense and the intellect is not so clear-cut. As I will show, the recourse which Aristotle takes to this analogy indirectly demonstrates the inherent intelligibility of the objects of sense in his system and exhibits complete self-knowledge as a fundamental limit with respect to the philosopher's pursuit of truth.

Jakob Ziguras

## **ARISTOTLE: METAPHYSICS AS THE ANTHROPOLOGY**

Aristotle's philosophy is governed by a structural tension that is, in certain ways, akin to what John Milbank has called transorganicity: "an integral yet discontinuous unity, (...) an integrity sustained despite an interruptive leap." This discontinuous unity involves an "addition" that is seen as paradoxically essential."

I focus on the most fundamental instances of this structural tension: the relation between God and the cosmos, and the relation between *voûç* and the human being as a psychosomatic whole. I will refer to these as macrocosmic and microcosmic transorganicity, respectively. It will be suggested that the forms of microcosmic transorganicity other than the relation between *voûç* and the human being are subordinate to the latter.

I suggest that the resolution of the problems implicit in these two relations, requires the postulation of a single exemplary instance of union between the human and the divine, a *θεάνθρωπος*, in relation to whom all other human beings – as integrally living, sentient and noetic – would be teleologically ordered, as to their final cause. Thus, though I argue that *voûç*, in both the *Metaphysics* and *De Anima*, is divine, rather than a power of the human soul, I will criticize the view that, in cognitive activity, a single divine *voûç* is identically active in all human beings alike. The postulated exemplary instance would be the primary intra-cosmic substance, and fulfill the criteria for substance in a way that avoids the twin extremes of pantheism and theopanism.

Wayne J. Hankey

## **"COMPLECTITUR OMNEM": DIVINE AND HUMAN HAPPINESS IN ARISTOTLE AND IN AQUINAS' *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE***

Aquinas concludes his questions on "the unity of the divine essence" with the inclusive perfection which is the divine happiness. Just as "the divine perfection includes every perfection (*divina autem perfectio complectitur omnem perfectionem*)," so "the divine happiness enfolds all happiness (*divina beatitudo complectitur omnem beatitudinem*)." The happiness which creatures seek, truly or falsely, and possess, God also has in his own proper way. Aquinas follows Aristotle's fundamentals on divine and human happiness, as an article earlier in Question 26 of the *Summa theologiae* (Whether God is called happy, because of intellectual actuality?) makes evident. The knowledge of God given by the light of glory far beyond our natural limits adapts itself to the way humans naturally participate in God's uncreated light so that the ladder of the *Lex divinitatis* is not broken. Every difference is maintained, and every extreme is mediated. We shall be made "deiformis," by means of the light of glory without ceasing to be human. Explicitly and definitely Aquinas founds the creature both in and from the thearchy. What is preserved can be included. So the divine happiness "complectitur omnem" and the human happiness is vision of the very essence of God in which all is contained.

Sonia Kamińska

## **ARE BRENTANO'S "HABILITATIONSTHESEN" ARISTOTELIAN? TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY**

This paper is meant to be a commentary on Franz Brentano's *Habilitationsthesen* that, along with *The Psychology of Aristotle*, make Brentano's "habilitation project." There are three main tasks that the essay attempts to perform: to show where Brentano's well-known aversion towards German idealism may have come from, to shed light on the origin of the fourth – most famous – habilitation thesis, and finally – to prove that according to Brentano Aristotelianism was always the best remedy for idealism. Surely, Brentano's theses

are Aristotelian. But, from what we have seen, there are two Brentanos, both in a way referring to Aristotle: a Thomist in *Aristotelica* and a modern scientist in PES. And this is perfectly reflected in the theses. On the one hand, these two philosophers are in perfect agreement, like in theses 1-4 and 11-15. On the other hand, sometimes they contradict each other, like – funnily enough – in theses 1-4. I believe that the essence of PES is more Aristotelian in spirit. But, definitely, the contents of *Aristotelica* were closer to Brentano's heart. Brentano was famous for changing his mind (as to ontology, intentionality, time-consciousness). But he never changed his mind when it came to Aristotle. I believe that it is wrong that we hardly ever stress how emotional Brentano was. We want to see him as a scientist figure whereas Husserl in his aforementioned memoirs gives an account of Brentano as a very romantic spirit. And, in this vein, I believe that Aristotle was the love of his life.

**Jeff Love and Michael Meng**

## **WHY AUTHORITY?**

Why do we seem to need authority? This is an exceedingly simple question. But it is also rarely asked. To be sure, we frequently interrogate certain kinds of authority: Why do the police have the authority to search my house? Or: Why does the professor have the authority to evaluate a student's assignment? Or: Why does the Koran have the authority to direct how I should live my life? Yet, in each case, only a certain kind of authority comes into question. What remains concealed in these questions is a more sweeping and probing question: Why do we have these various kinds of authority in the first place? Why authority?

In his celebrated tragedy, *Oedipus Rex*, Sophocles makes a connection between authority and salvation, which appears to be very intimate. Authority is precisely what it is because it offers relief, protection, salvation from threats to our survival and welfare. The king, who in theory should seek the welfare of his people, is in effect like a father seeking the welfare of his children, another connection frequently made, and is in this sense a savior. Indeed, when Freud refers to religion as an "infantile neurosis" he is referring precisely to this more profound stream of authority born of the struggle to resist disease and death.

In what follows, we deepen this very preliminary account of the reasons why we seem to need authority, in order to put that need itself into question, along with the concept of the political that derives from it. In short, we attempt to imagine a politics not predicated on the assertion of a supreme authority or, on the other hand, a thoroughgoing absence of authority. To the contrary, we seek to imagine a politics that is indifferent to authority.

**John Sallis**

## **THE SPACING OF IMAGINATION AND THE ELEMENTAL IN NATURE**

My intent is to engage imagination, to re-enact descriptively, theoretically, its most distinctive engagement with nature and with a certain range of art that is oriented in a particular respect to nature. This engagement will be carried out in relation to a series of natural scenes, of landscapes: from the lakes and woods of New England, to a narrow valley in the Black Forest, to a high, rocky outlet not too distant from Dresden, to the mountains of the northern heartland of China. Along this itinerary we will rely on descriptions, on paintings, and in every case, necessarily, on our own imaginative capacity. In both word and deed, Chinese landscape painting is oriented, not primarily to things, but to the elements; and these it depicts in the very withdrawal, the concealment, that belongs to their elemental character. This citation expresses this orientation with utter directness. Guo Xi writes: "Whenever you are planning to paint, you must first correlate the sky and the earth (...); between them one should (...) spread the scenery." One could hardly conceive a more eloquent statement – eloquent in its very simplicity and in its accord with the painting. For it directs the painter – as well as those who would be perceptive of his work – to the elementals, earth and sky, that bound, that delimit the space within which all showing takes place, both of visible things and of other elementals. It is to this enchorial spacing that the painter and those who take his work to heart are bound to attend.

**Bogna J. Gladden-Obidzińska**

## **ON AESTHETIC ENGAGEMENT, PRAGMATISM, AND THEIR ROMANTIC INSPIRATIONS**

As critics of contemporary art and culture, among them Maarten Doorman and Thomas Streeter, observe, the second half of the 20th Century can be understood in terms of its multifaceted bond with Romanticism. Several contemporary artistic manifestos have mutatis mutandis repeated or re-enacted (rather than continued) the post-Romantic rebellion against "the rational oppression" represented by technology and the technization of human environment. This rebellion began with the 19th Century Romantic contestation of the Enlightenment and industrial revolution and was carried forward first by the Victorian aestheticians and Morris's Arts and Crafts Movement in interior design, and then by some of the 20th Century avant-gardes, and the 1968 social movements. First, we will investigate Pragmatism in its genetic although not univocal relationship to Romanticism, and then the implications of this relationship for a possibility of applying the idea of inspiration to creativity construed in the Pragmatist way. Then we will situate Arnold Berleant's idea of aesthetic engagement and his concept of the negative sublime within this context. In particular, this text aims to explore how this post-Pragmatist orientation affects its own recognition of the sources of creative and aesthetic activity. Thus, Berleant's environmental aesthetics is of particular interest to us from the perspective in which the human being defines himself

through his bond with the natural environment and physical and biological conditioning, as well as in an ambiguous relation to the civilization-related environment – social-educational, economic and technological. The main question is how, for the aesthetics of engagement, human beings' belonging to the natural environment is combined with the environment conceived as human-dependent, and how this complicated condition provides a source of inspiration for transformative activity.

Piotr Nowak

## THE POLISH SCHOOL OF ESSAY

[*Four Decades of Polish Essays*, ed. Jan Kott, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1990, 403 pp.]

The first part of *Four Decades of Polish Essays* where the Polish writer is shown against the changing backdrop of history (regaining independence, wars, revolutions, The Polish School of Essay sudden changes of artistic paradigm, etc.), makes a very good impression. Then things get hard-going. Jan Kott, who collected all the texts and grouped them according to his own taste and calculations, decided to gift-wrap them in decorative foreign paper. I suspect he did so to smooth over our "immaturity" and lack of nurture, to prepare them – washed clean and perfumed – for the worldly prancing and curtsying. So when Schulz explains to Witkacy the connection between his painterly work and the beauty of Drohobych's "cinnamon shops," Jan Kott places his work against the background of Kafka's writings as if Schulz's work was not strong enough to express its contents. He adopts a similar approach to the essays of Czapski, Miciński, Kubiak, and many others. If Miciński, then from the perspective of "a work of nature" that Kant was; if Czapski, then in Bonnard's shadow; if Kubiak, then a hollow Kubiak, at most adorned with quotes from Pascal, and the most hackneyed ones at that, constantly repeated as "words of wisdom" or, rather, platitudes. Letting slide the impossible pomposity of some of the essays, I still get the impression that their very selection shows Kott's incredible parochialism: he prefers to discuss universal issues using a foreign voice, elucidate their meaning through the terminology used elsewhere, instead of tackling them from his own perspective, without an intermediary.

Christian Wildberg

## TWO NEW EDITIONS OF THE PRESOCRATICS – AND WHAT TO DO WITH THEM

I am proposing, firstly, to stop toning down the ancient evidence that the early Greek philosophers, in particular Thales, had far-reaching experience of Egyptian technology, wisdom, and culture, and instead to explore more honestly what this Egyptian background might mean for our understanding of the rise of philosophy in Greece.

Secondly, I am proposing to investigate the possible political dimension of Pre-Platonic thought as it develops, and to relate this dimension more closely to the sophistic movement on the one hand and to the historical transformations of the Greek city states on the other, in particular the rise of democracy in Athens.

Finally, I am proposing to re-examine the relationship in which Parmenides stands to the rest of the Western tradition of metaphysical speculation. Far from having been its founding father, there is a real possibility that those who thought and professed to follow his precepts were in fact ignoring his most momentous message, i.e. monism and the unreality of heuristic distinctions, and that Parmenides' Way of Truth might help us to arrive at a more global narrative of the history of philosophy that encompasses both East and West.

Kenneth Quandt

## ON THE NEW LOEB *REPUBLIC*

The new edition of Plato's *Republic* in the Loeb Series, volumes 237 and 276 of their entire Greek Series, translated and edited by Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy (Cambridge 2013), is intended, under the General Editorship of Jeffrey Henderson, to replace the two volumes of the same numbers produced by Paul Shorey decades ago. Unfortunately, that great edition will have been replaced by a version less than adequate.

The sheer quantity of the errors in the text and translation should have disqualified the manuscript from publication, at least in its present form. The nature and spectrum of those errors, moreover, suggests that the authors were unqualified to do the work. In addition to hundreds of basic translation errors that a third-year student might make, their work reveals specific ignorance of Greek idiom and insensitivity to Plato's semantics and to his use of syntactic structures. The work even suggests a deficiency in the conceptual apparatus requisite to understanding what Socrates is saying, especially when the so-called Theory of Forms comes into the conversation. And as to the pages on the left side, the fundamental errors made in presenting the text itself reveal methodological confusions and simple carelessness.

I submit this work (1) on behalf of scholars, to dissuade them from relying upon these volumes in their courses; (2) on behalf of students, as a prophylaxis in case they can no longer get their hands on the Shorey Loeb and perhaps a guide to better understanding; and, last but not least, (3) in hopes that those in charge of the Series shall not let this go on in future "modernizations" of the Loeb Plato.

Alessandra Filannino Indelicato

**STONE ON STONE OR THE TOWER OF A TREACHEROUS HERITAGE. REVIEW OF ENRICO BERTI'S "ARISTOTELE NEL NOVECENTO"**

In an interview released in September 1982, one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most important female philosophers and psychoanalysts, Marie-Louise Von Franz, tells us how passionately she had accepted her master's invitation to build a tower in the countryside of a very little town in Switzerland called Bollingen. This would not appear so curious if we were to take heed of these two details: (1) the master at issue was Carl Gustav Jung, one of the most important fathers of psychoanalysis and symbolic inquiry of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; and (2) many years ago, from 1923 until 1955, and indeed not very far from Von Franz's, he had first built a tower there – which can still be visited nowadays. Concerning the curious invitation, at the very core of Von Franz's acceptance there was the hope of gaining an experience marked by loneliness, in order to release that wild part of her soul which wanted to be freely expressed – as she herself confesses during the interview. Philosophy allows multiple forms of imagination, manipulation, reflection, and production – a case in point is Jung's immense *Red Book*. Construction as historical process means, symbolically, to build one's own tower; and it seems to belong to the philosophical investigation in its broadest and most authentic sense.

But in this short episode, we can also get a glimpse of the big archetypal issue of the comparison with the master, in the awareness that inheritance always implies a betrayal, a dance of approaching and stepping away from the master. Even history, never comprehensible in singular form, appears as nothing more than an unstoppable circular river, always a harbinger of new materials to integrate, and making the backdrop ever more layered, ever less faithful to itself.

The philosophical quarterly *Kronos* was established in 2007 by scholars connected with the University of Warsaw and the University of Białystok. Metaphysics, the philosophy of politics, the philosophy of literature and religion, history of psychoanalysis comprise the thematic scope of the journal. The editors of the quarterly strive to familiarize the Polish reader with new translations and commentaries of classic works (Plato, Joachim of Fiore, Nicholas of Cusa, Shakespeare, Schelling, the Schlegel brothers, Heidegger and many others), as well as the work of contemporary philosophers.

The annual *Kronos Philosophical Journal* (in English) was established in 2012 as a companion edition to the quarterly, to supplement it, yet without repeating the content of the Polish edition. The papers presented in the annual might be of interest to the readers from outside Poland, allowing them to familiarize themselves with the dynamic thought of contemporary Polish authors, as well as entirely new topics, rarely discussed by English speaking authors. One of the issues published so far contained passages from previously unknown lectures by Leo Strauss on Aristotle; another issue was dedicated to the Russian phenomenologist Gustav Shpet.

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