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**Interpreting Aristotle's God**

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**A Thesis**

**in**

**The Department of**

**Philosophy**

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for the Degree of Master of Arts at  
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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Interpreting Aristotle's God**

**David Christian Bellusci**

Interpreting Aristotle's theistic philosophy remains a source of controversy; arguments concerning Aristotle's deity range from myth to monotheism. My objective is two-fold: first, I show how Aristotle's works build up to God by examining *Posterior Analytics*, *De Anima*, the *Physics*, the *Metaphysics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*. The texts are studied in the light of contemporary Aristotelian scholarship representing the varying positions and their implications concerning Aristotle's theism. Second, on the basis of these five works, I argue that Aristotle's theology does not conflict with the Judeo-Christian understanding of God.

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This work is dedicated to Saint Joseph.

Poi ch'innalzai un poco più le ciglia,  
vidi'l maestro di color che sanno  
seder tra filosofica famiglia.  
*Dante, "Inferno," IV, 130-32*

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## ***Introduction***

An attempt to identify Aristotle's deity involves numerous difficulties ranging from the possible interpretations of Aristotle's philosophical works, to what may appear to be inconsistencies. In this thesis I argue that Aristotle demonstrates the existence of a divine being which is central to his philosophy. My aim is to show that the apparent difficulties in reaching an Aristotelian deity can be dealt with by pointing out how the philosophical elements harmonise, thereby leading to God.

I shall be examining texts from five of Aristotle's books which reveal how his philosophy connects from first principles to a divine and contemplative being that is source of human happiness. The obstacles in attaining the Aristotelian God are examined in the light of contemporary criticism. Chapter 1 begins with the principles that Aristotle sets out in *Posterior Analytics* B 19. In this chapter I pay close attention to two specific elements, ἀρχή and νοῦς, since both have implications for Aristotle's deity: "first principles" represent an ultimate source of knowledge, of movement, and of the good; these principles are grasped by the intelligence, which also exercises a contemplative role.

The intelligence with which Chapter 1 ends immediately leads to *De Anima* which is the focus of Chapter 2, specifically Γ 3 and Γ 4. These passages consider the relationship between the intelligence and reality, but also the theoretical implications of the intelligence, and the active intellect. The role of the intelligence as the source of θεωρία has consequences on the contemplative life of the individual and of God.

In the *Physics*, studied in Chapter 3, Aristotle does not make God explicit, but the Unmoved Mover appears to have the attributes of God. The divine attributes are presented and articulated, and yet the name θεός is avoided. In this chapter I argue that even if God is not explicated, Aristotle provides the elements necessary for a divine being.

Aristotle lays down the metaphysical foundation of pure act and divine substance in *Metaphysics* Λ as presented in Chapter 4. The divine being is developed by name, θεός, with these foundations provided in *Metaphysics* Λ. I show that Aristotle makes explicit reference to God, with evidence for a monotheistic interpretation. Reaching this deity Aristotle relies on principles that I present from the texts discussed in Chapters 1-4 of my thesis.

Chapter 5, the penultimate chapter, deals with God in relation to contemplation and human happiness. This chapter examines *Nicomachean Ethics* K in the light of Aristotle's presentation of divine and human contemplation, and I argue that the Aristotelian texts provide for a reading that God is the source of both divine and human contemplation. At this stage I examine the relationship between God, the intelligence and contemplation, that is, the relationship between θεωρία, νοῦς, and ἀρχή, and I argue that God is source of contemplation on the basis of the divine good.

Finally, Aristotle's philosophy has played a central role in the formulation of Judeo-Christian doctrines. Thus, in this last chapter, Chapter 6, I present three major difficulties: (i) I continue with the problem surrounding religious contemplation, addressing it specifically from a Judeo-Christian perspective; (ii) the eternal Aristotelian cosmos which seems to conflict with the created world; and (iii) the Aristotelian God that

appears to be indifferent on the one hand, while the Judeo-Christian God exercises divine intervention on the other. These difficulties require a discussion not only of creation and providence in the Judeo-Christian tradition, but also the implications of the will of God. My solution to these difficulties does not involve baptising Aristotle's philosophy as Judeo-Christian, nor do I claim that the Aristotelian material prefigures Judeo-Christian theology. My argument in Chapter 6 rests on the claim that Aristotle's philosophy is not wholly incompatible with Judeo-Christian principles, even if such principles are not explicit.

***Posterior Analytics:***  
**the ἀρχή – νοῦς relationship**

***Chapter 1***

The concepts of ἀρχή and νοῦς play a central role in Aristotle’s philosophy, and have implications for his theology. In Chapter 1 my goal is to show the role of first principles and the intelligence, and how the two interact. I shall be examining *Posterior Analytics* B 19 and to some degree A 2 for this purpose, as well as how first principles and the intelligence have been interpreted in modern scholarship. The conclusion is that first principles have both a sound argument for them, and a reference in reality that will be appropriated to divinity.

**1.1 Αρχη**

In the McKeon translation of *Posterior Analytics* B, 19 scientific knowledge is not possible without πρῶτασ ἀρχὰς or “primary immediate premises.”<sup>1</sup> While this preserves the logical sense of Aristotle’s analysis, Tredennick gives the Greek a more metaphysical quality: πρῶτασ ἀρχὰς is translated as “immediate first principles” (99b20). The latter translation is significant because it anticipates much of the metaphysical foundation of the *Physics* and *Metaphysics*, as well as the *Nicomachean Ethics* by highlighting the aspect of “principles.” Aristotle repeats the use of ἐπαγωγή as scientific knowledge, but the knowing faculty is referred to as νοῦς, and induction itself

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<sup>1</sup> Translations used for Aristotle’s works are given in each chapter. In Chapter 1 Hugh Tredennick (2<sup>nd</sup> edition revised), *The Metaphysics*, with an English Translation 2v., (in Loeb Classical Library, 1975) London (W. Heinemann), and Cambridge (Harvard University Press). I shall also be working from Richard McKeon (ed.), *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941).

referred to as ἐπαγωγή. In A 2, 72a8 the phrase πρῶτον καὶ ἀρχήν appears, and is translated by Tredennick as “the primary premise and first principle. A different sense is given to the word in line B 19 100a15 where ἀρχή is translated as “source.”<sup>2</sup> In B 19, 100b16 ἀρχὴ τῆς ἀρχῆς is given as “source of first principles” in the Tredennick translation, and “source of original basis” in McKeon. The importance here is that one has the sense ἀρχή not only as “first principle,” but also as “source.”

## 1.2 Source of knowledge

Aristotle develops the significance of the primary premises, maintaining that without such premises, scientific demonstrative knowledge is not possible, and reaffirms what had already been postulated in A 2: how knowledge is acquired in demonstrative or syllogistic reasoning. In A 2, 71b20 Aristotle states: “the premises of demonstrative knowledge must be true, primary, immediate, better known than, prior to the conclusion, which is further related to them as effect to cause.” Aristotle then develops syllogistic knowledge and defines the conclusion as the result of the cause-effect relationship. An order of relations is presented: the premises before the conclusion are based on true knowledge, and this knowledge which is present in the cognitive process is immediate. The accessibility that one has to this knowledge, and the possession of this knowledge, permits one to reach certain conclusions which follow. The immediate knowledge that one possesses precedes the demonstrated since the latter knowledge results from the what the individual already knows (A 2, 71b20). Aristotle emphasises this point: “the premises

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<sup>2</sup> Ross gives ἀρχή in A 2, 72a15 a temporal reading translating this as “starting-point.” Cf. W. D. Ross, *Aristotle's Prior and Posterior Analytics*, revised text with introduction and commentary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949).

must be the cause of the conclusion” (A 2, 71b30). Two kinds of knowledge are expressed: what is already known at the beginning of the demonstrative syllogism, and then what is known as a result of this syllogism.<sup>3</sup>

Επιστήμη for Aristotle follows from the first premises, science is the dependent relationship of true statements on these “first things,” τὰ πρῶτα. While the empirical is fundamental, sense perception is not enough: observing something does not explain how one ascertains the truth of what, in demonstration, becomes the cause. It is science that states the reason why – the demonstration. How? From first things the why is demonstrated: the conclusion of demonstration is based on the beginning of the demonstration.

### **1.3 Knowledge: prior and sensible**

Aristotle makes a distinction between “prior” and “better known,” in knowledge. Individuals have knowledge of sensory objects; these objects are known before those further from the senses, such as universals. A difference is established between the particular and the universal (A 2, 71b33-72a4). The more sensible and better known cause of knowledge refers to the particular, in this case, the man, while the universal cause is that which is further from sense perception, as in being. In other words, it is not what is better, the particular, that is cause of one’s demonstrative knowledge, but that which comes prior, the universal. Thus, the universal which is suprasensible is a cause of knowledge, it effects a conclusion because the universal occurs prior to the conclusion in

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<sup>3</sup> McKirahan (1995) points out that in Aristotle’s demonstrative science, the principles are not material entities, while those of some of his predecessors were material entities (p. 293). It was Plato’s non material Forms that were adapted to Aristotle’s philosophy – these Forms were beyond corruptibility and change (*ibid.*).

demonstrative knowledge. A difficulty arises with these universals: how can they be prior in knowledge as suprasensible when knowledge of a universal requires experience of the particular? This is treated in the following sections.

#### **1.4 Acquisition of universals**

Aristotle examines the question concerning the apprehension of premises (B 19, 99b16, 26-33), establishing that the role of the primary premise is not only in demonstrative reasoning of the syllogism, but the role is also in its universality in terms of knowledge, and then questions how this primary knowledge itself is acquired. Why should the process of apprehending knowledge which serves as causing demonstration, that is knowledge of universals, be of any importance? Because it is here where the issue of innateness is raised, a knowledge possessed from birth, which would mean that the knowledge of universals is not acquired. Such a claim would mean that knowledge is not a process of apprehending but bringing out that which is already present. Innate knowledge, however, does not need a cause because it is non-demonstrative; instead, in-born knowledge means that the subject learns by having this innate information emerge, rather than begin. For Aristotle, however, one cannot justify innate knowledge because the apprehension process with syllogistic reasoning involves demonstration: with a demonstration one has a cause.



## 1.5 Sense-Perception

Aristotle does not reject altogether some pre-existent knowledge because one would not be able to apprehend and learn if some knowledge were not already present.<sup>4</sup> The basis of this capacity to organise knowledge is ultimately sense-perception (B 2, 100a5). The perceptual basis of Aristotelian knowledge is central because it forms the foundation of reasoning; however, perceptual knowledge also goes beyond the sensory. The repetition of sense-perception leads to memory, and eventually experience (B 2, 100b4). Through experience the universal is established in the soul. This sense-perception is the ἀρχή for art (τέχνη) and for science (ἐπιστήμη).

It should seem strange that on the one hand one has causal universal knowledge which is prior to demonstration, and on the other, knowledge based on sense-perception of the particular which follows the universal. The question that surfaces, then, is how one progresses from sense-perception which is knowledge about “this man” to a universal knowledge about “man.” As indicated in Section 1.2 above, universal knowledge still requires experience of the particular. For Aristotle the first principles form the premise of syllogistic reasoning because the universal nature of these premises comes first in both the syllogism and in knowledge (B 2, 99b20). Aristotle maintains that “one of a number of logically (indiscriminable) particulars” is retained in the soul and that becomes memory (B 19, 100a14). A repetition of these memories becomes experience. Knowledge, then, at the experiential level involves a repetition of events stored in the soul or memory. Aristotle does not consider one singular event of sense-perception as an adequate experience for a universal to “stand.” Why? The answer is given with the

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<sup>4</sup> The paradox is expressed in Plato's *Meno* 89, E.

example of Callus: a singular experience of the perceived is Callus, but a repetition of these experiences means that while the particular Callus is being perceived, the perceptive faculty apprehends the man (B 19, 100b4ff.). At this stage it appears that the foundation of knowledge has its source in sense perception and experience leading to the universal, the causal premise which is source of all other knowledge, the ἀμύγη.

### 1.6 Επαγωγή

For Aristotle, then, one has scientific knowledge when one knows the reason why; first principles are known by νοῦς, but through sense-perception the universal is attained by induction (B 19, 100b3). Aristotle states in A 1, 81b6-9:

For it is sense-perception alone which is adequate for grasping the particulars: they cannot be objects of scientific knowledge, because neither can universals give us knowledge of them without induction, nor can we get it through induction without sense-perception.

Both are needed, sense-perception and induction, to grasp first principles; Aristotle represents these two in a co-dependent relationship.

In terms of ἐπαγωγή, Hamlyn raises an interesting point: even if induction is the means by which one arrives at knowing something, one needs to understand what Aristotle means by “sense-perception.” For Hamlyn this is crucial (1976). While sense-perception introduces the universal through induction, according to Hamlyn, this is not sense-perception in the usual sense. Sense-perception involves (i) the act of perceiving in seeing; and (ii) seeing in the sense of understanding; thus, “the universal is first in the soul when one of the ἀδιαφόρα has made a stand” (p. 181). This contrasts with the claim

that “it is not strictly true that the way in which sense-perception implants or introduces the universal is a matter of induction” (Hamlyn 1976, 181). The ἀδιαφόρα are those “indiscriminable entities” (B 19, 100a15) at which point the universal is present in the soul. Hamlyn’s observation is significant, otherwise, sense-perception even when it becomes experience is nothing more than a series of repeated particulars. It is “see” in the second sense that Hamlyn has argued which is more than just perceptual; induction is required as the intellectual act of the νοῦς.

For Aristotle intuition apprehends first principles, and through ἐπαγωγή, induction, one derives first things. In *Posterior Analytics* B, 19 what is perceived is “stored” in one’s memory and generates a λόγος in meaning, the universal. Thus, the ἀρχή is the principle or the universal present in this repeated operation. What is important here is the repeated experience, and the principles which are discovered through ἐπαγωγή. Hamlyn points out that intuition needs to be understood not only as the exercise of the intellectual faculty, but that which permits this exercise without overloading the intellectual functions of νοῦς (1976, 181). A problem with this position, however, is that νοῦς itself may be translated as intuition, and any intellectual function has its source in νοῦς. Categorising these functions does not reduce noetic activity.

The universalisation process of the particular as given in B 19, 100a15 introduces the “stand” that is made by the “indiscriminable particular,” and then “the earliest universal is present in the soul.” Thus, Aristotle has given the relationship between knowledge, sense-perception and the universal; one moves from a series of particulars,

such as “Callas,” to the universal “man.”<sup>5</sup> The universal is the cause of knowledge in demonstrative reasoning – and this is Aristotle’s point. Aristotle states in *Metaphysics* Λ 5, 1013a5 that the quarrel is the beginning of the fight, and the keel is the beginning of a ship. Beginning means not only “beginning” but also means “rule” or “control”; and this is the sense given to Aristotle’s demonstration (A 2, 71b35-36). This suggests the beginning of understanding or intelligibility. This epistemic process to apprehend ἀρχή requires the νοῦς.

## 2.1 Νοῦς as religious

A study of the etymology of νοῦς is quite revelatory: the etymology shows that the word derives from the Indo-European root \*nes meaning a return from death and darkness (Frame, in Lesher 1973, 47). The word νοῦς then arises out of a religious conception of the return to conscious life (p. 48). However, the Homeric poetry which was felt in Greek philosophy shows that the word came to mean simply “consciousness” or “mind” (*ibid.*). In Plato and Parmenides νοῦς appears to be limited to intellectual roles (p. 51). By illustrating the various tasks performed by νοῦς, such as consciousness and intellectual activity, Lesher shows that Aristotle’s usage cannot have a strict interpretation.

Unlike Plato’s mythical and poetical works, Aristotle develops a more empirical and scientific methodology. The presence of νοῦς had already been felt in Homer’s language where the Homeric hero shows that the mind is superior to the will (Zeller

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<sup>5</sup> Aristotle states: “as soon as the one individual percept has come to a halt” (B 19, 100a15-16). Perception as an ongoing process and perception as a completed act are distinguished in Aristotelian cognition: the two are represented by the particular and the universal, respectively.

1931, 8), the mind depends on the state of one's knowledge.<sup>6</sup> According to Zeller, present in Greek mythology is the mind-will dualism which reappears in Plato and Aristotle.<sup>7</sup> If such is the case for Aristotle, this dualism would have to be inferred since it does not appear to be explicit. The corporeal element is the Titanic presence while the divine is associated with Dionysius.<sup>8</sup> The body is considered a tomb, a prison of the soul, a punishment due to some deviant act during its divine existence. Within this same mythology appears the reincarnation of the soul: the soul will undergo purgation for millennia to come, a series of births and purgations by entering plants, animals and human bodies. By adhering to set precepts established by a spiritual master, leading a life of purity and abstinence, the soul can return to the previous state of divine happiness.<sup>9</sup>

Although the Orphic theology which emerges in this Hellenic context borders on pantheism, it is not quite pantheistic. This pantheism never really overcomes the dualisms of mind and matter, God and the world, the soul and the body, while the Orphic beliefs did attempt to comprehend the world as a unit, where an immutable law governed (Zeller 1931, 15). This is quite a reversal of the Greek version of life which is rooted in the reality of the corporeal person. The Dionysion God is ultimately oriental with its origin in Thrace, connected with the Orphic myths. With the rejection of the flesh, and exercising practical asceticism, Orphic beliefs are associated with mystical philosophy. Thus, the God-like soul in Orphic mythology seeks liberation and salvation.<sup>10</sup> Thrace, then, bridges

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<sup>6</sup> Zeller points out that Greek philosophy emerged in Ionia out of the Homeric hero (1931, 8).

<sup>7</sup> Zeus blasted the Titans with lightning, and the resulting ashes were used to create people resulting in the dual nature of humans (*ibid.*, 14).

<sup>8</sup> Dionysius is the God of creative nature, the lord of life and death. With the sole exception of his heart, he was cut into pieces and eaten by the Titans (*ibid.*).

<sup>9</sup> These beliefs were present from the seventh century to the first century B.C. from the Ionic colonies of the Aegean Sea along the coast extending to Southern Italy (*ibid.*).

<sup>10</sup> This myth originates in India in the Upanishads, commentaries on the Vedas of 800-600 B.C. (*ibid.*, 16).

the oriental mysticism with the Greek rationalism. By the sixth century B.C. two philosophical paths had evolved for those Greeks who were disillusioned with the polytheism of Olympian gods, either the Ionic path of rational thought and investigation, or the Orphic path of religious mysticism. Thus, rational Greek monistic thought emerged parallel to the oriental dualistic thought.<sup>11</sup>

Murray (1955) gives some insight into the mythology of the pre-Socratic Hellenic world.<sup>12</sup> In turn, these myths appear in the Ionic poetic tradition of Homer, and ultimately in Greek philosophy. The key notion of interest here is not so much the spirit-body duality in the oriental mysticism, or even the concrete monism of the ancient Greeks, but the very presence of the mind or spirit, and how knowledge in the mind ultimately has some kind of source. It is this source, this principle in relationship to the mind, that will reappear with divine elements: mind and knowledge, causality and divine are not separated in Greek thought.

## 2.2 Noûs in Aristotle.

True knowledge for Aristotle is scientific knowledge or ἐπιστήμη, and is part of demonstrative reasoning, as I have shown. However, “intuition” appears in the text of B 19, 100a8-12. Aristotle states that “no other kind of thought is more accurate than scientific knowledge,” juxtaposing intuition and scientific knowledge, and where the accuracy of intuition follows that of reason: νοῦς is the faculty that grasps the first principles. The result is that intuition apprehends the primary premise. One can see that

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<sup>11</sup> Zeller (1931, 16).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Gilbert Murray, *The Five Stages of Greek Religion* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1955). The first two chapters examine the pre-Olympian gods and their evolution in “Saturna Regina” and “the Olympian Conquest.”

both intuition and the premises function as antecedents in relation to demonstrative reasoning. The premise is the universal and intuition is the faculty that apprehends this universal: there exists here a primacy of intuition because through intuition the universal is grasped. Thus, the intuition does not only apprehend the premises of a demonstration, but it is also the originative source of scientific knowledge (B 19, 100b14). Aristotle attributes to the central role of intuition the source of knowledge, but also the apprehending of the “first principle.”

### 2.3 Interpretations of νοῦς

In *Posterior Analytics* Aristotle highlights the relationship between ὄραξι and νοῦς. But one might ask whether Aristotle is introducing new concepts or if he is reinterpreting old ones. I have already made reference to the Orphic and Homeric elements circulating in pre-Socratic Greece, and which are prominent in the dualist philosophy of Plato. Randall points out that Aristotle’s Platonic thought is especially present in *Posterior Analytics*: the doctrine of the *Theaetetus* is elaborated where λόγος is added to true opinion or knowledge of facts in order to reach ἐπιστήμη (1960, 16). True knowledge in *Posterior Analytics* is presented as ἐπιστήμη (B 19, 100a14-16). According to Randall, the theory of science as presented in this work is completely formalised; and if at this early stage of Aristotle’s philosophy one has the presence of such Platonic elements, Aristotle would later realise that these are more religious than scientific: Plato’s “ideas” are not epistemic, objects of science, but a religious system of symbols and ideas (Randall 1960, 18). Aristotle’s view of Plato’s philosophy as essentially religious was then to “rationalise” Platonic concepts making Plato more

intelligible and accessible (Randall, 27). While for Plato science is a single body of knowledge, for Aristotle sciences are distinct each possessing its own ἀρχή (p. 33). Randall's reading of Aristotle, however, represents an Aristotle who rationalizes and formalizes Plato to produce something more scientific. I do not believe such a representation of Aristotle is justified. As I show in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, Aristotle's work is as much scientific as it is theological.

Aydede challenges what is referred to as the "orthodox" interpretation of B 19, claiming that ἐπιστήμη cannot be justified on the basis of νοῦς because this intellectual faculty is simply overloaded (1998, 19). While the inductive process implies the empirical, for Aydede intuition itself as a first principle and cause is inconsistent with Aristotle's empiricism which is scientifically rigorous. Instead, "the essence of being a first principle, to be genuinely explanatory of phenomenon while at the same time to have no need of further explanation" (p. 26) is what ἀρχή is all about. Since this is the case, Aydede has the νοῦς appearing as knowledge. The problem with Aydede's interpretation is that it relies heavily on an empirical reading, and while Aydede admits that Aristotle is not to be regarded as an empiricist in the Humean or Lockean sense, it does not allow for a significant role that the νοῦς has in reaching first principles. First principles, I believe, are themselves more than just explanatory power; for Aristotle, these principles have a metaphysical value of being cause, of being an originative source. First principles being analysed simply as explanatory power, which Aydede suggests, places them purely in the epistemic domain, which in fact is the role of νοῦς.

The serious difficulty which presents itself then is how first principles can be known, especially since ἐπιστήμη depends on them. If one remains uncertain of these



principles, then, how can one be certain of true knowledge. These principles are the foundation to Aristotelian ἐπιστήμη, and ultimately the theology which is built on the epistemic structure. One needs to examine, however, whether postulating νοῦς or intuition for some kind of true knowledge is adequate. I tend to agree with Hamlyn (1976) here in relation to the role of sense-perception as I pointed out in Section 1.4 above, and its two functions.

Does Aristotle give a satisfactory interpretation for the apprehension of basic principles, known by νοῦς? If knowledge requires justification then like Lesher, and as with Aydede, the νοῦς as an intuitive capacity is more than just problematic. Since Aristotle's philosophy hangs on the ἀρχή and the νοῦς that apprehends it, the later theology which he develops will appear rather fragile if the epistemology upon which it builds leaves one unconvinced. Νοῦς etymologically evolves from a religious tradition, and Lesher draws from this religious tradition to account for the Aristotelian use of νοῦς, and maintains that Aristotle employs the word in a sense that is not restricted, which then refutes Aydede's claim that νοῦς is performing too many tasks. It is Ross (in Lesher 1973, 51) who has argued extensively for νοῦς to be understood as "intellectual intuition." Lesher's conclusion is that "the account of νοῦς of first principles which concludes *Posterior Analytics* is therefore neither ad hoc nor inconsistent with Aristotle's empiricism; on the contrary, it is a consequence of it" (p. 65). This is because "insight or grasp of the universal principles acquired by induction from particular cases and as constituting the source of scientific knowledge" is the meaning that Aristotle gives to νοῦς in *Posterior Analytics* (Lesher 1973, 68).

### 3.0 Interaction between ἀρχή and νοῦς

The relationship between ἀρχή and νοῦς represents the metaphysical and epistemic foundation to Aristotle's theology. Aristotle sets the individual on a path to reach God, even though this is not explicitly stated in *Posterior Analytics*, and to demonstrate inductively how one can have knowledge of God. But as I have shown in this chapter, the certitude of a "first principle" rests on the capacity of "intellectual intuition."<sup>13</sup> This active intellect, as the subsequent chapters show, grasps first principles as being not only the cause of demonstrations, but the reality to which those demonstrations conclude.

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<sup>13</sup> In a parallel discussion in *Nicomachean Ethics* Δ 6, Aristotle similarly maintains that νοῦς, intuitive reason, grasps first principles (Δ 6, 1141a7).

***De Anima:***  
**νοῦς and contemplation**

***Chapter 2***

In Chapter 2 I examine the intelligence in relation to the external world, and how the former receives sensible objects. The encounter between the non-material and the material is considered, including reception, awareness and finally contemplation.

**1.1 Intelligence and perception**

Aristotle maintains in *De Anima* (Γ 3, 427a18) that among the characteristics of the soul (ψυχή) is thinking (νοεῖν), judging (κρίνειν), and perceiving (αἰσάνεσθαι).<sup>1</sup> However, the distinction between these three faculties remains problematic due to the inseparable nature of their operations. Aristotle does make some crucial distinctions concerning their functions, and points out that thinking and perceiving were not distinguished by his predecessors such as Empedocles and Homer (Γ 3, 427a22, 25). By making this spiritual-material distinction, Aristotle denies thinking is a corporeal activity, unlike perceiving (Γ 3, 427b26).<sup>2</sup>

The part of the soul which knows and thinks is considered on the basis of how thinking takes place. Aristotle observes:

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<sup>1</sup> The word for soul is different from the word for mind. In Chapter 2, pp.6-7 of my thesis, I indicated that Homer used the same word for both: Homer's reference to "soul" is not ψυχή but νοῦς (cf. Zeller 1931, 16ff.). The translation of *De Anima* is from W. S. Hett, *On the Soul*, with an English translation (in Loeb Classical Library, 1964) London (W. Heinemann) and Cambridge (Harvard University Press).

<sup>2</sup> I believe the word most appropriate for νοῦς where "mind" is normally given would be "intelligence." Intelligence taken in its original Latin sense of *inter* + *legere*, "read into," thus, discernment, knowledge or understanding sharing the same meaning as νόσις. The intelligence as faculty expresses the spiritual united with the corporeal, avoiding the mind-body dualism so prevalent since Descartes.

The thinking part of the soul must therefore be, while impassable, capable of receiving the form of an object; that is, must be potentially identical in character with its object without being the object. Mind must be related to what is thinkable as sense is to what is sensible. (Γ 4, 429a15-17).

Aristotle establishes a parallel relationship between the thinkable and the sensible, between mind and sense. In other words, each of the two has an object: the mind has an object of thought, as the senses have an object of perception. The immaterial, that is, the thinking part of the spiritual soul, assimilates the intelligible features of the object, and the sensory or the material part of the soul employs the material organs of the body to assimilate the sensory qualities of the object. By returning to *Posterior Analytics* where one has the “mind” as intuition, the source of apprehension is indicated. In *De Anima* one also has apprehension, but of an object, not of a first principle. The object is apprehended through the intelligible form. The thinking part of the soul in *Posterior Analytics*, however, employs intuition to apprehend something suprasensible, that is a cause of syllogistic truth. So, the question to be asked, then, is how does the intelligence apprehend something sensible which is material, while the mind itself is immaterial?

### **1.2 Intelligence receives the object**

The spiritual and sensible represent an interesting meeting point expressed in *De Anima* Γ 4 by the contact between the non-material and material, respectively. The intelligence constitutes the source by which one apprehends a sensible object. The presence of an object is insufficient for knowledge; however, these sensible qualities are assimilated by the intelligence, “capable of receiving the form.” Aristotle specifies the intelligence as the thinking part of the soul, but adds: “before it thinks it cannot be any real thing” (Γ 4, 429a20). What does this passage say of Aristotle’s

epistemology? The soul receives the form of the object, and becomes the object, but does not take in its materiality, but only its intentional form, becoming “potentially identical in character.”<sup>3</sup> Aristotle maintains that the intellectual soul is not blended with the body; it is immaterial. The lack of corporeality in the soul as immaterial form enables it to become potentially identical to the object.

The intelligence in the passage just cited does not concern the universals as had been presented in B 19 of *Posterior Analytics*. The issue raised in *De Anima* Γ 4 concerns the thinking faculty in the presence of a sensible “object.” I have stated that for Aristotle thought must be identical in character to the object without being the object, that is, potentially one with the object. The intelligence must apprehend an object in order for it to be identical to that object, while the object represents more than the presence of a series of “sensory data.” The contact amounts to something more than just “phenomenal.” The experience of intelligible form is parallel to the universals of *Posterior Analytics*, that is, the form of a singular object is received as intelligible or until an “indiscriminable” particular appears.

Although it is not explicit in this passage, the intelligence which constitutes the thinking part of the soul, functions as the intuition of *Posterior Analytics* B 19 because the form is the essence of an object accessible to the intelligence, that part which is intelligible. I shall illustrate this by something concrete; for example, four slabs of mahogany wood (25 cm. l. X 10 cm. w.) which, when assembled, look like a book shelf; but the slabs function as both a book shelf and a bench, something on which to put books, and something on which to sit. One has the sensory experience of four slabs of wood whose configuration reveals something about its function; but the

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<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the manner in which Aristotle demonstrates the existence of the soul is through induction, it is “intuition” that seizes the existence of this non-material entity as Aristotle reveals in these passages: the soul itself is a “first principle.”

function one discovers is also innovative, a bench. One receives the form, but only experience can say when a “universal is established,” as Aristotle maintains in *Posterior Analytics*. In *De Anima* Γ 3, 429b10ff., Aristotle, instead, leads one to the essence of things.

### 1.3 Intelligence as receptive faculty

I have pointed out that Aristotle introduces *De Anima* Γ 3 by distinguishing thinking from judging. The distinction made is between judging the object and thinking its essence. This is expressed by the example “we judge flesh” and “the essence of flesh,” τὸ σάρκι εἶναι (Γ 4, 429b14). This passage suggests that before one can think the essence, the form must be first judged. Aristotle considers two questions: the “flesh” distinction serves to show how one judges based on form, and how one thinks based on essence. The problem to be considered at this stage is, (i) how can the intelligence think if it cannot be acted upon; and (ii) how can the intelligence itself be an object of thought? “Can the intelligence think itself?” Aristotle answers the question in the affirmative: the intelligence is itself thinkable like other objects of thought. This claim plays a central role in Aristotle’s epistemology, as I show in Chapters 4 and 5: the intelligence which thinks itself has implications for Aristotle’s deity in both the *Metaphysics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*. In Γ 4, 429b9 Aristotle states “the mind too is then able to think itself.”<sup>4</sup> The contrast is made in terms of the intellective soul; the forms present in the soul are potential and not actual. A relationship of potentiality exists between the actual object in the world, and the potential object re-presented in an intelligible form in the individual. With the

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<sup>4</sup> There is considerable controversy as to how Γ 4, 429b9 should be interpreted, due to disagreement over the use of δὲ αὐτὸν. Cf. Joseph Owens, “A Note on Aristotle, *De Anima* 3.4.429b9,” *Phoenix* (1976): 30, 107-118.

acquisition of this intelligible form, the intelligence thinks itself. This self-thinking thought is developed in *Metaphysics* where Aristotle states, “Therefore, it must be of itself that the divine thought thinks since it is the most excellent of things, and its thinking is a thinking on thinking” (Λ 9, 1074b33-34). What does the intelligence think? What it knows: what the intelligence has received through its senses. The intelligence thinking itself “καὶ αὐτὸς δὲ αὐτὸν τότε δύναται νοεῖν” can only think the knowledge it has acquired, as Aristotle states (Γ 4, 429b10). Aristotle maintains “then capable” suggesting only after contact has been made with the sensory world, does one have capacity for thought of itself.

Interpretations vary on what appears to be a controversial passage, and this needs to be considered. “Moreover, the mind is thus capable of thinking itself.” Lear (1988, 124) emphasises a more contemplative interpretation of thought which will be taken up on the second section of this chapter. Lowe’s analysis (1983) of *De Anima* Γ 4 distinguishes two kinds of thinking, “apprehensive thinking” and “autonomous thinking”: apprehensive thinking is attached more closely to sensation, while the autonomous type of thinking is more closely related to the mind (p. 17).<sup>5</sup> This distinction, however, is not made by Aristotle, and I believe this is because Aristotle wants to show the immaterial nature of the intelligence and the thinking in which it is engaged; what Aristotle does distinguish, however, is the sensory activity which requires the organ associated with the sense, that is, perception. Aristotle elaborates his position on thought contrasting things with and without matter. Unlike thinking things with matter, thinking things without matter and thinking are the same; thinking things without matter is speculative knowledge. Aristotle is no longer talking about

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<sup>5</sup> Lowe provides an in-depth analysis of Γ 4, 429b, and also observes that it is in *De Anima* B 7-8 where both types of thinking appear, contemplative thought and thinking about concrete objects where these objects (1983): 17ff.

exercising knowledge as in thinking, that is, νοεῖν, but knowledge as ἐπιστήμη ἢ θεωρητικὴ (Γ 4, 430a5).<sup>6</sup> The potentiality for knowledge requires the material object, while speculative knowledge and the non-material object are identical. The intelligence has the capacity of being thought when knowledge of a material object is present because these objects are potentially present in the intelligence (Γ 4, 430a8). This distinction anticipates one's understanding of the Aristotelian God because the implications of *De Anima* extend from thought to contemplation, from the individual to God.

Kosman (1992) justifies the translation of νοῦς ποιητικός as “maker mind” (p.344). In Aristotle this translation is based on “...ὁ δὲ τῷ πάντα ποιεῖν...” (Γ 5, 430a15), and as Kosman points out, this has been traditionally translated as “in that mind is made all things.” This arises from a distinction that Aristotle makes of intelligence as actuality and potentiality at the beginning of Γ 4, 429b30-430a1. The intelligence becomes potentially all things and makes knowledge of all things actual. δύναμις and ἐνέργεια, respectively. If the intelligence makes, what does it make? The problem that Kosman highlights concerns this issue of potentiality and actuality: is the potentially thinkable actual, that is, the concrete object present, or does it make potential νοῦς actual, namely, the νοῦς faculty being actualised (p. 345). The question that Kosman raises concerns actualisation: whether it is thinking, or thought being thought, that is actualised (*ibid.*). If one considers Aristotle's explanation of the relationship between knowledge and perception, it is the object that actualises the intelligence; Aristotle makes this clear. If I am thinking about a bench, the

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<sup>6</sup> “Ἐπιστήμη ἢ θεωρητικὴ” translates literally to “theoretical science.” See also Owens (1959, 307ff.).



intelligence having had sensory experiences of benches, has been actualised. Now I can think, “bench.”

In *De Anima* Γ 4 Aristotle maintains that the thinking subject, and the object thought, is the same actualisation. The analogy with the blank tablet or the visibility of colour through light (B 6, 418a26, 28) illustrate the transition from potentiality to actuality, and similarly, why the active intellect is needed to receive the form of objects. The mind as active intellect is like the light making objects present by illuminating them. Kosman points out, and I agree, that this explains why Aristotle attributes to the activity of intelligence the cause of knowledge (Kosman 1992, 347). I have already shown this from a different angle in *Posterior Analytics*. Kosman, however, seems to think that intuition, Aristotle’s νοῦς, is an empirically founded faculty that does not go beyond the experiential. This empirical position goes directly against Aristotle’s claims. Since one cannot have an infinite regress of how one knows, only the intuition can grasp these first principles.

## **2.1 Intelligence and contemplation**

When the intelligence is involved in actual thinking, then one has θεωρία and according to Kosman, the second activity of the intelligence (1992, 355). This contemplation is best exemplified by the divine intelligence (p. 312). If contemplation is the supreme activity of the divine intelligence, then one would conclude that for the divine intelligence this is expressed as “thought contemplating thought,” given the elements first presented on *De Anima* in Section I. Kosman goes further, and states that if one examines this in the light of *Posterior Analytics*, then the intelligence is the

source of consciousness (Kosman, 316) and the source of knowledge.<sup>7</sup> Kosman argues that the intelligence is the source of substance and psyche. I believe Kosman has it wrong here: Aristotle clearly states that the source of intelligence is the soul, and not the other way around. The opening lines of *De Anima* Γ are quite explicit. Anaxagoras claims that the intelligence must be uncontaminated or ἀμύγη because the intelligence thinks all things, if it is to rule.<sup>8</sup> The intelligence, then, as being unmixed and as ruling corresponds to a pure source of knowledge because in Aristotelian terms, to know means to rule, as indicated in the preceding chapter; this constitutes the same intelligence that has the capacity of intuition, to apprehend the first principles. The intelligence as νοῦς represents both the source of knowledge and the capacity to apprehend things because the intelligence also functions as intuition.<sup>9</sup>

## 2.2 Religious θεωρία

Randall argues that it was St. Thomas Aquinas and the religious Aristotelianism of the Middle Ages that defined the intelligence not only as uncorrupted and separable, but immortal as well (1960, 94). However, the immortality of the intelligence comes directly from Aristotle who states, “when isolated it is its true self and nothing more, and this alone is immortal and everlasting” (Γ 4, 430a23). Aristotle uses the Greek ἀθάνατος in reference to “immortality.” It is the possibility of going to heaven or to hell which adds a specific Judeo-Christian component. The

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<sup>7</sup> Randall (1960) maintains in footnote (n.13) that in Greek νοῦς meant “intellectual vision,” and is associated with verbs like θεωρεῖν or εἰδέναι “sight words” (p.90), adding that “The Oxford translation often turns νοῦς into intuition.” The idea that the intelligence must be unaffected in order to know the object, was borrowed from Anaxagoras, and brought into Greek philosophy by Aristotle (*ibid.*).

<sup>8</sup> One of the definitions of cause as source is also that of “rule” or “dominate” (cf. Chapter 2 of my thesis).

<sup>9</sup> In his footnote (n.13, p. 90) Randall accepts intuition in the original sense, from Latin *intueri* < *in* + *tueri* “look in” or “intellectual vision,” but notes that since the Romantic period, intuition had acquired other connotations.

problem here, however, is that Randall's claim reduces Aristotle to an empiricist leaving little room to advance beyond the empirical. The position that Randall takes develops a material or positivist approach to intelligence ignoring the fact that Aristotle, and not the Middle Ages, gave the intelligence non-material, or spiritual attributes including its immortality. I have shown in Chapter I that Aristotle does not remain at the level of the concrete object, the empirical; that is the whole point of the first principles introduced in *Posterior Analytics*. Randall claims that for Aristotle contemplation is to be understood as follows:

He [Aristotle] is concerned to show that *nous*, intellect, is a human function capable of knowing truth – of rising above limitations of a particular animal organism to attain a direct intellectual vision, a *theoria*, of things as they are. (p.94)

Θεωρία is presented as an exercise of νοῦς, or at least, connected to the νοῦς; however, one might ask how this relates to γνῶσις, a type of knowing. Νοῦς serves as the faculty from which arises either contemplation or knowledge. Randall, however, fails to take into account where Aristotle is going with the intelligence, even if not at this stage; ultimately Aristotle leads to divine contemplation.<sup>10</sup> In *De Anima* Aristotle is concerned with how one acquires universal knowledge, the relationship between sense-perception, the intelligence and the objective world. This relationship may evolve into something contemplative. Aristotle's sense of contemplative activity reaches an apex in *Nicomachean Ethics*. One can agree with Randall as far as the role

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<sup>10</sup> I recognise the difficulty in the terminology, exactly what is meant by "contemplation." One should bear in mind that in English the etymological evolution of contemplation cannot be separated from the religious sense: the word "temple" from Latin *templum* is the principle noun of the word (preceded by the preposition *con* from Latin "with"). The term was absorbed into English in a religious context in the thirteenth century, although its connotations in present day use extend beyond the religious.

of experience is concerned: Aristotle does rely on experience as a basis of acquiring knowledge.<sup>11</sup>

Is the awareness of non-material objects in human intelligence an act of contemplation? Lear seems to think so (1988). Lear makes a leap from the perceptible form of an object to the contemplation of its non-material form, the essence:

It is the essences of things that are intelligible so mind contemplates essences. When one sees a frog, the perceptive faculty receives the perceptible form; when one has studied froggy nature and is able to think about what it is to be a frog, one's mind has taken on the intelligible form. (p. 120)

The example provided is one of a frog: once “froggy” nature is studied, the human intelligence has assimilated the form which is intelligible, its essence. But Lear’s notion of Aristotelian “study” and “taking in” has little to do with the Aristotelian sense of contemplation, which may have religious overtones that cannot be ignored. Given that for Aristotle contemplation builds up to something religious, it seems unjustified to claim that  $\theta\epsilon\omega\rho\iota\alpha$  is only “speculative intelligence” in this particular context.<sup>12</sup> The contemplative life as Aristotle presents it in *Nicomachean Ethics* is the ultimate act associated with the perfect deity, and thereby equally desirable for humans to imitate. Contemplation, as with religious experience, is beyond the laborious activity of research and study of anything; in this respect, Aristotle’s contemplation excludes labour, otherwise it is simply not bliss.<sup>13</sup> Attaining the essence of a thing and contemplating this essence are not the same, either: one can be

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<sup>11</sup> Randall (1969, 95) points out that the role of observation in knowledge is distinguished from the intelligence in Aristotle and in Plato. In Plato’s philosophy, intellect could know the sensible aspect of material form but not the immaterial; but for Aristotle, the intelligible form or the universal exists in what is first empirically experienced.

<sup>12</sup> Aristotle does talk about the intelligence as being a property of the divine. I shall take this up in my chapter on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*.

<sup>13</sup> I shall present this in detail in my chapter on *Nicomachean Ethics*.

aware without contemplating. In *Posterior Analytics* Aristotle refers to a universal established in the soul, while in *De Anima* Aristotle shows how human cognition interacts with the sensory world, although Aristotle does not remain at this sensory level. The intelligence reaches the essence of things through the form; reaching an essence, however, does not mean contemplating it, although contemplation may include contemplating the essence that has been attained. Lear uses “contemplate” in reference to “froggy” form which is identical to the essence.<sup>14</sup> Translating θεωρία simply as “practical speculation” is one level of contemplation; the other level appears with a distinctly religious element in *Nicomachean Ethics*. Lear responds to Γ 4, 429b27 as follows, “this difficulty is raised by asking whether mind can contemplate itself” (1988, 123). Aristotle’s text reads, ἔτι δὲ ἰ νοητὸς καὶ αὐτός; in Hett’s translation this is given as “the mind itself can be an object of thought.” In *De Anima* Aristotle does not build up to contemplation, as he does in *Nicomachean Ethics* (K 7, 1177a19). Instead, in *De Anima* Aristotle presents θεωρεῖν as “actively aware” (Γ 4, 432a8). Hett offers the following translation: “Whether the mind itself can be an object of thought.” “Thought” in the latter translation serves as “contemplation” in Lear’s interpretation of Aristotle’s text. The problem arises with νοητός “intelligible” or “thought” which Lear is treating, in fact, as θεωρία. In the parenthesis following the word “thought” is the same word that is used for the activity of mind, νοητός and νοητόν, knowing and the known, respectively. In Hett’s translation of Γ 4, 429b28 the following is given:

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<sup>14</sup> One summer day, while I was in southern France, I was fascinated by a frog that I came across on a village road. I picked up the frog with intrigue, and eventually wrote a poem dedicated to this little creature. In spite of my sense of awe, and the morning I spent with it, I would never say that I “contemplated” this frog or its “frogginess.”

If, that is, mind is an object of thought in itself and not in virtue of something else, and what is thought is always identical in form.

Lear reaches a conclusion based on *De Anima's* Γ 4, that “contemplating consists in mind becoming the objects of thought” (p.124). This should read, rather, “thinking....” I agree that ultimately the intelligence is thinkable, that is what Aristotle is getting at: the intelligence can think itself.

That the intelligence judges, κρίνει, rather than that a person judges, is an interpretation Lowe adopts by contrasting the intelligence to sensation. Although for the intelligence to judge implies sensation, it introduces a dualism into Aristotle to maintain that the intelligence judges rather than the person since the senses are assumed in the intelligence involved in judging. However, it is true that the Greek subject of the verb is νοῦς: νοῦς judges (Lowe 1983, 20). This is important because of the distinction Aristotle makes between judging flesh, and judging what is to be flesh by identifying the physical (sensible), and the formal (intelligible) processes of the intelligence. It is ultimately the intelligence, as intuition, and coupled with the senses, that will lead one to “essences.” The judgement then is the cognitive power of the intelligence.

### **2.3 Thought and images**

Lowe makes an interesting observation based on Γ 8, 432a3-10: “the objects of thought involved in mathematics and natural sciences are learned by means of sensations having matter, while things are contemplated by means of images without matter” (p. 26). This may be Lowe’s interpretation of Aristotle, but the question is whether Aristotle makes such claims. For Aristotle contemplation is linked to the non-material, and the image implies contact with a material object. If, however, the image

is that of a form that one has thought, then this would be comparable to Aristotelian contemplation provided that the intelligence is actively engaged in studying the forms of this object, the essence. In fact, in  $\Gamma$  3, 427b15ff. Aristotle distinguishes thought from  $\phi\alpha\nu\tau\alpha\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ , that is, imagination. As I have stated, the contemplation goes further than essences, to include a religious element. The text in question is the following:

Hence (i) no one can learn or understand anything in the absence of sense, and (ii) when the mind is actively aware of anything it is necessarily aware of it along with an image; for images are like sensuous contents except in that they contain no matter. ( $\Gamma$  8, 432a6)

Aristotle gives the image a secondary role by adding “along with” the intelligence, and thereby giving the latter primacy. McKeon’s translation uses “actively aware” instead of “contemplation” which gives a less mystical reading. Is active awareness or simply thinking the same as contemplation? Although Lowe’s distinction is a good one, I find that the use of contemplation unsuitable in this context of *De Anima* because one can be aware without contemplating.

For purposes of my thesis, I have divided *De Anima*  $\Gamma$  3-4 into two parts: intelligence and perception, and intelligence and contemplation. Aristotle shows the relationship between the intelligence and the implications of sensory-perception. Sensory-perception requires both a thinking perceiving subject, and the object being thought and perceived. It is this subject-object relationship of intelligence and sensory-perception that causes difficulty: one can either focus on the thinking perceiving subject or the object being thought-perceived. Moreover, when this takes on a religious dimension, that is contemplation, one is beyond the speculation on essences. The significance of *De Anima* and the distinctions that Aristotle makes is

that, not only the source of contemplative experience as in the *Posterior Analytics*, but also the object of the contemplative experience are to be found in the non-material.



***Physics:***  
**The Unmoved Mover**

***Chapter 3***

In Chapter 3 I focus on Aristotle's Unmoved Mover and the controversy surrounding primary source of movement. I first present the development of Aristotle's prime mover, and how this provides elements for Aristotle's theology, even if Aristotle does not explicate God. The difficulties surrounding a theistic interpretation of the *Physics* come primarily from Randall and Organ. To recover the theistic interpretation of the Unmoved Mover I turn primarily to Owens and Zeller, and with some interesting material on Greek mythology from Murray.

**1.1 From the intelligence to the Unmoved Mover**

In both *Posterior Analytics* and *De Anima* intelligence plays a central role: in the former work, the intelligence grasps first principles; the intelligence seizes truths while itself is a source of truth. In *De Anima* Aristotle goes further: the intelligence not only makes contact with the sensible world, but these objects are now present in the individual in an intelligible form. Given the role and the continuity of the intelligence in these two works, one may wonder how the intelligence relates to Aristotle's *Physics*?<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I believe the role of νοῦς in both *Posterior Analytics* and *De Anima* represent a continuum in how knowledge is acquired, epistemic and conceptual knowledge, respectively.

A first reading of the *Physics* may appear as a departure from these previous two works which treat knowledge extensively.<sup>2</sup> In the *Physics* the focus shifts to motion, eternal motion and an Unmoved Mover. This is not so far from either *Posterior Analytics* or *De Anima*: the process of reaching this eternal movement, the necessity of an unmoved first mover, is through deduction, and the intelligence seizes this truth. Moreover, it is the same intelligence that speculates and theorises about the world. The issue, however, is not only the deductive process of reaching the Unmoved Mover, but how to characterise the Unmoved Mover. Is it God? Philosophers have been grappling with questions concerning the divine nature of the Unmoved Mover as I present below.

## 1.2 Potential and Actual Movement

Owens (1959) maintains that there are three branches to Aristotle's theoretical sciences: arithmetic, metaphysics and theology (p. 301). Does the *Physics* belong to Aristotle's theology? Is the Unmoved Mover God? These questions are related, and I would have to say yes to both. The answer can be justified by the following passage which is the starting point of Aristotle's Unmoved Mover.<sup>3</sup> The statement Aristotle first makes concerning motion is that what is in motion cannot be the source of its own motion (H 1, 241b24-25):

Everything that is in motion must be moved by something.  
For if it has not the source of its motion in itself it is  
evident that it is moved by something other than itself, for  
there must be something else that moves it.

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<sup>2</sup> Two translations are being used in this chapter for Aristotle's works are from Philip H. Wicksteed and Francis M. Cornford, *The Physics*, with an English Translation 2v., (in Loeb Classical Library, 1957) London (W. Heinemann), and Cambridge (Harvard University Press).

<sup>3</sup> As with *Posterior Analytics* and *De Anima*, I will be treating only the part of the *Physics* relevant to my thesis.

Having outlined the four causes, material, formal, efficient and final in B 3, 194b19ff., Aristotle shows that efficient cause belongs to motion: change is characterised by efficiency, and so is the process of motion: “The difference is this much, that causes which are actually at work and particular exist and cease to exist simultaneously with their effect” (B 3, 195b17-18). Aristotle gives the example of a house-building individual and a being-built house. The effect of the former, the house-builder, results in the activity of house-building; once the latter is actualised, then there is no efficient cause present. As Aristotle states, “but this is not always true for potential causes” (B 3, 195b19), things which can be, but are not actualised. These other causes, then, require the efficient cause to actualise them, other wise they remain potential. The efficient cause is further present in H 2, 243a2-4:

That which is the first movent of a thing – in the sense that it supplies not ‘that for the sake of which’ but the source of the motion – is always together with that which is moved by it (by ‘together’ I mean that there is nothing intermediate between them).

In this passage Aristotle expresses that something is being moved not as a final cause but as an efficient cause: the movement of the patient caused by the agent is contiguous. Father Lawrence Dewan believes that the doctrine of the Unmoved Mover serves to establish efficient causality, and that Aristotle’s task in the *Metaphysics* is to motivate a final cause; the result is that the final and efficient cause are linked.<sup>4</sup>

Aristotle maintains that before the actuality of movement the object possesses the potentiality of movement: the object is movable. The characteristics of movement, therefore, are potentiality and actuality: potentiality in the changeable state, and

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<sup>4</sup> Dewan (*pc.*, 2001).

actuality when the object is in the altered state. If Aristotle stresses anything, he stresses the limit of motion: movement is not a source of its own movement. Thus, movement has an external source which causes change from something potentially moveable to something actually moving.

The word “source” which surfaces, repeats the first principle of *Posterior Analytics*, ἀρχή. Motion requires a source, something that moves the moveable. Analogically, Aristotle has the originative source as knowledge which parallels the originative source of movement. Αρχή, therefore, represents both an epistemic and physical function.

The analysis of motion raises a few difficulties; for example, a thing that is both potential and actual, suggests that it can be both patient and actor, the thing can be moved or mover, respectively (Easterling 1976, 253). The fact that an object can be both patient and actor derives directly from Aristotle (Γ 3, 202a21-31). A mover will be in motion, κινουῦν, if it is potential, and if the mover was previously at rest, ἡρεμία (Γ 3, 202a3-5). An object, then, that is source of movement, possesses these two principles. If movement is the actualisation of the potential, Easterling maintains there are two actualisations: of the potential agent and of the potential patient. Is it the patient or the agent that is being actualised? I have pointed out that an object can be potential or actual, but then the object can be a potential actor or an actualised patient. These relationships are not the same. The house-builder builds a house, the relationship is one of agent and patient respectively, and both can be actualised, which presupposes that both exist potentially. Thus, the question, concerning which is being actualised suggests that in the process where both the house-builder and house are actualised, the agent or the patient has some kind of precedence in this activity. Aristotle’s answer is in Γ 3, 202a13-14: both potential and actual are in the patient.

For Easterling, this justifies a series of movers and finally an Unmoved Mover (p. 254), which seems to me an acceptable explanation in establishing an Unmoved Mover.

### 1.3 Implications of “becoming”

I have shown in the preceding section the role of efficiency in relation to movement, which is tied to potentiality and actualisation. Related to potential and actualisation, Aristotle develops another principle, one of perfection, “that which is in the process of becoming appears universally as something imperfect and proceeding to a first principle; and so that which is posterior in the order of becoming is prior in the order of nature” (B 1, 261a10). This is a crucial point because it maps out not only perfection, but finality: something that is becoming, which implies change, progresses towards a first principle, this first principle perfects that which is imperfect. Aristotle shows in Book B 3, 194b25-195a2 and B 8, 199a10-30 the place of final cause, something imperfect depends on something perfect. In Book Γ Aristotle states that nature, φύσις, is the principle of motion or change (Γ 1, 200b12). Motion is the process of going from the potential to the actual; thus, Aristotle claims that “The fulfillment of what exists potentially in so far as it exists potentially is motion” (Γ 1, 201a10-11), in other words, actualisation. Book B reveals that nature has teleological implications: nature is moving from the potential to the actual with a purpose, to become actualised is to be better than to be potential.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> This, of course, incorporates one of Aristotle’s four causes, the final cause, which he develops at the beginning of the *Physics*. The two causes present, thus far, are efficient cause and final cause.

## 2.1 Attributes of the Unmoved Mover

The continuity of motion implies the infinite; Aristotle can then state: “first movement causes a motion that is eternal and does cause it during an infinite time” (Θ 10, 267b25); in Book Θ, Aristotle repeats that the first mover must be unmoved (Θ 6, 258b10); and finally the Unmoved Mover is reintroduced (Θ 6, 258b30). Aristotle points out that the process of movement is “eternal”; thus, another attribute of movement appears, one of eternity (H 6, 259a6). Efficiency, causality, perfection, infinity and eternity in an Unmoved Mover represent attributes that are suggestive of a divine being, although Aristotle does not make divinity explicit at this stage. Nevertheless, the elements are provided upon which Aristotle develops his theology.<sup>6</sup> This is where disagreement begins to emerge.

## 2.2 Celestial and Terrestrial

The belief that the world has an origin, and will last forever already appeared in Plato’s *Timaeus*, “And as this was an eternal living being, he sought to make the universe eternal, so far as might be” (37d).<sup>7</sup> According to Owens the seventh book of the *Physics*, H, is a late development of Aristotle and separated from the other books which appear to be an earlier development (1959, 301). Similarly, in the *Metaphysics*’ fourteen books, Λ is also separated from the other books (p. 290).<sup>8</sup> In the case of concerns Aristotle discusses the eternal nature of the Unmoved Mover in the *Physics*, H, whereby a divine quality is revealed; and in the case of the *Metaphysics* Λ, Aristotle clearly develops a theological treatise since God becomes the focus. As

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<sup>6</sup> Aristotle picks up on these points and either repeats them or elaborates them in the *Metaphysics* which I shall examine in the next chapter.

<sup>7</sup> Edith Hamilton, and Cairns Huntington (eds.), “*Timaeus*,” in *The Dialogues of Plato*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

<sup>8</sup> The books are organised according to subject matter (Owens 1959, 289).

noted earlier, Aristotle's theoretical sciences include physical, mathematical and theological material. The division of the mobile and immobile has its source in Parmenides: something that is mobile is accessible to the senses and within the cosmos while the immobile entities are suprasensible, beyond the physical, and exist in themselves (Owens, 308).<sup>9</sup> This means that the celestial and the terrestrial division of the superlunary and sublunary world, are associated with the unending motion of the imperishable stars, compared to the matter of perishable things (Easterling 1976, 181). Aristotle maintains that each sphere must receive its motion from the same source as the first heaven, from an eternal unmoved incorporeal substance, from a "spirit" belonging to it (Easterling 1976, 182); there must be some kind of intelligence or spiritual being as source of motion for each sphere (*ibid.*).

Aristotle's philosophy of motion was a response to the previous developments in Greek philosophy where movement was indefinite and changing thus rendering knowledge impossible (Brehier 1963, 188). For Aristotle, there is no universal flux, but a collection of movements; knowledge with concepts that are permanent, penetrating the very things that are undergoing change (p. 189). Brehier maintains that Aristotle "accepted the close association of astronomy and theology, and the *Physics* represents an astral theology which he instituted; but in place of self-moving motion, in place of soul, he substituted a motionless mover with the nature of intelligence" (*ibid.*, 198).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Between the sensible of the physicals and the suprasensible of the theological, is mathematics (Owens, 308).

<sup>10</sup> Numerous points come up that are beyond the scope of my thesis as interesting and as significant as they may be. I shall take up more specifically Aristotle's theology in my chapter on his *Metaphysics*; I will not develop the astronomical details of the *Physics* but only that which directly concerns the first mover.

### **2.3 Rupture or Continuity**

Given the description that Aristotle gives of the celestial spheres and their movement, it would be a plausible claim to maintain Aristotle is speaking as a physicist who is penetrating astronomy without any connections with the divine or a divine mover. This Unmoved Mover has many attributes associated with God, but is this God? It is indeed the question that philosophers such as Jaeger (1948), Oates (1960), Organ (1962) Owens (1959), and Randall (1960) have confronted. The conflicting arguments relate largely to Platonic interpretations of Aristotle's books in relation to the Unmoved Mover. These interpretations conflict as to why the Unmoved Mover is intended or not intended to be a divine being. But I believe that the Unmoved Mover cannot be adequately understood outside the context of Aristotle's evolving philosophy, a philosophy that not only reveals the development of Aristotle's thought, but also how later principles presuppose earlier works. Of course, this can also be approached as an earlier Aristotle versus a later Aristotle where there is a discontinuity, and the philosophical principles seem rather disjointed as a result of the incongruity between the earlier and later Aristotle.

I am inclined to take the first position precisely to avoid a dichotomy of the early Aristotle and late Aristotle as though what Aristotle said later implies that he abandoned his earlier views. I believe that his later views build on his earlier ones. Much of the conflict in interpreting Aristotle's Unmoved Mover is failing to understand how this represents an evolving philosophy, and not a rupture between earlier and later works. Moreover, to maintain that Aristotle abandoned his earlier views means that one knows what those earlier views are; depending on one's position, then, one could be arguing in favour of views that were abandoned (early Aristotle) which may be the very views that were retained (the late Aristotle). Organ's



response to both Randall and Oates represents this scenario, of how to determine what Aristotle no longer adhered to, and what Aristotle retained.

#### **2.4 Disputed religious elements**

Organ (1962) presents an interesting case against both Randall (1960) and Oates (1960). Organ does not attempt to defend a theistic interpretation of the Unmoved Mover, but targets Oates' theistic claims against Randall while maintaining that other arguments could have challenged Randall's views without falling into theism.<sup>11</sup> First, what is Randall's central claim rejecting a theistic interpretation of the Unmoved Mover? It is simply that the claim the Unmoved Mover as God reflects the rational natural theology of the Middle Ages, whether this is Maimonides', Saint Thomas Aquinas' or Avicenna's. For Randall, the Unmoved Mover is not the God of Judaism, Christianity or Islam, but the principle of intelligibility, the ἀρχή of motion comparable to Newtonian or Einsteinian laws of motion (Randall 1960, 134), and Randall argues, "it is not the 'creator' of anything for the world is eternal; motion and time are eternal" (p.136). Randall's position contrasts dramatically with Aristotle's emerging theism. When Aristotle himself gives some religious relevance to the Unmoved Mover, Randall reacts,

It appears that the early Platonic Aristotle, who presumably set down the Book Λ did attach religious feeling to the ultimate postulate of his cosmological theory...we need hardly wonder that he did so since we have seen many recent physicists falling over themselves to do the same incomprehensible things. (p. 137)

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<sup>11</sup> Whitney J. Oates, "A Thinker's Three Themes," *New York Times Book Review* (October 9, 1960): Section 9, p. 42.

In other words if Aristotle reveals religious sentiment, such beliefs cannot be understood because religion simply does not make sense. One can only get the impression by such a passage that Randall is imposing a positivist interpretation on Aristotle.

One cannot simply ignore the implications of the Hellenic culture to which Aristotle belonged, even if the religious myths belonged to popular culture: the Greek world view was inseparable from the gods who determined human activity. Aristotle's world contrasts radically with the secularism that characterises western society of the twentieth century. Randall's claim can be contrasted to Zeller's only thirty years before Randall:

When however he [Aristotle] endeavours to give a philosophical proof of the necessity of the existence of God as the first mover he turns his attention to religious experience. Not only does the cosmos demand a final cause, but his soul, too, is aware intuitively of the existence of God. (Zeller 1931, 198)

Zeller grasped the sense of the religious Aristotle. Zeller responds to Aristotle acknowledging the continuity of specific philosophical principles in relation to God: first mover, final cause and soul and intuition. Randall, instead, reaffirms a scientific approach to the Unmoved Mover stating that this is not the domain of theology or metaphysics, but of physics and astronomy. Randall does not altogether reject the religious elements, but where they do appear, he considers them to be the early Aristotle still under the religious influences of Plato's philosophy, and so Randall regards these religious elements as Aristotle's Platonic period; these early works do not represent the mature Aristotle whose philosophy took on a more scientific orientation founded in empiricism. According to Randall, this Platonic period was

eventually discarded as Aristotle's philosophy became more determined by experience and the sensible world.

The controversy surrounding theistic interpretations arise from two principle works of Aristotle, *Physics* and *Metaphysics*. The problems arise not only from what appears to be an inconsistency within Aristotle's philosophy, but even with regards to possible textual insertions which were not Aristotle's.<sup>12</sup> How these two books are interpreted has implications for Aristotle's religious philosophy as crystallizing, or disappearing. For example, Randall maintains that part of the *Metaphysics* is the earliest of Aristotle's writings (p. 105), or precedes the *Physics*, on the basis that Platonic elements are present in it. Randall believes that the Platonic characteristics become progressively more scientific, with physical explanations in the mature Aristotle.

## 2.5 Myth of the Unmoved Mover

Randall and Jaeger attempt to resolve the differing scientific and religious interpretation, respectively, of texts that are not considered part of the Platonic early-Aristotle. Jaeger argues that parts of the *Metaphysics* presuppose and evolve out of the *Physics*; for example, *Metaphysics*  $\Lambda$  1-5 assume a knowledge of Book A of the *Physics* (1948:296). Jaeger points out that the first book of the *Metaphysics* depends on knowledge of the four causes. This is also true for the earlier parts of the *Metaphysics* which were written shortly after Plato's death when Aristotle was still a Platonist. The teleological character of the *Physics* is evidence that this is an earlier work according to Jaeger (*ibid.*).

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<sup>12</sup> For a detailed study on the problems concerning the authenticity and chronological order of these works, cf. Easterling (1976).

Randall maintains that Aristotle's Platonic period employs myths and therefore the Unmoved Mover of the *Metaphysics* is as much a myth as the Active Intellect of *De Anima* (cf. Chapter 2, 3.1 of my thesis), and are to be understood as myths that represent the Platonic tradition (p. 141). Organ's criticism is that Randall does not define what is meant by myth in relation to the Active Intellect or the Unmoved Mover (1962, 300).

Myth itself from the Greek *μῦθος* meaning story, narrative or speech; however, in English the word has developed a distinctive meaning to express a story that is not true, and regarded as synonymous to the word "legend." Murray explains that, "Theological myths suit philosophers, physical and psychic suit poets, mixed suit religious initiations, since every initiation aims at uniting us with the World and the Gods" (1955, 194). A myth, nevertheless, can be symbolic to communicate certain truths. This latter understanding of myth best expresses Randall's use where the myths that Aristotle employs have symbolic meaning. This would liken Aristotle to Plato, and such is the position maintained by Randall, that Aristotle was influenced by Plato's use of myths. This is also where Randall runs into difficulty (which I discuss below).

Organ also criticises Oates (1960) stating that: "Oates seems to forget the high role that myths play in all efforts to nobilise the object of religious experience. Myth is probably the most effective means of communicating the nature of deities" (Organ 1960, 301). Yet, if these are to be considered part of Platonic influences, Plato uses myth as a pedagogical device, a symbolic story with a hidden meaning, or a meaning to be discovered. The problem is that Oates attacks Randall's claim that the Unmoved Mover is myth when in fact it is Book  $\Lambda$  of the *Metaphysics* that Randall claims to be an early Platonic influence. Is Aristotle a Platonist when it comes to God? The

problem seems to be not so much whether this is theology or science, but one of narrative. If the Unmoved Mover is a myth, then the story symbolises an intelligible source as Randall would claim. Platonic stories serve to grasp the nature of the deity. This still presupposes that one is trying to grapple with existence of God, but in Aristotle's case, a less anthropomorphic one than the Greek Olympian pantheon.

If a deity is presupposed, then this remains a theological treatise at an embryonic stage which is further developed in the *Metaphysics*. To what extent this is Platonic depends on whether Plato's ideas or pedagogy serves Aristotle's purposes; but how Aristotle was influenced during the Platonic period remains complex.

I believe that Randall's myth argument is rather un-Aristotelian and lacks an Aristotelian foundation; Aristotle employs both empirical and rational arguments for reaching conclusions. If Aristotle relied more on experience than Plato, then he would have to find a solution to the changing reality of material world that is in flux. Flux, that is change, impedes knowledge: an object may be thought to be known, but change in the material entity means that the object is not fully known. I do not believe Aristotle simply repeated Plato's ideas, but modified them as his own philosophical system evolved and emerged. Are these Platonic influences on Aristotle or are they Aristotelian adaptations of Plato? I would not take an ideological position in replying to this by placing Aristotle into a philosophical system as "Aristotle the scientist" versus "Aristotle the theologian." Aristotle's philosophy was evolving into something more distinctly Aristotelian, but having been a student of Plato for twenty years (B.C. 367-347) this would have left a Platonic mark.<sup>13</sup> Certainly, to describe God or God's nature, societies have developed religious beliefs turning into anthropomorphisms and

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<sup>13</sup> Also significant, I believe, is that Aristotle remained a student of Plato's until Plato's death in B.C. 347; if an opposition existed between Plato's philosophy and Aristotle's views on them Aristotle could have abandoned the Academy.

myths of sorts. The Olympian gods of Aristotle's Greece are a good example. Aristotle is accused of this, using myth to describe God, but as Murray states rather succinctly:

His [Aristotle's] complete rejection of mythology and of anthropomorphism; his [Aristotle's] resolute attempt to combine science and religion, not by sacrificing one to the other but by building the highest spiritual aspirations on ascertained truth and the probable conclusions to which it pointed,

justify the position Aristotle held in mediaeval Christianity (Murray 1955, 109), nor has the significance of this position diminished.<sup>14</sup> Murray's position radically contrasts from Randall's rather positivist interpretation of Aristotle's Unmoved Mover.

This polarity between science and religion is well represented by Organ's reaction to Oates. Organ states that Randall cannot have it both ways (p. 301). But, why not? I would not say that the Unmoved Mover is the influence of Platonic religion and theology, some kind of mythical tradition; but that these religious elements are present not because of Platonic influence, but because this is where Aristotle advances through deduction. This is not a myth, but what is discovered as a result of the very principle Aristotle sets out in the *Posterior Analytics* and the *De Anima*: through the  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  the  $\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi\eta$  is reached. Organ rejects Randall's claim that this Unmoved Mover is a law of nature arguing that Aristotle says it is a "thing" in *Physics* and *Metaphysics* (*ibid.*). But if the Unmoved Mover is a principle, a cause, a source, all this implied by  $\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi\eta$  as Aristotle indicated in *Posterior Analytics*, there is

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<sup>14</sup> As Murray states regarding the Olympian gods, "They find it easier to live on the revenues and blast with thunderbolts the people who do not pay. They are conquering chieftains, royal buccaneers. They fight and feast, and play, and make music; they drink deep, and roar with laugh at the lame smith who waits on them. They are never afraid, except of their own king. They never tell lies, except in love and war (pp. 45-46).

no reason why ἀρχή cannot also be a thing. I do not see the conflict that Organ finds, but an opposition that exists for Organ rather than for Aristotle.

### **3. The Unmoved Mover and God**

I have tried to show the complexity of the Unmoved Mover not just as an Aristotelian concept, but the diverse interpretations of this eternal being. The problems raised concern whether Aristotle intended this to be God, or whether this is just the early Aristotle. I have argued that Aristotle's philosophy gradually advances from the Unmoved Mover which develops the divine attributes, only that Aristotle refrains from an explicitly religious reference given the physical context in which the Unmoved Mover is understood. The further difficulty is whether the Unmoved Mover with its numerous eternal spheres is compatible with the Judeo-Christian God. This question I shall take up in Chapter 6. The philosophical principles of the *Metaphysics* will reveal how the Unmoved Mover is to be understood as God.

## ***The Metaphysics of the Divine***

### ***Chapter 4***

In this chapter I shall be examining the *Metaphysics* and how Aristotle leads to divine substance, namely, God. This section treats knowledge in relation to the divine; it then treats the properties of substance, the implications of form, the Primary Unmoved Mover, and finally God.

#### **1. Knowledge of the Divine**

The *Metaphysics* implies the knowledge of principles; such knowledge constitutes a divine science as Aristotle states in A 2, 983a5-8),

For the most divine science is also most honourable; and this science alone must be, in two ways, most divine. For the science which it would be most meet for God to have is a divine science, and so is any science that deals with divine objects; and this science alone has both these qualities.

Aristotle points out that one has knowledge of things when their first cause is recognised. At the beginning of the *Metaphysics*, the reasoning behind the “eternal” and “immovable” is given (B 4, 999a26-29, 999b1-5). The difficulty Aristotle addresses is presented at the end of B, 3 which concerns the relationship between the particular, the universal and principles. Aristotle develops this in Chapter 4, stating that, “There is a difficulty connected with these [individuals], the hardest of all, the most necessary to examine” (B 4, 999a25). What is the issue? One of knowledge: once again, how does one know things? In terms of the singular object, the individual, knowledge is attained when universal attributes make knowledge possible by giving the object unity and identity. Knowledge in this sense appears as *ἐπιστήμη*.



The introduction to Chapter 4 of the *Metaphysics* Λ echoes *Posterior Analytics* B, 19 and *De Anima* Γ 4. I have already shown how Aristotle approaches knowledge in these two books. Aristotle is attempting to understand and explain how knowledge is acquired, the foundation of knowledge if things are to be known. Here, three related elements emerge: infinity, eternity and the immovable which seem, at first hand, beyond knowledge because they transcend human experience. And so it should even seem strange that Aristotle who repeatedly returns to reality would introduce knowledge in the context of the infinite, immovable and the eternal. Yet, both these elements are like the universal in that they represent some kind of first principle or ἀρχή.<sup>1</sup> Aristotle then sets a contrast between the sensory as knowable, and the non-sensory as knowledge acquired, and the intuition that grasps the principles; the person knows more than just the sensory object. Aristotle employs the term ἐπιστήμη (B 4, 999b2) which corresponds to scientific knowledge as in *Posterior Analytics*, unlike the term νοῦς used for the faculty of knowledge in *De Anima*.

The immovable and eternal which is posited as a means of knowledge are not susceptible to corruption; this is reminiscent of Plato's Forms since the two sources offer a solution to the world of flux and change by establishing an object that is stable and fixed, and thereby defying any kind of corruptibility. In the light of the Heraclitian obstacle, Aristotle attempts to resolve the difficulty. The eternal is understood to be the solution to this epistemic dilemma: Aristotle's response is eternal movement, which permits both changelessness and coming to be (B 4, 999b6).<sup>2</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup> I will not develop the infinite in my thesis since the infinite is examined by Aristotle in relation to the finite. Both would need to be treated which is beyond the scope of my research.

<sup>2</sup> I am also using the following translation, Hugh Tredennick (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. revised), *The Metaphysics with an English Translation* 2v., (in Loeb Classical Library, 1975) London (W. Heinemann), and Cambridge (Harvard University Press).

Book Λ Aristotle then develops these various points, incorporating the recurring principle of ἀρχή progressing towards a deity, eternal and immovable.

In E 1, 1026a18-20 Aristotle is no longer just talking about eternal, but specifically the divine, as he states, “There must, then, be three theoretical philosophies, mathematics, physics, and what we may call theology, since it is obvious that if the divine is present anywhere, it is present in things of this sort.”<sup>3</sup> The Greek text gives τῶν θείων for “the divine,” thereby referring clearly something pertaining to a deity. The *Physics* only suggests that the celestial bodies and the Unmoved Mover are something of divine; in the *Metaphysics* the theological study explicitly encompasses divine things. At the beginning of Book E (1, 1025b1) Aristotle states “we are seeking the principles and the causes of things that are” in the McKeon translation, while in Tredennick one reads, “It is the principles and causes of the things which are that we are seeking.” Tredennick’s construction emphasises the principles and causes that are being sought, by focussing on the object. Aristotle suggests that the divine is present in eternal causes. Three philosophies are being employed analogically, the divine is present, but in things of this “sort,” by referring specifically to the speculative sciences. Mathematics may seem rather out of place, but the divine element appears in the sensory, non-sensory, and between the two, mathematics. As the theoretical philosophy attains the divine, the philosophy progresses to contemplation.

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<sup>3</sup> Owens (1959) places mathematics between the two, sensible and suprasensible, justifying this theoretical domain of philosophy. I shall examine θεωπία in the next chapter of my thesis where I consider its theological implications in *Nicomachean Ethics*.

## 2. Eternal Substance

The *Metaphysics* gives substance, or οὐσία, in three senses: (i) sensible and perishable; (ii) sensible and eternal; and (iii) non-sensible and immaterial (Λ 1, 1069a30-40). In the *Physics* the necessity of the Unmoved Mover was shown as well as the reasons why it must be something eternal (Λ 7, 1072b10). Aristotle defines primary substance in E 10, 1037b2-5 as “one which does not imply the presence of something in something else,” and in E 17, 1041a10 “substance is a principle and a cause.” Aristotle also establishes a definition of substance as a characteristic of the immovable mover in the *Physics*.

One is left with the question, then, whether Aristotle is talking about different entities or a plurality of entities. Aristotle reaffirms in (E 17, 1041a20) that substances without matter must be eternal; but this claim is given in relation to essence which is actuality. In fact, Aristotle builds on several metaphysical principles which lead not to separate entities but to distinct principles, leading to one entity. Aristotle reaffirms in Λ 7, 1072a25 “And since that which is moved and moves is intermediate, there is something which moves without being moved, being eternal, substance and actuality.” In the subsequent lines, Aristotle compares the object of thought and object of desire. The intelligible and the desirable move without being moved: the real and the good are the object of the intelligence and the appetite, respectively.

However, this passage (Λ 7, 1072a25) is tricky since what follows may not seem to belong to the same discussion (Λ 7, 1072b1 ff.). Aristotle introduces this good as the final cause because actions are directed to this good. In this sense, objects are not moved, but they move, by being thought, or being desired. The final cause represents something good; thus, the first cause moves objects without itself being moved. In Λ 7, 1072b12 Aristotle further points out that “its mode of being is good.”

The difficulty at this stage involves the good of the eternal substance, found between the heavens and the celestial spheres; as a mode of existence, being good, this principle would move a person as Aristotle states, “on such a principle depends the heavens and the world of nature” (Λ 7, 1072b12). Clearly, Aristotle does not intend an analogical or symbolic interpretation of the first principle as good. This clearly does not correspond to an Unmoved Mover as something mythical contrary to what Randall claims (cf. preceding chapter).

### 3.1 The number of Unmoved Movers

The problem that surfaces, therefore, is one of number: substance with a monotheistic interpretation is difficult since Aristotle states quite definitively that there must be substances which are principles of the movements as the movements of the stars, and in their nature, eternal, and in themselves immovable, and without magnitude (Λ 8, 1073a36-40): this principle builds up to God, but does not seem limited to one God but a plurality of gods, as Aristotle states: “therefore, the number of all the spheres -- both those which move the planets and those which counteract these – will be fifty-five” (Λ 8, 1074a12). For every movement of a celestial sphere there may be one divine mover. Given the number of unmoved movers, Aristotle leaves the natural philosophy and theology open to polytheism.

In spite of the spheres associated with separated substances, or to use Owens’ phrase “spirit-spheres” implied by the *Physics* of Aristotle, the 55 eternal movements with which eternal substances are associated, Aristotle does not explicitly develop a polytheistic theology. A plurality of gods may only be inferred from Aristotle’s metaphysics, but this polytheistic cosmos is not what Aristotle implies or claims. In both the *Metaphysics* Λ 7, 1072b24ff. and *Nicomachean Ethics* K 8, 1178b20-23,

where God is explicitated and progressively developed, God is referred to in the singular rather than the plural. The most significant passage that explicitly reveals and confirms a monotheistic theology is to be found in  $\Lambda$  8, 1074a33-40:

Evidently there is but one heaven. For there are many heavens as there are many men, the moving principles, of which each heaven will have one, will be one in form but in number many. But all things that are many in number have matter; for one and the same definition, e.g. that of man, applies to many things, while Socrates is one. But the primary essence has not matter; for it is complete reality. So, the unmovable first mover is one both in definition and in number; so too, therefore, is that which is moved always and continuously; therefore there is one heaven alone.

Aristotle sounds as though he has had some after thoughts when he revises his theology to explicitly communicate a monotheistic understanding of the Unmoved Mover as well as heaven, which is “one.” The Unmoved Mover is linked to heaven through the movement of its source: if only one Unmoved Mover exists, then only one heaven which it governs exists. The question that arises from the text is whether a single Unmoved Mover is due to the existence of one heaven, or whether a single heaven is due to the existence of one Unmoved Mover. The two seem to go together: one heaven and one Unmoved Mover. The fact that there is one heaven, Aristotle states, is “evident”; and because only one heaven exists, so there is only one Unmoved Mover.

### **3.2 Prime Unmoved Mover**

I would like to look more closely at how these various elements interact, the Unmoved Mover of the *Physics*, and the principles of substance and act of the *Metaphysics*. Kessler (1978) makes a good point to show that the Unmoved Mover of the *Physics* is identified as the divine ἀρχή in Book  $\Lambda$  of the *Metaphysics* (pp. 2-4).

Kessler also maintains that Aristotle's substance can be divided into three types: (i) sensible and perishable; (ii) sensible and eternal; and (iii) sensible and imperishable. The Unmoved Mover belongs to the third sense of *ὄνσια* identified in *Λ 5*, 1071b15, 20 because two of the characteristics of the Unmoved Mover are a nature that is eternal and non-perishable. Kessler stresses the point that this is not just another mover, but a primary Unmoved Mover, and argues that the Unmoved Mover is primary in two respects: "it is primary in the sense of entity...it is also primary in the numerical sense of being first meaning prior" (p.4).<sup>4</sup> The sense of primary as entity arises from the third sense of substance, eternal and non-perishable; but this entity is limited to a single one as indicated in section 3.1 above by the fact that only one heaven exists.<sup>5</sup> Three attributes are given by Aristotle associated with the Prime Unmoved Mover: (i) that it is divine appears in *Metaphysics Λ 7*, 1072b10-12; (ii) that the Unmoved Mover is one appears in *Metaphysics Λ 7*, 1074a33-39; and (iii) that the Prime Unmoved Mover is analogically comparable to an army leader with a kind of hierarchical order in *Λ 10*, 1075a10ff.

Kessler, strangely enough, accuses Christianity of being guilty of theistic interpretations for Aristotelian thought. Referring to *Λ 7*, 1072b30 (p. 6), Kessler argues that such passages as employed by theists to defend the Aristotelian God, for Kessler reveals that "the logic of the situation demands it [God]."<sup>6</sup> What is the difference, then, between the logic of the situation and the theistic interpretation: there is none. In fact a single transcendental attribute is equal to God, whether eternal or

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<sup>4</sup> As Kessler (1978, 4) points out, the eternity of the world goes directly against the Judeo-Christian creation of the world *ex-nihilo* and not an eternal world.

<sup>5</sup> This remains problematic, nevertheless. I indicated in Chapter 3 that Owens (1959, 181) maintains that each sphere has an unmoved eternal substance.

<sup>6</sup> Although I have not taken up the Unmoved Mover with the attribute of unity, this is a crucial point that Aristotle makes with significant philosophical implications of the one and the many.

most good, and not just an addition of them. These attributes are completely within the Aristotelian framework.<sup>7</sup>

#### 4. Being

Philippe (1991) maintains that the purpose of the Unmoved Mover in Book  $\Lambda$  is not the same as that in the *Physics*: the orientation of the Unmoved Mover in the *Metaphysics* is ultimately to prove a separate substance, and the attributes of this substance, based on Book  $\Lambda$  6-10 (p. 210). If separated substances do not exist, then neither would movement, for it is substance that is cause of being and movement.<sup>8</sup>

Kosman refers to Aristotle's substance as "substance-being" (1987, 171): "The divine substance of Lambda is introduced by Aristotle not primarily as an explanation of the existence of the world, but of its being." Therefore, according to Kosman, divine substance serves as the explanatory ἀρχή of substance-being, and therefore, of being in general (p. *ibid.*). Kosman's claim, one may argue, represents a metaphysical rather than theological account of Aristotle's notion of substance: rather than divine substance functioning as a creative cause, divine substance accounts for being. Yet, one would have to respond by stating that the world presupposes its being also coming into existence.

Aristotle associates divine being with "ἀρχὴν τοιαύτην ἧς ἡ οὐσία ἐνέγεια"; in other words, the source whose substance is act ( $\Lambda$  6, 1071b20-23). The three beings Aristotle discusses are (i) accidental being, a human substance being white; (ii) per se being, as those found in the categories (except substance) as in being white; and (iii)

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<sup>7</sup> In fact, Christianity is no guiltier than Aristotle for generating the divine from the unity of these attributes and principles.

<sup>8</sup> Marie-Dominique Philippe, *Introduction à la philosophie d'Aristote* (Paris: Éditions Universitaires, 1991). Cf. *L'être. Essai de philosophie première* (2 volumes, Paris: Tequi, 1972-1974); and *De l'être à Dieu. De la philosophie première à la sagesse* (Paris: Tequi, 1977).

substance-being, as in being human (Z 1, 1028a1-20). Kosman explains that “the critical explanatory ἀρχή is that mode of being in which something is what it is, a mode of being exhibited most paradigmatically in οὐσία” (p.175). In other words, the substance as a principle of being makes something what it is. Kosman further maintains that Book Λ focuses on a causal explanation of the sensible, but not with a “causal existence of the sensible things.” Instead, Kosman believes that Aristotle’s concern in Book Λ is “that kind of causal explanation of sensible being which is achieved by revealing the formal principle of sensible substance-being.” (p.179). This formal principle, as has been shown above, represents the source to which the sensible being is predicated, or attributed. Kosman does not see “god” as incompatible with this formal principle (p. 178), and the reason for this is that in Book Θ 8, 1050b1, 20-27 Aristotle associates substance-being and form with ἐνέργεια (*ibid.*). Kosman brings to light a significant distinction which needs to be examined: the distinction between existence and being. The implication of Kosman’s analysis is that Aristotle is not “primarily” introducing in Book Λ a creative God, but a God who is the source of being. However, such a claim does not exclude a creative God, but nor does Kosman’s position answer how such “being” comes to be.

In the *Physics*, Aristotle notes that the material is associated with change, potentiality and corruptibility while the Unmoved Mover is beyond this change because being eternal and the cause of motion is suprasensible. Aristotle examines substance as separated, as the cause of being, because it is beyond change and corruption, it is non-potential, it is pure act. Substance which is pure act does not contain the potentiality of material. Given this non-potentiality, separated substance is the ἀρχή and source of motion. In N 2, 1089a15-b8 the process from non-being to being is examined, from the potential to the actual. Only the being present in the



predicable categories reveals that something can be simultaneously different and the same being.<sup>9</sup> In spite of the changeability of the accidents, the substance remains. Thus, being as being is found in the permanent nature of substance (Owens 1959, 325), and in the form of act (p. 330).

## 5. Form

Aristotle shows in Z 3, 1029a5-7 that in a sensible substance where both form and matter are present, in terms of being, form comes before matter because form includes both actuality and determination, while matter represents potentiality and indetermination (Λ 6, 1071b21-22). Aristotle explains that change is towards something, it implies some kind of finality. How does this link with the Unmoved Mover? Aristotle's intention is to show that this unmoved substance is a necessary existence and is eternal Λ 6, 1071b 4-20, enabling him to advance towards his theology.<sup>10</sup> This leads to Book Θ of the *Metaphysics* and the relation between actual being and potential being. While I agree on the significance of the causal explanation, I believe that Aristotle goes further than Kosman claims. In Book Λ Aristotle gives a causal principle not only to substance-being, but more significantly, gives it the actuality of substance. The formal principle that Kosman maintains represents a starting point for Aristotle to progress to what ultimately transcends form.

Brennan (1981) raises the question whether absolute or immaterial form is an attribute of God explaining the implications of form in relation to Aristotle's

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<sup>9</sup> In the light of Parmenides being denotes the immovable, the permanent and the positive; Aristotle develops being within this Parmenidean background (Owens, 325). However, Aristotle does not turn to a solution that separates itself from the sensory world.

<sup>10</sup> This, of course, assumes that the *Metaphysics* follows the *Physics*. I gave in Chapter 3 the various arguments favouring Book Λ following the *Physics*. Even if this does not presuppose knowledge of *Physics*, Aristotle is clearly developing his theology, here.

*Metaphysics*. Aristotle has radically reinterpreted the nature of form; thus, form as something separate from matter has not been entirely rejected (p. 81). This reinterpretation of form maintains that the form pre-exists in the agent, in artificial objects. An architect serves as an example: for an architect, that is the agent who constructs a house, the form pre-exists before the house as a material construction appears. Brennan argues that Aristotle is making a “distinction between the actual and artificial form” which “is a distinction not in their degree or manner of separateness, but in their mode of existence.” (p. 82). This parallels Kosman’s point regarding the mode of existence of being in relation to substance, where the three modes of being, accidental, per se and substantial (outlined in section 3 above) represent different modalities of the same being.

In  $\Lambda$  3, 1070a9-21 Aristotle distinguishes three types of substances, and form in relation to substance ( $\Lambda$  3, 1070a14), and maintains that form, εἶδος, of a “this,” if it exists apart from a material object, it would be true only for natural objects ( $\Lambda$  3, 1070a 8). Brennan makes reference to the artist where the form pre-exists in the agent, as in the case of a builder. What exists apart is the idea. Aristotle goes so far as admitting that if the form exists separately, Plato was not entirely wrong.

Given the immateriality of the Prime Mover which is substance or pure act, and at the same time unmoved and eternal, this prime mover, Brennan suggests, then must also be pure form (p. 84). Aristotle clearly departs from Plato when it comes to the autonomous nature of form: this Aristotle rejects. Unlike Plato, Aristotle sees form as the essence of things in the world. However, the Prime Mover as pure form is an inference based on the description Aristotle gives for ἀρχή in Book  $\Lambda$ . But pure or absolute form is not part of the list of attributes. Though the progress from the material to the immaterial is developed, the nature of pure form of the Unmoved

Mover would have to be inferred since Aristotle does not make the pure form explicit. Brennan affirms that “the apex is given in actual substance and not pure form” (p. 86). Brennan makes a good point: form is associated with matter while Book Λ deals with ascending substance from sensible to suprasensible, not form, and form is presented as a principle of sensible substance (p. 87). Thus, Aristotle’s progress in Book Λ is from perishable to non-perishable substance, with the sensible forms of eternal substance remaining at the celestial spheres.

## 6. God

Aristotle reasserts the principle of cause in the *Metaphysics* which also had appeared in the *Posterior Analytics*. In the *Metaphysics* A 2, 982b985a10 knowing the ἀρχή is part of having divine knowledge, but the same God is also a principle and cause. Aristotle presents this in an ascending order, that is, from knowledge of cause to God. The reverse is also true for Aristotle, but this is not how Aristotle outlines the problem, since it is not a problem about God, but how to get to God; ultimately, ascending towards God serves as a pedagogical tool and has parallels in Plato, especially Plato’s *Symposium*. To have such divine knowledge does not only mean to be God-like, but implies that this is divinity, the one who has this knowledge is God. This point is made also by McKirahan (1995, 292) who shows that these causes were for Aristotle’s predecessors entities (p. 293). The problem with an approach such as McKirahan’s, is reducing cause to a propositional value, generating an Unmoved like Randall’s: an Unmoved Mover that appears naturally and scientifically acceptable, but in religious terms, amounts to nothing more than myth.

Aristotle develops the divine element found in thinking, and further examines the implication of divine thinking. Divine thought thinks itself for the reason that

there is no dignity in thinking of nothing, and thinking of something else depends on something; thus, the thinking is the thinking of thinking (Λ 9, 1074b15); the divine thought will be the same as its object, and the object thought is the same as the eternal act. This clearly resonates with *De Anima*. God is thought thinking thought which translates to self-contemplation: God is a self-contemplating God given the unity between the thinker and the thought, and in the case of God the perfection and finality.<sup>11</sup>

Aristotle introduces elements that are parallel to *De Anima* where thinking was also addressed where thought thinks itself because thought shares the nature of the object thought (Λ 9, 1074b19, 22). Aristotle employs thought, νόησις, thinking itself to show the relationship of the divine: “possession rather than the receptivity is the divine element which thought seems to contain, and the contemplation is what is most pleasant and best.” Aristotle brings this to its culmination in Λ 9, 1072b18-24. Aristotle’s famous lines convey the deity which unites the attributes and principles of the *Physics* and the *Metaphysics*:

Moreover, life belongs to God. For the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality; and the essential actuality of God is life most good and eternal. We hold, then, that God is a living being, eternal, most good; and therefore life and a continuous eternal existence belong to God; for that is what God is.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Interpreting this passage (Λ 9, 1072b18-24) as a reference to God’s Divine Providence involves reading in the text claims that Aristotle does not explicitly state. The issue of Providence is take up in Chapter 6.

<sup>12</sup> The Geek text gives the following:

καὶ ζωὴ δὲ γε ὑπάρχει· ἡ γὰρ νοῦ ἐνέργεια ζωὴ, ἐκεῖνος δὲ ἡ ἐνέργεια· ἐνέργεια δὲ ἡ καθ’ αὐτὴν ἐκεῖνου ζωὴ ἀρίστη καὶ αἰδίος. Φαμέν δὲ τὸν θεὸν εἶναι ζῶν αἰδίον ἄριστον, ὥστε ζωὴ καὶ αἰῶν συνεχῆς καὶ αἰδίος ὑπάρχει τῷ θεῷ· τοῦτο γὰρ ὁ θεός.  
(Λ7, 1072:27-31)

According to Philippe “Le livre  $\Lambda$  apparaît donc bien comme le terme de la recherche de la philosophie: celle-ci se transforme en sagesse.” (1991, 210). The transition is made from philosophical to theological wisdom; this corresponds to what Aristotle sets out at the beginning of  $\Lambda$ : to possess knowledge of first principles is to possess divine knowledge, leading to God.

**The θεωρία of God:  
*Nicomachean Ethics***

***Chapter 5***

In Chapter 5 I, shall be focusing on the relationship between God, contemplation and the individual. This relationship will examine some contexts in which Aristotle employs “contemplation” in *Nicomachean Ethics*. I also consider the good, and the final cause as part of contemplative activity.

**1. Types of contemplating**

References to θεωρία and θεωρεῖν appear in a number of Aristotle’s other works, as I have already shown with the *De Anima* (Γ 4, 430a5), and reappear even more explicitly in *Nicomachean Ethics*.<sup>1</sup> Does Aristotle distinguish different types of contemplation? In Z 3, 1139b15-18 different types of intellectual virtues are distinguished, and among them Aristotle lists art, scientific knowledge, practical wisdom, philosophic wisdom, intuitive reason.<sup>2</sup> Επιστήμη and νοῦς have been examined in *Posterior Analytics* and *De Anima*. Where does contemplation appear in the context of these “states of virtues of which the soul possesses truth” (Z 3, 1139b15)? In defining wisdom, Aristotle states that “wisdom must be intuitive reason combined with scientific knowledge – scientific knowledge of the highest objects which has received as it were its

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<sup>1</sup> H. Rackham, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, with an English Translation, in Loeb Classical Library, 1962) London (W. Heinemann), and Cambridge (Harvard University Press).

<sup>2</sup> Given in the Greek as, τέχνη, ἐπιστήμη, φρόνησις, σοφία, and νοῦς.

proper completion.” (Δ 7, 1141a18-19). Intuitive reason and scientific knowledge refer to νοῦς and ἐπιστήμη, respectively. However, in Z 12, 1143b21-34 Aristotle begins to discuss the “qualities of the mind” in relation to philosophical and practical wisdom. Contemplation appears to be both philosophical and practical wisdom: φρόνησις, represents “the quality of mind concerned with things just and noble and good for man,” but this presupposes σοφία. Since the knowledge precedes the action, the former is considered greater by Aristotle ( Z 12, 1143b33).

In *De Anima* Γ 4, 432a8 Aristotle discusses learning in relation to “sense” and both τε θεωρῆ...τι θεωρεῖν are employed referring to “actively aware” and “aware,” respectively. In *Physics* θ 4, 255b1 Aristotle treats actuality and potentiality, and ἐπιστήμην... θεωρῶν are given for “science” and “actually exercising,” respectively. In the *Metaphysics* Θ 9, 1048a34 this is expressed by three related words ἐπιστήμονα, θεωροῦντα and θεωρῆσαι. Aristotle examines the relationship between actuality and potentiality, and conveys “science” and “studying” with the words, ἐπιστήμη and θεωρῶν, respectively. I will treat the various meanings of contemplation in the course of this chapter, but my focus here will be on *Nicomachean Ethics*.<sup>3</sup>

## **2. Happiness and the good**

Aristotle develops contemplative activity in *Nicomachean Ethics* unlike his treatment of θεωρία in his other works; for example, in K 7, 1177a19 Aristotle states, “that this activity is contemplative we have already said.” That activity is happiness; and where he says, “whether it be itself also divine or only the most divine element in us, the

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<sup>3</sup> In *Nicomachean Ethics* contemplation or contemplative activity appears in about 22 contexts.

activity of this in accordance with its proper virtue will be perfect happiness” (K 7, 1177a16-18), Aristotle associates contemplative activity with happiness. This is why the activity is inseparable from individuals, for as Aristotle observes in *Nicomachean Ethics*, all people strive for happiness. The intelligence among other purposes serves for thinking of things noble and divine; whatever is the object of contemplative activity is considered as being either divine or the most divine element in the person. Apart from how *θεωρία* is understood given the richness of the word and the plurality of related meanings, the next issue is how this relates to God; of equal importance is how *θεωρία* relates to individual people. These three, contemplation, God and the individual person, as Aristotle presents them, are related.

At *Nicomachean Ethics* (K 7, 1177a12ff.) Aristotle justifies the reason for regarding contemplative activity as the highest virtue to be exercised. The discourse unfolds with four central points: (i) intelligence or a similar faculty will lead the individual to divine thoughts (K 7, 1177a14-15); (ii) this faculty may be divine or that which is most divine in the person; (iii) perfect happiness is contemplative activity (K 7, 1177a16); (iv) Aristotle considers *νοῦς* the best thing that humans possess; and the object of the intelligence must be the best knowable object (K 7, 1177a22).

Another factor that leads Aristotle to consider contemplative activity as the best activity within the person, is that this contemplation represents a ceaseless act, contemplation does not have a limit, nor is it exhausted as sensible pleasures are. Aristotle also emphasises the importance of self-sufficiency: there is no need for things of the world, not even other people because one contemplates truth alone (K 7, 1177a35). Moreover, contemplative activity, as with happiness, is sought for its own sake. Aristotle



speaks in K 6, 1177a19 of “the activity of reason which is contemplation,” thereby, maintaining that the contemplative act is an act of the νοῦς. Apart from the intelligence which is the source of this activity, Aristotle gives a further explanation why perfect happiness is contemplative activity: contemplation is the activity of God. Aristotle reaches this conclusion on the basis that the gods are active, but this is not human activity as such; it is rather an activity fitting for God, contemplation, θεωρία (K 8, 1178b22). Human activity which most closely resembles that of God can be called divine.

### 3. Anthropomorphising God

The question that arises is twofold: (i) is God as a contemplating being the result of some kind of anthropomorphism, in which human activity is projected onto the divine; and (ii) what can God possibly contemplate? Answering the first question, Natali (1993) examines the question of anthropomorphism in Aristotle’s divinity.<sup>4</sup> Citing Gauthier and the English philosophers of the nineteenth century, Natali states:<sup>5</sup>

Gauthier and the English critics of the nineteenth century maintain that the position of Aristotle is untenable: either the concept of divinity must be stripped of all anthropomorphisms, and therefore, not even “theoria” can be applied to it, or if it can be maintained that it is possible to attribute “theoria” to both man and God, in various modes of analogy, then, there is no reason why, not to have other virtues applied to both, in other various analogical modes [my translation].

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<sup>4</sup> Carlo Natali’s article “Attività di Dio e attività dell’uomo nella *Metafisica* di Aristotele,” is an excellent treatment on the question, whether divine activity is an anthropomorphism. Cf. *Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica* (1993): 85, 324-351.

<sup>5</sup> The Italian text reads:

Gauthier e i critici inglesi del secolo XIX ritengono che la posizione di Aristotele è insostenibile: o il concetto di divinità deve essere spogliato di ogni antropomorfizzazione, e quindi, ad esso non può essere attribuita nemmeno la *theoria*, oppure, se si ammette che sia possibile attribuire sia all’uomo che a Dio, in sensi diversi per analogia, la *theoria*, non si vede perché non sia possibile attribuire ad entrambi, in modo diverso e per analogia anche le virtù.” (p. 326)

In reference to Gauthier, Natali considers the question if God can exercise the virtues of contemplative activity, why not include other human virtues (p. 326). Natali points out that in the *Metaphysics* (I 8, 1178b7-32) where Aristotle refers to the contemplative activity of God, the language being used is technical rather than a purely popular mythical vocabulary. Verbs such as πράττειν, ποεῖν and θεωρεῖν, are distinguished, while God is also attributed ἐνέργεια (p. 327). Aristotle, who belonged to a Greek culture that was influenced by the activities of the Olympian gods (as noted in the previous chapters), would be well-acquainted with the many anthropomorphisms; Aristotle seems more concerned with providing a more objective portrayal of God, one which is metaphysically tenable. Therefore, the discourse cannot be considered anthropomorphic since the language departs from the traditional Greek mythological terminology.

Natali continues to consider the difficulty: if contemplation is the most virtuous of activities, why can other virtues not be applied to God? The reason is straightforward: virtue implies the πάθη and Aristotle points out that the gods do not experience that which implies the corporeal (K 8, 1178b17). Natali also maintains that Aristotle is talking about God in the *Metaphysics*, even if not directly but founded nevertheless “secondo la quale egli non può compiere nessuna azione diversa dal contemplare” (p. 327).<sup>6</sup> Aristotle does not permit any virtue associated with God except contemplation because contemplative activity does not involve πάθη, feeling: gods do not have passions. Natali focusses on the concept act or ἐνέργεια, and points out that a human act and a divine act are not the same thing, and only in God is an act perfect (p. 349). A divine act for

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<sup>6</sup> According to which He cannot fulfil any action other than contemplation [my translation].

Aristotle exemplifies complete autosufficiency; this is because no potentiality exists in God, the same reason why πάθη identified with God in the corporeal sense is not possible.

#### 4. Final Cause

Aristotle states in *Nicomachean Ethics* I 8, 1178b23 that God's activity is contemplative; if contemplation is of things noble and divine, the intelligence contemplates the final cause. What is this final cause? The object of God's contemplation cannot belong to the sensible world because such things are inferior to God, as Aristotle states in the *Metaphysics*, "it thinks of that which is most divine and precious, and it does not change; for change would be change for the worse" (Λ 9, 1074b26). Contemplating something material implies change which is contrary to God's nature which does not change. Aristotle explains in the same section of the *Metaphysics* the object of God's contemplation, "Therefore it must be of itself that the divine thought thinks since it is the most excellent of things, and its thinking is a thinking on thinking" (Λ 9, 1074b35).<sup>7</sup> God is the source of all movement, and therefore, the very nature of God must be good.

George (1989) studies the validity of this Ramist argument occurring in weaker versions, or without an anti-Aristotelian sentiment.<sup>8</sup> This argument states: if God is the most perfect being whom God contemplates, then, God knows nothing except Himself, and nothing outside of Himself, not even of the world's existence (p. 62). Norman (1969)

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<sup>7</sup> "Its thinking is a thinking on thinking," reads as follows in Greek, καὶ ἔστιν ἡ νόησις νοήσεως νόησις.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. George (1989, 62) for a list of philosophers and their positions concerning this argument. Peter Ramus (1515-1572) was a French philosopher and leading figure who vehemently opposed traditional Aristotelian doctrines, and posed this problem.

believes that this is not so much self-contemplation, but abstract thought in which God is engaged. Such a position, however, fails to distinguish thinking from contemplation. Aristotle's texts refer to contemplation not only as a virtuous activity, but as one associated with happiness. Happiness is that which one strives for and this is to be found in the good. Thus, since divine life is full actualisation and the ultimate good, it is the object of the search for happiness. God as the true good finds happiness in contemplating Himself: happiness here is to be understood in the teleological sense which is inseparable from the good.

## 5. Thinking and Contemplating

Aristotle's contemplation is more than the νοητός of *De Anima* (Γ 4, 429b27); Aristotle takes this further and develops the activity associated with the divine as diverse expressions of θεωρεῖν. Aristotle refers to the activity as one which God exercises. If this self-contemplation were an anthropomorphism using Norman's words, God then is a "heavenly narcissus" (George 1989, 63-64). Yet, God as the ἀρχή of all things knows them by knowing Himself (De Koninck 1994, 473).<sup>9</sup> The Ramist tradition (outlined above) reflects to some extent Ross, who gives an either/or reading, and solution: either God knows Himself or He knows other things. One reading necessarily excludes the other (1959, 179). However, this solution immediately raises questions about God's omniscience. De Koninck observes that, because substance comes first in the order of intelligibility (p. 480), while potency is understood by act, "the first object of thought

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<sup>9</sup> Philosophically speaking God is not identified with any specific gender. In theology, however, according to theological traditions, the masculine is employed as part of Revelation as found in the Judeo-Christian tradition. My use of the masculine with the reflexive pronoun is that God is more personal than an "It"; the masculine also anticipates Natural Theology where God communicates life.

must be a simple substance existing actually.” (p. 481). This object of thought, as already indicated in the last chapter, also represents the first object of desire, the final cause as the primary good. De Koninck points out that *Nicomachean Ethics* K 8, 1178b22 refers to actual knowledge which is identical with its object; this parallels *De Anima* Γ 5, 430a19-20 and *De Anima* Γ 9, 431a1-2 (p. 488). While *De Anima* parallels *Nicomachean Ethics*, the two must be distinguished: in the latter work Aristotle treats θεωρία as an apex of the νοῦς, which is developed in *De Anima*.

As I have shown above, in *Nicomachean Ethics* K 7 Aristotle rejects the possibility of God’s being engaged in any activity except contemplation, and maintains that the most virtuous activity imitates the gods most closely. Majithia states that thinking itself should be understood in the context of a God that is perfect actuality who “does not undergo apprehensive thinking, and no matter what it is thinking about, its thinking is autonomous or what Aristotle calls thinking in itself” (1999, 382). The importance here is how God is thinking of Himself and I would agree with Majithia although giving it a more contemplative reading, that God is not just thinking about Himself like a “heavenly narcissus” (using Norman’s phrase) but contemplating Himself because of His goodness, perfection and the fact that He is the ἀρχή of all ἀρχαί. God as a heavenly narcissus reflects another divine anthropomorphism. The human perception of the divine constructs a human image of a divine person. This is precisely what was addressed at the beginning of this chapter. Majithia correctly observes that Aristotle claims that the mind thinking the intelligible object thinks without matter (Γ 4, 430a6-9), and points out that because God’s substance and essence are identical, and God thinks of that which is most noble, God’s thinking being cannot be the forms of the world (p.393).

Majithia differs considerably from Ramos (1995), whose position I am not inclined to agree with. According to Ramos' interpretation of Aristotle, when one comes to understand the world one becomes God-like: "If forms attain their highest level of reality when they are being understood, man in understanding is in effect re-enacting the very activity of God" (p. 240). I think "understand" is a poor choice of words because God is not trying to figure things out; moreover, even if God were contemplating forms, this act in the presence of the intelligible object would be contemplative, as Aristotle presents this, and not understanding. God's contemplation is directed towards the perfect good which can only be Himself. This does not mean God does not have knowledge of the world, understanding and contemplating simply are not the same act. Aristotle, however, develops a God whose knowledge of the world is not explicit but a God whose very nature as source or of all ἀρχαί possesses a divine knowledge that implies a knowledge of the world; this knowledge is assumed by God's act of contemplation. This suggests that Majithia's analysis of God contemplating only His own substance and essence may not be the case. Intelligible forms of the world are considered objects of contemplation for Aristotle, and in God, this may well be "thought thinking thought."

## **6. Personal happiness**

Within this Aristotelian framework, God's existence can be looked at from three perspectives: (i) God's existence which is the summit of the *Metaphysics*; (ii) God's activity as shown in *Nicomachean Ethics*; and (iii) God and the individual. The role of the νοῦς is central in all three; elements present from *De Anima* also reappear, as shown in the previous section. God's knowledge is of ἀρχαί. Knowledge of these principles

were outlined in Book II, B 19 of *Posterior Analytics*. Another perspective is how God is perceived in relation to the individual. No doubt the person trying to prove God's existence may fall into the trap of anthropomorphising God (this has already been dealt with in this chapter), and which Aristotle treats in *Nicomachean Ethics* (K 8, 1178b8ff.), but once these anthropomorphisms are removed, when a less human God appears, whose attributes are properly speaking God's, this still leaves the relationship between God and the individual. Given Aristotle's account of God, what does this say about God's relationship with the individual, or the individual's relationship with God, the two are definitely not the same.<sup>10</sup>

To answer this question, I will situate Aristotle's God in relation to *Nicomachean Ethics*, the individual, and contemplation. I mentioned earlier that the three are related. Having considered God and contemplation, I will examine the individual. The subject of *Nicomachean Ethics* as presented in Book I is the good: "Every act and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim to some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim." (A 1, 1094a1-3). Aristotle, however, makes the distinction between the good and ends employed to achieve that good. Similarly, while the highest of these goods is happiness is (A 4, 1095a12-20), three types of life can be found, one of pleasure, the political and the contemplative life (A 5, 1095b18-19): Aristotle reaffirms that happiness is a good which is attained for itself and not for something else. In other words, there is something final about the good and for this reason this first good must be self-sufficient. Aristotle defines this self-sufficiency as "that which when isolated makes life desirable and lacking in

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<sup>10</sup> This approaches the discussion on Aristotle and Judeo-Christianity which I shall examine in the next chapter.

nothing.” (A 7, 1097b14). These points are summed up in A 7, 1097b22-23, “Happiness, then, is something final and self-sufficient, and is the end of action.”

Aristotle outlines at the beginning of *Nicomachean Ethics* what happiness is, with an answer elaborated in A 9, 1099b27. The question is raised at the beginning of A 9 whether happiness is acquired by learning, by habit, by training, through divine providence or by chance: “The answer to the questions we are asking is plain also from the definition of happiness; for it has been said to be a virtuous activity of soul of a certain kind.” Happiness is located in the soul, but the activity is one which is virtuous. In Book A 5 of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle has already criticised the slavish appetites of those engaged in pursuing solely pleasure as a goal for happiness, thus acquainting such pleasure founded purely on instincts no nobler than the good of animals. The political life does not altogether escape Aristotle’s criticism either since he more than once associates political ambition with honour and for Aristotle this sort of happiness is not only superficial, but it also requires others to bestow the honours, therefore, one cannot be truly happy where such a need for popular support determines the goals of an individual.

Aristotle repeats that happiness is to be found in the virtuous activities of the soul; in other words, true happiness cannot be pursued if the act is lacking in virtue, and if the act requires dependency on other things. As a result, the Unmoved Mover that Aristotle develops in the *Physics*, which is developed as a good and first cause in the *Metaphysics*, is a God that contemplates Himself because of the supreme good which this God is in *Nicomachean Ethics*. However, this also gives reason for the individual to contemplate God: not only does such happiness finalise one’s life given the teleological nature of the good, but for this happiness to be real Aristotle emphasises that the conditions are met in



the same God who contemplates Himself. This is why the individual is attracted by this ultimate good, and responds through the act of contemplation. Contemplation, therefore, is not only a divine act, but a human act implying being drawn to the divine.

The goodness of God has a twofold aspect to it: (i) it attracts the individual as the individual draws to God as the source, the ἀρχή of all things; and (ii) this attraction to the first cause leads to contemplation because the virtuous act brings pleasure to the soul, and the person depends only on God, the final cause. Defourny (1977, 106) maintains that, while this is not the case with other activities, the activity of contemplation, the study of God, and the object of contemplation fuse into one object: “The ultimate message is a very specific kind of contemplation: the study of God.” Defourny has captured the sense of Aristotelian contemplation. Aristotle distinguishes between θεωρεῖν and φρόνησις where θεωρεῖν represents the part of theoretical activity associated with the divine, while φρόνησις constitutes the practical orientation towards this divine activity (pp. 106-07).

## **7. The power of the sun**

I shall end this chapter by an example which hopefully will serve to better grasp the evolution of θεωρία in Aristotle. The first Winter snowfall normally seems spectacular, and often a breath-taking experience when the white snow glitters under the sun. The exhilarating contrasts of blues, whites and silvers draw the individual to examine the snow and its unique beauty. Snow is, I might say, a contemplative experience: the intelligence is more than just active because the reaction to a first snowfall is not just thinking. After snow has turned dark gray, perhaps solid, in frozen heaps over months, the reaction changes to one of indifference. Contemplation now

diminishes, or it disappears altogether: the powerful object of attraction is absent. For Aristotle, contemplation is a relative term: the act of contemplation is actualized most fully in the presence of the final cause, the good in which everything has its source – the first ἀρχή.

This contemplative experience of snow diminishes as Winter sets in; but I remain aware of the surrounding snow. I am aware of the snow, but I re-focus on the the sunlight: its rays penetrate the trees, branches and leaves. I know the snow has not disappeared, I know of its presence; but the illuminating sun has now captured my attention.<sup>11</sup> I can know the snow is present, while I contemplate the sun, something far greater.

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<sup>11</sup> What about contemplating frogs? I shall take up the froggy experience in the next chapter, along with the snow and the sun introduced above.

# **The Aristotelian God and Judeo-Christianity**

## ***Chapter 6***

Although a pre-Christian philosopher, Aristotle has played an instrumental role in the formulation of Judeo-Christian doctrines. My objective in Chapter 6, therefore, is to show the relationship between Aristotle's God and God within the Judeo-Christian tradition. The question is whether the God of Aristotle is compatible with the Judeo-Christian God. In spite of some difficulties, I shall show that the Aristotelian God is far closer to the Judeo-Christian God than some philosophers claim. The areas which I examine are religious contemplation, creation, providence and the will.

### **1. Religious contemplation**

In section 7 of Chapter 5, I looked at contemplating snow and how this relates to contemplation in the Aristotelian sense of the term. How does snow differ from contemplating a frog?<sup>1</sup> I mentioned in Chapter 2, section 2.2, that properly speaking contemplation is a religious experience; my reasons for stating this were based on contemplative activity as Aristotle develops it in *Nicomachean Ethics*. The religious experience that emanates from contemplation also represents the high point in Aristotle's use of the term, as I had shown in Chapter 5: the term is employed to signify different intellectual acts, but contemplation attains its perfection when God is the object of contemplation.

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<sup>1</sup> The problem of contemplating a frog was taken up in Chapter 2.

Neither contemplating snow nor a frog is a religious experience; however, when snow and frog are objects of my intelligence, and when my intelligence is actively engaged, one can speak of a kind of contemplation, but one that lacks perfection.<sup>2</sup> However, both the snow and the frog can progress to a religious experience in the Aristotelian sense. Contemplation as a scientific exercise of speculation is one way of looking at θεωρία, but this is not religious contemplation, as pointed out in Chapter 2. What determines if contemplation is religious or not is the object of contemplation: God as the object of contemplation is religious. How can snow or a frog lead to a more religious experience of contemplation? By considering the source of the snow, as objects that are moved, and whose motion has a source. Following Aristotle in the *Physics*, movement leads to another movement which caused the movement (H 1, 241b24-25), until an Unmoved Mover is identified as first principle that is the good in the *Metaphysics* (A 7, 1072b12). This shows why mathematics falls between the natural philosophy of the sensory experience of snow and sun on the one hand, and metaphysical suprasensory understanding of a principle or source on the other; mathematics itself involves some tangible reference, while at the same time the reference does not exist in the real world. This activity of the intelligence unites the νοῦς with divine knowledge.

As I also indicated in section 7 of Chapter 5, one can be present to something, such as the snow, without actively studying these objects, in other words, without contemplating them. I know that snow surrounds me, while I am engaged in contemplating the sun, as source of light, warmth and life. Aristotelian contemplation has

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<sup>2</sup> One may argue that for some contemplating snow or a frog may be a religious experience. What is meant by religious experience would then need to be investigated. I would have to respond, however, that within an Aristotelian framework an experience is religious, in so far as the experience leads to something transcendental.

more than one angle. If one considers the contemplation of essence of *De Anima* Γ 4, 430a5-8, this suggest that the intelligible form of an object, that is the non-material, is the form reproduced by the intelligence. This intelligible form represents ἐπιστήμη ἢ θεωρητικὴ or “speculative knowledge.” Two other contemplative experiences appear in the *Physics* and *Metaphysics*, as I explained above. Aristotle does not remain at the sensory level in any of these experiences, but transcends the experience of the senses to consider metaphysical questions and implications, and what becomes a religious experience. This religious development is presented in Book Λ of the *Metaphysics*, as I mentioned in Chapter 4, section 4. This is why the frog and the snow are not religious experiences as such, but sensory ones, even as intelligible forms. *Nicomachean Ethics* suggests that religious contemplation is achieved as the summit of the contemplative life of things noble and divine *Nicomachean Ethics* I 8, 1178b23.

## 2. Creation and Providence

The problems that do surface are specifically the nature of separated substances. The fact that they are eternal is not a serious difficulty when one ascertains that only one such separated substance exists. However, a plurality of separated substances implies the eternal nature of the world, and this becomes problematic.<sup>3</sup> Why? Because an eternal world conflicts with the creation ex-nihilo of the world which is a central Judeo-Christian teaching: God created the world. How is Judeo-Christian teaching compatible with Aristotle’s eternal uncreated world? Creation is a problem in Aristotelian theology from a

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<sup>3</sup> For an excellent treatment on the controversial interpretations of both Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas, cf. Lawrence Dewan, “Thomas Aquinas, Creation, and Two Historians,” *Laval théologique et philosophique* (1994): 50, 363-387.

Judeo-Christian perspective. Can Aristotle's metaphysics be reconciled or offer a solution to the problem of eternity? No explicit reference appears to a created world; the Aristotelian cosmos is perceived largely in terms of eternity, eternal spheres and eternal motion. What has been examined is a monotheistic reading of separated intelligences as cited above from Book  $\Lambda$ ; this corrects the reading of multiple intelligent spirits leaving a single one. However, this does not solve the problem of the eternal cosmos, only the singularity of God. Creation *ex-nihilo* is un-Aristotelian language. Or is it? Can Aristotle's God create?

The second problem is the God which Aristotle's *Metaphysics* presents: a God who contemplates Himself. While God has knowledge of the world, just as I also know that the snow is receding, it is the brilliance of the sun that captures my attention shining through the trees, and not the frozen heaps of snow that have lost their glitter. God's contemplation is of Himself, but there is no reason why this should exclude intelligible forms present in God's thoughts while God contemplates. Why should Aristotle's God have any interest in these inferior human beings? The two questions that need to be considered, and that are central to Judeo-Christian theology are creation, and connected to creation the domain of providence.<sup>4</sup>

While Aristotle does not present a creative God, a God who creates the universe, this does not mean that Aristotle does not provide the metaphysical materials to generate

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<sup>4</sup> The term "providence" appeared in the English language around the fourteenth century from Latin, *pro-videntia*. For Roman Catholics providence has been understood as God's "fore-knowledge" or "pre-vision," *pro-videre*, yet not interfering with the choices that humans make in order that they may fully exercise their freedom. Protestants, on the other hand, have understood providence as part of the doctrine of predestination associated with the Protestant Reformers such as Luther, Calvin and Zwingli. This doctrine is based on the belief that human salvation has already been predestined by God along with the "choices" that individuals make.

a divinely created universe. The central role played by causality solves this problem of creation; movement itself is a relationship. One movement causes another movement, movement is the source of movement, the theme of Aristotle's *Physics*.

As I have shown in Chapter 3, philosophers such as Randall (1960) remain skeptical regarding the divine elements attributed to the Unmoved Mover. Van Steenberghen (1974) claims that "it is difficult to find a true theism in Aristotle's system, for his First Mover is neither Creator, nor infinite perfection, nor truly transcendent, nor provident, nor unique absolute, for it shares aseity with other immaterial substances, with the heavenly bodies, and even with the matter of the sub-lunar world" (p. 560). I have interacted with these various reservations that Van Steenberghen expresses concerning the Aristotelian deity; however, whether this deity cannot be characterised as provident, needs to be investigated. Its very nature, that is pure actuality, pure form, as expressed in the *Metaphysics* (Θ 8, 1050b1, 20-27), a separated substance that is eternal Unmoved Mover in the *Physics* (B 4, 999a26-29), draws the individual; one is drawn because of its nature being good as expressed in the *Metaphysics* (L 7, 1072b27-31). All these properties associated with the Aristotelian God transcend the corporeal world, a world of potentiality and corruptibility.<sup>5</sup>

Taking the Aristotelian principles outlined in the course of these chapters, with central points re-introduced in Chapter 6, the solution that I believe is plausible to the creation problem is God's perfection; and this needs to be addressed. Creation is the

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<sup>5</sup> There is also the problem of the infinite which Van Steenberghen raises. This difficulty is resolved by St. Thomas who maintains that the infinite would be a sign of imperfection, when infinity is understood in material and formal terms as Aristotle's predecessors had done (*Physics* Γ 4). This is in fact what Aristotle is rejecting: formal and material infinitude. St. Thomas then elaborates the notion of infinite as he applies it to God (cf. *Summa Theologiae* Ia, q. 7, a. 1).

expression of God's perfection: it is not necessary that God creates but God creates because as a perfect being, perfection is realized in creation, reaching its greatest perfection in the human being. The perfect engenders itself, in the case of the divine this engenderment is manifested in the creative act. I would like to consider two passages that support a creative God in Aristotle's theology. In *Metaphysics*  $\alpha$  1, 993b24-31 Aristotle states:

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 as well (e.g. fire is the hottest of things; for it is the cause of the heat of all other things); so that which causes derivative truths to be true is most true. Hence the principle 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.

This passage reflects Aristotle's thoughts on causation and truth: the two are clearly linked. Coming-to-be is caused by something eternal. As I have indicated previously, an eternal principle is a separated substance. An eternal being is a separate substance, but separate substance implies form (*Metaphysics*  $\Theta$  8, 1050b1, 20-27). The difficulty relates to the substances which include materiality, that are composed of both matter and form. In  $\Lambda$  5, 1071a1-4. Aristotle maintains:

Some things can exist apart and some cannot, and it is the former that are substances. And therefore all things have the same causes, because, without substances modifications and movements do not exist. Further, these causes will probably be soul and body, or reason and desire and body.



In the passage above Aristotle claims that things come from the same cause or source; in the last sentence Aristotle explains the role of the intelligence in causation. In the *Metaphysics* Aristotle claims that God's goodness moves the world. Goodness, therefore, functions with desire.<sup>6</sup>

### 3. Will of God

If the Judeo-Christian God creates the world, the nature of the creatures must pre-exist in the divine mind; this is the knowledge of the world that God has created. God is perfect, pure act, eternal, with divine knowledge; nothing escapes God because God's omniscience includes the thoughts of those essences which pre-exist in God's mind (Ramos 1995, 243). But what about the will? The question that is relevant to both creation and providence is whether God as an Intelligent Being also exercises a will.<sup>7</sup> Aristotle does not talk explicitly of a divine will; however, this can be inferred by the principles that Aristotle provides. If God is a source of movement this is because God is good; but God as a cause of being suggests that because God is good, God creates, even if this is not explicit in the Aristotelian text. Divine Intelligence implies will. This is the will to cause or not to cause. Therefore, causation and creation are the result of God's will. If God is good, this Unmoved Mover, the ἀρχή of all things, the good stems from God's perfection expressed in creation, a creation that is willed.

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<sup>6</sup> Van Steenberghen criticises St. Thomas' interpretation of Aristotle; for example, Van Steenberghen states that, "atheism must have appeared to the medievals as an unusual position, unworthy of a true metaphysician, and to be accounted for only because of a strange intellectual blindness." Also maintaining that for the medievals it was unlikely that Aristotle would have fallen into such error (1974, 561-62). I find Van Steenberghen's argumentation rather unconvincing.

<sup>7</sup> This section is based on Van Steenberghen (pp. 565-67) which is largely a Thomistic reading of Aristotle; I am only presenting that which is relevant to my study.

The providential role exercised by God in relation to human creatures can be understood by God's creative power associated with perfection, already in Aristotle. It follows from the good and the perfection of God that the Divine Intelligence willed and created the world. God is a living being, "Still everyone supposes that they live and therefore that they are active" (*Nicomachean Ethics*  $\Lambda$  8, 1178b18-19), and not just a logical principle (cf. Randall 1960). This God which is good, perfect, and creative would equally be involved in the lives of the creatures that have been created by God's own Divine Act. If Aristotle makes anything clear, and he states this explicitly in both the *Metaphysics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, God is good; then, the extension of this goodness is the presence of God to His creation. A God who is good is neither a clock-maker nor a computer-programmer.<sup>8</sup> Involvement with creation does not diminish God's self-contemplation, either. The extension of both God's goodness and knowledge do not diminish the contemplative act; rather, they are part of the contemplative act. The Aristotelian text that favours such a claim is to be found in *Metaphysics*: God is compared to both a leader of the army as well as its order: the leader leads the army, and thus the army has order in it:

Probably in both ways, as an army does; for its good is found both in its order and in its leader, and more in the latter; for he does not depend on the order but it depends on him. And all things are ordered together somehow, but not all alike – other fishes and fowls and plants; and the world is not such that one thing has nothing to do with another, but they are connected. ( $\Lambda$  10, 1075a10-19)

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<sup>8</sup> To say that God is a purely Intelligent Being who creates, but is disinterested in His creatures suggests a Humean view of God. There is nothing "good" about a Creator who shows no interest in what He has just created. The classic example regarding God as an Intelligent Being is the analogy of a clock maker who makes and winds a clock and leaves the clock on its own. The other extreme is predestination where human activity has been pre-determined by God.

Aristotle states explicitly that between the two, the leader reflects the greater good between the two because of the relationship of dependency: the army depends on the leader for order; in other words, the leader represents a final cause: the activities of the army are governed and finalized by the leader.

As Dewan correctly observes, “‘Mover’” in all this is the Aristotelian cause, ‘whence motion,’ i.e. efficient causality is meant” (1991, 88). This relationship between efficient cause and final cause are inseparable; for Aristotle, that which is the primary source of movement must be good. This mover, therefore, is a divine substance that is good by its very nature: both the efficient and final cause find their unity in God. Dewan states, “there is no difficulty in making the first cause both end and mover, i.e. in identifying the good as final cause with *nous* as productive cause” (p.89).

I have examined two problematic questions concerning God; namely, that of creation and providence. A harmony between the Aristotelian God and the Judeo-Christian God outweighs the apparent difficulties. The central attribute of Aristotle’s God which embraces the Judeo-Christian tradition certainly remains that of God’s goodness. God does not create out of necessity, rather God is not compelled to create, but creates because of His perfection which reflects the perfection of goodness. God’s goodness expresses itself in the creative act. Moreover, God’s goodness is providential: through the intellectual faculty *νοῦς*, shared by both God and God’s spiritual creatures, God participates in the life of these intelligent beings, and these creatures also share in the life of the divine. The final cause attracts these intelligent beings towards the perfect good, the source of happiness. Happiness is to be found in the creative God who is ἀρχή of life.

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## ***Greek-English Lexicon***

ἀδιαφόρα	- indiscriminable particular
ἀθάνατος	- immortality
αἰσάνεσθαι	- to perceive
ἀμύγη	- immortal
ἀρχή	- cause, principle, source
ἀρχή τῆς ἀρχῆς	- source of first principles
γνώσις	- knowledge, understanding
δύναμις	- potential
εἰδέναι	- to know, to be skilled
εἶδος	- form, shape
ἐνέργεια	- act
ἐπαγωγή	- induction
ἐπιστήμη	- science
ἐπιστήμη ἢ θεωρητικὴ	- theoretical science
ἡρεμία	- rest
θεωρεῖν	- to contemplate
θεωρία	- contemplation
θεός	- God
κινεῖν	- motion
κρίνει	- judging
λόγος	- reason
μῦθος	- story
νοεῖν	- thinking
νόησις	- thought
νοητός	- intelligible
νοῦς	- mind, intelligence, intuition
νοῦς ποιητικός	- maker mind
οὐσία	- substance
πάθη	- affection, passion, state
ποιεῖν	- to make
πράττειν	- to achieve, to practise
πρώτασ ἀρχὰς	- primary immediate premises
σοφία	- wisdom
τὰ πρῶτα	- first things
τέχνη	- art
τὸ σάρκι εἶναι	- essence of flesh
φαντασία	- imagination
φρόνησις	- practical wisdom
φύσις	- nature
ψυχή	- soul