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Aristotle on Substance, Accident and Plato's Forms

JULIA ANNAS

At *Metaphysics* 990 b 27-991 a 8 (= 1079 a 19-b 3) there is a very puzzling argument of Aristotle's against Platonic Forms. Aristotle is trying to embarrass the Platonists with a contradiction in their theory. On the one hand they want to say that there are Forms not only of substances but also of accidents of substances (qualities, relations, etc.) On the other hand, they are committed to the belief that there are Forms only of substances. The contradiction shows that they should give up at least one of the beliefs concerned. Clearly, however, Aristotle thinks that a more radical response is called for, namely, rejection of the theory of Forms altogether.

Aristotle's dilemma has not been thought a compelling one. The first horn is supported convincingly enough; he appeals to two Academy proofs,¹ but he could as well have pointed to famous passages in Plato's dialogues, where there are Forms of Beauty, Equal, Just and other qualities and relations.² It is the second horn of the dilemma that causes the trouble, since Aristotle does not (and could not) claim that the Platonists themselves consciously accepted that belief; rather he argues that, given certain premises which they accept, they *ought* to hold it, and it is the force of his argument for this that has

¹ The argument from the branches of knowledge, referred to at 990 b 12 and given by Alexander in his commentary, 79. 3-80.6; the argument from the unity of the object of thought, which is explained by Alexander (88.7-9) in terms which link it to the argument referred to at 990 b 14 and given by Alexander at 81.25-82.7. In this part of his commentary Alexander is generally assumed to be using Aristotle's work 'On the Forms', containing Academy proofs as well as his objections to the Forms.

² The Forms of Beauty, Equal and Justice are familiar from the *Symposium*, *Phaedo* and *Republic*. Indeed in the middle dialogues it is Forms like these which predominate, rather than substance-Forms; in the *Parmenides* Socrates is more sure of their existence than of the existence of Forms of Man, Fire and Water. No doubt this is because they are fitter than the latter to figure in the argument from 'incomplete' predicates, on which see Owen, 'A proof in the Περὶ Ἰδεῶν', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 57 (1957) 103-111. It would be a mistake, however, to see this as the whole story about Forms in the middle dialogues; there is the interest in definition in the *Meno*, with its example of bees, and the Form of Bed in the *Republic*.

been questioned. If this collapses, then so of course does the whole dilemma.

This part of the argument falls into two sections:³

A) 990 b 28-34. Forms must themselves be substances.

B) 990 b 34-991 a 8. Given A), participants in Forms must be substances; otherwise the common term applied to Form and participants will not have the same sense.

I shall concentrate mainly on A), which is the more controversial. The text of part A) runs:

'By necessity and according to the theory, if Forms can be participated in then there must be Forms only of substances, since they are not participated in accidentally; a Form must be participated in insofar as it is not said of a subject. I mean, for example, if something participates in the original Double,⁴ the same thing participates in eternal,⁵ but only accidentally, since the Double⁶ is, accidentally, eternal. So Forms will be substances.'

This is, to say the least, compressed and unclear. Recently the argument has been discussed by Owen⁷ and by Vlastos,⁸ who have done much to clarify its workings.

Owen discusses the argument in the light of a distinction which he claims is exploited by Aristotle, between two types of predicate applicable to a Platonic Form: A-predicates, which are true of it in virtue of its status as a Form (and so true of any Form), and B-predicates, which either 1) are applicable to the Form 'in virtue of the general logical character of the concept for which it stands' or 2) serve to define the concept in question. According to Owen, Aristotle is here granting the Academy some recognition of the difference between these two types of predicate, and so the argument as analyzed would

³ In what follows I reject the analysis of Alexander and Bonitz, according to which Aristotle is not proving that Forms are substance but assuming this. Ross in his note on this passage shows clearly that this analysis makes the argument redundant as well as necessitating an implausible emendation.

⁴ I.e. the Form of Double; the expression $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron-X$ or $\alpha\upsilon\tau\delta\ \tau\delta\ X$ is often translated into the barbarous English 'the X itself'.

⁵ Or 'something eternal'; this important point will be discussed at length below.

⁶ My translation assumes that $\tau\delta\ \delta\iota\pi\lambda\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\omicron\nu$ here refers to the Form of Double, as does $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\delta\iota\pi\lambda\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\omicron\nu$ in the line above. This differs from the way other interpreters take it; the point is discussed below.

⁷ p. 122 of 'Dialectic and Eristic in the treatment of the Forms' in *Aristotle on Dialectic*, ed. Owen, Oxford 1970, pp. 103-125.

⁸ 'The "two-level" paradoxes in Aristotle' in *Platonic Studies*, Princeton 1973, pp. 332-334.

be one accepted both by him and by the Academy. (I shall not go further into Owen's claim that according to Aristotle the Platonists are still embarrassed by this argument because of their assumption that Forms are self-predicative. If the present argument is valid Aristotle would have a complete dilemma against the Platonists, independently of self-predication.)

Owen analyzes the argument as follows (p. 122):

'He draws a sharp distinction between the A-predicate, *eternal*, and a B-predicate: his example of the latter is *double*, but since the appropriate example turns out to be a substance-predicate I shall use *man*. Suppose then that Socrates partakes of the Idea, Man. Since Man is eternal, Socrates might be said to partake of eternal; but this would be participation *per accidens* and not in the strict sense. Socrates is a man, and is patently not eternal. Why does his eternity not follow from the premisses, as his being a man does? Because, says Aristotle, eternity is only an accident of man, i.e. not all, or even most men are eternal (cf. *Met.* 1025 a 14-15, 1065 a 1-3): in fact only one man, the Paradeigm, is so. From this he infers that, strictly speaking, *no* predicate which is merely accidental to some class of substances can be partaken of. Otherwise eternity would have to come in with the rest. So there can be no Ideas of substances.'

Owen's analysis gives Aristotle a clear argument, but it raises some difficulties.

Firstly, it leaves Aristotle with an invalid argument. Owen himself brings this out succinctly in a footnote: 'Suppose (a) S partakes of D, (b) S and D are members of some class to which a further predicate P is accidental, (c) D is a P thing; then Aristotle can claim that these propositions do not jointly *entail* that (d) S partakes of P, but he has not shown that they *preclude* (d); and still less has he proved what he wants, namely that (d) would be precluded by a conjunction of (a) and (b) with the different proposition that S is P'. Of course it is possible that the argument is irredeemably invalid, but it is surely worth while trying to reconstruct it in a valid form.

Secondly, since the whole argument turns on the distinction between substance and accident, we would expect a recognisable example of Aristotelian substance. But *double* is a prime example of an Aristotelian *relative*.⁹ This point can be met by pointing out that the argument concerns not *double* but the *Form of Double*, and Aristotle is entitled

⁹ For one example (among many), *Sophistici Elenchi* 173 a 33-40 (answered at 181 b 25-182 a 6).

to use it here as an example of substance, since Forms are substances for the Platonists if not for him, and the argument is supposed to proceed on premises a Platonist would accept. Yet it would be strange if Aristotle were in this arm of the dilemma applying 'substance' to what the Platonists recognise as substances, when in the first half 'substance' clearly referred to the range of what Aristotle would himself regard as substances, including neither double nor the Form of Double. This difficulty does not become prominent in Owen's analysis because he substitutes for 'double' the term 'man', clearly an Aristotelian substance-term.

Thirdly, Owen has to take the phrase 'the double' in the clause 'since the double is, accidentally, eternal' to refer to the class of pairs, things that come in doubles. On this interpretation the 'since-' clause does give a reason for what precedes. But it is surely a more natural way of reading the Greek to take τῷ διπλασίῳ here to have the same reference as αὐτοδιπλασίου in the line before – that is, the Form of Double. If Aristotle were giving a consideration about the class of doubles as a reason for his statement about the Platonic Form of Double, one would at least expect him to make it clear that it was no longer the Form that was being talked about.

Vlastos' interpretation, which avowedly follows Cherniss,¹⁰ is rather different. He takes the argument as follows (p. 326-7):

'If a particular participates in the Form of *F* and the latter is in fact a *G* (as, in the example, the Idea of Double is eternal), then if the Idea of *G* were participatable, the particular, in virtue of its participation in the Idea of *F*, would accidentally participate in the Idea of *G*. The conclusion would be odd on any view... [and certainly so for *eternal* on Aristotle's view] ... Hence there can be no Idea of an attribute like Eternity, nor of any other which, like it, is non-substantial and, if participatable, would be participated in accidentally'.

On Vlastos' analysis, the argument proceeds by *reductio*. Aristotle puts forward as a premise accepted by the Platonists a compound premise which Vlastos labels 1:

1. If *x* participates in the Idea of *F*, and the Idea of *F* is *G*, and there exists a participatable Idea of *G*, then *x* participates *accidentally* in the Idea of *G*.

Then by substituting 'double' and 'eternal' for *F* and *G* Aristotle constructs a case where applying 1 leads to absurdity. He takes it

¹⁰ *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy* p. 306 and n. 208 (not. n. 8 as in Vlastos' reference). Cf. also n. 212.

that this will lead them to reject something in 1, and that what they will reject will be the clause, 'there exists a participatable Idea of *G*'. Vlastos claims that this shows that Aristotle cannot be here assuming that the Platonists make use of the distinction between A- and B-predicates of Forms. For if they did, they would not be forced by the argument to give up any part of 1; they would rather point out that the argument does not get off the ground since the pair {Double, Eternal} is not a pair that can permissibly be substituted into 1 – precisely because one is an A- and one a B- predicate. Vlastos compares the 'clever *aitia*' passage in the *Phaedo*,¹¹ where it is said that if a particular participates in one Form, another Form is 'brought on', and among the examples used are {Two, Even} and {Three, Odd}. According to Vlastos, the argument here turns on Aristotle's being able to *deny* to the Platonists any distinction of types or levels of predicates such as would enable them to accept the *Phaedo* examples but reject Aristotle's example of Two and Eternal. Only if they have no such distinction are the Platonists compelled to accept Aristotle's example of Two and Eternal on the same basis as the *Phaedo* example of Two and Even, and hence to react to its absurdity by denying part of 1.

Vlastos objects to Owen's analysis that it commits Aristotle to the eccentric conclusion that my two ears, for example, are accidentally eternal, instead of making him present it to the Platonists as an unacceptable conclusion from their premisses. This is surely mistaken. According to Owen's analysis, a particular like Socrates could be said to participate in eternal, but not in the strict sense, only *per accidens*. But *per accidens* participation is precisely not participation in the strict sense, so since the particular does not, on Owen's view, participate in the proper sense in the Form of Eternal, it cannot be said to be eternal, even accidentally.

Vlastos' own analysis is open to objection on several counts.

Firstly, it depends on his being able to compare the argument with the *Phaedo* passage by omitting as irrelevant Aristotle's qualification '*accidentally* participates'. But it is arbitrary dealing with an Aristotelian text to interpret it in a way that crucially demands suppressing '*accidentally*' as being 'a term of Aristotelian stamp, expressing no relevant notion in the Platonic doctrine' (p. 328). Since Aristotle's argument depends on the step involving '*accidentally*', it is not sur-

¹¹ *Phaedo* 103 c-105 e.

prising that by omitting it Vlastos completely loses the force of Aristotle's conclusion. Vlastos' readiness to drop the 'accidentally' also makes it unclear why according to him it should appear at all in his compound premise 1; why should x participate *accidentally* in the Form of G merely because the Form of F is ('in fact') G?

Secondly, according to Vlastos the argument draws, for polemical purposes, the conclusion that a particular pair, such as my ears, will, because it participates in the Form of Double, participate accidentally in the Form of Eternal, and thus be accidentally eternal. Vlastos thus takes 'the double' in the 'since-' clause to refer to the particular pair which has been referred to by $\tau\iota$ and $\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron$ in the preceding line. Unfortunately, the 'since-' clause then merely repeats what has been said already in the clause before, instead of giving a reason for it. In an argument as compressed as this, it is unlikely that Aristotle would merely repeat himself in such a clumsy and misleading way.

Thirdly, and most importantly, Vlastos' reading relies too much on the special nature of the example of 'eternal', and thus fails to make Aristotle's point. On Vlastos' reading the point of the argument is that if the Platonists accept 1 then 'eternal' as a G-predicate will cause trouble for them. Yet this falls far short of the generality desired for the argument, at least as Aristotle presents it. What he wants to show is that there are *no* Forms for *any* non-substance terms, and the arguments he mentions in the first half of the dilemma show that he is thinking of the whole range of non-substance terms, like 'just', 'equal' and the like. An argument which merely rules out a Form for 'eternal' underfulfils this requirement quite pathetically. Why should what is true of *eternal* be true of *just* or *equal*? Vlastos assumes in his analysis that the conclusion about *eternal* can at once be generalized to *all* non-substance terms, but this is surely a very implausible assumption to foist on the Platonists. Vlastos thus makes the argument come out very weak, and weak in an obvious way. The Platonists could defend themselves by denying that what applies to 'eternal' carried over to all, or even most, other non-substance predicates. To do this they would not even need anything as sophisticated as a distinction between A- and B- type predicates. They could simply point out that eternality is a very special kind of attribute; it attaches to its subject necessarily, and Aristotle himself points this out (this will be discussed later). This would not involve any recognition of types or levels of predicates, yet it would completely draw the teeth of the argument. It is hard to think that Aristotle, who himself makes such a point

about 'eternal', would not realize this; but in that case his use here of this example would be a gross and inexplicable blunder. It is weak to insist that Aristotle must have come to see the special nature of *eternal* only after writing this argument. It is surely better to try to find an interpretation of the argument which will do justice to Aristotle's example by showing it to be an example of what is required for the conclusion.

A central feature of Vlastos' analysis is that it assumes that *μετέχει* – 'participates' or 'partakes' – refers in both occurrences to a relation of particular and Form. According to him, the skeleton of the argument is the following: Suppose x participates in the Form of F, and the Form of F is G; then x participates accidentally in the Form of G. But then 'eternal' for 'G' provides a counterexample; so we must reject the premise that x participates in the Form of G (and so, ultimately, the premise that there is a Form of G for x to participate in.) The difficulties with this analysis, however, suggest that it may be more fruitful to try to analyse the argument without letting x's participation in the Form of G be assumed as a premise.

Owen's analysis does not explicitly assume x's participation in the Form of G as a premise. Owen retains the 'partakes' idiom, but he uses lower case in talking of 'partakes of eternal'; and this suggests the view I shall develop, namely that talk of participation need not always import a Form. My interpretation is best regarded as an expansion of what is hinted at in Owen's brief treatment, with the further aim of showing that the argument does have an interpretation which is valid and free from the difficulties already mentioned.

My main disagreement with Owen comes over the crucial clause, 'since the Double is, accidentally, eternal'. Owen regards this as predicating eternity of the class of pairs (hence he writes 'the double'). This gives him a straightforward sense for 'accidentally', namely, 'not all or most are...' I think, however, that the clause is better interpreted as referring not to the class of pairs but to the Form of Double. This means that I also take 'accidentally' here in a different way. On my account, the clause says simply that eternity is an accident of the Form of Double. That is, it belongs to it *κατὰ συμβεβηκός* as opposed to *καθ'αυτό*; it is not part of its nature but a quality which it happens to have, a non-substantial item which attaches to a substance but it not part of what it is.

What does this do for the argument as a whole? Anything which participates in the Form of Double will participate in something which

is eternal, but only accidentally so. Hence, Aristotle assures us, the particular will participate in eternal only accidentally. What is the force of this second 'accidentally'? How are we to understand the claim that x participates accidentally in G if G is an accident of the Form F in which x participates non-accidentally? I think that what is being contrasted here are two ways in which 'participates' might be understood, so that 'accidentally' serves in fact to disambiguate the second occurrence of 'participates'. In its first occurrence 'participates' refers to the relation of the particular and the Form of Double, and one might assume that in its second occurrence it would likewise relate the particular and a Form, the Form of Eternal. To say that the second participation is accidental is to remind us that participating in the accident of a Form is different from participating in a Form in the ordinary or straightforward sense. To participate in the accident of a Form is not yet to participate in a Form; and this difference is brought out by saying of the first case that it is participation only accidentally.

The use of 'accidentally' here thus serves to make us aware of a use of 'participates' which shows that the Platonists are wrong to think that we can infer straightforwardly from 'x participates in the Form of F and the Form of F is G' to 'x participates in the Form of G'. For, where G is an accident of the Form of F, 'participates' has to be qualified in a way which blocks the inference to a Form of G. This can be illustrated by the present example. If a pair of items is two by participating in the Form of Double, and the Form of Double is eternal, then there is a sense in which they do, and a sense in which they do not, participate in eternal. They do participate in something eternal, viz. the Form of Double which happens to be eternal. Hence they participate accidentally in eternal. They do not, however, participate straightforwardly in a Form, hence there can be no inference to a Form of Eternal in which they participate in the proper or straightforward sense.

There is some grammatical evidence for this interpretation to be found in a difference between the first and second occurrences of *μετέχειν* in the sentence at 990 b 32-3; 'if something participates in the original Double, the same thing participates in eternal, but only accidentally' – εἰ τι αὐτοδιπλασίου μετέχει, τοῦτο καὶ αἰδίου μετέχει, ἀλλὰ κατὰ συμβεβηκός.

Μετέχειν is normally followed by a noun, which may or may not

have the definite article.¹² In his use of the term to express the relation between Forms and particulars, Plato often exploits the Greek idiom whereby the grammatical place of a noun can be filled by the neuter singular form of the adjective preceded by the neuter form of the definite article. He also uses the neuter singular of an adjective preceded by *αὐτο-*. Both these forms are recognised as ‘nominal’ or ‘substantive’ forms, and are used with *μετέχειν* in a way parallel to the use with a noun.¹³ The use of *αὐτοδιπλασίου μετέχει* is thus normal; *αὐτο-* followed by neuter singular adjective is used elsewhere to refer to a Form in a way parallel to a noun. The phrase would also, I think, be best and most naturally read as having the same reference as *τῷ διπλασίῳ* in 1.33, where the neuter singular adjective is ‘nominalized’ in the standard way by prefixing the neuter definite article.

The phrase *αἰδίου μετέχει*, however, is odd, for we find the neuter singular adjective without the ‘nominalizing’ definite article, while elsewhere it is only *nouns* that can stand with *μετέχειν* without the definite article. The oddity carries over to the English translations ‘partakes of eternal’ or ‘participates in eternal’.

Plato elsewhere at least once uses this odd form (neuter singular adjective without the definite article) to refer to a Form¹⁴; so ‘participates in eternal’ *could* be read as ‘participates in the Form of Eternal’. But there is some evidence that a Greek could also read it another way, viz. ‘participates in something eternal’. Kühner-Gerth¹⁵ notes several cases where the neuter singular adjective is used substantivally without the article, but where what is understood is not ‘*the x*’ but

¹² L.-S.-J. note no distinction between uses with and uses without the article in the case of nouns.

¹³ Compare *Phaedo* 100 c 5-6, *μετέχει ἐκείνου τοῦ καλοῦ* with 101 c 5, *τὴν τῆς δυάδος μετάσχεσιν*, and *Republic* 476 c 9-d 2, *αὐτὸ καλόν ... καὶ τὰ ἐκείνου μετέχοντα* with 472 c 1-2, *δικαιοσύνη ... καὶ πλείστα τῶν ἄλλων ἐκείνης μετέχη*;

¹⁴ *Sophist* 256 a 7-8, *διὰ τὸ μετέχειν αὐτὸ πάντ' αὐτοῦ*. This *could* be read as ‘participates in *it*’, but the context makes the only reasonable translation ‘participates in the Same’, which is a Form of some kind. I am grateful to Professor G. E. L. Owen for drawing my attention to this passage.

¹⁵ Band I, § 403, p. 268. There is a usage of the neuter singular adjective without definite article where the *definite* article is understood- e.g. *ἐν μέσῳ* means not ‘in middle’ but ‘in *the* middle’. ‘Ohne Artikel, die Mitte, nicht bloss bei Homer, z.B. *Z* 120 *ἐν μέσῳ ἀμφοτέρων*, u.s., sondern auch in der Prosa. Xen. *An.i.* 7.6, *τὰ ἐν μέσῳ τούτων ...*’ However, this stereotyped idiom does not strike me as so important as the Platonic usage cited in n. 14, though no doubt the latter is not ordinary usage.

'something x', 'wo man in Deutschen *etwas* hinzuzufügen pflegt'.¹⁶ For example, ἄτοπον γ' ἔφη, λέγεις at *Symposium* 175 a means not, 'you are saying peculiar' but, 'you are saying *something* (which is) peculiar'. Kühner-Gerth give several examples (none with ἄιδιος, unfortunately) and the use seems well-established. This does suggest that to a Greek ἀϊδίου μετέχει was ambiguous, and that he could read it either as 'participates in the Eternal' (though this would seem to be the less likely reading) or as 'participates in something eternal'. If so, this supports my suggestion above that the function of 'accidentally' in 'accidentally participates' is to make us aware of the two readings; in the context Aristotle is clearly steering us towards the second one.

Aristotle's argument, then, reinforces a point which is suggested informally by Greek grammar. The Platonists take it that if x participates in the Form of F and the Form of F is G, then x participates in the Form of G. Aristotle is pointing out that this inference is derailed when 'G' is a non-substance term. Grammar suggests that where 'G' is an adjective all you can correctly infer to is x's participation in *something* G, not in *the* G. Aristotle makes the point formally in terms of substance and accident. Where G is an accident of F, x participates in G only accidentally, not in the proper sense as when G is a Form.

At this point I must face a serious problem for my analysis, namely that it commits Aristotle to the assumption that the Form of Double is only *accidentally* eternal. Would not a Platonist insist that any Form was eternal just in virtue of being a Form, by reason of its very nature? And if Aristotle denies this, is it not crass misrepresentation or failure to grasp what Plato means?

The problem appears more serious when we notice that Aristotle in *Metaphysics* Book I chapter 10 insists that being imperishable is a necessary attribute of whatever has it. Being imperishable surely entails and is entailed by being eternal. Further, Aristotle uses this as an argument against Plato's Forms: since the perishable and the

¹⁶ 'Sehr oft steht das Neutrum Sing. ohne Artikel substantivisch, wo man im Deutschen *etwas* hinzuzufügen pflegt, im Griechischen aber keineswegs die Ellipse von τι anzunehmen hat'. The examples given or referred to are: Plato, *Symposium* 175 a, ἄτοπον γ', ἔφη, λέγεις; Xenophon, *Mem.* i, 2, 30: εἰπεῖν, ὅτι ὑἱὸν αὐτῷ δοκοῖη πάσχειν ὁ Κριτίας ('etwas Schweinisches'); Xenophon, *Mem.* 2.7.13: θαυμαστὸν ποιεῖς; Plato, *Laws* 657 a: Κλ: Θαυμαστὸν λέγεις. Αθ: Νομοθετικὸν μὲν οὖν καὶ πολιτικὸν ὑπερβαλλόντως.

imperishable are different in kind, Platonic Forms are impossible. The Forms are supposed to be the same in kind as their instances, but then there will, absurdly, be two sorts of men, the perishable and the imperishable. Clearly, this argument needs the assumption that eternality follows from the very nature of Forms.¹⁷

The difficulty can be overcome, however, without reducing the argument to ad hoc polemic inconsistent with Aristotle's own considered views. The *I* passage assumes only that Forms are the same in kind as their instances, and shows that this leads to absurdity if Forms really are imperishable as Aristotle understands this, i.e. necessarily imperishable. Aristotle does not say that this is the way that the Platonists themselves characterize their Forms as imperishable. And elsewhere he criticizes the Platonists on the grounds that although they call Forms and numbers eternal, they do not understand this the proper way, that is, as excluding the *possibility* of coming into or going out of existence. Because they fail to insist that Forms and numbers (unlike Aristotle's own eternal objects) exclude all potentiality, their supposedly eternal objects are not really so; they just happen not to go out of existence and so are in fact no different from very long-lasting and durable objects.¹⁸ According to Aristotle, one must recognize the importance of the distinction between actuality and potentiality before one can give a true account of eternality; since the Platonists fail to do this, he feels justified in treating their 'eternal' objects, Forms and numbers, as not properly eternal. This is quite consistent with his arguing elsewhere that absurdity would arise for Platonic Forms if they *were* eternal in his proper sense.

¹⁷ 1059 a 1-7, 10-14, Cherniss (op. cit. n. 212) argues that this passage shows that Aristotle's arguments are merely eristic; he is more concerned with doing down the Forms in every possible way than with the consistency of his own position: 'The fact that the ideas are αἰδία is not considered a bar to their specific identity with the particulars ... in the present argument [i.e. *Met.* 990 b 27-991 a 8], in the first part of which eternality is treated as an accidental predicate of the ideas. Yet elsewhere Aristotle objects that the eternality of the ideas prevents the idea and the particulars from being specifically identical and synonymous as they are supposed to be (*Met.* 1059 a 10-14 ... *Topics* 148 a 14-22 ...)'. Incidentally, Syrianus had already made this charge (*Comm. in Met.* 114. 17-20, commenting on the passage as it appears in M 4).

¹⁸ N, 1088 b 14-35, where it is argued that the Platonists' 'eternal' objects are not really so because they contain matter, and so potentiality. Cf. *Nic. Ethics* 1096 b 3-5.

Thus for Aristotle eternity *is* a mere accident of a Platonic Form. He merely assumes it in this argument, but there are arguments elsewhere that give substance to this assumption.

Part B) of the argument, which has not yet been considered, fits well with the argument as so far analyzed. Aristotle argues that if Forms are substances (there being no Forms answering to non-substance terms) then participants in Forms must also be substances. Hence the required conclusion of this arm of the dilemma, that there can be no Forms except for substances. This is because 'the same terms signify substance here as yonder', i.e. in application to Forms and to particulars. Otherwise, what is the force of the One over Many, i.e. the argument that there is a Form answering to every general term that can be predicated of a multiplicity of particulars?

It is at first sight not obvious what relation the development of this point has to do with part A), and some commentators take it to be in effect a separate piece of reasoning, a feeble echo of the Third Man argument mentioned shortly before.¹⁹ But there is a connexion: Aristotle is arguing that if a Form is a substance then its participants must also be substances if the 'name' they share is not to shift in sense between its application to the Form and its application to the participants. With this point guarded against, the argument is complete.

In his appeal to the principle that the word or 'name' applied to both Form and participants must have the same sense in its application to both, Aristotle seems to be making assumptions that are Platonic, or at least designed to be acceptable to a Platonist. It is, for example, assumed that a general term has meaning by virtue of corresponding to a single form possessed by the different things to which the word is applied. (Acceptance of this principle does not of course commit Aristotle to separate Platonic Forms). With the help of this principle, he sets up a dilemma: either Forms and participants have a common form, or they do not. i) If they do, then they will have something in common. 'Two', then, will have the same sense when applied to a physical pair and when applied to the perfect pair which is the Form of Two, just as it preserves the same sense when applied to any two selected pairs, physical or non-physical. ii) If they do not, then 'F' as applied to the Form will have a different sense from 'F' as applied to particulars. Form and particulars will be 'homonymous'.

Aristotle expects the Platonists to reject ii), for the arguments for

¹⁹ This is Alexander's view, and Cherniss agrees (p. 289, 307-8, n. 210, 215).

Forms would lose their interest if 'F' changed sense between Form and particulars; many ways of describing Forms imply that they have perfectly the characteristics which ordinary things have imperfectly. Thus the Platonist is expected to choose i), and Aristotle's argument is complete: if 'F' applies in the same sense to Forms and to particulars, and Forms are substances only, then particulars are substances only.

This part of the argument might be objected to on two grounds. Firstly, could not the Platonist reject i) but deny that the Form was F in a sense *unrelated* to that in which particulars are F? Elsewhere Aristotle shows that he knew Platonist arguments which exploited this possibility. But a Platonist could not do so here without rejecting the One over Many in the crude form put forward here. Aristotle's argument could also be queried on the grounds that it employs the implausible principle that a difference of categorial application of a word amounts to a difference of sense. Elsewhere he defends this for 'is', 'one' and 'good', but gives no indication that the principle can be applied to *any* word.

I think that it is a merit of my interpretation of the argument as a whole that it makes it plausible that Aristotle could have thought of it as an argument to show that there can be no Forms of non-substances generally, as it has to be if the dilemma is to be complete. Any interpretation which, like Vlastos', makes 'eternal' a counterexample to the principle that where x participates in the Form of F and the Form of F is G, x participates in the Form of G, has to explain why on earth Aristotle thought this provided an argument ruling out Forms for *any* non-substance terms. My interpretation, which makes 'eternal' illustrate rather than confute the argument's main premise, does suggest a way in which the argument might be generalized. Aristotle only gives us the one example of double and eternal, but he may well have thought of his example as giving us a general schema, and in any case it provides the material for one. That is, wherever F is G, whatever participates in F participates in G *only if both 'F' and 'G' are substance-terms*. For if 'G' is a non-substance term, the inference does not go through; x may participate in F but participate in G only accidentally. So the argument does suffice to show that in the schema

x participates in F and F is G, so x participates in G

where 'G' is a non-substance term, 'participates' is not being used univocally. So if 'participates in F' refers to a particular's relation to a Platonic Form, 'participates in G' cannot. The argument does then point up an interesting difference between substance and non-sub-

stance terms: an inference that is secure if restricted to substance terms generates an ambiguity in 'participates' if a non-substance term is let in. So, given the extra premise that 'participates' must be used univocally within the theory of Forms, the argument does show that there cannot be Forms for *both* substance and non-substance terms, at any rate not Forms of the same kind. This has obvious affinities with the principles on which Aristotle distinguishes sharply between substances and non-substances in his theory of categories; the criticism of Plato is on my analysis not ad hoc but strongly linked to Aristotle's own metaphysical views.

Aristotle does, then, have an argument which will rule out Platonic Forms for all terms which are non-substance terms in his sense of 'substance'. His example, however, is the Form of Double, which, as emphasised, is a Platonic but hardly an Aristotelian substance. It seems that Aristotle is trying to present an argument which the Platonists will not be able to reject, by using a principle about substance to apply to what the Platonists themselves are willing to call substance. In this argument Aristotle is not only willing to use the Form of Double as an example of substance, he offers only one explanation of what substancehood is: a Form is a substance since it must be participated in insofar as it not said of a subject. By using a notion of substance which he can share with the Platonists²⁰ Aristotle is forcing them to accept his dilemma.

This concession turns out to be ill-advised, however. For suppose a Platonist were to challenge Aristotle in the following way: 'Your argument depends on the principle that whenever F is G, and 'G' is a non-substance term, G is merely an accident of F (that is why you say that something that participates in F participates only accidentally in G). But what about cases where G is not merely an accident of F, but predicated καθ' αὐτό, and yet is a non-substance term? For example, 'White is a colour'?²¹ ('You cannot even make your grammatical

²⁰ At *Nic. Ethics* 1096 a 19-22 Aristotle seems to regard his own distinction between substance and the other categories as coinciding with the distinction of the 'Academy categories', between the καθ' αὐτό and the πρὸς τι. On the latter see Alexander, in *Met.* 83. 24-6, Xenocrates fr. 12 Heinze, Hermodorus ap. Simplicius in *Phys.* 247. 30-248. 15, and the *Divisiones Aristoteleae* 39-41 Mutschmann, where we find: τὰ ... καθ' ἑαυτὰ λεγόμενά ἐστιν, ὅσα ἐν τῇ ἐρμηνείᾳ μηδενὸς προσδεῖται ταῦτα δὲ ἂν εἴη οἷον ἄνθρωπος ἵππος καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ζῶα.

²¹ In what follows I leave out of account the interesting and difficult sort of case where Aristotle would agree that 'F' is a substance term and 'G' a non-substance term, and yet say that 'F is G' makes a non-accidental connexion, e.g. 'surface is coloured'.

point about that one)'. Aristotle would presumably reply, 'Your example is not a counterexample to my argument and the principle employed there, because 'white' is not a substance-term either. White is said of a subject, and substances are not said of a subject. If you remember, I let your Form of Double into the argument as a substance because Forms, being participatable, are not said of a subject'.

The Platonists, however, could make a comeback: 'In predications like 'white is a colour', 'white' certainly seems to be a subject having *being a colour* predicated of it; what grounds have you for saying that it is not *really* something that is not said of a subject (hence a substance for the purposes of this argument)?' To rule out 'white' as a substance-term in spite of the fact that the Platonists would be prepared to talk of it as not said of a subject, Aristotle would have to do something like retreat to the doctrine of the *Categories*: substances are what are neither said of nor present in a subject.²² This will rule out an item like white, which is present in a subject whatever the outcome of the 'said of' test. But by making a move like this, Aristotle would make it clear to the Platonists that Platonic Forms could no longer count as examples of substance; for the *Categories* doctrine makes particular individuals like Socrates the prime examples of 'first' or primary substance. It seems, then, that if Aristotle relaxes the conditions for an item's being a substance so as to include Platonic Forms for the purposes of this argument, the Platonists can undermine his argument by presenting counterexamples to the crucial distinction he needs between substance and non-substance terms. If, on the other hand, he strengthens the criteria for substance so as to rule out these counterexamples, Platonic Forms will no longer count as substances, and the Platonists will no longer be forced to accede to the argument.

Aristotle's argument, then, probably suffers from a defect to which many arguments are prone. If the opposition can be made to agree to the premises, the conclusion comes out too weak, and if the conclusion is strong enough, the opposition can no longer be made to agree to the premises.²³

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²² I take it that Aristotle would appeal to the early *Categories* doctrine rather than to later works like *Met. ZH*, in view of the generally accepted early date for *Met. A 9*, and the use in the argument of the 'said of' point.

²³ I am very grateful to Professor G. E. L. Owen for helpful discussions of earlier versions of this paper, which have greatly improved and sharpened it.