

Συμφωνία

Aristotle versus Plato Critiqued

by

Wehan Murray Coombs

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Magister Artium (Philosophy)

In the

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

PRETORIA

2016

SUPERVISOR: Professor E. Ruttkamp-Bloem

March 2016

Συμφωνία (*Symphonia*)

Aristotle versus Plato Critiqued

by

Wehan Murray Coombs

ABSTRACT

The notion of harmony between the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle is one of the most enduringly controversial topics in Western philosophical exegesis. In modernity, this controversy has been blunted by twin assumptions; the widespread acceptance of a fundamental opposition between Plato and Aristotle, premised on the widespread dismissal of the thesis of harmony (as proposed by the Neoplatonic commentators). This dissertation aims to re-assess the hegemony of reading Aristotle as anti-Platonic, by investigating the ancient, modern and contemporary discussions surrounding the topic. In each case, three major aspects of the debate are investigated; Aristotelian versus Platonic metaphysics; conceptions of form/Form; and psychological doctrine. The Neoplatonic commentators turn out to be ingenious in their efforts at harmony, and far less philosophically misguided than modern commentators often contend. Furthermore, the key strategy of constructing an anti-Platonic Aristotelianism in modernity (i.e. developmentalism), is shown to be based largely on spurious or circular assertions. Finally, key issues of contention in the contemporary milieu are investigated, illustrating the enduring questions surrounding the topic. A proper grasp of the harmony debate and its significance for philosophy at large is shown to be of paramount relevance not only to advanced scholars, but also to those new to the discipline. The investigation of *Plato versus Aristotle* has for too long been beleaguered under the weight of unquestioned assumptions of fundamental opposition. This dissertation aims to work towards remedying this unfortunate state of affairs, and revivifying one of the most significant debates in the history of Western philosophy.

KEY TERMS: Philosophy, Plato, Aristotle, Platonism, Aristotelianism, Neoplatonism, Developmentalism, Metaphysics, Harmony, Symphonia

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Divine Plato, in his dialogue the *Symposium*, has Socrates eulogize at length on the wonders of love, friendship and community. Aristotle, called The Philosopher, writes in his *Politics* that “He who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god”. Indeed, few philosophers have failed to take seriously the significance of the communal situatedness so fundamental to our shared experience of the human condition. The Southern African tradition of *Ubuntu* emphasizes how our humanity is constituted by the humanity of those around us. In contemporary French philosophy, Jean-Luc Nancy has made a significant impact thinking through the implications of our communal being in works like his *Être singulier pluriel (Being Singular Plural)*. Even the infamously insular Nietzsche admits the need for companionship, and has his *Zarathustra* emphatically exclaim it.

Yet, faced with the overwhelming vastness of the reality outside of our own selves, and the increasingly poignant comprehension of our own insignificance within that grand cosmic scheme, all human endeavour, including communal endeavour, seems to take on the character of absurdity. Albert Camus, one of my philosophical inspirations, believes that the only way to deal with such disorienting absurdity is to face it head on, and to take heart in the fact that at least, we are not alone in our revolt against the absurd. Søren Kierkegaard, a forerunner to Camus’ existentialism, emphasises the importance of faith as response to the even more troubling absurdities of belief in the face of the paradoxes of the Absolute. Without doubt, the somewhat *Sisyphusian* challenge of completing a philosophical dissertation may have been insurmountable without an enduring faith in the providence of the Divine, and the constant care and support I received from family, friends, and colleagues. Though the nature of writing does incline one towards ‘the religion of solitude’ (to borrow a phrase from Aldous Huxley), I have by no means been alone in this undertaking, and I am thankful of that. I cannot here mention every person I’ve been fortunate enough to share the journey of the last few years with, but I would like to extend my sincere thanks to some that have been particularly involved in the realization of this project.

First and foremost thanks must be extended to my loving parents, Mieke and Murray Coombs, without whose constant support I certainly never would have succeeded. Their support of me has kept me going, and their nurturing of my love for philosophy has been an inestimable boon to my life and career.

My deep thanks goes also to the person most directly responsible for bringing this project to life, my supervisor Prof. Emma Ruttkamp-Bloem. Prof. Ruttkamp-Bloem's continuous feedback, sage advice and genuine care guided me through what otherwise may have been a very daunting venture, and her philosophical insight and knowledge is strewn between the lines of this entire project. I must also thank Prof. Ernst Wolff, who consulted with me on a previous version of my dissertation, and who is the person who originally cemented my decision to pursue philosophy academically, with a stirring speech on the idea of *wonder*.

Thanks also to my loving partner Kylene, who has been there for me throughout this project as invaluable companion and confidant. My friends who have been there for me, as sounding boards for ideas and thoughts and as the social lighthouses of my life I thank, they know who they are. My peers and teachers in meditation, often prodigious and inspiring in their insights into philosophy in general and Neoplatonism in particular, must also be acknowledged – my gratitude towards them is inexhaustible.

Special thanks also to all my colleagues at the University of Pretoria's philosophy department, who have continually kept my love of philosophy alive and well. I will see you all at Oom Gert's to celebrate when the work is done!

Finally, I would like to extend my thanks to the University of Pretoria, the Faculty of Humanities, and the entire staff of the Department of Philosophy in particular. I could not have asked for an environment more conducive to philosophical enquiry, brimming as it is with sharp minds and kind hearts. To everyone involved with this wonderful community I say thank you, without you I would never have come this far.

For my teachers

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Title, Abstract and Key Terms</u>	<u>i</u>
<u>Acknowledgements</u>	<u>ii</u>
<u>Dedication</u>	<u>iv</u>
<u>Table of Contents</u>	<u>v</u>
<u>Chapter 1: Overture</u>	<u>1</u>
1. Themes	1
1.1. Platonism	2
1.2. Aristotelianism	4
1.3. Neoplatonism	7
1.4. Developmentalism	10
1.5. Harmonism	11
2. Overview	12
<u>Chapter 2: Harmony</u>	<u>17</u>
1. Introduction	17
2. The Origins of Harmony	20
2.1. The <i>Peripatos</i>	21
2.2. The <i>Akademia</i>	22
3. Harmonic Metaphysics	24
3.1. Material Causality and the Receptacle	25
3.2. Matter as Potency	28

3.3. The Explanatory Adequacy of Nature	29
3.4. The Unmoved Mover as Ultimate First Principle	31
4. Pro Pillar I: The Forms	34
4.1. Paradigmatic Causes and Enmattered Forms	36
4.2. Forms and Universals	42
4.3. The Individual-Universal Paradox	45
4.4. The Third-Man Argument	46
4.5. The Demiurge and Forms	48
5. Pro Pillar II: The Soul	52
5.1. Platonic versus Aristotelian Definitions of Soul	52
5.2. Incorporeal and Immortal Intellect in <i>De Anima</i>	57
6. Conclusion	63
<u>Chapter 3: Cacophony</u>	<u>64</u>
1. Introduction	64
2. The Development of Disharmony in Modernity	66
3. Discordant Metaphysics	68
3.1. Theology and First Philosophy	69
3.2. <i>Alpha Elatton</i>	70
4. Contra Pillar I: The Forms	72
4.1. Forms and Universals	72
4.2. Aristotle's Alternative Metaphysics	79
5. Contra Pillar II: The Soul	80

5.1. Separable Soul in <i>De Anima</i>	81
5.1.1. The “Two Intellects” Thesis	82
5.1.2. Identifying the Agent Intellect with the Intellect of the Unmoved Mover	83
6. Conclusion	85
Chapter 4: Symphony	86
<hr/>	
1. Introduction	86
1.1. Harmonists and Disharmonists throughout History	88
1.1.1. Notable Harmonists	88
1.1.2. Notable Disharmonists	90
2. Platonic versus Aristotelian Metaphysics Today	92
2.1. The Categories of Reality	93
2.2. Matter	94
2.3. Divine Thought	95
3. Plato versus Aristotle on the Forms Today	96
3.1. Material Generation	96
3.2. Forms, Universals, and Intelligible Reality	98
3.2.1. Universals and Nominalism	98
3.2.2. The Ontology of Sensible Substance	104
3.2.3. Forms and Intelligible Reality	109
3.3. The Third Man, Recent Debates	111
4. Plato vs. Aristotle on the Soul Today	114
4.1. Hylomorphism and Dualism in Aristotle	114

4.2. Personal Immortality	120
4.2.1. Intellectual versus Personal Immortality and the Problem of Reincarnation	121
5. Aristotle: Platonist <i>malgré lui</i>?	124
5.1. Aristotle as Witness to the <i>Agrapha Dogmata</i>	126
6. Conclusion	132
<u>Chapter 5: Coda</u>	<u>134</u>
1. Doing Justice to Ancient Philosophy	134
2. A Perfectly Crazy Position	137
3. Aristotelianism as a Platonism	141
4. Teaching the Controversy	143
5. Final Remarks	144
<u>Bibliography</u>	<u>145</u>
<u>Appendix 1: Detail from Raphael's <i>School of Athens</i></u>	<u>156</u>

Chapter 1: Overture

If Western philosophy has been a series of ‘footnotes to Plato’, as famously remarked by Alfred North Whitehead¹, then the first note of this symphony has been one of reverberating tension. This tension, that between Plato and his most famous student, Aristotle, is perhaps best encapsulated in a telling fragment from the ancient Roman scholar Claudius Aelianus’ *Varia Historia*:

“Plato called Aristotle a colt: What is meant by that name is manifest: a colt as soon as it is satisfied with the milk of the dam kicks at her. Plato therefore hereby signified some Ingratitude of Aristotle; for he having received the greatest seeds of Philosophy from him, and introduction thereto, as soon as he was replenished and satisfied with the best things thereof, revolted from him, and, getting his friends together, set up against him Peripateticism, professing himself Plato’s adversary.”²

Clearly then, the idea of an intractable rivalry between the two figures, and the accompanying proposition of the fundamental incompatibility of their philosophies, is an ancient one. In modern times, the assertion of their virtually binary opposition is so universally accepted that it is rarely, if ever, questioned. But things are not always as they seem. In his chapter on Aristotle, the famed historian of philosophy Diogenes Laertius wastes no time in confounding the reader by relating Plato’s infamous comparison of Aristotle to the spurning colt³, shortly after asserting flatly that Aristotle was Plato’s “most authentic disciple”⁴. The question of Aristotle’s relationship to Plato, or otherwise stated, the question of Aristotle’s ‘Platonism’, injects a vexing tension into the very heart of the genesis of Western philosophy. It is the aim of this dissertation to attempt to make sense of this tension by examining the arguments of those commentators who most fully appreciated it, both ancient and modern, specifically focusing on the arguments made for and against the putative opposition of Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysics. In this first movement⁵ the traditions most relevant to the debate at hand will be introduced, in order to define the major themes and problems involved in the issue. At stake is the answer to one of the history of philosophy’s most confounding exegetical riddles; Plato versus Aristotle.

1. Themes

The following surveys the major traditions involved in the question of the relationship between the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. Each tradition rightly deserves a volume of explication, but for the

¹ Whitehead 1929: 37.

² Aelianus, IV.9.

³ Diogenes uses slightly different phrasing (V 2): “[Aristotle] seceded from Plato while he was still alive; so that they tell a story that he said, “Aristotle has kicked us off just as chickens do their mothers after they have been hatched.””

⁴ D.L. V 2.

⁵ The idea of musical harmony and melody, or *symphony* (a play on the title of the dissertation, which was the Greek word most often used to indicate harmony in the particular context of the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle), will be employed sparingly throughout this dissertation as stylistic motif, via occasional references to musical or symphonic terms. The chapter titles of this dissertation reflect this motif, every title indicating the thematic atmosphere of the respective ‘movement’ it represents, in the same manner that sections of musical symphonies (oftentimes referred to as ‘movements’) are titled according to their musical tone, mood, or tempo.

sake of brevity, only outlines will be sketched here. At times these traditions overlap, and major themes are shared amongst all of them. The purpose of this survey is not to compare and contrast these traditions, but rather to construct a basic contextual framework which will serve as an orientation and backdrop to the arguments presented in the dissertation that follows. The traditions are not presented in any chronological order, nor strictly in order of appearance in this dissertation. Rather, they are presented in an arc representing the general thrust of the dissertation's aim: to understand and compare the various arguments concerning the relationship of the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle.

1.1. Platonism

In contemporary philosophy, *platonism*, lower-case 'p', is shorthand for any philosophical position that accepts the existence in reality of 'abstract' objects, that is, non-spatial, non-temporal objects⁶. *Platonism*, upper-case 'P', on the other hand, is shorthand for any philosophy that draws its central tenets from a reading and interpretation of the dialogues of Plato— or, more controversially, from Plato's so-called "unwritten doctrines"⁷. More specifically, and perhaps confusingly, Platonism can be identified as those philosophies that emerged as a result of the *project* of attempting to extract particular doctrines from Plato, and then defend them (as with the Neoplatonic tradition⁸). Finally, and most bizarrely, it can be argued that *Platonism predates Plato*, as Lloyd Gerson explains in his 2005 work, *Aristotle and Other Platonists*:

"It was fairly widely believed in antiquity that Plato was not the first Platonist, as we might tententiously put it. Aristotle informs us that Plato "followed the Italians (i.e. the Pythagoreans) in most things. Plotinus tells us that Plato was not the first to say the things that in fact we today identify as Platonism, but he said them best. On this view, since Plato was not the first and therefore not the only champion of Platonism, there was generally held to be nothing untoward in arguing that Plato *meant* what he did not happen to say explicitly. To draw out the implications or the true meaning of what Plato said, in other words, was part of the project of articulating and defending Platonism."⁹

In contemporary Plato scholarship, the issue of the interpretation of Plato is a massively complex field of study. As one author puts it "we... are now beginning to accept the necessity of having to cope with a flourishing plurality of approaches to an author as multidimensional as Plato is"¹⁰. Faced with such an overabundance of interpretative tools, the one used in this dissertation must necessarily be the one best suited to its aim, i.e., examining the putative opposition of Plato and Aristotle. Here a two-pronged approach is taken; 1) taking Platonism to be, broadly, those doctrines identified as Platonism by those

⁶ Balaguer 2004.

⁷ Armstrong 2016.

⁸ See Remes 2008, esp. Ch. 7, for a review of how the Neoplatonic tradition influenced Platonism in general.

⁹ Gerson 2005: 24-25.

¹⁰ Thesleff 1993: 17. See also Press 1993 and Szlezák 1999.

who held Aristotle to be in accord with Plato (principally the Neoplatonists¹¹) and; 2) taking Platonism to be the opposite of the positions that are expressly *rejected* in the dialogues – as Gerson does in his 2013 work, *From Plato to Platonism*. The latter I will present here, with the former being addressed in the section on Neoplatonism below.

In his work Gerson puts forward a definition of Platonism premised on the idea of ‘Platonism by negation’¹², or ‘Ur-Platonism’:

“[Ur-Platonism, hereafter ‘UP’]... is the general philosophical position that arises from the conjunctions of the negations of the philosophical positions explicitly rejected in the dialogues... Platonism in general can be usefully thought of as arising out of the matrix of UP, and that Plato’s philosophy is one version of Platonism. So, in a manner of speaking, UP is the *via negativa* to Plato’s philosophy. To be a Platonist is, minimally, to have a commitment to UP. It is only a slight step further to recognize that this basic commitment is virtually always in fact conjoined with a commitment to discover the most consistent, integrated, positive metaphysical construct on the basis of UP. That is what Platonism is.”¹³

The elements of this Ur-Platonism then, are “antimaterialism, antimechanism, antinomialism, antirelativism¹⁴, and antiskepticism”. To a certain extent, these concepts entail each other, for example, antimechanism is entailed by antimaterialism: someone who holds that bodies and their properties are not the only existents will also hold that the kind of explanations available to materialists are inadequate for fully explaining reality. Similarly, antiskepticism is, in the context of Platonism, entailed by antimaterialism and/or antinomialism: rejecting the idea that only bodies and their properties exist, and/or the idea that only individuals exist, is compatible with the contention that reality is knowable¹⁵. Due to this interconnection, Gerson, in a later work, reduces these to the most important two, antimaterialism and antinomialism: “It seems to me... that the core of Platonism negatively defined is the enterprise of drawing out the conclusions of the rejection of nominalism and materialism, which are in fact two faces of the same doctrine”¹⁶. Plato’s philosophy, as put forward in the dialogues then, is a specific instance of Platonism that is made up of those particular consequences of the rejection of nominalism¹⁷ and materialism that Plato endorses. Other ‘Platonisms’ may draw other conclusions from these two broad premises, whilst still falling under the general rubric of Platonism. In this way, when

¹¹ See Merlan 1960, especially Ch. 1 on the benefits of such a reading, and some remarks on reading Aristotle’s metaphysics as also essentially Neoplatonic. See also Schofield 2013.

¹² Gerson 2005: 37.

¹³ Gerson 2013: 9-10.

¹⁴ Antirelativism is the denial of the claim that truth is relative or subjective – in Platonism this is extended to be an ethical point, and follows to some extent from antiskepticism. See Gerson 2013: 13, and Lee 2005.

¹⁵ Or, differently put, if only bodies and properties and/or individuals exist, then skepticism follows: “According to the argument we get in the dialogues, if either materialism or nominalism were true, skepticism would follow because it would not be possible for the real to be present to any cognizer; there would only be representations of some sort of the real, representations whose accuracy would be indeterminable” (Gerson 2013: 13-14).

¹⁶ Gerson 2005: 42.

¹⁷ See n. 127.

we ask questions about the Platonism of Aristotle, we are simultaneously asking about Aristotle's categorization as a Platonist, *in genere*, and Aristotle's accord with Plato's Platonism, *in particulari*.

If antinominalism and antimaterialism are the signposts that mark the boundaries of Platonism broadly conceived, then the theory of Forms and the doctrine of the immortality of the soul are the pillars that mark the entrance to the sanctum of the Platonism of the dialogues¹⁸. These 'twin pillars of Platonism', though certainly useful, and at least apparently accurate, are not unproblematic. As we shall see, it is necessary to ascertain whether we can distinguish *Plato's* theory of Forms from the many other (competing, one might say) theories of Forms that were around at the time¹⁹. Furthermore, it is necessary to determine the exact sense of immortality of the soul put forward by Plato, and as is the case with the Forms, scholarship is divided on the issue. In assessing the ancient, modern and contemporary views on the putative opposition of Plato and Aristotle, these issues will be examined within those respective contexts, explicating the interpretation of Plato, and whether that interpretation is taken to be in line with or in opposition to the interpreted position of Aristotle.

Finally, when attempting to reconstruct Plato's Platonism, we must consider the case for the alleged "unwritten doctrines". Though the very existence of these doctrines constitutes an intense controversy in Platonic scholarship, the significance of them for this dissertation lies in the fact that it is Aristotle himself who mentions them, and therefore they indicate a part of Aristotle's understanding of the work of Plato. Moreover, these unwritten doctrines were of singular importance to the Platonists of the Academy:

"For most of its history the Academy was devoted to elucidating doctrines associated with Plato that were not entirely explicit in the dialogues. These "unwritten doctrines" were apparently passed down to his immediate successors and are known to us mainly through the work of Aristotle: there are two opposed first principles, the One and the Indefinite Dyad (Great and Small); these generate Forms or Ideas (which may be identified with numbers), from which in turn come intermediate mathematical and, at the lowest level, perceptible things..."²⁰

Having reviewed the contextual use of the term and tradition called 'Platonism' for this dissertation, I now turn to a similar review of the term and tradition called 'Aristotelianism'.

1.2. Aristotelianism

In a similar way to Platonism, Aristotelianism broadly conceived can be defined as any philosophical position that draws its central tenets from a reading and interpretation of the works of Aristotle, and can be described also as the *project* of drawing out and systematizing the apparent doctrines, and

¹⁸ See n. 227.

¹⁹ See Krämer 1973: 118-190.

²⁰ Woodruff 2015: 4. I return to the question of the relevance of the *agrapha dogmata* to the harmony debate in Chapter 4, section 5.1.

methodological approaches, in the entire corpus of Aristotle's writings (including the esoteric and exoteric works, the distinction between which I discuss below). Unlike Platonism though, it would be strange to claim that Aristotelianism predates Aristotle (unless, perhaps, Aristotelianism turns out to be a variety of Platonism). Aristotle's works are brilliant in their novelty, and entirely revolutionized natural philosophy. As a tradition of commentary, no author besides Plato has received such extensive and sustained attention, remaining massively influential up to the present day; the discourses of logic, metaphysics, natural science and ethics owe an immense debt to the Stagirite's efforts. For the purposes of this dissertation, a brief exposition of what may be termed 'the Aristotelian method', as well as of the central tenets of Aristotle's metaphysics, will suffice. Shields describes the Aristotelian method as such:

"Aristotle's basic approach to philosophy is best grasped initially by way of contrast. Whereas Descartes seeks to place philosophy and science on firm foundations by subjecting all knowledge claims to a searing methodological doubt, Aristotle begins with the conviction that our perceptual and cognitive faculties are basically dependable, that they for the most part put us into direct contact with the features and divisions of our world, and that we need not dally with sceptical postures before engaging in substantive philosophy. Accordingly, he proceeds in all areas of inquiry in the manner of a modern-day natural scientist, who takes it for granted that progress follows the assiduous application of a well-trained mind and so, when presented with a problem, simply goes to work. When he goes to work, Aristotle begins by considering how the world appears, reflecting on the puzzles those appearances throw up, and reviewing what has been said about those puzzles to date. These methods comprise his twin appeals to *phainomena* and the endoxic method."²¹

The key elements of Aristotle's distinct *methodology* then are these twin appeals. The appeal to *phainomena* here indicates Aristotle's commitment to examining the world as it appears, i.e. as phenomena, and the appeal to the endoxic method indicates Aristotle's commitment to reviewing the testimony of experts on a given subject.

The central elements of Aristotle's metaphysical doctrine are essentialism, category theory, the four causes,hylomorphism, and teleology. Briefly, Aristotelian essentialism is the commitment to identifying that characteristic which makes something exactly what it is (the *essential* nature of the thing), and also explains the other characteristics common to all other things of the same kind (the *necessary* characteristics of that kind of thing). So for example, *being rational* is to Aristotle the *essence* of what it is to be a human being, and this *essence* explains the characteristics *necessarily* shared by all other human beings, like *being capable of grammar*, or *being ethical*, or *being capable of judgement*,

²¹ Shields 2008.

and so on²². Aristotle's category theory stipulates ten categories of existence²³ that are meant to be exhaustive and irreducible, namely: substance, quality, quantity, relativity, place, time, position, having, acting upon, and being affected²⁴. Aristotle's causal theory supplies the four fundamental causes that explain any given phenomena, which are also meant to be exhaustive and irreducible (and that, according to Aristotle, must be taken into account when explaining phenomena):

“The material cause: that from which something is generated and out of which it is made, e.g. the bronze of a statue.

The formal cause: the structure which the matter realizes and in terms of which it comes to be something determinate, e.g., the shape of the president, in virtue of which this quantity of bronze is said to be a statue of a president.

The efficient cause: the agent responsible for a quantity of matter's coming to be informed, e.g. the sculptor who shaped the quantity of bronze into its current shape, the shape of the president.

The final cause: the purpose or goal of the compound of form and matter, e.g. the statue was created for the purpose of honouring the president.”²⁵

Hylomorphism then, following from Aristotelian causal theory, is Aristotle's conviction that no individual thing existing is ultimately simple, but is rather always a composite of matter (ύλη) and form (εἶδος or μορφή). Finally, Aristotelian teleology, being Aristotle's defence of final causation, refers to the idea that even some of the things existing in nature have a *telos*, i.e. can be explained as existing for the sake of some *goal*.

Another way of looking at the central tenets of Aristotle's metaphysics, as outlined above, is to see them in contrast to Platonic metaphysics, that is, to describe Aristotle in terms of his anti-Platonism – an approach that is particularly *apropos* for the aim of this dissertation. Each of the above facets of Aristotelianism can be viewed in the light of Aristotle's apparent critique of Platonism; Aristotle apparently critiques Platonic essentialism for confusing multivocity for univocity; the focus of the *Categories* on individuals seems to overturn the Platonic 'top-down' metaphysical schema; finally, the four-fold causal scheme, Aristotelian teleology, and especially Aristotle's hylomorphic account can all be read as rejections or counters to the Platonic theory of Forms. Determining to what extent these readings of Aristotle correctly interpret Aristotle's engagement with Plato, that is, to what extent Aristotelianism can be coherently construed as an anti-Platonism, is one of the chief aims of this dissertation.

²² Ibid.

²³ I return to the issues surrounding the question of whether Aristotle's *Categories* is in fact chiefly a logical or a metaphysical work in Chapter 2, section 4.2, and Chapter 4, section 2.1. See also n. 308.

²⁴ Shields 2008.

²⁵ Ibid.

Finally when considering the Aristotelian corpus, we must take account of the distinction between Aristotle's 'esoteric' and 'exoteric' works. The division of the Aristotelian corpus in this way is less controversial than in the case of Plato's *agrapha dogmata*, but no less fascinating. In several places, Aristotle mentions his 'public' or 'exoteric' works, claiming that these works were meant for a wider general audience, as opposed to the 'esoteric' works, which were meant for Aristotle's own students. Strangely, all the works that have come down to us are of the latter category, with only fragments of the exoteric works remaining. Questions concerning why this may be the case, and about the relationship of the exoteric works to the infamous dialogues of Aristotle aside²⁶, the relevant concern for this dissertation will be whether what remains of the exoterica at times represents an early, Platonic phase of Aristotle's thought, as is held by developmentalism, or is, for the most part, an extension of Aristotle's core philosophy, which is in harmony with Plato's, as held by the majority of the Neoplatonic commentators.

1.3. Neoplatonism

The term Neoplatonist refers to those philosophers, self-identified as Platonists, who set themselves the task of interpreting Plato (often in the light of the testimony of Aristotle, and their understanding of the unwritten doctrines), beginning with Plotinus in the second century C.E. and ending with the closing of the Platonic academy in 529 C.E. (with the exception of some notable later Christian Neoplatonists).

On the label 'Neoplatonist', Gerson notes:

"The philosophers who held this view [the harmony of Plato and Aristotle] are today usually given the faintly pejorative label 'Neoplatonists.' The label, originating in early nineteenth-century Germanic scholarship, has a dubious value as a category of historical reality. For the so-called Neoplatonists regarded themselves simply as Platonists; that is, as interpreters and followers of Plato. They would have probably been more comfortable with the label 'Paleoplatonists' than with the label 'Neoplatonists.' In addition, the presumptive designation of later followers of Plato as 'neo' subtly suggests that Aristotle must have been a 'non' Platonist... I use the accepted label 'Neoplatonists' with the hope that the reader will keep in mind that 'neo' is the last thing that these Platonists wished to be."²⁷

I follow Gerson in retaining this label in reference to these philosophers, with the caveat that it is not necessarily dubious, if it is viewed as useful in identifying a range of Platonists in antiquity who were *novel* (and as such can usefully be referred to as 'neo' Platonic) in their approach to Platonism in at least two major ways; 1) their efforts at understanding the scope and content of the *agrapha dogmata* and; 2) their efforts at understanding Aristotle in the light of Platonism, and incorporating Aristotelian doctrine into the philosophy of Plato, and vice versa. Though there may be more novel features of

²⁶ Masters 1977 and Chroust 1979.

²⁷ Gerson 2005: 2.

Neoplatonism, such as their emphasis on the religious or mystical aspects of a Platonic worldview, the abovementioned two are the most salient for this dissertation, and suffice as motivation for retaining the term ‘Neoplatonist’ herein as a useful label indicating a particular tradition of Platonic philosophy.

The idea of harmony between the works of Plato and Aristotle then, is a Neoplatonic invention (or discovery), and as such will be the subject matter of Chapter 2. Here I will only provide a brief listing of the major Neoplatonic figures, as well as some notable non-Neoplatonists (marked with an asterisk), relevant to the debate on harmony, and their respective key contributions²⁸.

* **Antiochus of Ascalon (ca. 130-ca. 68 B.C.E).** Academic philosopher who advocated a return to the doctrines of the ‘Old Academy’. Advocated the harmony of Platonic philosophy with both Stoicism and Peripateticism. Teacher of Cicero.

* **Numenius (second century C.E.).** Rejected the harmony of Plato and Aristotle, instead advocating the continuity of Platonic philosophy with Pythagoreanism and the philosophy of the ancient orient. According to Karamanolis, Numenius “claims that Aristotle’s philosophy must be separated from Plato’s doctrine and set aside”²⁹.

* **Alcinous (second century C.E.).** Author of a Platonic handbook called *Didaskalikos*, according to Gerson “a presentation of Platonism in systematic form... Alcinous reveals his harmonist assumption in incorporating numerous Peripatetic elements into his exposition of Platonism”³⁰.

* **Alexander of Aphrodisias (second century-early third century C.E.).** Principal Peripatetic commentator on Aristotle. According to Gerson Alexander “criticizes both Stoic and Platonic positions in defence of... Aristotle... [b]ut there are also other places in which his interpretation of Aristotle is in line with harmonization”³¹.

Plotinus (204/5-270 C.E.). Considered to be the founder of Neoplatonism. Takes Aristotle to be generally in harmony with Plato (following his teacher Ammonius Saccas in this, according to the testimony of Hierocles, see below), whilst critiquing Aristotle on certain points, most notably on the conception of the unmoved mover as the first principle of all.

Porphyry (234-ca. 305 C.E.). Student of Plotinus, further developed and systematized, to some extent, his teacher’s work. Wrote several commentaries on both Plato and Aristotle. Gerson relates that his “work *On the Unity of the Doctrine of Plato and Aristotle* (not extant) was evidently the first

²⁸ Ibid, 291-294. See Tuominen 2009 and Bénatouil et al. 2011 for a general overview of the philosophies, approaches and discourses of the ancient commentators on Plato and Aristotle.

²⁹ Ibid, 127.

³⁰ Ibid, 293.

³¹ Ibid, 45.

systematic attempt to defend the position supposedly held by Plotinus’s teacher Ammonius Saccas”³².

Iamblichus (ca. 245-ca. 325 C.E.). Contemporary, possible student, and critic of Porphyry (most famously in his *On the Mysteries*). Wrote several commentaries on both Plato and Aristotle. Iamblichus’s commentary on Aristotle’s exoteric (and non-extant) work *Protrepticus* treats Aristotle as within the Platonic tradition. Iamblichus assumes the harmony of Plato and Aristotle in his commentary on Aristotle’s *Categories*.

* **Themistius (ca. 317-388 C.E.).** Important Peripatetic commentator on Aristotle, significantly harmonizes Plato and Aristotle’s views on the immortality of intellect.

Dexippus (early fourth century C.E.). Possible student of Iamblichus, wrote a partially extant commentary on Aristotle’s *Categories*, wherein the harmonist thesis is defended via attempting to show that Aristotle holds a Platonic view of substance.

Proclus (412-485 C.E.). Pupil of Plutarch and then of Syrianus (see below). Wrote several commentaries on both Plato and Aristotle, unfortunately the latter are non-extant. According to Gerson “his works constituted the most extensive systematic expression of Neoplatonism to that time”³³. In his critiques of Aristotle, Proclus provides space for the Aristotelian account to be harmonized with Platonism, particularly in the contexts of Aristotle’s accounts of nature and final causality.

Hierocles (D. ca. 437 C.E.). Pupil of Plutarch of Athens. Testifies to the proposal of harmony between Plato and Aristotle made by Ammonius Saccas³⁴.

Asclepius (Late fifth-early sixth century C.E.). Argues for the total harmony of Plato and Pythagoras, and defends the harmony of Plato and Aristotle, principally in terms of Aristotle’s putative critiques of the Forms.

Simplicius (ca. 490-560 C.E.). Proposes the ‘division of labour’ between Aristotle and Plato, and broadly argues for their harmony. Wrote several commentaries on both Plato and Aristotle.

John Philoponus (ca. 490-570 C.E.). Follows Simplicius in accepting the harmony of Aristotle and Plato, whilst critiquing Aristotle for holding views antithetical to Christianity.

Olympiodorus (before 505- after 565 C.E.). Holds to the general harmony of Plato and Aristotle, whilst critiquing both on specific arguments.

³² Ibid, 291.

³³ Ibid, 292.

³⁴ Ibid, 9.

The above then are some of the most notable of the Neoplatonic commentators, and their close contemporaries, in the context of the harmony debate. In the work of these thinkers we find a wide range of differing arguments concerning particular aspects of harmonism³⁵. Rather than treat each of these thinkers individually, I treat the issue of harmonism conceptually and thematically in Chapter 2, referring to the work of those commentators most salient to the issues at hand.

1.4. Developmentalism

A ‘developmentalist’ reading aims to distinguish between the early or undeveloped, and later or mature thought of a given philosopher. Developmentalism has been applied to both Plato and Aristotle, gradually falling out of vogue in the case of the former, and becoming canon in the case of the latter³⁶. For the purposes of this dissertation, the development of an early ‘Socratic’ Plato into a later fully ‘Platonic’ Plato is moot³⁷. However, since the development of Aristotle has generally been framed as a development from a Platonic Aristotle to a decidedly anti-Platonic Aristotle, the question of Aristotle’s putative development is of cardinal importance, and will be dealt with extensively in Chapter 3. Here I will only provide a brief listing of the most influential composers of the developmentalist thesis in Aristotelian exegesis, and their respective key contributions.

Werner Wilhelm Jaeger (1888-1961). Prussian classicist, formulated the groundwork of a developmentalist understanding of Aristotle in his seminal 1948 work *Aristotle: The Fundamentals of His Development*³⁸. Jaeger plots a trajectory of Aristotle’s work wherein the thinker starts out as an “authentic and loyal Platonist but then, as he grew intellectually, moved away from Platonism to a philosophical position more or less explicitly anti-Platonic”³⁹.

Gwilym Ellis Lane Owen (1922-1982). Welsh philosopher, proposes an alternative to Jaeger’s developmentalism in his 1965 work *The Platonism of Aristotle*⁴⁰. Owen argues that Aristotle did develop, but in the opposite direction to what Jaeger claimed, that is, Owen maintains that Aristotle started out as an anti-Platonist, and matured into a committed Platonist.

FA Nuyens (ca. 20th century C.E.). Dutch scholar, applies the Jaegerian thesis of developmentalism to Aristotle’s psychological doctrines in his 1939 work *Ontwikkelingsmomenten in de Zielkunde van Aristoteles*⁴¹.

³⁵ See Chapter 1, section 1.5, below.

³⁶ See Wians et al. 1996 for an overview of developmentalism as applied to Aristotle.

³⁷ See Gerson 2014.

³⁸ Jaeger 1948.

³⁹ Gerson 2005: 13.

⁴⁰ Owen 1965.

⁴¹ Nuyens 1939.

As in the case of the Neoplatonic commentators, I do not discuss these thinkers individually, but rather refer to their positions as they relate to the arguments that make up the developmentalist position as a whole, particularly in Chapter 3.

1.5. Harmonism

Harmony, or *συμφωνία*, is the term used by the Neoplatonic commentators in asserting the complementary nature of the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. In his introduction to *Aristotle and Other Platonists*, Gerson provides a helpful overview of the issue of harmony in the context of its use by the Neoplatonic harmonists⁴². According to Gerson, the case for harmony is partly cumulative and also partly inferential:

“The more one sees harmony in a particular area, the more one is inclined to consider it in another, perhaps hitherto unsuspected. And naturally, the more one views Aristotle’s philosophy as a system, the more one is inclined to view partial harmony as suggesting, if not entailing, complete harmony. Still, from the Neoplatonists’ point of view, resistance to an account of Aristotle’s philosophy as a system is not all that troubling. Platonism itself provided all the systematic structure necessary.

...most of the Neoplatonic material... assumes harmony rather than presenting a brief on its behalf... Most revealingly, we shall see time and again that a text seemingly resistant to any reasonable conclusion regarding its meaning has been rendered so by an antiharmonist assumption. When scholars repeatedly say, “This is what the text appears to mean, though it simply can’t mean *that* since that would be *Platonic*,” it is perhaps salutary to re-examine the assumption that leads to this cul-de-sac.”⁴³

For the Neoplatonists then, harmony broadly conceived is the consistency of the Aristotelian and Platonic philosophical systems, in a complementary way, such that each philosophy can be employed to better or more fully comprehend the other – this of course was the Neoplatonic goal in investigating more closely the works of Aristotle in the first place. To understand what the Neoplatonists meant with the harmony of Plato and Aristotle, we may first rule out, as does Gerson, the kinds of harmony which they did not mean. For example, the Neoplatonists also employed the term harmony to refer to the self-consistency of a philosopher’s own doctrines (as Syrianus does at *In Met.* 141, 2). Harmony can also refer to simple non-contradiction, as is the case when two philosophical positions are logically unconnected. Or, it can refer to the harmony of philosophical schools of thought that share joint antagonisms to other, competing schools of thought. Nor is harmony meant to entail identity, eclecticism or syncretism. None of these are what the Neoplatonists had in mind when affirming the harmony of Plato and Aristotle.

⁴² Gerson 2005: 3-16.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 3.

The key ways of understanding the harmony defended by the Neoplatonists are; 1) as a division of labour between Plato and Aristotle; 2) a framing of Aristotelianism as a kind of Platonism; 3) showing in what ways Aristotle agrees with Plato (even when he appears not to) and; 4) supplementing or correcting a mistaken Aristotelian point with the proper Platonic principle. These approaches form the spectrum of Neoplatonic harmonism⁴⁴, and their full consideration, alongside examples of the application to particular instances of Aristotelian exegesis, will be the subject matter of Chapter 2.

2. Overview

Before proceeding to a broad overview of the content and structure of this dissertation, I must acknowledge my indebtedness to the groundbreaking work of Lloyd Gerson, whose 2005 book *Aristotle and Other Platonists* thoroughly canvasses the harmony debate in both its ancient and modern incarnations. It has been variously praised by reviewers – I include below some examples from Kraut, Boys-Stones and Ewbank:

“All praise is due to... [Gerson] for the boldness with which he challenges a deeply engrained and widespread approach to the study of Plato and Aristotle... With... [Gerson’s] book as our guide, we are now in a better position to come to terms with the Neoplatonic writings – commentaries and self-standing works – in which the case for the harmonization of Plato and Aristotle is set forth... [Gerson’s] presentation of the Neoplatonic interpretation is remarkable for its erudition and thoroughness... [Gerson’s efforts are] a marvellous contribution to the study of ancient philosophy.”⁴⁵

“Aristotelian scholarship is dominated by the view that the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle are somehow different in *kind*... Lloyd Gerson’s book, as the title makes clear at the outset, intends to challenge this view... [Gerson’s] arguments are powerful, at times brilliant, and they show up serious flaws in a complacent paradigm. The clearer this is made, the better for Aristotle *and* the Neoplatonists.”⁴⁶

“*Aristotle and Other Platonists* is a remarkable work in terms of what is established and how its arguments are developed. Gerson’s meticulous and sensitive examinations of original texts of Plato and Aristotle, along with their central commentary traditions and more recent interpretations, offer nuanced insights into the intended meanings of each relevant text... no synopsis can do justice to Gerson’s thorough reflections, which not only clarify enduring philosophical problems, but also encourage more exacting comprehension of subsequent renown speculators.”⁴⁷

⁴⁴ For more see Hadot 2015.

⁴⁵ Kraut 2006.

⁴⁶ Boys-Stones 2006.

⁴⁷ Ewbank 2005.

As is clear from the above, Gerson's *Aristotle and Other Platonists* is undoubtedly one of the most significant scholarly examinations of the harmony debate produced in recent years, and so I feel justified in relying on it as a key text for the purposes of this project. I examine Gerson's arguments in favour of harmonism as a basis for my exposition and evaluation of the potential of the harmony thesis, via tracing its history and development from its inception to its current form. I also acknowledge here my debt to the editors John M. Cooper (*Plato, Complete Works*) and Jonathan Barnes (*The Complete Works of Aristotle*) respectively, my key sources for the texts of Plato and Aristotle. These important acknowledgements in place, I proceed to an overview of this dissertation as a whole.

As seen above, the introductory chapter (entitled *Overture*; the thematic introduction to a musical piece) of this dissertation canvasses the major themes of the dissertation, with the aim of contextualizing these themes under the rubric of the question of the putative harmony of Plato and Aristotle, approached specifically from the perspective of these thinkers' respective metaphysical doctrines, eschewing for the moment their ethical and political views, harmonious or disharmonious as they may have been. In the proceeding chapters then, excluding necessarily the concluding chapter, I present the arguments for and against harmony in what I think can accurately be described as an 'Aristotelian' manner. That is, I proceed in each case from the basis of the sensible and/or the particular to the heights of the intelligible and/or the universal. Such a hierarchical composition allows for a consistent scheme of conceptual organization across the various chapters and sections, as well as being within the thematic spirit of the question of the harmonization of Plato and Aristotle, wherein Aristotle begins at the foundations of the sensible, and at the heights of his philosophy, joins with Plato, who expounds more comprehensively the doctrines associated with first principles and the intelligible. In addition, I broadly organize the sections according to the scheme metaphysics-forms-soul, building the investigations of each upon the premises established in the preceding category: to properly expound (and correctly grasp the relationship between) the philosophies of soul of Plato and Aristotle, their philosophies of forms must first be presented, and likewise the basis of their philosophies of forms must be premised upon the relevant general metaphysical frameworks.

The second chapter, entitled *Harmony* (for reasons that are immediately apparent), explores the idea of Platonic-Aristotelian harmony in more depth, especially as it was put forward by the Neoplatonists, and further elucidated by Lloyd Gerson and other relevant modern commentators' investigations of these. After a cursory glance at the origins of arguments made for or against harmony by various influential members of the ancient Peripatetic and Academic schools of philosophy, the main tenets underlying the project of harmonizing Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysics is presented. Herein, focus is placed upon the arc of harmonization moving from Aristotle's identification of Plato's Receptacle as matter (in a particular metaphysical sense), towards an investigation of the putative claim that matter has explanatory adequacy in Aristotelian metaphysics, and finally to the Neoplatonic critique of Aristotle's identification of the Unmoved Mover as First Principle. These key aspects of the project of

harmonization illustrate three key strategies of the harmonist commentators; firstly, their strategy of intermingling and equating Aristotelian and Platonic terminology; secondly, the ‘division of labour’ between Aristotle and Plato being put into action, taking Aristotle as authoritative on the sensible world and Plato as authoritative on the intelligible world, and bringing the features of the two together in a complementary fashion and; thirdly, ‘correcting’ of Aristotle’s ‘errors’ (doctrines or arguments inconsistent with the Neoplatonic understanding of Platonism) via supplementing or replacing them with the ‘proper’ Platonic principles. At the very outset then, the striking ingenuity of the Neoplatonic project of harmonization is showcased. Hereafter, the chapter proceeds to an explication of Platonic-Aristotelian harmonization *vis-à-vis* the Platonic theory of Forms (and especially the standard Neoplatonic interpretation of that theory). The Neoplatonic appropriation of paradigmatic causes into Aristotelian metaphysics forms the basis upon which further harmonization can be built here, through; firstly, the separation of the explanatory function of Platonic Forms and Aristotelian universals; secondly, the Neoplatonic responses to Aristotle’s most significant critiques of the theory of Forms, and; finally, an investigation of the similarity between Aristotle’s Unmoved Mover and the Demiurge of Platonism, alongside their respective relationships to the intelligible realm. Through this arc of investigation, another salient feature of the Neoplatonic project of harmonization comes forward (besides those already presented), namely, the contention that Aristotle’s apparent critiques of Plato are often aimed at flawed or inadequate versions of Platonic doctrine, not the *true* (according to the Neoplatonic commentators, at least) version of Platonic philosophy. The penultimate section of Chapter 2 investigates the Neoplatonic harmonization of the Platonic and Aristotelian theories of soul, focusing particularly on the immortality and incorporeality of soul, and showing that, according to the Neoplatonic commentators, Aristotle adheres to these doctrines in decidedly Platonic fashion. Chapter 2 concludes with an overview of its contents, and some final remarks on the plausibility of Platonic-Aristotelian harmony as presented by the Neoplatonic commentators.

The third chapter, entitled *Cacophony* (alluding to the modern view that the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle are fundamentally opposed and irreconcilable), canvasses the modern hegemonic interpretation of Aristotelian philosophy as *anti-Platonic*, beginning with an overview of the development of this interpretation in modernity particularly. The dominant strategy of the construction of an anti-Platonic Aristotelianism in modernity, the thesis of developmentalism (the argument that Aristotle’s early work is Platonic, whereas his later work is anti-Platonic, or *vice versa*), is discussed throughout the chapter. The chapter continues with an overview of two key features of the anti-Platonic interpretation of Aristotelian metaphysics; firstly, the contention that Aristotle’s metaphysics is non-theological and; secondly, the treatment of the apparently Platonic section *Alpha Elatton* of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. These are presented alongside Lloyd Gerson’s critiques of them (often informed by the Neoplatonic formulations of harmony). In the final analysis, the developmentalist thesis *vis-à-vis* these issues is shown to be based on an inescapable circularity. The chapter then proceeds to an examination

of Aristotle as anti-Platonist as regards the theory of Forms via; firstly, the contention that Aristotle's universals are meant to *replace* the theory of Forms and; secondly, the concurrent thesis that Aristotle constructs a metaphysics alternative and incompatible with Plato's, one based on the primacy of sensible substance. Again, Gerson's critiques of these positions are presented. Here, these critiques conclude that, since the explanatory roles of Forms and universals are fundamentally different, *no* theory of universals can replace *any* theory of Forms, and that the concurrent thesis of an alternative Aristotelian metaphysics fails to account for the nuances of Aristotle's conception of final causality, which overrides his apparent conclusions on the causal self-sufficiency of nature. The chapter then proceeds to an examination of the modern conception of Aristotle's anti-Platonism in terms of his psychological doctrine. The modern dismissal of Aristotle's clear position that the soul is immortal and eternal is critiqued (again via the lens of Gerson and the Neoplatonic commentators), showing that ultimately Aristotle's acceptance of some part of the soul being immortal and eternal is not only internally consistent, but altogether in accord with the Platonic doctrine (at least as it was understood by the Neoplatonic commentators). The chapter concludes with an overview of its contents, and some final remarks on the possible benefits of finally abandoning, or at least critically reviewing, the developmentalist thesis and the concurrent modern formulations of Aristotelianism as straightforwardly anti-Platonic.

The fourth chapter, entitled *Symphony* (alluding to the plethora of ongoing arguments relevant to various aspects of the harmony-disharmony debate), canvasses issues of contention in contemporary philosophy directly relevant to establishing or refuting the thesis of Platonic-Aristotelian harmony. The chapter begins with a brief overview of the positions on the harmony-disharmony debate of various influential thinkers throughout history, illustrating the depth of the debate (and indirectly the incredulity of this author that the issue of Platonic-Aristotelian harmony is not even seen as *debatable* in most modern contexts). The chapter proceeds with an explication of some of the key ongoing debates relevant to the issue of Platonic-Aristotelian harmony; firstly, the question of whether Aristotle's *Categories* can be properly classed as a text dealing with either purely logical or purely metaphysical concerns; secondly, the status of matter in Aristotle, and the question of whether Aristotle correctly grasps the Platonic conception of matter and; finally, the nature of divine thought in Aristotle, and its relation to the same in Plato. Hereafter the chapter proceeds to investigate those arguments relevant to Platonic-Aristotelian harmony in terms of Aristotle's putative rejection of the theory of Forms, revisiting some of the themes related to this issue already discussed earlier in the dissertation. The key issues of contention then, involve; firstly, Aristotle's conception of generation, and the contention that it eschews the need for paradigmatic causation; secondly, several facets of the apparent contradiction between Aristotle's consistent critiques of Forms and his equally (if not more so) consistent adherence to the metaphysical priority of intelligible reality and; finally, a modern perspective on the Third Man argument from Plato's *Parmenides*, which seems to be amenable to the project of Platonic-Aristotelian

harmony. From here, the chapter proceeds to present some of the contemporary debates surrounding the respective psychological doctrines of Plato and Aristotle, with focus on the issues of Aristotle's putative hylomorphism and dualism, personal immortality, and the problem of reincarnation. Next, Gerson's proposal that Aristotle may be a 'Platonist *malgré lui*' is assessed, followed by a discussion of the relevance to the harmony-disharmony debate of whether Aristotle may be considered a reliable witness to Plato's 'unwritten doctrines', the *agrapha dogmata*. The chapter concludes with an overview of its contents, and some final remarks on the 'state of the art' in philosophy regarding the question 'Aristotle versus Plato'.

The concluding chapter (entitled *Coda*; the final thematic section of a musical piece) of this dissertation then proceeds to a broad indication of the importance of the harmony-disharmony debate for the discipline of philosophy in general, and ancient philosophy in particular, by reviewing the most salient features of the debate as presented throughout the dissertation, and laying emphasis upon their significance and import. This is achieved through five thematic movements, namely; firstly, the importance of doing proper exegetical justice to ancient philosophy, and the issues that may arise (or have already arisen!) from an improper grasp of the relationship between Plato and his most influential student; secondly, an investigation of the nature, causes and possible motivations underlying the hegemonic modern interpretation of Aristotelian philosophy as anti-Platonic; thirdly, the exegetical and philosophical benefits of taking Aristotelianism to be a particular species of Platonism, and the validity of the justifications that may be used for such an interpolation of both traditions; fourthly, the present author's thoughts on the lamentable situation of contemporary classrooms' and guidebooks' virtually complete lack in terms of even mentioning what is surely a crucial aspect of teaching Plato and Aristotle properly at any level of competency and; fifthly, some final remarks on the future of the harmony-disharmony debate in general.

As the ancient Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu eruditely notes, even a journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step. The path of tracing the complex harmony-disharmony debate outlined in this section then, must necessarily begin with a single step in the form of a misleadingly simple question; 'What is meant by harmony'? Attempting to answer this question then will be the second movement of this dissertation; the first harmonic note of a symphony called *Aristotle versus Plato*.

CHAPTER 2: Harmony

1. Introduction

“Aristotle versus Plato. For a long time that is the angle from which the tale has been told. Aristotle's philosophy, so the story goes, was *au fond* in opposition to Plato's. But it was not always thus. The indispensable historian of philosophy Diogenes Laertius tells us, for example, that Aristotle was Plato's “most authentic disciple”. Beginning perhaps in the 1st century B.C.E., we observe philosophers already claiming the ultimate harmony of Academic and Peripatetic thought.”⁴⁸

In modern Aristotelian exegesis, the issue of the disagreement between the philosophies of Plato and his most famous student Aristotle, is well established: they are fundamentally opposed. Yet, for centuries, philosophers, most notably Neoplatonists, argued that their philosophies were, in fact, in harmony. In this movement I will investigate this claim as it appears and is argued for in the works of some of the ancient commentators (alongside Gerson's treatment of these), in order to assess its merit. Towards this goal, this introduction will examine the particular sense of harmony between Plato and Aristotle meant by the Neoplatonists, followed by a brief genealogy of the origins of the harmonic thesis in ancient Aristotelian exegesis. Hereafter, I will focus on the harmonists' arguments concerning what I have previously referred to as the twin pillars of the Platonism of the dialogues; the theory of Forms and the immortality of the soul. As far as the arguments made by the commentators for harmony are strong and coherent, we can take more seriously their position, and re-evaluate the currently hegemonic stance of Aristotelian exegesis.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, harmony *vis-à-vis* the works of Plato and Aristotle has several particular, sometimes distinct, sometimes overlapping senses for the Neoplatonic commentators. The most significant is perhaps the harmony that results from a division of labour between Plato and Aristotle, as described by Simplicius:

“In every case he [Aristotle] did not want to depart from nature but to consider the things above nature according to their relation to nature, just as the divine Plato, for his part, and in the manner of the Pythagoreans, examined even natural things according as they partake of those things above nature.”⁴⁹

Although in modern times it has ironically come to represent the exact opposite, Gerson notes how Raphael's *School of Athens*, with Aristotle holding his *Ethics* and gesturing with his palm down towards the Earth, and Plato pointing to the heavens and holding his *Timaeus*⁵⁰, is more than likely a depiction of this division of labour, since Raphael was a student of (amongst others) the Renaissance harmonist

⁴⁸ Gerson 2005: 1.

⁴⁹ Simplicius *In Cat.* 6, 27-30.

⁵⁰ See Appendix 1.

Picco della Mirandola⁵¹. Gerson further makes the claim that “Raphael and his audience must have known that Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* ends with an exhortation to ‘divinization’ corresponding exactly to what Plato says at the end of *Timaeus*”⁵². Indeed, in the penultimate section to Book X of the *Ethics*, Aristotle relates:

“Now he who exercises his intellect and cultivates it seems to be both in the best state and most dear to the gods. For if the gods have any care for human affairs, as they are thought to have, it would be reasonable both that they should delight in that which was best *and most akin to them* (i.e. intellect) and that they should reward those who love and honour this most, as caring for the things that are dear to them and acting both rightly and nobly. And that all these attributes belong most of all to the wise man is manifest. He, therefore, is the dearest to the gods. And he who is that will presumably be also the happiest; so that in this way too the wise man will more than any other be happy.”⁵³

On reviewing the relevant passage near the end of Plato’s *Timaeus*, one would be hard-pressed to not admit the similitude that Gerson pinpoints:

“...if a man has seriously devoted himself to the love of learning and to true wisdom, if he has exercised these aspects of himself above all, then there is absolutely no way that his thoughts can fail to be immortal and divine, should truth come within his grasp. And to the extent that human nature can partake of immortality, he can in no way fail to achieve this: constantly caring for his divine part as he does, keeping well-ordered the guiding spirit that lives within, he must indeed be supremely happy.”⁵⁴

The above highlights the possibility of at least a superficial harmony of Platonic and Aristotelian ethics. What it does not do is presuppose that Aristotle himself practiced the religious rites later Neoplatonists, most notably Iamblichus, would popularize⁵⁵. Nevertheless, the case for a harmony of Platonic and Aristotelian ethics is strong, on reviewing this and other evidence⁵⁶. In this dissertation however, the focus will be squarely on the issue of the putative harmony of Plato and Aristotle as regards their respective metaphysics.

The general premise of harmony is then a division of labour between Plato and Aristotle, wherein Aristotelian philosophy can be subsumed under Platonic philosophy, since the latter deals with more primary material than the former. In this way it is useful to think of the harmonic thesis as asserting that the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle are *complementary*, as opposed to *contradictory*. Within this general framework then lie the various shades of harmony that differ from commentator to commentator

⁵¹ Gerson: 2005: 4. See Chapter 4, section 1.1.1.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Aristotle *EN* 1179a23-32, emphasis mine.

⁵⁴ Plato *Tim.* 90b6-c6.

⁵⁵ Gerson 2005: 8-10.

⁵⁶ See Ibid, Ch. 8. See also Jaeger 1927 on Aristotle’s exposure to the religious aspects of Platonism, and Chroust 1965 on his exposure to other religious traditions.

and from argument to argument. Gerson provides a useful summary of the relevant distinctions that can be drawn, with notable examples included:

“We need to make the idea of harmony a bit more precise, since not all of Aristotle’s doctrines (on Neoplatonic interpretations) are harmonized with those of Plato (again, on their interpretations) in the same way. There are (1) doctrines of Aristotle that are basically identical to those of Plato; (2) doctrines of Aristotle that are superficially different owing principally to language, though they rest on principles that are identical with those held by Plato; (3) doctrines of Aristotle that are different from those of Plato because they rest on an imperfect or incomplete grasp by Aristotle of the correct Platonic principles. Examples of (1) are the superiority of the contemplative or theoretical life to any other, the immortality of intellect, and the unicity of the first principle of all; of (2), the nature of matter, the role of divine providence, the relative primacy of sensible substance, the immortality of the person, and the rejection of separate Forms; of (3), the identification of the first principle of all with thinking, the completeness of the fourfold schema of causal analysis, and the identification of the first principle of all exclusively as a final cause. Depending on the context, to hold that Aristotle’s philosophy is in harmony with Plato’s can mean any one of those examples, though it may be doubted whether any Neoplatonic author is always so clear about the precise sense of harmony being employed.”⁵⁷

The caveat concerning the Neoplatonist *interpretations* of Plato and Aristotle in the above is significant. Most of the work of discerning the value of the Neoplatonic thesis of harmony will involve ascertaining to what extent these interpretations of Plato and Aristotle are justified, and to what extent these interpretations truly entail a complementary relationship between the two philosophies.

These considerations in mind, this movement proceeds to an investigation of the origins of the harmony thesis, chiefly by an examination of the foundational traditions present around the time of its inception; academic and peripatetic. Hereafter the key metaphysical tenets of harmonism are expounded, with focus on the conceptions of matter, nature and the ultimate first principle in Plato and Aristotle. Next, the keynotes of harmony as regards the theory of Forms are examined, with focus on the differences between Forms and universals, the Neoplatonic response to Aristotle’s critique of the theory of Forms, and the relationship between the Demiurge and Forms. Finally, this movement investigates the proposed harmony of Platonic and Aristotelian psychological doctrine, with focus on their respective definitions of soul, and the claims made concerning incorporeal and immortal intellect in Aristotle’s *De Anima*, before moving on to the movement’s concluding remarks. This brief overview in place, we proceed now to a rehearsal of the first notes played in the harmonic tone – the origins of the harmonic thesis.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 5.

2. The Origins of Harmony

In his 2006 work, *Plato and Aristotle in Agreement? Platonists on Aristotle from Antiochus to Porphyry*, George E. Karamanolis explains the origins of the harmonic thesis⁵⁸. Of course, to establish whether in fact the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle are in agreement, we need to examine the texts of these philosophers themselves. However, as Gerson points out, there exists in Aristotle's work, perhaps frustratingly, evidence of both agreement and disagreement with Plato⁵⁹. As an example of agreement, consider the respective views of the philosophers on the beginning of philosophy, that are even more strikingly similar than Aristotle's mirroring of Plato's thoughts concerning wisdom and the end of philosophy, as showcased in the previous section. In his *Theaetetus* Plato's character Socrates declares that "this is an experience which is characteristic of a philosopher, this wonderment: this is where philosophy begins..."⁶⁰ Compare Aristotle in *Metaphysics* who himself declares that "it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at first began to philosophize"⁶¹. Contrast these remarks with Aristotle's tirade of critique against the theory of Forms in the very same work, including such apparently devastating denouncements as "of the ways in which we prove that the Forms exist, none is convincing"⁶² and "to say that they [the Forms] are patterns and the other things share in them is to use empty words and poetical metaphors"⁶³. What are we to make of all this? Gerson makes the argument that a certain critical distance is necessary in evaluating whether Aristotle's philosophy is in harmony with Plato's, despite what Aristotle himself may appear to be claiming:

"The question of whether Aristotelianism is or is not in harmony with Platonism is certainly not going to be answered decisively by anything Aristotle says suggesting that it is not. We should acknowledge that the Neoplatonists looked back at their great predecessors with some critical distance, as do we. What may have appeared to Aristotle as a great chasm between himself and his teacher may have reasonably appeared much narrower to those looking at both philosophers with the benefit of critical distance some six hundred to nine hundred years later."⁶⁴

A crucial piece of the puzzle of Aristotle versus Plato then lies in assessing the traditions of interpretation of the Platonic and Aristotelian corpuses as they have come down to us, and determining whether these interpretations can be justified by the content of the primary material, or whether a putative harmony between Plato and Aristotle boils down to merely wishful thinking.

⁵⁸ Karamanolis: 2006, Introduction.

⁵⁹ Gerson 2005: 12.

⁶⁰ Plato *Theaet.* 155d3-4.

⁶¹ Aristotle *Met.* 982b12-13.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 990b9-10.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 991a21-22.

⁶⁴ Gerson 2005: 10.

2.1. The *Peripatos*

The tradition of Aristotelian interpretation most closely associated with Aristotelianism itself is of course the Peripatetic School, the philosophical community and school founded by Aristotle at the Lyceum in Athens in c. 355 B.C.E. Even here, in the name of the philosophical community founded by Aristotle himself, there lurks the suspicion of Platonic influence, according to the author of the anonymous Neoplatonic *Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy*, “which explains that ‘Peripatetic’ is a term that comes from *Plato*’s habit of walking around while philosophizing... [a]ccordingly, Aristotle (and Xenocrates), as followers of Plato, were called ‘Peripatetics’, though the former taught in the Lyceum, the latter in the Academy”⁶⁵. Today, it is accepted that the term Peripatetic is a reference to the ‘covered walking halls’, or *peripatos* (‘colonnades’), of the Lyceum, which was the locus of the Peripatetic school from its inception to its eventual decline and relative extinction in the first century B.C.E with the Roman sacking of Athens. The Peripatetic tradition however, continued in the hands of the Roman conquerors (I will refer to the thinkers of this period as the ‘later Peripatetics’), until its eclipse by the rise of Neoplatonism around the third century B.C.E. The members of the Peripatetic school, both early and late, were concerned with the continuation of the projects of philosophy instigated by Aristotle, and as such we may view them as Aristotle’s immediate intellectual heirs. It behoves us then to turn to these thinkers first in our quest to determine the relative accord of Aristotle with his famous teacher.

Gerson writes of the early Peripatetics (from Theophrastus to Critolaus of Phaselis at the end of the second century B.C.E.) that “some two hundred years of Peripatetic philosophizing without the harmonist assumption did not yield at the end something that could be called anti-Platonic Aristotelianism”⁶⁶. More exactly this means, according to Gerson, drawing on the work of Wehrli⁶⁷, that since no distinctively Aristotelian theoretical basis can be identified in the projects of the early Peripatetics (due to the general incoherence of their projects), so also no distinctively anti-Platonic theoretical basis can be identified. As Gerson notes, this does not mean that the early Peripatetics were “cryptoharmonists”, but simply that no distinctively anti-Platonic Aristotelianism can be derived from the fragments left of their projects⁶⁸.

The situation complexifies hereafter with serious attempts by the later (Roman) Peripatetics to systematize the philosophy of Aristotle. Yet again though, no exclusively anti-Platonic system emerges. The example of Alexander of Aphrodisias provided by Gerson illustrates the point well:

⁶⁵ Ibid, 8.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 43.

⁶⁷ See Wehrli 1967.

⁶⁸ Gerson 2005: 43.

“Alexander of Aphrodisias as perhaps the first professional Aristotelian of antiquity might have been expected to reveal a strong interest in articulating distinct Aristotelian principles, though it is admittedly not so odd that we do not find them in his commentaries on particular works. There are indeed many places in Alexander’s commentaries and in his personal works as well in which he criticizes both Stoic and Platonic positions in defence of his understanding of what Aristotle taught. But there are also other places in which his interpretation of Aristotle is in line with harmonization.”⁶⁹

As far as the question of harmony is concerned then, no definite answer in the affirmative or negative arises from an examination of the Peripatetics. This should not strike us as particularly surprising, since establishing the relationship of Aristotle to Plato was never one of the goals of Peripateticism. It was however, a key goal of especially the later proponents of the other dominant philosophical school of the era; Plato’s Academy.

2.2. The *Akademia*

The Academy was the philosophical community and school founded by Plato around 385 B.C.E., and took its name from the nearby public park and gymnasium, which was a historical site sacred to the Greek goddess Athena. In antiquity the site was known as the *Hekademia*, which evolved into *Akademia*, a name which has also been linked to the mythical Athenian hero ‘Akademos’. Though several different methods of recounting the history of the Academy as an institution exist, for the purposes of this dissertation I will use the following simple designations:

The Old Academy (ca. 385-ca. 265 B.C.E.). The Academy as lead by Plato and his immediate successors; Speusippus (c. 407-399)⁷⁰, Xenocrates (396-314), and Polemon (c. 350-267)⁷¹. During this time various interpretations of the major components of Platonic philosophy (particularly the theory of Forms) were formulated and debated.

The New Academy (ca. 265-ca.80 B.C.E.). The Academy as lead by Arcesilaus and his successors. At this point the Academic turned away from Platonic dialectic and towards the Skeptical project of ‘suspending belief’⁷². Co-existed with Stoicism as the dominant, and antithetical, philosophical schools of the time.

The Academy of Middle Platonism (ca. 80 B.C.E.-second century C.E.). Lead by Antiochus of Ascalon (ca. 130-68 B.C.E.) and his successors, ending with Plotinus (204-69 C.E.), the founder of Neoplatonism. These Academics broke away from the site of the New Academy in Athens – the

⁶⁹ Ibid, 45.

⁷⁰ Unfortunately I cannot deal here with any questions (salient as they may or may not be) surrounding why Speusippus (and not Aristotle) became head of the Academy after Plato, nor the issue of Aristotle’s ‘exit’ from the Academy. For more on the former issue, see Merlan 1946, for the latter see Chroust 1967.

⁷¹ See Dillon 2008.

⁷² Woodruff 2015: 5.

succession from this line returned to Athens after the death of Philo, with the contemporaries Plutarch and Ammonius studying at the Academy in Athens. The Middle Platonists are notable for their focus on Plato's Unwritten Doctrines, and their appropriation of Aristotle as an interpreter of Plato. Hereafter the Academy "ceased to be the name for a species of Platonic philosophy, although the school remained a centre for Platonism"⁷³.

Neoplatonism (second century C.E. – 529 C.E.). Founded by Plotinus, ending in 529 C.E. with the abolishment of pagan schools by the Eastern Roman emperor Justinian I (though Neoplatonic philosophers can be found throughout history beyond this point as well). Neoplatonists can be broadly defined as those thinkers who brought a characteristically theological approach to the project of the interpretation and systematization of the Platonic corpus. These thinkers are particularly relevant to this dissertation due to their extensive use of Aristotle as a (more or less) reliable witness of the true Platonic doctrines.

Though they were first and foremost students of the Platonic corpus, the thinkers of the Academy (particularly the Middle- and Neoplatonists) would become crucial to the continued study of Aristotle in the ancient world. Around the time of the decline of Peripateticism, and the rise of Middle Platonism, we see the majority of commentaries on Aristotle shifting from Peripatetic to Academic hands. An understanding of why Platonists developed such a deep interest in the work of Aristotle is of key importance in tracing the roots of the harmonic thesis. In turn then, we must briefly also examine the attitude of Platonists towards the work of Plato itself.

Karamanolis explains that, despite indications in the very work of Plato that his texts were not meant to be taken as final or authoritative documents outlining and arguing for specific doctrines, the philosophers of the Academy committed themselves to framing them as just that, and staunchly defending them from criticism – which included defending what they construed as the doctrines of Plato from the putative criticism of Aristotle, treating the work of Aristotle in "ways which ranged from suspicion to caution".⁷⁴

The change in attitude towards Aristotle comes with the rise of Middle Platonism, led by Antiochus of Ascalon in the first century B.C.E. Antiochus was of the persuasion that it was the work of a good Platonist to "reconstruct and systematize Plato's doctrines"⁷⁵. Due to Plato's often obscure and enigmatic style though, this is a sometimes stunningly difficult endeavour. As Gerson notes, the "gap between what Plato says - or, more accurately, what Plato's characters say - and what Plato means is a

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Karamanolis 2006: 8.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 15.

potentially bottomless pit”⁷⁶. One principal strategy employed by Platonists in order to attempt to mitigate this hermeneutical difficulty was to rely “on the statements of philosophers who were indebted to Plato’s thought”⁷⁷. In this context, Aristotle emerges as a particularly good, if not perfect, candidate.

And so, for several hundred years, initiated in the work of Antiochus of Ascalon and culminating in the efforts of the Neoplatonists, Platonists set themselves the monumental task of comparing the thought of Aristotle and Plato, with the express goal of better understanding Plato thereby. In time, these thinkers came to believe that despite apparent disagreement, Aristotle, at the core of his philosophical system, is in agreement with his teacher Plato; and so the thesis of harmony was born:

“Neoplatonists regarded Aristotle as an extremely valuable component of the bridge across the gap between what Plato said and what Plato meant. If his criticisms of Plato stood alone without any countervailing evidence of his commitments to Platonism, then they probably would have concluded that those criticisms meant that Aristotle was not a Platonist, as, say, Pyrrho or Epicurus were not. But because there is such evidence – in fact, because there is such a *considerable* amount of evidence – they were inclined to take the criticisms of Plato as criticisms of unsuccessful versions of Platonism, not of the Platonism that Plato himself truly endorsed... [however] since Aristotle’s Platonism actually was [on the Neoplatonists’ interpretation] defective in certain crucial respects, he would naturally be expected to criticize Plato. That is why, after all, his philosophy was said to be in harmony with Platonism, not identical with it. Owing to the fact that the defect was a serious one... many other things were bound to be out of kilter. But precisely because the defect was capable of being isolated... that if one were to imagine the defect removed, Aristotelianism would be just Platonism or a creative version of it.”⁷⁸

In the following sections I will examine the thesis of harmony and the project of harmonization as it was carried out by the Platonic commentators, with emphasis on the harmony of Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysics, stances on the theory of Forms, and stances on the immortality of the Soul.

3. Harmonic Metaphysics

As mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, the basic framework of the Neoplatonic thesis of harmony is the division of labour between Plato and Aristotle, with Plato as the authority on the immovable and eternal, and Aristotle as the authority on the world of change and motion, and Neoplatonists holding that Aristotle’s accounts of physical nature were complementary to the Platonic ‘two-world’ metaphysics, instead of contradictory⁷⁹. Moreover, as Gerson notes, the Neoplatonists

⁷⁶ Gerson 2005: 11.

⁷⁷ Karamanolis 2006: 15.

⁷⁸ Gerson 2005: 16.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 101.

“employed Aristotelian principles and concepts in order to articulate a Platonic account of nature”⁸⁰. In this section I will explore to what extent the Neoplatonists could extend the theory of harmonization in terms of Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysics. Key examples of this can be found in the Neoplatonic analysis of; 1) the Aristotelian versus the Platonic theories of material causality; 2) Aristotle’s conception of matter as potency; 3) the putative explanatory self-sufficiency of nature as final cause in Aristotle’s metaphysics, and finally; 4) the Neoplatonic critique of Aristotle’s positing of the unmoved mover as ultimate first principle.

3.1. Material Causality and the Receptacle

In the Neoplatonist Simplicius’ comparison between Platonic and Aristotelian causality, we find a typical example of how the Neoplatonists incorporated Aristotelian thought into Platonic philosophy. Gerson paraphrases this commentator’s analysis thusly:

“At the start of his *Commentary on Aristotle’s Physics* he says that among principles..., Aristotle affirms two causes..., the productive... and the final... and two contributory causes..., the form... and the matter... To these, says Simplicius, Plato added two more; to the causes he added the paradigmatic..., and to the contributory causes he added the instrumental.”⁸¹

In this way, Simplicius ‘amends’ the Aristotelian fourfold causal schema with the proper Platonic principles – the fourfold schema is useful for explanations concerning the world of becoming, but fails to fully explain reality, since even final causes, Aristotle’s *teloi*, are not self-explanatory as such⁸². The amended schema then, forms a complete picture of causality by bringing the Aristotelian account under the aegis of the Platonic account.

However, as regards material causality, it is widely argued that “Plato had no concept of matter whatsoever and that Aristotle’s proposed identification of matter with the ‘receptacle of becoming’... is a mistake”⁸³. As far as the Neoplatonic commentators were concerned though, they generally had “no doubt at all that Plato has accounted for material causality, for their standard way of referring to the likenesses of Forms is as *enmattered* forms” (another good example of Neoplatonists incorporating Aristotelian terminology into a Platonic framework)⁸⁴. In other words, the Neoplatonists, not unreasonably, asserted that Plato’s remarks concerning the *material* likenesses of Forms shows that Plato had a working conception of material causality. Whether Aristotle is amenable to this Platonic conception of matter, or whether the Aristotelian account compliments or contradicts the Platonic

⁸⁰ Ibid, 102.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² See Chapter 2, section 3.3 below.

⁸³ Gerson 2005: 104. See Chapter 4, section 2.2.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 14, emphasis mine. Gerson also notes that the Neoplatonists justified their use of this terminology by referring to Plato’s own distinction between Forms and likenesses, e.g. Plato’s distinction between ‘largeness in us’ and ‘Largeness itself’ in *Phd.* 54c1.

account is the harmonic question at hand. The Neoplatonic harmonization of the Platonic and Aristotelian accounts of matter then, involves showing firstly that Aristotle is correct in his identification of a Platonic principle of matter in the doctrine of the receptacle or Indefinite Dyad (hereafter ID), and secondly in showing that Aristotle is committed to a view of causality that transcends the material, and is therefore in line with the tenets of Platonism. I will deal with the former here, and expand upon the latter in the section below on the Forms.

Firstly, as concerns the Aristotelian identification of Plato's receptacle/ID with matter, we can examine Aristotle's interpretation of Plato's remarks in the *Timaeus*, as reported by Aristotle in his *Physics*:

“...if we regard the place as the *extension* of the magnitude, it is the matter. For this is different from the magnitude: it is what is contained and defined by the form, as by a bounding plane. Matter or the indeterminate is of this nature; for when the boundary and attributes of a sphere are taken away, nothing but the matter is left. This is why Plato in the *Timaeus* says that matter and space are the same, for the ‘participant’ and space are identical. (It is true, indeed, that the account he gives there of the ‘participant’ is different from what he says in his so-called unwritten teachings. Nevertheless, he did identify place and space.)

...

...Plato's Great and Small... he makes these his matter...

...

...Plato has two infinities, the Great and the Small.”⁸⁵

And *Metaphysics*:

“Since the Forms are the causes of all other things, he [Plato] thought their elements were the elements of all things. As matter, the great and the small were principles; as substance, the One; for from the great and the small, by participation in the One, come the numbers.

...

...it is evident what the underlying nature of matter is, of which the Forms are predicated in the case of sensible things, and the One in the case of Forms, viz. that this is a dyad, the great and the small.”⁸⁶

Plato identifies the Receptacle as space and place in his *Timaeus*, this much is clear. Aristotle extends this identification, as can be seen in the above quotes, to identifying the receptacle as matter, the Great and Small, and the ID. On an Aristotelian account then, all these terms (space, place, receptacle, matter,

⁸⁵ Aristotle *Phys.* 209b6-16; A 4, 187a17; G 203a.

⁸⁶ Aristotle *Met.* A 6 987b19-22; 988a11-13.

the Great and Small, the Indefinite Dyad) are interchangeable and synonymous. Next, we must gauge what Aristotle means when using the term ‘matter’ in this context. Gerson explains the matter thusly:

“Aristotle tells us that by ‘matter’ he means “the primary underlying subject... in a thing, from which, as something present... but not as an attribute, something else is generated.” So, when Aristotle identifies the receptacle and the Great and Small or Indefinite Dyad, we may assume that he means to attribute to Plato the concept of an underlying subject of generation or, more generally, of change.”⁸⁷

To a large extent, whether one takes Aristotle to be correct in this identification depends on whether one accepts Aristotle’s familiarity and understanding of what he himself calls Plato’s “unwritten teachings” (the *agrapha dogmata*) as trustworthy⁸⁸. As has already been noted, the Neoplatonists in general acceded Aristotle’s reliability in this regard, and so accepted the Aristotelian identification of matter and the ID as correct. In fact, none other than the founder of Neoplatonism, Plotinus, endorses this definition of matter as an underlying subject as a necessary aspect of the proper Platonic account of matter, and gives two reasons for why such a principle is necessary, as paraphrased by Gerson: “(1) a receptacle or substrate for the presence of forms in the physical world is needed because these forms are images, and images need a medium in which they can be reflected; (2) an underlying principle of generation and change in general is needed”⁸⁹. Thus the key mechanism of harmonization is here achieved, through the familiar division of labour – the combination of the Platonic and Aristotelian accounts delivers the full metaphysical picture.

Plotinus’ appropriation is not uncritical though; in *Enneads* II the philosopher critiques Aristotle for differentiating between matter and privation, when according to Plotinus, the proper Platonic understanding dictates that matter is exactly privation⁹⁰. Aristotle defines privation in the *Metaphysics* as “the denial of a predicate to a determinate genus”⁹¹. In this instance we have an example of a Neoplatonist defending Plato against a perceived Aristotelian mistake. Plotinus argues that it is in fact Aristotle who is mistaken in attempting to separate privation from matter. As Gerson explains, Plotinus rejects the “distinction between matter and privation... [because it] is a distinction between relative and absolute nonbeing... By insisting on the identity of matter and privation, Plotinus can maintain that any material thing, insofar as it is material, cannot be said to *be* unqualifiedly”⁹². As such, nothing material, for Plotinus, can have relative nonbeing in relation to its potential, and therefore nonrelative (unqualified) being in relation to itself, since matter is always defined by the Forms. In this Platonic sense matter even exists, in a sense, at the level of the Forms, since they themselves are mere emanations

⁸⁷ Gerson 2005: 106.

⁸⁸ See Chapter 4, section 5.1.

⁸⁹ Gerson 2005: 106.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 108, notes that Proclus dissents from this view, and Simplicius relegates privation to the role of ‘accidental cause’.

⁹¹ Aristotle *Met.* IV 6 1011b19-20.

⁹² Gerson 2005: 108.

from the One. On the Neoplatonic account then, not only does Plato have a theory of matter, but that theory can be more fully appreciated by supplementing it with the complementary Aristotelian perspective⁹³.

3.2. Matter as Potency

A further appropriation of the Aristotelian conception of matter is made by Plotinus by identifying it with potency, as Aristotle appears to do in the *Physics*:

“...matter comes to be and ceases to be in one sense, while in another it does not. As that which contains the privation, it ceases to be in its own nature; for what ceases to be – the privation – is contained within it. But as *potentiality* it does not cease to be in its own nature, but is necessarily outside the sphere of becoming and ceasing to be.”⁹⁴

And *Metaphysics*:

“For we seem to seek another kind of substance, and this is our problem, i.e. to see if there is something which can exist apart by itself and belongs to no sensible thing... But if the principle we now seek is not separable from corporeal things, what has a better claim to the name than matter? This, however, does not exist in actuality, but exists in potency, and it would seem rather that the form or shape is a more important principle than this; but the form is perishable, so that there is no eternal substance at all which can exist apart and independent. But this is paradoxical; for such a principle and substance seems to exist and is sought by nearly all the best thinkers as something that exists; for how is there to be order unless there is something eternal and independent and permanent?”⁹⁵

Plotinus makes sure to point out that matter is potency only in the unlimited sense of matter as the receptacle (let us call this unlimited matter), not matter as material, or “matter in the way bronze is”⁹⁶ (let us call this corporeal matter). Given Aristotle’s remark above that “as potentiality [matter]... is necessarily outside the sphere of becoming and ceasing to be”, Plotinus’ caveat that matter is potency only in the sense of matter as the receptacle seems entirely reasonable – and thoroughly Platonic. Identifying corporeal matter with potency would, after all, afford matter the status of relative nonbeing, thereby also affording it explanatory adequacy (e.g. saying that the soul is the actuality of the material body would encapsulate all that needs to be said about the soul). This is of course unacceptable from a Platonic point of view. The opposing Neoplatonic position is explained by Gerson:

⁹³ See Claghorn 1954, who argues for the harmony of Plato and Aristotle as regards the *Timaeus*. Contra this see Johnson 1967, and for a nuanced appreciation of the differences in Plato and Aristotle on matter see Drummond 1982.

⁹⁴ Aristotle *Phys.* A 9 192a25-29, emphasis mine.

⁹⁵ Aristotle *Met.* K 2 1060a1-26.

⁹⁶ Gerson 2005: 109.

“[Neoplatonists insist] that there is no explanatory adequacy in the account of images without adducing their paradigmatic causes: that is, without introducing the Forms, the Intellect that contains these, and the first principle of all, the One. For them the Aristotelian physical explanation has an ‘as if’ quality, a sort of strategic pretence of adequacy. If you treat flora or fauna or astronomical bodies as if they were basic, then Aristotelian explanations are acceptable. If you recognize that they are not, then those explanations will not be adequate. In addition, owing to the fact that nature is a moved mover and not an unmoved mover, it is an instrumental cause. Hence, no explanation can end with the claim “nature is like that”, where an ending means that further requests for explanation are pointless or unintelligible. Nature is not an *unqualified* principle of motion and rest.”⁹⁷

For Neoplatonists then, harmony between the Platonic and Aristotelian accounts of matter is achieved by the former picking up where the latter leaves off. Another example of Neoplatonic appropriation of Aristotle’s conception of material causality, via the ‘completion’ thereof by Platonic metaphysics, can be found in the Neoplatonic treatment of Aristotle’s putative rejection of paradigmatic causes in the schema of generation. The infamous Aristotelian injunction that “man begets man” seems to commit Aristotle to a conception of generation that does not need to rely on Forms, i.e. paradigmatic causes, for explanatory adequacy. I will treat the Neoplatonic response to this charge in the following section on the Forms.

3.3. The Explanatory Adequacy of Nature

To complete the harmonization of the Platonic and Aristotelian accounts of material reality, Neoplatonists must attend to Aristotle’s claim in the *Physics* that “nature is a final cause”⁹⁸. Aristotle poses this definition in his arguments against those that would assert that nature acts only according to chance and necessity, without need for explanation by final causality⁹⁹. Aristotle goes on to explain that necessity does exist in nature, but only as hypothetical necessity, which acts only as “an explanation of the conditions for that which the final cause explains”¹⁰⁰. The distinction between hypothetical necessity and final causality in nature is made by Aristotle in the *Physics*:

“Similarly in all other things which involve that for the sake of which the product cannot come to be without things which have a necessary nature, but it is not due to these (except as its material); it comes to be for an end. For instance, why is a saw such as it is? To effect so-and-so and for the sake of so-and-so. This end, however, cannot be realized unless the saw is made of iron. It is, therefore, necessary for it to be of iron, if we are to have a saw and perform the operation of sawing. What is

⁹⁷ Ibid, 109-110.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 122.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

necessary then, is necessary on a hypothesis, not as an end. Necessity is in the matter, while that for the sake of which is in the definition.”¹⁰¹

In other words, the *material* cause is a *hypothetical, instrumental* necessity, whilst the final cause is the end, what Aristotle calls the “for the sake of which”; the *telos*. If nature is a final cause then, then it cannot be the hypothetical necessity of the matter in nature that makes it so. What is left is to determine in what way nature then acts as a final cause. In *De Anima*¹⁰² Aristotle distinguishes between two senses of final cause: “(1) the result for the sake of which and (2) the person or thing for whom or for which something is done”¹⁰³. Let us call (1) natural final causality (NFC) and (2) ideal final causality (IFC). According to Gerson, for Aristotle, the primary final causality is IFC: “It is because things aim to achieve an ideal [IFC] that they fulfil their natures [NFC]”¹⁰⁴. The primacy of IFC over NFC is illustrated in Aristotle’s analogy of the army in *Metaphysics*:

“We must consider also in which of two ways the nature of the universe contains the good or the highest good, whether as something separate and by itself, or as the order of the parts. Probably in both ways, as an army does. For the good is found both in the order and in the leader, and more in the latter; for he does not depend on the order but it depends on him.”¹⁰⁵

We have already seen that nature *qua* corporeal matter cannot qualify as an Aristotelian final cause, now we see that nature *qua* NFC is not explanatorily sufficient. The order of nature, the NFC, on Aristotle’s analysis, depends upon an IFC, an ideal which is likened to one who gives orders. In short, the ordering depends upon an order-giver. In *De Anima*, Aristotle helpfully provides us with the identity of this order-giver, in the context of his analysis of generation:

“...any living thing that has reached its normal development and which is unutilated, and whose mode of generation is not spontaneous, the most natural act is the production of another like itself, an animal producing an animal, a plant a plant, in order that, as far as its nature allows, it may partake in the eternal and divine. That is the goal towards which all things strive, that for the sake of which they do whatsoever their natures renders possible.”¹⁰⁶

Nature is a final cause then, but only in the sense of a NFC – beyond this, another final cause, the IFC, is needed, and this is none other, according to Aristotle, than “the eternal and divine” – Aristotle’s unmoved mover. The reason why nature is not self-explanatory as final cause for Aristotle, and requires a separate final cause, the unmoved mover, to explain it, is, according to Gerson drawing on the analysis of Simplicius, that nature “...is an instrument of motion – a moved mover – and not an unmoved mover... [t]hus even if nature always acts for the good by actualizing the potency in anything that exists by

¹⁰¹ Aristotle *Phys.* B 8 200a7-14.

¹⁰² Cf. Aristotle *Met.* 1072b1-3.

¹⁰³ Gerson 2005: 123; cf. Aristotle *De An.* II 415b1-3.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹⁰⁵ Aristotle *Met.* A’ 10, 1075a11-15.

¹⁰⁶ Aristotle *De An.* B4, 415a27-b1.

nature, nature's so acting is not self-explanatory"¹⁰⁷. The activity of nature is explained finally by the separate IFC that is the unmoved mover, an explanation that Neoplatonists could readily reconcile with Platonic top-down metaphysics – though not uncritically, as we shall see in the next section.

Neoplatonists extend the explanatory inadequacy of nature as a final cause to include, not surprisingly, the explanatory inadequacy of physical science, and hold that Aristotle endorses this stance. Simplicius, as Gerson points out, makes this explicit in his analysis of Aristotle's *Physics*, in which Aristotle states that "nature, taken as a principle of motion, is a hypothesis"¹⁰⁸ – nature exists as a mover only hypothetically, i.e. for the sake of something else. It is on their interpretation of this statement that harmonists like Simplicius, Gerson explains, may claim that Aristotle himself acknowledges the explanatory inadequacy of physical science, leaving the door open for even deeper harmony with the Platonic schema:

"To Neoplatonic ears... [Aristotle's description of nature as a hypothesis] sounds like the hypothetical reasoning of Plato's *Republic*, which should lead ultimately to an unhypothetical understanding of first principles. Simplicius sums this up nicely in noting the direction of the entire *Physics*: "Thus the truly marvellous Aristotle brought his teaching about physical principles to the point of the theology of the supernatural and showed that the entire physical or bodily order was dependent on the nonbodily and boundless intellectual goodness above nature, in this also following Plato." Simplicius goes on to identify this "intellectual goodness" with the Demiurge, an "intellectual god." He further suggests that apparent differences between Aristotle and Plato in this regard are owing to the fact that the former couched his argument in terms of an explanation of motion and movables, whereas the latter couched his explanation in terms of coming-to-be; the one arrives at a "primary unmoved mover" and the other arrives at "that which is always the same in the same way"."¹⁰⁹

Finally then, having surveyed the Neoplatonic harmonization of Platonic and Aristotelian theories of material, natural final, and ideal final causality, let us assess the Neoplatonic critique of Aristotle's IFC, the Unmoved Mover, as the ultimate first principle (hereafter UFP).

3.4. The Unmoved Mover as Ultimate First Principle

The conception of the prime unmoved mover represents the pinnacle of Aristotle's metaphysics, and an important touchstone with Platonism. In the *Physics* and the *Metaphysics* we find Aristotle's rationale for positing, and explanation of, his concept of the unmoved mover:

¹⁰⁷ Gerson 2005: 125.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 112.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

“...it is evident that that which primarily imparts motion is unmoved; for, whether that which is in motion but moved by something leads straight to the first unmoved, or whether it lead to what is in motion but moves itself and stops its own motion, on both suppositions we have the result that in all cases of things being in motion that which primarily imparts motion is unmoved.

Since there must always be motion without intermission, there must necessarily be something eternal, whether one or many, that first imparts motion, and this first mover must be unmoved.”¹¹⁰

“And since that which is moved and moves is intermediate, there is a mover which moves without being moved, being eternal, substance, and actuality. And the object of desire and the object of thought move in this way; they move without being moved...

Now if something is moved it is capable of being otherwise than it is... But since there is something which moves while itself unmoved, existing actually, this can in no way be otherwise than as it is... The first mover, then, of necessity exists; and in so far as it is necessary, it is good, and in this sense a first principle...

On such a principle, then, depend the heavens and the world of nature. And its life is such as the best which we enjoy, and enjoy for but a short time. For it is ever in this state (which we cannot be), since its actuality is also pleasure. (And therefore waking, perception, and thinking are most pleasant, and hopes and memories are so because of their reference to these.) And thought in itself deals with that which is best in the fullest sense. And thought thinks itself because it shares the nature of the object of thought; for it becomes an object of thought in coming into contact with and thinking its objects, so that thought and object of thought are the same. For that which is *capable* of receiving the object of thought, i.e. the substance, is thought. And it is *active* when it *possesses* this object. Therefore the latter rather than the former is the divine element which thought seems to contain, and the act of contemplation is what is most pleasant and best. If, then, God is always in that good state in which we sometimes are, this compels our wonder; and if in a better [sic.] this compels it yet more. And God *is* in a better state. And life also belongs to God; for the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality; and God’s essential actuality is life most good and eternal. We say therefore that God is a living being, eternal, most good, so that life and duration continuous and eternal being belong to God, for this *is* God.”¹¹¹

The unmoved mover then, the God of Aristotelian metaphysics, is a necessary explanation for the possibility of motion. The unmoved mover is eternally unchanging, necessary and good, moves by attracting desire and contemplation without itself being moved, and is alive in the best state possible, that of pure contemplation, or thought thinking itself.

¹¹⁰ Aristotle *Phys.* VIII 5.4-9, 6.10-12.

¹¹¹ Aristotle *Met.* XII 7, 1072a24-1072b31.

Plotinus' critique of Aristotle's doctrine of the unmoved mover stands as a remarkable example of Neoplatonic commentary that both critiques the Aristotelian position at the same time as it brings it within the orbit of Platonic metaphysics¹¹². Gerson summarizes Plotinus' critique of Aristotle's definition of the unmoved mover as "thinking thinking of thinking" and the terms of the resulting dispute over the identification of this as the UFP, the Ultimate First Principle, as such:

"[Plotinus argues that thinking]... requires duality consisting of thinking and an object of thinking; hence, thinking requires relative complexity. But in primary thinking, or thinking considered paradigmatically, the complexity is not that of a thinker and something that is other than the thinker. The complexity must be *within* the thinker... The dispute between Aristotle and Plotinus, then, is over two points: (1) whether or not thinking of thinking involves complexity, and (2) if it does, whether this invalidates it as a first principle."¹¹³

On the issue of the complexity of thinking of thinking, Plotinus invokes the self-reflexivity of thinking in order to show its complexity. In this way, even paradigmatic thinking, wherein there is no distinction between the subject and object of thinking, still implies awareness of thinking: the being thinking of thinking is aware that it is thinking of thinking – this self-reflexivity, for Plotinus, denotes duality and therefore complexity. Gerson explains the Platonic reasoning why this kind of complexity disqualifies the unmoved mover as the UFP:

"Why, then, should we suppose that this sort of complexity is incompatible with ultimate ontological primacy? The answer supplied by Plato and Platonism is that the Idea of the Good, the first principle of all, is beyond being or essence (οὐσία). So, if, as Aristotle seems to hold, the prime unmoved mover is absolutely primary οὐσία, then it cannot be the first principle of all. The philosophical answer is that οὐσία implies definiteness or limitedness and the first principle of all cannot be limited in any way. For as first, there could be no principle outside it to provide a limit... If primary οὐσία is the activity of thinking, and thinking is self-reflexive, there must be sufficient definiteness in order to make the self-reflexivity of thinking possible."¹¹⁴

For Plotinus then, though the unmoved mover deserves its place at the pinnacle of οὐσία, it is not the first principle of all. As such, it is disqualified as the ultimate focus of the science of being, which would be the first principal of all proper; the One, as Gerson notes: "The science of being, which has its foundation in the *first* principle of all, encompasses the science of οὐσία; it is not identical with it"¹¹⁵. In this sense, though Aristotle is, according to the Neoplatonists, mistaken in asserting the unmoved mover (as the thinker thinking of thinking) is the UFP of all, supplementing the theory with the proper

¹¹² Plotinus V, 6 and VI, 7, 1-2 (trans. Mackenna and Page). Gerson 2005: 205.

¹¹³ Gerson 2005: 206. See also Rist 1973.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 207.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 208.

Platonic principle saves it and incorporates it, resulting in a harmony between the two apparently disparate positions.¹¹⁶

To complete the Neoplatonic picture of metaphysical harmony though, we must now proceed to investigate Aristotle's putative positions on the so-called 'Pillars of Platonism' (the theory of Forms and the immortality of the soul), alongside relevant examples of the Neoplatonic project of harmonization as applied to these positions.

4. Pro Pillar I: The Forms

The theory of Forms is in many ways the backbone of Platonic philosophy. Aristotle's putative critique of this theory is the cornerstone of reading Aristotle as an anti-Platonist; hence contesting the nature of this critique is a central concern to those who see Aristotle as a true ally of Platonism. Before examining the Neoplatonic treatment of the Aristotelian critiques, I will provide here a brief overview and contrast of what we can call Plato versus Aristotle's theories of Form/form.

The Forms are mentioned many times in many of Plato's dialogues. In the *Phaedo* the idea of the Form of Equality is introduced in the context of the doctrine of *anamnesis*, the idea that all true knowledge proceeds from recollection of what the soul had previously already known:

“Consider, he said, whether this is the case: we say that there is something that is equal. I do not mean a stick equal to a stick or a stone to a stone, or anything of that kind, but something else beyond all these, the Equal itself. Shall we say that this exists or not? Indeed we shall, by Zeus, said Simmias, most definitely... Do they [equal things] seem to us to be equal in the same sense as what is Equal itself? Is there some deficiency in their being such as the Equal, or is there not? A considerable deficiency, he said... Then before we began to see or hear or otherwise perceive, we must have possessed knowledge of the Equal itself if we were about to refer our sense perceptions of equal objects to it, and realized that all of these were eager to be like it, but were inferior... Therefore, if we had this knowledge, we knew before birth and immediately after not only the Equal, but the Greater and the Smaller and all such things, for our present argument is no more about the Equal than about the Beautiful itself, the Good itself, the Just, the Pious and, as I say, about all those things which we mark with the seal of “what it is,” both when we are putting questions and answering them.”¹¹⁷

The above passage makes salient some of the key features of the theory of Forms. Taking into account what is said about the Forms in similar examples from the various dialogues wherein they are discussed,

¹¹⁶ For the relationship of this argument to the issue of divine causality see Chapter 2, section 4.5 below.

¹¹⁷ Plato *Phaedo* 74a6-d3. See Sedley 2016 for a thorough investigation of the passage.

one may formulate a working summary of the theory (aspects of which can, of course, be disputed), as for example does Crisp:

“Plato’s *theory of Forms* is a realistic ontology of universals. In his elenchus, Socrates sought what is common to, e.g., all chairs. Plato believed there must be an essence – or Form – common to everything falling under one concept, which makes anything what it is. A chair is a chair, because it “participates in” the Form of Chair. The Forms are ideal “patterns,” unchanging, timeless, and perfect. They exist in a world of their own... Plato speaks of them as self-predicating: the Form of Beauty is perfectly beautiful... The only true understanding is of Forms. This we attain through *anamnesis*, “recollection”.”¹¹⁸

For our purposes here, we may now contrast this with the ‘alternative’ Aristotelian definition of Forms:

“Aristotle agreed that forms are closely tied to intelligibility, but denied their separate existence. Aristotle explains change and generation through a distinction between the form and matter of substances. A lump of bronze (matter) becomes a statue through its being moulded into a certain shape (form). In his earlier metaphysics, Aristotle identified primary substance with the composite of matter and form, e.g. Socrates. Later, he suggests that primary substance is form – what makes Socrates what he is (the form here is his soul). This notion of forms as essences has obvious similarities with the Platonic view.”¹¹⁹

Though admittedly similar, the Aristotelian conception seems to set itself up in opposition to the Platonic; particularly due to Aristotle’s apparent criticisms of the Platonic theory (denying the separate existence of Forms, for example). On the Neoplatonic reading of Aristotle though, the fact that Aristotle in his work critiques the Forms is not an insurmountable impediment to harmony – in their quest to better understand Plato through the works of his closest student, the Neoplatonists did not take the Stagirite’s critiques at face value:

“Simply stated, Aristotle’s opposition to a theory of Forms does not contradict the harmony of Aristotle and Plato as the Neoplatonists understood it. The reason is that they recognized a theory of Forms as a theory about the intelligible order. A philosopher who denied the existence of such an order would indeed be anti-Platonist [sic.], and his philosophy would not be in harmony with Plato’s. But there is no evidence that Aristotle denied this order and much evidence across all his works – esoteric and exoteric – that he affirmed it.”¹²⁰

As such, the Neoplatonists aimed to show that the apparent opposition between the Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions of Forms was largely illusory, and that their viewpoints on the issue were harmonious. In order to establish the status of the Platonic theory of Forms in the work of Aristotle, I

¹¹⁸ Crisp 2015: 369. It should be noted at this point that formulating one unified theory of Forms is no easy task, as evidenced by the fact of myriad of intra-academic debates on the issue (Gerson 2005: 10, 31). See also Chapter 3, section 4, and Chapter 4, section 3.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Gerson 2005: 68.

will examine the thesis that what Aristotle called eternal intelligibles, thought eternally by the prime unmoved mover, are none other than the Forms of Platonism, and secondly, to consider how the Neoplatonists viewed Aristotle's criticisms of various theories of Forms to not be an impediment to harmony. I will reserve the former argument for Chapter 4, and deal here only with the latter. The most significant criticisms, which I will deal with in turn below, are; 1) Aristotle's putative rejection of paradigmaticism and the concomitant claim that there is no place in Aristotelian metaphysics for the theory of Forms; 2) the difference between Forms and universals; 3) Aristotle's exposition of the individual-universal paradox; 4) the 'Third Man' argument, and; 5) the Neoplatonic identification of Aristotle's Unmoved Mover as the Platonic Demiurge.

4.1. Paradigmatic Causes and Enmattered Forms

In attempting to bring Aristotle into the fold of Platonism, Neoplatonists had to attend to the matter of Aristotle's apparent rejection of paradigmatic causes, or Forms, as an explanatory necessity for the phenomena of material generation, as held by Aristotle's injunction that "man begets man". The apparent explanatory adequacy of Aristotle's fourfold schema of causation seems to rule out entirely the need for Forms, and so, the charge that there is no place in Aristotle's philosophy for a paradigmaticism is a strong one, and is readily supported by textual evidence, as Gerson attests:

"Related to the central objection that a Form cannot serve its explanatory function if it is a separate individual are the objections that Forms do not fit anywhere into Aristotle's framework for scientific explanation. Aristotle says it is evident that if Forms were to be any part of that framework, it would be as causes of the 'whatness' of things, that is, as formal causes. But then Aristotle argues in Book Z that to separate the formal causes of things from those things leads to disaster... Aristotle [also addresses]... in passing the suggestion that a Form is a 'paradigm' and that other things 'participate' in Forms, dismissing the suggestion as "empty words and poetic metaphors"... It is clear enough that a paradigmatic cause does not fit into the fourfold schema of causality to which Aristotle is committed. No Neoplatonist supposed that in fact it did. Still, a Form as a paradigmatic cause *is* rejected. Where is the harmony in that?"¹²¹

The Neoplatonic strategy of harmonization here consists, briefly, in asserting that, as Asclepius does, "the explanatory role that Forms are postulated to fulfil is not part of the Aristotelian explanatory framework"¹²². Forms, or 'paradigmatic causes', need not be introduced into the Aristotelian explanatory framework since that framework is meant specifically to explain actual predication (and material generation), as opposed to the "eternal possibility of intelligible real predication among sensibles"¹²³, which is explained by reference to the Forms¹²⁴. As such, according to Gerson, Asclepius

¹²¹ Ibid, 225-226.

¹²² Ibid, 226.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ See Asclepius *In Met.* 87, 34-88, 18; 88, 37-89; 89, 6-7.

does not take Aristotle as dismissing paradigmatic causes altogether, but rather as critiquing those who would incorporate paradigmatic causes into the Aristotelian fourfold schema, thereby forcibly placing them into an explanatory framework for which they were never meant¹²⁵. Instead, for the Neoplatonists, the theory of Forms compliments the Aristotelian framework, as Gerson points out:

“Asclepius confronts the criticism that calling Forms ‘paradigms’ is “empty words and poetic metaphors”. He replies that Forms are paradigms for the Demiurge just as the physician looks to the rules of medicine within him as paradigms for treatment. What are paradigms in the intelligible world are ‘images’ (εἰκόνας) here below. Asclepius goes on to point out that it is a horse that produces a horse and a human being that produces a human being, not the Forms of Horseness and Humanity. In other words, paradigms are not part of the explanatory framework of particular events or things. That, says Asclepius, is why we hold that Ideas of particulars do not exist; there are only Ideas of things considered universally.

The point being made is a shrewd one. The explanatory role that Forms are postulated to fulfil is not part of the Aristotelian explanatory framework. A Form is the explanation for the eternal possibility of intelligible real predication among sensibles. The explanation for an actual predicate is addressed exhaustively within the Aristotelian framework and acknowledged by the Platonist. The ‘enmattered form’ is part of that framework. Asclepius takes Aristotle to be objecting to someone who would adduce the unparticipated paradigm as part of an Aristotelian explanation.”¹²⁶

From the perspective of the harmonist then, Aristotle is not wrong in asserting that it is man that begets man, and horse that begets horse – the causal mechanisms of material generation are already exhaustively described by the Aristotelian fourfold schema. However, this does not answer the metaphysical question of how it is possible for more than one self-same thing to share attributes with other self-same things – it is precisely this question that the Forms are meant to address, since it is a question which the antinomialists, the realists Plato and Aristotle, must contend with¹²⁷.

Gerson notes that the same argument is made by Proclus: “Proclus... argues that identifying that which is common in all things still leaves the question of the explanation of the origin of that which is common.

¹²⁵ Gerson 2005: 226.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ “Nominalists in general deny the existence of universals. In other words, no universal need ‘exist’ in the sense of being the referent for an individual such as ‘green’ or ‘book’. One familiar difficulty with such an interpretation of nominalism is that it cannot account for the classification needed to know what the strength of similarity is to know that each individual book can be denoted by the term ‘book’. Realists on the other hand in this context generally accept the existence of universals – or at least of universals that refer to bona fide natural kind terms such as ‘horse’” (viz. Ruttkamp (2002, 172). Plato (and arguably Aristotle, as we shall see) is a realist in the sense that he accepts the real existence of universals, like beauty, apart from the individual things which instantiate it. This is essentially the thesis of the theory of Forms, which many scholars affirm is presented in the *Parmenides* as an answer to extreme monism, where Plato takes a *realist* stance towards sameness and difference, arguing that both these universals must really exist independently from the things which instantiate them for it to be possible for things to partake of contrary qualities. Concurrently, this realism commits Plato to an *antinominalist* stance, that is, the denial that the only existents are concrete individual objects, to the exclusion of universals. Aristotle is (arguably) similarly realist and antinomialist with regards to his acceptance of the existence of eternal intelligibles, as we shall see. See also Chapter 1, section 1.1 and Chapter 4, section 3.2.1.

In other words, identifying the fact that many things are large does not explain how many self-identical things can have the same attribute.”¹²⁸ The relevant passage from Proclus reads as such:

“Others again have attributed the permanence of the Forms to the common element in individual phenomena (for man begets man, and like in general springs from like), but these people must first address themselves to the problem as to whence the common element in individuals takes its origin. For this could not be the genus, being immanent in Matter and divisible and not absolutely eternal, nor, if it comes from another causal principle, could this be one that is subject to motion and change; for in that case it itself would be totally changeable. But in fact inasmuch as it is a Form, it remains always the same, like one identical seal impressed upon many pieces of wax. They may change, but it remains uninterruptedly the same in all the instances of wax.”¹²⁹

So whilst the Aristotelian schema of causation explains material predication, the eternal metaphysical possibility of such predication is explained by Forms. We can also find here an example of Neoplatonic commentators ‘correcting’ an Aristotelian interpretation of Plato, in order to bring Aristotle’s position in harmony with that of Plato:

“Asclepius’s understanding of the criticism of a Form as a useless ‘paradigmatic cause’ is also indirectly supported by Aristotle’s account in Book M of *Metaphysics* where he says that Forms were adduced in order to provide the explanation for individuals... Asclepius seems justified in insisting that Forms were never intended to provide such explanation. That is precisely why there are no Forms of individuals. Even more important for the harmonists’ perspective is that the explanations for individuals that Aristotle *does* provide do not preclude or contradict the role of Forms. Indeed, the enmattered form provides the link between the Aristotelian explanations and the Platonic. The enmattered form does what the separate unparticipated Form was never supposed to do. But the enmattered form could not exist if its eternal perfect paradigm did not exist”¹³⁰

Here we must note the Neoplatonic distinction between Forms and enmattered forms, and the logic underlying the reasons for positing such a distinction. In fact, at this juncture we can ask the not insignificant question: why posit Forms (or paradigmatic causes) in the first place? As mentioned, Forms are meant to explain the possibility of real predication. How do they achieve this – and how does this relate to enmattered forms?

To begin to answer these questions, we must first assert, as Gerson does, that “no straightforwardly canonical Neoplatonic theory of Forms” exists. This is due to the simple fact that, wanting ever to understand Plato more completely, various issues surrounding the theory of Forms were continually debated and discussed by the Neoplatonic commentators. To make matters simpler, we can turn to a

¹²⁸ Gerson 2005: 226.

¹²⁹ Proclus *In Parm.* 883, 37-884, 3.

¹³⁰ Gerson 2005: 227.

relatively standard definition (one well supported by the dialogues themselves) of Forms given by Proclus, who attributes it to Xenocrates¹³¹: “The Idea [Form] is the paradigmatic cause of the things that are eternally constituted according to nature.”¹³² The reason for positing paradigmatic causes is given in the *Parmenides*, in the words of the Parmenides character to the character of Socrates: “I suppose that your reason for thinking each Form to be one is this: whenever it appears to you that there are some many large things, perhaps there seems to be some one character [ιδέα] which is the same when you look at all of them, on the basis of which you think that Largeness is one.”¹³³ Gerson rehearses the standard argument for Forms in a more complete fashion, which we can reconstruct as such¹³⁴:

- 1) If x has attribute f , then f stands for a “real feature in the world”.
- 2) If y also has attribute f , then there must be a further real feature called F -ness.
- 3) F -ness is the feature that both things with attribute f share.
- 4) This is so because if F -ness referred to the same thing as f , then no more than one thing could ever possess the attribute called f , whilst still being individual things.
- 5) Thus, the existence of real entities such as F -ness constitute the metaphysical possibility of individuals having shared attributes whilst still remaining individuals.

There are two standard challenges to this argument:

- 1) No separate entity called F -ness can exist, since no two things can share in the same attribute whilst remaining individual.
- 2) No separate entity called F -ness need exist, since it is unnecessary in explaining how two individuals can share a common attribute.

The first challenge is that of Zeno’s paradox in the *Parmenides*, which the character of ‘young Socrates’ disarms by showing that material things may share attributes and still remain individual, since material things may partake of both the Forms of Sameness and Difference simultaneously, whilst the Forms themselves remain separate and truly individual:

“...if someone should demonstrate that I am one thing and many, what’s astonishing about that? He will say, when he wants to show that I’m many, that my right side is different from my left, and my front from my back, and likewise with my upper and lower parts – since I take it I do partake of multitude. But when he wants to show that I’m one, he will say that I’m one person among the seven of us, because I also partake of oneness. Thus he shows that both are true.

¹³¹ Ibid, 210.

¹³² Proclus *In Parm.* 888, 18-19.

¹³³ Plato *Parm.* 129c3-d6.

¹³⁴ Gerson 2005: 211-212.

So if – in the case of stones and sticks and such things – someone tries to show that the same thing is many and one, we’ll say that he is demonstrating *something* to be many and one, not the one to be many or the many one – and we’ll say that he is saying nothing astonishing, but just what all of us would agree to.”¹³⁵

As for the second challenge, we can look to Proclus’ argument from complexity, which looks as follows¹³⁶:

- 1) If many individuals share an attribute *f*, these individuals are necessarily complex.
- 2) If the individuals were not complex, then they would be reducible to attribute *f*, and so would no longer be distinguishable as individuals.
- 3) Because of this, a distinction can be made between the individual that possesses attribute *f*, and the attribute *f* that is possessed by the individual.
- 4) However, the attribute *f* that is uniquely possessed by each individual must also be distinct from the attribute *f* that is shared by the collective, and marks the collective as a group of individuals all sharing a common attribute called *F-ness*, if they are to remain complex individuals.
- 5) For there to be more than one individual thing possessing the attribute *f*, there must be an ontologically prior entity called *F-ness*, otherwise no individual thing could possess the attribute *f* without reducing that thing to that very attribute, nor could more than one individual thing possess the attribute *f* at the same time as another individual thing, whilst at the same time remaining individual.

So, for the Platonic metaphysician, a distinction can be made between: 1) a thing that has attribute *f*; 2) the attribute *f*; and 3) the entity called *F-ness*. Proclus describes this distinction as the distinction between: 1) that which participates (sensibles); 2) that which is participated in (the enmattered form); and 3) that which is unparticipated (the paradigmatic cause; the Form)¹³⁷.

Using this logic, it is simple enough to attribute the doctrine of participation to Aristotle by identifying his forms in matter, as enmattered forms. But what of the unparticipated, the paradigmatic cause? Even if Aristotle is mistaken in his understanding of paradigmatic cause as explaining individuals, and given that enmattered forms as conceived by Neoplatonists can be identified without strain as the forms in matter conceptualized by Aristotle, and even if Platonic paradigms fall outside of the Aristotelian fourfold schema and so are not contradicted by it, this doesn’t imply the kind of harmony that Neoplatonic commentators insist upon. Where are the paradigmatic causes in Aristotle – did he truly reject them entirely, threatening his own realist position?¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Plato *Parm.* 128e-130a.

¹³⁶ Gerson 2005: 212.

¹³⁷ Gerson 2004: 12.

¹³⁸ I return to the question of whether Aristotle ‘replaces’ Forms with universals in Chapter 2, Section 4.2 below, Chapter 3, section 4, and broadly in Chapter 4, section 3.

Simplicius makes the necessary harmonizing connection between the fourfold schema and paradigmaticism by identifying the Aristotelian concept of ‘the definition’ with the Forms, showing that without paradigmatic causation, the Aristotelian schema is in fact incomplete:

“I think that it is possible to use Aristotle’s assumptions to show that the causes of [enmattered] forms are distinct from them and are paradigms of them. We say that the natural things exist as a result of the participation of matter and form, with the matter participating in the form according to an internal participation.”¹³⁹

“But perhaps someone will not concede that there is a participation for the forms here, [rather claiming] that these have a prior existence. For in the intelligible worlds [one might argue] there is no man or horse, but rather causes of these [here below] which exist in different forms, though they are productive of these; for example, man comes from god and that which is in motion comes from that which is immovable, and these are not the same in form [as their producers]. Those who makes these claims should be asked whether they suppose that beauty, goodness, essence, life, knowledge, actuality, and number exist in the intelligible worlds – or anything else similarly sublime. Because Aristotle concedes that these exist in the intelligible world. He makes this clear when he says that [the intelligible world] is desirable for everything and that intellect is in essence activity, thus identifying essence and life and intellect, attributing beauty and goodness to them, and saying that the immovable causes are equal in number to the heavenly bodies.

But it is also clear that Aristotle is displeased with those concepts of forms that, along with the names derived from things here, also drag with them the definitions which include the physical and material elements of things here. That is why he is unhappy with certain of the names, though he does not think it inappropriate to apply certain of the purer names from here to the things in the intelligible world, such as beauty, goodness, essence, life, intellect, and actuality

If then someone were to say that these do not exist in the intelligible world, but not in the way that the forms, do here, we would agree with this, but we would require of him to say the same thing of Human Being and Horse and similar [Forms] in the intelligible world. For we do not believe that Human Being in the intelligible world is bodily, since it is not even the case that a human being is bodily in his physical definition, though we do believe that there is some likeness between the bodily human being and the disembodied Human Being just as there is between bodily beauty and disembodied Beauty. In general if the form here is generated, and if everything generated is necessarily generated by some cause that has previously acquired the definition of what is generated, in order that the generation should not be nonrational or unlimited, and if what is generated is likened to the definition, there would in this way be a paradigm for things generated.”¹⁴⁰

In the last paragraph of the above we see Simplicius’ connection of the idea of definition with the idea of paradigmatic cause. As such the paradigmatic cause is in a sense the blueprint for generation, and

¹³⁹ Simplicius *In Phys.* 296, 32-297, 1, Gerson’s brackets.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 297, 11-35, Gerson’s brackets.

the possibility of predication, without which generation, lacking a definition according to which it proceeds, would be impossible. According to Gerson, Simplicius can in this way show that the Aristotelian ‘definition’ (λόγος) amounts to a paradigmatic cause, which cannot be generated, and cannot “include or refer to the enmattered form”¹⁴¹. Moreover, as Gerson notes, Aristotle makes “an interesting concession” to the idea of eternal definitions guiding the generation of composite individuals when he muses over the possibility of whether the “essences of destructible things are separate”¹⁴², concluding finally that at least the essences of artificial things cannot be separate. The criterion that this logic is based on being specifically artificiality, Gerson sees a tantalizing opening for the plausibility of paradigmatic causation in nature for Aristotle:

“In a true or pure artifact the maker or her conception is the paradigm. One does not have to follow a pattern in making something – say, an abstract work of art. But if an animal or a plant generates a defective version of itself, the defective product is relative to a paradigm other than the generator. It is relative to that which is expressed in the definition of the species. One could deny this by effacing the distinction between the artificial and the natural and holding that all generation is like the making of an adventitious artifact. Whatever the merits of this position, it is certainly not Aristotle’s. For his entire physical science rests upon the distinction between the artificial and ‘things existing by nature’.”¹⁴³

In the final analysis then, there is much work to be done in order to reconcile Aristotle’s view of causation with a doctrine of paradigmaticism. Given Aristotle’s trenchant realism though, this work does not appear to be unjustified: given that the fourfold schema explains predication, but not the eternal possibility thereof, and given that Aristotle seems to embrace the possibility of paradigmatic causation in his conception of the ‘definition’ of things, and finally given that Aristotle only seems to explicitly reject separate paradigms, or definitions, of artificial things, the possibility of locating room for paradigmatic causation in Aristotle is very real. If this is the case, then a complementary picture, with the possibility of the fourfold schema being explained by the theory of Forms, is not as far-fetched as it may at first sound to ears unsympathetic to harmony.

4.2. Forms and Universals

A cornerstone of antiharmonism is the assertion that Plato and Aristotle offer conflicting explanations of predication, i.e. that Aristotle’s conception of the universal is meant to *replace* the theory of Forms, and their necessity for predication¹⁴⁴. Gerson draws on the work of several Neoplatonists to show how the harmonist position asserts that this cannot possibly be the case. Firstly, Gerson argues that he sees

¹⁴¹ Gerson 2005: 121.

¹⁴² Ibid. Cf. Aristotle *Met.* H 3, 1043b.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 122. Cf. Aristotle *Phys.* Book II 192b9-28.

¹⁴⁴ I return to this issue as it has been formulated in modernity in Chapter 3, section 4, and the contemporary debates surrounding the issue in Chapter 4, section 3.

no reason to believe that the explanation of predication given in the *Categories* and *On Interpretation* either contradict or affirm the Platonic position on the matter:

“Plato thinks that in general, if ‘x is f’ is true where ‘x’ stands for some sensible thing and ‘f’ stands for an attribute of it, then the explanation is that x participates in a Form of F-ness. Aristotle’s explanation of ‘x is f’ is [on the antiharmonist’s account] supposedly different and incompatible. In fact, when one searches *Categories* for the putative alternative explanation, it becomes clear that though Aristotle has quite a bit to say about such statements as ‘x is f’ and their meaning, he does not in *Categories* regard the statement ‘x is f’ as needing an explanation in the way that Plato does. So, when Aristotle claims that ‘Socrates is white’ means that ‘white’ is present in Socrates, he is not ipso facto contradicting the Platonic explanation for the truth of ‘Socrates is white’, namely, that Socrates participates in the Form of Whiteness.

Further, when Aristotle in *On Interpretation* defines ‘universal’... as ‘that which by its nature is predicable of more than one,’ he is not obviously offering predication as an *alternative* to Platonic participation. Thus if “Socrates is a man” and “Plato is a man” mean that ‘man’ is predicated of Socrates and Plato, and ‘man’ is taken as a universal, there is no reason I can see for holding that *therefore* it is false that Plato and Socrates participate in the Form of Man. Nor, must it be granted, is the Aristotelian meaning any reason to believe in the Platonic explanation.”¹⁴⁵

However, the fact of non-contradiction with the Platonic position provides the harmonist a wedge with which to show that universals cannot in fact replace Forms in their explanatory capacity. Gerson draws here on the work of Alexander of Aphrodisias, Porphyry and Iamblichus.

The Peripatetic philosopher, and invaluable commentator on Aristotle, Alexander of Aphrodisias, opens the Forms/universals distinction up by affirming the difference between universals and natures:

“Alexander in his commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* endorses the Aristotelian position that everything that is separate is an individual. Yet he acknowledges that a plurality of individuals may possess the same nature. This nature is *neither* an individual *nor* a universal, for the universal is just this nature as conceived. The universality is accidental to the nature. This nature is prior to any individual that possesses it. It is also prior to the universal.”¹⁴⁶

As Gerson notes, the distinction is not hard to fathom, as if there is only one individual of a given type then no universal is possible, but the individual yet possesses a nature¹⁴⁷. Moreover, in his *De Anima*, Alexander makes it clear that the nature of a thing is in fact *ontologically* prior:

¹⁴⁵ Gerson 2005: 81.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 85-86. Aristotle defines a universal as the conception of a shared nature in *Met.* Book Z.8 (specifically 1034a6-8) and Z.13, and in *On Int.* 17a37.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 86.

“Alexander... distinguishes enmattered forms... from the forms that are completely separate from matter. These two types of form are objects of two different types of thought. The latter are just the natures previously distinguished from universals. For example, bronze is distinct from what it is to be bronze. And it is the latter that is causally responsible for the former.”¹⁴⁸

Drawing on Alexander’s analysis, Porphyry uses the distinction between predication (the way in which common natures are conceived and described, i.e. as universals) and participation (the explanation of the metaphysical possibility of common attributes being shared amongst individuals, i.e. the theory of Forms), to show in what way Aristotle can be correct to call sensibles and individuals ‘primary substances’. That is, they are primary in our descriptions of things (as universals), but not ontologically primary (as Forms are):

“I shall say that since the subject of the work [*Categories*] is significant expressions, and expression are applied primarily to sensibles – for men first of all things assign names to what they know and perceive, and only secondarily to those things that are primary by nature... but secondary with respect to perception – it is reasonable for him to have called things that are primarily signified by expressions, that is, sensibles and individuals, primary substances. Thus with respect to significant expressions sensible individuals are primary substances, but as regards nature, intelligible substances are primary. But his intention is to distinguish the genera of being according to the expressions that signify them, and these primarily signify individual sensible substances.”¹⁴⁹

Clearly, Porphyry’s analysis depends, in part, on the assumption that the *Categories* is a logical work as opposed to a metaphysical one¹⁵⁰. Leaving this issue aside for the moment, the Neoplatonic harmonists are here characteristically showing in what way Aristotle describes and categorizes things, where Plato provides the explanation for their very possibility – in this case, Aristotle is describing predication, the possibility of which is explained by the theory of Forms, as participation:

“The Neoplatonists were, if nothing else, passionately interested in ultimate explanations of things. So, we need to have a closer look at the theory of Forms as providing ultimate explanations and what this means for the interpretation of Aristotle. In *Phaedo*, Plato has Socrates assert that if something is beautiful, it is ‘owing to’... participation in the Form of Beauty. Two lines later, the participation is assumed to be synonymous with the instrumental causality of the Form. But the Forms here are adduced as a particular sort of *explanans*. In effect, they provide the explanation for the *possibility* of predication. Because Forms exist, it is possible that genuine or true predication should occur.”¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 87.

¹⁴⁹ Porphyry *In Cat.* 91, 19-27.

¹⁵⁰ I return to this question in Chapter 4, section 2.1. See also Evangelidou 1988. For an overview of how Aristotelian logic influenced Neoplatonic logic see Lloyd 1955a and 1955b.

¹⁵¹ Gerson 2005: 82. See Plato *Phd.* 100D5-8.

Aristotle's universal then, that which is 'said of' a substance, the essential predication, is not ontologically primary – it is a word or a concept, as Porphyry points out. As such, it cannot be taken as an alternative to a Form, which is meant to *explain the possibility* of predication (guaranteed by participation in the Form), a possibility without which conceptual predication could not even exist. The explanatory roles played by Forms and universals being fundamentally different in this way, the Neoplatonic harmonists could conclude that these compliment instead of contradict each other, and as such harmony, in this regard, is established.

4.3. The Individual-Universal Paradox

Even given the harmonization of Aristotelian definitions with paradigmatic Forms, and arguments separating the explanatory roles of Platonic Forms and Aristotelian universals, Neoplatonists remain faced with a range of severe criticisms levelled by Aristotle against the Forms, most notably in his *Metaphysics*. One of the best known, and most widely touted, of these criticisms is Aristotle's rejection of the possibility of separate forms via the individual-universal paradox. Gerson summarizes the critique in question as such:

“The argument is that a Form is postulated as a separate individual existence... But a Form is predicated... or 'said of' the many sensibles. It is, however, the function of a universal to be 'said of' many, not an individual. So, Forms have contradictory natures, that is, to do what Plato wants them to do, they have to be individuals *and* universals. A dilemma is thus presented to the Platonists. If they wish to insist that the Form is a separate individual, then they must give up the primary function of a Form which is to be a one-over-many. If, on the other hand, they wish to maintain this function, then they can no longer insist that the Form must be a separate individual.”¹⁵²

The Neoplatonic solution to the quandary is typical; Aristotle is here not arguing against the true, Platonic, version of the theory of Forms, but against an inadequate version, one which the Neoplatonists themselves rejected as not Platonic¹⁵³. The theory of Forms being rejected then, by Aristotle and the Neoplatonists alike, is one where “each Form is a self-contained eternal and immutable island of intelligibility”¹⁵⁴, as a passage from Asclepius's *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* makes clear:

“Aristotle here seems to be opposing Plato on Ideas. We have already seen the aim of Aristotle regarding this matter. For it is he himself who says in the work *De Anima* that “those have spoken well who have said that the soul is the place of the forms,” and that intellect is actuality in its objects, and further that intellect in potency acts and intellect in actuality makes. So, Aristotle himself straightforwardly places Ideas in the intellect. Why, then, someone might say, if he is elevating Ideas, does he seem to be quarrelling with Plato. We reply that in reality he is quarrelling not with

¹⁵² Ibid, 221.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 223-224.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 224.

Plato, although elsewhere he in fact does quarrel with Plato, but with those who have posited these Ideas as existing by themselves and as having been separated from intellect. Thus, the whole conception of Aristotle regarding Ideas has become clear to us.”¹⁵⁵

Though the canonical definition of a Form as ‘itself by itself’ may seem to imply the extreme sort of isolation of an absolute “island of intelligibility”, according to the commentators Forms are only separate, necessarily, from the sensible world, which does not necessitate their being separate from each other or from a transcendent intellect¹⁵⁶. As such, a distinction can be made between Forms and their natures, as Proclus does, in arguing that the Forms are not unqualifiedly separate from us, since in that case they would be unknowable, but are rather “transcendent... and not in us and, at the same time... present everywhere and... participated in, while not being in their participants... [so] [t]he nature of the Form, not the Form, is present in the participant, in a diminished way”¹⁵⁷. Moreover, the universality of Forms is made possible by their existence within a divine intellect (hence the significance of asserting the non-separateness of Forms and transcendent intellect); here the distinction is made (as by Syrianus), between “the Form existing as an intelligible and the Form existing intellectually – that is, in the [mind of the] Demiurge”¹⁵⁸.

In this way, it is argued that when the Demiurge thinks a Form, it is thought universally, and so can be predicated of the many, whilst the Form itself remains “really distinct from the object of universal thinking”¹⁵⁹, and thus ultimately is still separate; *itself by itself*. In this way Neoplatonists can explain the apparently contradictory nature of Forms as in one way separate (as intelligibles), and in another universal (as universally thought by the Demiurge). As such, when Aristotle critiques the Forms on the basis of the individual-universal paradox, he is not, according to the Neoplatonic harmonists, critiquing the true, Platonic theory of Forms, but an inaccurate and paradoxical version of it that makes the separate nature of Forms too extreme for them to do what Platonism requires of them.

4.4. The Third-Man Argument

Related to the individual-universal paradox is the Neoplatonist response to the well-known ‘third-man argument’ taken up by Plato in the *Parmenides*, that if Forms can be predicated of ‘the many’, then a further ‘many’ may be posited that includes the Form itself, which then would require the existence of a further Form, and so on *ad infinitum*. Though Plato does not seem to hold that this argument against the Forms is fatal to the theory¹⁶⁰, in places it seems that Aristotle may. For example, in the *Metaphysics*

¹⁵⁵ Asclepius *In Met.* 69, 17-27.

¹⁵⁶ Gerson 2005: 224

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. See Proclus *In Parm.* 930, 6 – 931, 9.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ See Chapter 4, section 3.3.

Aristotle writes that "...of the more accurate arguments [for Forms], some... involve the difficulty of the 'third man'"¹⁶¹ and "If, then, we view the matter from these standpoints, it is plain that no universal attribute is a substance, and this is plain also from the fact that no common predicate indicates a 'this', but rather a 'such'. If not, many difficulties follow and especially the 'third man'."¹⁶² Whether Aristotle's remarks here imply his acceptance of the Third Man as fatal to the theory of Forms is debatable. In any case, the argument itself poses a serious challenge, one which Neoplatonists had to contend with in order to save the theory. If the Third Man challenge is correct, then a realist interpretation of Forms is untenable, and so the theory of Forms would be defeated by it.

The Neoplatonic response is simple and hinged to some extent upon the above explained conception of Forms as not being *absolutely* separate, as Gerson summarizes:

"Asclepius makes two points against the third-man argument. First, the argument only works if Forms are conceived as existing separately from the divine intellect. Second, since Forms are *not* absolutely separate existents, they are not to be taken as the same as sensibles. So, a Form plus the original 'many' does not constitute a legitimate many requiring another Form over and above it. Syrianus makes basically the same point, saying that the Form is not 'synonymous' with the many, and adding, "The Idea should not in any way be thought to partake of anything." Proclus mentions the inappropriateness of synonymy to describe the relation between the Form and its instances explaining, "The common element in the many instances is that of being derived from and having reference to one... For what the one Form is primarily, the many under it are derivatively."¹⁶³

A related point is made by Alexander of Aphrodisias in his report on Aristotle's exoteric work *On Ideas*¹⁶⁴, concerning Aristotle's putative arguments against the positing of Forms of relatives, such as the Form of Equality in Plato's *Phaedo*. It is reported by Alexander that Aristotle claims that though the argument in the *Phaedo* establishes Forms of relatives, yet "Platonists do not want to admit such Forms" and the reason why is that "the Platonists hold that Forms "exist on their own" and so are substances, whereas relatives "have their being in relation to others"¹⁶⁵. The Neoplatonic strategy here should by now be familiar: the correct, Platonic version of the theory of Forms does not hold that Forms are absolutely separate, and so the 'Platonists' Aristotle are referring to can only be those who mistakenly hold that they are, and so once again, Aristotle is criticizing an inadequate version of the theory. Even if Aristotle then holds that the Third Man is fatal to the theory of Forms¹⁶⁶, Neoplatonic

¹⁶¹ Aristotle *Met.* 990b15-17.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 1038b35-1039a3.

¹⁶³ Gerson 2005: 228-229. See also d'Hoine 2011.

¹⁶⁴ The authenticity of which is of course disputed; see Fine 1993: 30-31.

¹⁶⁵ Gerson 2005: 230.

¹⁶⁶ See also Gerson's idea of Aristotle as Platonist *malgré lui*, discussed in Chapter 4, section 5 below.

harmonists can maintain that it is only fatal to a version of the theory that they themselves reject, dispelling the charge that Aristotle is in this regard the enemy of Plato¹⁶⁷.

4.5. The Demiurge and Forms

A final, highly significant issue that must be addressed when considering the differences and similarities between the Aristotelian and Platonic conceptions of Forms is the relation of the Demiurge to the Forms. A key issue of contention in assessing the Platonism of Aristotle's metaphysics involves comparing the Platonic Demiurge (hereafter PD) to Aristotle's Unmoved Mover (hereafter UM), and concurrently, assessing whether Aristotle's thoughts on divine thinking and divine causality are in line with the Platonic positions. In this section I will examine this issue by assessing the merits of the Neoplatonic claim that Aristotle's Unmoved Mover is in fact similar, if not identical (in nature and ontological function) to the Demiurge of Platonism.

The Platonic concept of a creator, the Demiurge, is introduced in Plato's dialogue the *Timaeus*, by the character of the same name. Timaeus sets out a grand cosmology, premised by the necessity of a creator:

“As I see it then, we must begin by making the following distinction: What is *that which always is* and has no becoming, and what is *that which becomes* but never is? The former is grasped by understanding, which involves a reasoned account. It is unchanging. The latter is grasped by opinion, which involves unreasoning sense perception. It comes to be and passes away, but never really is. Now everything that comes to be must of necessity come to be by the agency of some cause, for it is impossible for anything to come to be without a cause. So whenever the craftsman looks at what is always changeless and, using a thing of that kind as his model, reproduces its form and character, then, of necessity, all that he so completes is beautiful. But were he to look at a thing that has come to be and use as his model something that has been begotten, his work will lack beauty.

Now, as to the whole universe or world order... Has it always existed? Was there no origin from which it came to be? Or did it come to be and take its start from some origin? It has come to be. For it is both visible and tangible and it has a body – and all things of that kind are perceptible. And, as we have shown, perceptible things are grasped by opinion, which involves sense perception. As such, they are things that come to be, things that are begotten. Further, we maintain that, necessarily, that which comes to be must come to be by the agency of some cause... And so we must go back and raise this question about the universe: Which of the two models did the maker use when he fashioned it? ...Now surely it's clear to all that it was the eternal model he looked at, for, of all the things that have come to be, our universe is the most beautiful, and of causes the craftsmen is the

¹⁶⁷ Related to this are arguments concerning Forms of relatives, as well as Forms and mathematics. For this issue see Gerson 2005: 199-232. See also Chapter 4, section 3.3 on the issue of the self-predication of Forms.

most excellent. This, then, is how it has come to be: it is a work of craft, modelled after that which is changeless and is grasped by a rational account, that is, by wisdom...

Now, why did he who framed this whole universe of becoming frame it? Let us state the reason why: He was good, and one who is good can never become jealous of anything. And so, being free of jealousy, he wanted everything to become as much like himself as was possible.”¹⁶⁸

The PD then, creates benevolently by crafting the universe according to the template of the changeless, that is, the Forms – in the broadest of strokes, this is the canonical Platonic creation mythos.

Aristotle’s putative rejection of the metaphysics of the PD can be found in his *Physics*:

“...so far as time is concerned we see that all with one exception are in agreement in saying that it is uncreated: in fact, it is just this that enables Democritus to show that all things cannot have had a becoming; for time, he says, is uncreated. Plato alone asserts the creation of time, saying that it is simultaneous with the world, and that the world came into being. Now since time cannot exist and is unthinkable apart from the now, and the now is a kind of middle-point, uniting as it does in itself both a beginning and an end, a beginning of future time and an end of past time, it follows that there must always be time, for the extremity of the last period of time that we take must be found in some now, since in time we can take nothing but nows. Therefore, since the now is both a beginning and an end, there must always be time on both sides of it. But if this is true of time, it is evident that it must also be true of motion, time being a kind of affection of motion.”¹⁶⁹

Now, this cannot be taken to be a rejection of the metaphysics of the PD *tout court*. Rather, what Aristotle explicitly rejects is Plato’s putative doctrine of the creation of time – if this critique turns out to be inadequate, it could still be that Aristotle’s position can be harmonized with Plato.

The Neoplatonists had several responses to the Aristotelian critique, chief amongst these being Proclus’ assertion that Plato does not in fact support the creation of time, and therefore Aristotle’s interpretation of Plato here is mistaken¹⁷⁰. This critique disarmed, the Neoplatonists could argue that the PD and UM are in fact the very same metaphysical entity – a crucial point of harmonization. Gerson elucidates and supports the Neoplatonic reasoning:

“Part of the resistance to the idea that Aristotle has left the door open to an external productive intellect is undoubtedly that he characterizes the external intellect as entirely engaged in self-contemplation. But it is not obvious that the Platonic tradition views the productive intellect or the Demiurge otherwise. For one thing, there is more or less a consensus among Neoplatonists that the representation of the generation of the universe by the imposition of shapes and numbers on it by

¹⁶⁸ Plato *Tim.* 27d5-29e4.

¹⁶⁹ Aristotle *Phys.* 251b14-28.

¹⁷⁰ Gerson 2005: 129. For a modern view of the similarity between Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions of time and eternity, see von Leyden 1964. For a review of the differences in Plato and Aristotle on the describability and knowability of God see Wolfson 1947.

the Demiurge is mythical, not literal. Further, the Demiurge as intellect is not identified with soul, though this does not preclude its having life. Finally, the Demiurge is emphatically not viewed by the Neoplatonists as a *personal* deity in the biblical sense. In claiming that Aristotle's prime unmoved mover and Plato's Demiurge are similar or the same, they were not implicitly or explicitly doing so on the basis of anthropomorphic characteristics. It is not so far-fetched to suppose that the prime unmoved mover is Aristotle's version of the Demiurge *if* we do not think that the latter is more than a separate intellect."¹⁷¹

Significantly, in terms of Aristotle's comments on the workings of the intellect of the unmoved mover, the Demiurge's thinking of Forms is not reducible to mere conceptualization, as Gerson points out:

"The reason why the Demiurge's thinking the Forms universally is not reducible to conceptualization is that the Demiurge *is* the entity that each and every nature is really distinct from. So, the eternal cognitive identity it has with each nature while contemplating it is not merely a representation of the Form – a representation, that is, of that which is external to intellect. Given this analysis, we can at least see the basis for the Neoplatonic view that when Aristotle says, in reference to the prime unmoved mover, that when "intellect thinks itself it does so by partaking of the intelligible" and "by thinking, intellect and intelligible are the same," he is not saying something in principle different from what Plato holds."¹⁷²

The significance, for the project of harmonization, of distinguishing the Demiurge's mode of thinking the Forms from mere conceptualization, and instead describing it as a kind of 'cognitive identity'¹⁷³ is then exactly this; that it allows us to read Aristotle's identification of intellect and intelligible in the Demiurge as not anti-Platonic. This concept of the cognitive identity of the Demiurge (or Unmoved Mover) with the Forms (or intelligibles) is supported by passages in both Plato and Aristotle. Plato says of the Demiurge in the *Timaeus*:

"Now surely it's clear to all that it was the eternal model he [the Demiurge] looked at, for, of all the things that have come to be, our universe is the most beautiful, and of causes the craftsman is the most excellent. This, then, is how it has come to be: it is a work of craft, modelled after that which is changeless and is grasped by a rational account, that is, by wisdom.

...

Now why did he who framed this whole universe of becoming frame it? Let us state the reason why: He was good, and one who is good can never become jealous of anything. And so, being free of jealousy, he wanted everything to become as much like himself as was possible."¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 128.

¹⁷² Ibid, 224.

¹⁷³ Ibid, 216. However, this does not mean that the ultimate locus of the Forms is the mind of the Demiurge; see Chapter 2, section 4.3 above. See also Rich 1954, and Doherty 1960 for both sides of the debate.

¹⁷⁴ Plato *Tim.* 29a6-b1, 29e3, 30d1-3.

Aristotle, in turn, says of the UM in his metaphysics:

“And thought thinks itself because it shares the nature of the object of thought; for it becomes an object of thought in coming into contact with and thinking its objects; so that thought and object of thought are the same.”¹⁷⁵

Moreover, the Neoplatonic critique of Aristotle’s Unmoved Mover as UFP explains how the true locus of Divine Causality¹⁷⁶ must be found in a UFP that is not ‘thinking thinking of thinking’. Gerson elucidates the Neoplatonic reasoning in light of the passage in the *Metaphysics*¹⁷⁷ where Aristotle ponders the ordering of the universe via the analogy of the relationship between the ordering of an army and the general which orders it:

“The goodness in an army is in part in its order and in part in the general, though primarily in the latter. Just so, the goodness in the universe is in part in its order and in part in the separated mover. But the goodness is more in the general than in the army because the order is owing to the general.

Let us suppose that the disordered army is inspired by the qualities of its general and is set in order by a field officer according to those qualities. The problem with so understanding the analogy is that in the case of the universe, order is not produced out of disorder. The dynamic nature of the universe and everything in it is enough on its own to explain the order. On the assumption that here the first principle of all is a final cause and only a final cause, it is difficult to see how the order of the universe is owing to that final cause. It seems rather to be the case that the final cause, as extrinsic object of desire, is a function of that order, not its cause.

The Neoplatonic understanding of this passage is neither to reduce it to an explication of Platonism nor to dismiss it to a consequence of anti-Platonic principles. The former is implausible, and the latter makes little sense of what is being said here. If God is thinking thinking of nothing but thinking, then God is a poor candidate for the cause of order in the universe. If, however, God’s thinking is the locus of eternal intelligible being, then, although God is still a poor candidate as ultimate cause of order, at least God *is* that order, paradigmatically. But given the complexity of thinking, there is every reason to suppose that the first principle of all is not Aristotle’s unmoved mover. And the way that first principle is a cause of order and of being is different from and superior to the way that thinking participates in that causality.

The correct understanding of Λ 10, according to Neoplatonists, is that what Aristotle is claiming is in harmony with Platonism. When Aristotle comes to investigate the order of the entire universe in relation to the prime unmoved mover, he needs to have this mover do more than it can do as mere

¹⁷⁵ Aristotle *Met.* 1072b20-22. An important objection to the metaphysics involved in the cognitive identity of the Demiurge and the Forms is that the Demiurge’s knowledge of the Forms implies that the Forms are acted upon, which would make the Forms other than changeless. Briefly, the Neoplatonic solution to the objection involves stressing that both the Forms and the Demiurge are subordinate to a truly immovable First Principle. A more detailed explanation can be found in Gerson 2005: 216-217.

¹⁷⁶ See also Studtmann 2007.

¹⁷⁷ Aristotle *Met.* Λ 10, 1075a11-25.

thinking activity. He opens the door, perhaps inadvertently, to a Platonic first principle which in turn embraces the unmoved mover in the ultimate causal framework. How else can we honestly construe the last line of *Metaphysics* Λ 10, “things do not want to be governed badly”, followed by the quotation from Homer, “It is not good that there be many leaders; let there be one?”¹⁷⁸

Taking these issues into account, especially in the light of the larger Neoplatonic project of harmony, the evidence for an accord between Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysics seems strong indeed, even in the face of Aristotle’s apparently relentless criticisms of ‘Platonic’ arguments. If nothing else, the Neoplatonic commentator’s efforts at metaphysical harmony were nothing short of ingenious. Whether they are, in the end, stronger than the well-known modern arguments to the contrary, remains to be seen.

5. Pro Pillar II: The Soul

Those seeking to construct an anti-Platonic Aristotelianism have gone to great lengths to, as Gerson puts it, “show that when Aristotle states that the intellect is “immortal and eternal” he does not mean that it is immortal and eternal”¹⁷⁹. The Neoplatonic commentators, on the other hand, read Aristotle’s comments upon that part of the soul called the active intellect being “eternal and immortal”, as in harmony with the Platonic view of the soul. This rests of course on the Neoplatonic interpretation, mainly on the basis of the *Timaeus*, that the Platonic dialogues are themselves committed to the immortality of the intellect alone¹⁸⁰. If we accept this interpretation as correct, and accept that when Aristotle says that the active intellect is immortal and eternal, that is what he means, then the question that remains to be answered, by the Neoplatonic commentators, is “not the harmonization of two opposing views on immortality so much as the harmonization of two accounts of how immortal intellect is related to embodied soul”¹⁸¹. The two key points to review here revolve around; 1) the differences and similarities between the Aristotelian versus the Platonic definitions of Soul, and; 2) Aristotle’s endorsement of incorporeal and immortal intellect in *De Anima*.

5.1. Platonic versus Aristotelian Definitions of Soul

Before turning to Aristotle’s well-known, and apparently anti-Platonic, definition of soul, let us review the Platonic doctrine on the subject – without meandering, at this juncture, into the myriad of modern scholarship of the issue, a sojourn that would take us too far afield for the purposes of this dissertation at this juncture¹⁸². Plato’s most salient remarks on the soul, those that the Neoplatonic commentators

¹⁷⁸ Gerson 2005: 203-204. See also Sedley 2016.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 132.

¹⁸⁰ See Chapter 4 section 4.2 and 4.2.1.

¹⁸¹ Gerson 2005: 134.

¹⁸² See Chapter 4, section 4.

took to be authoritative, and amenable to Platonic-Aristotelian harmony (and therefore most relevant to this dissertation), can be found in the *Phaedo* and *Timaeus*. In the *Phaedo* we hear:

“I do not think, said Socrates, I that anyone who heard me now, not even a comic poet, could say that I am babbling and discussing things that do not concern me, so we must examine the question thoroughly, if you think we should do so. Let us examine it in some such a manner as this: whether the souls of men who have died exist in the underworld or not. We recall an ancient theory that souls arriving there come from here, and then again that they arrive here and are born here from the dead. If that is true, that the living come back from the dead, then surely our souls must exist there, for they could not come back if they did not exist, and this is a sufficient proof that these things are so if it truly appears that the living never come from any other source than from the dead. If this is not the case we should need another argument.

Quite so, said Cebes.

Do not, he said, confine yourself to humanity if you want to understand this more readily, but take all animals and plants into account, and, in short, for all things which come to be, let us see whether they come to be in this way, that is, from their opposites if they have such, as the beautiful is the opposite of the ugly and the just of the unjust, and a thousand other things of the kind. Let us examine whether those that have an opposite must necessarily come to be from their opposite and from nowhere else, as for example when something comes to be larger it must necessarily become larger from having been smaller before...

...

So we have sufficiently established that all things come to be in this way, opposites from opposites?

Certainly.

...

Well then, is there an opposite thing to living, as sleeping is the opposite of being awake?

Quite so, he said.

What is it?

Being dead, he said.

Therefore, if these are opposites, they come to be from one another, and there are two processes of generation between the two?

Of course.

...

Therefore, he said, if there is such a thing as coming to life again, it would be a process of coming from the dead to the living?

Quite so.

It is agreed between us then that the living come from the dead in this way no less than the dead from the living, and, if that is so, it seems to be a sufficient proof that the souls of the dead must be somewhere whence they can come back to life again.

...

...if everything that partakes of life were to die and remain in that state and not come to life again, would not everything ultimately have to be dead and nothing alive? Even if the living came from some other source, and all that lived died, how could all things avoid being absorbed into death?

It could not be, Socrates, said Cebes, and I think what you say is altogether true.

I think, Cebes, said he, that this is very definitely the case and that we are not deceived when we agreed on this: coming to life again in truth exists, the living come to be from the dead, and the souls of the dead exist.

Furthermore, Socrates, Cebes rejoined, such is also the case if that theory is true that you are accustomed to mention frequently, that for us learning is no other than recollection. According to this, we must at some previous time have learned what we now recollect. This is possible only if our soul existed somewhere before it took on this human shape. So according to this theory too, the soul is likely to be something immortal.

Cebes, Simmias interrupted, what are the proofs of this? Remind me, for I do not quite recall them at the moment.

There is one excellent argument, said Cebes, namely that when men are interrogated in the right manner, they always give the right answer of their own accord, and they could not do this if they did not possess the knowledge and the right explanation inside them..."

"So the soul is more like the invisible than the body, and the body more like the visible? – Without any doubt, said Socrates.

Haven't we also said some time ago that when the soul makes use of the body to investigate something, be it through hearing or seeing or some other sense – for it to investigate something through the body is to do it through the senses – it is dragged by the body to the things that are never the same, and the soul itself strays and is confused and dizzy, as if it were drunk, in so far as it is in contact with that kind of thing?

Certainly.

But when the soul investigates by itself it passes into the realm of what is pure, ever existing, immortal and unchanging, and being akin to this, it always stays with it whenever it is by itself and can do so; it ceases to stray and remains in the same state as it is in touch with things of the same kind, and its experience then is what is called wisdom?

Altogether well said and very true, Socrates, he said.

Judging from what we have said before and what we are saying now, to which of these two kind do you think that the soul is more alike and more akin?

I think, Socrates, he said, that on this line of argument any man, even the dullest, would agree that the soul is altogether more like that which always exists in the same state rather than like that which does not.

What of the body?

This is like the other.

Look at it also this way; when the soul and the body are together, nature orders the one to be subject and to be ruled, and the other to rule and be master. Then again, which do you think is like the divine and which like the mortal? Do you not think that the nature of the divine is to rule and to lead, whereas it is that of the mortal to be ruled and be subject?

I do.

Which does the soul resemble?

Obviously, Socrates, the soul resembles the divine, and the body resembles the mortal.

Consider then, Cebes, whether it follows from all that has been said that the soul is most like the divine, deathless, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, always the same as itself, whereas the body is most like that which is human, mortal, multiform, unintelligible, soluble and never consistently the same. Have we anything else to say or show, my dear Cebes, that this is not the case?

We have not.”

“Answer me then, he said, what is it that, present in a body, makes it living? – A soul.

And this is always so? – Of course.

Whatever the soul occupies, it always brings to life? – It does.”

And in the *Timaeus*:

“We have now pretty much completed our presentation of the kinds of bodies that are distinguished by their multifarious shapes, their combinations and their intertransformations. Now we must try to shed some light on what has caused them to come to have the properties they do. First, we need at

every step in our discourse to appeal to the existence of sense perception, but we have so far discussed neither the coming to be of flesh, or of what pertains to flesh, nor the part of the soul that is mortal.”

“All these things, rather, the god first gave order to, and then out of them he proceeded to construct this universe, a single living thing that contains within itself all living things, mortal or immortal. He himself fashioned those that were divine, but assigned to his own progeny the task of fashioning the generation of those that were mortal.

They imitated him: having taken the immortal origin of the soul, they proceeded next to encase it within a round mortal body [the head], and to give it the entire body as its vehicle. And within the body they built another kind of soul as well, the mortal kind, which contains within it all those dreadful but necessary disturbances... In the face of these disturbances they scrupled to stain the divine soul only to the extent that was absolutely necessary, and so they provided a home for the mortal soul in another place in the body, away from the other, once they had built an isthmus as boundary between the head and the chest...”¹⁸³

The Platonic definition of soul then, though at times somewhat nebulous, can be usefully summarized for the purposes of this dissertation as: that immortal part of a human being which exists before birth and after death, animates the body (and as such, uses the body as a kind of vehicle), and consists of both an immortal (*rational*) and mortal (*appetitive* and *vegetative*¹⁸⁴) part, the former of which is superior to the latter, and both of which are superior to (and rule over) the corporeal body. As such, Aristotle’s famous (and apparently anti-Platonic) definition of the soul as “actuality of a natural body with organs”, combined with Aristotle’s (more obliquely anti-Platonic) remark in *De Anima* that the (separable) intellect seems to belong to “a kind (γένος) different from soul”¹⁸⁵, poses an interesting quandary for the Neoplatonic harmonists. The solution is best illustrated by a passage of Aristotelian exegesis from Pseudo-Simplicius, as quoted by Gerson:

“The words “the actuality of some [living things] are of the parts themselves” apply to the inseparable life of all bodies. The words “nothing prevents some actualities from being separate, because they are not actualities of any body” apply to the life that is separate in every way. By means of these [expressions] he observes the duality... of soul. For the actuality that uses [the body] is in a way inseparable by its completely... using the body and in a way separate by its transcendentally... using the body as an instrument that is serving it. If it uses the body in one way and in one way does not use it at all, as the example of the sailor makes clear, that which does not use it is separate in every way.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Plato *Phd.* 70c-73a, 79c-80b, 105c-d, and *Tim.* 61c, 69c-e.

¹⁸⁴ The *vegetative* aspect of the soul is introduced in Plato’s *Republic*, 439d5-7. For the purposes of this dissertation, the *vegetative* soul may be safely subsumed together with the *appetitive* under the rubric of the ‘mortal soul’.

¹⁸⁵ Gerson 2005: 134. See Aristotle *De An.* B1, 413b26.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 137. See Aristotle *De An.* 413a2-9 and Pseudo-Simplicius *In de An.* 96, 3-10. See also Chapter 3 section 5 and Chapter 4 section 4.

In this way Pseudo-Simplicius illustrates in what way the soul is both separable and inseparable from the body; “the soul uses the body “completely” when we digest food and breathe; it uses the body transcendently when we consciously desire something and move to obtain it”¹⁸⁷. In other words, as the actuality of the function of the body as organism, that part of the soul is inseparable, but as the actuality of the functions of cognition, that part of the soul is entirely separate – a position that does not contradict the Neoplatonic interpretation of Plato’s doctrine, and can therefore be said to be in line with harmony.

5.2. Incorporeal and Immortal Intellect in *De Anima*

Without doubt, the most interesting and controversial passages in *De Anima* are those in which Aristotle conveys his thoughts concerning eternal, incorporeal and separable intellect. These passages are, of course, highly significant for the harmonists’ project. The most intriguing of these passages is the infamous *De Anima*, *Gamma 5*. At stake in *Gamma 5* of *De Anima* then is the contention that Aristotle is here introducing a secondary intellect. Gerson, following the Neoplatonic commentators, insists that it is not the case. Investigating why will reveal the nature of the harmony claimed here by the commentators. Gerson stresses the importance of understanding this passage as a crucial continuation of what was discussed earlier in *Gamma*, particularly the arguments in *Gamma 4* concerning the nature of human cognition. I will not here rehearse the entirety of the arguments on cognition presented in *De Anima*, but only those that are, arguably, directly related to *Gamma 5*, and therefore imminently significant for the Neoplatonic harmonic thesis, as elucidated by Gerson¹⁸⁸. These are; 1) Aristotle’s distinction between two actualizations of intellect; and 2) the necessity of the intellect being wholly ‘unmixed’, and in particular unmixed with body. Additionally, I will provide some of the Neoplatonic commentary and critique of the issues just listed.

The passage in question then, reads as follows:

“Since just as in everything in nature there is something which serves as the matter in each genus (this is that which is all of those things in potency), as well as something else which is the cause and is productive by making all things, as in the case of art in relation to matter, so necessarily there exists these differences in the soul. And intellect is this sort of thing in one sense by becoming all things, and in another by making all things, like a sort of disposition, in the way that light does. For in a certain way light makes potential colours and actual colours. And this intellect is separable and unaffected, and unmixed, being in its essence in actuality. For that which acts is always more honourable than that which is acted upon, and the principle is more honourable than the matter. Actual knowledge is identical with that which is known; potential knowledge is, however, prior in

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, 138.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, 140-148.

time in the individual, but as a whole it is not prior in time. But [intellect] is not at one time thinking and another time not thinking. Having been separated, it is just what it is, and this alone is immortal and eternal. But we do not remember because while this is unaffected, the passive intellect is destructible. And without this, it [i.e., the individual] thinks nothing.”¹⁸⁹

In the above we see Aristotle’s distinction between the ‘active’ or agent (actual, immortal and eternal) intellect, and the passive (potential and destructible) intellect. This distinction boils down to the distinction between the “presence of an intelligible form in the intellect” (the passive intellect) and the “further actuality that is the awareness of the presence of that form”¹⁹⁰. The significance of this distinction to harmony will become clear below¹⁹¹, after having examined the concomitant claim that the intellect must be wholly unmixed. Gerson rehearses the arguments leading up to the latter claim as follows:

“In order finally to address the question of the distinctiveness of thinking from sense perception, Aristotle turns in chapter 4 to an account of intellect... By ‘intellect,’ Aristotle says he means that by which the soul thinks discursively and judges. We recall that judgment is the result of the process of discursive thinking and that judgment is the genus whose species are belief, knowledge, and prudence. Aristotle has assumed that cognition in general is divided into sense perception and thinking. Imagination is produced by sense perception. Its presence does not entail the presence of thinking. He has already shown that imagination is not judgement. It remains to discuss intellect and to show that discursive thinking and judgment are not to be assimilated to sense perception. That is, thinking is necessarily incorporeal.”¹⁹²

Although Aristotle distinguishes sharply between thinking and sense perception, in order to make his point about the necessity of intellect being unmixed (and therefore incorporeal), he concedes that the two are in at least one significant way analogous: they cannot be mixed with their content. In other words, the senses cannot be mixed with sensibles, and the intellect cannot be mixed with intelligibles. For example, if one is to see anything, then sight cannot contain within itself things seen, as this would destroy its very capacity for seeing – the subject cannot also contain the kind of object it wants to perceive, if it is to perceive its object proper. Aristotle’s reasoning is that, in the same manner, intelligibles cannot be mixed with intellect. The crucial distinction is that the category of intelligibles is practically unlimited; hence, intellect cannot be mixed with any intelligibles at all – it must remain ‘wholly unmixed.’ Furthermore, Aristotle claims that intellect can neither be mixed with body – intellect must be incorporeal:

“Therefore, it is not even reasonable that it [intellect] should be mixed with body, for it might then acquire some quality, for example, coldness or heat, or there might even be an organ for it, just as

¹⁸⁹ Aristotle *De An.*, *Gamma 5*, 430a10-25.

¹⁹⁰ Gerson 2005: 153-154.

¹⁹¹ For a thorough discussion of *De Anima*, *Gamma 5*, see Gerson 2005: 152-172 and Kal 1988.

¹⁹² Aristotle *De An.* 2,4, 429a24-29, 429b5-9.

there is for the faculty of sense perception. But, as it is, this is not the case. And those who say that the soul is the ‘place of the forms’ speak well, except that it is not the whole [soul that is the place of the forms] but only the thinking part, and this part is not actually the forms, but is them in potency...

And whenever it [the intellect] becomes each [intelligible] in the way that someone who knows is said to actually know (this happens when he is able to actualize his knowledge by himself), even then it [the intellect] is somehow still in potency, but not in the way it is in potency before it learned or discovered. And it is then that it is able to think itself¹⁹³

This capacity of the intellect to think itself is the reason why intellect cannot be mixed with body – a point appreciated by the Neoplatonic commentators. Gerson summarizes their argument as such:

“The Neoplatonic commentators have clearly in focus the point that is being made. Both Philoponus and Pseudo-Philoponus signal it in a number of different places. The point is that cognition generally requires self-reflexivity... and no body is capable of this. As the latter commentator states it, “self-reflexivity is nothing but the grasp of one’s own actual states”... The reason why no body is capable of self-reflexivity is straightforward. If the putative bodily cognizer is in a state of information, then the grasp of that state will, *ex hypothesi*, be a bodily state. One bodily state grasping the state of another body will not be a case of the cognizer ‘thinking itself.’ It will be a case of one cognizer grasping the state of the other cognizer.”¹⁹⁴

That thought is incorporeal then, for the Neoplatonic commentators, is a natural outcome of Aristotle’s distinction between two modes of intellection, which implies a self-reflexivity that cannot be achieved by a corporeal entity, at least not in Platonic terms. The crux of the matter in terms of harmony is addressed thoroughly by Pseudo-Simplicius:

“It is worth commenting on the whole argument by which he [Aristotle] is encouraged to declare that the soul’s substantial intellect is immortal and everlasting, so that thereby we may admire his harmony with Plato, and also his greater working of details, which Plato handed down in a more general and synoptic way appropriate to his earlier time...

So Aristotle starts from... [Plato’s assertion of the self-moving nature of the soul] and shows that the productive element in the soul, which Plato himself had said was separable and impassible and unmixed, is a principle and a kind of being that is causal and of a higher status than matter and everything that comes into being...

From there he takes its being non-material (for everything that is in matter is divisible) and active with respect to itself, and shows that everything non-material thinks itself [Aristotle’s cognitive identity of thought and thinker]. And when he has shown that it is simultaneously thinking and object

¹⁹³ Gerson 2005: 148.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 150.

of thought and simple, in so far as it does not think with a part of itself and is not being thought with another part, but that the whole of it does both [the agent and passive intellect *in concert* are responsible for intellection], he shows that it is immortal and everlasting. For what is separate and simple and its own gives itself life and perfects itself, in such a way that in its inclination to the outside secondary lives and beings gush forth, is shown to be not only capable of receiving death and destruction, but also to be predominantly the bearer of life and being, and thereby immortal also...

So the whole argument, to put it together concisely, is something like this: it is clear that the question is only about our soul. In our soul there is not only what is acted upon but also what acts, the principle and the cause of the things that happen. Further what acts in the soul is able to think itself and unites its activity indivisibly with its substance...

This, as we have said, is discussed by Aristotle entirely in harmony with Plato's exposition starting from the soul's being self-moved... This then is, I think, clearly and necessarily concluded, that what only acts in the soul is immortal and everlasting. He has done well to add 'everlasting,' as Plato added 'indestructible' in the *Phaedo*... But why "and this alone is everlasting"? It is because, as he indicated clearly, the passible intellect is perishable.

Someone might raise the question how that too, being intellect, is destroyed, if it, too, is non-material. For every kind of intellect is held to be non-material, and for this reason every kind of intellect is intelligible, but it is not also the case that a non-material form is also an intellect. The passible intellect is material and potential and precisely this, passible and imperfect intellect as a whole, so long as it is passible. And for this reason it is perishable and passible. It becomes non-material and intellect in act and intelligible in contract with what acts, perfectly non-material and perfect intellect in its ascent to the one that is active...

And, as it were, objecting to the soul having been shown to be everlasting, he asks how we do not remember things before birth if it had previously existed everlastingly? By this it is clear again that his discussion is about the soul, and not about the higher intellect. For what sort of problem would he have had about why we do not remember, if it is the things superior to us that are everlasting? And the solution to the objection is appropriate to the soul, namely, that the intellect that acts is impassible and for this reason immortal, while the passible intellect is perishable *qua* passible, as I said, as also when it is being brought together with what is at rest, and without the passible intellect, *qua* passible and proceeding as far as corporeal lives, the impassible intellect clearly thinks none of the things that can be remembered, which is what Aristotle is talking about.

Those things, as he himself teaches us elsewhere [*On Memory* 450a23-25], are things that can be imagined. Therefore in thinking about things that can be remembered we do certainly need the reason that proceeds as far as the imagination, and without this not even the impassible intellect will think any of the things that can be remembered. The 'nothing' must not be understood simply as meaning that the impassible intellect thinks nothing without the passible one. For how will it still be

separate, how unmixed, how activity in its substance? For even while it is still giving life to this body, the soul sometimes lives and thinks separately. “What god is always,” he says in the *Metaphysics* book Lambda, “that we are sometimes,” as clearly as our power allows.”¹⁹⁵

Like Gerson, I quote the above at length because it is nothing short of a stellar example of Neoplatonic commentary in the harmonist tradition. Pseudo-Simplicius deftly shows Aristotle to be expounding essentially Platonic philosophy in a more detailed manner: Aristotle shows that non-material things ‘think themselves’, that the active and passive intellect produce intellection in concert, that the active intellect is immortal due to its affinity with the actual (that which ultimately acts – in Pseudo-Simplicius’ words ‘the productive element in the soul’), and that the passive intellect is perishable due to its affinity with the corporeal (in Pseudo-Simplicius’ words it is ‘perishable *qua* passible’). The crux of the matter in terms of harmony is the concord between Plato and Aristotle on the incorporeality of intellect, premised on the differentiation between an active and passive intellect in Aristotle, and the distinction between having and using knowledge in Plato. The textual evidence in Plato, as Gerson notes, is not hard to find¹⁹⁶. For the Platonic version of the distinction between active and passive intellect, or otherwise stated, the presence of forms in the intellect and the awareness of their presence, we turn to Plato’s *Theaetetus*:

“Socrates: Well, then, have you heard what people are saying nowadays that knowing is?

Theaetetus: I dare say I have, but I don’t remember it at the moment. [Note how this shrewd line and the next from the character foreshadow the argument that follows.]

Socrates: Well, they say, of course, that it is ‘the having of knowledge’.

Theaetetus: Oh, yes, that’s true. [Passive knowledge has become actualized!]

Socrates: Let us make a slight change; let us say ‘the possession of knowledge’.

Theaetetus: And how would you say that was different from the first way of putting it.

Socrates: Perhaps it isn’t at all; but I will tell you what I think the difference is; and then you must help me to examine it.

Theaetetus: All right – if I can.

Socrates: Well, then, to ‘possess’ doesn’t seem to me to be the same as to ‘have’. For instance, suppose a man has bought a coat and it is at his disposal but he is not wearing it; we would not say that he ‘has’ it on, but we would say that he ‘possesses’ it.

¹⁹⁵ Ps.-Simplicius *In de An.* 246, 17-248, 16 excerpted (trans. Blumenthal).

¹⁹⁶ Gerson 2005: 166.

Theaetetus: Yes, that would be correct.”¹⁹⁷

In the above then we have the Platonic basis for the notion of self-reflexivity in the intellect. As Gerson notes though, this alone is not enough to motivate the further Neoplatonic assertion that this self-reflexivity implies incorporeality, and that Plato and Aristotle are in harmony on this point. The connection is provided by the recollection and affinity arguments presented in the *Phaedo*, as Gerson explains:

“The so-called recollection argument for the immortality of the soul in *Phaedo* notoriously claims that we had knowledge of Forms prior to our embodiment. The so-called affinity argument claims that knowers such as ourselves must be like the incorporeal and hence immutable entities that they know... Two points about these arguments are relevant here. First, whether or not it is possible, according to Plato, to obtain knowledge of Forms while embodied, the knowledge we possess in the embodied state prior to recollection is not occurrent and is not knowledge in the primary sense; it is like possessing knowledge but not using it. Second, it is only something that is separate and incorporeal, as Forms are supposed to be, that can know them. Despite the fairly widespread view that the affinity argument is embarrassingly weak, Plato can be seen to be making a shrewd intuitive leap in supposing that knowledge is possible only for incorporeal entities. The basis for the intuition is the idea that knowledge is essentially a self-reflexive state. This is the state of the disembodied knower prior to embodiment. The supposition that knowledge is only possible for incorporeal entities is of a piece with Plato’s argument in *Republic* that knowledge is only *of* incorporeal entities. The Neoplatonic observation of Aristotle’s exegetical prowess grows in weight in my view in light of these considerations.”¹⁹⁸

The note of harmony struck now becomes clear; in asserting that knowledge is incorporeal (since it is wholly unmixed), and distinguishing between active (immortal) and passive (passible) intellect, Aristotle not only brings together two core Platonic doctrines in striking fashion, but also provides a reasoned account of the affinity argument; a self-reflexive state is non-corporeal; thinking (as a self-reflexive state) is therefore non-corporeal; that which thinks (causes the self-reflexive state) must therefore be non-corporeal. Being non-corporeal and actual, the intellect is also consequently immortal and eternal¹⁹⁹. Whatever the merits of these arguments, the case for the harmony of Plato with his student on these issues seems strong indeed.

¹⁹⁷ Plato *Theaet.* 197A9-C. See also Schankula 1971.

¹⁹⁸ Gerson 2005: 166-167.

¹⁹⁹ I return to the issue of immortal intellect in Aristotle in Chapter 3, section 5, and Chapter 4, section 4 (especially sections 4.2 and 4.2.1).

6. Conclusion

In various ways then, ranging from Aristotle's conception of matter in Plato and his apparent rejection of paradigmatic causes in the fourfold-schema, to his critique of Plato's Demiurge, and from his assertion that the soul is the actuality of the body, to his remarks on immortal intellect, the Neoplatonic commentators harmonized the words of the Philosopher to the tune of his teacher, often in ingenious ways. The Neoplatonic project lends a deep plausibility to the thesis that Aristotle may be a contributor to the Platonic project, as odd as the claim may sound at first. Though compelling, these arguments came to be increasingly drowned out by the rising clamour of the developmentalist thesis in modern Aristotelian exegesis. If we are to assess their merit, we must concomitantly assess the developmentalist critiques, which will be the theme of the third movement of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 3: Cacophony

1. Introduction

“Every man is born an Aristotelian or a Platonist. I do not think it is possible that any one born an Aristotelian can become a Platonist; and I am sure no born Platonist can ever change into an Aristotelian. They are the two classes of men beside which it is next to impossible to conceive a third.”²⁰⁰

“One might be at a loss to understand how anyone reading objectively the corpus of Aristotelian texts could suppose that Aristotle did not see himself as profoundly opposed to Plato.”²⁰¹

In this chapter I will explore the development of the current hegemonic position of Aristotelian scholarship, that is, that Aristotle’s philosophy is fundamentally opposed to the philosophy of Plato. As we shall see, there is serious reason to question the legitimacy of this claim (over and above the arguments by ancient commentators already reviewed), a claim that is today so widely assumed and touted that it is basically accepted without question. In the following sections I will outline the development of the notion of contradiction between Plato and Aristotle, the position of anti-harmony, or what I will more simply refer to as the thesis of disharmony. In supplying a critical examination of the development of this thesis, and the arguments that constitute it, I hope to assess its merit.

As far as this thesis of disharmony can be shown to be fallacious or incoherent, to that same extent we should consider more seriously, and concurrently more closely examine, the possibility that it is in fact the position of the harmonists that should be accepted and promoted as the correct stance on the ‘Platonism’ of The Philosopher, Aristotle. Thus, to some extent, the impetus for questioning the reasoning behind accepting the opposition between Plato and Aristotle lies in the fact that for centuries, philosophers, mostly those somewhat inaccurately labelled ‘Neoplatonists’²⁰², argued extensively and conclusively for the opposite position, that is, the claim that the philosophies of these two giants of Western philosophy are in fact ‘harmonious’, as we saw in Chapter 2.

Before exploring the development of the disharmonist thesis in modern times, it is necessary to first assert that the position is by no means entirely novel. Even in antiquity, commentators readily acknowledged that Aristotle was “bucking against the Platonic bridle”²⁰³. None in antiquity believed that the thought of Aristotle was reducible to that of Plato, or that their ideas were identical – no one thought that “Aristotle was simply Plato speaking a peripatetic dialect”²⁰⁴. As such, even the most impassioned harmonists held a nuanced view, taking care to show where Aristotle and Plato agreed,

²⁰⁰ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, passage from *Table Talk* column circa 1830, quoted in Porteous 1934.

²⁰¹ Gerson 2005: 7.

²⁰² See Chapter 1, section 1.3.

²⁰³ Gerson 2005: 22.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 8.

and where they did not. In the case of the harmonists, generally, it was held that there was harmony at a fundamental level, and that though Platonism and Aristotelianism were not identical, they were in fact complementary, as opposed to entirely contradictory. Of course, not all the ancient commentators held this view. Significantly, Plato's immediate intellectual heirs, the heads of the Old Academy, seemed to be motivated in defending the Platonic doctrine, to some extent at least, because of critiques made against it, most notably the critiques of Aristotle:

“The Academics, being motivated by a sense of loyalty to Plato, engaged themselves in defending the views presented in his dialogues, which Aristotle criticized, by showing what these views actually amounted to and how they should be understood. But they did so exactly because they assumed that some of the views discussed in Plato's dialogues are Plato's own doctrines and, as a result, they treated Aristotle's criticisms of them as a threat.”²⁰⁵

Perhaps not surprisingly, the unassailable fact that Aristotle critiques Platonic doctrine led these early Platonists to view Aristotle as a threat to Platonism – though this would later be overturned by the Neoplatonic attempts at reconciliation via harmony.

In general though, it was affirmed in antiquity (especially by the Neoplatonists, as we have seen) that Aristotle's dissent against Platonism was not a fundamental opposition as it is understood today, but rather that Aristotle was either defending or rejecting various forms of what we can term 'Platonism'; that is, Aristotle was expounding a somewhat divergent *form* of Platonism, but was a Platonist, or at least an ally to Platonism, nonetheless.

With these introductory considerations in place, this movement proceeds to an investigation of the development of the disharmonic thesis in modernity. Hereafter the key metaphysical tenets of disharmonism are expounded, with focus on the difference between theology and first philosophy, and the reaction to the apparent Platonism of section *Alpha Elatton* of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Next, the keynotes of disharmonism as regards the theory of Forms are examined, with focus on the differences between Forms and universals, and the contention that Aristotle proposes an alternative to Platonic metaphysics. Finally, this movement investigates the proposed disharmony of Platonic and Aristotelian psychological doctrine, with focus on responses to Aristotle's doctrine of separable soul in *De Anima*, particularly in the guise of the 'two-intellecets' thesis, and the argument which identifies the 'agent intellect' with the intellect of the unmoved mover, before moving on to this movement's concluding remarks. This brief overview in place, we proceed now to a rehearsal of the first dissonant notes of our symphony – the development of the disharmonic thesis.

²⁰⁵ Karamanolis 2006: 7.

2. The Development of Disharmony in Modernity

If the commentators of antiquity generally agreed that Aristotle's thought was in harmony with that of his teacher, and modern commentators felt that Aristotle was fundamentally opposed to Platonism, it becomes necessary to identify what exactly the difference in approach was that explains this radical difference in interpretation. The evidence for either position must come from the original texts themselves, and we can see how a reading of the Aristotelian corpus provides, perhaps frustratingly, evidence to support either claim:

“Inextricably bound up with Aristotle's account or accounts of Platonism are issues regarding Aristotle's own philosophical positions. If, to put it simply, Aristotle was a Platonist, why does he appear to criticize Plato relentlessly? If, on the other hand, he was not a Platonist, why does he say so very many things that seem to be so *echt* Platonic?”²⁰⁶

In order to explain these contradictions, modern scholars, most notably Werner Jaeger, turned to the thesis of developmentalism, that is, the notion that “Aristotle started out as an authentic and loyal Platonist but then, as he grew intellectually, moved away from Platonism to a philosophical position that was more or less explicitly anti-Platonic”²⁰⁷. Some, like G. E. L. Owen²⁰⁸ even suggest an opposite, but still developmental thesis, that is, that Aristotle “was a young anti-Platonist but in his maturity came back to Platonism”²⁰⁹. The former thesis, of development away from Platonism, remains the dominant scholarly stance on the issue of disharmony. By insisting on the development of Aristotle's thought away from Platonism, every apparent aspect of Platonism in the work of The Philosopher can be explained away as ‘immature’ or ‘vestigial’ strains of Platonic thought. The danger here lays in the circularity of such exegesis, as Gerson points out:

“In order to construct an anti-Platonic Aristotelianism with regard to these matters one would have to do violence to the texts or else start with an assumption about Aristotle's development that could not be supported by the texts except by the patent circularity of arranging them according to such an assumption.”²¹⁰

The matters Gerson is referring to in the above quote are the ‘general sciences’ of nature, metaphysics, psychology and ethics, as opposed to the specific sciences of such things as logic or rhetoric. Gerson's point, which is also that of the Neoplatonists, is that as regards the specific sciences, Aristotle need not be in harmony with Plato, not only since Plato generally has very little to say about these, but also because these sciences are demarcated by their own particular principles, and as such are in a sense self-contained, and do not rely for their proper understanding or application on universal principles, and as

²⁰⁶ Gerson 2005: 12.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 13. See Jaeger 1948. Cf. Case 1925.

²⁰⁸ See Owen 1965.

²⁰⁹ Gerson 2005: 49.

²¹⁰ Ibid, 46.

such can be a-Platonic, or even anti-Platonic, without concurrently turning Aristotle into an anti-Platonist *tout court*.

On the other hand, regarding the general sciences, Aristotle must, and does, make recourse to more universal principles. As we have seen, the Neoplatonists attempted to show, more or less successfully, that these principles were fundamentally Platonic – making it possible to harmonize Aristotle’s approach to the general sciences with the larger scheme of Platonic metaphysics. Developmentalists on the other hand, attempt to show that Aristotle at one time accepts and at another time rejects Platonic principles – at times even in the very same work! This contortion is what Gerson seems to be referring to with doing “violence to the texts” – the attempt to read developmentalism into a work in such a way that it turns an internally consistent Platonic doctrine into an internally inconsistent Aristotelian doctrine. This does not do the thought of Aristotle justice, and actually creates more problems than it solves. The arrangement of the texts according to a developmentalist thesis achieves a similar violence, albeit this time on the scale of the entire corpus as opposed to any single work. This is not to say that Aristotle somehow started writing with his fully matured philosophy in mind, and never strayed from this single, consistent system – of course Aristotle developed, as every thinker does. The question, rather, is whether Aristotle truly did develop from a Platonic stance to an anti-Platonic one (or vice versa), or whether his thought, though developing, stayed within the general arena of his teacher’s philosophy.

This question concerning developmentalism, as also pointed out by Gerson, concerns the type and scope of development that can be identified in Aristotle’s work. Gerson argues that for any aspect of Aristotle’s philosophy, ‘shallow development’ can easily provide the same explanatory role that ‘deep development’ would, that is, Aristotle’s thought can be shown to have developed within the boundaries of a certain framework (Gerson holds this framework to be Platonic), as opposed to from one framework to an antithetical framework (from Platonic to anti-Platonic or vice versa):

“The problem with Jaeger’s deep developmentalism is that on almost any account of the evidence it can be trumped... by shallow developmentalism... The point here is that... [for example] Aristotle’s rejection of one or more theories of Forms at any point in his career is compatible with an unwavering commitment [through the rest of his work] to the existence of eternal intelligibles being eternally contemplated by God. So, Aristotle’s putative rejection of the theory of Forms is interpreted as a development in his understanding of eternal and immutable intelligible objects. On this interpretation, shallow developmentalism can accommodate inconsistencies within a larger framework.”²¹¹

If Aristotle is committed to Platonic principles (as the Neoplatonists argued), but wavers on the details, or develops more mature intimations of these principles, then the question of Aristotle’s relationship to Platonism is not a binary one. In other words, if the overwhelming majority of textual evidence, un-

²¹¹ Ibid, 48-49.

contorted by a deep developmentalist agenda, leads us to affirm that Aristotle remains constant in his acceptance of certain basic Platonic principles, but rejects or modifies certain consequences or iterations of these principles, then the correct question is not whether Aristotle is (or ultimately ended up as) a Platonist or anti-Platonist, but how much, and what kind of a Platonist Aristotle really is. This would of course require us to finally abandon a rather deeply entrenched tradition of Aristotelian exegesis – but if this leads to a better understanding of Aristotle (and Platonism to boot), then the course required of future scholars of these thinkers is clear.

In the following sections I will look more closely at how exactly the modern arguments that have aimed to construct an anti-Platonic Aristotelianism (often on the basis of a thesis of deep development) have done so in terms of Aristotle’s metaphysics, critique of the Forms, and thoughts on the soul, in order to ascertain whether the construction of an anti-Platonic Aristotelianism is ultimately feasible, or untenable in the face of a stronger case for Platonic Aristotelianism.

3. Discordant Metaphysics

When assessing the evidence in support of a thesis of deep development and anti-Platonic Aristotelianism, a reasonable starting point is an examination of the exegetical treatment developmentalists have applied to Aristotle’s most significant work in terms of dissonance with Platonism: the *Metaphysics*. In this work developmentalists and others seeking to construct an anti-Platonic Aristotelianism have found much grist for their speculative mill, as Gerson summates:

“[In the *Metaphysics*] Aristotle argues strenuously against what he takes to be Plato’s version of the science that he, Aristotle, is trying to construct. He rejects various theories of Forms and theories of the reduction of Forms to first principles. He offers an argument for the existence and nature of an unmoved mover that seems deeply un-Platonic. In short, he seems to reject the fundamentals of Plato’s account of the intelligible world.”²¹²

Given the breadth of putative evidence for Aristotle’s rejection of Platonic principles in the *Metaphysics*, and the assertions of anti-harmonists throughout the Middle Ages and onwards up to modernity, it is not hard to see how the view of an anti-Platonic Aristotle propounded early on in modernity by eminent scholars of Greek philosophy, such as Eduard Zeller²¹³, took hold, and provided the initial bedrock of assumed opposition upon which Jaeger and others could cultivate the thesis of deep development.

In the remainder of this section I will briefly examine some of the paradigmatic strategies employed by developmentalists and other scholars seeking the construction of an anti-Platonic Aristotelianism, by

²¹² Ibid, 174.

²¹³ See Zeller 1923: 475-480.

examining two of the most significant arguments as discussed by Gerson. These are: 1) the putative difference between theology and first philosophy in Aristotle and; 2) the putative Platonism of section *Alpha Elatton* of the *Metaphysics*.

3.1. Theology and First Philosophy

For those who want to contrast a worldly, mature Aristotelian metaphysics with the mystical and otherworldly metaphysics of Platonism, Aristotle's first philosophy, the ultimate science that investigates the nature of being *qua* being, must be construed as non-theological, that is, as not being dependant on immovable substances (the Forms, God and/or gods) for its construction. To do this, developmentalists must find a way to explain how it is then that Aristotle in the *Metaphysics* seems to base the science of being *qua* being on exactly that:

“One might indeed raise the question whether first philosophy is universal, or deals with one genus, i.e. some one kind of being; for not even the mathematical sciences are all alike in this respect - geometry and astronomy deal with a certain particular kind of thing, while universal mathematics applies alike to all. We answer that if there is no substance other than those which are formed by nature, natural science will be the first science; but if there is an immovable substance, the science of this must be prior and must be first philosophy, and universal in this way, because it is first. And it will belong to this to consider being *qua* being – both what it is and the attributes which belong to it *qua* being.”²¹⁴

An ambiguity haunts this passage, as Gerson points out²¹⁵, one that affords scholars seeking to construct an anti-Platonic Aristotelianism a small wedge, and supporters of the deep development thesis a tantalizing, if circular, confirmation. The ambiguity lies in Aristotle's meaning in saying that if immovable substances did not exist, natural science would be first science. The question begged is, if natural science was first science, would the science of being *qua* being then be subsumed under natural science, or would it still stand on its own, no longer a part of first philosophy *per se*? The wedge here opened for an anti-Platonic Aristotelianism lies in the possibility that the answer to this question is the former, opening the way for a non-theological, Aristotelian first philosophy, or as Reeve puts it: “Aristotle has provided us with a recipe for constructing a naturalistic and Godless primary science on his behalf”²¹⁶. However, the latter answer is far more plausible in terms of what the Aristotelian corpus itself actually suggests, as Gerson explains:

“...Aristotle holds that the existence of immovable substance or substances can be shown to be a necessary truth, only impossibilities follow from its denial... We should, I believe, understand the ambiguous sentence as claiming that if immovable substance does not exist, then *per impossibile*

²¹⁴ Aristotle *Met.* 1026a24-32.

²¹⁵ Gerson 2005: 176.

²¹⁶ Reeve 2000: 287.

the first science would be the science of movables (of course), and there would be no separate science of being *qua* being. One does not have to show how physics could be that science, since this is an impossibility.”²¹⁷

If the reading Gerson suggests in the above is correct²¹⁸, then a straightforwardly anti-Platonic interpretation of the material is untenable. Since the doctrine of the unmoved mover, as discussed in Chapter 2, is a quintessential aspect of Aristotle’s metaphysics, it hardly seems possible to deny that Aristotle accepts the existence of immovable substance as metaphysically necessary²¹⁹. However, even if an anti-Platonic reading is not viable here, a developmentalist one still is: namely, that the apparent Platonism of this claim is nothing more than an indication of a phase in Aristotle’s less mature thinking. However, this reasoning is based on its own assumptions, a circularity which is not saved by any actual textual evidence, without doing, as discussed above, violence to the Aristotelian corpus.

3.2. *Alpha Elatton*

Moving now to the second argument offered by Gerson to illustrate developmentalism’s key points, a similar circularity presents itself in some developmentalists’ treatment of section *Alpha Elatton* of the *Metaphysics*, though here the wedge depends either on awkwardness of fit or textual interpretation. In the first case, section *Alpha Elatton* has long been acknowledged as a relatively independent section of the *Metaphysics*, not neatly fitting into the long-studied ‘methodological sequence’ of the rest of the books, but rather standing on its own as an introductory type of treatise on theoretical philosophy and separable substance²²⁰. Moreover, the tone of much of the book is unmistakably Platonic. For example, early on in the treatise, Aristotle explains that philosophy is rightly understood to be the knowledge of truth, and then goes on to explain what is meant by this, in decidedly Platonic fashion:

“Now we do not know a truth without its cause; and a thing has a quality in a higher degree than other things if in virtue of it the similar quality belongs to the other things (e.g. fire is the hottest of things; for it is the cause of the heat of all other things); so that that which causes derivative truths to be true is most true. Therefore the principles of eternal things must be always most true; for they are not merely sometimes true, nor is there any cause of their being, but they themselves are the cause of the being of other things, so that as each thing is in respect of being, so it is in respect of truth.”²²¹

The apparent Platonism²²² of passages such as these may have lead some developmentalists, such as Werner Jaeger, to insist upon the awkward independence of the work as a sign of its inauthenticity²²³,

²¹⁷ Gerson 2005: 176-177.

²¹⁸ Marx 1977: 48, for example, is in agreement with this position. See also Menn 1992.

²¹⁹ See Chapter 2, section 3.4.

²²⁰ Gerson 2005: 174.

²²¹ Aristotle *Met.* A 1, 993b23-31.

²²² In this case, adherence to the Platonic principle of a metaphysical hierarchy premised upon relative reality and truth.

²²³ Jaeger 1948: 169.

rather than claiming it to be part of an earlier phase of Aristotle's development, as others do²²⁴. Yet another strategy involves pointing out that Aristotle's arguments in *Alpha Elatton* contradict the putative Platonic doctrine that the being of all things are ontologically (and therefore causally) dependant on separate Forms:

“But it will perhaps be said that in fact the manner according to which Aristotle later in *Metaphysics* understands the priority and causality of the eternal to the noneternal is specifically anti-Platonic... Specifically, Aristotle will later argue against Plato that separating the οὐσία of a thing from it leads to absurdity. And so the phrase [“the substance is the cause of the being of each thing”]... cannot be understood in Book *α* to indicate anything in harmony with the view that separate Forms are the eternal causes of the being of other things.”²²⁵

Against these, Gerson supplies a Neoplatonic defence of *Alpha Elatton*:

“The core of the reply to this objection is that Neoplatonists did not suppose that Forms understood or misunderstood as ultimate, isolated, nonliving first principles *could* be the causes of the being of anything. First, they did not believe that Forms were ultimate principles and they did not believe that Plato believed it either. Second, because they believed in intelligible complexity, they did not believe that Forms existed independently of all eternal intellect. And we shall see that they at least had some grounds for thinking that Plato did not believe this either. In short, the view that the general account in Book *α*, chapter 1 should not be taken as being in harmony with Platonism is based on a view of what Platonism is which the Neoplatonists rejected. In addition, what Aristotle rejects are misconceptions about Platonism. Forestalling the rejoinder that this is just wishful thinking on their part, the Neoplatonists would say that what Aristotle positively asserts about the intelligible world and its causality can be accommodated within Platonism. Nothing that is true in what he says contradicts Plato in this regard.”²²⁶

The Neoplatonic strategy should be familiar by now; Aristotle is not critiquing *the* Platonic doctrine, but a faulty or inadequate version of it. Moreover, taking Aristotle to be in harmony with Plato here confers an internal harmony to the Aristotelian position, so that Aristotle's conception of the nature of eternal intelligibles elsewhere can coherently be related to what The Philosopher says of substance in *Alpha Elatton* also. The exegetical force of this kind of reading makes, in my view, the Neoplatonic position far more attractive than its disharmonist and developmentalist counterparts, premised as they are on questionable assumptions of inauthenticity or circular assumptions of deep development, both of which have the further drawback of rendering the Aristotelian position internally incoherent at various junctures. At the very least, the Neoplatonic position provides a compelling vantage point from which

²²⁴ See e.g. Aubenque 1963 and Ferrari 2002.

²²⁵ Gerson 2005: 186-187.

²²⁶ *Ibid*, 187.

to re-assess aspects of Aristotelian exegesis which may be premised on a defunct reading of the Aristotelian corpus as a whole, and ‘troublingly Platonic’ passages in particular.

4. Contra Pillar I: The Forms

To assess whether Aristotle’s thinking is ultimately anti-Platonic, Platonic, or develops from one into the other, it is necessary to have a basic working definition of what Platonism is. Even when putting issues of the interpretation of the dialogues aside, compiling a comprehensive definition of Platonism is a matter which can, and has, filled many volumes. For the purposes of this paper then it is necessary to reduce Platonism to its most basic and fundamental tenets (as in Chapter 1). To simplify even further, we may take key among these to be the theory of Forms, and the immortality of the soul, the ‘twin pillars of Platonism’ famously identified by Francis Cornford²²⁷. If Aristotle can be shown to fundamentally reject these two doctrines, then we can say confidently that Aristotelian philosophy is undeniably anti-Platonic, which is after all what modern Aristotelian exegetes hold to be the case.

4.1. Forms and Universals

Continuing our exposition of Gerson’s arguments illustrating the developmentalist perspective, let us then first examine the arguments put forth for Aristotle’s putative rejection of the ‘first pillar’ of Platonism; the theory of Forms. Gerson attests to the amount of criticism Aristotle affords the (or *a*) theory of Forms:

“In Book A, chapters 6 and 9 of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle discusses the philosophy of Plato... in chapter 9 in particular he mentions a number of arguments for the existence of Forms and briefly adds some criticisms of these... There are also criticisms of the Forms in the central books of *Metaphysics* as well as in Books M and N. On the basis of these texts – to say nothing of things said in other works – there is little doubt that in some sense Aristotle is the enemy of the Forms.”²²⁸

Modern scholars, building on the assumption of opposition set up by their disharmonist predecessors²²⁹, used Aristotle’s apparently scathing critique of the Forms as the basis for the formulation of an anti-Platonic Aristotle. Frank, for example, argues forcefully for the “fundamental opposition of Aristotle to Plato” based on Aristotle’s rejection of the notion of separate Forms:

“Aristotle rejects the transcendence, the *chorismos*, of the ideas, i.e. Plato’s conviction that true existence, the idea, is absolutely separated from the objects of this world; in their finite, particular, and perishable existence these objects reflect only in an image, as it were, the eternal and universal subsistence of a unique idea; they “imitate it” and “partake of it”... without ever being able to

²²⁷ Cornford 1935: 2.

²²⁸ Gerson 2005: 220.

²²⁹ See Chapter 4, section 1.1.2.

reproduce it themselves. For Plato, therefore, the idea has a form of existence entirely different from that of the particulars, of which nevertheless the idea is predicated. Between idea and particular there is the same relation... as there is between the real Callias and his wooden portrait. The two are entirely different from each other, the one Callias is real, a living being (ζῷον), the other is a dead piece of wood which reproduces only the shape (εἶδος) of the living Callias, a mere image, though also called ζῷον in Greek; but it is the name ζῷον alone which the two have in common. Thus for Plato the word “existence” (οὐσία) which refers to the idea as well as the particular thing is only “homonymous”... since in reality it has different connotations.

It is this Platonic principle of the *chorismos* which Aristotle attacks most ardently. The existence of the idea, as Aristotle formulates it in the general notion..., the definition (λόγος), is separated only in thought from the particulars whose real character it expresses, whereas in reality it is immanent in the particulars. For Aristotle then, the expression “existence” means the same here and there, it is “synonymous,” not merely “homonymous,” as it was for Plato...”²³⁰

The fundamental opposition that Frank identifies here then is a dichotomy between the Platonic and Aristotelian answers to the problem of predication; Plato separates universal denominations from their instantiations, whilst Aristotle makes them inherent to their instantiations. This contrasting of the ‘otherworldly’ Plato to the ‘here-and-now’ Aristotle is a typical example of the modern depiction of Aristotle as, to use Gerson’s phrasing, ‘the enemy of the Forms’. It is important to understand here what is meant exactly by designating Aristotle as such.

Firstly, modern scholars have argued, based upon evidence in the *Metaphysics*, that Aristotle rejects the explanatory role provided by Forms by replacing them with ‘universals’²³¹, which Aristotle defines consistently as ‘that which is predicated of many things’²³². The difference between Forms and universals then (as conceived by antiharmonists scholars) – which is also the reason why it can be said that Aristotle substitutes universals for Forms in his metaphysics - hinges on three assumptions: 1) Aristotle clearly rejects the theory of Forms; 2) Aristotle formulates a competing theory of universals that cannot be separated from matter (except in thought) and; 3) Aristotle describes knowledge of universals without reference to separately existing Forms (and without recourse to the doctrine of *anamnesis*, for that matter). An overview of the textual foundations of these assumptions follows below.

In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle makes various direct attacks on the possibility of separable Forms. Some notable examples include:

“Above all one might discuss the question what on earth the Forms contribute to sensible things, either to those that are eternal or to those that come into being and cease to be. For they cause neither

²³⁰ Frank 1940: 34-35. Cf. Mabbott 1926.

²³¹ See Gerson 2005: 81-89. For a modern example of the thesis that Aristotle *replaces* the theory of Forms with his own concept of universals, see Lloyd 1968: 54-56.

²³² Aristotle *Met.* 1038b11-12, *De Int.* 17a39-40, *Met.* 1000a1.

movement nor any change in them. But again they help in no wise either towards the knowledge of the other things (for they are not even the substance of these, else they would have been in them), or towards their being, if they are not in the particulars which share in them; though if they were, they might be thought to be causes, as white causes whiteness in a white object by entering into its composition.

...

Further, must we say that sensible substances alone exist, or that there are others besides these? And are substances of one kind or are there in fact several kinds of substances, as those say who assert the existence both of the Forms and of the intermediates, with which they say the mathematical sciences deal? The sense in which we say the Forms are both causes and self-dependent substances has been explained in our first remarks about them; while the theory presents difficulties in many ways, the most paradoxical thing of all is the statement that there are certain things besides those in the material universe, and that these are the same as sensible things except that they are eternal while the latter are perishable. For they say there is a man-himself and a horse-itself and health-itself, with no further qualification, a procedure like that of the people who said there are gods, but in human form. For they were positing nothing but eternal men, nor are the Platonists making the Forms anything other than eternal sensible things.

...

Now there are some who say that these so-called intermediates between the Forms and the perceptible things exist, not apart from the perceptible things, however, but in these; the impossible results of this view would take too long to enumerate, but it is enough to consider even such points as the following: It is not reasonable that this should be so only in the case of these intermediates, but clearly the Forms also might be in the perceptible things; for both statements are parts of the same theory. Further, it follows from this theory that there are two solids in the same place, and that the intermediates are not immovable, since they are in the moving perceptible things. And in general to what purpose would one suppose them to exist indeed, but to exist in perceptible things? For the same paradoxical results will follow which we have already mentioned; there will be a heaven besides the heaven, only it will be not apart but in the same place; which is still more impossible.

...

Is there, then, a sphere apart from the individual spheres or a house apart from the bricks? Rather we may say that no 'this' would ever have been coming to be, if this had been so, but that the 'form' means the 'such', and is not a 'this'-a definite thing; but the artist makes, or the father begets, a 'such' out of a 'this'; and when it has been begotten, it is a 'this such'. And the whole 'this', Callias or Socrates, is analogous to 'this brazen sphere', but man and animal to 'brazen sphere' in general. Obviously, then, the cause which consists of the Forms (taken in the sense in which some maintain the existence of the Forms, i.e. if they are something apart from the individuals) is useless, at least with regard to comings-to-be and to substances; and the Forms need not, for this reason at least, be

self-subsistent substances. In some cases indeed it is even obvious that the begetter is of the same kind as the begotten (not, however, the same nor one in number, but in form), i.e. in the case of natural products (for man begets man), unless something happens contrary to nature, e.g. the production of a mule by a horse. (And even these cases are similar; for that which would be found to be common to horse and ass, the genus next above them, has not received a name, but it would doubtless be both in fact something like a mule.) Obviously, therefore, it is quite unnecessary to set up a Form as a pattern (for we should have looked for Forms in these cases if in any; for these are substances if anything is so); the begetter is adequate to the making of the product and to the causing of the form in the matter. And when we have the whole, such and such a form in this flesh and in these bones, this is Callias or Socrates; and they are different in virtue of their matter (for that is different), but the same in form; for their form is indivisible.

...

But those who say the Forms exist, in one respect are right, in giving the Forms separate existence, if they are substances; but in another respect they are not right, because they say the one over many is a Form. The reason for their doing this is that they cannot declare what are the substances of this sort, the imperishable substances which exist apart from the individual and sensible substances. They make them, then, the same in kind as the perishable things (for this kind of substance we know)—‘man-himself’ and ‘horse-itself’, adding to the sensible things the word ‘itself’. Yet even if we had not seen the stars, none the less, I suppose, would they have been eternal substances apart from those which we knew; so that now also if we do not know what non-sensible substances there are, yet it is doubtless necessary that there should be some. Clearly, then, no universal term is the name of a substance, and no substance is composed of substances.

...

But, further, all other things cannot come from the Forms in any of the usual senses of ‘from’. And to say that they are patterns and the other things share in them is to use empty words and poetical metaphors. For what is it that works, looking to the Ideas? And anything can either be, or become, like another without being copied from it, so that whether Socrates or not a man like Socrates might come to be; and evidently this might be so even if Socrates were eternal. And there will be several patterns of the same thing, and therefore several Forms; e.g. ‘animal’ and ‘two-footed’ and also ‘man himself’ will be Forms of man. Again, the Forms are patterns not only of sensible things, but of Forms themselves also; i.e. the genus, as genus of various species, will be so; therefore the same thing will be pattern and copy.

Again, it would seem impossible that the substance and that of which it is the substance should exist apart; how, therefore, could the Ideas, being the substances of things, exist apart? In the *Phaedo* the case is stated in this way - that the Forms are causes both of being and of becoming; yet when the Forms exist, still the things that share in them do not come into being, unless there is something to originate movement; and many other things come into being (e.g. a house or a ring) of which we

say there are no Forms. Clearly, therefore, even the other things can both be and come into being owing to such causes as produce the things just mentioned.”²³³

I quote Aristotle at length here to illustrate the breadth of his criticisms of the theory of Forms. In the above, we see Aristotle making several arguments against Forms, rejecting them on the bases that; 1) if Forms are separate they cannot have any causal, epistemological, or metaphysical relation to sensibles; 2) the problems inherent in treating Forms as if they are ‘eternal sensible’ objects, without qualification; 3) the problem of overlapping realities posed by the proposal of the existence of intermediaries between Forms and sensibles and; 4) the uselessness of Forms in explaining material causality.

A further apparent critique of separate Forms can be found in the *Metaphysics* where Aristotle distinguishes between the *principle* or *formula* (the Aristotelian form) of a thing and its elements, showing also that the form is inherent to its object:

“It is clear also from these very facts what consequence confronts those who say the Ideas are substances capable of separate existence, and at the same time make the Form consist of the genus and the differentiae. For if the Forms exist and ‘animal’ is present in ‘man’ and ‘horse’, it is either one and the same in number, or different. (In formula it is clearly one; for he who states the formula will go through the formula in either case.) If then there is a ‘man-in-himself’ who is a ‘this’ and exists apart, the parts also of which he consists, e.g. ‘animal’ and ‘two-footed’, must indicate ‘thises’, and be capable of separate existence, and substances; therefore ‘animal’, as well as ‘man’, must be of this sort.

Now (1) if the ‘animal’ in ‘the horse’ and in ‘man’ is one and the same, as you are with yourself, (a) how will the one in things that exist apart be one, and how will this ‘animal’ escape being divided even from itself?

Further, (b) if it is to share in ‘two-footed’ and ‘many-footed’, an impossible conclusion follows; for contrary attributes will belong at the same time to it although it is one and a ‘this’. If it is not to share in them, what is the relation implied when one says the animal is two-footed or possessed of feet? But perhaps the two things are ‘put together’ and are ‘in contact’, or are ‘mixed’. Yet all these expressions are absurd.

But (2) suppose the Form to be different in each species. Then there will be practically an infinite number of things whose substance is ‘animal’; for it is not by accident that ‘man’ has ‘animal’ for one of its elements. Further, many things will be ‘animal-itself’. For (i) the ‘animal’ in each species will be the substance of the species; for it is after nothing else that the species is called; if it were, that other would be an element in ‘man’, i.e. would be the genus of man. And further, (ii) all the elements of which ‘man’ is composed will be Ideas. None of them, then, will be the Idea of one thing and the substance of another; this is impossible. The ‘animal’, then, present in each species of

²³³ Aristotle *Met.* XII.

animals will be animal-itself. Further, from what is this ‘animal’ in each species derived, and how will it be derived from animal-itself? Or how can this ‘animal’, whose essence is simply animality, exist apart from animal-itself?

Further, (3) in the case of sensible things both these consequences and others still more absurd follow. If, then, these consequences are impossible, clearly there are not Forms of sensible things in the sense in which some maintain their existence...”²³⁴

The above then constitutes a further facet of Aristotle’s rejection of separate Forms (in conjunction with those related criticisms from the *Metaphysics*), based upon the difficulties that arise from separating the form (in this case the Aristotelian form; the *formula*) from its object, namely; 1) the self-division of forms; 2) the problem of forms containing contraries and; 3) the problems arising from conflating forms and substances.

Finally, at the end of the *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle describes the process of abstraction which results in knowledge of universals:

“So from perception comes memory... and from memory (when it occurs often in connection with the same thing), experience; for memories that are many in number form a single experience. And from experience, or from the whole universal that has come to rest in the soul (the one apart from the many, whatever is one and the same in all those things, a principle of skill and understanding...)”²³⁵

The concert, these critiques of separate Forms work to illustrate the significant differences between Forms and universals. Universals then, are entirely unlike Forms in two key ways: they are inherent and non-separable from their objects, and knowledge of them arises from perception and abstraction, not reflection and recollection. Following from this, it is argued that Aristotle proposes an alternative (that is, anti-Platonic) metaphysics, the focus of which are sensible substances²³⁶.

If Aristotle rejects separate Forms and replaces them with universals, which are clearly entirely different, even antithetical, to Forms, then harmonism, the idea that Plato and Aristotle agree on a fundamental level, is summarily defeated. However there may be good reason to suspect that this is not the case. Gerson provides the following comment regarding the first point on the explanatory role of Forms and universals:

“...if Aristotle rejects separate Forms, how can his philosophy be said to be in harmony with Plato’s? The argument here depends on showing that since Aristotle shares with Plato a realist’s account of sameness and difference in the sensible world – namely, a rejection of nominalism – Aristotle is committed to the ontological priority of intelligible natures to their sensible instances. The very fact

²³⁴ Aristotle *Met.* VII.

²³⁵ Aristotle *An Post.* 100a3-8.

²³⁶ See Gerson 2005: 101-130. I examine this argument in Chapter 3, section 4.2 below.

that Aristotle recognizes the possibility of knowing things universally obliges him to accept some account of the grounds for the possibility of universal knowledge, an account that the universality of thought itself does not provide. Forms are not universals, and universals do not do the job that Forms must do to make universal knowledge possible. Hence, *no* theory of universals serves as a substitute for a theory of Forms.”²³⁷

Several textual references from Aristotle support the conclusion Gerson arrives at in the above. In *Posterior Analytics*:

“For there to be forms or some one thing apart from the many is not necessary if there is to be demonstration; however, for it to be true to say that one things holds of many is necessary. For there will be no universal if this is not the case, and if there is no universal, there will be no middle term, and so no demonstration either. There must, therefore, be some one and the same thing, non-homonymous, holding of several cases.”²³⁸

In *De Interpretatione*: “Now of actual things some are universal, other particular (I call universal that which is by its nature predicated of a number of things, and particular that which is not; man, for instance, is a universal, Callias is a particular)”.²³⁹

And, of course, in *Metaphysics*:

“We must not only raise these questions about the first principles, but also ask whether they are universal or what we call individuals. If they are universal, they will not be substances; for everything that is common indicates not a ‘this’ but a ‘such’, but substance is a ‘this’. – And if we can actually posit the common predicate as a single ‘this’, Socrates will be several animals – himself and man and animal, if each of these indicates a ‘this’ and a single thing. – If, then, the principles are universals, these results follow; if they are not universals but of the nature of individuals, they will not be knowable; for the knowledge of anything is universal. Therefore if there is to be knowledge of the principles there must be other principles prior to them, which are universally predicated of them.

...

For it seems impossible that any universal term should be the name of a substance. For primary substance is that kind of substance which is peculiar to an individual, which does not belong to anything else; but the universal is common, since that is called universal which naturally belongs to more than one thing. Of which individual then will this be the substance? Either of all or of none. But it cannot be the substance of all; and if it is to be the substance of one, this one will be the others also; for things whose substance is one and whose essence is one are themselves also one.”²⁴⁰

²³⁷ Ibid, 21. See also Gifford 1999.

²³⁸ Aristotle *An Post.* A 11, 77a5-9.

²³⁹ Aristotle *De Int.* 17a39-17b1.

²⁴⁰ Aristotle *Met.* B6 1003a9-17 & Z 13 1038b8-14.

If, then, the above-mentioned critique and those that follow from it are correct, then Aristotle is not criticizing *the* theory of Forms, the pillar of Platonism, but *a* theory of Forms, one that he finds lacking, as Gerson, in commenting on the Neoplatonic position of harmony between Plato and Aristotle, argues:

“There are... several good reasons why they [the Neoplatonists] did not take the rejection of the Forms by Aristotle at face value. First, as we have seen, a reasonable argument could be made to the effect that Aristotle believed that the prime unmoved mover’s eternal thinking is of eternal intelligible objects. These intelligible objects appear to be not at all different from Forms, especially when Forms are properly understood. This leads to the second point. The Neoplatonists’ view about Forms was built on a reading of all the dialogues, the letters, and Aristotle’s testimony. What Aristotle manifestly rejects was to these philosophers something quite different from the picture of the Forms that a close reading of all the evidence would show. So, Aristotle, like Plato himself in several places, rejects an inadequate or false theory of Forms, not the true – Platonic – theory.”²⁴¹

On its own perhaps, the assertion that Aristotle is not critiquing Plato’s theory is not convincing enough to postulate a harmony between the philosophers on matters of universal predication. However, in concert with the assertion that Aristotle’s universals, as he himself formulated them, can *never* substitute *any* theory of Forms, the argument holds far more weight. What remains is to examine whether Aristotle does in fact attempt such a replacement, as contradictory as it may well be.

4.2. Aristotle’s Alternative Metaphysics

If the above is correct, and Aristotle is not rejecting *the* Theory of Forms, then what can be said concerning Aristotle’s putative ‘alternative’ (that is, anti-Platonic) metaphysics of sensible substance? The key claim here is that nature fulfils a self-sufficient explanatory role in Aristotelian metaphysics²⁴². The textual impetus for claiming that Aristotle proposes such a metaphysics comes from his discussion of final causality in Book II of the *Physics*, for example: “If, therefore, purpose [a final cause] is present in art, it is present also in nature. The best illustration is a doctor doctoring himself: nature is like that.”²⁴³ A recent example of a modern author touting this putative self-sufficiency can be found in the work of Sedley²⁴⁴. Contra such an anti-Platonic interpretation, Gerson points out that Aristotle “repeatedly and consistently distinguishes two senses of final cause: (1) the result for the sake of which and (2) the person or thing for whom or for which something is done”²⁴⁵. Gerson goes on to argue that Aristotle argues for the primacy of (1), in *De Anima*, for example: “That [partaking in the eternal and divine] is

²⁴¹ Gerson 2005: 209.

²⁴² Ibid, 122.

²⁴³ Aristotle *Phys.* B 8, 199b29-32.

²⁴⁴ Sedley 2000: 327ff. In his analysis of final causality in Aristotle, Gerson (2005: 124) notes that: “[Sedley] claims that κεχωρισμένον [Aristotle’s word describing the separateness of the unmoved mover] “does not... necessarily mean something transcendent or extra-cosmic, but simply something over and above the ordering itself, as the prime unmoved mover plainly is.” I do not understand what “over and above” means in this context if it does not mean “transcendent or extra-cosmic.” No doubt “separated” does not always mean ‘separated in reality’ for Aristotle; something can, e.g. be separated merely in thought. But nothing that is so separated can have an explanatory role as the prime mover is intended to do in this passage”.

²⁴⁵ Gerson 2005: 123.

the goal towards which all things strive, that for the sake of which they do whatsoever their nature renders possible”²⁴⁶. Clearly then, nature is, in the final sense, rather explanatorily *insufficient* than sufficient, as Gerson elucidates:

“The reason nature is not self-explanatory... is that it is an instrument of motion – a moved mover – and not an unmoved mover. Thus even if nature always acts for the good by actualizing the potency in anything that exists by nature, nature’s so acting is not self-explanatory.”²⁴⁷

The unmoved mover then takes its place in Aristotelian metaphysics as that which is over and above nature, and is its final, unmoved cause. By moving via attraction, as Aristotle describes of an unmoved mover, the unmoved mover sets itself apart from all that it affects, a category that includes everything in nature. Attempts to make nature self-sufficient then cannot be upheld without removing a crucial capstone of Aristotelian thought, the unmoved mover, without which the entire edifice of his natural philosophy collapses. If Aristotle is internally inconsistent in this manner, then this must be admitted. However, it seems at least more likely that Aristotle is internally consistent in this matter, and that this consistency is a mark of his ultimate harmony with the grander metaphysical scheme of Platonism²⁴⁸.

5. Contra Pillar II: The Soul

The last argument in Gerson’s analysis of developmentalism’s core claims and the ‘second pillar’ of Platonism that Aristotle is putatively taken to reject by those seeking to construct an anti-Platonic Aristotelianism, is the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. To some extent, this hinges on Aristotle’s rejection of separate Forms; if the soul is the Form of the body, and Forms cannot be separated from matter, then the soul cannot be separated from the body, and is thus not immortal, as Platonism asserts it to be. As Gerson puts it, according to this view “Aristotle the hylomorphist or, more crudely, Aristotle the ‘empiricist’ is diametrically opposed to Plato the ‘dualist’ or ‘rationalist’”²⁴⁹. In order for this to be the case though, a thoroughly developmentalist approach is necessary, since in the vast majority of Aristotle’s work a conception of the soul as separable from the body is espoused. The developmentalist schema, as put forward by one eminent developmentalist, F. A. Nuyens²⁵⁰, runs more or less as follows, as described by Gerson:

“Nuyens distinguishes three phases in the development of Aristotle’s psychological doctrines: (1) a Platonic phase... wherein the soul is conceived of as an entity separate from the body; (2) a

²⁴⁶ Aristotle *De An.* B4, 415b1-2.

²⁴⁷ Gerson 2005: 125.

²⁴⁸ A discussion of the question of the Platonism of the unmoved mover, as well as the adequacy of the unmoved mover as first principle, has been presented in Chapter 2 of this dissertation (especially section 3.4 and 4.5). In Chapter 4, section 2.3 I will consider related questions concerning the question of the nature of divine thought in Aristotle.

²⁴⁹ Gerson 2005: 132.

²⁵⁰ See Nuyens 1948 and Nuyens et al. 1950. For critiques of Nuyens, see Block 1961, Hardie 1964, Lefèvre 1972, Charlton 1987, Wedin 1988, Frede 1992, Cohen 1992 and Dancy 1996.

“mechanistic instrumentalist” phase, in which the body and the soul continue to be held to be separate entities, but the body is an instrument of the soul, located now in the heart...; (3) a final phase... in which the soul is conceived as the form of the body.”²⁵¹

This final phase is primarily represented by *De Anima*. For the purposes of this paper then, we may turn briefly to the textual evidence found therein to establish whether it indeed supports the construction of an anti-Platonic Aristotelianism.

5.1. Separable Soul in *De Anima*

The key passages regarding separable soul in Aristotle are found in *De Anima* 430a10-25, wherein Aristotle describes the active intellect as “immortal and eternal” and 413a2-9, in which Aristotle asks whether the soul (or part of the soul) stands in relation to the body as the sailor to the ship. What becomes clear in the above passages is that Aristotle does not believe in what would be the so-called final phase of his thought as construed by the deep developmentalist thesis, that the entire soul is separable from the body (and immortal), but only that a part of it (the active intellect) is. Given that Platonism itself is not committed to the view that the entirety of the soul is immortal (at least according to Neoplatonic interpretation), those seeking to construct an anti-Platonic Aristotelianism must find some way to explain away the apparent harmony. However, given the textual evidence and the contorted strategies required to achieve this explaining away, these attempts fail to manage any real perspicuity, as Gerson points out:

“The antiharmonists among contemporary scholars are nothing if not transparent in attempting to read Aristotle as expressing exclusively an anti-Platonic view of the soul. One option is simply to dismiss *De Anima* 413a4-9 as not seriously intended. Another option is to give a ‘deflationary’ account of separable intellect, pressing hard on a functionalist interpretation of cognition in the hylomorphic composite. If, however, we find reason to resist such an account, we shall see that separable intellect inevitably draws Aristotle into the Platonic orbit in his attempt to account for embodied intellectualized activity. If separable intellect were not somehow necessary to account for embodied cognition, then that cognition could perhaps be explained functionally; that is, in terms of the material organism’s functions. But this Aristotle will not do.”²⁵²

As seen above, that intellect cannot be explained by a material organisms functions follows from Aristotle’s argument that it must be wholly unmixed²⁵³. Intellect is not bodily for Aristotle, and no amount of mental gymnastics can make it so.

Two other notable strategies employed by harmonists to attempt to ‘save’ the Aristotelian account of psyche from the looming notes of Platonism involve either; 1) arguing that Aristotle is adding a second

²⁵¹ Gerson 2005: 131.

²⁵² Ibid, 138.

²⁵³ See Chapter 2, section 5.2.

intellect and; 2) identifying the agent intellect with the intellect of the unmoved mover. I assess the merit of these strategies in the sections below.

5.1.1 The ‘Two Intellects’ Thesis

The ‘two intellects’ thesis, as I will refer to it, turns on a point of exegesis of *De Anima, Gamma 5*. The lines in question read:

“And intellect is this sort of thing in one sense by becoming all things, and in another by making all things, like a sort of disposition, in the way that light does. For in a certain way light makes potential colours actual colours.”²⁵⁴

Gerson points out that this line has been interpreted to signal the introduction of a second intellect²⁵⁵. However it seems a difficult interpretation to uphold upon reviewing the finer aspects of the text, as Hicks makes clear:

“The word τοιοῦτος is predicate and stands for both “passive” with ὁ μὲν and “active” with ὁ δέ [int. νοῦς]: “the one intellect is passive, like matter, in that it becomes all objects, the other intellect is active, like the efficient cause, in that it makes all objects.” If τοιοῦτος were attribute and not predicate, ἔστιν must mean “there exists” and the sense must be “passive intellect exists in so far as it becomes all objects, active intellect, in so far as it makes all objects.” Those who press this interpretation deny that [Aristotle]... ever really taught the existence of two distinct intellects in the sense in which the art which constructs is distinct from the material which it works upon: they contend that [Aristotle’s]... one intellect is sometimes passive, sometimes active, as it is sometimes θεωρητικός, sometimes πρακτικός.”²⁵⁶

In reference to the interpretation that a second intellect is introduced, Gerson writes:

“The crux of the problem is... [that the passage in question] has frequently been understood to indicate that there are two intellects. But the contrast ὁ μὲν ... ὁ δέ in lines 14-15 is evidently meant to reflect the τὸ μὲν ... ἕτερον δέ contrast in line 10-11, and though the general principle *may* be instantiated by two separate entities, it need not be. Indeed, since Aristotle is talking about how the general principle operates in the soul, it seems highly likely that the material and active elements of the instantiation of the principle are not, in their operation, separate from each other. The words τοιοῦτος νοῦς indicate that intellect is such as are the things that fall under the general principle. If it only indicated the material principle, then that would suggest that the reference to the active principle was a reference to another intellect. But this would make the first five lines pointless and the motive for the introduction of the second intellect unintelligible.”²⁵⁷

²⁵⁴ Aristotle *De An.*, *Gamma 5*, 430a14-17.

²⁵⁵ Gerson 2005: 154.

²⁵⁶ Hicks 1907: 500.

²⁵⁷ Gerson 2005: 154-155.

The contextual evidence then against the introduction of a second intellect is strong. Gerson continues:

“Even if we construe the line so as to indicate two intellects, the whole point of the analogy is that these intellects in concert produce intellection. And given that Aristotle has said, and will say five more times by the end of chapter 8, that that thinker must be identical with what is thought, postulating two intellects does not solve anything. No doubt that is why some scholars want to excise chapter 5 altogether. But we have already seen that a continuation of the answer to the questions raised in 4 is needed. It is the duality of a single intellect that is at issue... The distinction of the two principles [the potential and actual intellect] no more indicates two intellects than does the distinction between practical and theoretical intellect, and no more than the distinction among psychic functions indicates multiple souls.”²⁵⁸

The active and passive intellect then, cannot be two separate intellects, and if they are separate, it is only in operation. The disharmonist thesis is here defeated, as it often is, by a close reading of the text. Given the straightforwardness of the opposing harmonist thesis, and the internal consistency it provides us in looking at Aristotle’s thoughts on psyche, it is at the very least an interpretation worth taking far more seriously.

5.1.2. Identifying the Agent Intellect with the Intellect of the Unmoved Mover

In an alternative attempt to ‘save’ Aristotle from Plato’s dualism, scholars insist that the agent intellect must, in fact, be the intellect of the unmoved mover. A recent example can be found in the work of Caston:

“In *De anima* 3.5, Aristotle famously argues for the existence of a *second* intellect, the so-called “Agent Intellect.” The fifteen lines which follow (430a10-25) are some of the most controversial in his entire corpus: it is unclear whose intellect it is, how many there are, and exactly what it does. In this paper, I shall suggest a modest proposal as to how this whole difficulty might be resolved.

Much of the tradition has become mired in difficulties because it has tended to concentrate on the analogies with which the chapter begins, rather than the logical structure of Aristotle’s argument and the attributes he prosaically lists in the second half of the chapter. But these provide the key. The structure of the argument concerns a distinction between different *species* within the genus of soul, if you will, rather than a distinction between faculties inside a given soul; and the attributes he assigns to the second species make it clear that his concern here – as at the climax of his other great works, such as the *Metaphysics*, the *Nicomachean* and the *Eudemian Ethics* – is the difference between the human and the divine. The intellect in question is nothing but its essence (a22-23), which is just actuality (a18), and its functions without interruption (a22) for eternity (a23) – characteristics ascribed only to God, who is unique (1074a35-37).”²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸ Ibid, 155-156.

²⁵⁹ Caston 1999: 199-200.

Gerson opposes this contextual point with his own, as we saw above²⁶⁰, arguing that the introduction of a second intellect here (whether mortal or divine), does not address the issues that Aristotle wants to address, and can only (in the context of the work as a whole) be taken to indicate the duality of a single intellect, in which two distinct principles are operating. These issues aside, Gerson makes a clear argument for why the agent intellect cannot possibly be the intellect of the unmoved mover, premised on the metaphysical differences between divine and mortal thought:

“The main reason for holding that separated intellect is not identical with the thinking that is the prime unmoved mover is that for the latter there is no distinction between substance and activity, no distinction between intellect and thinking, whereas a separated intellect would still be in potency to its thinking. Another subsidiary reason as Aristotle argues earlier in *Metaphysics*, is that the perfect actuality that turns out to be ‘thinking thinking about thinking’ must be unique. The immortality of the intellect without which any particular human being cannot think at all is not in question. What is supremely questionable is whether that separate intellect is continuous with me.”²⁶¹

The crux of Gerson’s argument here then consists in the apparent metaphysical differences between divine and mortal thought here, premised on the distinction that, unlike divinity, an embodied person would still only ever be in potency to its own thinking.

Both Caston and Gerson’s arguments here are strong. However, in light of the thrust of *De Anima*, I don’t believe that Caston’s contextual claim that *De Anima* deals with the difference between the human and the divine because some of Aristotle’s other great works do so at their climax, is sufficient reason for holding that that is in fact what Aristotle is doing at that juncture. However, Caston’s individual points on the evidence in the text that indicate the possibility that Aristotle is here discussing divine intellect are significant, Gerson’s rejoinder notwithstanding. As is often the case in the discursive landscape, more study will be needed to make any conclusive statements on this issue, and what it means for the harmony debate in general²⁶².

However, taking all the other evidence for a Platonic reading of Aristotle’s psychological doctrine into account, one may be permitted to lean towards Gerson’s conclusion, at least circumspectly. If we take the Neoplatonic reading of Aristotle seriously, and evaluate it alongside the disharmonist thesis fairly, then perhaps even more so than with Aristotle’s putative rejection of the Platonic theory of Forms, it seems not at all clear that Aristotle in fact rejects out of hand that pillar of Platonic philosophy that is the doctrine of the immortality of some part of the soul.

²⁶⁰ Chapter 3, section 5.1.1 above.

²⁶¹ Gerson 2005: 159. I return to the ‘supremely questionable’ issue of whether immortal intellect is continuous with the person who instantiates it below, in Chapter 4, section 4.2.

²⁶² That this is a contentious issue is clear from the attention it is given by modern scholars.

6. Conclusion

In this movement I have attempted to portray in broad strokes the gist of the arguments that seek to construct an anti-Platonic Aristotelianism, from the putative Aristotelian distinction between theology and first philosophy, through the Aristotelian critiques of the theory of Forms, and the efforts by modern scholars to dampen the Platonic melody of Aristotle's views on the immortal soul. Given the amount of criticism afforded to Plato and Platonic theories in the Aristotelian corpus, it is not difficult to understand what lead modern scholars to assert that Aristotle's philosophy is, fundamentally, in opposition to Plato's, and furthermore, that if there are elements of Platonism still to be found in Aristotle's work, then they must be somehow indicative of a different stage in the development of his thought. However, on closer inspection, these arguments seem to be largely spurious or circular, and supported by the actual words of Aristotle only in a contorted or fragmented way. To the extent that we can show such arguments to be mistaken, we should take more seriously the possibility that, as the Neoplatonists believed, the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle stand not in opposition, but in harmony. If this can be conclusively shown to be the case, then the ubiquitously and stridently touted thesis of opposition must be abandoned. Yet, with a melody as complex as Aristotelian versus Platonic metaphysics, it is difficult to make any sweeping conclusions. As such, in the penultimate movement of this dissertation I turn to some of the subtler notes of intersection on the harmony-disharmony scale, particularly those that remain highly or widely controversial or contested in contemporary scholarship

Chapter 4: Symphony

1. Introduction

“I want to show that reading Aristotle as a Platonist, or understanding Aristotelianism as a Platonism, far from being an exercise in historical perversity, does actually yield significant results both exegetical and philosophical... I would like... to undermine the widely held belief that any interpretation that “turns Aristotle into a Platonist” must be *ipso facto* ruled out of court.”²⁶³

The issue of the putative Platonism of Aristotle remains to this day a serious controversy, though one could perhaps be forgiven for being unaware of it, given the near universal acceptance of the currently hegemonic interpretation of Aristotle’s relationship to Plato (that is, a more or less binary opposition). Having surveyed the development of both the ancient and modern stances on the issue, in this movement I will explore the current state of the debate by examining some of its most recent developments, as well as reviewing the positions of influential proponents from either side that have impacted the contemporary discursive landscape in some significant way. On the side of anti-Platonic Aristotelianism then stand such figures as Aquinas, Martin Luther, Zeller, Jaeger, Owen, and more recently Cherniss and Sorabji. In the harmonist camp we find figures such as Augustine, Alfarabi, Pico della Mirandola, Gadamer, and more recently Düring and Gerson. With particular emphasis on the recent efforts of Gerson and his contemporaries in this debate, I will examine the harmonist thesis as it relates to the metaphysics, stance on the Forms, and stance on the soul of Plato and Aristotle, and attempt to show that an ignorance of this controversy risks under-appreciating the complexity of the relationship between Plato and Aristotle at best, and entirely misunderstanding the fundamentals of both these magisterial thinkers at worst.

What is at stake in understanding the relationship between Plato and his most famous student then, is nothing less than the proper interpretation of the works of two of the most influential thinkers in all of Western history. The Neoplatonists, starting with Antiochus, intimated this when they took up the project of reading Aristotle as a means of reaching a better understanding of the founder of the original Academy, their philosophical master, Plato. In modern times, with the ascendancy of the developmentalist thesis, a chasm has opened between Plato and his most famous student, one which can appear so impassable that one almost loses sight of the fact of Aristotle’s decades long tutelage under Plato. Moreover, the developmentalist thesis often has the unfortunate effect of making aspects of Aristotle incoherent, incomprehensible, or deeply inconsistent, resulting in a widespread destabilization of our understanding of the fundamental features of Aristotelian philosophy proper. To redress this lamentable situation, scholars such as Gerson have attempted to re-examine the Neoplatonic

²⁶³ Gerson 2005: 7.

position, in order to see whether the harmonic thesis may not render the relationship between the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle back into a coherent form – and this involves viewing Aristotle in the context of his putative Platonism, alongside the historical fact of his long time involvement in Academic philosophy, and the assessment of the influence of that fact on his own philosophical oeuvre.

Of course, besides the historical facts, there is much in Aristotle that does give us good reason to believe that he held deeply Platonic views, and lines of reasoning that can be followed to not only support this view, but to do so in a manner which makes Aristotelian philosophy more cohesive and consistent on the whole! Besides contextual considerations then, there is textual evidence proper to be examined and studied, as scholars did both in ancient and modern times, and of which I have in this thesis attempted to provide a brief overview. As it stands, ‘Aristotle versus Plato’ is one of the most significant questions for that discipline called the ‘history of philosophy’ – and doing this question its proper justice, is nothing less than a philosophical imperative²⁶⁴.

Doing justice to ancient philosophy then, requires us to objectively assess the textual evidence (in light of contextual evidence) and the various interpretations of that evidence, as I’ve attempted to do in this thesis. The Neoplatonic appropriation of Aristotle as a cooperative in the Platonic project places Aristotle in a specific context of interpretation, one which scholars such as Gerson and Sedley feel is greatly beneficial for our understanding of Aristotle²⁶⁵. If then, as some scholars are now attempting to show, our modern assumptions about harmony have been in error, then it is up to us to revise our philosophical history books, so to speak. It may well turn out that, on review, the harmonist proposition is not only not perfectly crazy, but in fact utterly compelling.

With these introductory remarks in place, this movement proceeds to brief overview of the history of the harmony debate, as instantiated by some of its most influential figures. Hereafter the key metaphysical issues of contention within the contemporary milieu are expounded, with focus on Aristotle’s *Categories*, matter, and divine thought. Next, the keynotes of the harmony debate as regards the theory of Forms are examined, with focus on material generation, the relationship between Forms, universals and intelligible versus sensible reality, and recent developments concerning the Third Man argument. Thereafter, this movement investigates the contemporary issues in the harmony debate around Platonic and Aristotelian psychological doctrine, with focus on the issues of hylomorphism and dualism in Aristotle, personal immortality, and the related problem of reincarnation. Finally, this movement investigates Gerson’s *malgré lui* thesis, and the relevance of Aristotle as witness to the *agrapha dogmata*, before moving on to the movement’s concluding remarks. This brief overview in

²⁶⁴ See Chapter 5, section 1.

²⁶⁵ Gerson 2005: 2 and Sedley 2002: 37-39.

place, we proceed now to a review of some of the most resonant notes of the harmony debate played throughout history, by some of the harmony debate's most influential composers.

1.1. Harmonists and Disharmonists throughout History

The harmonist-antiharmonist debate has had a long and varied existence across the ages of philosophical inquiry. In this section I will sketch a broad overview of some of the most notable proponents on either side, in order to illustrate something of the sheer breadth of the tradition of interpretation that has come down to us on this issue, and with which any modern scholar of the subject must contend.

1.1.1. Notable Harmonists

As discussed in Chapter 2, the tradition of an interpretation of Aristotle as being in harmony with Plato begins with the work of Antiochus of Ascalon in the first century B.C.E. This tradition of interpretation found its most staunch proponents amongst the Neoplatonists, most notably in figures such as Simplicius, Plotinus, and Iamblichus. Outside of the confines of the Neoplatonic milieu however, several influential proponents of harmonism can yet be identified. I provide brief sketches of the positions of some of the most significant of these thinkers below, in chronological order.

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 C.E.). Held to the 'agreement' of Plato and Aristotle. In his *Contra Academicos*, Augustine relates:

"Today, therefore, we see practically no philosophers unless they be either Cynics or Peripatetics or Platonists. The only reason we have the Cynics is that such people find their pleasure in a certain 'freedom' and even licence in life. But as to that which concerns erudition, doctrine, and morals, all of which help the soul – since there have been acute and clever men who taught in their disputations that Aristotle and Plato in such wise agree with one another that those who are unskilled or examine the matter cursorily think that they disagree – after many generations and many conflicts there is strained out at last, I should say, one system of really true philosophy. For that philosophy is not of this world – such a philosophy our sacred mysteries most justly detest – but of the other, intelligible world. To which intelligible world the most subtle reasoning would never recall souls blinded by the manifold darkness of error and stained deeply by the slime of the body, had not the most high God, because of a certain compassion for the masses, bent and submitted the authority of the divine intellect even to the human body itself. By the precepts as well as deeds of that intellect souls have been awakened, and are able, without the strife of disputation, to return to themselves and see once again their fatherland."²⁶⁶

²⁶⁶ Augustine *Con. Acad.* III, 19.42.

Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Fārābī (ca. 872-ca. 951 C.E.). Wrote a treatise entitled *The Book on the Harmonization of the Opinions of the Two Sages: Plato the Divine and Aristotle*, which influenced many later harmonists²⁶⁷.

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494 C.E.). Called the ‘Prince of Harmony’ by his associates, aimed to show the harmony of Plato and Aristotle, most notably in his work *De ente et uno*. Kristeller relates:

“The other distinctive aspect of Pico’s syncretism [beyond the Cabalistic influence], his tendency to assume a basic agreement between Plato and Aristotle, also remained one of his major preoccupations during the later years of his life. We know that he planned to write an extensive treatise on the agreement between Plato and Aristotle, and his friends like to call him *Princeps Concordiae*, the prince of harmony, punning upon the name of the small town of Concordia, which was among the feudal possessions of his family.”²⁶⁸

Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002 C.E.). Believed Plato and Aristotle held “essentially similar views”²⁶⁹.

Hans Ingemar Düring (1903-1984) Swedish historian who rejects the developmentalist thesis in favour of harmony in his 1964 article *Aristotle and the Heritage from Plato*²⁷⁰.

Lloyd Gerson (1948- C.E.). Argues extensively for a re-evaluation of the harmonist thesis in his 2005 work *Aristotle and other Platonists* (a key text for this dissertation) notably suggesting the idea of Aristotle as “Platonist *malgré lui*”:

“How can Aristotle’s philosophy be in harmony with Plato’s if Aristotle himself never acknowledges this harmony? Even if it is granted that some or most of Aristotle’s criticisms are not directed at something that might deserve to be called ‘mature’ or ‘refined’ Platonism, why should we opt for the Neoplatonic interpretation of Aristotelian texts which makes them harmonious with that? Given the criticism and the absence of an explicit commitment to harmony, is not the reasonable default interpretation of these texts anti-Platonic...? [O]ne possible way of answering this question... [is by] suggesting that perhaps, Aristotle is a Platonist *malgré lui*. I mean the possibility that Aristotle could not adhere to the doctrines that he *incontestably* adheres to were he not thereby committed to principles that are in harmony with Platonism.”²⁷¹

²⁶⁷ See Fakhry 1965.

²⁶⁸ Kristeller 1964: 62.

²⁶⁹ Malpas 2014. Gadamer’s view is nuanced though, and he does admit differences in Plato and Aristotle. See e.g. Gadamer 1986.

²⁷⁰ Düring 1964.

²⁷¹ Gerson 2005: 275.

I return in section 5 to a fuller examination of Gerson's *malgré lui* thesis. Having surveyed some notable figures on the side of Aristotelian-Platonic harmony, we turn to an overview of some notable figure on the other side of the debate.

1.1.2. Notable Disharmonists

In Chapter 3 I have already outlined the fundamentals of the developmentalist thesis, built principally by Jaeger (and an alternative account by Owen) based on the assumption of disagreement between Plato and Aristotle (a basic premise most notably instantiated in modern times by Zeller). Though this is the most common strategy employed to show the disagreement between Plato and Aristotle, it is not the only one. Others include showing that Aristotle simply misrepresents or misinterprets Plato (Cherniss), or that the Neoplatonic thesis of harmony is absurd or misguided (Sorabji). Below I provide brief sketches of these and other notable disharmonists throughout history.

Eudorus of Alexandria (1st century B.C.E.). Reacts to the harmonist thesis of Antiochus, arguing, like Numenius, that “Plato’s philosophy essentially was Pythagorean and at odds with that of Aristotle”²⁷².

Atticus (1st century C.E.). According to Karamanolis, Atticus “addresses those who teach the doctrines of Plato through those of Aristotle, arguing that Aristotle’s philosophy systematically contradicts that of Plato, and hence is altogether useless for the Platonist”²⁷³.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 C.E.). For long held to be decidedly Aristotelian and anti-Platonic, the issue of Aquinas’ Platonism is now a topic of serious debate²⁷⁴. Moreover, in the context of this dissertation, whether it is even coherent to be both an Aristotelian and an anti-Platonist is also up for debate. Most Christian authors throughout the Middle Ages opted to side with *either* Plato *or* Aristotle, assuming or even arguing for their fundamental opposition:

“One way [of constructing an anti-Platonic Aristotelianism] occurs within the context of attempts to bring pagan Greek philosophy into the service of revealed theology. With Christian theological concerns in mind, John Philoponus will emphasize the superiority of Plato over Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas will do the opposite. In both cases the superiority is to be understood *au fond*, not merely in detail.”²⁷⁵

Martin Luther (1483-1546 C.E.). Famously criticizes Aristotle in favour of Plato, as in his *Heidelberg Disputation*:

²⁷² See Karamanolis 2006: 82-84.

²⁷³ Ibid, 29.

²⁷⁴ The relationship of this debate to the issue of harmony is interesting, but unfortunately outside of the scope of this dissertation. For more see O’Rourke 2003.

²⁷⁵ Gerson 2005: 45. See Runia 1989 for an overview of the early Christians’ stances on Aristotle.

“Eighth Conclusion:

Aristotle badly rebukes and ridicules the Platonic ideas [which is] better than his own philosophy.

In favour of the declaration:

That the philosophy of Plato is better than the philosophy of Aristotle appears from this, namely, that Plato always depends upon the divine and immortal, separate and eternal, insensible and intelligible, from whence he also recommends that singulars, individuals, and sensible things be abandoned because they cannot be known on account of their instability. Aristotle, being opposed to this in every way, ridicules the separable and intelligible things and brings in sensible things and singulars and thoroughly human and natural things. But, he does this most cunningly:

Firstly, because he cannot deny that the individual is transient [*fluxa*], he invents a form and different matter, and so the thing is not knowable as matter, but as form. Therefore, he says that the form is the cause of knowing [*causam sciendi*], and he calls this “divine, good, desirable” and he assigns the intellect to this. And so he frustrates every mind, while he examines the same thing in two ways.

Secondly, this “form” is a quiddity and the sum of his Metaphysics. So, he destroys all the ideas, putting in their place his own forms and quiddities conjoined to matter, ridiculing and denying [the existence of] the ideas separable from matter, as appears in many places, especially Metaphysics 1 and [Nicomachean] Ethics 1. But, it is well known by way of blessed Augustine, Iamblichus and all the Platonic disputants that the ideas of Plato are separate [from matter]. And so it is well known that the philosophy of Aristotle crawls in the dregs [*reptat in faecibus*] of corporeal and sensible things, whereas Plato moves among things separable and spiritual.”²⁷⁶

Harold Fredrik Cherniss (1904-1987 C.E.). Argues extensively that Aristotle misinterprets Plato, and that Aristotle’s claims concerning Plato’s unwritten doctrines are unreliable, most notably in his 1944 work *Aristotle’s Criticism of Plato and the Academy*. Cherniss assumes then that Aristotle is in fundamental disagreement with Plato, but that this disagreement is premised on a flawed understanding of Plato’s philosophy, or is directed at defective versions of Platonic philosophy.

Sir Richard Rustom Kharsedji Sorabji (1934- C.E.). Famously calls the harmony of Plato and Aristotle a “perfectly crazy position”. Sorabji adds, of course, that though it was ‘perfectly crazy’, it was also philosophically fruitful. Gerson questions the odd conjunction of absurdity and utility:

“One might well wonder why, if harmony is a crazy idea, the attempt to show it should be other than philosophically fruitless. Sorabji in a recent as yet unpublished paper suggests as an example of the fruitful outcome of the harmonization principle the efforts by Neoplatonists to understand the

²⁷⁶ Martin Luther, *Heidelberg Disputation*, 1518 (trans. Parker 2013).

Aristotelian account of sensible reality as it relates to the Platonic account of unchanging, eternal reality.”²⁷⁷

To me, Sorabji’s remark contains a hint of dubious assumption; it seems to imply that the Neoplatonic commentators went to work on framing Aristotle’s doctrine as harmonious with Plato’s with the assumption of harmony in mind, and that this ‘crazy’ project at least proved philosophically fruitful in the end. This is likely not an accurate assumption. It seems rather that, whilst appreciating the ways in which Aristotle does deviate from Plato, the conclusion these commentators drew from their deep examination of the work of the Stagirite was that he was, in the end, in harmony with Plato on the fundamental issues²⁷⁸.

These notable figures, both on the harmonist and disharmonist sides of the debate, are only a select handful of those who have weighed in decidedly on the topic, and thereby in some significant way influenced the discursive landscape. However, almost every major philosopher at some point or another deploys, or at least mentions, the distinction (or similarity) between Plato and Aristotle. In the concluding movement of this dissertation I return to the issue of how and why, in light of this, properly grasping the relationship between the thought of these two deeply influential figures is not simply an exercise in historical curiosity, but a crucial issue within the discipline of philosophy as a whole²⁷⁹.

2. Platonic versus Aristotelian Metaphysics Today

In Chapters 2 and 3 I have provided some of the evidence suggesting that an interpretation of Aristotle as anti-Platonic may be untenable, partly due to the exegetical force of reading Aristotle as a partisan in the Platonic project (as did the Neoplatonists), and partly due to the relative incoherence of developmentalist accounts of the Aristotelian corpus. Leaving these issues behind, even if we do not reject out of hand the possibility of a harmony between Plato and Aristotle, several important exegetical points remain in question. In assessing the relative harmony or disharmony of Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysics, contemporary scholars like Gerson have brought these issues into focus. Among the most significant of these, in terms of metaphysics, include; 1) the status of Aristotle’s *Categories* as a logical or metaphysical work, 2) the status of matter in Plato, and the relationship of this to Aristotle and; 3) the nature of divine thought in Aristotle.

²⁷⁷ Gerson 2005: 7.

²⁷⁸ Cf. Karamanolis 2006: 7-28. See also Chapter 5, section 2.

²⁷⁹ See Chapter 5, section 1.

2.1. The Categories of Reality

The status of Aristotle's *Categories* as either a logical or metaphysical work remains an ongoing topic of controversy in contemporary scholarship²⁸⁰. The significance for the question of harmony is apparent: if the *Categories* is a purely logical work, or as Gerson puts it, and can be read, without “excessive strain”, as “concerned entirely with language and conceptual thinking”²⁸¹, then it need not suppose a metaphysics that is either Platonic or anti-Platonic. In the very soft sense of harmony then, reading the *Categories* as a logical work makes it at least non-contradictory with Platonism, since “though Plato does have a great deal to say about these matters, it is not so clear that his remarks stand in the way of accepting the import of the far more detailed discussions of Aristotle”²⁸². In other words, if we read the *Categories* as a work on logic and language, then nothing in it directly contradicts any of the tenets of Platonism, and it can even be read as a more detailed study of logic and language, subjects which Plato only considers in an elementary manner. Many, but not all²⁸³, Neoplatonic harmonists read the *Categories* in exactly this manner, as a work whose aim σκοπός²⁸⁴ was the categorization of beings in terms of logic and language²⁸⁵ - a notable example here is Porphyry²⁸⁶. However, even if the *Categories* can be said to be a logical work, which is, as was mentioned, a topic of ongoing controversy, this does not necessarily close the case on the question of the putative harmony of the work with the doctrines of Plato, as Gerson rightly notes:

“Let us grant for the moment that the aim of *Categories* is open to question. Let us further grant that Porphyry's interpretation of that aim is not an unreasonable one. Still, one wants to insist that this interpretation does not remove the objection to harmonization. For the distinction between a logical and an ontological work does not imply that a logical work is totally innocent of any ontological commitments. Indeed, if logic is to be, as Aristotle evidently thought, an effective tool of demonstrative science, it is because that tool is shaped according to the ontological commitments of science. Chief among these commitments seems to be the absolute priority of such things as ‘this man’ and ‘this horse’.”²⁸⁷

Gerson's point here is significant: even if we can, without difficulty, read the *Categories* as a purely logical work (which I believe is the correct reading, based on the sheer volume of terminology in the work that seems purely and straightforwardly orientated towards the discussion of logic and linguistics), this does not mean we cannot glean from it certain ontological commitments, which we can then assess

²⁸⁰ See e.g. Krämer 1973: 122-125, Owens 1981: 14-22, Frede 1987: 11-48, Wedin 2000: 67-73, Burnyeat 2001: 106-108, and Kraut 2006: 86.

²⁸¹ Gerson 2005: 77. Cf. Reale 1980 and Wehrle 2000.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid, 80.

²⁸⁴ Ibid, 79: “One of the fundamental questions that Neoplatonic commentators generally asked about a text of Plato or Aristotle or indeed anyone else was “what is the aim or σκοπός of this work?” If two works, such as *Categories* and *Metaphysics*, were supposed to have different aims, then contradictions were much less likely to be seen.”

²⁸⁵ Ibid, 79.

²⁸⁶ Porphyry *In Cat.* 58, 4-21 (trans. Strange). See also Chapter 2, section 4.2.

²⁸⁷ Ibid, 80.

towards the goal of establishing or refuting harmony. Modern readers have taken these commitments to do the latter: “Nevertheless, what Aristotle says in the *Categories* primarily about substance (οὐσία) seems to contemporary readers at least a stumbling block sufficient to deter all but the most benighted Platonist”²⁸⁸.

Whether the *Categories* is a work primarily about logic or metaphysics then, turns out to be less important, in terms of harmonization, than the ontological commitments that the work can be taken to espouse either way. The key issues turn out to revolve around questions of the Forms, universals, predication and participation, which I return to in section 3 below.

2.2. Matter

As we saw in Chapter 2, section 3, an important part of the harmonization of Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysics hinges on whether Aristotle is accurate in identifying Plato’s Receptacle as matter – this matters to harmonization because, if Aristotle is not accurate on this matter, it throws serious doubt on his reliability as a witness to the *agrapha dogmata*, and therefore (to some extent) on his reliability as an exegete of Plato in general²⁸⁹. Whether or not Aristotle is accurate in his identification of matter as the Receptacle remains a matter of ongoing controversy. Miller summarizes the terms of the resulting dispute concisely:

“Aristotle’s formulation of the difficulties raised by Plato’s account of the Receptacle serves to divide ancient and modern scholarship into four camps: (I) those who think that the Receptacle is matter (in some sense); (II) those who think that the Receptacle is space (in some sense) and therefore not matter; (III) those who think that the Receptacle is (in some sense) both; and (IV) those who think that it is neither.”²⁹⁰

Miller’s own argument in *The Third Kind in Plato’s Timaeus* is summarized by Gerson:

“...Miller... argues that the ‘third kind’ at *Tim.* 49A1-2, which is usually taken to refer to the receptacle understood as either matter or space (or place) or the confused amalgam of the two, actually refers to a metaphysical principle, distinguished from the other ‘two kinds’: namely, the intelligibles and their sensible images. If this is so, then it is plausible to take this metaphysical principle as being instantiated by *two different* physical principles: namely, matter and space (or place). This would mean that Plato never intended to merge these. If true, this would mean that Aristotle at least tendentiously portrayed Plato’s account.”²⁹¹

²⁸⁸ Gerson 2005: 77.

²⁸⁹ I return to the question of the relevance of Aristotle’s reliability as a witness to the *agrapha dogmata* in section Chapter 4, section 5.1 below.

²⁹⁰ Miller 2003: 20.

²⁹¹ Gerson 2005: 115.

On its own though, the possibility that Aristotle ‘at least tendentiously’ portrays correctly the Platonic account of matter²⁹² is not enough to prove Aristotle’s worth as exegete as regards the *agrapha dogmata*²⁹³, although it is enough to admit at least the possibility of harmony between the two thinkers on this issue, as was shown in Chapter 2.

2.3. Divine Thought

As discussed previously, a key point of harmony turns on whether Aristotle’s Unmoved Mover is in fact identical to the Demiurge of Platonic metaphysics. In Chapter 2 we saw evidence to provide at least initial plausibility for this claim. Here I will investigate the contemporary debate on the issue in more detail, by rehearsing the arguments in favour of this position made by Gerson on the issue of divine thought. Gerson summarizes the key issue at stake for harmony in terms of divine thought as such:

“The central question for our purposes is whether God thinks only about his own thinking or whether he thinks about something else. The centrality of the question hardly needs emphasizing. For if God thinks about all that is intelligible – whatever precisely that might be – the eternity of what is intelligible and its separability from matter and sensibles generally are as well established as the eternity and separability of God himself. The relation between God and these intelligibles would then not look very different from the relation between the Demiurge and intelligibles, as Platonists conceive of them.”²⁹⁴

The central impediment to such a harmonist interpretation of divine thought in Aristotle is the argument that Aristotle’s conception of the Unmoved Mover as ‘thinking thinking of thinking’ in fact strips the Unmoved Mover’s thought of content. Briefly, the argument is that “if God is thinking of thinking, that is, thinking about himself, then God cannot be thinking of anything else”²⁹⁵. If God cannot be thinking of anything else, then he cannot be thinking the Forms, signalling a thorough departure from the kind of metaphysics associated with the Platonic Demiurge (whose thinking has the content of all that is intelligible). In opposition to this argument, Gerson (alongside others²⁹⁶) claim that the twin statements that ‘God thinks himself’ and ‘God is thinking thinking of thinking’ are meant to distinguish divine thought from human thought, not to empty divine thought of content:

“...because God’s essence or οὐσία is identical with his thinking and not in potency to it, when he thinks, he thinks himself. By contrast, another thinker, such as a human being, has an essence that is not identical with thinking. So, when human beings think, they are in essence not identical with what they think. Although they are not in essence identical with what they think, their thinking *is* in a way identical with what they think, as Aristotle will carefully add at the end of the chapter. So,

²⁹² See also Keyt 1961.

²⁹³ I return to the question of Aristotle and the *agrapha dogmata* in Chapter 4, section 5.1 below.

²⁹⁴ Gerson 2005: 195-196.

²⁹⁵ Ibid, 196.

²⁹⁶ See e.g. Norman 1969.

the crucial difference between God and human beings is not that God thinks of nothing but we think of something; rather, it is that God is not in potency to his thinking, while we are. Therefore, God (who is just thinking) is thinking of what he himself is: that is, thinking. The point of saying that God is “thinking thinking of thinking” is not to drain all content out of God’s thinking but to contrast that thinking with the thinking of things that are not essentially identical with the essence of the thinker. The exalted position of the prime unmoved mover is owing to the fact that he is nothing but thinking, not to the alleged fact that there is no content in his thinking.”²⁹⁷

Taking the textual evidence into account then, it seems entirely reasonable that beyond the initial plausibility of the identification of the Unmoved Mover with the Platonic Demiurge, there is also enough clear evidence of similarity between descriptions of the thinking of the Unmoved Mover in Aristotle and the Neoplatonic conception of the thinking of the Platonic Demiurge to suggest a clear harmony.

3. Plato versus Aristotle on the Forms Today

The keystone of reading Aristotle as an anti-Platonist is, and always has been, Aristotle’s apparent rejection of Platonic Forms. Whilst Neoplatonists did not take this rejection at face value (Aristotle was rejecting *flawed versions* of the theory of Forms, not the Platonic theory proper), modern interpreters generally have, resulting in a gulf between the ancient and modern ideas concerning the harmony of Plato and Aristotle. More than any other issue, the question of Aristotle’s stance on the Platonic Forms can be seen as the battleground upon which the question of harmony will be decided. Below I review some of the most significant issues in the contemporary compositions of this debate, drawing on the work of Gerson and his contemporaries. These are; 1) the issue of generation; 2) various questions surrounding the Forms, universals, and intelligible reality and; 3) some recent discussions surrounding the Third Man argument.

3.1. Material Generation

As discussed in Chapter 2, Aristotle’s injunction that “man begets man” seems to commit Aristotle to a view of generation that bypasses the need for Forms. The Neoplatonic response, as we saw, was to counter that Forms, as paradigmatic causes, fall outside of the Aristotelian fourfold schema, as a complementary condition of the possibility of the schema itself (which is achieved by identifying the Aristotelian concept of ‘definition’ with Forms). In contemporary debates, Aristotle’s apparent rejection of paradigmatic forms has been taken to constitute The Stagirite’s “misguided and unequivocal rejection of the sort of explanation given in *Phaedo*”²⁹⁸; that is, Aristotle’s rejection of the need for Forms for

²⁹⁷ Gerson 2005: 198.

²⁹⁸ Ibid, 117

generation – it is the father that explains the presence of the son, not the Form of Humanity. Vlastos, for example, mentions how some scholars have attempted to read Aristotle as conflating the putative explanatory role of *Platonic Forms* with his own *efficient cause*:

“[Another]... interpretation... [is that] the Form is meant to take the place of Aristotle’s “efficient cause.” So Aristotle himself expounded our passage, complaining that “Socrates in the *Phaedo*” thought the Forms “sufficient *aitia* [causes] of generation,” though it is hard to know just how seriously he took this reading, for it is clear from another remark of his that he knows quite well that this cannot be Plato’s conclusion.”²⁹⁹

Lennox³⁰⁰ agrees that reading Aristotle here as misunderstanding Plato is probably spurious, as Gerson notes:

“Lennox... argues that Aristotle understands perfectly well what Plato is offering in *Phaedo* as a causal explanation of the presence of form and that “this man (i.e., the father) explains the presence of that man (i.e., the son)” is the appropriate explanatory corrective to “the Form of Humanity explains the presence of this man.”³⁰¹

Gerson adds that “the Neoplatonists as well as Plato do in fact provide arguments for the view that “being of no use for generation” does not exhaust the exigencies of the explanation for generation”³⁰². In other words, that the Forms do not play a direct causal role in the processes of material generation, and that material generation can be adequately explained in purely material terms, does not exhaust the explanation of material generation; as we saw earlier, the fact that nature acts in a certain way does not explain why it in fact does act in such a way – and Aristotle was aware of this³⁰³. The Neoplatonic commentators then, see the need to supplement the Aristotelian schema of material generation with the Platonic principles that explain its very possibility. As we saw earlier, this is achieved by the insistence of the need for paradigmatic causation in Aristotle’s schema (based on Aristotle’s own remarks on generation), coupled with the identification of the Aristotelian ‘definition’ or ‘formula’ with the Platonic Form³⁰⁴.

The strength of the Neoplatonic reading is that it allows us here again to read Aristotle as internally consistent and coherent. In this regard, at least, it is far more exegetically and contextually *apropos* than the reading which turns Aristotle, by all accounts Plato’s *best* student, into a thinker who so badly misunderstood his teacher’s doctrine that this misunderstanding even taints and makes incoherent his

²⁹⁹ Vlastos 1969: 303, cf. Aristotle *De Gen. et Corr.* 335B9-16 & *Met.* 991B3-4. The ‘other remark’ that Vlastos mentions here is from Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* (988A8-10): “It is evident from what has been said that he [Plato] has used only two *aitiai*: that of the essence, and the material *aitia*”.

³⁰⁰ Lennox 2001: 183.

³⁰¹ Gerson 2005: 117.

³⁰² *Ibid.*

³⁰³ See Chapter 2, section 3.3.

³⁰⁴ See Chapter 2, section 4.1.

own positions, not to mention those he assigns to his eminent teacher. On the other hand, if this is indeed the case, those who wish to hold to such an interpretation of Aristotle will have to, in the end, admit this inconsistency. It seems that in many cases, we are offered the choice of an incoherent Aristotle who is fundamentally opposed to Plato, or a coherent Aristotle who is fundamentally in harmony with Plato. Though the issues of harmony and internal consistency must often be examined on the basis of particular doctrines, I argue that viewing the Aristotelian corpus, as a whole, as harmonious with Platonic principles relieves so much internal tension that this turns out to be a far more convincing reading than either the circularly developmentalist or awkwardly anti-Platonic alternatives³⁰⁵.

Of course, the strength of a reading of Aristotle as *fundamentally* in harmony with Plato requires that those aspects of Aristotle that seem most directly in contradiction to (or most directly in agreement with), Platonic principles be addressed. This leads us to examine, as we have in previous movements, Aristotle putative criticism of the Platonic Forms, and thereafter his putative commitment to the immortality of some part of the soul.

3.2. Forms, Universals and Intelligible Reality

The keynote of Gerson's endorsement of Neoplatonic harmonization (as regards Aristotle's attitude towards the Forms) is twofold: the argument that Forms and universals have distinct explanatory functions, and the assertion that Aristotle's eternal intelligibles, correctly conceived, are in fact none other than Plato's Forms. In this section I will examine the contemporary debates surrounding these issues, comparing the arguments for and against both positions. The main arenas of contention that I will examine here are: 1) universals and nominalism; 2) the ontology of sensible substance in Aristotle and; 3) Forms and intelligible reality.

3.2.1. Universals and Nominalism

Ample evidence has been provided in this dissertation to support the general notion that Aristotle's universals can in no way replace any theory of Forms in an explanatory capacity. Nonetheless, the status of universals in Aristotle's metaphysics remains one of the most disputed interpretative issues in the entirety of Aristotelian scholarship. A salient feature of this debate for the purposes of this dissertation is the question of whether Aristotle's "rejection of the substantiality of the universal entails his acceptance of a nominalist position"³⁰⁶. Aristotle's clear commitment to the existence of eternal intelligibles aside, I will here present briefly the arguments for and against a nominalist interpretation of Aristotelian universals.

³⁰⁵ See also Chapter 5.

³⁰⁶ Gerson 2005: 227.

The initial evidence for taking Aristotle as nominalist can be found, for example, in the *Metaphysics*:

“Let us return to the subject of our inquiry, which is substance. As the substratum and the essence and the compound of these are called substance, so also is the universal. About two of these we have spoken; both about the essence and about the substratum, of which we have said that it underlies in two senses, either being a ‘this’-which is the way in which an animal underlies its attributes-or as the matter underlies the complete reality. The universal also is thought by some to be in the fullest sense a cause, and a principle; therefore let us attack the discussion of this point also. For it seems impossible that any universal term should be the name of a substance. For firstly the substance of each thing is that which is peculiar to it, which does not belong to anything else; but the universal is common, since that is called universal which is such as to belong to more than one thing. Of which individual then will this be the substance? Either of all or of none; but it cannot be the substance of all. And if it is to be the substance of one, this one will be the others also; for things whose substance is one and whose essence is one are themselves also one.

Further, substance means that which is not predicable of a subject, but the universal is predicable of some subject always.

But perhaps the universal, while it cannot be substance in the way in which the essence is so, can be present in this; e.g. ‘animal’ can be present in ‘man’ and ‘horse’. Then clearly it is a formula of the essence. And it makes no difference even if it is not a formula of everything that is in the substance; for none the less the universal will be the substance of something, as ‘man’ is the substance of the individual man in whom it is present, so that the same result will follow once more; for the universal, e.g. ‘animal’, will be the substance of that in which it is present as something peculiar to it. And further it is impossible and absurd that the ‘this’, i.e. the substance, if it consists of parts, should not consist of substances nor of what is a ‘this’, but of quality; for that which is not substance, i.e. the quality, will then be prior to substance and to the ‘this’. Which is impossible; for neither in formula nor in time nor in coming to be can the modifications be prior to the substance; for then they will also be separable from it. Further, Socrates will contain a substance present in a substance, so that this will be the substance of two things. And in general it follows, if man and such things are substance, that none of the elements in their formulae is the substance of anything, nor does it exist apart from the species or in anything else; I mean, for instance, that no ‘animal’ exists apart from the particular kinds of animal, nor does any other of the elements present in formulae exist apart.

If, then, we view the matter from these standpoints, it is plain that no universal attribute is a substance, and this is plain also from the fact that no common predicate indicates a ‘this’, but rather a ‘such’. If not, many difficulties follow and especially the ‘third man’.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁷ Aristotle *Met.* VII.

An example of a writer on the side of interpreting Aristotle as nominalist then, is Kraut, whose critique of Gerson's *Aristotle and other Platonists* seems to assign a kind of nominalism to Aristotle, at least as far as Kraut takes Aristotle's universals to be an alternative to and critique of Platonic metaphysics:

“Why are Plato's Forms not to be understood as the sorts of items that Aristotle calls universals? Is... [Gerson] saying that Forms are *particulars* rather than universals? Not at all! As he sees it, they fit into neither category. What then are they? [Gerson's]... answer is that “they provide the explanation for the *possibility* of prediction” (pg. 82, his emphasis). More fully: “If something is large, then ‘large’ stands for a real feature in this world. But if something else can be large, too... then there must be *another* real part of the world that the word ‘Largeness’ stands for... [T]hings like Largeness are the entities that provide eternally the condition for the possibility of things having words like ‘large’ correctly used of them” (p. 211, his emphasis).

No one would quarrel with these statements, but they are the closest... [Gerson] comes to saying what Forms are, and they provide no good reason for refusing to say that they are the sorts of objects that are usually called properties or universals. In common philosophical parlance, it is the mark of a property or universal that it is something that can be “shared in” by many things – something that can have one or more “instances.” (A class is a different sort of entity, because it is the sort of thing that can have *members* rather than *instances*. A whole is yet another sort of thing: it has *parts*.) [Gerson]... himself repeatedly speaks of Forms as things that have “instances”... In fact, it is nearly impossible to avoid using “instantiation,” or its cognates, or equivalent terms, in describing the relationship between the Form designated by “Largeness” and the many observable things that are large. Those same locutions are applicable to the relationship between the things that Aristotle calls universals and the particular items of which those universals are predicated. So, in common parlance, Plato's Forms and Aristotle's universals are what we call “universals.” And once we recognize this, it is entirely reasonable to take Aristotle to be making an anti-Platonic point when he says that things like this horse and this man are primary substances, and that the things that are predicated of them are dependent on them.”³⁰⁸

Aristotle does indeed refer to the dependence of universals as ‘second substances’ on particulars as ‘first substances’. Yet the matter is not so simple. In the *Metaphysics* The Philosopher drops the term “secondary substances” when he refers to universals³⁰⁹, and so Kraut's conclusion does not remain unchallenged. Irwin argues that universals are not properties because for Aristotle of the *Organon* and the *Categories* universals are not ‘thises’; “they necessarily have plural instances, and therefore they

³⁰⁸ Kraut 2006: 85-86. Kraut (ibid, 86) also maintains, that contra Gerson and the Neoplatonic commentators, the *Categories* cannot be read as a purely logical work: “Aristotle is talking about beings – things like this man and this horse – and not only about words. His thesis that Socrates is an example of a *primary* substance, prior to his qualities, is not a claim about the word “Socrates” or “man” or “pale,” but about the ontological relationship between what these words name. So the Neoplatonic strategy, which seeks to harmonize the *Categories* with Platonic metaphysics by finding no ontology in the former, will not work.” Of course, Gerson (2005: 80) anticipates this critique with the caveat that even a work that may be primarily *logical* yet has *ontological commitments*, and that these will have to be examined if Platonic-Aristotelian harmony is to be established or refuted. See also Chapter 2, section 4.2.

³⁰⁹ Irwin 1988: 267.

aren't simply properties"³¹⁰. They can be substances though, and are dependent on first substances³¹¹, as already mentioned. However, Aristotle changes his tune in the *Metaphysics*³¹². Aristotle starts out by arguing that particulars are 'first' substances: "the particular non-inherent subject is called substance 'most fully and primarily and more than anything else'"³¹³. Universals then, are 'second' substances because Aristotle argues that the subject-criterion is prior to the essence-criterion³¹⁴. However, Irwin points out that if particulars meet the subject-criterion better, then universals meet the essence-criterion better³¹⁵. And so, if universals are secondary as substances, they "may be primary as essences"³¹⁶. Indeed, in the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle does appeal to the essence-criterion to understand universals³¹⁷, drops their 'secondary' dependence on particulars, and seems to argue that universals *are* substances *because of their epistemological and explanatory roles*³¹⁸: "we understand particulars as far as we group them in terms of kinds under universals, and belief in universals seems to suggest that they still have a claim to be substances even if we also recognise properties"³¹⁹. Moreover, Gerson would add in response to Kraut, that there *is* good reason to say that Plato's Forms are not the kind of things usually called properties or universals (and the kind of thing Aristotle calls universals in particular), in so far at least that Forms explain the metaphysical possibility of predication, whereas universals describe this predication as it occurs within human cognition³²⁰.

In fact, it turns out that many scholars, even those who read Aristotle as decidedly anti-Platonic, yet hold that Aristotle was also decidedly antinominalist. We have already considered Irwin's arguments briefly. Another example is Lear:

"Now before Aristotle begins his inquiry in *Metaphysics* VII, it does seem as though the intelligibility of the world is under threat. For in *Metaphysics* III, where Aristotle catalogues the difficulties which confront the philosophical inquirer, he asks whether substance is a particular or a universal. It looks as though the answer must be 'neither.' For if a substance is a particular, it will not be knowable... But it is unacceptable that substance be unknowable. If, on the other hand, substance is a universal, it will be knowable, yet it will not be capable of independent existence... But substance is supposed to be ontologically independent. It looks then, as though substance can either be knowable or ontologically basic, but not both. This is untenable.

³¹⁰ Ibid, 80.

³¹¹ Ibid, Section 42, 80-82.

³¹² Viz. *ibid*, 267.

³¹³ Ibid, 80.

³¹⁴ Viz. *ibid*, 81.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ibid. Cf. Witt 1989 for arguments for essences being the cause for the existence of substances rather than playing a mere classificatory role.

³¹⁷ Viz. Irwin 1988: 267.

³¹⁸ He does however make it clear in the *Metaphysics* (Book Z and Book M) that *ontologically* universals are not substances – see for instance Scaltsas 1994: 257 ff.

³¹⁹ Ibid, 268.

³²⁰ See Chapter 2, section 4.2 and Chapter 4 section 4.1.

Aristotle solves this dilemma, but he does so without opting either for the particular or for the universal as primary substance. What he realizes in *Metaphysics* VII is that the choice between particular and universal is not exhaustive. There is, he discovers, a way of being a ‘this something’ which is neither a particular nor a universal. That is why it is crucial not to assume that a ‘this something’ is a particular. The form or essence of each species is, Aristotle discovers, a ‘this something,’ yet it is neither a particular nor a universal... Once Aristotle discovered that an individual like Socrates could be conceived as a composite of form and matter, it was a short step to realizing that the species *man* could be conceived as a universal which itself has a formal and material aspect. The species *man* could be conceived as human soul embodied in such and such a type of flesh and bones. *Human soul* is thus the form of the species *man*...

...

Now if there is a way that the form of a species can be a ‘this something,’ then this form can count as ontologically basic. *Human soul*, for example, is the form of the species *man* and so it can count as one of the basic things there is. Each species-form is eternal, and Aristotle thinks that each individual organism, by realizing its form, participates to the best of its ability in something that is ontologically basic and divine. And yet the form or essence of each species is also definable, and so it is thoroughly intelligible. Species-form satisfies both of the constraints on primary substances – basicness and intelligibility – and thus the hierarchy and intelligibility of reality can be secured.”³²¹

As such, Aristotle seems to hold to the existence (and ontological primacy), of a ‘this-something’ that can be predicated of many individuals – a basically antinomialist stance, or at least not a typical nominalist stance³²².

Gerson in his own analysis establishes the basic foundation of Aristotle’s antinomialism:

“If a many is possible – that is, if it is possible that there should be many individuals that are identical in some way – then we are forced to make a distinction between the individual and the attribute or property or Form-instance or whatever we choose to call it in virtue of which that individual belongs to the many. And at this point we can note that Aristotle is without question in concert with this analysis... See *On Ideas* 79, 15-17 and 81, 8-10, where Aristotle says that the arguments for Forms show that there must exist something besides “individuals”... and something that is predicated of a many: that is, of a many as such. This seems sufficient to establish Aristotle’s antinomialistic credentials.”³²³

Indeed, in the *Categories* and the *Metaphysics* Aristotle makes claims that appear incompatible with nominalism:

³²¹ Lear 1987: 274-275.

³²² Of course, Lear premises this, to some extent, on the idea that Aristotle is developing an ontology in *Metaphysics* that breaks with that of *Categories*. See Lear 1987: 275.

³²³ Gerson 2005: 276.

“The species in which the things primarily called substances are, are called *secondary substances*, as also are the genera of these species. For example, the individual man belongs in a species, man, and animal is a genus of the species; so these – both man and animal – are called secondary substances.”³²⁴

“What the essence is and in what sense it is independent, has been stated universally in a way which is true of every case, and also why the formula of the essence of some things contains the parts of the thing defined, while that of others does not. And we have stated that in the formula of the substance the material parts will not be present (for they are not even parts of the substance in that sense, but of the concrete substance; but of this there is in a sense a formula, and in a sense there is not; for there is no formula of it with its matter, for this is indefinite, but there is a formula of it with reference to its primary substance-e.g. in the case of man the formula of the soul-, for the substance is the indwelling form, from which and the matter the so-called concrete substance is derived; e.g. concavity is a form of this sort, for from this and the nose arise ‘snub nose’ and ‘snubness’); but in the concrete substance, e.g. a snub nose or Callias, the matter also will be present. And we have stated that the essence and the thing itself are in some cases the same; i.e. in the case of primary substances, e.g. curvature and the essence of curvature if this is primary. (By a ‘primary’ substance I mean one which does not imply the presence of something in something else, i.e. in something that underlies it which acts as matter.) But things which are of the nature of matter, or of wholes that include matter, are not the same as their essences, nor are accidental unities like that of ‘Socrates’ and ‘musical’; for these are the same only by accident.”³²⁵

Aristotle’s rejection of nominalism then (especially if we also take his commitment to eternal intelligibles into account), seems to be of a similar kind to Plato’s in the *Parmenides*, that is, a rejection of the kind of extreme nominalism proposed by Zeno (that no two things can share the same attribute and still remain individual; which means that no ‘many’ can exist), which also amounts to a rejection of most modern forms of nominalism (which amount generally to denying that universals exist)³²⁶. As Gerson admits, this antinomialism (and consequent realism) is not enough to, on its own, establish Aristotle as in harmony with Plato *au fond*. However, in concert with all the other factors canvassed in this dissertation, the possibility that Aristotle and Plato’s antinomialism (and realism) are of a similar kind, and a facet of their fundamental harmony, seems at least reasonable – especially in light of the further thesis that Aristotle may not be committed to the ontological primacy of sensible substance, as we shall see below.

³²⁴ Aristotle *Cat.* 2a15-19.

³²⁵ Aristotle *Met.* VII.

³²⁶ See Chapter 1, section 1.1 and n. 126.

3.2.2. The Ontology of Sensible Substance

As mentioned above, whether Aristotle's *Categories* is ultimately a logical or metaphysical work, it remains strewn with certain traceable ontological commitments³²⁷. One of these concerns the ontological status of universals, as discussed in the above section on nominalism. Another relevant question is the ontological status of substance, and sensible substance in particular. Gerson critiques Daniel Graham's contention (shared by some other scholars³²⁸) that Aristotle in the *Metaphysics* departs from the view of substance he put forward in the *Categories*, thereby making "an unnecessary and damaging concession to Platonism". Taking into account that in the above section it was acknowledged that Aristotle for instance does not refer to universals as 'secondary substances' in the *Metaphysics* while he does so in the *Categories*, this does not necessarily imply total inconsistency between the two works. Gerson, for instance, argues against Graham, and supported by the Neoplatonic tradition, that the view of substance put forward in the *Categories* is consistent with that given in the *Metaphysics*, and that on the whole, this view is in harmony with Platonic metaphysics.

The key argument made by Graham is that the introduction of matter as a component of sensible substance in the *Metaphysics* breaks firmly with the account in *Categories* of substance as fundamental (or ontologically ultimate): on this account, sensible substance is only fundamental if it is conceived of as atomistic, not as hylomorphic, which the introduction of matter to its composition by necessity makes it to be³²⁹. As such, Graham argues a developmentalist line – Aristotle develops (apparently 'unfortunately'³³⁰) from a more purely Aristotelian account in *Categories* to a Platonic account in *Metaphysics*. Gerson counters that even if one were to concede that sensible substance is not ontologically ultimate in the *Metaphysics*, it is not at all clear that it was such in the *Categories*. Gerson shows that, as is often the case when the developmentalist line is being toed, serious exegetical gymnastics are required to attempt to show that Aristotle at any point seriously considered sensible substance as ontologically ultimate:

"Assuming that Graham is correct in holding that sensible substance is not ontologically ultimate in *Metaphysics* just because it is composed of form *and* matter, the question then becomes, is it so in *Categories*, as Graham claims? In order to maintain this position, one would first of all have to disregard the claims in the *exoterica* regarding God, intellect, and "divine intelligibles." Otherwise one would be forced, as is Graham, to assign *Eudemus*, *Protrepticus*, and *On Philosophy* to the period in which Aristotle was committed to the second of his two systems and had rejected the first. Second, one would have to excise from *On Interpretation* the passage in which Aristotle says: "It is evident from what has been said that that which necessarily exists exists in actuality, so that if eternal things... are prior, actuality is also prior to potentiality. And some things are actualities without

³²⁷ See Chapter 4, section 2.1 above.

³²⁸ See e.g. Mann 2000.

³²⁹ Gerson 2005: 99.

³³⁰ See Chapter 5, section 2.

potentiality, for example, the primary substances...., some things are actualities with potentiality, and these are what are prior by nature, though posterior in time, and some things are never actualities, but are potentialities alone”.

Graham recognizes that this passage contradicts his claim that sensibles, albeit *atomic* sensibles, are the primary substances. So, he rejects the passage as “an insertion (by Aristotle no doubt) which does not belong to the original version of *On Interpretation*.” This is of course possible. But the motive for claiming it is odd. It is that only in Aristotle’s later period, the period of his second system, did he come to identify ‘primary substance’ with the supersensible. This, too, is perhaps possible. But what I find highly improbable, if not impossible, is that Aristotle at any point in his career held the view that what undergoes change – sensible substance – is absolutely fundamental in the universe.”³³¹

In the final analysis then, these attempts ultimately fail to contradict the simple fact that Aristotle is nowhere tied explicitly to the conclusion that sensible substance is ontologically ultimate (even if we concede that he may be tied to the conclusion that sensible substance is *logically* atomic). At least, this would be Gerson’s contention. Many scholars would emphatically disagree. Cohen, for example, makes the role of primary substance in Aristotle’s metaphysics explicit:

“The individuals in the category of substance play a special role in this scheme. Aristotle calls them “primary substances” (*prôtai ousiai*) for without them, as he says, nothing else would exist. Indeed, Aristotle offers an argument (2a35–2b7) to establish the primary substances as the fundamental entities in this ontology. Everything that is not a primary substance, he points out, stands in one of the two relations (inhering ‘in’, or being ‘said of’) to primary substances. A genus, such as animal, is ‘said of’ the species below it and, since they are ‘said of’ primary substances, so is the genus (recall the transitivity of the ‘said of’ relation). Thus, everything in the category of substance that is not itself a primary substance is, ultimately, ‘said of’ primary substances. And if there were no primary substances, there would be no “secondary” substances (species and genera), either. For these secondary substances are just the ways in which the primary substances are fundamentally classified within the category of substance. As for the members of non-substance categories, they too depend for their existence on primary substances. A universal in a non-substance category, e.g., colour, in the category of quality, is ‘in’ body, Aristotle tells us, and therefore in individual bodies. For colour could not be ‘in’ body, in general, unless it were ‘in’ at least some particular bodies. Similarly, particulars in non-substance categories (although there is not general agreement among scholars about what such particulars might be) cannot exist on their own. E.g., a determinate shade of colour, or a particular and non-shareable bit of that shade, is not capable of existing on its own—if it were not ‘in’ at least some primary substance, it would not exist. So primary substances are the basic entities—the basic “things that there are”—in the world of the *Categories*.”³³²

³³¹ Gerson 2005: 99-100.

³³² Cohen 2000.

As we can see from the above, the ultimate primacy of sensible substance in Aristotle's metaphysics remains widely accepted, and any debate on the issue is therefore immediately contentious – perhaps due to the deeply ingrained habit of viewing Aristotle as necessarily and fundamentally anti-Platonic (in some cases to the point of misconstruing Aristotle to be some species of materialist)³³³. However, despite the serious reservations many scholars may have against Gerson's conclusion, there is, as we have seen, some compelling evidence for the thesis that Aristotle is committed exactly to the view that sensible substance is *not* ontologically fundamental (a conclusion that is bolstered by others, e.g. that of Aristotle's commitment to eternal intelligibles, the essentially theological basis of his entire metaphysics in eternal substance, his antinomialism etc.) – a conclusion which of course turns out to be useful to the project of harmonism:

“The posteriority of the composite to the form may be taken in two radically different ways. In one way, it could mean that the form of *this* composite is prior to it. In another way, it could mean that a substance that was nothing but form is ontologically prior to a substance that is a composite of form and matter. In favour of the latter interpretation is that if the form of the composite is prior to the composite, then we would seem to have on our hands *two* actualities, the form and the composite. But this will not do, for Socrates and Socrates' form are not two actualities. If we agree that the one actuality is the composite, and this is posterior owing to its matter, we might still want to hold that the form that is prior is only the form of the composite, but in that case the priority could only be conceptual, not ontological. But this seems rather implausible, given that Aristotle has already said and will say again that the investigation of sensible substance has been undertaken in order to discover the substance that is separate from sensible substance: that is, the substance that is ontologically prior.

What is especially significant here to the eye of the Neoplatonist is that the posteriority of the composite – that is, sensible substance – harmonizes nicely with the Platonic argument that the sensible world in general has less being than the intelligible world. Aristotle has already in Book Z, chapter two alluded to the fact that though Plato believed in sensible substance, he also believed in eternal substances that have ‘more being’... than sensible substances. It would seem that only someone with a deep prior commitment to *disharmony* would want to insist that Aristotle does not commit himself to the view that eternal substance has more being than sensible substance just as the form of sensible composites has more being than the matter or the composite itself. With such a commitment, however, goes one pillar of support for the view that Aristotle rejected the Platonic account of the intelligible world as the really real world and the sensible world as less than really real.

In the passage immediately following the description of the life of the prime unmoved mover [in the *Metaphysics*], Aristotle explicitly criticizes Pythagoreans and Speusippus (but not Plato) for holding that that which is most beautiful and best is found not ‘in the principle’ (ἐν ἀρχῇ) but rather

³³³ See Chapter 5, section 1 and 2.

in the products of the principles. According to Aristotle, they argued incorrectly from the fact that whereas in plants and animals the principles are causes, it is in the products that beauty and perfection are to be found. On the contrary, says Aristotle, the imperfect comes from the perfect, as the seed comes from the man. This passage is typically taken as adding little or nothing to the foregoing argument or to the following lines at the end of the chapter in which Aristotle summarizes the attributes of the prime unmoved mover. But Aristotle is not here making a point about priority within nature, a point that would be irrelevant to the aim of the entire chapter. He is making a general point about the priority of the eternal and actual and perfect to everything else and adducing Pythagoreans and Speusippus as among those who do not understand this. Aristotle's remark that the man is prior to the seed is given as an analogy or metaphor... of the general point. The top-down approach that Aristotle here endorses in the middle of an argument for the priority of the eternal to the transitory is in fact as deeply Platonic a claim as Aristotle anywhere makes."³³⁴

In the above Gerson argues that not only is Aristotle not committed to the ontological primacy of sensible substance, but that his *rejection* of that primacy is in harmony with Plato. In fact, Gerson reads Aristotle to not only reject the primacy of sensible substance, but to also concurrently adhere to a top-down metaphysics that is deeply Platonic. No doubt, this contention will be met with serious scrutiny by any who hold to Aristotle's commitment to sensible substance as ontologically primary, and the anti-Platonism which that putative commitment entails.

A further significant point here, as regards the harmonic thesis, is the claim is made by the little known Neoplatonist Dexippus, that Aristotle in the *Categories* is using the term 'substance' in a very particular way:

"For this is what Aristotle lays down about these substances in Book Λ of *Metaphysics* and here he subsumes the multiplicity of substances under substance in general. He brought them all together into one system and traced them back to one originating principle. For it will hardly be that anything else would participate in unity, if substance itself, which has its being in the One, is to be denied that completeness which is attributable to unity. So, since intelligible reality is ineffable, he makes use of the name of 'substance' metaphorically and analogically from what is familiar to sense perception."³³⁵

Dexippus' point, as Gerson notes, is that the type of 'substance' that can be claimed to be ontologically ultimate (in the Platonic sense), i.e. intelligibles, can only be called 'substance' *metaphorically*: "The central point Dexippus is making... is that 'substance' in the *Categories* is applied *properly* to sensibles and *metaphorically* to intelligibles, but the metaphor is of a *special* sort (i.e. *analogical*) because

³³⁴ Gerson 2005: 194-195.

³³⁵ Dexippus *In Cat.* 41, 13-19.

intelligibles are *ineffable*”³³⁶. A significant, and interesting, point of harmony is achieved by this analogical argument, as Gerson explains:

“If the sensible world is an image of the intelligible world, as Platonists generally hold, then the metaphor [applying the term ‘substance’ to intelligibles] should go the other way. Intelligibles should be the primary designate of whatever terms are applied both to them and to sensibles. That is what Plotinus did in designating the ‘real’ man as the Form of Man and Socrates as man metaphorically. But here the order of designation is reversed, and the reason seems to be epistemological. Aristotle himself maintained the principle that “the natural way to proceed is from what is more known and clearer to us to what is by nature clearer and more known.” [*Phys.* A 1, 184a16-18] This is the order of investigation. It is how knowledge of first principles is attained. By contrast, the order of scientific demonstration is from what is “more known by nature” to “what is more known by us.” [*APo.* A 2]

Dexippus actually assumes (perhaps from Porphyry or Iamblichus) a benign and favourable interpretation of Aristotle. He assumes that the epistemological order from the immediate, sensible, and particular to the intelligible is a passage from effect to cause. The ineffability of the cause is a separate point. Aristotle’s doctrine might be interpreted by an opponent as self-defeating if in thus proceeding the result is not a cause but merely universals. As we have seen, Neoplatonists are not hostile to an Aristotelian account of universals. They are hostile to an account that mistakes universals for explanatory entities. It is not, Neoplatonists would insist, because man is a rational animal and rational animals are capable of laughter that man is capable of laughter, so long as one supposes that ‘man’ and other such terms designate universals. On the contrary, only the intelligible realm explains the connections here below that Aristotle characterizes in terms of species, genus, differentia, and property. But in this case, the intelligible realm is not to be construed as a tableau of universals. And the differences between the true causes and their effects mean that epistemologically one proceeds from effects that can be described in perceptible terms to causes that are utterly incapable of being so described. Dexippus seems exactly right to maintain that both Plato and Aristotle believe that these causes could not be substances in the sense in which the effects are substances.”³³⁷

As such, differentiating the nature of the substance of causes from the substance of effects achieves a significant point of harmony, by allowing the Aristotelian ontology of sensible substance to compliment the Platonic ontology of intelligible ‘substance’ – substance here being used *analogically*. Universals are not causes for Aristotle, but neither is sensible substance. On this account, the Aristotelian picture is completed by the more full consideration of ultimate causes found in Plato. Yet, Aristotle is, according to Dexippus at least, justified in moving *epistemologically* from describable sensible effects to ineffable ultimate causes. Again here the implied argument is that sensible substance cannot be

³³⁶ Gerson 2005: 97-98, emphasis mine.

³³⁷ Ibid.

ontologically primary for Aristotle. Yet, this point is possibly the most contentious of the entire harmony debate; though I cannot hope to make any conclusive declarations on the matter in the confines of this section of this dissertation, I believe the above is a good introduction to some of the most significant of the subtle complexities surrounding the issue. For my part, I find Gerson's arguments in support of the Neoplatonic thesis of Platonic-Aristotelian harmony on these points compelling – if nothing else, they are certainly deserving of serious and diligent study, being as they are insightful and often novel accoutrements to the study of Plato, Aristotle, and the commentators.

3.2.3. Forms and Intelligible Reality

As we have seen, a cornerstone of the harmonist's project involves showing that Aristotle not only does not 'replace' Platonic Forms with universals, thereby constructing an alternative metaphysics of sensible substance, but actually implicitly accepts Forms, in his thoroughgoing commitment to eternal intelligibles. Four key points support this line of reasoning; 1) the Neoplatonic arguments showing that Aristotle's criticisms of the theory of Forms attack weak or non-Platonic versions of the theory; 2) Aristotle's conception of divine thought, wherein eternal intelligibles are contemplated eternally by a Divine Mind, the Prime Unmoved Mover, in a way not significantly different from the relation of the Platonic Demiurge to the Forms; 3) the Neoplatonic thesis that paradigmatic causes are necessary to complete the Aristotelian fourfold schema of causation, and that Aristotle's conception of the 'definition' is metaphysically tantamount to a theory of Forms and; 4) the priority of eternal substance in Aristotle's metaphysics. I have already canvassed points 1 to 3 in the sections above, and so will here only discuss point 4.

As shown above in section 3.2.2, it can be argued that Aristotle is nowhere committed to the idea that sensible substance is ontologically ultimate. However, if harmony is to be achieved, Aristotle must simultaneously be shown to be committed to the idea that eternal substance is ontologically superior, in the Platonic sense of 'having more being'. Though this may already be implied by the fact that Aristotle does not believe *sensible* substance to be ontologically superior, direct evidence that the latter (explicitly Platonic) claim is made by Aristotle still remains to be shown. Gerson believes that this evidence can be found in Aristotle's claim of the 'priority' of the intelligible substance that is the unmoved mover; the claim that "the principle upon which heaven and nature depends is... the activity of intellect"³³⁸:

"What Aristotle's claim could well mean is that just as sensible substance is prior to everything else in the sensible world, so the intelligible substance that is the prime unmoved mover is prior to sensible substance. Exactly what sort of priority is this? Aristotle has already many times in *Metaphysics* argued both for the priority in substance of actuality to potency and even for the priority in substance of the eternal to the transitory. The priority in substance of the eternal to the transitory

³³⁸ Ibid, 192.

looks very much like the sort of priority that Aristotle says Plato was interested in. Plato held that if X can exist without Y, but Y cannot exist without X, then X is prior to Y in nature and in substance. This is a perfectly reasonable way to understand the Platonic notion of the intelligible world in relation to the sensible world... If the unmoved mover is the absolutely primary substance, and therefore the focal point of the science of being *qua* being, everything else is or has being in a secondary way. This includes, of course, sensible substance.”³³⁹

Moreover, as Gerson will go on to argue, Aristotle argues for the ‘posteriority of the composite’, that is, that the composite of matter and form is ontologically posterior to the substance that is form, which strikes an internal harmony with the concomitant Aristotelian claims of the posteriority of potency to actuality, and of the transitory to the eternal³⁴⁰. The reason why it is ontologically posterior, as opposed to simply conceptually posterior, is, according to Gerson, because Aristotle states that “the investigation of sensible substance has been undertaken in order to discover the substance that is separate from sensible substance” – and this separability implies a causal priority³⁴¹ that is perfectly in line with the Platonic notion of ontological priority: intelligible substance is more real, that is, has more ‘being’, than sensible substance. The harmony with Platonism now becomes abundantly clear:

“What is especially significant here to the eye of the Neoplatonist is that the posteriority of the composite – that is, sensible substance – harmonizes nicely with the Platonic argument that the sensible world in general has less being than the intelligible world. Aristotle has already in Book Z, chapter two alluded to the fact that though Plato believed in sensible substances, he also believed in eternal substances that have ‘more being’... than sensible substances. It would seem that only someone with a deep prior commitment to *disharmony* would want to insist that Aristotle does not commit himself to the view that eternal substance has more being than the matter or the composite itself. With such a commitment, however, goes one pillar of support for the view that Aristotle rejected the Platonic account of the intelligible world as the really real world and the sensible world as less than really real.”³⁴²

On its own, the toppling of this pillar may not be enough to stave off the tide of disharmonism, but, in concert with the avalanche of supporting evidence of Aristotle’s commitment to intelligible reality, as well as the various other effective Neoplatonic strategies, I argue that the thesis of harmonism reveals itself as the far stronger exegetical contender overall.

³³⁹ Ibid, 192-193.

³⁴⁰ Ibid, 193.

³⁴¹ Ibid, 194, Aristotle *Met. Z* 17 1041a6-10.

³⁴² Ibid, 194-195.

3.3. The Third Man, Recent Debates

As seen above³⁴³, the Third Man challenge to the forms involves the argument taken up by Plato in the *Parmenides*, that if Forms can be predicated of ‘the many’, then a further ‘many’ may be posited that includes the Form itself, which then would require the existence of a further Form, and so on *ad infinitum*. The Neoplatonic response, as we saw, was to argue that the Forms, properly conceived, are not entirely separate islands of intelligibility, and therefore the Third Man challenge is only effective against an inadequate version of the theory of Forms which conceives of them as such. In this section I will review some of the salient features of the contemporary debates on the issue, with particular reference to their relevance for the harmonist project.

Rickless gives a concise overview of the breadth of the divide in modern scholarship over the arguments presented in the *Parmenides*, including his own position:

“Among scholars, opinions vary on all possible fronts. While some believe that Plato intended the arguments of Part I [wherein the character Parmenides presents a series of criticisms against a theory of Forms presented earlier by the character Socrates] to be valid *reductiones*, others hold that the purpose of the entire dialogue is to enable readers to see that these arguments are plainly fallacious. In addition, there is no consensus on the intended message of Part II [wherein a series of deductions are made from the contrary positions that *the One is* and *the One is not* – resulting in seemingly incompatible conclusions]. Some believe that Plato did not mean the deductions to be valid, others that he did. Among the former, some claim that the arguments of Part II were meant as a joke, others that they were meant as a dialectical exercise. Among the latter, some hold that the deductions were intended as *reductiones*, others that the seemingly incompatible conclusions of the deductions are, in fact, compatible, and that philosophically interesting results may be derived from them.

I believe that Plato intended every single argument proposed by Parmenides to be sound (and hence valid) *and* that he meant us to see that the results of Part II can be used to solve the serious problems raised in Part I.”³⁴⁴

Rickless goes on to show that the deductions of Part II of Plato’s *Parmenides* show that the theory of Forms can be safeguarded from 4 out of 5 of the criticisms levelled against it in Part I³⁴⁵. Very briefly, this is accomplished by rejecting the claim that no Form can have contrary properties³⁴⁶. What is particularly interesting about this conclusion is that it seems implicitly to support the Neoplatonic rebuttal to the Third Man argument. That is, if we are to accept that Forms can have contrary properties,

³⁴³ Chapter 2, section 4.4.

³⁴⁴ Rickless 1998: 501-502.

³⁴⁵ Ibid, 554 notes that the solution to the criticism that is not defeated, the ‘Greatest Difficulty Argument’, is passed over by Parmenides, who states that it is not possible to provide an answer to it without dealing with “many distant considerations”. Perhaps a familiarity with the *agrapha dogmata* would have been necessary in order to do so.

³⁴⁶ Ibid, 541-543.

then it is also possible to claim, as the Neoplatonist harmonists did, that the Forms are *in one respect* entirely separate (from the sensible world) and *in another respect* non-separate (from each other, and divine intellect). Thus, on Rickless' account, not only do the arguments in the Parmenides (save the Greatest Difficulty Argument) not pose an insurmountable threat to the theory of Forms, but their solution is given in the very same dialogue. This fact may throw some doubt on the reliability of Aristotle as Platonic exegete in general, and on him being witness to the *agrapha dogmata* in particular³⁴⁷. Whether or not this is the case, the kind of riddles thrown up by these investigations reveal the sheer complexity of the harmonist puzzle, as aptly stated by Gerson:

“...I am not claiming that Aristotle's arguments against Forms are frivolous or arguments for Forms in disguise. Everyone, ancient and modern, believes that Aristotle rejects *some* theories of Forms. What makes matters slightly more complicated is that the Neoplatonists also believed that Plato rejects some theories of Forms, including those held by certain unnamed 'friends'. So, the issue is whether Aristotle rejects the theory that Plato, according to the Neoplatonists, actually held. Even this is something of an oversimplification, because in some matters, such as the range of Forms and the structure of reduction, there was no canonical position. Alternative, contrary views on these matters, and others, were available to Platonists. Accordingly, some Platonists must have disagreed with Plato, assuming that Plato had definite views on all these questions.

It would not be very plausible, however, to say merely that Aristotle's refutation of some theories of Forms indicates that he himself is hospitable to another version, which just happens to be the one to which Plato adhered. There must be positive indications of harmony – not of identity, as I have repeatedly argued. These include Aristotle's support for (1) the priority of the intelligible to the sensible; (2) the eternity of form; and (3) the non-identity of form and universal. If the explanatory focus of the science of being is separate substance and separate substance is identified with separate form, it is not, I would suggest, captious for Neoplatonists to conclude that Aristotle's sketch of that science – identified, we must recall, with a science of theology – is harmonious with Platonism. Nevertheless, no Neoplatonists supposed that the prime unmoved mover, eternally contemplating intelligible reality, was anything more than a simulacrum of the authentic first principle of all. Although Aristotle recognized that such a principle must be absolutely simple and unique, he mistakenly identified it with thinking.”³⁴⁸

Claiming Aristotle as a Platonist or anti-Platonist *simpliciter* fails to grasp these complexities. What is required is a thoroughgoing assessment of Aristotle's putative Platonism and anti-Platonism. The developmentalist thesis however, achieves this only by making Aristotle internally inconsistent. A compelling alternative then is provided by Gerson's *malgré lui* thesis, which I return to below³⁴⁹.

³⁴⁷ I return to the latter issue below in Chapter 4, section 5.1 below.

³⁴⁸ Gerson 2005: 231-232.

³⁴⁹ Chapter 4, section 5.

Another significant point on the Third Man argument that bears mentioning is whether Plato means for Forms to be self-predicating; for if he does, this leads to the Third Man immediately – if the Form of Beauty is also beautiful, then another Form will be needed to explain the participation of the first Form, and so on *ad infinitum*. A vast amount of scholarship has been dedicated to the Third Man argument in general, as well as the self-predication problem in particular, and whether an inescapable Third Man regress amounts to a conclusive defeat of Plato’s theory of Forms³⁵⁰. Since I do not here have the liberty to canvas the entirety of this extensive debate, I will only refer here briefly to Gerson’s stance on the issue, as it is directly relevant also to the question of Platonic-Aristotelian harmony:

“The reason why Plato would hesitate to say that a building and the Form of Largeness are synonymously large is, as I have suggested, that they are not large in the same way. More precisely, if the Form of Largeness just is Largeness, then it is a kind of category mistake to call it ‘large.’ If the Form of Largeness is more than just Largeness, then perhaps it can be properly called ‘large’ but surely not in the way that anything else is large: that is, by having some specific quantity. Plato seems to face a dilemma in accounting for the manner in which the Form’s name is predicated of it and its participants.

It seems reasonable to ask, though, why Plato cannot have recourse to the very same distinction Aristotle employs in Book *α*. If something can be hot (synonymously) without being fire, why cannot something be large (synonymously) without being the Form of Largeness? It is clear that Aristotle doubts that the situations are parallel. In his *Topics* he averts on several occasions to a putative distinction between a Form and the nature that the Form’s name names. A Form of Human Being is immortal because it is a Form, but if the Form of Human Being is a human, then, since humans are mortal, it too will be mortal. So, the Form of Human Being would have to be immortal and mortal, which is impossible. What Aristotle seems to be assuming is that Plato cannot avail himself of a distinction between the Form and its nature such that one can say that it is possible that contradictory predicates such as ‘immortal’ and ‘mortal’ can apply alternatively to the Form *qua* Form and the Form *qua* its nature. It is precisely such a distinction that would enable us to maintain synonymous application of predicates to the Form’s nature and its participants, even as we maintain homonymous application of the same predicates to the Form itself and those participants.”³⁵¹

Self-predication then only applies to the nature that the Form’s name names (as well as the Form’s participants), not the Form itself – the self-predication that *does* apply to the Form itself is only *homonymous*, and as such does not imply participation in a further Form, and so does not lead to the Third Man. On Gerson’s account then, distinguishing between a Form and its nature (or ‘the nature that its name names’) supplies prospective harmonists with the principle necessary to save the theory of Forms from the self-predication iteration of the Third Man critique, whilst at the same time supplying

³⁵⁰ See e.g. Vlastos 1954, Sellars 1955, Strang 1963, Cohen 1971, Peterson 1973 and 1975, Patterson 1985: 65-81, Scaltsas 1989, Fine 1993: 144-149, 189-190, 228-231, Rickless 1998, Malcolm 1991, Nehemas 1978, Silverman 2002 and Gerson 2004 and 2011.

³⁵¹ Gerson 2005: 185.

the foundation for the possibility of harmony between Plato and Aristotle on the subject. Once again, the versatility of the harmonist project is impressive in reconciling Aristotelian metaphysics with its Platonic predecessor, or perhaps more accurately, its Platonic origin.

4. Plato versus Aristotle on the Soul Today

As we have seen, the debate on whether Aristotle's conception of the soul is harmonious with a Platonic notion of the soul comes down to one key factor: separability. In modern times, the separable soul in Aristotle is rejected concomitant with Aristotle's rejection of separable forms, the soul being the form of the body for Aristotle. If however, there is reason to believe that Aristotle does not reject separable forms outright, then what remains is to ascertain to what extent Aristotle believes the soul to be separable from the body, and whether or not Aristotle's position is then harmonious with the Platonic stance (which the Neoplatonic commentators, as we have seen, thought it was). Below I shall review some salient features of the contemporary debate, as exemplified by the work of Gerson and his contemporaries, with focus on two key issues: 1) the debate surrounding hylomorphism and dualism in Aristotle and; 2) the nature and extent of 'personal immortality' and the related problem of reincarnation.

4.1. Hylomorphism and Dualism in Aristotle

Many of the debates on Aristotle's conception of $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ in the modern era have centred on pinpointing whether or not the Philosopher's formulation of the relation of the soul to the body actually commits him to some or other species of dualism, instead of the standard 'hylomorphic' interpretation. Gerson makes the significance for the harmonist debate clear:

"Nuyens' thesis [of development in Aristotle's ideas on soul] has been subjected to extensive criticism... Nevertheless, his fundamental idea – a development away from Platonic dualism and toward Aristotelian hylomorphism – remains virtually unquestioned. And it is on the basis of this idea that Aristotle's mature psychological doctrine is usually interpreted. The principal focus of the interpretations that assume the anti-Platonism of *De Anima* is the account in Book Γ , chapter 5, of the so-called agent or active intellect. Endless contortions are contrived in order to show that when Aristotle states that intellect is "immortal and eternal" he does not mean that it is immortal and eternal. Of course, there is much more to Aristotle's psychology than the seemingly cryptic doctrine contained in Γ 5. The anti-Platonist assumption extends beyond a denial of immortality to the entire array of epistemological considerations. Perhaps because it is assumed that for Aristotle the soul is in no way immortal – or perhaps despite this assumption – it is also assumed that Aristotle's

epistemology is deeply at odds with Plato's. Aristotle the hylomorphist or, more crudely, Aristotle the 'empiricist' is diametrically opposed to Plato the 'dualist' or 'rationalist'.³⁵²

As we have seen, the Neoplatonists rather took Aristotle at his word that the intellect is immortal and eternal, and proceeded from this vantage point to construct a conception of Aristotelian psychological doctrine that is in harmony with Platonism. For those seeking to construct an anti-Platonic psychological doctrine of Aristotle however, the strategies have been more diverse. Some amount to mere dismissal, as we can see in various scholars' exegesis of what I will call the 'captain analogy'³⁵³. The relevant passage is found in *De Anima*:

"From this it is clear that the soul is inseparable from its body, or at any rate that certain parts of it are (if it has parts) – for the actuality of some of them is the actuality of the parts themselves. Yet some may be separable because they are not the actualities of any body at all. Further, we have no light on the problem whether the soul may not be the actuality of its body in the sense in which the sailor is the actuality of the ship."³⁵⁴

We have already seen that the Neoplatonic harmonist Pseudo-Simplicius took this analogy to illustrate that the soul was in one respect inseparable and in another separable from the body³⁵⁵. Modern commentators, on the other hand, have generally responded very differently to the remark. Hicks, for example, takes the developmentalist line, and writes concerning the sailor-ship analogy that:

"If the conclusion of *Metaph. Z.*, C. II represents [Aristotle's]... mature judgement, it may be plausibly argued that in our present passage ἔτι δὲ ἄδηλον is a mere phrase of the lecture room, like σκεπτόν ὕστερον, an affectation of uncertainty because the writer is stimulating, without satisfying, curiosity."³⁵⁶

Hamlyn and Shields go even further in their almost flippant dismissal of the passage:

"In so far as the soul consists merely of potential functions of parts of the body, it cannot have an existence separate from the body; but Aristotle leaves it an open question whether it is entirely like this. There may be certain psychical functions which have no bodily counterpart – although how this could be so is, to say the least, puzzling. It is clear that Aristotle is looking forward here to what he says about the active intellect in III. 5.

The remark about the possible analogy between the soul and a sailor in a ship (with which cf. Descartes, *Meditation VI*) is also puzzling, since the argument up to this point has tended completely in the opposite direction. It can be set down only as a lecturer's aside."³⁵⁷

³⁵² Gerson 2005: 132.

³⁵³ Ibid, 138.

³⁵⁴ Aristotle *De An.* 413a4-9.

³⁵⁵ Chapter 2, section 5.1.

³⁵⁶ Hicks 1907: 320. See *ibid* 319-321 for Hicks' full discussion of the passage.

³⁵⁷ Hamlyn and Shields 1993: 87.

Hamlyn and Shields indicate that the riddle of how the soul may in some way be separate from the body is left off for later discussion, specifically in our by now well-known passage, *De Anima*, *Gamma* 5. What is truly puzzling is that Hamlyn and Shields fail to notice how significant the captain analogy is for what is said in that very passage; the nature of the soul's separability (and as such the nature of the soul's immortality), which the captain analogy puts into focus, is exactly the issue at hand in *Gamma* 5. Passing it off as a 'lecturer's aside' is far from satisfactory.

As we saw in Chapter 2, Gerson takes the opposing line, arguing that Aristotle's psychological doctrine is inescapably attached to the doctrine of some part of the soul being truly separable (which in turn leaves Aristotle open to Platonic harmonization)³⁵⁸. Does this make a dualist of Aristotle? Those who wish to avoid this conclusion have another viable option apart from mere dismissal; the functionalist interpretation of Aristotle's psychological doctrine. Heinaman provides a concise explanation of the functionalist interpretation, along with his own critique of it:

"To close I will consider a possible objection to my conclusion that what a psychic event is over and above a physical change is an activity. For according to one popular view Aristotle is a functionalist, and on this view a mental event is, in addition to a material change, a certain functional characteristic; or perhaps rather the material change which is (alone) the mental event has such a characteristic. According to functionalism a certain type of mental event is to be defined in terms of its causal role, specifically in terms of its causal relation to sensory input, behavioural output, and other mental states. This would allow Aristotle to give a materialist account of psychological events for a physical event may have such a causal role. But whether the causal role is counted as a physical or non-physical property, it will *be* a disposition of the material change which is the matter of the psychic event and not, as I claimed, an activity. Hence, the form of a psychic event is not an activity possibly causing or caused by the bodily change but the causal role of that change.

It should be noted, to begin with, that there is no evidence that Aristotle shares the belief which is one of the main motivations of functionalism, viz. the belief that the same mental state can have different physical realizations...

It is true that Aristotle allows that the same psychological event may be found in different species of animal... but nothing he says suggests that he believes that the physical basis of the same psychological state will vary...

There are good reasons to reject the view that Aristotle is a functionalist. To begin with, for the functionalist the only *essential* features of a psychological event are its functional features. Thus, while brain matter may in fact realize pain in man, it is possible that eventually some synthetic material should come to play the causal role of pain, and then the synthetic material would realize

³⁵⁸ Also see Olshewsky 1976 for an involved discussion of the differences and similarities in the conceptions of the relationship between soul and body in Plato and Aristotle.

pain. Generally, it is an essential feature of functionalism that it allows the same psychological state to be realized in different types of matter or event. Aristotle rejects this.

...Contrary to a functionalist view, Aristotle considers specific types of perception to be tied down to specific types of bodily change.

...Aristotle allows that one's body can be in the same condition as it is when one is in a certain psychological state but not be in that psychological state... This is incompatible with a materialistic functionalism for a physical state which realizes a certain psychological state in human beings cannot fail to have the functional features which make it the realization of that psychological state when it exists in a person.

...if we look at some of the formal definitions of psychological events given by Aristotle, they often fail to conform to the functionalist style of definition...

Finally, a functionalist characteristic is a quality – a disposition – whereas a psychological event is an event, falling into the category of doing... or suffering... Aristotle can no more allow an event to be constituted by a quality than he can allow a substance to be constituted out of qualities... The form of an event must be an event, just as the form of a substance must be a substance.”³⁵⁹

On Heinaman's account then, the theory that Aristotle is a materialistic functionalist, i.e. that Aristotle holds that a mental event is only a functional (causal) characteristic of a material change, is untenable. This is due to the fact that Aristotle rejects some of the core assumptions of functionalism. Chief amongst these are; 1) Aristotle rejects that the same psychological state can have different physical realizations, or be realized in different types of matter or event; 2) Aristotle asserts that the body can be in the same state it was when a given psychological event occurred without necessarily again being in that psychological state and; 3) Aristotle's understanding of psychological states as mental events is ontologically incommensurable with the functionalist understanding of psychological states as functional characteristics.

On the side of those who then resist both the dismissal of Aristotle's dualism as well as the arguments for functionalism, we find some who in addition believe that Aristotle's psychological doctrine indeed commits him to a form of dualism. One example is the 'supervenient dualism' proposed by Shields³⁶⁰. Robinson also argues for dualism in Aristotle³⁶¹. Gerson notes that Robinson's "account of "Aristotelian dualism" would... do equally well as an account of Platonic dualism of the embodied person"³⁶².

³⁵⁹ Heinaman 1990: 100-102.

³⁶⁰ Shields 1988: 106.

³⁶¹ Robinson 1983.

³⁶² Gerson 2005: 139.

Heinaman, on the other hand, assigns to Aristotle a version of dualism known as ‘emergent dualism’ – though he himself admits that this assignment is not entirely straightforward:

“The soul is a form and all forms are immaterial entities. But forms can be related to matter in three ways:

- (1) A form which is a structural or physical feature of matter, e.g., the form of an artifact such as a house, or a colour, or a certain arrangement of bodily parts such as health.
- (2) A form which is not an immediate structural or physical feature of matter but is supervenient and dependant for its existence on immediate physical features of matter – such as the power of a drug, according to Alexander, and the soul, according to Aristotle.
- (3) A form which does not depend on matter or material features for its existence.

If Aristotle held the soul to be a form of the third sort he would be a Cartesian dualist. At most he thinks the intellect is such a form. If Aristotle held the soul to fall into (1), then there would be at least some plausibility in labelling him a materialist, despite the fact that the soul would still be an immaterial substance. I have argued that Aristotle believes the soul to fall into the second class of forms. Since this makes his position very like that of present day “emergent dualists”, it is, I think, best to classify Aristotle as a dualist.

So: on the standard account of the dualist-physicalist distinction the former accepts the existence of non-physical entities and the latter does not. Non-physical entities are explained as being entities irreducible to physical entities. On this understanding of the issue, Aristotle is a dualist.

...the interpretation of Aristotle as a dualist remains problematic for two reasons: (i) at least as far as I know, there is no account available enabling us to draw a clear distinction between non-physical and physical emergent entities or, hence, between the dualist and the physicalist; (ii) even if such an account of the physical-non-physical distinction were or is available, there is no reason to believe that it or anything like it entered into Aristotle’s thinking about the soul.”³⁶³

As we have seen, Gerson argues that Aristotle’s dualism is essentially akin to Platonic dualism, and so, contrary to the position argued in the above quote by Heinaman, *unproblematically* endorses a conception of (part of the) soul as properly incorporeal, defeating the traditional straightforwardly hylomorphic account of Aristotle’s psychological doctrine, and leaving Aristotle’s doctrine readily reconcilable with the Platonic account:

“A hylomorphic account of cognition without the separable intellect would involve forms of cognizable things being present somehow in the nonseparable intellect. On this basis alone, a functionalist account would be plausible. But the presence of forms of cognizable things in a nonseparable intellect is for Aristotle no more a description of cognition than is the presence of

³⁶³ Heinaman 1990: 90-92.

information in a computer a reason for believing the computer cognizes anything. Without the separable intellect, there could be no cognition. And the reason is that cognition is essentially self-reflexive for Aristotle. That is, cognition is a state in which cognizable form is present in the intellect *and* the cognizer is aware of the presence of form in *itself*. By contrast, if the cognizer were aware of the presence of form in that with which it were not identical, then a vicious infinite regress would threaten. The presence of form in the original nonseparable intellect would be sufficient for there to be cognition. Now here is the crucial next step. Cognition, being essentially self-reflexive, could not occur in a material entity. Even if we posited a separable intellect along with a nonseparable one, if either or both were material, self-reflexivity could not occur. Cognition would be a case of one material entity related to another, not to itself

The incorporeal separable intellect is not an appendix or an add-on for Aristotle, required only for very high-level cognition, or a dispensable residue of some outmoded account. It is essential to the account of embodied human cognition. And because cognition is essentially self-reflexive, the intellect must be incorporeal. And because of *this*, Aristotle's definition of the soul as an 'actuality' is inadequate, at least as it is supposed to apply to the account of the souls of cognizers. As I argue below, understanding the role of agent or active intellect in thinking leads us to deny that there are two intellects, active and passive. In fact, there is good reason to conclude that there is only one intellect in Aristotle's account of cognition in *De Anima*. On this basis of this conclusion, and granting that this intellect is immortal, the way is open to appreciating the harmonists' position.

Plato's understanding of embodied human cognition is, according to Neoplatonism, founded on the same principles and, as we might have predicted, faced with the same problems. To being with, Neoplatonists generally held that cognition was essentially self-reflexive and that self-reflexivity required incorporeality. Revealingly, one of the problems Plotinus finds with Aristotle's definition of the soul as an actuality of a body is that, so defined, we cannot account for personal psychic conflict. A conflict in a person who desires to do something and at the same time desires not to have that desire put into action is not explicable or even possible if the subject of both desires is not the same entity. This is so because the conflict requires that one be aware of the original desire in oneself and also aware of the desire in oneself not to have the original desire put into action. If the subjects of the desires were different entities, we would not have a case of incontinence or personal psychic conflict, but a case of interpersonal conflict. When we resist the desires of those who wish to do us ill, we are not being continent. But the subjects of both desires could not be the same entity if the entity were material. The incorporeality of the soul is thought to follow from, among other things, the irremovable cognitive dimension in personal psychic conflict."³⁶⁴

On Gerson's account then, separable and incorporeal intellect are *essential* for the Aristotelian account of human cognition; without separable and incorporeal intellect self-reflexivity in the psyche would not be possible, and without self-reflexivity in the psyche human cognition proper, as Aristotle wants to

³⁶⁴ Gerson 2005: 139-140.

maintain it, would not be possible. This assertion, alongside the contentions that the active and passive intellect produce intellection in concert, and that without self-reflexivity internal psychic conflict could not occur (when in fact it evidently does), establishes the necessity of incorporeality for Aristotle's conception of psyche. If we further posit that a separated and incorporeal intellect would also be immortal, then this makes the possibility of harmony with Platonic psychological doctrine immediately apparent.

I would like to add that harmonizing Aristotle's psychological doctrine with the Platonic account in this way does not reduce the former to the latter. I agree with Gerson that Aristotle's dualism, as far as the intellect is concerned, is deeply Platonic. However, and as the Neoplatonists often appreciated, Aristotle completes the Platonic metaphysical foundation by supplementing it with the view from nature. From this vantage point, and taking into account the metaphysical priority of the intelligible to the material in Aristotle³⁶⁵, the soul in its hylomorphic capacity as 'actuality of the body' is in fact causally dependent upon the intelligible realm. Bringing these positions together, I think it would not be entirely inaccurate to ascribe to Aristotle a position we could call "emergent hylomorphism" – the unity of the composite that is soul and body is an effect that is causally dependant on the immortal and separable nature of the intellect – in this case particularly the divine intellect of the Demiurge/Unmoved Mover, who, in its role as creator, imposes a reflected (and imperfect) version of the order of absolute intelligible reality upon the non-absolute receptacle called matter, which in the case of the individual soul involves its connection to a material body, and the possibility of cognition through its connection to its 'personal' immortal intellect³⁶⁶. This particular formulation of Aristotle's psychological doctrine would be, to be best of my knowledge, fairly novel, and further scrutiny of its merits would certainly be warranted.

4.2. Personal Immortality

As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, both Plato and Aristotle seem to hold to the immortality of only part of the soul, and this provides solid ground for asserting the possibility of harmony between the Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions of $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$. However, as Gerson points out, a significant question remains despite this evidence:

"There is, however, perhaps a deeper reason for insisting that Aristotle's view of immortality must be different from Plato's. It is supposed that even if Aristotle does acknowledge the immortality of intellect, he is not affirming personal immortality. By contrast, Plato's commitment to immortality is apparently inseparable from his commitment to disembodied punishments and rewards and at least the possibility of reincarnation. In short, Plato believes in personal immortality or the

³⁶⁵ As discussed in Chapter 4, section 3.2.3 above.

³⁶⁶ Which, as we saw above in Chapter 4, section 2.3 above, is distinguished from the divine intellect of the Demiurge by virtue of its not being, like the Demiurge, *essentially* identical with its objects, but only *partially* identical.

immorality and continuity of the embodied person whereas Aristotle does not. Therefore, it is misleading in the extreme to say that Aristotle is in harmony with Plato on this point. Either Plato believed in the immortality of the tripartite soul, or if he did not, then his view of the intellect must be fundamentally at odds with Aristotle's such that it makes sense to assign personal properties to the former but not the latter."³⁶⁷

Gerson, following the Neoplatonic harmonists, opposes this objection of personal immortality in Plato versus nonpersonal immortality in Aristotle on several fronts, instead arguing that "a deep similarity in the Platonic and Aristotelian conception of intellect produced a high degree of harmony in their views about the moral psychology of embodied persons"³⁶⁸. Gerson's argument proceeds systematically, starting with the immortality of intellect *alone* in Plato and Aristotle³⁶⁹. Since this point has already been thoroughly canvassed in this dissertation, I will proceed directly to a discussion of the possible distinction that can be made between intellectual and personal immortality, and the related problem of reincarnation.

4.2.1. Intellectual versus Personal Immortality and the Problem of Reincarnation

In assessing whether intellectual immortality may amount to personal immortality for Aristotle (as it undoubtedly does for Plato), we must head into the sometimes murky waters of their respective conceptions of personhood. Early on in this dissertation³⁷⁰ we saw the accord of Plato's *Timaeus* with Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* on the issue of how human beings may achieve immortality and a degree of divinity, viz. by identifying as much as possible with their intellectual faculty, and thereby achieving wisdom and happiness. A fragment from Aristotle's lost exoteric work, *Protrepticus* (as preserved by Iamblichus), makes the relevance of this doctrine for his conception of personhood clear:

"There exists nothing divine or blessed among men except that which alone is worthy of attention, whatever there is of intellect or wisdom in us. For this alone seems to be immortal and the only divine things of ours. And in virtue of being able to share in this power, however wretched and hard life is by nature, still things have been favourably arranged so that in comparison with other things man would seem to be a god. "Our intellect is god," says either Hermodotus or Anaxagoras, and that "the mortal always has a portion of god." We ought to philosophize, therefore, or say farewell to life and depart from it since everything else seems to be much foolishness and folly."³⁷¹

Gerson notes that this passage indicates that "...Aristotle no more than Plato thinks that the immortality of intellect alone diminishes *our* immortality" and that the "exhortation to philosophize is [in both Plato and Aristotle]... an exhortation to identify oneself in some sense with intellect"³⁷². Gerson adds that

³⁶⁷ Gerson 2005: 55.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Chapter 2, section 1.

³⁷¹ Iamblichus *Prot.* 78, 12-79, 2 Des Places (= Ross 1970, frag. 10C, Düring 1961, frags. B108-110).

³⁷² Gerson 2005: 57.

this identification “amounts to an appropriation or construction of selfhood”, but that “in the Aristotelian (and Platonic) context, it is an appropriation of what one really or ideally is”³⁷³. In this sense, it seems more appropriate to call this appropriation of selfhood an ‘unveiling’ of Self-hood, in the very Platonic and rather mystical sense – a sense that it must be admitted, given the clear harmony even to the point of phraseology that we see here with Aristotle, is shared closely by Plato’s *protégé*. I agree wholeheartedly with Gerson that the “claim by Jaeger and others that the immortality of intellect alone would make a mockery of personal aspirations indicates nothing more than Jaeger’s own conception of the personal”³⁷⁴. However, showing that 1) Plato and Aristotle agree that only part of the soul, viz. the intellect, is immortal and that 2) on this basis of this accord and other evidence, they share a similar view of personhood (both moral and metaphysical), does not entirely dispel the objection that their views on the post-mortem life of the immortal soul are still of a radically different character, as Bussanich argues in a pointed critique of Gerson:

“Aristotle’s rejection of immortality for the whole soul, but acceptance of an immortal intellect..., brings him rather close to Plato, but important differences remain, which Gerson glosses over. He argues that Platonic mind/soul-body dualism is secondary to the more basic dualism of embodied and disembodied persons... Unfortunately, Aristotle says nothing about disembodied existence, whereas Plato and Plotinus provide fascinating glimpses into this recondite aspect of human life. Given the often striking differences between Aristotle and the Platonists on this issue, it is not surprising that Gerson doesn’t discuss passages like *Phaedo* 81 or the *Phaedrus* myth, for these and other passages, e.g., the choice of lives in the Myth of Er, make an implicit distinction between an immortal intellect and an intermediate psychic vehicle, which is the seat of the passions and which also survives the death of the body even though it is not immortal. In other words, Platonists have a good deal to say about “disembodied persons” that is not addressed by Gerson’s statement that “embodied human existence has to be understood or explained in terms of intelligible ideals. Thus embodied persons are images of disembodied ideals”... Thus, his doubts that reincarnation is an essential part of Platonism... are unwarranted, for without this theory the entire Platonist vision of the soul’s path to perfection crumbles to dust. Aristotle’s refutation of reincarnation... raises serious questions about how closely the two philosophers’ notions of divinization can be assimilated to each other. Platonic philosophers require eons to achieve their goal, whereas Aristotelians, limited to one lifetime, apparently can reach theirs in one. How can the character of their respective goals be the same or even very similar in the face of this fundamental difference?”³⁷⁵

I don’t believe the first objection given in the above to be a serious impediment to harmony, which, as we have seen, is not to be understood as the *identity* of the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. If Platonists have more to say about disembodied life than Aristotle, this is no impediment to harmony, and it being the case would have not have surprised or deterred any of the Neoplatonic harmonists,

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Bussanich 2016.

given their commitment to the idea of a ‘division of labour’ between Aristotle and Plato, as we saw described by Simplicius. Moreover, I find Bussanich’s contention that the “character of their respective goals” cannot be construed as “even very similar” due to a “fundamental difference” unconvincing³⁷⁶. Taking into account the division of labour again, and acknowledging the deep similarity of how both Plato and Aristotle articulate the moral goals of the embodied person, it is only a lack of imagination that impedes one from taking the further step of seeing the goals of Aristotle’s moral doctrine (whether limited to a single lifetime or not), as harmonious with the goals of Plato’s moral doctrine – it could even be argued that Aristotle illustrates the way in which Platonic divinization is achieved in the context of a single lifetime – all that Platonism adds, is the reminder that this work can only in fact be fully accomplished over the course of many such lifetimes – which does not detract from the importance of striving towards this goal as far as is possible within the context of a single lifetime³⁷⁷! Though a more thorough investigation of this thesis cannot be accommodated here, there is at least enough reason, I believe, to resist Bussanich’s inference that harmony is here defeated by a “fundamental difference”³⁷⁸.

I would agree with Bussanich though that Gerson is misguided to say that reincarnation is not an essential feature of Platonism. It may not be an essential feature of what Gerson calls ‘Ur-Platonism’ (the matrix of interconnected theses from which the various forms of Platonism arise), but it certainly is an entrenched feature of Platonism as the Neoplatonists conceived of it. If then, Aristotle does deny the possibility of reincarnation – can we still hold to the harmony of Plato and Aristotle’s account of *ψυχή in genera*? Before addressing this concern, let us first examine the textual evidence for Aristotle’s putative rejection of reincarnation. In *De Anima* Aristotle writes:

“The view we have just been examining [the movement of the soul], in company with most theories about the soul, involves the following absurdity: they all join the soul to a body, or place it in a body, without adding any specification of the reason of their union, or of the bodily conditions required for it. Yet such explanation can scarcely be omitted; for some community of nature is presupposed by the fact that the one acts and the other is acted upon, the one moves and the other is moved; but it is not the case that *any* two things are related to one another in these ways. All, however, that these thinkers do is to describe the specific characteristics of the soul; they do not try to determine anything about the body which is to contain it, as if it were possible, as in the Pythagorean myths, that any soul could be clothed in any body – an absurd view, for each body

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ See also Sedley 1999 and Armstrong 2004 for a dispelling of the notion that Platonic ethics is merely eschatological and as such cannot be achieved within the confines of a single lifetime.

³⁷⁸ The harmony Gerson suggests in 2005, Ch. 8, between Platonic and Aristotelian ethics further blunts the edge of this objection. See also Gerson 2005: 60-70, on Plato and Aristotle’s accord concerning the superiority of the contemplative life, and Sedley 1997. For similarities in Plato and Aristotle’s conception of Virtue, see Broadie 2005 and Sparshott 1970. For remarks on the similarity of their eudemonic approach see Yu 2001. See also Mackey 2005 and Gerson 2016a. For a well-argued critique of some of Gerson’s remarks on the harmony of Plato and Aristotle’s ethics see Kraut 2006: 87.

seems to have a form and shape of its own. It is as absurd as to say that the art of carpentry could embody itself in flutes; each art must use its tools, each soul its body.”³⁷⁹

How are we to reconcile Aristotle’s commitment to the immortality of the intellect with his apparent rejection in the above of the transmigration of soul? I believe the answer is that we do not have to. Firstly, it is not immediately clear whether, holding that the intellectual part of the soul *alone* is immortal, Aristotle *could* endorse a view of the transmigration of *intellect alone*. Unfortunately, Aristotle does not explicitly address this issue. A simple Neoplatonic strategy here would be to either say that we have here again an example of the division of labour between Plato and Aristotle; since the possibility of transmigration of intellect is not necessarily directly contradicted by Aristotle, the Platonic position completes and clarifies the picture (taking into account, of course, Aristotle’s commitment to the immortality of intellect). If, however, we find reason to believe that Aristotle does deny even the *possibility* of transmigration of intellect, then perhaps a Neoplatonist would venture that this is one of those issues that Aristotle simply got wrong. In this way, the harmonist project of including Aristotle amongst the ranks of those who contributed to Platonism is a versatile project indeed. Alternatively, it may be that the Neoplatonists at large were wrong to embrace reincarnation as a core facet of Plato’s Platonism³⁸⁰. Unfortunately, an investigation of this latter issue would take us too far beyond the scope of this dissertation. Moreover, more needs to be said about the possibility that Platonists espouse an immortality of more than intellect alone. My suspicion is that much evidence may be found to suggest that various Neoplatonists may have held to more than the immortality of the intellect alone. This question, however, will have to be left aside for a future study.

5. Aristotle: Platonist *malgré lui*?

In the final section of this chapter I will present and assess Gerson’s argument in *Aristotle and Other Platonists* that Aristotle may have been a Platonist *malgré lui*, that is, despite himself (hereafter *ML*). In a nutshell, Gerson argues that not only is Aristotle committed to antinomialism (that critical characteristic of Gerson’s Ur-Platonism), but also that Aristotle’s commitments to eternal intelligibles, and his remarks on separable and immortal soul, commit him to positions that are inevitably open to harmonization with Platonism. In the final chapter of *Aristotle and Other Platonists*, Gerson sets out his *ML* thesis, and the problems it is supposed to address:

“It is time to take stock and address some obvious questions. How can Aristotle’s philosophy be in harmony with Plato’s if Aristotle himself never acknowledges this harmony? Even if it is granted that some or most of Aristotle’s criticisms are not directed at something that might deserve to be

³⁷⁹ Aristotle *De An.* 407b13-25.

³⁸⁰ This seems unlikely though, if we take passages like *Phd.* 70c-73a into account. See Chapter 2, section 5.1.

called ‘mature’ or ‘refined’ Platonism, why should we opt for the Neoplatonic interpretation of Aristotelian texts which makes them harmonious with that? Given the criticism and the absence of an explicit commitment to harmony, is not the reasonable default interpretation of these texts anti-Platonic? This concluding chapter explores one possible way of answering this question: namely, by suggesting that perhaps Aristotle is a Platonist *malgré lui*. I mean the possibility that Aristotle could not adhere to the doctrines that he *incontestably* adheres to were he not thereby committed to principles that are in harmony with Platonism. In short, I explore the claim that an authentic Aristotelian, if he be consistent, is inevitably embracing a philosophical position that is in harmony with Platonism. That is, there cannot be an authentic form of Aristotelianism that is not in harmony with Platonism as I have been using the term throughout this study... I hope that pushing the application of the concept of harmony to this extent will serve to illuminate some central philosophical problems and also to enable us to understand better the contribution both Aristotle and Plato made to their solution.”³⁸¹

In claiming that Aristotle may be a Platonist *ML* then, Gerson is arguing that if one can show that Aristotle’s definitive doctrine espouses principles that are in harmony with Platonism, then whether or not Aristotle himself was committed to harmony becomes, to a large extent, irrelevant. Indeed, as Gerson notes early on in *Aristotle and Other Platonists*: “What may have appeared to Aristotle as a great chasm between himself and his teacher may have reasonably appeared much narrower to those looking at both philosophers with the benefit of critical distance some six hundred to nine hundred [and we may add, almost twenty-four hundred!] years later”³⁸². Though a simple point, this argument allows Gerson to once again affirm that the “question of whether Aristotelianism is or is not in harmony with Platonism is certainly not going to be answered decisively by anything Aristotle says suggesting that it is not”³⁸³. Possibly *despite* whatever Aristotle may have intended to the contrary then, and *despite* Aristotle’s vehement criticisms of Platonism, Aristotle’s philosophy proper, according to Gerson, inevitably moves within the Platonic milieu; the Neoplatonists, on Gerson’s conclusive analysis, were on the right track in intimating and refining this interpretation of The Philosopher’s work:

“Is Aristotle *just* a Platonist? Certainly not. In this regards, I would not wish to underestimate the importance of the dispositional differences between Aristotle and Plato. This dispositional difference is in part reflected in Aristotle’s penchant for introducing terminological innovations to express old (i.e., Platonic) thoughts. In working through the Aristotelian corpus with a mind open to the Neoplatonic assumption of harmony, I have found time and time again that Aristotle was, it turns out, actually *analysing* the Platonic position or making it more precise, not refuting it. In addition, I do not discount in this regard the fundamental thesis, advanced by Harold Cherniss, that Aristotle is often criticizing philosophers other than Plato or deviant versions of Platonism. It is not

³⁸¹ Gerson 2005: 275.

³⁸² *Ibid*, 10.

³⁸³ *Ibid*.

a trivial fact that most of Aristotle's writings came after Plato's death and after Plato's mantle as head of the Academy had passed to Speusippus and then to Xenocrates.

In my view, however, it would be a mistake to conclude from Aristotle's unrelenting criticisms of Plato and other Academics, and from the orientation of most of the corpus to a categorizing and explaining sensible reality, that Aristotle is not *au fond* a Platonist. Even when Aristotle is criticizing Plato, as in, for example, *De Anima*, he is lead, perhaps *malgré lui*, to draw conclusions based on Platonic assumptions. These assumptions are not so general and benign that just anyone can accept them; Platonism is not, after all, an infinitely large tent. The main conclusion I draw from this long and involved study is that if one rigorously and honestly sought to remove these assumptions, the 'Aristotelianism' that would remain would be indefensible and incoherent. A comprehensive and scientifically grounded anti-Platonic Aristotelianism is, I suspect, a chimera."³⁸⁴

Through his *ML* thesis then, Gerson frames the overall thrust of his argument that Aristotle's philosophy is fundamentally Platonic, even if Aristotle himself may not have believed, or intended for it to be so. However, as far as Aristotle often seems to be critiquing Plato's arguments directly (even if these can often be shown to be inadequate versions of Platonic doctrines), questions concerning Aristotle's reliability as Platonic exegete in general remain, especially around the issue of Plato's so-called 'unwritten teachings'.

5.1. Aristotle as Witness to the *Agrapha Dogmata*

A key concern when assessing the Platonism in Aristotle, and when assessing Aristotle as a reliable exegete of Plato, is whether or not Aristotle had access to the so called 'unwritten doctrines' (the *agrapha dogmata*, hereafter *AD*) of Plato. I cannot in the context of this dissertation canvas in detail the vast and hotly contested question of whether Plato in fact *had* unwritten doctrines, and what the significance of these are for interpreting, understanding or systemizing Plato. Instead, in the sections below I will only review; 1) some of the evidence in Plato (and the commentators) that suggests at least the possibility of his having *AD*; 2) the fact of Aristotle's conviction that Plato in fact had some form of unwritten doctrine, as well as what can be gleaned about the content of these unwritten doctrines according to Aristotle's testimony; 3) the Neoplatonic stance on Aristotle's reliability as witness to the *AD*; 4) some modern stances on the same and; 5) the significance of said reliability for the question of harmony.

The textual evidence in Plato for the existence of *AD* is intriguing. For example, in the *Theaetetus*, we see that the concept of secret doctrines taught only to certain pupils was not foreign to Plato: "Was Protagoras one of those omniscience people? Did he perhaps put this out as a riddle for the common crowd of us, while he revealed the Truth as a secret doctrine to his own pupils?"³⁸⁵ Moreover, in several

³⁸⁴ Ibid, 290.

³⁸⁵ Plato *Theaet.* 152c.

places in the Platonic dialogues we find allusions to the ‘mysteries’, pointing to the likelihood that Plato was involved in one or more esoteric traditions existent at the time³⁸⁶. So, for example, we find in *Protagoras* Plato explaining how philosophy may be veiled by poetry or the mysteries:

“Now, I maintain that the sophist’s art is an ancient one, but that the men who practiced it in ancient times, fearing the odium attached to it, disguised it, masking it sometimes as poetry, as Homer and Hesiod and Simonides did, or as mystery religions and prophecy, witness Orpheus and Musaeus...”³⁸⁷

And in various dialogues we find direct allusions to the mysteries and initiation. Good examples include those below from the *Phaedo*, *Meno*, and *Symposium*:

“[Socrates:] It is likely that those who established the mystic rites for us were not inferior persons but were speaking in riddles long ago when they said that whoever arrives in the underworld uninitiated and unsanctified will wallow in the mire, whereas he who arrives there purified and initiated will dwell with the gods. There are indeed, as those concerned with the mysteries say, many who carry the thyrsus but the Bacchants are few [the implication here being that those who aspire to initiation are many, but the initiated are few]. These latter are, in my opinion, no other than those who have practiced philosophy in the right way. I have in my life left nothing undone in order to be counted among these as far as possible, as I have been eager to be in every way.”³⁸⁸

“Socrates: It is not better, son of Alexidemus, but I am convinced that the other [answer] is, and I think you would agree, if you did not have to go away before the mysteries as you told me yesterday, but could remain and be initiated.

Meno: I would stay, Socrates, if you could tell me many things like these.”³⁸⁹

““Even you, Socrates, could probably come to be initiated into these rites of love. But as for the purpose of these rites when they are done correctly – that is the final highest mystery, and I don’t know if you are capable of it. I myself will tell you,” she [Diotima] said, “and I won’t stint any effort. And you must try to follow if you can...”³⁹⁰

Indeed, as can be surmised from the above, and as seasoned readers of Plato will appreciate, the dialogues are strewn with allusions to myths and mysteries, and in several places it seems evident that Plato considered himself privy to the esoteric knowledge and experiences associated with these.

³⁸⁶ These were most likely those traditions known variously as the Eleusinian, Bacchic or Orphic mysteries. See Taylor 1875, Burkert 1969, Riedweg 1987, Kingsley 1995 and 1999, McPherran 1996, Morgan 2000, Hadot 2002, and Adluri 2006.

³⁸⁷ Plato *Prot.* 316d.

³⁸⁸ Plato. *Phd.* 69c-d.

³⁸⁹ Plato *Men.* 76e.

³⁹⁰ Plato *Sym.* 210a. See also Gerson 2016b.

Finally, in the *Seventh Epistle*, Plato (or an impostor rather convincingly pretending to be Plato) comments on the impossibility for certain teachings to ever be written down:

“I know that certain others also have written on these same matters; but who they are they themselves do not know. So much at least I can affirm with confidence about any who have written or propose to write on these questions, pretending to a knowledge of the problems with which I am concerned, whether they claim to have learned from me or from others or to have made their discoveries for themselves: it is impossible, in my opinion, that they can have learned anything at all about the subject. There is no writing of mine about these matters, nor will there ever be one. For this knowledge is not something that can be put into words like other sciences; but after long-continued intercourse between teachers and pupil, in joint pursuit of the subject, suddenly, like light flashing forth when a fire is kindled, it is born in the soul and straightway nourishes itself. And this too I know: if these matters are to be expounded at all in books or lectures, they would best come from me. Certainly I am harmed not least of all if they are misinterpreted. If I thought they could be put into written words adequate for the multitude, what nobler work could I do in my life than to compose something of such great benefit to mankind and bring to light the nature of things for all to see? But I do not think that the “examination,” as it is called, of these questions would be of any benefit to men, except to a few, i.e., to those who could with a little guidance discover the truth by themselves. Of the rest, some would be filled with an ill-founded and quite unbecoming disdain, and some with an exaggerated and foolish elation, as if they had learned something grand.”³⁹¹

The *Epistle* goes on to further expound upon the inadequacies of language in relating certain teachings. The evidence that Plato held that certain doctrines were meant to be hidden, or at least unwritten, turns out to be abundant, albeit often frustratingly cryptic. The difficulty of appreciating the import of Plato’s frequent yet furtive nods to the mysteries has led to widespread ignorance on this issue (and consequently various broad misappropriations and misunderstandings of the nature of Platonic philosophy), as Adluri astutely notes:

“The language of initiation is not a linguistic archaism carried over by Plato. Rather, this language comprises an essential aspect of Plato’s conception of philosophy, as illustrated in several of the... dialogues... When taken seriously, we are forced to admit (paraphrasing Whitehead’s famous comment) that Western philosophy is a series of footnotes to a radically de-theologized Plato, an alleged rational philosopher.”³⁹²

If Aristotle is in fundamental harmony with Plato, then this ‘de-theologization’ of the ancients’ philosophy has been even more pronounced, even more widespread, and even more readily accepted as the canonical and correct interpretation of the Stagirite’s philosophical melody. This does not imply that Aristotle must also have been ‘initiated’ into or privy to some form of the ‘mysteries’, but simply

³⁹¹ Plato *Sev. Epi.* 341b-e. The authenticity of the *Seventh Epistle* is, of course, disputed. See Cooper 1997: 1634-35.

³⁹² Adluri 2006: 409.

that Aristotle's philosophy is, like Plato's, inherently dependent on eternal substance, and as such ultimately and incontestably 'theological'³⁹³.

Further evidence of Plato's connections to the mysteries can be gleaned from the works of the historians and commentators. The Greek historian Herodotus (contemporary of Plato), for example, relates that Plato learnt some manner of esoteric teaching from the study of the 'Orphic and Pythagorean writings': "What Orpheus delivered in hidden allegories Pythagoras learned when he was initiated into the Orphic mysteries; and Plato next received a knowledge of them from the Orphic and Pythagorean writings"³⁹⁴. St. Augustine, citing Cicero, also mentions the alleged practice of the Academics to not reveal their own views: "He [Cicero] assures us that the Academics had a practice of hiding their view, and of not revealing it to anyone except those who lived with them up to old age. What that doctrine was, God knows! For my part, I do believe that it was Plato's"³⁹⁵. Moreover, various Neoplatonic commentators do not hesitate to explicitly connect Platonic philosophy in general (and often specific Platonic doctrines or passages from the dialogues) with the mysteries – a fine example here is Proclus' *On the Theology of Plato*, which opens with the following passage:

"O Pericles, to me the dearest of friends, I am of opinion that the whole philosophy of Plato was at first unfolded into light through the beneficent will of superior natures, exhibiting the intellect concealed in them, and the truth subsisting, together with beings, to souls conversant with generation (so far as it is lawful for them to participate of such supernatural and mighty good); and again, that afterwards having received its perfection, returning as it were into itself and becoming unapparent to many who professed to philosophize; and who earnestly desired to engage in the investigation of true being, it again advanced into light. But I particularly think that the mystic doctrine respecting divine concerns, which is purely established on a sacred foundation, and which perpetually subsists with the gods themselves, became thence apparent to such as are capable of enjoying it for a time, through one man [Plato], whom I should not err in calling the primary leader and hierophant of those true mysteries, into which souls separated from terrestrial places are initiated, and of those entire and stable visions, which those participate who genuinely embrace a happy and blessed life."³⁹⁶

Indeed, besides the project of harmonism, one of the fundamental characteristics of Neoplatonism was the emphasis on the esoteric aspects of Plato, and virtually every major figure in that tradition makes some effort towards tying Plato's philosophy to various myths and mysteries³⁹⁷.

Moving on to Aristotle's testimony concerning Plato's alleged *AD*, we find Aristotle's key references in the *Physics* (during his discussion of place and space), the various passages concerning the doctrine

³⁹³ See Chapter 2, sections 3.3, 3.4 and 4.5; Chapter 3, section 3.1, and Chapter 4, section 3.2 above. See also Chapter 5 sections 1 and 2.

³⁹⁴ Herodotus, ii. 51, 81 (trans. Taylor 1875: 48).

³⁹⁵ Augustine *Con. Acad.* III, 19.43.

³⁹⁶ Taylor 2010.

³⁹⁷ See Ahbel-Rappe 2000. See also a good example of this phenomena in Plato in Pender 2013.

of the One and the Indefinite Dyad (a doctrine which Aristotle ascribes to Plato, but which cannot be expressly found in the Platonic dialogues, and is tied by Aristotle to Pythagoreanism³⁹⁸) in the *Metaphysics* (one example of which I have provided below), and in *De Anima* in the context of a discussion of the composition of the soul:

“This is why Plato in the *Timaeus* says that matter and space are the same, for the ‘participant’ and space are identical. (It is true, indeed, that the account he gives there of the ‘participant’ is different from what he says in his so-called unwritten teaching [ἄγραφα δόγματα]. Nevertheless, he did identify place and space.)”³⁹⁹

“Since the Forms are the causes of all other things, he [Plato] thought their elements were the elements of all things. As matter, the great and the small were principles; as substance, the One; for from the great and the small, by participation in the One, came the numbers.

But he agreed with the Pythagoreans in saying that the One is substance and not a predicate of something else; and in saying that the numbers are the causes of the substance of other things, he also agreed with them; but positing a dyad and constructing the infinite out of great and small, instead of treating the infinite as one, is peculiar to him; and so is his view that the numbers exist apart from the sensible things, while *they* say that the things themselves are numbers, and do not place the objects of mathematics between Forms and sensible things. His divergence from the Pythagoreans in making the One and the numbers separate from things, and his introduction of the Forms, were due to his inquiries in the region of definitory formulae (for the earlier thinkers had no tincture of dialectic), and his making the other entity besides the One a dyad was due to the belief that the numbers, except those which were prime, could be neatly produced out of the dyad as out of a plastic material.”⁴⁰⁰

“In the same way Plato in the *Timaeus* fashions the soul out of his elements; for like, he holds, is known by like, and things are formed out of the principles or elements. Similarly also in the lectures ‘On Philosophy’ it was set forth that the Animal-itself is compounded of the Idea itself of the One together with the primary length, breadth, and depth, everything else being similarly constituted. Again he puts his view in yet other terms: Mind is the monad, science or knowledge the dyad (because it goes undeviatingly from one point to another), opinion the number of the plane, sensation the number of the solid; the numbers are by him expressly identified with the Forms themselves or principles, and are formed out of the elements; now things are apprehended either by mind or science or opinion or sensation, and these same numbers are the Forms of things.”⁴⁰¹

In various places Aristotle expands on these concepts, and various Neoplatonic commentators comment variously on Aristotle’s testimony. The majority of these take Aristotle to be trustworthy in his

³⁹⁸ Aristotle *Met.* 987a29-b35.

³⁹⁹ Aristotle *Phys.* 209b11-15.

⁴⁰⁰ Aristotle *Met.* A 6 987b19-35.

⁴⁰¹ Aristotle *De An.* 404b 16-27.

testimony, and many agree that Aristotle was chiefly relating the content of Plato's oral lecture, 'On the Good,' in his own exoteric work of the same name⁴⁰². For example, Simplicius relates:

“Alexander says that ‘according to Plato the One and the Indefinite Dyad, which he spoke of as Great and Small, are the Principles of all things and even of the Eide themselves. So Aristotle reports in his work *On the Good*. One might also have got this from Speusippus and Xenocrates and the others who attended Plato's Lecture on the Good. For all of them wrote down and preserved his opinion and say that he made use of these same Principles. It is very likely that Plato made the One and the Indefinite Dyad the Principles of all things, since this was the doctrine of the Pythagoreans whom Plato followed at many points. And Plato made the Indefinite Dyad a Principle of the Ideas also, calling it Great and Small to signify Matter...”⁴⁰³

Based on the above and similar textual evidence from the sources and the commentators, various scholars have either accepted or rejected the existence and importance of the *AD* for Plato's philosophy. Probably the most well-known is Cherniss' 1944 *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy* and 1945 *The Riddle of the Early Academy*, wherein Aristotle's reliability as an exegete of Plato in general, and as witness to the *AD* in particular, is questioned wholesale⁴⁰⁴. Hans Joachim Krämer and the so-called 'Tübingen School' forwarded the thesis that the unwritten doctrines formed the core of Plato's philosophy⁴⁰⁵ – a thesis that has been widely critiqued or qualified, for example by the eminent hermeneutical theorist Hans-Georg Gadamer⁴⁰⁶. More recently, Miller provides a thesis on the possibility of extracting the same principles that Aristotle assigns to the *AD* from Plato's dialogues, particularly the *Parmenides*⁴⁰⁷.

As should be clear from the above, the issue of the *AD*, its relation to Plato's philosophy at large, and Aristotle's reliability as a witness of them, remain hotly contested issues. The question we must content ourselves with addressing here then is – what is the relevance of these ongoing debates for the question of Platonic-Aristotelian harmony? I would like to forward the tentative thesis that perhaps, it is not very relevant at all, all things considered. As far as Aristotle's reliability as an exegete of Plato is concerned, whether or not he reliably relates the content of any putative Platonic *AD* is moot, as is the question of whether or not Plato in fact *has AD* that significantly change or effect the way in which we read Plato.

It seems certain that the questions surrounding the *AD* will still occupy serious scholars of Plato and Aristotle for many years to come. In the meantime, I believe that Gerson's *malgré lui* thesis may be

⁴⁰² For a complete list of the passages where Aristotle relates or expands upon the content of Plato's unwritten teachings, and the Neoplatonic responses to these, see Krämer 1990: 203-217, Findlay 1974: 413-454. See also Novotny 1977: 28.

⁴⁰³ Simplicius *In Phys.* 187a, 12 (trans. Findlay 1974). Of course, I cannot here canvas the controversial issue of Plato's harmony with Pythagorean doctrines, as espoused by Iamblichus – for more on this issue see Gerson 2005: 5-6 and *ibid*, 25-26.

⁴⁰⁴ See Cherniss 1944 and 1945.

⁴⁰⁵ See Nikulin 2012. Cf. Reale and Catan, 1990: 7ff.

⁴⁰⁶ Malpas 2014.

⁴⁰⁷ Miller 1995.

immediately useful in terms of the relevance of this issue to the harmony debate. Whatever Aristotle's relative reliability, and whatever the content of the *AD* may mean for our understanding of Plato's philosophy as a whole, what we have before us immediately are Plato's dialogues and Aristotle's commentary upon various issues relating to those. These form the ideal vantage point from which to tackle the question of Aristotle versus Plato, since, as Gerson believes, we may assess from these the putative Platonism of the doctrines that Aristotle *incontestably* adheres to. Whether Aristotle is in harmony with the content of whatever *AD* may exist (besides the explicit issues of the One and Indefinite Dyad⁴⁰⁸), is an issue that can only be contended with once a proper scholarly foundation for the exposition of the *AD* has been established – in my view, not nearly enough has been done in this area to be able to draw any definitive conclusions. Hopefully this is a situation that will be remedied by a better grasp of both Plato and Aristotle and their ancient interpreters – more focus on the Neoplatonic harmonists in this context would certainly be pertinent. For now though, much about the *agrapha dogmata*, and their nature and place within the context of Platonic-Aristotelian harmony, remains largely a mystery, the study of which future scholars may do well to initiate themselves into.

6. Conclusion

As this penultimate movement has, I hope, made abundantly apparent, the issue of Plato versus Aristotle remains a thriving discourse in contemporary scholarship. From questions around the intentions and foci of Aristotle's works, to the finer aspects of Aristotle's metaphysical and psychological doctrines, there exists a vast scale of both subtle and complex notes upon which contemporary scholars may compose their exegetical movements. My own rehearsal of some of the most significant of these notes has showcased some of the most enduring difficulties of *Aristotle versus Plato*, difficulties which will surely still occupy scholars of the masters for many years to come. The nature of the *Categories* and its status in the Aristotelian corpus remains controversial, as does the question of whether Aristotle correctly grasps the Platonic conception of matter and Plato's 'receptacle'. Moreover, the nature of divine thought in Aristotle, and the similarity or contrast this conception has as regards the Platonic position on the same, remains difficult to fully apprehend. These questions all complicate the question of metaphysical harmony, and final judgements on Platonic-Aristotelian metaphysical harmony must, to some extent at least, yet be suspended until these issues have been resolved satisfactorily. The keystone of harmony, that Aristotle does not out of hand reject Plato's theory of Forms (with the converse forming the keystone of the thesis of disharmony), also has several significant *aporias* that preclude decisive declaration of harmony or disharmony *au fond*. Questions around the tension between Aristotle's critique of Forms and his adherence to intelligible reality require further addressing (and in particular, the perpetually perplexing issue of the Third Man critique of Forms remains a significant

⁴⁰⁸ See Chapter 1, section 1.1 and Chapter 2, section 3.1.

issue for our understanding of both Plato and Aristotle). Finally, the issue of whether and what kind of hylomorphist or dualist Aristotle may be as regards his psychological doctrine remains wide open, as do the issues surrounding Aristotle's famously controversial adherence to some form of psychological immortality. In short, there is no small amount of work that may yet be achieved towards the solution of the riddle *Aristotle versus Plato* – the breadth of attention some of these issues are yet afforded in the contemporary milieu make this abundantly clear. Through this invaluable work new tones and melodies in our understanding of both Platonism and Aristotelianism emerge. Being as they are, two of the oldest and most dominant traditions in Western philosophy, this work turns out to be highly valuable, with each new tune and counter-melody adding to a symphony that is profoundly significant for the discourse of philosophy in its entirety. Apprehending this significance then, and the importance of thoroughly thinking through the issues of *Aristotle versus Plato* for philosophy at large, form the keynotes of the final movement of this dissertation.

Chapter 5: Coda

In the introductory chapter of this dissertation, we noted the tone of tension that rang out at the inception of Western philosophy, between Plato ‘The Divine’ and his most famous student, Aristotle ‘The Philosopher’. Our symphony now concluded, it is time to adjust ourselves to an *allargando*, broadly reflecting back on what has been presented in order to investigate whether the efforts of the commentators, both modern and ancient, have relieved, resolved, or in fact heightened this tension. Whatever the case, what is key for the purposes of this dissertation is an assessment of the relevance of this tension for the discipline of philosophy at large, and what the relative merits or drawbacks may be of its various interpretations. Towards this end, I will in this concluding chapter assess the putative harmonism of Plato and Aristotle across several key themes: Firstly, by investigating the widespread modern dismissal of the possibility of Aristotelian-Platonic harmony, achieved chiefly via adherence to developmentalism and the concurrent construction of an anti-Platonic Aristotelianism; secondly, by making clear the significance of properly understanding the relationship of these two thinkers for philosophy in general, and the importance of doing proper justice to ancient philosophy in particular; thirdly, by assessing the utility for philosophy of interpreting Aristotle as a contributor to what we have called the project of Platonism; and fourthly, by insisting on the crucial importance of the proper portrayal of the complex relationship between Plato and Aristotle in lectures and guidebooks. Finally, I will draw all of these themes together into one last *crescendo*, illustrating the conclusions that can be drawn from the secondary foundational tension of this symphony – the tension between the harmonists on one side, and the anti-harmonists on the other.

1. Doing Justice to Ancient Philosophy

“...give but little thought to Socrates but much more to the truth.” ~ Plato⁴⁰⁹

Caring more for truth than for opinion is a philosophical ideal as old as the discipline itself. In this dissertation, I have endeavoured to attempt to separate what is true concerning the relationship between the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle from what is simply wishful thinking and conjecture. The aim of such an endeavour, as I also stated in my introduction, is largely to attempt to ‘do justice to ancient philosophy’. In *Aristotle and Other Platonists*, Gerson asserts that “doing philosophical justice to both Aristotle and Plato is facilitated by a serious consideration of the harmonists’ position”⁴¹⁰. Frede’s comments on doing justice to ancient philosophy are likewise pertinent:

“How, then, do we explain historically the historical fact that someone held a certain philosophical view, if he had no good reason for doing so, and if we cannot find some line of reasoning and certain

⁴⁰⁹ Plato *Phd.* 91C1.

⁴¹⁰ Gerson 2005: 2. Cf. Sedley 2002.

assumptions that we can easily imagine ourselves using? We consider the historical context to explain the fact that someone held a certain philosophical view.

But at this point it is, perhaps, worthwhile to note the fact that it does not follow from the fact that someone held a philosophical view which has to be explained historically that it has to be explained in terms of the history of philosophy, by the historian of philosophy. Perhaps we can avoid some confusion if we distinguish between ancient philosophy, or quite generally the philosophy of the past, and the study of this philosophy, on the other. There is an object, ancient philosophy, and this object allows for a certain kind of study. Often one uses the expression “the history of ancient philosophy” to refer to the object as a whole, but to avoid confusion we may prefer to reserve the term “history of philosophy” for a certain kind of study of this object and for the aspect of the object that is studied this way, namely the kind of study that tries to do justice to ancient philosophy.”⁴¹¹

To do justice to ancient philosophy here then, amounts to taking seriously the propositions of the ancient philosophers, understanding the contextual and historical frameworks of their thought, and applying the diligence that is due in investigating them. However, one may still ask what the relevance of such a task may be, for the field of philosophy in general, and for the contemporary philosophical milieu in particular. In this section I will attempt to work through some of the considerations that have informed my understanding of the importance of doing justice to ‘Aristotle versus Plato’, how that justice may be achieved, and the ways in which this debate may continue to influence the philosophical landscape even today.

I believe three important aspects of doing justice to the Plato-Aristotle debate need to be addressed. The first is the simple fact of the colossal influence these thinkers have had on the whole of philosophy. This dissertation started with an allusion to Alfred North Whitehead’s assertion that Western philosophy can safely be characterized as a ‘series of footnotes to Plato’. Many scholars share this view of both Plato and Aristotle, e.g. Gilles Deleuze, who in his 1994 work *What is Philosophy* (co-authored with Félix Guattari), echoes Nietzsche in identifying the atmosphere or *milieu* of Western philosophy, broadly conceived, as Greek: “...what philosophy finds in the Greeks, said Nietzsche, is not an origin, but a milieu, an ambiance, an ambient atmosphere: the philosopher ceases to be a comet”⁴¹². The ancient commentators, Neoplatonists and otherwise, should be seen as co-architects of this foundational philosophical milieu - that gravitational melody around which Western philosophy composes itself. As such, taking these commentators seriously, and taking into account their views of the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, is nothing less than a philosophical imperative.

Secondly, as Whitehead’s ‘footnotes’ remark implies, almost all the problems of Western philosophy find their genesis in the ancient Greek masters. When thinking through these problems, first surveying

⁴¹¹ Frede 1987: xiii.

⁴¹² Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 96. Cf. Long 1992.

the work done by towering figures such as Plato and Aristotle is not optional for the serious student of philosophy; it is obligatory. Every branch of philosophy owes an incalculable debt to these thinkers, and misconstruing their philosophies amounts to setting off on the path of philosophical inquiry headed immediately in the wrong direction. As such, the problem of ‘Plato versus Aristotle’ is not *just* a matter relevant to the historians of philosophy – it is directly relevant to every philosopher dealing with any of the problems of philosophy dealt with by Plato and his best student Aristotle – and this vast umbrella, in many ways, covers almost *all* the problems of philosophy, including those still being hotly contested today. The question of harmony then is so deeply relevant to philosophy that its significance can hardly be overstated, and the fact that it is in the modern context so rarely discussed is a situation in need of immediate rectification.

A third and final significant facet of the Plato versus Aristotle debate is the fact that, based on the largely erroneous assumption of a fundamental opposition between Plato and Aristotle, philosophers throughout modernity have set themselves up as falling into either ‘camp’; *either* one is an Aristotelian, *or* one is a Platonist – there seems to be no middle ground. If, as it turns out is the case, there is a *considerably large* middle ground, then what can we make of this division amongst modern philosophers, when figures as influential as Husserl, Gadamer, Hegel, Ricoeur, and various others declare their allegiance more or less confidently for one or the other (or premise some or other argument on the assumption of a fundamental difference between the two)? It seems that, if there is less of a divide between Platonism and Aristotelianism than these thinkers have apparently assumed, much of the recent history of philosophy has been premised on a false dichotomy. It is not that there is no distinction between Plato and Aristotle; there certainly is. But the *fundamental* opposition, set up in a kind of binary between philosophical-scientific, logical-poetic, rational-mystical, religious-atheist, or idealist-materialist, simply does not exist in the comparison of Plato to Aristotle. If thinkers wish to distinguish themselves along these kinds of lines then that is their prerogative, but they cannot justifiably use the imaginary binary “Plato-Aristotle” to do so. The fact that many have, and that in the modern context this distinction is hardly ever questioned, has led to a situation of stalemate for the harmony debate. The widespread dismissal of even the possibility of harmony between Plato and Aristotle has become far too entrenched, and I argue that the time has come to uncover and re-examine its arguments and assumptions, in order to determine whether, on closer inspection, they can stand up to philosophical scrutiny. The situation wherein harmony can simply be dismissed is no longer academically tenable. To understand more about why this is the case, and what gave rise to this current quagmire in Aristotelian exegesis, we must examine the conditions of its inception and eventual ascendancy, which is the aim of our next section.

2. A Perfectly Crazy Position

“Not for the only time in the history of philosophy... , a perfectly crazy position (harmony) proved philosophically fruitful.” ~ Sir Richard Sorabji⁴¹³

What events transpired in the world of philosophy to bring about the kind of academic atmosphere where as eminent and influential a scholar as Sir Richard Sorabji can declare an otherwise compelling philosophical position “perfectly crazy”? The near-universal acceptance of the idea that Aristotle is *fundamentally* opposed to Plato is so entrenched it seems, that dismissing the entire thesis of harmony requires no more than a pithy quip. In a discipline that re-evaluates itself and its theories perennially and with such great meticulousness, this seems a bizarre situation indeed. Though ostensibly rooted in the thesis of developmentalism, the conviction that Aristotle is an anti-Platonist is, I believe, driven by forces and inclinations of a broader and more subtle nature. In the third chapter of this dissertation I outlined some of the specific elements that make up the developmentalist thesis, and that lead to its conclusion of Aristotle’s anti-Platonism (whether at the beginning or end of his philosophical career). Here, I would like to trace the arc of the construction of ‘Aristotle the anti-Platonist’ more broadly, surveying those movements and moments in thought that led not only to its inception, but to its current ascendancy.

Of course, at the very beginning of such an arc of investigation, we must admit the ancient roots of the idea that Aristotle was opposed to Plato in some way. Our first source consists in nothing less than the work of Aristotle himself, littered as it is with apparent and often scathing critiques of Platonic doctrine. It is not hard to understand, when reading the Aristotelian corpus, why commentators both ancient and modern readily came to the conclusion that Aristotle was in some significant way the philosophical ‘enemy’ of Platonism. Yet, there is a comparable amount of evidence for exactly the opposite conclusion! In modernity, this contradiction led eventually to the at least initially plausible thesis of the development of Aristotle’s thought from Platonic to anti-Platonic; a position which has now become the standard reading. But before taking a closer look at the development of developmentalism, as it were, let us review again some important factors of what we may call the ‘initial evidence’ for Aristotle’s anti-Platonism.

Firstly, when analysing Aristotle’s putative arguments against Plato, several important qualifications come into play. I think the first that needs to be gotten out of the way is that of personal factors. What was the relationship between Plato and Aristotle – can something of their philosophical agreement or disagreement be gleaned from their attitude towards each other? Some commentators, like our Roman friend from this dissertation’s introduction, seem to ascribe to Aristotle a kind of ‘ingratitude’, like the colt kicking at the dam, and on the basis of this make claims to the effect that Aristotle ‘set up

⁴¹³ Sorabji 1990: 5.

Peripateticism' against Plato. Others, like Diogenes, make contradictory statements on this matter, saying both that Aristotle was like a 'colt', and yet that he was also Plato's 'most authentic disciple'. From other sources we learn about Plato's deep esteem for Aristotle, as for example Chroust relates:

"All sources also agree that Aristotle was taught by Plato personally. Mubashir (*II VA 10*) is more explicit in maintaining that, 'because of the extraordinary impression which Aristotle made upon him, Plato did not entrust him to be taught by Xenocrates, as he did with his other pupils.' *II VS 2*, as had already been shown, essentially relates the same story, insisting that during his stay at the Academy, Aristotle studied (exclusively?) under Plato's direction, concentrating on Platonic philosophy. The 'extraordinary impression' which Aristotle made upon Plato became manifest not only in the fact that Plato insisted upon instructing him personally, but also in the lavish praise which Plato apparently bestowed upon him. Thus, when it sometimes happened that Aristotle was not among Plato's audience, according to *IVS 5*, the latter would say, 'the "Mind" is absent,' or 'the philosopher is far from the truth,' or, 'the audience is deaf.' Mubashir (*II VA 11-12*) insists that Plato simply refused to hold scholarly discussions unless Aristotle was present, remarking that he did not care to discuss philosophy 'until the "Mind" is here.' And when Aristotle arrived, Mubashir continues, Plato would say: 'Begin to recite, the audience is complete,' or, 'read now, the "Mind" is present.'"⁴¹⁴

Several sources also cite the student's esteem for the master⁴¹⁵. The Neoplatonist Olympiodorus even attributes to Aristotle some honorific verses in praise of Plato⁴¹⁶, relating (to Eudemus, apparently) how an unknown character erected a shrine to Plato:

"And when he had come to Kekropia's famous soil he piously founded there an altar of august Philia in honour of the man whom bad men have no right even to praise: who sole or first among mortals revealed it clear to sight, by his own life and by the investigations of his discourses, that man becomes happy if he becomes good. But now it is not possible for anyone even to attain this."⁴¹⁷

The last lines, argue Jaeger, indicate the degree of esteem Aristotle had for Plato, insisting as it were that none besides Plato could hope to attain to the ideals of Platonism as fully as the man himself.

These considerations in place, what are we to make of those various accounts of Aristotle's so-called 'rebellion' from Plato, his 'succession' from the Academy, and his setting up of a 'rival' school? Many scholars are in accord that these are almost certainly based on misinterpretations of certain events following Plato's death, and that in fact Aristotle never had anything but an excellent regard for his teacher⁴¹⁸. The evidence, it seems, is greatly in favour of this interpretation of the relationship between

⁴¹⁴ Chroust 1973: 59-60.

⁴¹⁵ See e.g. *ibid.*

⁴¹⁶ Jaeger 1927 supports this attribution.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴¹⁸ Chroust 1973.

Plato and Aristotle. Then what of their philosophical disputes? Here our friends the Neoplatonic commentators have some useful insights, as we shall see below.

Several issues must be kept in mind diligently when evaluating the philosophical disagreements between Plato and Aristotle. The first is hinted at by the introductory quotations given at the beginning of sections 1 and 4 of this concluding chapter; that both Plato and Aristotle were in complete agreement that philosophical truth was more important than friendship, or perhaps we may say in this regard, that expounding the truth was more important than maintaining the appearance of friendship, at the cost of philosophy! As such, we can in no way even begin to assume that Aristotle's apparent philosophical disagreements with Plato had any bearing on their (according to all reliable accounts) amicable relationship. Nor should we imagine that their relationship led them to some kind of bitter rivalry, as seems to be the assumption of those who draw a correlations between accounts of Aristotle alleged 'revolt' and his philosophical critiques of Platonism. In the end, whatever the nature of the relationship between Plato and Aristotle, in regards to the 'relationship' of their *philosophy*, we are given free rein to isolate it (to some extent at least), from their personal attitudes. What we can say at the very least, is that Aristotle's works display a deep respect for Platonic philosophy, even when critiquing it.

This last point is perhaps a clue. As we saw earlier (chiefly in Chapter 2), the Neoplatonic commentators made convincing arguments to the effect that when Aristotle seems to criticize Plato, he is not in fact criticizing Platonism proper, but rather defective versions of it (in some cases probably versions that were being debated intra-Academically). Moreover, the Neoplatonists are also quick to point out that in many of the cases of *actual* disagreement between Aristotle and Platonic philosophy proper, it is on account of a deficiency in *Aristotle's conception* of Platonism, as with Aristotle's mistaken identification of a thinking being as the ultimate first principle. As Gerson notes, since some of these mistakes were on decisive matters in the conception of Platonic philosophy, "many other things were bound to be out of kilter"⁴¹⁹. On this view, Aristotle remains a Platonist (though with some qualifications), and instead of critiquing *Plato*, Aristotle was critiquing versions of *Platonism* that were inadequate – an exercise that is tantamount, certainly to the Neoplatonic commentators, to *defending* Platonism proper. It is not unsurprising then that the Neoplatonists could view Aristotle as a co-contributor to the project of Platonism.

How then, do we currently find ourselves in a situation where the thesis of Platonic-Aristotelian harmony is so widely dismissed that it can be blithely labelled 'perfectly crazy'? I believe the influence of the developmentalist thesis is key here. If the Neoplatonic response to Aristotle's criticisms of Platonism was to show in which way his criticisms were either based on a flawed understanding of criticism, or on flawed versions of Platonism, then the developmentalist response to Aristotle's

⁴¹⁹ Gerson 2005: 16.

Platonism has been to try to explain it away, theorizing that Aristotle must have started out as Platonist and then ‘matured’ into an anti-Platonist, then divvying up Aristotle’s work into early and late (Platonic and anti-Platonic) stages, and then explaining away those pesky Platonisms that *yet* remained in the putative ‘late’ Aristotle as vestigial traces of his youthful Platonism or the likes. The problems with such an interpretation of the Aristotelian corpus are manifold. The direst of these is its circularity – one of the only ways of reading such a development into Aristotle is by categorizing the Aristotelian corpus upon the assumption of such development; there is not sufficient reason, it turns out, to justify the developmentalists’ organization of the Aristotelian corpus on any other grounds. A further significant point is the one made by Gerson on ‘deep’ versus ‘shallow’ development⁴²⁰. This point is related to another, that of Aristotle’s internal coherence. Briefly, the developmentalist thesis conceives Aristotle’s thought as developing ‘deeply’, that is, from one distinctive point to its polar opposite; from Platonism to anti-Platonism. The problem with such a conception of Aristotle’s development (since, of course, Aristotle *did* develop as a thinker; all thinkers do), is that it brings a general incoherence to much of Aristotle’s philosophy. Because this conception of Aristotle’s development leaves Aristotle at the ‘end’ of his work a committed anti-Platonist, those Platonisms still present in his ‘later’ work must be explained away. Unfortunately for the developmentalist thesis, this exercise is so fraught with difficulty that it requires a kind of exegetical magic to achieve without fundamentally distorting the fundamental tenets of Aristotelian philosophy. This is because the Platonisms in Aristotle, at all ‘stages’ of his work, are *not* vestigial or simply incidental or even accidentally – they are *crucial* aspects of Aristotle’s entire philosophical system. A more likely thesis on Aristotle’s development then, is that it was ‘shallow’, developing into maturity on some of its specific aspects, but maintaining an overarching character – that of Platonism.

I believe another factor besides developmentalism is responsible for the widespread dismissal of the idea of *Aristotle the Platonist*. This is I think an often unspoken, sometimes even subconscious factor in the minds of many scholars. It is not recognized in any place formally as far as I am aware, perhaps because it is so subtle, or perhaps because it cannot ever be ‘proven’ to any extent. Still, I mention it here because I believe it is a significant contributing factor to the sustaining of a philosophical atmosphere wherein the thesis of harmony is rarely even mentioned, and then only with disdain or blunt dismissal. My thesis here is that perhaps, Aristotle is framed as an anti-Platonist particularly by those who themselves have an anti-Platonic bias. Aristotle, it seems, is often set up as a hero of ‘rationality’ or even materialism, opposed eternally to the wishful thinking of his mystical teacher. The influence of the Enlightenment must not be taken lightly here – it is likely no coincidence that the thesis of Aristotle’s development from Platonist to anti-Platonist followed quickly on the heels of the ‘rationalist revolution’. The slant of Western philosophy in general, from this time forward, weighed heavily in the favour of ‘anti-metaphysics’, instantiated famously by figures such as Nietzsche, Russell and Derrida. I

⁴²⁰ Ibid, 48-49. See Chapter 3, section 2.

believe that Aristotle, who had historically at times been taken as the opponent of Plato, became a favoured candidate for the role of an ancient champion of rationality, and bizarrely, atheism and materialism! Whatever the relative merits of these positions, the simple fact of the matter is that Aristotle is a terrible candidate for their champion. The amount of evidence that Aristotle is in fact almost the opposite of a materialist or atheist is so massive that holding him to be anything like either of those does an equally massive amount of violence to his philosophy – sometimes even to the point of deliberate mistranslation⁴²¹! These kinds of contortions do no justice to the genius of Aristotle, nor to his nuanced understanding of his teacher’s philosophy. In the end, the binary of Plato versus Aristotle, so widely accepted, is neither accurate, nor philosophically useful, and should, I believe, be abandoned in favour of a more accurate reading. Such a reading must necessarily ascertain what *manner* of Platonist Aristotle in fact was; which is the topic of our next section.

3. Aristotelianism as a Platonism

“The discourses of Socrates are never commonplace; they always exhibit grace and originality of thought; but perfection in everything can hardly be expected.” ~ Aristotle⁴²²

We may imagine the Neoplatonic commentators expressing a similar sentiment to the above towards the Platonism of Aristotle; that it was good, but not perfect. The Neoplatonic reading of Aristotelianism as a Platonism (or Aristotle as a Platonist) is, I believe, the correct reading, though not without qualification. Gerson neatly summarizes the Neoplatonic harmonists’ project, motivations, and conclusions:

“Neoplatonists regarded Aristotle as an extremely valuable component of the bridge across the gap between what Plato said and what Plato meant. If his criticisms stood alone without any countervailing evidence of his commitment to Platonism, then they probably would have concluded that those criticisms meant that Aristotle was not a Platonist, as, say, Pyrrho or Epicurus were not. But because there is such evidence – in fact, because there is such a *considerable* amount of evidence – they were inclined to take the criticisms of Plato as criticisms of unsuccessful versions of Platonism, not of the Platonism that Plato himself truly endorsed. Finally, and most important, since Aristotle’s Platonism actually was defective in certain crucial respects, he would naturally be expected to criticize Plato. That is why, after all, his philosophy was said to be in harmony with Platonism, not identical with it. Owing to the fact that the defect was a serious one, having to do primarily with the nature of an ultimate ontological principle, many other things were bound to be out of kilter. But precisely because the defect was capable of being isolated, one could say... that if one were to imagine the defect removed, Aristotelianism would just be Platonism or a creative

⁴²¹ For a good example of this see *ibid*, 196.

⁴²² Aristotle *Pol.* II.6, 1265a10-12.

version of it. In other words, the prodigal son was after all still an inseparable member of the family.”⁴²³

In modern times, the ‘prodigal son’ of Aristotelianism has been removed so distantly from its Platonic hearth, that one would imagine them to be nothing but the most bitter of philosophical enemies. I believe the time has come to remedy this situation, and situate Aristotelianism again within the Platonic context from which it was birthed. In this section I will explore the relative benefits and drawbacks that may arise from a concerted effort at such a reunion today, as well as reviewing the philosophical insights that the Neoplatonic commentators arrived at, borne as they were on the conceptual wings of their harmonic brainchild, Aristotle the Platonist.

It is striking to learn that the curriculum for becoming a Neoplatonic philosopher proper involves first familiarizing oneself with Aristotle before moving on to the study of Plato. Though this may seem chronologically odd, it makes perfect sense within the Neoplatonic context. In fact, we may say that it is an *Aristotelian* approach, keeping in mind that ‘division of labour’ which the Neoplatonists assigned to Plato and his *protégé* Aristotle. Starting at the philosophy of Aristotle, focused as it is on the sensible and changing, the world of becoming, and moving on to that of Plato, focused as it is on the intelligible and eternal, the world of being, is, in a sense, a typically Aristotelian approach. In this way then, though the thought of Plato and Aristotle cannot be construed as *identical*, it is in fact *complementary*, and as such, taking the Aristotelian appropriations of Platonic concepts into account leaves us with a more *complete* Platonic system. We should be careful, the Neoplatonic commentators would add, to also identify those places in which Aristotle does genuinely depart from Platonic doctrine proper, and determine whether these departures are premised on a flawed understanding of Platonism, or whether they are critiques of such inadequate positions.

What is arrived at in this manner is an Aristotelianism which reveals itself as a species of Platonism. The differences are in the details, but, the harmony is in the core. Indeed, one may identify, as does Gerson, the ‘twin pillars’ of Aristotle’s Platonism, i.e. The Philosopher’s consistent commitment to eternal intelligibles, and his thesis of the immortality of intellect, as crucial features of his philosophy, without which much of what the Stagirite says becomes unintelligible. This fundamental harmony discovered, scholars may more accurately investigate the details of Aristotle’s divergence from the teachings of Plato, without a bias towards opposition confounding such efforts at every juncture.

In the final analysis, the benefits of reading Aristotle as a Platonist far outweigh the possible drawbacks. It renders Aristotelian philosophy more coherent, and strikingly resolves apparently contradictory statements in the Aristotelian corpus into the larger framework of a subtle and complex philosophical

⁴²³ Gerson 2005: 16.

system. Reading Aristotle as a Platonist turns out to be deeply philosophically fruitful, despite how ‘crazy’ the proposition might sound to those hearing it for the first time.

4. Teaching the Controversy

“...piety requires us to honour truth above our friends.” ~ Aristotle⁴²⁴

At the inception of this study I was plainly shocked to find a work entitled *Aristotle and other Platonists*. In all my years as a philosophy undergraduate, I had never once even heard a hint of the possibility of *harmony* between the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, much less of a *fundamental* harmony! I am certain that my experience in this regard is not unique. Moreover, years of perusing introductory texts on philosophy never once left me with anything to contradict the apparent *fact* that Aristotle broke radically with Plato’s thought. I give this part of my thesis its own section not because I have very much to say about the subject, but because what I have to say is urgent: this has to stop. In short, I am advocating for the approach of ‘teaching the controversy’. Let us remind ourselves of its original context of this phrase. The originator of the phrase, University of Chicago professor Gerald Graff, provides this context:

“About 20 years ago, I coined the phrase “teach the controversy” when I argued that schools and colleges should respond to the then-emerging culture wars over education by bringing their disputes into academic courses themselves. Instead of assuming that we have to resolve debates over, say, whether Huckleberry Finn is a racist text or a stirring critique of racism, teachers should present students with the conflicting arguments and use the debate itself to arouse their interest in the life of the mind. I elaborated the argument in numerous essays and in a 1992 book, *Beyond the Culture Wars*, which is subtitled, *How Teaching the Conflicts Can Revitalize American Education*.”⁴²⁵

In the same article, Graff goes on to make the erudite point that “when we measure the pedagogical merits of an idea, its usefulness in clarifying an issue or provoking students - and teachers - to think can be as important as its truth or validity... [i]n some cases even false or dubious notions can have heuristic value”. Though I believe that this dissertation has convincingly shown that the harmony thesis is far from dubious, the point remains; it is a *crucial* facet of our understanding of Plato and Aristotle, and should be presented as such. What is at stake is nothing less than a proper grasp of the thought of two of the most influential thinkers in philosophical history, and neglecting such a significant aspect of the comprehension of the relationship between their philosophies is, in my view, simply irresponsible, at *any* level of instruction.

⁴²⁴ Aristotle *EN*. 1096a16.

⁴²⁵ Graff 2005.

5. Final Remarks

What can be said, in conclusion, on that note of tension that reverberated at the very inception of Western philosophy; that most vexing tension between Plato ‘The Divine’, and his most eminent student, Aristotle ‘The Philosopher’? Moreover, what of that secondary tension, the underscored battle cries of the harmonists versus the disharmonists? Have these tensions been resolved, or in fact heightened?

I believe that this study, and those like it, cannot *resolve* the tension between Plato and Aristotle, nor should they aim to. If anything, the utility of studying the harmony debate lies in *highlighting* these tensions, and resolving them into their proper context and import. Bringing these issues to light not only does justice to the ancient roots of the discipline of philosophy, it enlivens modern debates that for too long may have been premised on a misguided assumption about the nature of the tension between Plato and Aristotle. Seeing this tension as ‘one among friends’, instead of a binary opposition, illuminates facets of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy that will surely occupy serious scholars of both schools for many years to come.

However, the fundamental issue of properly grasping the complex nature of the relationship of Plato and Aristotle should by no means be a matter solely reserved for the edifices of advanced scholarship. It should be the standard fare of introductory lectures and beginner’s guidebooks. This dissertation has been, at heart, an urgent plea for the thorough realization of that ideal. My hope is that the work presented here has made some small contribution towards that most crucial cause.

The *crescendo* of conclusion complete, let us content ourselves with one final hopeful note in *smorzando*; though our current symphony be done, that grand symphony, the epic *tête-à-tête* of *Aristotle versus Plato*, plays on, as relevant, fascinating and dynamic to contemporary audiences as it was to the original, those first witnesses to the *kairotic* moment that changed the song called philosophy forever, when The Philosopher first strode into the lecture hall of The Divine.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adluri, V. (2006). Initiation into the Mysteries: The Experience of the Irrational in Plato. *Mouseion*, 3(6), pp.407-423.
- Aelianus, C. and Stanley, T. (2016). *Aelian: Various Histories. Book IV*. [Online] Penelope.uchicago.edu. Available at: <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/aelian/varhist4.xhtml> [Accessed 25 Mar. 2016].
- Ahbel-Rappe, S. (2000). *Reading Neoplatonism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Aristotle (1984). *The Complete Works of Aristotle*. Barnes, J (Ed.). Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- (1907). *De Anima*. Hicks, R. (Ed.). Cambridge: University Press.
- (2016). *Metaphysics, by Aristotle: book7*. [Online] Ebooks.adelaide.edu.au. Available at: <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/a/aristotle/metaphysics/book7.html> [Accessed 25 Mar. 2016].
- (2016). *Metaphysics, by Aristotle: book12*. [Online] Ebooks.adelaide.edu.au. Available at: <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/a/aristotle/metaphysics/book12.html> [Accessed 25 Mar. 2016].
- Armstrong, A. (2016). *Platonism*. [Online] Encyclopedia Britannica. Available at: <http://global.britannica.com/topic/Platonism> [Accessed 25 Mar. 2016].
- Armstrong, J. (2004). After the Ascent: Plato on Becoming Like God. *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 26, pp.171-183.
- Asclepius (1888). *In aristotelis metaphysicorum libros a-z commentaria*. Hayduck, M. (Ed.). Berlin: Reimer.
- Aubenque, P. (1963). *La prudence chez Aristote*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Augustine. (1950). *Against the Academics*. O'Meara, J. (Ed.). Westminster, Md.: Newman Press.
- Balaguer, M. (2004). *Platonism in Metaphysics*. [Online] Plato.stanford.edu. Available at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/platonism/> [Accessed 25 Mar. 2016].
- Bénatouïl, T., Maffi, E. And Trabattoni, F. (2011). *Plato, Aristotle, Or Both? Dialogues between Platonism and Aristotelianism in Antiquity*. Georg Olms Verlag.
- Block, I. (1961). The Order of Aristotle's Psychological Writings. *The American Journal of Philology*, 82(1), p.50.

- Blumenthal, H. (2000). *Simplicius: On Aristotle's "On the Soul" 3.1-5*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- Boys-Stones, G. (2006). Review: Gerson (L.P.) Aristotle and Other Platonists. *CAR*, 56(01), p.61.
- Broadie, S. (2005). Virtue and beyond in Plato and Aristotle. *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 43(S1), pp.97-114.
- Burkett, W. (1969). Das Proömium des Parmenides und die Katabasis des Pythagoras. *Phronesis*, 14(1), pp.1-30.
- Burnyeat, M. (2001). *A Map of Metaphysics*. Pittsburgh: Mathesis Publications.
- Bussanich, J. (2006). *Aristotle and Other Platonists // Reviews // Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews // University of Notre Dame*. [Online] Ndpr.nd.edu. Available at: <https://ndpr.nd.edu/news/24985-aristotle-and-other-platonists/> [Accessed 25 Mar. 2016].
- Calvo Martínez, T. And Brisson, L. (1997). *Interpreting the Timaeus-Critias*. Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag.
- Case, T. (1925). V.—Discussions: The Development of Aristotle. *Mind*, XXXIV (133), pp.80-86.
- Caston, V. (1999). Aristotle's Two Intellects: A Modest Proposal. *Phronesis*, 44(3), pp.199-227.
- Charlton, W. (1987). Aristotle on the Place of Mind in Nature. In: A. Gotthelf and J. Lennox, ed., *Philosophical Issues in Aristotle's Biology*, 1st ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.408-423.
- Cherniss, H. (1944). *Aristotle's criticism of Plato and the Academy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press.
- (1945). *The Riddle of the Early Academy*. New York: Russell & Russell.
- Chroust, A. (1965). Aristotle and the "Philosophies of the East". *The Review of Metaphysics*, 18(3), pp.572-580.
- (1967). Aristotle Leaves the Academy. *Greece & Rome*, 14(01), pp.39-43.
- (1973). *Aristotle: New Light on His Life and On Some of His Lost Works*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press.
- (1979). On Masters's "The Case of Aristotle's Missing Dialogues..." *Political Theory*, 7(4), pp.537-543.
- Claghorn, G. (1954). *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's 'Timaeus'*. The Hague: Nijhoff.

- Cohen, S. (1971). The Logic of the Third Man. *The Philosophical Review*, 80(4), p.448.
- (1992). Hylomorphism and Functionalism. In: M. Nussbaum and A. Rorty, ed., *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima*, 1st ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp.57-73.
- (2000). Aristotle's Metaphysics. [Online] Plato.stanford.edu. Available at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-metaphysics/#SubEss> [Accessed 29 Mar. 2016].
- Cornford, F. (1935). *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Crisp, R. and Audi, R. ed., (2015). Form. In: *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 3rd Ed. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- d'Hoine, P. (2011). Aristotle's Criticism of Non-Substance Forms and its Interpretation by the Neoplatonic Commentators. *Phronesis*, 56(3), pp.262-307.
- Dancy, R. (1996). Keeping Body and Soul Together: On Aristotle's Theory of Forms. In: W. Wians, ed., *Aristotle's Philosophical Development*, 1st ed. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, pp.249-87.
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1994). *What is Philosophy?* New York: Columbia University Press.
- Dexippus. (1888). *Dexippi in aristotelis categorias commentarium*. Busse, A. (Ed.). Berlin: Reimer.
- Dillon, J. (2008). *The Heirs of Plato*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Diogenes Laertius., and Hicks, R. (1925). *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. London: W. Heinemann.
- Doherty, K. (1960). Location of the Platonic Ideas. *The Review of Metaphysics*, 14(1), pp.57-72.
- Drummond, J. (1982). Indivisible Lines and the Timaeus. *Apeiron*, 16(1).
- Düring, I. (Ed.). (1961). *Aristotle's Protrepticus*. Goteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothenburgensis.
- (1964). Aristotle and the Heritage from Plato. *Eranos*, 62, pp.84-99.
- Evangelidou, C. (1988). *Aristotle's Categories and Porphyry*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- Ewbank, M. (2005). Review of Aristotle and Other Platonists. *The Review of Metaphysics*, 59(1), pp.175-178.
- Faggiotto, P., Nuyens, F. and Mansion, A. (1950). *François Nuyens, L'évolution de la psychologie d'Aristote, preface par Augustin Mansion [recensione]*. Torino: Società editrice internazionale.

- Fakhry, M. (1965). Al-Farabi and the Reconciliation of Plato and Aristotle. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 26(4), p.469.
- Ferrari, F. (2002). Modelli di causalità: L'idea del Bene in Platon e Aristotele. In: M. Migliori, ed., *Gigantomachia. Convergenze e divergenze tra Platone e Aristotele*, 1st ed. Brescia: Morcelliana.
- Findlay, J. (1974). *Plato: Plato: The Written and Unwritten Doctrines*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Fine, G. (1993). *On Ideas*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- (1999). *Ethics, Politics, Religion, and the Soul*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Frank, E. (1940). The Fundamental Opposition of Plato and Aristotle. *The American Journal of Philology*, 61(2), p.166.
- Frede, M. (1987). *Essays in Ancient Philosophy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- (1992). On Aristotle's Conception of the Soul. In: M. Nussbaum and A. Rorty, ed., *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima*, 1st ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp.57-73.
- Gadamer, H. (1986). *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Gerson, L. (2004). Platonism and the Invention of the Problem of Universals. *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 86(3).
- (2005). *Aristotle and Other Platonists*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- (2011). Proclus and the Third Man. *etudesplatoniciennes*, (8), pp.105-118.
- (2013). *From Plato to Platonism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- (2014). The Myth of Plato's Socratic Period. *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 96(4).
- (2016a). *Platonism in Aristotle's Ethics*. [Online] Academia.edu. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/7706267/Platonism_in_Aristotles_Ethics [Accessed 26 Mar. 2016].
- (2016b). *The Hermeneutics of Mystery in Plato*. [Online] Academia.edu. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/7531441/The_Hermeneutics_of_Mystery_in_Plato [Accessed 26 Mar. 2016].

- Gifford, M. (1999). Aristotle on Platonic Recollection and the Paradox of Knowing Universals: Prior Analytics B.21 67a8-30. *Phronesis*, 44(1), pp.1-29.
- Graff, G. (2005). *To Debate or Not to Debate Intelligent Design? / Inside Higher Ed.* [online] Insidehighered.com. Available at: <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2005/09/28/debate-or-not-debate-intelligent-design> [Accessed 25 Mar. 2016].
- Hadot, I. and Chase, M. (2015). *Athenian and Alexandrian Neoplatonism and the Harmonization of Aristotle and Plato.* Brill.
- Hadot, P. (2002). *What is Ancient Philosophy?* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Hamlyn, D. and Shields, C. (1968). *Aristotle's De Anima, Books II and III (with certain passages from Book I).* Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hardie, W. (1964). Aristotle's Treatment of the Relation between the Soul and the Body. *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 14(54), p.53.
- Heinaman, R. (1990). Aristotle and the Mind-Body Problem. *Phronesis*, 35(1), pp.83-102.
- Iamblichus. (1966). *De Mysteriis.* Des Places, E. (Ed.). Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
- Irwin, T. (1988). *Aristotle's First Principles.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Jaeger, W. (1927). Aristotle's Verses in Praise of Plato. *The Classical Quarterly*, 21(1), pp.13-17.
- (1948). *Aristotle: The Fundamentals of His Development.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Janson, H. W. (1970). *A History of Art.* Revised and Enlarged Edition. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Johnson, H. (1967). Three Ancient Meanings of Matter: Democritus, Plato, and Aristotle. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 28(1), p.3.
- Kal, V. (1988). *On Intuition and Discursive Reasoning in Aristotle.* Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- Karamanolis, G. (2006). *Plato and Aristotle in Agreement?* Oxford: Clarendon.
- Keyt, D. (1961). Aristotle on Plato's Receptacle. *The American Journal of Philology*, 82(3), p.291.
- Kingsley, P. (1995). *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- (1999). *In the Dark Places of Wisdom.* Inverness, Calif.: Golden Sufi Center.

- Krämer, H. (1973). *Aristoteles und die akademische Eidoslehre*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- (1990). *Plato and the Foundations of Metaphysics*. Catan, J. (Ed.). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Kraut, R. (2006). Review: Aristotle and Other Platonists by Lloyd P. Gerson. *Classical Philology*, 101(1), pp.83-88.
- Kristeller, P. (1964). *Eight philosophers of the Italian Renaissance*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Lear, J. (1987). *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lee, M. (2005). *Epistemology after Protagoras*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Lefèvre, C. (1972). *Sur l'évolution d'Aristote en psychologie*. Louvain: Éditions de l'Institut supérieur de philosophie (de l'Université catholique de Louvain).
- Lennox, J. (2001). Are Aristotelian Species Eternal? In: J. Lennox, ed., *Aristotle's Philosophy of Biology: Studies in the Origins of Life Science*, 1st ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.131-159.
- Lloyd, A. (1955). Neo-platonic logic and Aristotelian logic - II. *Phronesis*, 1(2), pp.146-159.
- (1955). Neoplatonic logic and Aristotelian logic-I. *Phronesis*, 1(1), pp.58-72.
- Lloyd, G. (1968). *Aristotle: The Growth and Structure of His Thought*. London: Cambridge U.P.
- Long, A. (1992). Finding Oneself In Greek Philosophy. *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, 54(2), pp.255-279.
- Luther, M. and Parker, E. (2013). *The Platonism of Martin Luther - The Calvinist International*. [Online] The Calvinist International. Available at: <http://calvinistinternational.com/2013/05/20/the-platonism-of-martin-luther/> [Accessed 25 Mar. 2016].
- Mabbott, J. (1926). Aristotle and the Χωρισμός of Plato. *The Classical Quarterly*, 20(2), pp.72-79.
- Mackay, A. (2005). Aristotle's dilemma. *J Ethics*, 9(3-4), pp.533-549.
- Malcolm, J. (1991). *Plato on the self-predication of forms*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Malpas, J. (2003). *Hans-Georg Gadamer*. [Online] Plato.stanford.edu. Available at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/gadamer/#His> [Accessed 25 Mar. 2016].
- Mann, W. (2000). *The Discovery of Things*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

- Marx, W. (1977). *Introduction to Aristotle's Theory of Being as Being*. The Hague: Nijhoff.
- Masters, R. (1977). The Case of Aristotle's Missing Dialogues: Who Wrote the Sophist, the Statesman, and the Politics? *Political Theory*, 5(1), pp.31-60.
- McPherran, M. (1996). *The Religion of Socrates*. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Menn, S. (1992). Aristotle and Plato on God as Nous and as the Good. *The Review of Metaphysics*, 45(3), pp.543-573.
- Merlan, P. (1946). The Successor of Speusippus. *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 77, p.103.
- (1960). *From Platonism to Neoplatonism*. The Hague: M. Nijhoff.
- Miller, D. (2003). *The Third Kind in Plato's Timaeus*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Miller, M. (1995). Unwritten Teachings in the Parmenides. *Review of Metaphysics*, 48, pp.591-633.
- Morgan, K. (2000). *Myth and philosophy from the Presocratics to Plato*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nehemas, A. (1978). Self-Predication and Plato's Theory of Forms. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 12, pp.93-103.
- Nikulin, D. (2012). *The Other Plato*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Norman, R. (1969). Aristotle's philosopher-God. *Phronesis*, 14(1), pp.63-74.
- Novotný, F. (1977). *The Posthumous Life of Plato*. The Hague: M. Nijhoff.
- Nuyens, F. (1939). *Ontwikkelingsmomenten in de zielkunde van Aristoteles*. Nijmegen: Dekker & Van de Vegt.
- Olshewsky, T. (1976). On the Relations of Soul to Body in Plato and Aristotle. *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 14(4), pp.391-404.
- O'Rourke, F. (2003). *Aquinas and Platonism*. [Online] Academia.edu. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/9861727/Aquinas_and_Platonism [Accessed 25 Mar. 2016].
- Owen, G. (1965). *The Platonism of Aristotle*. London.
- Owens, J. (1981). Aristotle on Categories. In: J. Catan, ed., *Aristotle: The Collected Papers of Joseph Owens*, 1st ed. Albany: SUNY, pp.14-22.

- Patterson, R. (1985). *Image and reality in Plato's metaphysics*. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett Pub. Co.
- Pender, E. (2013). 'Perforated right through': why Plato borrows Empedocles' klepsydra. *Leeds International Classical Studies*, 11(2).
- Penelope.uchicago.edu. (2016). *Aelian: Various Histories. Book IV*. [Online] Available at: <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/aelian/varhist4.xhtml> [Accessed 10 Dec. 2015].
- Peterson, S. (1973). A Reasonable Self-Predication Premise for the Third Man Argument. *The Philosophical Review*, 82(4), p.451.
- (1975). A Correction to "A Reasonable Self-Predication Premise for the Third Man Argument". *The Philosophical Review*, 84(1), p.96.
- Plato. (1997). *Complete works*. Cooper, J. (Eds.). Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett Pub.
- Plotinus. (1955). *The Six Enneads*. Mackenna, S. and Page, B. (Eds.). Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica.
- Strange, S. (1992). *Porphyry: On Aristotle's Categories*. London: Duckworth.
- Porteous, A. (1934). Platonist or Aristotelian? *The Classical Review*, 48(03), pp.97-105.
- Press, G. (1993). *Plato's Dialogues: New Studies and Interpretations*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Proclus. (1894). *Procli philosophi Platonici opera inedita (Commentary on Plato's Republic)*. Cousins, V. (Ed.). Paris: Durandt.
- Taylor, T. (2010). *Proclus on the Theology of Plato - electronic edition*. [Online] Archive.org. Available at: <https://archive.org/stream/ProclusOnTheTheologyOfPlato-ElectronicEdition/ProclusPlatoTheologyCOMPLETE#page/n43/mode/2up/search/plato> [Accessed 25 Mar. 2016].
- Reale, G. and Catan, J. (1980). *The Concept of First Philosophy and the Unity of the Metaphysics of Aristotle*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- (1990). *A History of Ancient Philosophy II*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Reeve, C. (2000). *Substantial Knowledge*. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub.
- Remes, P. (2008). *Neoplatonism*. Stocksfield: Acumen.
- Rich, A. (1954). The Platonic Ideas as the Thoughts of God. *Mnemosyne*, 7(1), pp.123-133.

- Rickless, S. (1998). How Parmenides Saved the Theory of Forms. *The Philosophical Review*, 107(4), p.501.
- Riedweg, C. (1987). *Mysterienterminologie bei Platon, Philon und Klemens von Alexandrien*. Berlin: W. de Gruyter.
- Rist, J. (1973). The One of Plotinus and the God of Aristotle. *The Review of Metaphysics*, 27(1), pp.75-87.
- Robinson, H. (1983). Aristotelian Dualism. *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 1, pp.123-144.
- Ross, W. (Ed.). (1970). *Aristotelis fragmenta selecta*. Oxonii: E. Typographeo claredoniano.
- Runia, D. (1989). Festugiere Revisited: Aristotle in the Greek Patres. *Vigiliae Christianae*, 43(1), pp.1-34.
- Scaltsas, T. (1989). The Logic of the Dilemma of Participation and of the Third Man Argument. *Apeiron*, 22(4).
- (1994). *Substances and Universals in Aristotle's Metaphysics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Schankula, H. A. S. (1971). Plato and Aristotle: Εὐδαιμονία, Ἔξις OR Ἐνέργεια? *Classical Philology* 66 (4). University of Chicago Press: 244–46.
- Schofield, M. (2013). *Aristotle, Plato and Pythagoreanism in the First Century BC*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sedley, D. (1997). 'Becoming like God' in the Timaeus and Aristotle. In: *Interpreting the Timaeus-Critias: Proceedings of the IV Symposium Platonicum*, 1st ed. Sedley, D. (Ed.). Sankt Augustin, pp.327-39.
- (1999). The Ideal of Godlikeness. In: G. Fine, ed., *Plato, Volume 2: Ethics, Politics, Religious and the Soul*, 1st ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.309-28.
- (2000). Metaphysics Λ 10. In: M. Frede and D. Charles, ed., *Aristotle's Metaphysics Lambda*, 1st ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.327-350.
- (2002). Socratic irony in the Platonist Commentators. In: J. Annas and C. Rowe, ed., *New Perspective on Plato, Modern and Ancient*, 1st ed. Washington: Center for Hellenic Studies, Trustees for Harvard University, pp.37-57.
- (2016). *Equal sticks and stones*. [Online] Academia.edu. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/4310085/Equal_sticks_and_stones [Accessed 25 Mar. 2016].

- (2016). *Teleology, Aristotelian and Platonic*. [Online] Academia.edu. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/10848228/Teleology_Aristotelian_and_Platonic [Accessed 25 Mar. 2016].
- Sellars, W. (1955). Vlastos and "The Third Man". *The Philosophical Review*, 64(3), p.405.
- Shields, C. (1998). Soul and Body in Aristotle. *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 6, pp.103-137.
- (2008). *Aristotle*. [Online] Plato.stanford.edu. Available at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle/> [Accessed 25 Mar. 2016].
- Silverman, A. (2002). *The Dialectic of Essence*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Simplicius. (1882). *Simplicial in aristotelis physic rum libros commentaria*. Diels, H. (Ed.). Berlin: Reimer.
- (1895). *Simplicii in aristotelis physicorum libros commentaria*. 2nd ed. Diels, H. (Ed.). Berlin: Reimer.
- (1907). *In aristotelis categorias commentarium*. Kalbfleisch, K. (Ed.). Berlin: Reimer.
- Sorabji, R. (1990). *Aristotle Transformed*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- Sparshott, F. (1970). Five Virtues in Plato and Aristotle. *Monist*, 54(1), pp.40-65.
- Strang, C. and Rees, D. (1963). Plato and The Third Man. *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume*, 37(1), pp.147-176.
- Studtmann, P. (2007). Aristotle, Science and the Plenitude of Being. *Apeiron*, 40(3).
- Szlezák, T. (1999). *Reading Plato*. London: Routledge.
- Taylor, T. (1875). *The Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries*. New York: J.W. Bouton.
- Thesleff, H. and Press, G. ed., (1993). Looking For Clues: An Interpretation of Some Literary Aspects of Plato's 'Two Level Model'. In: *Plato's Dialogues: New Studies and Interpretations*, 1st ed. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Tuominen, M. (2009). *The ancient commentators on Plato and Aristotle*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Vlastos, G. (1954). The Third Man Argument in the Parmenides. *The Philosophical Review*, 63(3), p.319.
- (1969). Reasons and Causes in the Phaedo. *The Philosophical Review*, 78(3), p.291.

- Von Leyden, W. (1964). Time, Number, and Eternity in Plato and Aristotle. *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 14(54), p.35.
- Wedin, M. (1988). *Mind and Imagination in Aristotle*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- (2000). *Aristotle's Theory of Substance: The Categories and Metaphysics Zeta*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wehrle, W. (2000). *The Myth of Aristotle's Development and the Betrayal of Metaphysics*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Wehrli, F. (1967). *Die Schule des Aristoteles*. Basel: Schwabe.
- Whitehead, A., Griffin, D. and Sherburne, D. (1978). *Process and reality*. New York: Free Press.
- Wians, W. (1996). *Aristotle's Philosophical Development*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Witt, C. (1989). *Substance and Essence in Aristotle: An Interpretation of Metaphysics, VII-IX*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Wolfson, H. (1947). The Knowability and Describability of God in Plato and Aristotle. *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 56, p.233.
- Woodruff, P. and Audi, R. (2015). Academy. In: *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 3rd Ed. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Yu, J. (2001). Aristotle on "Eudaimonia": after Plato's "Republic". *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 18(2), pp.115-138.
- Zeller, E. (1923). *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*. Hildesheim: G. Olms.

APPENDIX 1: Detail from Raphael's *School of Athens*



Detail from Raphael's *School of Athens*, 1510-11 (Fresco, Stanza della Signature, Vatican Palace; Rome). "...Raphael makes each philosopher reveal "the intentions of his soul"..."⁴²⁶

⁴²⁶ Janson 1970: 370.