

## *The doctrine of the Forms under critique*

FIRST PART

*Metaphysics* A 9, 990<sup>a</sup>33–991<sup>b</sup>9

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### Background and outline of the critique

As Aristotle's programmatic statement in ch. 7 indicates his search in *Metaphysics* A for the highest form of knowledge of what there is consists of two steps. The first step contains an examination of his predecessors' treatment of the first principles and causes, in order to confirm the correctness of his own conception of the four causes that he had worked out in the *Physics* (chs. 3–7): matter, form, moving cause, and final cause. The second step points up internal problems (*aporiai*) of these earlier conceptions of cause (chs. 8–9), in order to show what is well said in those accounts and what is not (8, 989<sup>b</sup>27–29).

The most prominent feature in the 'aporetic' treatment of the Platonic position in ch. 9 is that Aristotle addresses two significantly different theories of the Forms without any explicit recognition of their difference. The chapter's first part deals with the theory of Forms familiar from Plato's middle dialogues. The second part reverts to the discussion of the Forms as numbers that had

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been anticipated in ch. 6, where Plato's principles and causes seem to be little more than derivations from Pythagorean 'number-theory'. As a closer look at ch. 6 shows, however, Aristotle is well aware of the difference, for he refers to certain special features (ἴδια) that distinguish Plato from the 'Italians': In the wake of Socrates' search for universals Plato introduced the Forms (ἰδέαι) as the unchangeable principles that explain the common nature and name of the sensibles (987<sup>a</sup>30–<sup>b</sup>10). It is easy to overlook the importance of this reference to Plato's middle theory of the Forms in ch. 6, because Aristotle then characterizes 'participation in the Forms' as a version of the Pythagorean theory and explains Plato's metaphysical principles on the basis of Pythagorean number-theory.<sup>1</sup>

Why Aristotle in ch. 9 does not as much as hint at the difference between the type of Forms inspired initially by Socrates and the mathematised Forms, a difference he is going to acknowledge in his revision of ch. 9 in book *M* 4–5, must remain a moot point here.<sup>2</sup> One reason may lie in the compressed form of his critique. For instead of an extensive discussion, ch. 9 contains little more than a catalogue of problems with scant explanations of what is crucial about them. For this very reason Alexander of Aphrodisias in his commentary discusses this chapter extensively, partly drawing on Aristotle's lost work *Peri Ideôn*. Given the amount of attention paid in the literature in the last decades to Alexander's report, discussion must be limited here to the supplemental information it provides on Aristotle's text.<sup>3</sup>

As a preliminary overview of the first part of ch. 9 shows, Aristotle's critique displays only a loose order. First he marshals arguments concerning the existence of Forms as such (i–ii), then turns his attention to certain dubious kinds of Forms and their unwanted consequences (iii–iv), and finally points out problematic features of Forms as causes (v–vii).<sup>4</sup> There is some overlap of detail between the different points, but this is only to be expected, given that the Forms

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the summary in ch. 8, 989<sup>b</sup>24–990<sup>a</sup>32. In how far the overall picture does justice to Plato cf. the essays by C. Steel and O. Primavesi in this volume.

<sup>2</sup> Fine 1993, 37–38, takes the very fact that Aristotle does not comment on the difference as a sign that he saw no change. But Aristotle's silence may indicate no more than his wish to refrain from an explanation of the difference at this point. At *M* 4, 1078<sup>a</sup>9–17 he not only distinguishes the two theories but declares that initially there was no connection between Forms and numbers, 1078<sup>b</sup>9–11: "...we must first examine just the theory of the Form, not connecting it at all with the nature of numbers, but just as the people who first said that there were Forms understood it at the outset." Trsl. Annas, 1976; on this issue cf. her comments, 152–4; Ross 1924, xxxiii–xliii.

<sup>3</sup> Fine's monograph with its presentation of text, translation and thorough commentary on the different issues is the chief source-book. But to do justice to her suggestions would require a discussion that exceeds the limits of this article.

<sup>4</sup> The many 'furtherers' (ἔτι) that string together the different points in this chapter confirm the impression that Aristotle was not much concerned with the order and internal connection of the arguments.

are discussed under different aspects.<sup>5</sup> To avoid confusion, the subdivisions and numbering of the arguments in Ross' analysis are preserved, and Ross' translation is used, with some modifications:

(i) 990<sup>a</sup>32–<sup>b</sup>8: The Forms represent (needless) duplications of existing things ('Aristotle's Razor').

(ii) 990<sup>b</sup>8–17: Special problems with the existence of the Forms: Some of the proofs for the existence of Forms are invalid; others introduce 'unwanted' Forms of different kinds, i.e. Forms of objects of all sciences, of negative terms, of perishable things, of relative terms, and the infinite regress of Forms in the 'Third Man argument'.

(iii) 990<sup>b</sup>17–22: Certain arguments justify types of Forms that do not agree with basic principles of the theory.

(iv) 990<sup>b</sup>22–991<sup>a</sup>8: The theory's logic requires the limitation to Forms of substances rather than Forms of all things.

(v) 991<sup>a</sup>8–19: Forms are useless, because they fulfil their causal role neither from an ontological nor from an epistemological point of view.

(vi) 991<sup>a</sup>19–<sup>b</sup>1: The conception of Forms as 'models' is unintelligible and leaves unexplained the relation of the participants to their models.

(vii) 991<sup>b</sup>1–9: The separation of Forms is incompatible with their role as essences and as causes of generation and being.

### (i) *Aristotle's Razor*

Let us leave aside now the views of the Pythagoreans, for it is sufficient that we have dealt with them this far. But as for those who posit the Forms as causes: First, attempting to find the causes of these things around here they introduced others, equal in number to these, as if someone who wanted to count something thought that he would not be able to do it while there were too few of them, so tried to count them by making more of them. For there are about equally many or at least no fewer Forms than those things in search of whose causes they proceeded to the Forms, because in each case there is something with the same name besides the substances and also of the other things of which there is a one over many, both for these things over here and for the eternal things.<sup>6</sup> (990<sup>a</sup>33–<sup>b</sup>8)

<sup>5</sup> As Fine states in her Preface, vii, the arguments are "cryptic, abstract, and indeterminate". She plausibly suggests that Aristotle may have intended just this effect in order to highlight a corresponding indeterminacy in Plato's texts.

<sup>6</sup> Jaeger's, 1957 *ad loc.*, diagnosis of some disturbance of the text is confirmed by the numerous versions documented in the rich apparatus in Primavesi. Jaeger's transposition of οὐσία requires a corresponding change at *M* 4, 1079<sup>a</sup>2–4, an interference that should be a remedy of last resort. The many attempts to amend the text must be due to the awkward grammatical construction that leaves the status of 'the other things' unspecified. But this may be due merely to a somewhat careless formulation on Aristotle's side.

There are three points worth noting in this first section:

(i.1) Aristotle's 'Razor': The explanation of why the introduction of the Forms represents a needless multiplication of entities must be *facete dictum*. Not only is it ludicrous to say that counting gets easier when the numbers are larger (provided that there is more than one countable thing), but given the abundance of objects in the sensible world no such increase is called for. Alexander, who does not suspect that THE PHILOSOPHER may be speaking facetiously, is clearly at a loss what to make of the remark and therefore offers more explanations than the 'Razor' really deserves (76.10 – 77.9). Among them is the conjecture that the perceptible objects are unknowable and the inference that if sensibilia are unknowable, so are the Forms. But even if 'the Razor' is a kind of joke, as far as the 'countability'-argument is concerned, Aristotle obviously regarded the fact that the Forms duplicate ordinary things as worth a *reductio ad absurdum*.<sup>7</sup>

(i.2) What kinds of objects are the same in number 'here and over there'? Ross (*ad loc.*) suggests that τούτοις in <sup>b</sup>2 must refer to individual sensible things on earth and in the heavens. This is indeed the natural reading of the text, because of the demonstrative article at the beginning (990<sup>b</sup>1: τῶνδὲ τῶν ὄντων) that is also kept in the parallel passage in *M* 4, 1078<sup>b</sup>36 f. If some interpreters have assumed with Alexander (77.3–8) that Aristotle must refer to the types of sensible entities rather than to their tokens, they must do so because it is hard to comprehend that there should be as many Forms as there are individuals, given that Plato does not accept Forms of individuals – a fact that Aristotle acknowledges elsewhere. While the number of individuals is indefinitely large, the type of unities (ἐν ἐπὶ πολλῶν) they participate in must be finite, even if there are Forms of all of their properties, so that one individual partakes of many Forms.<sup>8</sup> Because the number of individuals is unlimited, not even a rough numerical equality between Forms and their participants would result, while there is no such difficulty with respect to types of entities and the corresponding Forms. But then it is not the types that partake in Forms, but the tokens. In view of these difficulties it is perhaps best to accept the explanation that Aristotle deliberately exaggerates the need for a 'Razor' as an introduction of the *aporiai* by pointing out that one of the theory's consequences is that there will be at least as many Forms as there are participants. Therefore he anticipates a maxim

<sup>7</sup> The clause "equal or no less" at <sup>b</sup>4–5 confirms the jocular element that is also at work at *M* 4, 1078<sup>b</sup>36–78<sup>a</sup>1 where the forms are "so to speak even more numerous" (πλείω) than the ordinary things. If Jaeger's assumption is right that book *M* is a later revision of book *A*, Aristotle, despite the jocularity, continued to regard his 'Razor' as a suitable opening to his critique. Cf. Jaeger 1912, 28–36.

<sup>8</sup> Annas's suggestion 1976, 155–6, inspired by G.E.L. Owen, that the infinite regress of the Third Man Argument is at stake, is unlikely, because the infinity of higher and higher Forms in the regress stands in no relation to the unlimited number of sensible objects.

that was to acquire canonical status in later history: *entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem*.

(i.3) Whatever version of the troublesome text at <sup>b</sup>8–9 one prefers, the overall meaning of the passage should be clear: For each item (καθ' ἕκαστον) in search of whose causes the Platonists have introduced Forms, there is something with the same name, both for the things here and for those that are eternal. By the 'homonymy' between Forms and their participants Aristotle must have in mind mere sameness of name without any commitment to his own technical distinction in *Categories* 1 between the sameness or difference in definition. As noted above, the grammatical construction of the text as we have it is somewhat loose, concerning the specifications of the status of substances and 'the other things' which must be the properties of substances. In addition, it is debatable whether 'παρά' at <sup>b</sup>9 should be read in the strong sense of 'separate'. But given that the parallel passage in *M* 4 starts out with the affirmation that in contrast to Socrates the Platonists separated the universals (1078<sup>b</sup>31: ἐχώρισαν) and that Aristotle uses the expression 'one over many' to characterize the status of the separate Platonic Forms (990<sup>b</sup>7; 13; 991<sup>a</sup>2) it is natural to read 'παρά' in the strong sense. For this is central point in the subsequent critique of the Platonist position.

### (ii) *Special problems with the existence of the Forms*

Further: In none of the ways in which we attempt to prove that there are Forms is this actually shown. From some of them no inference follows with necessity; from others it follows that there would be even Forms of things where we assume that there are none. For, according to the arguments from the sciences, there will be Forms of all things of which there are sciences; according to the 'one over many argument' there will also be Forms of negations; and from the argument that if there is thinking of something that has perished there will be Forms of perishables, for there is an image of them. Further, of the most precise<sup>9</sup> arguments some posit Forms of relative terms, of which we deny there is a kind by itself; others speak for the argument of the Third Man. (990<sup>b</sup>8–15)

This passage is famous, for several reasons. The first consists in the fact that Aristotle from now on seems to include himself among the Platonists, as the frequent use of 'we' suggests. The evidence from the manuscripts at 990<sup>b</sup>9 is strongly in favour of 'δείκνυμεν' over 'δείκνυται', while the corresponding passage in *M* has only the latter form.<sup>10</sup> In what follows Aristotle generally speaks in

<sup>9</sup> The preference of 'ἀκριβέστατον' in the α-tradition will be discussed below.

<sup>10</sup> For the evidence cf. Primavesi's Introduction to the edition, \*\*\*. On divergences between *A* 9 and *M* 4 and 5 see also Ross (190), and Annas 1976, 131–2.

the first person plural, in contradistinction to his first critique of Plato's theory in ch. 6, where he addresses Plato by name and throughout the discussion uses the third person singular. So, the question is whether and why Aristotle at this point assumes the perspective of an insider.<sup>11</sup> The hypothesis that he confines his allegiance to the theory of Forms as it is to be found in Plato's dialogues, while excluding the 'esoteric' number-theory of Forms, fails. For Aristotle continues to use the first person plural in the discussion of the number-theory in the chapter's second half (e.g. 992<sup>a</sup>11).<sup>12</sup> Jaeger's suggestion<sup>13</sup> that *Metaphysics A* was a lecture-course, which Aristotle presented to fellow-Platonists at Assos has found Ross' approval (190) and a lot speaks for this assumption. The presence of other Platonists would explain a shared but critical attitude towards certain aspects of Plato's theory of the Forms. It would also explain the fact that Aristotle resorts to a standardized catalogue of arguments with fixed titles that represent a kind of consensus within the audience.<sup>14</sup> The revisions in *M* 4-5 must then have been made at a time when Aristotle had dissociated himself from the doctrine of the Forms *tout court* and addressed a different audience.<sup>15</sup>

The second reason for this passage's prominence is that Alexander of Aphrodisias in his interpretation of the arguments (990<sup>b</sup>11-16) makes extensive use of

<sup>11</sup> Alexander explains this identification as a kind of psychological 'projection' (78.1-4): Aristotle addresses the argument "as one testing and critically examining his own opinion that he refutes in order to discover the truth" (Tr. Dooley). Alexander clearly does not consider the possibility that Aristotle at some point had been a Platonist and not just a 'friend' as in *EN* I 4, 1096<sup>b</sup>13. But the fact that Alexander saw the need to explain that change shows that he distinguished it from the regal 'we' that Aristotle uses at the beginning of *A* 2.

<sup>12</sup> The 'we' is also found in ch. 8, 989<sup>b</sup>18 and in *B* 2, 997<sup>b</sup>3 in a reference to the treatment of the Forms as 'causes and substances by themselves' (in a less distinct way in *B* 6, 1002<sup>b</sup>12-14). There is also a 'we' contained in *M* 4, 1079<sup>b</sup>4 concerning a point omitted in *A* 9, an ambiguous use in *M* 10, 1086<sup>b</sup>19 (it concerns Aristotle's preference for *ousia*) and an unambiguous one in *N* 4, 1091<sup>a</sup>32. Annas 1976, 83-4 is reserved about Jaeger's overall hypothesis that the shift signifies Aristotle's severance from the Academy. Instead, she suggests that Aristotle, while maintaining an overall allegiance to the Academy, is selective about different points. But the many replacements of 'we's' by 'they's' in *M* suggest that the few 'we's' in *M* and *N* are the result of carelessness in the revision rather than of selectiveness.

<sup>13</sup> Jaeger (1912, 33-35).

<sup>14</sup> Ross *ad loc.* cites later evidence, most of all from Syrianus' commentary on the *Metaphysics* but also from Plotinus and Proclus, that the Platonists greatly reduced the kinds of entities that have Forms. Ross is more reserved about the possibility that this reduction reflects a revision in Plato's later dialogues. Had Plato reduced the Forms to natural kinds and elements in his late years, much of Aristotle's critique would be otiose.

<sup>15</sup> Cherniss 1944, 175-201, points up indications that both *Metaph. A* and *M* are revisions of an even earlier treatment of the Forms by Aristotle. It is curious that the 'we'-Form in *M* 4, 1079<sup>b</sup>4 occurs in the only argument that is *not* found in *A* 9. Perhaps Aristotle took it from the more comprehensive list in the *Peri Ideôn* and the inapposite 'we' escaped his notice.

Aristotle's lost work *Peri Ideôn* (79.3–85.13).<sup>16</sup> According to Alexander this work preceded *Metaphysics A*, for he remarks that Aristotle seems to refer back to some of its arguments (ὧν δὲ νῦν μνημονεύειν ἔοικε λόγων ...). This fragment of Aristotle's has received a lot of attention in the last hundred years, both from a philological and from a philosophical point of view, but only what is essential for a proper understanding of Aristotle's critique can be taken up here.

Whether the arguments under consideration were formal proofs is doubtful. The loose way of expression suggests that Aristotle is merely taking up various 'modes' (τρόποι) of argumentations used in support of the theory of Forms in different contexts. Be that as it may, Aristotle's critique contains, roughly speaking, two major objections against the Platonist proofs that there are Forms: (ii.1) Some of the proofs are invalid/unsound. (ii.2) Some of the proofs allow for Forms that are not acceptable to the Platonists themselves.

(ii.1) The text contains no explanation of the alleged *non sequitur*; it neither indicates what the proofs are, nor why they fail. If the connecting 'ἔτι δέ' at 990<sup>b</sup>8 indicates a continuation with the previous section, the proofs should concern the same items, i.e. all the items where there is a 'one above the many'. It is therefore likely, as Alexander suggests on the basis of Aristotle's *Peri Ideôn* (79.5–19), that the invalid proofs move from the assumption that there are unitary features shared by all sensible objects of the same kind to the conclusion that these unitary features are unique and separate *paradeigmata* of those kinds. A reconstruction of the 'Platonist' proof runs as follows:

- (p1) To all sensible things that have a common character there corresponds one unique nature.
- (p2) *This one nature is an eternal and separate entity, a Form.*
- (c) To all sensible things of the same kind there corresponds an eternal, unique separate Form.<sup>17</sup>

As Alexander explains, Aristotle regards the argument as invalid/unsound, because the move from common features (κοινά) of all sensibles to Forms such

<sup>16</sup> For the text cf. *CAG I* 1881 ed. M. Hayduck and the revised edition by D. Harlfinger (1975). Harlfinger's edition is reprinted in Fine 1993, 2–11.

<sup>17</sup> The *Peri Ideôn* is the explicit basis of Alexander's interpretation throughout this section down to the 'Third Man' argument. Fine's monograph contains the most detailed reconstruction of the arguments, comparisons with similar arguments elsewhere, and an extensive discussion of the relevant secondary literature. Comments on Alexander's suggestions have to be kept to a minimum here. Against Fine's treatment of the 'compresence of contrary properties' as Plato's main reason for the introduction of Forms, to the exclusion of 'flux' it should be pointed out, however, that Aristotle cannot be entirely mistaken when he attributes a flux-theory to Plato (6, 987<sup>a</sup>32–35; *M* 4, 1078<sup>b</sup>12–17) is confirmed not only by passages in the *Timaeus* but also in the *Symposium* (207d–208b) and the *Philebus* (42d–43c).

as ‘man itself’ (αὐτοάνθρωπος) or ‘health itself’ (αὐτουγία) is unwarranted.<sup>18</sup> The flaw lies, then, in the minor premise’s claim that the unique feature is a separate Form. Against this interpretation it has sometimes been objected that the text need not refer to separation, if ‘παρά’ at 990<sup>b</sup>7 is taken in a weaker sense of ‘besides’. But, as noted before, the entire argument seems turned against the separation of the Forms, and so it seems natural to accept Alexander’s explanation of the invalidity of the argument because the minor premise is false.<sup>19</sup>

(2) This leaves open the question whether the arguments that lead to Forms that the Platonists themselves do not accept are also invalid/unsound. If so, as the phrasing might suggest (990<sup>b</sup>11–12: ἐξ ἐνίων μὲν ... ἐξ ἐνίων δὲ καί...), then they might be invalid because they all share the flaw of the first proof, i.e. the unjustified presupposition of the separate status of the Forms. This may, however, not suit Aristotle’s intentions because the invalidity of all proofs on that basis would take the ‘bite’ out of his contention that the theory leads to the assumption of Forms that the Platonists themselves reject.<sup>20</sup> If the arguments are invalid anyway, why take their consequences seriously? It is preferable therefore to focus on the different types of the ‘unwelcome Forms’: (ii.a) The ‘argument from the sciences’ requires that there are Forms of all the things that are objects of a science. (ii.b) According to the ‘one over many’ there will be Forms of negations. (ii.g) According to the argument ‘that there is a Form of every object of thought’ there will also be Forms of things that have perished. (ii.d) Of the ‘most precise arguments’ some lead to Forms of relative terms, some to the Third Man.

Before a detailed discussion of the first three types of ‘unwelcome Forms’ the appellation of the last two arguments as ‘most precise’ (990<sup>b</sup>15: ἀκριβέστατο)<sup>21</sup> requires a preliminary clarification. The question is whether Aristotle

<sup>18</sup> Alexander claims the invalidity of the ‘argument from the sciences’, because its presuppositions merely show that all sensible particulars of the same type must have something in common, but not that there must be Ideas (79.16–20). The only case that Alexander treats as legitimate concerns the assumption of a model (παράδειγμα) of *equality* on the ground that there is no strict equality here on earth (83.7–22). Otherwise Alexander seems to waver between questioning the formal validity of the arguments and the truth of their premises (78.4–25).

<sup>19</sup> ‘Separate’ (χωρίς) is used in the final summary of the problem at 991<sup>b</sup>1–3.

<sup>20</sup> As Ross 192 f. points out, it is extremely hard to say which of the arguments really apply to Plato, because later reports, such as those in Syrianus (*CAG VI.1* ed. Kroll, 107.8–38), seem so restrictive concerning the acceptance of Forms that they must rely on later sources and hardly reflect Plato’s own point of view.

<sup>21</sup> Primavesi gives preference to the superlative ‘ἀκριβέστατος’, following the  $\alpha$ -tradition and Alexander’s lemma, while Ross and Jaeger both adopt the comparative ‘ἀκριβέστεροι’ of the  $\beta$ -tradition. In his discussion Alexander uses both the comparative and the superlative forms.

thereby means that they are valid, as opposed to the first, *invalid* arguments for the Forms. A closer look shows that this interpretation of ‘most precise’ is implausible. For, Aristotle nowhere in his logical writings uses ‘precise’ (ἀκριβής) to designate formal validity. In the *Prior Analytics* that term is never applied to proofs at all, and in the *Posterior Analytics* (I 24, 86<sup>a</sup>16 f.) it serves to distinguish proofs that are based on first principles from derivative proofs, in that the former are more precise. Similarly, Aristotle uses ‘ἀκριβέστερα’ to distinguish the understanding of the first principles from knowledge derived by deductions (II 19, 99<sup>b</sup>27) and treats the understanding of first principles and deductions as “worthier with respect to precision” (99<sup>b</sup>33-4: τιμώτερα κατ’ ἀκριβείαν) than the capacity to acquire them. It is likely, then, that the ‘most precise’ arguments concern consequences based on the first principles of the theory of Forms. This sense of ‘precise’ also agrees with the claim at *Metaphysics A* 2, 982<sup>a</sup>25 that “the most precise of the sciences (ἀκριβέσταται) are those that are most concerned with what is primary”. This would let one conclude that the first set of arguments (ii.a-g) is based on presuppositions that are not immediately related to the principles of the theory of Forms, contradistinction to the last two arguments (2.d).<sup>22</sup> In what way this difference is supported by the types of arguments themselves remains to be seen.<sup>23</sup>

(ii. a) The ‘arguments from the sciences’ (990<sup>b</sup>12: κατὰ τοὺς ἐκ τῶν ἐπιστημῶν) must have been based on the premises that science proper concerns immutable objects and that such objects are Forms.<sup>24</sup> This argument agrees with presuppositions that Plato endorses, for instance, at *R.* VI 479a-480a, and that Aristotle actually shares when it comes to science proper, especially in the *Posterior Analytics*. If the flaw in the argument lies in the type of objects that thereby turn out to be or to have Forms it is possible that Aristotle has objects of a disputed status in mind, such as those in arithmetic and geometry that are not themselves Forms because they presuppose plurality and are subject to operations performed in arithmetic and geometry that are incompatible with the uniqueness and immutability of the Forms.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> The anonymous referee suggests that the ‘precision’ is due to the fact that the proofs need fewer or no additional posits but most generally apply to the Platonic theory of Forms and are therefore ‘closer’ to it, as opposed to some of the arguments that refer to very specific Forms, like those of objects of thought and perishables. Against this suggestion it has to be said that the objects of the ‘most precise arguments’ apply to quite specific Forms.

<sup>23</sup> Alexander offers a similar explanation: These arguments no longer merely rely on a common feature (κοινόν τι, 83.20 f.).

<sup>24</sup> For a reconstruction of a formal proof and a summary of the three versions of the argument that Alexander had culled from *Peri Ideôn* cf. Ross 193.

<sup>25</sup> Problems with the status of mathematical entities are discussed extensively in books *M* and *N*.

But since this interpretation would be quite restrictive, it is more likely that Aristotle is concerned with the consequences of an all-too-liberal conception of science. For the recognition of sciences in Plato's dialogues varies, so that it is hard to draw a clear line between disciplines whose objects have Forms and those that do not.<sup>26</sup> That the objects of a certain science are subject to generation and destruction cannot *eo ipso* be a reason for exclusion, because sensible objects are the acknowledged participants of the Forms, provided the science is not focusing on generation and destruction as such.<sup>27</sup> Alexander, at any rate, objects in Aristotle's name that though the *technai* deal with general features (as carpentry does with 'bed', not 'this bed' etc.), the Platonists cannot wish to accept Forms for such things (79.21–80.7). The 'Three Beds' in *Republic X* and the shuttle and awl in the *Cratylus* seem to have gone out of fashion at some point. Forms of artefacts will also be excluded in argument vii (991<sup>b</sup>7), but the chapter is not free from repetitions and the perspective in vii is a different one, so that the objects of *technai* may well be excluded here, along with objects of other disciplines with objects of uncertain nature.

(ii.b) The argument from the 'one over many' (<sup>b</sup>13: κατὰ τὸ ἓν ἐπὶ πολλῶν), taken unqualifiedly, is treated as a problem because it will include Forms of negations (τῶν ἀποφάσεων). 'Negation' clearly does not refer to statements but to negative terms such as 'not just'.<sup>28</sup> All things that share the feature of being 'not just' will thereby partake in the Form of the 'not just'. There is no explanation why negative Forms should be objectionable but Aristotle treats it as obvious.<sup>29</sup> The question is whether Plato acknowledged such 'negative unities' as common features that constitute Forms.<sup>30</sup> There is conflicting evidence on this issue. According to the criteria mentioned in the *Phaedrus* (265e–266a) and specified further in the *Politicus* (262a–e) negations do not (necessarily)

<sup>26</sup> The *Philebus*' 'divine method' of collection and division is designed to accommodate all sorts of disciplines, including those concerning letters and the modes of music (16c–18e). Later the dialogue distinguishes between more and less exact disciplines (55c–57d), with mathematical exactness as the decisive criterion, but admits even the inexact disciplines to the final mixture of the good life (61d–62d). But this says nothing about the status of their objects.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *Phlb.* 58e–59b. Plato mentions, however, that changeable things are not objects of the 'most precise truth' (59b1: τῆ ἀκριβεστάτῃ ἀληθείᾳ), and criticises those who are concerned only with the study of becoming rather than with the unchangeable order of things.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *Categories* 10, 11<sup>b</sup>23; 12<sup>a</sup>23 f.; 12<sup>b</sup>5–16.

<sup>29</sup> Alexander (80.16–81.10) refers to negative predicates such as 'not man' as being predicated truly of horse and dog, adding that the Platonists cannot want such Forms, not only because there would be indefinitely many such objects, but also because it would obliterate the difference between genus and species. He seems to presuppose, however, that the Platonists did accept negative Forms.

<sup>30</sup> As Ross *ad loc.* remarks, negations should not be confounded with contraries like the bad, the ugly, and the unjust, for which Plato in *R.* 475e–476a assumes Forms.

establish natural kinds. And it is to be noted that in his extensive divisions in the *Sophist* and in the *Politicus* Plato avoids negations, except as occasional shortcuts. On the other hand, in the *Sophist's* metaphysical part Plato famously explains 'not being' as 'being different from' and includes negations of all sorts: The 'not beautiful' is no less than the beautiful (257a-258e), and in general 'not being' is said to "split up just as much as does being".<sup>31</sup> If Aristotle relies on a general consensus among the Platonists that there should be no Forms of negative terms, then this consensus either ignores or intentionally contradicts the *Sophist's* contention.<sup>32</sup>

(ii.g) As noted by Ross *ad loc*, the argument "that thinking of something that has perished leads to Forms of perishables" (<sup>b</sup>14: κατὰ τὸ νοεῖν τι φθαρέντος τῶν φθαρτῶν) exceeds the common realm of Forms. Because most participants in the Forms belong to the realm of generation and destruction (cf. 6, 987<sup>b</sup>7-10; 9, 990<sup>b</sup>8), the special point cannot be the fact that the objects are subject to destruction, but must concern the status of such things once they have perished. The justification of such eccentric Forms must, then, run as follows:

- (p1) Every thought necessarily is of something (νοεῖν τι)<sup>33</sup>
- (p2) To every object of thought there corresponds a Form;
- (p3) *Something that has perished is an object of thought.*
- (c) There must be a Form of something that has perished.

It is not obvious whether the argument postulates a Form of 'perishables' as the common nature of all that perishes, or whether it concerns only particular humans and other objects once they have perished. The reference to an image (φάντασμα) as the justification of a remainder speaks for the latter assumption, because such an image must be that of a deceased person or some such object. The need for special Forms is based on the assumption that such a man is not a man in the normal sense and does not partake of the Form of Man but of Perishable/ed Man. It must also remain an open question whether Aristotle has

<sup>31</sup> Fine 115, denies that the 'special facts about being and not-being' in the *Sophist* carry over to every property, but this seems not in conformity with the text. Whatever extension Plato assigns to the 'not beautiful' or the 'not just', he treats negations as parts (μέρη) of Forms, into which they are split up (258d-e: κατακερατισμένῃ) and compares their status with that of the parts of the things that are (ὄντα).

<sup>32</sup> There is an oblique reference to Plato's *Sophist* in *Metaph. K* 8, 1064<sup>b</sup>28-29: "therefore Plato was not wrong when he said that the sophist spends his time on not-being". Aristotle's critique of Parmenides in *Physics* I 2 and 8, 191<sup>a</sup>33-<sup>b</sup>15 also reflect knowledge of that dialogue.

<sup>33</sup> The argument alludes to the sophistic arguments against the possibility of thinking what is not, i.e. that if the thought is of nothing then it is no thought at all. But its main point must be that something that has perished remains an object of thought *qua* the something that has perished.

his own conception of φάντασμα in mind, as a residue of sensory experience, or rather the popular belief in ghostlike appearances. Given the argument's formulaic title it is unlikely that the objection is a fabrication of Aristotle's own, and it is unclear whether he regards it as a serious objection.

The reason that Aristotle regards all the arguments that lead to such unwanted Forms as 'imprecise' in comparison with the subsequent ones, must lie in the fact that they are consequences of the theory in general that there are Forms of every kind of entity that has a – however specious – common nature.

(ii.d) If the 'most precise arguments' are based on primary features of the theory of Forms, they have to be more closely tied to that theory's principles than the general presuppositions that left the door open for the previous *aporiai*. But once again, there is no information about content of the arguments themselves. In what way they are based on first principles of the theory of Forms can therefore at best be reconstructed from the two special cases that Aristotle regards as problematic: the Forms of relatives (ii. d.1), and the problem of the Third Man (ii. d.2).<sup>34</sup>

(ii. d.1) That the 'most precise arguments' introduce Forms of relatives, despite the fact that the Platonists deny that there are such Forms, *prima facie* presents a paradox, unless either there is difference of opinion, or 'some posit' (ποιουῦσιν) means an implicit rather than an explicit 'positing'. In the case of the relatives Aristotle gives at least a hint of what the stumbling block is: the Platonists who reject relatives deny that they represent a 'kind by itself' (καθ' αὐτό γένος). This denial could mean that they are not a class of their own.<sup>35</sup> But it is much more likely that it means that relatives are not the sort of things that fulfil the 'by itself'-condition for Forms. Relatives do indeed play a prominent role in the *Phaedo*, the only dialogue Aristotle explicitly refers to in the discussion (991<sup>b</sup>3). Plato in his introduction of the Forms notoriously presents 'the equal as such' (αὐτὸ τὸ ἴσον) as the paradigmatic case and subsequently includes further relatives in the discussion.<sup>36</sup> As the ample literature on the problem of these types of Forms in the *Phaedo* shows, it remains an open question whether or not Plato regarded these predicates as incomplete and recognized that this poses a problem for his postulate that the Forms are beings 'by themselves'. If certain

<sup>34</sup> Ross 194 assumes, after Jackson, that 'more accurate' refers to implications of Plato statements about the Forms. This is, of course, quite possible. But the argument in the *Parmenides* is not presented as an argument for the Forms but against them, and there is no sign that Aristotle acknowledges that fact.

<sup>35</sup> Ross 194 accepts this view on the ground that relatives cut across all natural classifications in the universe.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *Phd.* 74-77a. 'The equal' alongside with 'the larger' and 'the lesser' are treated as Forms in the same way as the beautiful, the just and the holy itself (75c-d). They all get the "seal of the 'itself that it is'" (αὐτὸ ὁ ἴστιν)...

Platonists denied that there are Forms of relatives then they did so in clear opposition to their master. That there was open disagreement is confirmed from Alexander's brief but succinct summary of Aristotle's argument from the *Peri Ideôn* about why there can be no relative Forms, with special reference to 'the equal' (83.24-33): Forms for the Platonists ought to be substance-like things that exist independently (διὰ τὸ τὰς μὲν ἰδέας καθ' αὐτὰς ὑφεστάναι αὐτοῖς οὐσίας τινὰς οὐσίας), independent classes or kinds (γένος), while the relative appears like a mere offshoot of being (τὸ πρὸς τι παραφυάδι ἔοικεν).<sup>37</sup>

Plato's later dialogues contain no inkling of a change of mind on his side; for 'the large' is still used as the prime example of a Form in the first part of the *Parmenides* (131c-132b). Plato may not have realized that it constitutes a relative term, but Forms of relative terms such as sameness and difference, likeness and unlikeness, are also mentioned in young Socrates' plea for the Forms in the *Parmenides* (129d-130a), and almost the same catalogue of Forms constitutes the list of the five 'most important kinds' in the *Sophist* (254a-259d). Whatever status Plato may have assigned to those kinds, he seems to have seen no problem in accepting both relative and non-relative concepts. Thus, if the objection to relatives as considered one of the 'most precise arguments' represents a position in the Academy, then it addresses central presuppositions of Plato's theory of Forms.<sup>38</sup> It is very likely that Aristotle himself was one of that positions' main critics; for, if he had already developed his system of categories when he wrote *Metaphysics A*, he would quite naturally have regarded concepts such as 'the equal itself' and others like it as an incoherently conceived type of entity. Furthermore, Forms like 'the same' and 'the different' must present a fundamental problem for the Platonists, because these topic-neutral concepts cannot fulfil the Forms' main function: to serve as the essences of the things that are.

(ii. d.2) The 'arguments that speak for the third man' (ἔ17: οἱ τὸν τρίτον ἄνθρωπον λέγουσιν) allows for two interpretations, depending on whether the 'third man' supposedly is explicitly argued for, or is regarded only as an implicit (and unwelcome) consequence of the arguments that establish Forms for all there is. In any case, it represents a reason for further disagreement with Plato. There is general consent nowadays that the problem addressed is the objection raised by old Parmenides in his altercation with a very young Socrates

<sup>37</sup> Alexander indicates that this argument comes from a source other than the *Peri Ideôn*. He may be referring to the objection to the Form of the good in *EN I 6*, 1096<sup>a</sup>19-23: The distribution of the good over all categories treats it as a relative (πρὸς τι), so that instead of being 'by itself' (καθ' αὐτό) and a substance it would be like a mere offshoot (παραφυάς) and an accident of being.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Owen (1986) 173. For a report of the treatment of the disagreement in the earlier secondary literature cf. Ross, Introduction, xlviii-li.

in the *Parmenides*, which purports to show that if the Forms have the character they stand for, an infinite regress of Forms will follow. Plato's exemplary Form is 'large' rather than 'man', but otherwise there is no significant difference between the arguments. It will probably forever remain a mystery why Aristotle nowhere acknowledges Plato's parentage of the problem but treats it as a problem for his theory rather than a problem he raised against it himself. There is the possibility that once the label had been changed and the Form of a substance rather than of some property was treated as the argument's primary target, its origin was forgotten; but this would mean that Plato's disciples either did not study the *Parmenides*, or they did not understand what they were reading, and instead 'reinvented' the problem. That assumption at least explains the ignorance among Plato's disciples as to how he understood the argument, and what kind of solution he envisaged.<sup>39</sup>

While Aristotle here only names the argument, elsewhere he specifies the problem it represents.<sup>40</sup> Thus in the *Sophistici Elenchi* (22, 178<sup>b</sup>36–38), he points out that a Third Man, apart from Man as such and individual men, would show up if 'Man' is treated as an individual rather than as a quality or something of that sort. The argument is mentioned again under the same title in *Metaph. Z* (13, 1039<sup>a</sup>2–3) to explain why a universal cannot signify a 'this' (τόδε τι), but only a 'such like' (τοῖόνδε). *Metaph. Z* 6, 1031<sup>b</sup>28–1032<sup>a</sup>4 does not use that label but contains a fuller version of Aristotle's objection to the Platonic position by pointing out the contrast between the nature of essences and the types of objects that have them. If Forms are essences, then they should be just that and not require further essences of their own. If Forms are independent objects that are separate from their participants, the problem arises that they in turn require essences, and so an infinite regress gets on the way.<sup>41</sup> According to Alexander's report in the *Peri Ideôn*, 83.35–84.8, Aristotle also pinpointed the two most important features that have become the focus in modern reconstructions of the Third Man Argument ('TMA'): that the infinite regress depends on 'self-

<sup>39</sup> As Ross notes, 197, the problem of the uniqueness of the Forms is addressed in *R.* x 597c and in *Ti.* 31a, but in both places Plato confines himself to the postulate that there is only one Form, because two Forms would presuppose a higher Form as the archetype of both.

<sup>40</sup> Alexander presents a variety of arguments by other authors under that title (cf. Ross 194–5), but the one he focuses on is that of Plato's *Parmenides*, though neither the dialogue nor the argument's original form are mentioned. The use of 'large' rather than 'man' in the *Parmenides* may be meant as a reaction to Socrates' qualms about Forms of such entities, *Prm.* 130c–d. It is probably no accident that 'the large itself' (αὐτομέγεθος) occurs only in the Neoplatonist commentators, most of all in Proclus' commentary on the *Parmenides*. But if *Metaph. A* and *SE* are early works, this shows that the label 'The Third Man' must have been a household name in the early Academy.

<sup>41</sup> I owe this reference to the anonymous referee.

predication' and on the condition of 'non-identity'. The argument focuses on substances as their examples and is based on the following moves:

- (1) Things that are predicated in common of substances are those things in the proper sense (κυρίως).
  - (2) These common predicates are the Forms.
  - (3) Things that are similar to each other are so by participating in the same thing, which is that thing in the proper sense.
  - (4) This thing is the Form.
  - (5) But if that thing which is predicated of some things in common is not the *same* as these things of which it is predicated, it will be a different thing from them.
  - (6) Man-itself (αὐτοάνθρωπος) is a genus, because while predicated of the particulars it is not the same as any of them.
- (C) There will be a Third Man, apart from the particulars and from the Form, which itself is also one in number.

Alexander does not mention an infinite series of Forms at this point although he does so later, but it is obvious that the argument can be reiterated at every higher level, if the critical conditions (5) and (6) are upheld, namely that the participants and the character they participate in are different from each other. Alexander regards the difficulty as a consequence of contradictory assumptions about the Forms: In (1-4) they represent the proper sense of the common character shared by their participants; while (5-6) suppose that the Forms are different from the character shared by their participants. The special status of the Forms, the 'in itself' as in 'Man itself' (αὐτοάνθρωπος) does not permit treating it as the common character of its participants, for while every man is a man, no one is 'Man itself'.

The question concerning the exact nature and the status of the Forms according to Plato himself cannot, and fortunately need not, be decided on the basis of the text of A 9 or of the supplements provided by Alexander.<sup>42</sup> But both texts confirm the diagnosis that the crucial feature that makes the Forms different from commonly shared characters, *Aristotelico more*, is their eternal

<sup>42</sup> My suspicion is that Plato gives fair warning that one should *not* look at the Large itself and the other large things "in the same way (ὁσαύτως) with the mind's eye", *Prm.* 132a6, because he was well aware that it is a cardinal mistake to treat Forms as things *with* a certain character rather than as the character itself. But it must remain a suspicion that the seemingly innocent phrase in his eyes is not supposed to be innocent at all.

paradigmatic nature that separates them from their participants.<sup>43</sup> The two ‘most precise’ arguments address, then, different yet equally basic problems with the principles of the Forms: The argument about relatives concerns the types of paradigmatic Forms introduced in the *Phaedo*, such as the equal itself, while the Third Man Argument raises a difficulty concerning the nature and ontological status of all Forms.

### (iii) *Undesirable consequences*

And in general, the arguments for the Forms eliminate those things whose existence we as proponents of the Forms prefer to the existence of the Forms; for it follows that not ‘two’ is primary but ‘number’, and that what is relative is prior to what is *per se*, and all the other things concerning which certain people in their pursuit of the beliefs about the Forms have come into conflict with their principles. (990<sup>b</sup>17–22)

This objection is introduced both as a summary and a continuation of the previous list (<sup>b</sup>17: ὅλως τε ἀναιρουῦσιν), but it is unclear how close the connection is supposed to be. The retention of ‘we as proponents of the Forms’ in the text with Primavesi (a rationale for a ‘retrofitting’ in accordance with the parallel passage in *M 4* in this case, as assumed by Ross, 196, is hard to come by) speaks for a continuation with special emphasis on the point that the friends of the Forms are at odds with themselves if they would rather accept that ‘certain things’ are the case than that the Forms themselves exist. Ross assumes that this section raises a new point; but he does so because he presupposes, with Alexander, that the ‘two’ in question is the infinite dyad, rather than the number 2, and therefore is not a continuation of the discussion of the middle theory of Forms.<sup>44</sup> But given that the priority of ‘number’ vs. ‘two’ is at stake, and that Aristotle frequently calls the number 2 ‘the dyad’, an anticipation of the discus-

<sup>43</sup> Fine 1993, chs. 14–16, offers a spirited argument that separation is not the salient feature of Plato’s theory of Forms, both in general and in connection with the TMA. But it is hard to see how this agrees with Plato’s treatment of the Forms in middle and middle-late dialogues. Alexander, at any rate, treats the ‘separated’ status of the Forms (84.23: κειχωρισμένον) as the reason why the Forms are both predicated of their participants and yet different from them.

<sup>44</sup> Alexander 85.17–86.4 and Ross 196 take ‘δύς’ to refer to the Pythagorean ‘great and small’, as in 6, 987<sup>a</sup>25–27. But Plato does not treat the ‘indefinite dyad’ as a number, but rather as the ‘matter’ that stands in need of a *one* as a structuring factor. Alexander also resorts to the explanation that number is a relative because it is always the number *of* something, and claims that this applies to Platonic Forms: models are always models *of* something. Even if Aristotle regarded numbers as relative to what they are the numbers of, the same would then apply to ‘two’. The ‘fuller form’ of this argument in *M 4*, 1079<sup>a</sup>17 sheds less light on the problem than Ross, 196, would have it, for the text is strained and the manuscripts disagree.

sion of the late mathematicized Forms is unlikely.<sup>45</sup> But if the relation of 2 and number is the subject, two points require clarification: (a) The meaning of the claim that number will be prior to 2, and (b) whether the subsequent remark about the priority of relative over *per se* existing things provides an explanation of that priority, so that the καί is explicative, as many interpreters (and Ross' translation) presuppose, or whether it addresses a separate issue.

(a) What kind of priority of two before number does Aristotle have in mind that will be 'destroyed' if there are Forms of both? The best explanation seems to lie in the fact that Aristotle elsewhere defends the view that 'number' does not constitute the genus or species of all numbers, because there is no common definition of their nature, just as there is none in the case of other entities that constitute an ordered series.<sup>46</sup> Number is therefore not prior in definition to '2' (if 2 is the first rational integer), nor is it prior to any other number. If Aristotle felt strongly committed to that tenet then it is clear why he rejects a Form of number that is to represent the common nature of all numbers and is therefore prior to the first member of that series.

The question remains, then, whether the friends of the Forms shared this view concerning members of an ordered series and included numbers among them. There is indeed very good evidence that they did. For, Aristotle in his critique of Plato's Form of the Good in *EN* I 6, 1096<sup>a</sup>17–24 refers to the fact that the Platonists themselves did not assume a Form of number: "Those who introduced this doctrine did not posit Forms of subjects within which they recognised priority and posteriority (which is the reason why they did not assume a Form of number)." Aristotle also exploits this principle to justify that 'good' have a different meaning in the different categories, and that the primary sense be tied to the category of substance.<sup>47</sup> He pays special attention to the category of relatives (πρός τι) and concludes "what is *per se* (καθ' αὐτό), i.e. substance (οὐσία), is prior to the relative, for the latter is like an offshoot (παραφύας) and

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *Metaph. B* 3, 999<sup>a</sup>8; *Z* 13, 1039<sup>a</sup>13; *M* 6, 1080<sup>a</sup>24 *et pass.* Aristotle shares with Plato (and most likely the mathematicians of their time) the tenet that two is the first rational integer because 'one' as the unit (μὴνός) is the principle and common element of all numbers (*Top.* I 18, 108<sup>b</sup>25–31; VI 4, 141<sup>b</sup>5–9 cf. also *Metaph. I*, 6, 1056<sup>b</sup>23–25; *M* 9, 1085<sup>b</sup>10). Conflicting evidence is due to the dual role of 'one' as unit and as the first cardinal (*hen*) number. When it comes to counting, Plato (*Ti.* 17a) and Aristotle (*Cat.* 6, 5<sup>a</sup>30 f; 12, 14<sup>a</sup>29–35 *et pass.*) quite naturally start with 1. In addition, Aristotle does not always make clear whether in discussing numbers he is speaking in his own name or reporting someone else's views, cf. *Metaph. M* 6 and 7; cf. Annas 1976, 11; 36–41.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *Metaph. B* 3, 999<sup>a</sup>6–12; *EE* I 8, 1218<sup>a</sup>1–10. In *de An.* II 3, 414<sup>b</sup>19–415<sup>a</sup>13 Aristotle also refers to the principle of priority to justify that there is no unified conception of soul, and in *Pol.* III 1, 1275<sup>a</sup>34–38 he claims the same for the different forms of constitution.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. also *Metaph. Δ* 11, 1019<sup>a</sup>1–4. That this principle represents a common conviction of members of the Academy is argued by E. Berti 2008, 129 f.

accident of what is.” The tie between the kind of ordered series recognized by the Platonists and Aristotle’s system of categories may be tenuous,<sup>48</sup> but in his eyes it was sufficiently close to accuse them of the inconsistency of admitting a Form that is incompatible with the assumed priority among numbers and other such orders, and of attributing Forms to relatives as well as to *per se* existing things. If this is right, objection (b) is not the explanation of (a) but an extension to other cases. It is therefore also not a repetition of the point about relatives made in section (ii.δ), because it now addresses Forms of relatives *tout court*. Because all Forms as separate entities are on a par, ascribing such a status to a mere offshoot of being means giving undue priority to something that should by right be posterior. Whether this interpretation meets Aristotle’s intentions must remain somewhat speculative, as must the nature of the “other things” he claims cause conflicts within the convictions of the adherents of Forms. But a certain confirmation that Aristotle is here judging the theory of Forms from the perspective of his own ontology lies in the fact that the next objection addresses the primacy of Forms of substances.

#### (iv) *Forms of substances*

Further: according to the assumption because of which we say that there are Forms, there will not only be Forms of substances but also of many other things. (For, the thought is *one* not only concerning substances but also about the others, and there are sciences not only of substance but of others as well, and countless other consequences of this sort result.) But according to necessity and the opinions held about the Forms, if they are to be partaken in, there must be Forms of substances only. For, they are not partaken in accidentally, but things must partake in each one in such a way that it is not predicated of them as of a subject. (I mean, e.g., if something partakes in the double itself, then it also partakes in the eternal, but only accidentally. For it is accidental to the double that it is eternal). Therefore the Forms will be substances; but it is the same things that signify substance around here as over there. Or what else will it mean to say that there is something apart from these things here, the one over many? And if the Forms and what partakes in them have the same essence, there will be something common to them. For, why should ‘two’ be one and the same in perishable twos and in the many eternal two’s, any more than in the case of the two itself and of some particular two? But if they do not have the same Form, there will be mere homonymy,<sup>49</sup> just as if someone would call both Callias and a wooden image ‘man’, without seeing any community between them. (990<sup>b</sup>22–991<sup>a</sup>8)

<sup>48</sup> The corresponding critique of the good itself in *EE* I 18 is too diffuse to shed further light on this problem, but it also mentions the fact that there is no common nature of things that stand in a *proteron-hysteron* relationship, and therefore no Form (cf. esp. 1218<sup>a</sup>2–10).

<sup>49</sup> The reading of the a-tradition ‘ὁμωνυμία’ is accepted in 991<sup>a</sup>6 with Primavesi as the counterpart of ‘κοινωνία’ at 991<sup>a</sup>8.

As the singular of ‘the assumption’ (<sup>b</sup>28: ἡ ὑπόληψις) indicates, this paragraph concerns a central point about the theory of Forms. (iv.1) The assumption of the existence of Forms is not limited to those of substances, but applies to properties as well. (iv.2) Against this presupposition Aristotle objects that, given ‘necessity’ and ‘the opinions about the Forms’, only substances can have Forms. The overall justification for this exclusivity-claim is as follows: Only in the case of substances does the proper relationship between Forms and participants exist, namely synonymy. But the details of Aristotle’s argument for limiting the Forms to substances are *prima facie* hard to follow.

(iv.1) 990<sup>b</sup>22–27: The initial claim that there are Forms of things other than substances is, of course, quite in agreement with two of the conditions mentioned in the earlier argument (see ii above) that there are Forms of everything that is the object of a science and that ‘the thought (about the things) is one’ (τὸ νόημα ἓν). Both conditions are clearly fulfilled by many different kinds of object, not just by substances. This also agrees with the assumption of different kinds of Forms in Plato’s middle dialogues, where Plato emphasized the unity of the Forms (*Phd.* 78d *et pass.*) and most examples represent properties of things rather than their possessors, although the realm of the Forms is, perhaps deliberately, left indeterminate (cf. *Phd.* 100b7: “all the rest”; *R.* x 596b: “about each of the many”).

(iv.2) 990<sup>b</sup>27–34: Against the extension of the Forms to objects other than substances Aristotle objects in the name of both ‘necessity’ and of ‘the opinions’ that the Forms must be limited to those of substance (οὐσίαι).<sup>50</sup> What necessity is this, and what kind of opinions have such consequences? Though the upshot of the argument is clear, its justification is far from transparent. To take the upshot first: Both the Forms and their participants must be substances, because only in that case will they have both name and nature in common; otherwise they will be mere homonyms<sup>51</sup>, in the same sense as the man Callias and a wooden statue of a man (991<sup>a</sup>1–8). The claim that there are Forms of substances only supposedly follows from two conditions whose relevance and interrelation needs further elucidation (990<sup>b</sup>29–31): (iv.2.1) Forms are not to be partaken in accidentally (οὐ γὰρ κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς μετέχονται); and (iv.2.2) the Forms are

<sup>50</sup> Alexander takes it for granted that for the Platonists the Forms are substances, because he assumes that the participants get their *being* from the Forms. But then Alexander also argues that all Forms ought to be of the same kind and therefore substances (cf. 90.7–90.2). On Forms as substances cf. Fine 183–188 and n. 3.

<sup>51</sup> As has been noted by others, Aristotle in this chapter first uses ‘homonymy’ in the Platonic sense, 990<sup>b</sup>6, but now in his own sense, as defined in *Cat.* 1, 1<sup>a</sup>6–10.

partaken in as something not predicated of a subject (ἢ μὴ καθ' ὑποκειμένου λέγεται).

(iv.2.1) 990<sup>b</sup>29 f: If the relation between Forms and their participants is not to be accidental, what kind of participation is thereby ruled out here? Though many of the Forms mentioned in the *Phaedo* concern accidental properties in the sense that they are not necessary but subject to change, e.g. tallness, shortness, equality, health, strength, justice, or beauty, this condition applies only to the possessors' relation to these properties, not to that between the properties and their Forms. Their possessors can therefore be 'called after the Form', namely tall, good, just etc., as long as they partake in them. But this relation is not accidental in the sense of Aristotle's builder who happens to be musical. The 'eponymy'-condition in the *Phaedo* (102b) spells out that participants are not themselves Forms and do not share their status, but they derive their properties from them.<sup>52</sup> In terms of Aristotle's *Categories* this relationship would be a case of paronymy. Though Aristotle takes no notice of the distinction between immanent characters and the participating things, nor does he mention the eponymy-relation in Plato, this relation must be the butt of his critique. As the subsequent example suggests, something that is double can partake in the Form and its characteristics only accidentally.

(iv.2.2) 990<sup>b</sup>30-34: In view of the result of the argument as a whole one would expect the injunction of the opposite, i.e. that the Form should be "said of something as of a subject" (καθ' ὑποκειμένου) so that synonymy in the sense of *Cat.* 2 (1<sup>a</sup>20-22) holds, i.e. that both names and definitions of the Form can be predicated of their participants. If the text has not been tampered with, as one of Alexander's suggestions seems to presuppose,<sup>53</sup> the denial of the 'said of' condition must concern the relationship of all Forms to their participants, *except* for the Forms of substances. This exception is not stated in the text, but it is necessary to explain the unwanted conclusions Aristotle draws in the case of the double: Were there to be a synonymous relation between the Form of the double and some particular double (whether 6 : 3, or 6 apples : 3 apples), not

<sup>52</sup> We can neglect here, for brevity's sake, the distinction between Forms that import necessary concomitants or what Aristotle would call essential properties, such as the coldness of snow, the heat of fire, the oddness of the number five, and life in the case of soul.

<sup>53</sup> Alexander (90.5-8) offers three explanations: (i) He turns the explanation on its head by claiming that Aristotle says that the participants must not have the Forms as *in* a subject, thereby treating it in accordance with the division in *Cat.* 2, but that is, of course, not what Aristotle's text says. (ii) Then Alexander suggests, again without textual evidence, that Aristotle here uses 'of a subject' in the sense of 'of an accident'. (iii) Finally, he mentions that in 'some manuscripts' the 'not' (μὴ) is omitted in 990<sup>b</sup>31. This would eliminate the problem of the denial of synonymy at this point, but it would obliterate the distinction between Forms that are and those that are not 'said of' their subject-matter.

only ‘the double itself’ (αὐτοδιπλάσιον) but also its properties, including the feature of being eternal, would have to be ‘said of’ the particular doubles, unless participation is accidental.

(iv.3) 990<sup>b</sup>33–991<sup>a</sup>2: Aristotle does not explicitly recur here to the condition that the Form be ‘said of’ their subject. But this must be the meaning of his affirmation that in their case the nature of the Form and the particulars is the same, for “the same things here and over there mean substance” (οὐσίαν σημαίνει). For he adds that this is assured by the ‘one over many’-relation and the existence of such a unity. In the case of substances, this *one* being has the very same nature as the many particular that fall under it. Because particular substances are proper subjects, they share the relevant features of the Forms that determine their nature. This is affirmed in the otherwise strange-sounding claim that there is the same form (εἶδος) of the Forms (ἰδεῶν) and of their participants (τῶν μετεχόντων), because the form is what they have in common (991<sup>a</sup>2 f.). Aristotle does not here want to introduce Forms of Forms but to indicate that the common nature in both spheres *is* the Form. Does this also explain why substantial Forms do not pass on their properties *qua* Forms to their participants? This inference can be drawn on the basis of Aristotle’s denial of transcendent Forms as independent entities with their own properties. His plea for forms instead of Forms as sufficient conditions of a genuine one-over-many relation at the same time justifies the claim that only the properties of inherent forms are to be ‘said of’ the particulars.

(iv.4) 991<sup>a</sup>2–8: The final explanation presents yet another problem. For, after the contention that only substances have Forms, the exemplification by the number 2 is puzzling, especially given the rejection of a Form of the double itself. For this new argument, clad in a suggestive question, reasons that synonymy should both apply to 2 in perishable and imperishable but multiple things, and also to the two itself and to the particular 2. ‘Two’ is not the same as double and therefore not a relative,<sup>54</sup> but unless Aristotle wants to treat numbers as stand-ins for substances here, they must be quantities and represent inherent properties.<sup>55</sup> The argument may, however, not be concerned with the status of the number 2 at all, but be intended as a *reductio ad absurdum* of all Forms that

<sup>54</sup> Alexander does not realize that in 990<sup>b</sup>32–3 Aristotle uses ‘double’ instead of ‘two’; for he speaks of ‘the *dyad*’ throughout, thereby ignoring Aristotle’s critique of the Pythagoreans’ conflation of the two concepts in 5, 987<sup>a</sup>22–26.

<sup>55</sup> Aristotle sometimes toys with the idea of non-substantial forms, as in *Ph.* I 7 190<sup>b</sup>17–191<sup>a</sup>3, where man and musical each are said to have a form (εἶδος) and a *logos*, not only the positive concepts, but also their opposites – both musical and unmusical, hot and cold, being ordered and disordered. He does so because the opposites here are treated as ἀρχαί or as processes of generation. But such an extension would not fit his argument here.

are different in nature from the entities whose Forms they are. This is suggested by the conclusion of the argument that unless all these ‘two’s’ have the same nature they would have nothing in common between them, so that they would be mere homonyms. Such a conclusion must indeed be unacceptable to the Platonists, because the Forms, are, after all, designed to explain what all things sharing the same name have in common. The example of ‘two’ is, then, merely meant to show that, regardless of the subject matter, the theory of Forms requires that the Forms fully represent the nature of their participants, a condition that in Aristotle’s eyes is fulfilled only by forms of substances.

### (v) *The use of the Forms*

But above all one might raise the difficulty of what the Forms contribute to sensible things at all, either to those that are eternal or to those that come to be and cease to be. For they are not the cause of any movement or change to them. But the Forms also are no help towards the knowledge of the other things (they are not their essence, otherwise they would be *in* them), nor to their being, given that they do not inhere in their participants. Perhaps one might hold them to be causes in the way of the white being mixed in is the cause for what is white. But this explanation, which first Anaxagoras and afterwards Eudoxus have proposed, along with some others, is all too easily upset; for it is easy to collect a lot of objections and impossibilities against a doctrine of this sort. (991<sup>a</sup>8–19)

The ‘greatest difficulty’ presents less of an exegetical problem than the previous points of criticism, because the challenge directly addresses Aristotle’s main concern: what *use* are the Forms as causes? It also harks back to the first objection that the Forms are needless duplications of reality.<sup>56</sup> There are four aspects that supposedly confirm the uselessness of the Forms: (v.1) They do not serve as moving causes of their participants; (v.2) because they are not their participants’ essences, they have no epistemological value; (v.3) for the same reason they have no ontological function; (v.4) the explanation that they constitute physical components is no sooner suggested than discarded. Though the first three points of criticism are clear-cut, one may well ask whether, given the strategy in *Metaphysics A*, Aristotle argues altogether *bona fide* in the way he denies a causal function of any kind to the Forms.

(v.1) It seems odd that Aristotle presents as a difficulty for Plato’s theory that the Forms cannot serve as moving causes, because in the summary of his predecessors’ achievements in ch. 7, 988<sup>b</sup>1–4 he had mentioned that the Forms were

<sup>56</sup> So also Alexander (95.5–10).

not even supposed to function as causes of motion or change, but rather as the explanation of the entities' changeless nature. Either this recognition of Plato's intentions is altogether forgotten here, or Aristotle wants to emphasise that it is, nevertheless, a weakness of the Platonic theory, that it provides no causal account of what makes their sensible participants move and change, for changeability is part of their very nature and not a mere accident. The eternal sensibles are, of course, the heavenly bodies; they do not come to be or perish, according to Aristotle, but they move around, so that their motion must have a cause.

(v.2) The objection that Forms have no epistemic value because they are not the essence<sup>57</sup> of their *explananda*<sup>58</sup> appears *prima facie* like a retraction of the acknowledgement in ch. 7 that, of all earlier philosophers, the proponents of the Forms have said most about the essence and substance of things (987<sup>b</sup>35–988<sup>a</sup>6).<sup>59</sup> But here the objection must concern the separation of the Forms: if they constituted the essence of their participants they would have to be in them. Plato himself acknowledges this very difficulty in *Prm.* 131a–e and in *Phlb.* 15b–c. Aristotle seems to be impressed neither by the promise that a man of extraordinary talent could solve the problem (*Prm.* 135a–b) nor by the 'divine method' of dialectic (*Phlb.* 16c–17a), according to which both unity and plurality are to be found in the objects of research themselves. However we are to take Plato's provisions, in Aristotle's eyes they were insufficient to bridge the gap as long as the 'real essences' remain outside their sensible participants. As Ross notes (198), the theory that Plato's pronouncements were meant as a reply to young Aristotle's critique has little in its favour, both for chronological reasons and because Aristotle nowhere acknowledges such an attempt to meet his critique.

(v.3) The objection that the Forms are of no ontological use because they do not inhere in their participants and therefore cannot be the cause of their being, is just another version of the previous point. As Annas remarks in her commentary on the parallel passage in *M* 5, 1079<sup>b</sup>15–23, "this is more a confrontation of two philosophical positions than an argument." If the Forms are ontological principles for Plato, they are so because they are permanent features of reality, which are manifest in the respective sensible objects. But for Aristotle the very separation of the Forms rules out the possibility that they be the essential causes

<sup>57</sup> While most of the time οὐσία is best translated by substance, here the essences of whatever entity must be at stake.

<sup>58</sup> 991<sup>a</sup>12–13: "of the other things" (τῶν ἄλλων) must mean things other than the Forms, not 'other than the eternal and changeable perceptible things', as it does in 991<sup>a</sup>19.

<sup>59</sup> This compliment is somewhat reduced by Aristotle's appraisal that there is an overall lack of clarity on this issue, 988<sup>a</sup>34–35.

of their dependants. Whether Aristotle's own conception of essence is immune to this critique in all respects, is a question not to be pursued here.

(v.4) The possible causal 'use' that Aristotle suggests for the Forms, only to demolish it instantly again, addresses not Plato's theory of Forms but an alternative version attributed to Anaxagoras and Eudoxus. Eudoxus, who according to ancient sources was a friend and sometime colleague of Plato's in the Academy,<sup>60</sup> seems to have advocated a theory of 'Forms' (ἰδέαι) of his own that attributed a twofold nature to them, so that 'the white' is both an 'it itself' and responsible for the appearance of whiteness when it is part of a mixture. What elements of the Platonic doctrine Eudoxus thereby tried to preserve is hard to say, given the scantiness of our sources on his philosophy.<sup>61</sup> The question is complicated by the fact that Aristotle picks Anaxagoras as another representative of such a theory. But the Anaxagorean mixture-theory hardly fills the bill, because it does not seem concerned with an explanation of separable unities for the ingredients in a way that could make them suitable candidates as form-like entities. It is likely that Aristotle here addresses the 'reformed' theory he had imputed to Anaxagoras in ch. 8, 989<sup>a</sup>34-<sup>b</sup>1, that the elements of the mixtures must at first have been separate before being mixed together, a conviction that Anaxagoras did not share.<sup>62</sup> Aristotle does not tell us why such theories are 'all too easily upset' nor who the 'other' proponents of such an explanation are. He must presuppose that all theories that try to combine a physicalist explanation with a theory of transcendence of any kind suffer from the same defects: physical properties cannot at the same time be separate things that explain the nature of their possessors and function as intelligible principles of the 'one over many'.<sup>63</sup> Forms of any kind cannot be at the same time both transcendent and immanent entities.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Cf. the references in Ross 198.

<sup>61</sup> Apart from the parallel passage in book *M* Aristotle does not mention Eudoxus' theory elsewhere; other references to him are concerned with his astronomical model (*Metaph. A* 8. 1073<sup>b</sup>17-32) and with his defence of hedonism (*EN* I 12, 1101<sup>b</sup>27-35 and X 2, 1172<sup>b</sup>19-25). Aristotle certainly treats Eudoxus with respect, but his remark in *EN* X that people were more convinced by Eudoxus' lifestyle than by his arguments shows that he is not overly impressed by Eudoxus' philosophical acumen. On Eudoxus as a scientist and philosopher cf. F. Lasserre, 1966, D 1 + 2, 148-151; H. Karpf, 1933; K. v. Fritz, 1978; Schmitz II, 157-61; Cherniss App. VII, 525, Fine, 1986.

<sup>62</sup> For Aristotle's treatment of Anaxagoras cf. Primavesi's discussion in this volume, 12 ff.

<sup>63</sup> Further reasons against 'Eudoxianism' are discussed by R. Dancy 1991, in a detailed analysis of the positions and objections attributed by Alexander to Aristotle (cf. 97.2-98.20). As Dancy points out, the meaning of Alexander's paraphrase is hard to grasp, as is what (if anything) he took over from Aristotle's *Peri Ideón*.

<sup>64</sup> Alexander enumerates objections of all sorts: that these Forms would have to be physical entities, that they would have to be contrary to each other, and that they would have to be either wholes or parts. He refers to the second book of the *Peri Ideón* as his source for these arguments (97.28-98.25); but from his enumeration of arguments it is hard to say which of his arguments focus on Eudoxus and which ones on Plato.

*(vi) Forms as patterns*

But it is also impossible to say, in any of the usual ways of speaking, that the other things are 'from' the Forms. To say that they are patterns and that the others partake in them is to utter empty words and poetic metaphors. For what is it that produces them, looking at the Forms? Anything can both be and become like another thing without being copied from it, so that whether Socrates exists or not, someone may become exactly like Socrates, and this would evidently be so even if Socrates were eternal. And there will be more than one pattern for the same thing, and therefore more than one Form, e.g. animal and two-footed will be the Forms of Man and at the same time also Man-itself. Furthermore, the Forms will not only be the patterns of the perceptible things but also of each other, e.g. the genus will be (the pattern) as the genus of the species. Thus one and the same thing will be both pattern and copy. (991<sup>a</sup>19-32)

This section attacks the paradigmatic status of the Forms. (vi.1) The objections start with a linguistic challenge: If the Forms had any causal role to play, it should be possible to explain how their participants are 'from' the Forms. Neither of the two customary forms of expressing the relation between Forms and their dependents seems satisfactory: (vi.2) Participation in the Forms is an empty metaphor. (vi.3) The language of model and copy leaves the causal relation unexplained. (vi.4) A further difficulty concerns the hierarchical order of Forms.

(vi.1) As is shown by the fact that Aristotle dedicates ch. 24 of *Metaph.* Δ to the elucidation of the various uses of 'from' (ἐκ), this must be more than a linguistic quibble. Of the six kinds enumerated there (things are said to be 'ἐκ' if the relation concerns: matter, moving cause, matter and form together, parts of the form, parts of origin or principle, or temporal succession) none indeed fits the relation of Forms and their participants. It should be noted, however, that Plato does not use 'ἐκ' in connection with the Forms: In the *Phaedo* he uses 'ἐκ' in the cyclical argument to make plausible that the living come 'from the dead' (70d-72d; cf. 103a-b), and he frequently points to the reasons of arguments as that 'from which' they derive their validity, but no such phrase is used in connection with the Forms. An exception is *Prm.* 132c, but the suggestion that all things consist 'ἐκ νοημάτων' is quickly rejected. If Aristotle attributes such a relationship of the participants to the Forms, it must be due to his contention that the participants are dependants of their Forms and should be explained as such.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Alexander seems at a loss concerning the exact point of this criticism, 99.7-101.10. He gives a lengthy explanation of different uses of 'coming from' that may well be based on *Metaph.* 24 (from matter, form, parentage etc.).

(vi.2) This passage is notorious, for it is one of the few places where Aristotle expresses his frustration with the language of ‘participation’, ‘imitation’, and ‘paradigm’ and does so in quite hostile terms that are far from his usual detachment.<sup>66</sup> This outburst suggests that Plato’s disciples felt as much in the dark concerning the precise relation between the Forms and their participants as do most of his readers nowadays. A charitable interpretation of Plato’s, no doubt intentional, metaphorical use of ‘participation’, ‘presence’, ‘community’ etc,<sup>67</sup> would be that ‘participation’ means no more than that the respective objects represent the relevant features that the Forms stand for. That there is no universal explanation of participation is, then, not due to any mystification on Plato’s side, but rather reflects the fact that the way particular things are representatives of their respective Forms must be different for different kinds of objects. What sort of thing a particular pair of two is and how it comes to be, will depend on the objects and the circumstances and the same applies to all other objects and their properties.<sup>68</sup> This seems to be also the point of Socrates’ self-proclaimed inability to deal with the causes of being, generation and destruction in the *Phaedo* (96a–97b) and of his ‘simple-minded’ retreat to a formal explanation by the postulation of the respective Forms.

(vi.3) A more charitable treatment can also be extended to Aristotle’s query as to who or what it is that is at work, ‘looking at the Forms as paradigms’.<sup>69</sup> If Aristotle is not referring to the divine demiurge’s production in *Timaeus* 28c ff., he must have *Cratylus* 389a–b, and *Republic* X 596a–597d, in mind, where craftsmen supposedly fabricate shuttles or beds by ‘looking up at their Forms’ in order to copy them.<sup>70</sup> Taken literally, the story indeed does not make sense. That Plato does not really expect craftsmen to be on a ‘transcendent lookout’ is the upshot of his further explanation in *R.* X 601c–602a. There the divine maker is soon supplanted by the artefact’s user who tells the craftsman how to make it: It is the *use* (χρεία) that determines what a good bed or a good flute should be like.<sup>71</sup> Such a thought should have been quite germane to Aristotle’s own point

<sup>66</sup> Similarly 992<sup>a</sup>24–29; in *APo.* I 22, 83<sup>a</sup>32–35, Aristotle dismisses the Forms as ‘mere twitterings’ (τεπετισματα). Aristotle’s rejection of Plato’s Form of the good in *EN* I 6 is expressed more respectfully but is no less critical in content.

<sup>67</sup> *Phaedo* 100d leaves no doubt that the vagueness of expression is intentional.

<sup>68</sup> E. g. two shoes can be made together, thrown together, lined up together, stolen etc.

<sup>69</sup> Aristotle elaborates on this point in his criticism of the Form of the good in *EN* I 6, 1096<sup>b</sup>35–1097<sup>a</sup>14.

<sup>70</sup> The importance of the *Cratylus* for the depiction of the Platonic position in ch. 6 has been argued for in Steel’s contribution to this volume.

<sup>71</sup> What applies to gadgets whose goodness and aptness do not present more than technical difficulties, also applies to human virtues. Plato has given more than a hint to that effect: Justice is doing our own things in the sense of doing what we are best at, in the interest of both ourselves and society as a whole. On this issue cf. D. Frede 2011.

of view that a thing's essence lies in its function, but he seems to have been unaware of the possibility that this conception lies behind Plato's much vilified metaphor of 'participation'.

(vi.4) The critique of the Forms now turns to the explanation in terms of a 'likeness' of the participants to the Forms as patterns or models (παράδειγματα), which Aristotle interprets as a causal explanation in a literal sense and therefore treats as equally futile. Though Plato's language may be misleading and infelicitous when he talks of things' "wanting to become like a Form" (*Phd* 74d-e), he does not claim that the sensible particulars are actual copies of models.<sup>72</sup> There is, of course, a deeper-seated problem with the metaphor of 'likeness' or 'copy' that Plato addresses in his aporetic treatment in the *Parmenides* (132d-133a): Likenesses of any kind presuppose that the respective objects share certain salient features. How a physical entity can be *like* a purely intelligible one is hard to comprehend, in any sense of the word 'like'. There is the possibility of structural isomorphism or other kinds of structural similarity, but such 'likenesses' are rather different from the likeness of copies of the Mona Lisa to its original. With his example of someone's likeness to Socrates Aristotle does not address the question of transcendent paradigms but only the process of coming to be like him. In this case the original has no causal role to play; it does not even make any difference whether Socrates is (still) in existence or not.<sup>73</sup>

(vi.5) The objection that if Forms are patterns there will have to be more than one pattern for one and the same thing in the case of subordinate and superordinate Forms is of a different calibre. If there are Forms of every universal then there will indeed be Forms for species, differentiae, genus etc., and an individual by partaking of its specific Form will thereby also partake of the higher Forms. This is not in itself an absurdity; but Aristotle's reference to 'Man itself' (αὐτοάνθρωπος) seems designed to point to the difficulty that arises with Forms of Forms in the sense of paradigms of paradigms. That there is a hierarchy of Forms clearly did not escape Plato's notice, because it is at the very heart of his dialectical method of collection and division. He obviously realized that definitions presuppose nested sequences of universal concepts, as witnessed by the definitions that result of such divisions in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Quite generally, Plato makes much less use of the metaphors of paradigms, copies and likenesses in connection with the Forms than most introductions to Plato's philosophy would let one expect. Παράδειγμα is more often used in the quite harmless sense of 'example' rather than that of transcendent 'model'.

<sup>73</sup> The alleged likeness of Theaetetus' to Socrates, *Tht.* 143e, is such a case in question, though Aristotle may not have been thinking of that banter.

<sup>74</sup> Cf the tongue-twisting definition at *Sph.* 268c-d of the sophist's art as that of an 'imitation of the contrary speech producing, insincere and unknowing sort, of the appearance-making kind of copy-making...'.

Now, Plato never speaks of ‘patterns’ or ‘paradigms’ in that connection, nor does he say that a lower Form ‘partakes’ in that sense in a higher one. ‘Animal’ is not the model of ‘quadruped’, just as ‘quadruped’ is not the model of ‘dog’. But precisely how Plato understood the relationship between the wider and the more specific Forms is hard to tell, except that the genus is assumed to have the capacity for increasing diversification. As the depiction of the different cases of ‘interweaving’ of the Forms in the *Sophist* indicates, 253d–e, Plato treated these relationships in purely formal and abstract terms that are quite remote from the metaphorical language of his earlier dialogues, and in that connection he does not treat the Forms as transcendent separate entities. But Aristotle clearly has a point when he wonders in what relation the genus stands to its species.<sup>75</sup>

### (vii) Summary of the defectiveness of Forms as causes

Further, it would seem impossible that the essence and that of which it is the essence should be separate. So how could the Forms be separate if they are the essences of the things? In the *Phaedo* it is actually said<sup>76</sup> that the Forms are the causes of both being and becoming. But even if the Forms exist, still their participants do not come to be unless there is a moving cause. And many other things come to be, such as a house and a ring, of which we deny that there are Forms. So it is obvious that the other things can also be and come into being through the causes that have been mentioned just now. (991<sup>b</sup>1–9)

The last section contains three points: (vii.1) separate Forms do not fulfil the role of essential causes; (vii.2) the Forms cannot serve as moving causes; (vii.3) artefacts both exist and come to be without Forms.

(vii.1) The objection to the separation of the Forms itself has been the central point of Aristotle’s critique from the start, a point he had also raised in objection (v) that the Forms are useless if they do not inhere in their participants. That Aristotle returns to this point here, once again, is to underline the causal insufficiency of the Forms: they cannot serve as essential causes. It is to be noted that Aristotle here explicitly uses the expression ‘separate’ χωρίς (991<sup>b</sup>1; 3), while before he had used ‘παρά (991<sup>a</sup>2). Plato would, no doubt, agree that a

<sup>75</sup> As Ross remarks, 199, the complicated formulation ‘the genus as genus of a species’ is due to Aristotle’s concern to make clear that ‘εἶδος’ here means species and not ‘Form’ or ‘form’.

<sup>76</sup> Jaeger notes in the *apparatus* that Alexander and Asclepius have ‘λέγομεν’ at this point and in his posthumously published paper Jaeger, 1965, pleads for the acceptance of this reading on the ground that the commentators represent an earlier and independent tradition than the oldest manuscripts. This reading would, however, extend Aristotle’s allegiance to Platonism to the authorship of a Platonic dialogue, as noted by Merlan 1970.

particular object cannot be separate from its essence because it must possess its nature as long as it exists. That is the very point of the participation in a Form, so that an individual is an instantiation of the Form ‘human being’, its οὐσία, and that nature is its essence. But the exact relation of such ‘immanent’ essences to the transcendent Forms is nowhere depicted in a non-metaphorical way; Aristotle therefore rightly points to a gap in the theory of Forms as essences.

(vii.2) That Aristotle ties the question in what way the Forms are causes of being and becoming to Plato’s *Phaedo* suggests that this dialogue was his main source in the discussion of what is problematic about Plato’s Forms.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, the *Phaedo* attributes to the Forms a causal role in both being and becoming, esp. at 101c, but this does not by itself show that he regards them as moving causes. Instead, the Forms determine that there is the coming to be of a certain kind of being, but it does not set the process itself in motion. That the Forms are not meant to serve as moving causes is shown by the fact that the ‘second sailing’ is limited to the postulate of participation in Forms and in their interconnections. Socrates deliberately refrains from any explanation of how concrete things come to be or pass away, and for good reasons. Not only is the question how the soul enters and leaves the body shrouded in darkness, but even in more mundane cases there will be quite different explanations of what causes different kinds of things to become or to accept different qualities.

(vii.3) The final argument is a repetition of the uselessness of the Forms with respect to artefacts. It is not entirely clear whether Aristotle intends to say that in the case of the artefacts the Forms provide neither the formal nor the moving cause, because both are due to the craftsman; for the essence is the product of his ingenuity and the moving cause is his physical labour. But Aristotle clearly goes onto the offensive here and does not just find fault with certain aspects of the theory of Forms as causes: There must be causes other than the Forms, because “we deny” (991<sup>b</sup>6 f.: οὐ φάμεν) that there are Forms of artefacts.<sup>78</sup> If there was such consensus among the Platonists, then it ignores the discussion of Forms of artefacts in *Grg.* 503a, in *R.* x 596b, and in *Cra.* 389a.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>77</sup> The problem connected with the notion of cause in the *Phaedo* is discussed at greater length in *GC* II 9, 335<sup>b</sup>9–24. Aristotle raises the following objection: If Forms are causes why do they not generate continuously, but sometimes do and sometimes don’t, though there are always Forms and also things able to participate? So this argument is not just used for polemical reasons but represents a serious difficulty in Aristotle’s eyes; it presupposes that the Forms are active forces, a presupposition Plato hardly shared.

<sup>78</sup> Alexander mentions the denial of Forms of artefacts as a *communis opinio* in the Academy in his excerpt from the *Peri Ideôn* in connection with the ‘argument from the sciences’ (see section ii above). For a fuller discussion of this issue cf. Broadie 2007.

<sup>79</sup> Alexander’s text at 79.22–80.8 mentions health as the product of medicine, bench and bed as the products of carpentry, and refers to sculpture, painting and building with the claim that these are the kinds of things for which the Platonists do not wish to assume Forms.

Interpreters who deny that Plato can be serious about the Form of the bed or the flute overlook the fact that in *R.* x artefacts are not only included in the comparison of the three kinds of production (God, craftsman, artist), but play a central role in the entire argument. For Socrates not only uses the Form of the bed as the prime example in his comparison of ‘makers’ of Forms, perceptible objects, and artistic creations, but continues to include artefacts in his summary in 601d–e, where he distinguishes three types of objects: gadgets (σκεύη), living things (ζῷα), and actions (πράξεις). Thus Plato seems to see no problem in Forms of artefacts, unless the entire passage is discounted, which would seem like a desperate sort of remedy.<sup>80</sup>

We are here confronted here with the same problem as in the case of Forms of relatives. There are three possibilities: (a) Plato was never serious about such Forms; (b) he later changed his mind, or (c) the members of the Academy, to whom Aristotle here still pledges allegiance, differed from Plato. In view of the texts in some of Plato’s middle dialogues where Forms of artefacts are included, apparently without reservations, the first possibility can be ruled out. It is possible that Plato later changed his mind, especially when he was no longer wedded to the notion of paradigmatic Forms;<sup>81</sup> for there is no explicit mention of Forms of artefacts in his very late dialogues.<sup>82</sup> But I take it that there is not sufficient evidence to decide between (b) and (c), though (c) seems to be the most likely explanation. In what way the denial that artefacts have Forms adumbrates Aristotle’s own treatment of forms of artefacts, for instance in *Metaphysics H*, lies beyond the scope of this article.

### *Conclusions: The character of the aporiai in the first half of the ‘second critique’*

What are we to make of Aristotle’s critique of the Forms? His relation to Plato is an equation with several unknowns. We cannot be sure when his dissent started, how it started, or what course it took. The same is true of his relation to his fellow Academics. We do not know why, when, and for how long he maintained his, seemingly, uneasy allegiance to the group he calls ‘we’ in our chapter.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. the discussion in Fine 1993 ch. 7.

<sup>81</sup> This possibility has been suggested to me by Fine. The changes within Plato’s theory of the Forms could not be attended to in this essay in the way that would do justice to all possibilities.

<sup>82</sup> Aristotle’s remark in *Metaph. A*, 3 1070<sup>a</sup>18–19 that for Plato there are as many Forms as there are kinds in nature (φύσει) is not conclusive. For in *R.* x 597c Socrates discusses the question whether the god has worked out one or two Form of the bed in nature (ἐν τῇ φύσει), indicating that there is no limitation of Forms.

The discussion reflected in that text must have taken place relatively early in his career, but also not too early, given that he had already developed major features of his own philosophy before he wrote *Metaphysics A*, such as the theory of the four causes, and also the division of being according to categories.

Some reflections on the *aporiai* themselves are in order, by way of conclusion. *Prima facie* it seems that Aristotle is here giving vent to a long pent-up resentment against Plato's theory of Forms. This impression is based not only on the at times quite hostile language, but also on objections that seem designed to leave Plato's entire theory in tatters. Aristotle does not just confine himself to working out problems within the theory of Forms, but points out why its principles are untenable. The joke about needless ontological duplication aside, if the critique of the separation of the Forms, their general uselessness in an ontological and epistemological sense, and the unintelligibility of the Forms as models are to be taken seriously, all seem intended to show that there are no such things as the Forms, including Forms of the type of entities that Aristotle regards as the only appropriate ones, i.e. Forms of substances.

But the fact that, his devastating criticism notwithstanding, Aristotle still associates himself with the friends of the Forms seems to speak against such 'lethal' intentions. Instead, he may have regarded the long catalogue of *aporiai*, shared with certain other Platonists, as a challenge for further discussion. *Aporiai* in Aristotle notoriously present a problem, because they play no standard role. Sometimes he treats *aporiai* as mere difficulties that are capable of a solution, most of all when they concern his own position; sometimes he treats them as problems whose solutions justify the *endoxa* worth preserving, while on other occasions they provide the means of refutation. Concerning book *A* it should be noted that at the beginning of the review of his predecessors' positions in ch. 7, 988<sup>b</sup>21 Aristotle only speaks of "possible difficulties" (τὰς ἐνδεχομένους ἀπορίας). If this is not just urbane politeness, then he may not regard his criticism as the last word on Plato's Forms in all respects.<sup>83</sup> If the hypothesis is correct that Aristotle addressed an audience of fellow Platonists, perhaps at Assos, then he may well have wanted to leave room for further discussion in certain respects.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Fine's assumption 1993, 28 f. may be overly optimistic that Aristotle does not really aim to "record and criticize arguments to which Plato is not straightforwardly committed", or at least that this was not his intention in the *Peri Ideôn*. But she is certainly right about certain vagaries in Aristotle's procedure, which she regards as not so much designed to refute the Platonic position as to offer reconstructed versions of Plato's arguments in order to provide philosophical illumination. It must remain doubtful whether Aristotle himself saw it that way. Cf. also Fine's arguments against some authors' claim that the critique is purely 'immanent', 253 n. 47.

<sup>84</sup> The anonymous reader objects that it is unclear for what audience *Metaphysics A* was written. Against this it has to be pointed out that Aristotle's objections in this chapter frequently appeal to shared opinions, a practice that is absent in his critique of the causes accepted by the other authorities and that is equally absent in his criticism of the Platonist position later in the *Metaphysics*.

But regardless of his immediate addressees, the overall purpose of the book leaves little doubt that Aristotle was concerned with a clear demarcation between his own causal principles that are to serve as the basis of his metaphysics and those recognized by his predecessors. Among them Plato plays a crucial role because of his recognition of the importance of essential causes. It was therefore of prime importance to Aristotle to show that not all kinds of things have Forms and to put special emphasis on the problem with separate Forms of substances as a preparation for his own conception of form and essence.

If Aristotle's immediate target was to convince his fellow-Platonists, that would also explain why he does not draw an explicit line between the Platonic doctrine of Forms of the middle dialogues and the mathematised version of Plato's later years: The members of the Academy must have been quite familiar with that distinction. Aristotle could therefore turn to that problematic in the second part of ch. 9 without even marking that transition. If the revision of book *M* was written much later and addressed a different audience, Aristotle no longer had any motive to maintain common ground with the Platonists and could not count on his readers' thorough familiarity with the theory of Forms and its origin. For this very reason Aristotle in book *M* saw the need to make explicit that there are two versions of the theory of Forms in Plato before presenting his list of *aporiai*.