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WORKING PAPER NO. 1

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On the Function of Platonic
Doctrines in Late Antique
Commentaries on *Metaphysics*
A 9, A 6 and M 4

– an Example of Late Antique Knowledge Transfer

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Zitationsangabe für diesen Beitrag:

Uhlmann, Gyburg: On the Function of Platonic Doctrines in Late Antique Commentaries on Metaphysics A 9, A 6 and M 4 – an Example of Late Antique Knowledge Transfer, Working Paper des SFB 980 *Episteme in Bewegung*, No. 1/2014, Freie Universität Berlin

Stable URL online: http://www.sfb-episteme.de/Listen_Read_Watch/Working-Papers/No_1_Uhlmann_Function-of-Platonic-Doctrines.html

Working Paper ISSN 2199 – 2878 (Internet)

Diese Publikation wurde gefördert von der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG).

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On the Function of Platonic Doctrines in Late Antique Commentaries on *Metaphysics* A 9, A 6, and M 4

- an Example of Late Antique Knowledge Transfer

Gyburg Uhlmann

συνομολογοῦσι δὲ καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι πάντες, ὅτι τὸ διπλὸν τῶν ὀνομάτων μεγάλην
ἀφορμὴν εἰς διαλεκτικὴν παραδέδωκεν.

However, everyone else agrees, too, that the double meaning of words provides
a strong stimulus towards dialectics. (Simp. in Cat. 22,11-13)

Abstract:

The paper analyses the argumentative strategies of the ancient commentators on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* A 9, A 6 and M 4 and the functions ascribed by them to Aristotle's doxographic reports and critique. In discussing the use made of concepts from the Categories in the critique of Platonic Forms the commentators elucidate the need for further differentiations for didactic purposes in the institutional context of the philosophical schools of late antiquity. By doing this, the paper argues, the commentators further develop Aristotle's own argumentative strategy when he transfers tools from his logical treatises into other contexts. The commentators' transfer of texts and conceptual tools into other textual contexts follows the *skopos* of enhancing understanding of the meaning of the Aristotelian text. These acts of transfer constitute a new textual context for the Aristotelian text commented upon, one that includes texts from Plato, Platonic sources, Aristotle himself and earlier or contemporary commentators, each of which has its specific argumentative functions.

1 Introduction

This paper¹ treats the constitutive role in generating knowledge that is played by discussion of Platonic doctrines and authorities in the late antique commentaries on the *Metaphysics*. With this perspective the paper concentrates on commentary on *Metaphysics* A 9, and the part of A 6 that is in M 4 linked to the critique of Plato in A 9.²

The paper is concerned with the argumentative functionalisations of doctrines termed Platonic by commentators who can be located in and around the late antique Platonic schools of philosophy in Alexandria and Athens. Consequently, it will not simply be affirmed or denied

¹The ideas presented in this paper were developed in the context of the SFB 980 Episteme in motion, funded by the DFG (German research foundation). I am grateful to Sandra Erker, Arbogast Schmitt and Christian Vogel for their helpful comments and suggestions and to Dieter Harlfinger for his support in dealing with glosses in the Par. Gr. 1853.

²A further paper is in preparation which addresses analogous questions in relation to A 5 and A 8 and to Syrianus' commentary on M and N and how commentators engage with Aristotle's critique. The methods of argument and functionalisations are similar to those of the discussion of Platonic doctrines, so the second paper should be understood as a continuation of the present one.

whether Plato or the Platonists ‘really’ held the positions ascribed to them by Aristotle. That problem is not the focus here.³ The concern here is rather to describe and analyse processes by which new argumentative contexts are established. These are generated when the ancient commentators cite texts from the Platonic (and Pythagorean) tradition and from the tradition of Aristotelianism and commentary on Aristotle, turning them into a new horizon of understanding for the text commented upon and deploying them in argument. The result of these processes is the differentiation and generation of a Platonic-Aristotelian culture of debate and (appropriate to its *skopos*) of stocks of knowledge, which are differentiated ever further as this traditional context develops.⁴

Reference to Platonic doctrines fulfilled important argumentative functions in late antique commentary on Aristotle. It will be shown in the present inquiry that the commentators, by embedding the Aristotelian text they are commenting on in a wider textual and traditional context, guide the textual interpretation which they want to communicate to their students towards differentiations. This is done by discovering contradictions within the newly established textual context.

Such contradictions may be highlighted within an Aristotelian argument or with reference to other statements in the Corpus Aristotelicum (especially in Book Λ of the *Metaphysics* or in *De anima* Γ) or by confronting the text with Platonic texts that explicitly or implicitly recur to Aristotle. Through this the generation of knowledge that occurs with and through the commentary is transferred into new traditional contexts in a multi-level and multi-dimensional process of knowledge transfer.⁵

Such functionalisations for argumentative purposes can be found in commentaries both on

³ In this approach I am indebted to the work of Gail Fine, who, with a focus on the $\Pi\epsilon\rho\iota\ \iota\delta\epsilon\omega\nu$, has developed and argued for a position that differentiates more as regards Aristotle’s criticism of Plato’s Theory of Forms. Gail Fine, *On Ideas: Aristotle’s Criticism of Plato’s Theory of Forms*, Oxford 1993, passim, e.g. 28f. Fine stresses that in the $\Pi\epsilon\rho\iota\ \iota\delta\epsilon\omega\nu$ Aristotle often takes as basis a vague Platonic position and then presents an interpretation of it that is literal and seemingly obvious to us, which he then refutes (*ibid.*, 28 and frequently). This more differentiated approach does justice to the complexity of both the Platonic and Aristotelian thought and to their didactic ambitions; as such Fine’s book shows the way also for analysis of the late antique commentators, who, in my view, are aiming for an analogous differentiation and complex setting-into-relation of Platonic and Aristotelian doctrines. This is frequently true in other contexts for Simplicius at least, and is made explicit in some of the cases in Syrianus examined below. I also owe much in method to the studies of Iamblichus’ *De Pythagoreis* by Dominic O’Meara, who does not aim to reconstruct (early) Pythagorean doctrine, but rather to study the manner in which Iamblichus has used Pythagorean material and how he develops a philosophical system in his work *On Pythagoreanism* (more correctly: *On the Sects of the Pythagoreans*): Dominic O’Meara, *Pythagoras revived. Mathematics and Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, Oxford 1989, 31. Cf. also Bent Dalsgaard Larsen, *Jamblique de Chalcis. Exégète et Philosophe* (2 Bde.), Aarhus 2002, 66-147.

⁴ This approach complements Jaap Mansfeld’s studies of prolegomena as a textual genre intended to facilitate access by students of philosophy to a complex philosophical system (Jaap Mansfeld, *Prolegomena: Questions to Be Settled Before the Study of an Author Or a Text*, Leiden 1994 (*Philosophia Antiqua: A Series of Studies on Ancient Philosophy*)). The purpose of the textual genre of commentary is not presentation but the generation of this kind of complex textual context within which the single text, the single argument, the single question can be contextualised.

⁵ The analysis of these processes of differentiation can contribute to a differentiated study, related specifically to the substantive content, of simple qualifications such as obscurity or unclearness, which are explained as having didactic purposes. On the interpretation of the obscurity of Aristotle’s language as a didactic tool, e.g. to exclude the uninitiated, see Ineke Sluiter, *Commentaries and the Didactic Tradition*, in: Glenn W. Most (ed.) *Commentaries – Kommentare*, Göttingen 1999 (*Aporemata* Bd. 4), 173–205, 185f., 192, who draws a picture that is in general very critical of the stability of the process of tradition formation, which from a modern perspective seems uncreative (e.g. p. 203); it seems to me that this picture needs to be differentiated by reflection on differences in the ways of evaluating the generation and development of knowledge. Gail Fine has successfully done this for Aristotle’s $\Pi\epsilon\rho\iota\ \iota\delta\epsilon\omega\nu$ (Gail Fine, *On Ideas: Aristotle’s Criticism of Plato’s Theory of Forms*). It is now necessary to extend this work of differentiation also to the ancient commentary tradition.

Aristotelian texts and on Platonic dialogues⁶ as well as on texts by Nicomachus of Gerasa. From this perspective, Aristotle's criticisms of the Platonists in A and M of the *Metaphysics* provides one possible example of an argumentative functionalisation, but not the only one. A defence by the Platonists against Aristotle's critique is one aspect that can be observed here alongside other functions.

To distinguish between apologetic and non-apologetic motives it can help to contextualise the method used to deal with Platonic material within the wider context of debates about earlier opinions, or in texts in which no explicit critique of these opinions is formulated, or where they are cited in a different way.⁷ This method of argument is deployed in late antique commentaries on Aristotle when discussing other thinkers and schools of thought, too, but, as I aim to show, they have a particular character and focus in the analysis of Platonists:⁸ The debate with Platonic positions draws attention to the need to introduce further differentiations when discussing the conceptual or intelligible.

(Also) for this goal the methodical and terminological toolkit provided by the *Categories* and the *Organon* as a whole is deployed. For the functionalisation of Platonic discussions it is especially the conceptual pair homonymous-synonymous that is transferred into new contexts and there developed further.

In what follows I shall proceed in three steps: (1) I sketch (already with an eye to the argumentative techniques of the ancient commentators) the adaptive transfer of the terms 'homonymous'

⁶ Stephen Menn has elaborated in an article how the transfer of Aristotelian arguments and texts differentiates the Platonic texts themselves and extends their arguments, freeing them from *aporiai*: Stephen Menn, *Self-Motion and Reflection: Hermias and Proclus on the Harmony of Plato and Aristotle on the Soul*, with a new critical edition of the Greek Text by Oliver Primavesi, in: James Wilberding and Christoph Horn (eds.) *Neoplatonism and the Philosophy of Nature*, Oxford 2012, 44-67. The article focuses on Hermias' commentary on the *Phaedrus* and sets out a theory, of relevance far beyond this particular context, about the method of combining Platonic and Aristotelian texts or arguments (e.g. *ibid.*, 63). The differentiating moves presented in my article fit well into the horizon that Stephen Menn has set out in such a differentiated way. However, Menn takes the view that the Aristotelian critique has the *skopos* of improving or completing what was in fact inadequately thought out by Plato, by discovering *aporiai* and inconsistencies that are really present and by thinking them through further (e.g. *ibid.*, 49). My approach focuses, in contrast, more on the processes and results than on the supposed intentions of Plato or Aristotle. The thought processes that Menn describes as corrections are generally classed by the late antique Platonists instead as 'thinking through fully', as a specific application of an established insight, or as a differentiating move of wider relevance than just to one specific textual context; that is, they credit Plato or Aristotle with this ability to differentiate, and see their own contribution as being to make this potential idea explicit and didactically available in the form of something actually thought out. This yields different understandings of tradition, which need to be discussed and analysed more precisely in the context of late antique Platonists and Aristotelians.

⁷ In a systematic discussion it would also be necessary to distinguish between commentary texts that are commenting upon a reference to Pythagorean or Platonic material in the base-text and those that themselves introduce the reference to illuminate a passage. The first case is found – admittedly – in the commentaries on *Metaphysics* A 5 and 6, and A 8 and 9, and on the corresponding passages in M, the second case e.g. in the commentaries of Asclepius and Philoponus on the *Isagoge* of Nicomachus, and also in scholia in the *vetustissimi* of the manuscripts of *De interpretatione*. See Nikos Agiotis, *Kodex Guelf. 24 Gud. gr.: Transkriptionen von Scholien, Marginalien, Interlinearien zu Aristoteles, De interpretatione c. 1 – 4*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca – Heuristik (Datenbank)*: <<http://cagb-db.bbaw.de/handschriften/handschrift.xql?id=R3VlbGYuEd1ZC4gZ3IuIDI0>>.

⁸ There is a certain proximity between treatments of Pythagorean and Platonic positions or those that accept Forms, but also divisions and differences among them, despite a broad consensus among the commentators of the school of Ammonius and in Simplicius that there are no important differences in content between the Platonic and the Pythagorean. Such differences are nonetheless identified in the area of communicative forms and verbal procedure. An example: *Ascl. in Metaph. 44,11-17*: '...and he [sc. Aristotle] says that he [Plato] followed the Pythagoreans in much; we however say, not only in much but in everything. For the Philosopher was a Pythagorean even if he did not use all their verbal veils (*parapetasmata*). For the Pythagoreans used not myths but symbols so that the hearers, if they remained at the level of appearances, would suffer no harm [as with the Pythagoreans – Crux]. Besides, they wanted to present them (sc. their doctrines) unclearly so that their wisdom would not be accessible also to cobblers.'

and ‘synonymous’ in Aristotle himself and show how Aristotle differentiates and extends his own terminology in the context of the *Topics* and other *pragmateiai*; (2) I describe the contextualisation of one argument against the Platonic Theory of Forms in A 9 of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* as an example of how this differentiating use and transfer of terms, as practised by Aristotle himself, is continued in the case of the terminological pair homonymous-synonymous, which is transferred out of the propaedeutic formal logic into other argumentative contexts; and finally (3) I investigate the ancient commentaries on this argumentation.

2 Homonymous-Synonymous in the *Categories* and its transfer

The terminologies presented by the *Categories* offer a very particular means of differentiation, one that is located at an introductory level. Likewise related to the specific *skopos* of this work is the distinction between homonymous and synonymous expressions with which Aristotle begins the first chapter of the work.

Ἰσώνυμα λέγεται ὡν ὄνομα μόνον κοινόν, ὁ δὲ κατὰ τοῦνομα λόγος τῆς οὐσίας ἕτερος, οἷον ζῶον ὃ τε ἄνθρωπος καὶ τὸ γεγραμμένον τούτων γὰρ ὄνομα μόνον κοινόν, ὁ δὲ κατὰ τοῦνομα λόγος τῆς οὐσίας ἕτερος ἔαν γὰρ ἀποδιδῶ τις τί ἐστὶν αὐτῶν ἑκατέρῳ τὸ ζῶν εἶναι, ἴδιον ἑκατέρου λόγον ἀποδώσει. συνώνυμα δὲ λέγεται ὡν τό τε ὄνομα κοινόν καὶ ὁ κατὰ τοῦνομα λόγος τῆς οὐσίας ὁ αὐτός, οἷον ζῶον ὃ τε ἄνθρωπος καὶ ὁ βοῦς τούτων γὰρ ἑκάτερον κοινῶ ὀνόματι προσαγορεύεται ζῶον, καὶ ὁ λόγος δὲ τῆς οὐσίας ὁ αὐτός (Arist. Cat. 1a1-10)

“Homonymous’ is said of those things that have only a common name but a different meaning (λόγος) that belongs to the name, as, for example, man and a painted man are each said to be an animal. For they have only the name in common, while the meaning that belongs to the name is different. For if one were to answer the question what ‘being an animal’ is in each of them, one would give each a concept (λόγος) of its own. ‘Synonymous’, on the other hand, is said of that which has a shared name and in which the meaning that belongs to the shared name is the same, as for example a man and a cow are each said to be an animal. Each of the two is called an animal by the shared name, and the meaning is also the same.’

The *skopos* of the *Categories* is to analyse simple predications relevant to practical life. It shows how predications that are very different *substantively* and *logically* and which have differing valence may look the same *verbally*: whether I say, ‘That is Socrates’ or, ‘That is red’ or, ‘Man is a rational mortal animal’, the form of the predication looks the same, but describes entirely different relations between the subject (ὑποκείμενον) and what is said about it (predicate/ κατηγορούμενον). Consequently one cannot use them in argument in the same way; they must be used differently and with different consequences. In order not to form false opinions about things, one must therefore introduce further differentiations that go beyond the external form of the predication.

With the pair of terms ‘homonymous’ and ‘synonymous’ (Cat. 1a1-12) Aristotle in the *Categories* is primarily distinguishing the predication of secondary substances from predications of the other nine categories. If one predicates ‘man’ of an individual man as subject, then both the word (ὄνομα) and the meaning (λόγος) is predicated of this subject (the synonymous predication). If, on the other hand, one predicates ‘white’ of an individual body, the *term* is predicated

of the body, but not the λόγος of 'white' (the homonymous predication) (Cat. 2a19-34). In the case of other predications, 'of something that is in a subject', neither the term nor its λόγος is predicated of the subject.

There are other contexts for the analysis of homonymy in Aristotle's dialectic. The differentiation of words that are said in multiple ways – of πολλαχῶς λεγόμενα – in order to avoid homonymies, i.e. predications that look the same verbally but differ semantically, is one task of dialectic as conceived by Aristotle in the *Topics*. His dialectic is designed to stand at the start of the learning path and trains the students to broach basic philosophical questions by giving them the tools to make distinctions and to know when it is important to distinguish something.⁹

Εἷς μὲν οὖν τόπος τοῦ ἀσαφῶς, εἰ ὁμώνυμόν ἐστί τι τὸ εἰρημένον, οἷον ὅτι ἡ γένεσις ἀγωγή εἰς οὐσίαν καὶ ὅτι ἡ ὑγίεια συμμετρία θερμῶν καὶ ψυχρῶν ὁμώνυμος γὰρ ἡ ἀγωγή καὶ ἡ συμμετρία. ἄδηλον οὖν ὁπότερον βούλεται λέγειν τῶν δηλουμένων ὑπὸ τοῦ πλεοναχῶς λεγομένου. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ εἰ τοῦ ὀριζομένου πλεοναχῶς λεγομένου μὴ διελῶν εἶπεν ἄδηλον γὰρ ὁποτέρου τὸν ὄρον ἀποδέδωκεν, ἐνδέχεται τε συκοφαντεῖν ὡς οὐκ ἐφαρμόττοντος τοῦ λόγου ἐπὶ πάντα ὧν τὸν ὀρισμὸν ἀποδέδωκεν. μάλιστα δ' ἐνδέχεται τὸ τοιοῦτον ποιεῖν λανθανούσης τῆς ὁμωνυμίας. (Arist. Top. 139b19-27)

'One topos, then, of indistinctness is, if the definition is homonymous with something, e.g. 'Becoming is a way into being,' or 'Health is the balance of hot and cold elements.' Here 'way' and 'balance' are each homonymous: therefore, it is not clear which of the meanings of that which can have several meanings is meant. Equally, also, if what is defined, is said in multiple senses and yet is said without differentiation. For then it is not clear to which of them the definition given applies, and one can then bring a captious objection because the definition does not apply to everything of which the definition had been rendered. And that is particularly easy if the definer does not see the homonymy.'

The *Sophistici Elenchi* complement this by pointing out the *aporiai* into which one is led by overlooking homonymous predications or the *secundum quid*.¹⁰

Even though topics as a discipline is concerned with probable and non-scientific, or not scientifically true, inferences, as a method of learning it nonetheless remains relevant for philosophy itself, as Aristotle says in Book 8 of the *Topics*.¹¹ This is because, as a method, it is a way of testing the opinions or concepts and their meanings that we use in both thinking and speaking.¹²

⁹ See Top. B 3 110a23ff; A 7 and A 15 106b13ff; see in addition Top. Θ 14, 163b11ff. Cf. Andreas Beriger, Die aristotelische Dialektik. Ihre Darstellung in der 'Topik' und in den 'Sophistischen Widerlegungen' und ihre Anwendung in der 'Metaphysik' M 1-3, Heidelberg 1989, 95. On the character of the *Topics* as an art of debating designed to lead one to philosophy see Oliver Primavesi, Die Aristotelische Topik: ein Interpretationsmodell und seine Erprobung am Beispiel von Topik B, München 1996 (Zetemata (München)), passim und e.g. 20.

¹⁰ The investigation of the forms by which knowledge is generated through transfer in the commentaries on Aristotle can thus cite as precedent Aristotle's own definition of how topics relate to the generation of knowledge in the *Topics* and the *Sophistici Elenchi*; it builds on studies that have examined how the *Topics* or dialectical method relate to the discussion and analysis of substantive philosophical issues in Aristotle himself. Cf. on homonymies, or the lack of correspondence between things and words as a source of error in researches, Walter Leszl, Logic and Metaphysics in Aristotle. Aristotle's Treatment of Types of Equivocity and its Relevance to His Metaphysical Theory, Padova 1970, esp. 83ff. (SE 1 165a7ff) and cf. also J. T. Hintikka. Aristotle and the Ambiguity of Ambiguity, in: Inquiry II, 1959, 137ff.

¹¹ Oliver Primavesi, Die Aristotelische Topik: ein Interpretationsmodell und seine Erprobung am Beispiel von Topik B, esp. 58.

¹² Top. 155b4-13. The late antique commentators on the *Organon* for this reason ascribe to it an anagogic role in learning: Ps.-Ammon. in Apr. 3,35f.

In this there is an important role for the investigation of words that can be used in multiple senses and which hence must in each case be examined precisely for the meaning relevant in any individual usage.

Πότερον δὲ πολλαχῶς ἢ μοναχῶς τῷ εἶδει λέγεται, διὰ τῶνδε θεωρητέον. πρῶτον μὲν ἐπὶ τοῦ ἐναντίου σκοπεῖν εἰ πολλαχῶς λέγεται, ἐάν τε τῷ εἶδει ἐάν τε τῷ ὀνόματι διαφωνῆ. (Arist. Top. 106a9-12)

'Whether a word with regard to its meaning is said in multiple senses or just in one, may be considered by the following. First, look and see if its contrary is said in multiple senses, and whether the discrepancy between them is one of meaning or one of name.'

Differentiation is here a way to extend and complete one's own knowledge and begins with the simplest forms of learning. Aristotle's method is to begin from contradictions that arise when identity in the verbal expression is not tested for possible difference in the form of predication and in the meaning. From this arises the insight that here something is being said in multiple senses (πολλαχῶς λέγεται) which need to be differentiated.

The object of the *Sophistici Elenchi* is to present examples of errors that arise if one does not observe predications that look the same verbally but have different valences logically, that is, if one does not correctly distinguish verbal expressions that need to be differentiated logically, i.e., homonymies. That is the first step in the method.

But Aristotle is not content to leave the different meanings of words and expressions all at the same level. He is interested above all in those of the homonymous relations that are not random but which are 'ἀφ' ἑνὸς καὶ πρὸς ἓν', that is, those that possess similarity on the basis of a shared point of reference. The example that has drawn most attention in Aristotelian studies is Aristotle's statement, made in exactly this spirit, that 'being' is said in many senses:

Τὸ δὲ ὄν λέγεται μὲν πολλαχῶς, ἀλλὰ πρὸς ἓν καὶ μίαν τινὰ φύσιν καὶ οὐχ ὁμωνύμως (...) οὕτω δὲ καὶ τὸ ὄν λέγεται πολλαχῶς μὲν ἀλλ' ἅπαν πρὸς μίαν ἀρχὴν τὰ μὲν γὰρ ὅτι οὐσίαι, ὄντα λέγεται, τὰ δ' ὅτι πάθη οὐσίας, τὰ δ' ὅτι ὁδὸς εἰς οὐσίαν ἢ φθοραὶ ἢ στερήσεις ἢ ποιότητες ἢ ποιητικὰ ἢ γεννητικὰ οὐσίας ἢ τῶν πρὸς τὴν οὐσίαν λεγομένων, ἢ τούτων τινὸς ἀποφάσεις ἢ οὐσίας διὸ καὶ τὸ μὴ ὄν εἶναι μὴ ὄν φαμεν. (Metaph. Γ 2, 1003a33f. and 1003b5-10)

'Being is said in many senses, but in relation to one thing and to a single definite nature (...)

In this way, however, being, too, is said in many senses, but all in relation to a single principle. For some things are said to be because they are substances, others because they are affections of substance, others because they are a route to substance, or destructions, privations, qualities, productions or generations of substance or of what is said relative to substance, or negations of one of these or of substance. For even of non-being we say that it is non-being.'

This approach discovers a certain form of unity among the meanings by seeking not a mere similarity of name that needs to be differentiated, but rather the reason for this similarity. Through this it is revealed that the different predications, which are similar in meaning but different in certain respects, can be matched to a certain difference in content, from which the different uses of the word can be derived.

The unity thus discovered hence comprises a hierarchical structure in which all elements are related to the difference in content as primary meaning. This is the methodical principle by which concepts are differentiated in Book Γ of the *Metaphysics*. Here too Aristotle traces the multiplicity of the differentiated meanings of something to a connection and a primary meaning.

The second methodical step in the approach to homonymies is thus one that combines and structures by adding an explanatory level. It seeks the grounds for the similarity, the διὰ τί. It represents a differentiation in function and argumentative strategy, relative to the simple distinction between shared meaning and different meaning as found in the *Categories*.¹³ For that reason it is used frequently in ontological passages and in passages in which findings are set in a hierarchy.

This search for causes and creation of hierarchy continues the differentiating move that began with the simple distinction, to avoid contradictions, of expressions that can be used in many senses. For by accepting a hierarchical connection between the meanings of words a new possibility is opened up: the logical errors to be avoided (sc. if one thinks that it is a synonymous relation) can be understood as indicating a real connection, though one that requires differentiations if it is to be understood without contradiction. Both of these two methods generate knowledge, but the second one supplements the first with a further aspect, as the explanation for the familiar linguistic usage is provided and, through this, new knowledge is generated.

The commentators on Aristotle's critique of Plato (and Pythagoras) make lavish use of this encouragement to further differentiate and increase the degree of complexity of the matter under examination by differentiating levels of predication.¹⁴

I present Syrianus' approach as one first preparatory example for what I will show more precisely and in more detail in the third main part of my paper (ch. 4): Syrianus practises the described method when he wants to demonstrate that Aristotle has knowingly overlooked homonymies and so has falsely referred a statement that refers to a certain level of signification to a different one. This is not just an apologetic method of argument, as one might think at first glance; in terms of argumentative strategy it above all makes explicit, and hence comprehensible, the connection between these two confounded levels, i.e. a didactic horizon is opened up, what can be shown by the following argument from Syrianus' commentary.¹⁵

¹³ Christof Rapp, Ähnlichkeit, Analogie und Homonymie bei Aristoteles, in: Zeitschrift für Philosophische Forschung 46, 1992, 526, 537 with reference to Hans Joachim Krämer, Zur geschichtlichen Stellung der aristotelischen Metaphysik, in: Kant-Studien 58, 1967, 313-354, 338.

¹⁴ E.g. Phlp. in GC 130,28-131,7: ὡςπερ δέ, φησί, πολλὰ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὀνομάτων πολλαχῶς λέγεται, καὶ τῶν πολλαχῶς λεγομένων τὰ μὲν ὁμωνύμως λέγεται (ὡς Αἴας ὁ Τελαμώνιος καὶ ὁ Ὀϊλέως, καὶ κύων ὁ τε χειρσαῖος καὶ ὁ θαλάττιος) ἄπερ καὶ ἰσοτίμως μετέχουσι τοῦ ὀνόματος, τὰ δὲ ἀφ' ἑνὸς καὶ πρὸς ἕν, ὣν καὶ τὸ μὲν κυριώτερον λέγεται τὸ δὲ ἀκυρότερον (οἷον ἐπὶ τοῦ ὄντος πρῶτως μὲν καὶ κυρίως ἢ οὐσία ὄν, δευτέρως δὲ καὶ τρίτως αἱ ἄλλαι κατηγορίαι ὁμοίως κυρίως μὲν ζῶον ὁ ἀνθρώπος ὁ ἀληθινός, τὸ δὲ γεγραμμένον ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ ζῶον καλούμενον οὐ κυρίως καλεῖται ζῶον ὁμοίως ἢ μουσικῆ ἐπιστήμη καὶ ἢ ἀπ' αὐτῆς μουσικῆ γυνῆ ἢ μουσικῆ καθάρα, πρῶτως δηλονότι καὶ κυριώτατα ἐπὶ τῆς ἐπιστήμης τὸ τῆς μουσικῆς κατηγορεῖται ὄνομα).

¹⁵ George Karamanolis has proposed a related hypothesis to explain the *skopos* of Syrianus' commentary, by looking for positive functions and functionalisations of the Aristotelian arguments for the sake of philosophical teaching: George Karamanolis, Porphyry, the first Platonist Commentator of Aristotle (Supplement to the Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies, vols. 83.1-2), in: P. Adamson, H. Baltussen, and M. Stone (eds.) Science and Exegesis in Greek, Arabic and Latin, London 2004, 79-113, n. 18; cf. also Cristina D'Ancona, Syrianus dans la tradition exégétique de la 'Métaphysique' d'Aristote. 2, Antécédents et postérité, in: Marie O. Goulet-Cazé (ed.) Le commentaire entre tradition et innovation, Paris 2000, 311-327, who stresses Syrianus' important role in two respects: 1. Syrianus won acceptance for the commentary technique of Alexander of Aphrodisias as a mode in the Neoplatonic schools; 2. he ended the insistence on seeing Aristotle as an authority exclusively for the study of logic and established him as an authority also for the treatises on specific subjects. She sees one result of Syrianus' *Metaphysics* commentary as being the refutation and hence silencing of Aristotelian arguments that do not themselves possess positive functions.

Τούτων οὕτω προειλημμένων οὐ διαφωνοῦσι Πλάτων καὶ Πυθαγόρας καὶ οἱ πᾶσι αὐτῶν πρὸς ἀλλήλους περὶ τῆν τῶν εἰδῶν ὑπόθεσιν, ὡς φησιν Ἀριστοτέλης, ἀλλ' οἱ μὲν Πυθαγόρειοι περὶ τῶν αἰσθητῶν πρῶτον διαλεγόμενοι τοῖς αὐτοῖς ὀνόμασιν ἐχρῶντο κατὰ ἀναλογία ἀπὸ τῶν μεταφέροντες ἐπὶ τε τὰ μέσα καὶ τὰ πρῶτιστα τῶν πραγμάτων, ὅθεν καὶ ἔδοξαν, οὐκ Ἀριστοτέλει φαίην ἄν, ἀλλὰ τοῖς ἐπιπολαιότερον τῶν κείνων ἱστορήσασιν, περὶ μόνων τῶν χωρίστων εἰδῶν διαλέγεσθαι. (Syrian. in *Metaph.* 83,12-18)

'Once these things have been set out in this way first, Plato and Pythagoras and their followers agree among themselves about the acceptance of Forms, as Aristotle says, but the Pythagoreans, because they began their inquiries with the sensible things, used the same names, by analogy transferring them also to the median and first level of things; by this they were thought – not, I should say, by Aristotle but by those who investigated their teachings more superficially – to have been discussing only the inseparable Forms.'

The adequate distinctions are not to be found in language itself; instead one must everywhere reckon with homonymous uses of terms, which are to be discovered in the process of advancing knowledge through commentary, a process that will guide one to differentiations. Syrianus here explicitly denies that Aristotle is guilty of any error in argument.

That fits with Syrianus' 'Praefatio' to his commentary on *Metaphysics* M, where he emphatically recognises Aristotle as an authoritative teacher, and does so with explicit reference not only to the works in logic, ethics and natural science, but also to the *Metaphysics*, and there especially to Books Z and Λ.¹⁶

But how should we then assess his strategy of reminding Aristotle, through fictional apostrophes, of the basic principles of his own *Metaphysics* and conceptual system, which, so Syrianus, is in agreement with the work of differentiation undertaken by the Platonists?

In this 'Praefatio' Syrianus leaves open the grounds that may have led Aristotle to the attacks on the Platonic theory of Forms, attacks which, in Syrianus' view, miss their target.¹⁷ However, he presents the observation that the attacks are in reality not directed against the Platonic doctrines at all, but 'against his own hypotheses' (sc. of Aristotle about these doctrines) (Syrian. in *Metaph.* 80,21f.).

In content and in relation to Aristotle himself, Syrianus thus sees no need for clarification, and so also no need for detailed refutations; however, such a need does exist, in his view, for didactic purposes:

οὐδὲν μὲν ἐχέγγυον οὐδὲ ἰκανὸν πρὸς αὐτὰς λέγοντα, τὰ πολλὰ δὲ οὐδὲ πρὸς αὐτάς, εἰ χρὴ τ' ἀληθὲς ἀπροφασίστως εἰπεῖν, ἀπαντῶντα, ἰδίαις δὲ ὑποθέσει τὰς ἀντιλογίας προσάγοντα, εὐλογον ὥφθη φειδοῖ τῶν ἀπλουστέρων ἀχροατῶν, ὡς ἂν μὴ τῇ δόξῃ τῇ δικαίᾳ κατεχόμενοι τ' ἀνδρὸς εἰς καταφρόνησιν ὑπενεχθῶσι τῶν θείων πραγμάτων καὶ τῆς ἐνθέου τῶν πρεσβυτέρων φιλοσοφίας, βασανίσαι τὰ ῥηθέντα κριτικῶς ἅμα καὶ ἀδεκάστως εἰς δύναμιν, καὶ ἐπιδειῖξαι τὰς τε Πυθαγόρου καὶ Πλάτωνος περὶ τῶν ἀρχῶν θεωρίας ἀνελέγκτους καὶ ἀπτῶτους διαμεμενηχίας, 'καὶ τὰς' Ἀριστοτέλους κατὰ τούτων ἐπιχειρήσεις τὰ πολλὰ μὲν παρὰ θύρας ἀπαντώσας καὶ οὐδὲν τοῖς θείοις ἀνδράσιν ἐκείνοις προσήκοντα σχέμματα διερευνημένας, ὀλιγάκις δὲ λέγειν μὲν τι πρὸς αὐτάς καὶ ἀποτείνεσθαι προθυμουμένας, ἔλεγχον δὲ

¹⁶ Syrian. in *Metaph.* 80,4-7 und 9-14.

¹⁷ Syrian. in *Metaph.* 80,16f.

οὔτε ἐλάττονα οὔτε μείζονα προσφέρειν δεδυνημένας. (Syrian. in Metaph. 80,22-81,2)

‘... though here he says nothing that comes close or is adequate to them, and in large part he does not engage them at all, if one may speak the truth honestly, and instead presents counter-arguments against his own theories, it seemed reasonable, out of consideration for the simpler students – so that they are not taken in by the genuine authority of the man and hence carried off into despising the divine things and the divine philosophy of the ancients – to test what has been said by differentiation and at the same time as impartially as possible and to demonstrate that Pythagoras’ and Plato’s theories about first principles remain unrefuted and unshaken, and that Aristotle’s attempts against them in many cases miss their target and do not at all consider problems appropriate to those divine men and, when they occasionally strive to say something relevant to them and to touch upon them, they are not able to advance a refutation of either smaller or greater extent.’

The citation of other Aristotelian treatises is thus really directed at students of philosophy, who rightly see Aristotle as a great authority. However, since they follow a still simple and, as it were, literal interpretation, they are to be guided to the correct intellectual approach by reference to his own doctrine. This allusion by Syrianus to Aristotle’s own method matches in method the differentiating approach pursued by Gail Fine in her book on Aristotle’s *De ideis*, just as it does also with the attempt here to trace the differentiating moves made by Aristotle himself and by the late antique commentators since Syrianus.¹⁸

The commentators on Aristotle and the discussions among the Platonists are hence, in this sense, not misusing Aristotle’s terminology when they use it to analyse his argumentation against the Theory of Forms; rather, they are building on a method of approach that Aristotle himself had proposed in the Topics and other treatises, when he further developed and applied the concepts of homonymy and synonymy to uncover logical fallacies.¹⁹

In discussions of the Theory of Forms the same distinction is moulded and applied in a quite different way by the ancient commentators on the Metaphysics: a differentiation is made between predications on particular things and predications on Forms, which logically and ontologically precede the particular things as thinkable possibilities and principles; this differentiation is required by the substantive issues in question. The commentators are here setting themselves in a

¹⁸ Thomas Alexander Szlezák, Die Lückenhaftigkeit der akademischen Prinzipientheorien nach Aristoteles’ Darstellung in Metaphysik M und N, in: Andreas Graeser (ed.) *Mathematik und Metaphysik bei Aristoteles*, Bern 1987, 45–67, 49–51 points out that in this distinction Aristotle is oriented towards a ‘Modell des zeitlichen Werdens wahrnehmbarer Dinge’ (50, ‘a model of the generation in time of perceptible things’), and that the possibilities cited by him are ‘klarerweise nur auf wahrnehmbare Substanzen anwendbar’ (ibid., ‘clearly only applicable to perceptible substances’). This allows him to conclude: ‘In der Tat liegt dem Vorwurf der Unterlassung einer wesentlichen semantischen Unterscheidung letztlich eine Meinungsverschiedenheit über Zielsetzung und Natur der akademischen Frageweise zugrunde.’ (50, ‘In fact the charge of leaving out an essential semantic distinction is ultimately a difference of opinion about the goals and nature of the Academic style of enquiry’) Overall he wishes to show that the objections that Aristotle advances (above all against the fact that the Platonic doctrine has gaps) are not justified, to the extent that they do not consider the internal consistency of the theories but demand from them explanations that do not even arise within the horizon of their own questions/system. This accords with Fine’s approach, viz. that Aristotle is refuting his own construction of Platonic doctrines (cf. p. 2).

¹⁹ See below p. 20. Stephen Menn has proposed for such processes of applying a concept to different content three Arabic terms (*tashbīh*, *ta’t.īl*, *tanzīh*), which focus primarily on the religious and ontological problems arising from the simple transfer of forms of predicate and the need to ‘purify’ such erroneous simple transfers: Stephen Menn, *Self-Motion and Reflection: Hermias and Proclus on the Harmony of Plato and Aristotle on the Soul*, 49f. In my view this does not pay enough attention to the late antique commentators’ systematic use of the opportunity to undertake differentiating transfers in and out of different contexts (even in readings of the dialogues).

Platonic tradition of uncovering homonymies in the context of clarifying problems in the Platonic Theory of Forms. Paradigmatic for such efforts to differentiate is the commentary offered on the discussion of Forms in the first part of Plato's dialogue *Parmenides*; we first encounter this commentary as a connected account in Proclus.²⁰ Reciprocal influences with the peripatetic tradition of commentary on Aristotle are here very probable.

The adaptive transfer of the pair of concepts from the *Categories* into other argumentative contexts is, furthermore, paradigmatic for the use of the conceptual apparatus of the *Organon* in commentaries on the Aristotelian treatises on specific subject-matters and on Platonic dialogues as a whole. For the late antique Aristotle commentators use the propaedeutic dialectic, the instruments provided by (*Isagoge*,) *Categories*, *De interpretatione* and the syllogistic, as a didactic resource for the hermeneutic study of the texts they comment upon. This corresponds to the Neoplatonic school curriculum, which had been established at latest since and by Iamblichus, in which training in the techniques of the *Organon* provided the armoury of tools needed for philosophical teaching, something that was therefore taught at the beginning of a student's education.²¹ This also corresponds to the teaching activity of Plotinus' student Porphyry, who was probably the first to integrate Aristotle into the philosophical teaching of the Platonic schools as a second central teaching authority.²²

The fact that this conceptual armoury was available and ready for use by the recipients is reflected in the commentators' frequent practice of making explicit the logical figures in the Aristotelian argumentation. This is also revealed by the use of visual figures representing the three Aristotelian logical figures in the marginal glossing of the manuscripts of Aristotle, which appear alongside textual glosses containing excerpts from the late antique commentators on Aristotle.²³

However, not only the Aristotelian treatises, but also texts and concepts from the Platonic tradition were interpreted on the basis of Aristotle's *Organon*.²⁴ The investigation of the presence of concepts from the *Organon*, and commentary on them, in the commentators on Plato and in other Platonic text forms, as well as in other, non-logical commentaries on Aristotle, can yield important insights into the reciprocal inter-relation between the exegesis of Plato and of Aristotle. It can also cast light on the links between, and the equal standing of, the exegesis of Plato and

²⁰ Examples from Procl. in Prm. (on 128b): Proclus uses the Aristotelian terminology as the (first) logical approach: Ὅτι δὲ εἶναι δεῖ τὸ ἐν ὄν πρὸ τοῦ πλῆθους, λάβοις ἂν διὰ μιᾶς μὲν ἐφόδου λογικῆς τοιαύτης ἢ ὁμωνύμως λέγεται τὸ ὄν κατὰ τῶν ὄντων πάντων, ἢ συνωνύμως, ἢ ὡς ἀπ' ἐνὸς καὶ πρὸς ἕν ...; (on 130e): explicitly stating the need for differentiation of similar predications: 851,5-852,26; (on 133d): 93919ff. explicitly citing Aristotle.

²¹ Cf. Leendert Gerrit Westerink, *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy*, Amsterdam 1962, preface; id., *The Alexandrian commentators and the introductions to their commentaries*, in: Richard Sorabji (ed.) *Aristotle transformed. The Ancient Commentators and Their Influence*, Oxford 1990, 325-348 stresses that a standard form became established for the introductions to the commentary texts, which were of importance for didactic purposes, and the stability of this form.

²² George Karamanolis, *Porphyry, the first Platonist Commentator of Aristotle*.

²³ Cf. the exemplary edition of Nikos Agiotis, *Kodex Guelf. 24 Gud. gr.: Transkriptionen von Scholien, Marginalien, Interlinearien zu Aristoteles, De interpretatione c. 1 - 4*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca - Heuristik (Datenbank)*: <<http://cagb-db.bbaw.de/handschriften/handschrift.xql?id=R3VlbGYuEd1ZC4gZ3luID10>>. A research project under my direction is currently engaged in the study of these glosses and their significance for the movements of knowledge in and by the Aristotelian treatises.

²⁴ An example to which I shall return is Alexander's summary of the discussion in *Περὶ ἰδεῶν* in his commentary on A 9, 990b15, where he presents the grounds why the Platonists cannot accept Forms of relatives. That is excluded because for them the Forms are something that subsists in itself, whereas relatives have their being in their relation (*σχέσις*) to one another: Alex. Aphr. in *Metaph.* 83, 24-26. With this Alexander's summary is applying criteria from the *Categories* (Cat. 6a36-b2) to the discussion about the Forms. See in detail below, p. 21.

3 Homonymy and Synonymy in Metaphysics A 9, A 6 and M 4

Strategies of argument by the ancient commentaries aimed at discovering homonymies as a source of logical errors occur with special frequency and with a specific *skopos* in the lemmata to the discussion of Platonic and Pythagorean doctrines. The reason for this is that the method of differentiation by resolving homonymies is a relatively simple procedure which, through teaching of the *Categories*, was established and already well practised in the initial phase of teaching. As the discussion of the Forms concerns matters in the sphere of the purely conceptual, which are hence especially hard to communicate and approach, a familiar and simple-to-use method of differentiation is especially helpful for didactic purposes.

The functionalisation of this differentiating procedure can be investigated paradigmatically by comparing the commentaries on Metaphysics A 9, and within them taking the example of the commentary on A 9, 990b15-17.

ἔτι δὲ οἱ ἀκριβέστατοι τῶν λόγων οἱ μὲν τῶν πρὸς τι ποιῶσιν ἰδέας, ὧν οὐ φαμεν εἶναι καθ' αὐτὸ γένος, οἱ δὲ τὸν τρίτον ἄνθρωπον λέγουσιν. (Arist. Metaph. 990b15-17)²⁶

'Further, of the most accurate arguments, some lead to Ideas of relations, of which we say there is no class of its own, and others introduce the 'third man'.'

This passage treats the consequence that acceptance of the kind of Forms imputed to the Platonists by Aristotle would entail the necessity of accepting Forms of relatives and would lead to an argumentation in which 'the Third Man' is introduced, that is, in which there is an infinite regress in pursuit of an explanatory level.

I shall first discuss the context of the argument in Aristotle in order to be able to consider the strategies of the commentators. Then I analyse Alexander's commentary in the *editio vulgata*, after which I draw out the differences in the *altera recensio* and in Asclepius and Syrianus (in his commentary on the parallel passage in M 4, in which the arguments from A 9 considered here are differently contextualised).²⁷

Aristotle in Chapter 8 begins his second survey of the conceptions of earlier thinkers. Whereas Chapter 8 is devoted to other positions, including Pythagorean ones, in Chapter 9 he turns to those that accept Forms.²⁸ The question that Aristotle now poses is: what does reference to Forms contribute to the search for the causes of things, which is Aristotle's concern in A as a whole?²⁹

²⁵ Karamanolis argues that it was Porphyry who first accepted and used Aristotle as an authority in philosophical teaching of equal value to Plato and in agreement with him: George Karamanolis, Porphyry, the first Platonist Commentator of Aristotle, esp. 100; see on the didactic function of the commentary literature as a whole: Ineke Sluiter, Commentaries and the Didactic Tradition.

²⁶ Primavesi in A 9 convincingly argues for the reading ἀκριβέστατοι and thus follows the α-tradition and Alexander's lemma.

²⁷ Syrianus' commentary responds in its argumentation to the different context created by Aristotle in M 4, for which reason I have not been able to present the four commentators' strategies towards the passage of A 9 under discussion in a strict chronological arrangement.

²⁸ Oliver Primavesi, Second Thoughts on Some Presocratics (Metaphysics A 8, 989a18-990a32), with a new critical edition of the Greek Text by Oliver Primavesi, in: Carlos Steel (ed.) Aristotle's Metaphysics Alpha. Symposium Aristotelicum, Oxford, 225-264, 226-229.

²⁹ On the differentiation of the goal of argument in Chapters 3-7 relative to Chapters 8-9 see 988b16-21.

In brief, and at times in an abbreviated form that cites material already familiar, he presents various arguments against the validity of the Theory of Forms.³⁰ These all, in different ways, concern the question of the kind of similarity between particulars and Forms, and the *aporiai* that can be derived from such relations of similarity if the Forms are to serve as explanatory causes for the particulars.

In our passage (990b15-17) Aristotle debates a way of understanding this similarity which he terms ‘very well thought through’ or ‘most precise’ (ἀκριβέστατον), but which he nonetheless criticises with the argument that two *aporiai* arise from them, and indeed either both together or at least one of the two. These two *aporiai* are, firstly, the acceptance of Forms of relatives, which ‘we’ reject, as Aristotle says, placing himself within the Academic tradition, or, secondly, the infinite regress which (as Alexander says) had been known since the sophists and Plato’s *Parmenides* (Prm. 132a-133a) by the name ‘the Third Man’, that is, the argument that if one assumes Forms that are similar to particulars, then a higher Form must also be assumed as the common feature shared by the two similar relata.³¹ In what follows I will concentrate on the first part of this critique (except for the analysis of the exegesis of Syrianus and Asclepius, where the discussion of ‘the Third Man’ is included.)

Aristotle’s formulation here is very brief.³² Our question, thus, is: how does a most exact form of expression and differentiation lead to the acceptance of Forms of relatives (which was according to Aristotle rejected by Platonists³³ as impossible)?

3.1 Aristotle’s use of ‘homonymous’ and ‘synonymous’ in A 6 und A 9

Taking a cue from the arguments about similarity that define the Chapter, it seems most obvious to look for the connection at the point where a differentiation is sought in the predication of something (universal) about particulars.³⁴ For the opening brief arguments cite a position that identifies the Forms directly with the abstract universal that can be predicated of many particulars (ἐν ἐπὶ πολλῶν b7f.) alongside those particulars. The demonstration that this cannot be adequate determines the arguments in the chapter up to this passage.

If the λόγος that is now under discussion is more exact, then it must introduce a further differentiation.³⁵ What that is is not made explicit by Aristotle himself and can therefore only be

³⁰ Gail Fine, *On Ideas: Aristotle’s Criticism of Plato’s Theory of Forms*, vii sees in this a tactic by Aristotle, which seeks to indicate the faultiness of what is presented through the confused character of the presentation. However, she differentiates between the position of Plato himself and the interpretations of it to which Aristotle responds or which he constructs, and which he then in his refutations charges with a systematic lack of transparency.

³¹ William David Ross, *Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, reprinted 1953 with corrections, Oxford 1924, 194-196. The problem is discussed in detail from the aspect of self-predication of the Forms by John Malcolm, *Plato on the Self-Predication of Forms: Early and Middle Dialogues*, Oxford 1991.

³² See the interpretation by Gail Fine, *On Ideas: Aristotle’s Criticism of Plato’s Theory of Forms*, 197-202 in debate with Robin, Leszl und Cherniss: Léon Robin, *La théorie platonicienne des idées et des nombres d’après Aristote. Étude historique et critique* par Léon Robin, Ann Arbor 1908; Walter Leszl, *Aristotle’s Conception of Ontology*, Ann Arbor 1975; id., *Logic and Metaphysics in Aristotle*; Harold F. Cherniss, *Aristotle’s Criticism of Plato and the Academy*, Baltimore 1944.

³³ Dorothea Frede, *The Doctrine of Forms Under Critique (Part 1)*, with a new critical edition of the Greek Text by Oliver Primavesi, in: Carlos Steel (ed.) *Aristotle’s Metaphysics Alpha. Symposium Aristotelicum*, Oxford 2012, 265-296, 272, speaks of ‘unwelcome forms’.

³⁴ See on this below fn. 46, with reference to the interpretations of *ibid.* and Gail Fine, *On Ideas: Aristotle’s Criticism of Plato’s Theory of Forms*, 197-202.

³⁵ Fine, too, pleads for a distinction between the ‘Accurate One over Many Argument’ discussed here from the first ‘One over Many Argument’ and proposes that Aristotle introduced this second argument to soften his critique of the Platonic Theory of Forms: *ibid.*, 201. That is interesting, as the proposal ascribes to Aristotle an intention to differentiate through the interpretations of the Theory of Forms which he is critiquing.

established indirectly.

In the spirit of the *Categories* (Cat. 1a1-12) it would be most obvious to seek this differentiation in the analysis of a homonymous relation between Form and particular. Aristotle makes this possibility explicit at three points in A (987b9f.; 990b6f.; 991a5-8).³⁶

Already in A 6, in a much-discussed passage that recounts the genesis of the Theory of Forms, he reports that due to the fact that sensibly perceptible particulars are subject to alteration and change, Plato had ruled out the possibility that universal definitions could refer directly to particulars (987b6f.). For that reason he called that which *could* be a universal concept a ‘Form’. However, these universals can only be predicated indirectly of the particulars, via the Forms (κατὰ τὰ ὄντα), which are apart from the particulars (987b7-9).

This is followed by a hard-to-interpret formulation, which poses exegetical problems that are reflected also in the manuscript transmission. The sentence has been elucidated in a recent close study by Carlos Steel.³⁷ Picking up the line of thought in the commentators’ discussion I here supplement Steel’s reflections by proposing two differentiations: one with regard to Aristotle’s argument itself and one with regard to Alexander’s exegesis.

κατὰ μέθεξιν γὰρ εἶναι τὰ πολλὰ τῶν συνωνύμων [ὁμώνυμα] τοῖς εἶδεσιν (987b9-10)

‘for the many that is synonymous with the Forms is [sc. something definite] by participation in them’

The transmission is (1) τῶν συνωνύμων in Laurentianus 87.12 and in Alexander, Asclepius and Moerbeke’s translation, and (2) ὁμώνυμα in combination with τῶν συνωνύμων in Parisinus Graecus 1853.

The reading ὁμώνυμα is unknown to both Alexander and Asclepius. It is worth examining whether this is a later marginal explanation of τῶν συνωνύμων which has entered the text in the course of transmission. The character of such a marginal note and the grounds for its appearance would need to be sought in the text of Aristotle, an attempt I shall now make.

Steel³⁸ begins his interpretation of the sentence quoted above with a summary of Alexander’s exegeses.³⁹ As regards Aristotle he ultimately comes to the conclusion that there is no ground to assume that Aristotle must be imputing to Plato the view that Forms and particulars stand in a homonymous relation, because the *Parmenides* passage cited does not use ‘homonymous’ in the strict sense of the *Categories* as ‘only homonymy’ but rather in the simple sense of having the same name, without any further differentiation of the meanings involved.⁴⁰

Steel stresses that Aristotle in A 9 explicitly understands Plato’s view as accepting the thesis that Forms and particulars must be synonymous with one another. In that case, however, he must also accept that the two have the same essence; if Plato were to contest that, the result would be the position, unacceptable to Plato, of strict homonymy. In A 6, so Steel, Aristotle refrains from

³⁶ On homonymy and synonymy in the Theory of Forms: G.E.L. Owen, A Proof in the Peri Ideon, in: *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 77, 1957, 103–111; Christopher Shields, Order in Multiplicity: Homonymy in the Philosophy of Aristotle, Oxford 1999; Terence Irwin, Homonymy in Aristotle, in: *Review of Metaphysics* 34, 1981, 523–44; Gail Fine, On Ideas: Aristotle’s Criticism of Plato’s Theory of Forms, 144–151.

³⁷ Carlos Steel, Plato as seen by Aristotle (Metaphysics A 6), with a new critical edition of the Greek Text by Oliver Primavesi, in: Carlos Steel (ed.) *Aristotle’s Metaphysics Alpha. Symposium Aristotelicum*, Oxford 2012, 167–200, 177–180.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 177–180.

³⁹ At the end he also refers to an analogous passage in Proclus’ commentary on the *Parmenides*, which addresses the question why Plato in the *Parmenides* says of the particulars that they are homonymous with the Forms. Alexander’s attempts to explain this will be discussed below in debate with Steel’s arguments.

⁴⁰ Carlos Steel, Plato as seen by Aristotle (Metaphysics A 6), 179.

raising the problems related to the rejection of a shared substance, and the differentiations they would prompt, and understands by ‘synonymy’ the similarity with regard to name and being.⁴¹

A focus on the strategy of argument suggests, as an option for interpreting Aristotle, a further differentiation of these reflections, if we consider even more specifically the different strategic argumentative contexts in the passage cited and in the two passages in A 9 (990b6f.; 991a5-8).⁴²

Aristotle begins Chapter A 9 by creating a connection between the Theory of Forms and the search for causes. In their search for the causes of things, the Platonists had assumed Forms and, as something that is apart from the particulars, they had counted an equal number of them in addition (990a34-b2); in reality, so Aristotle, this had added no explanatory content.

From this argumentation Aristotle in 990b6-8 says that there is something homonymous which can be predicated of sensibly perceptible and of eternal things as an abstract universal (‘as one over many’). What usage of the term ‘homonymous’ should we assume in this passage, in which Aristotle is trying to establish, in a way relevant to the search for causes, that there is not a difference between the particulars and the Forms, the latter being identified with the abstract universal concept?

Clearly it is here not, or not directly, possible to apply the usage established in the *Categories* (1a1-12). There, as we have seen, something is homonymously predicated if it is predicated of something else with the same word (ὄνομα) but a different meaning (λόγος). The focus is on this simple distinction between homonymy and synonymy as respectively the mere sharing of a name or also of a common meaning, in which there is a difference of meaning in homonymy.

However, in the expression ‘homonymous’ the accent can also be placed on the fact that there is a shared name, but that no inquiry has yet been made into the relation between the meanings (λόγοι), i.e. that this quality remains for now undefined.

Such a usage is found in Plato, who terms the Forms homonymous with the particulars in the *Parmenides* (133d3), *Timaeus* (52a5) and *Sophistes* (234b7). In the *Parmenides* the passage is part of the propaedeutic, anagogic-didactic exchange between Parmenides and the young Socrates. The specific context is an *aporia* into which Parmenides wants to lead Socrates: if he accepts that the Forms and knowledge of them cannot be related to the particular and knowledge of it, then it follows that it is in principle impossible to know anything at all. The description of the particulars as the same merely in name is part of this argument, which leads into the *aporia* but which thereby indicates the need to introduce more distinctions. If the particulars are the same as the corresponding Form only in name, the resulting separation of particular thing and particular knowledge from Form and knowledge as a whole would entail a series of *aporiai* that would present a basic challenge to the possibility of rational knowledge and rational discourse (135b6-c4).

In the *Sophistes* the argumentative context does not relate directly to the distinction between particular and Form. Instead its aim is to define the production of appearances by the sophists by classing the sophist’s art as one of the mimetic arts. It is said here that the products of this imitative art of producing appearances generate imitations which are homonymous with that which is, and hence they are able to deceive the young, but this statement about homonymy does not exclude a similarity in content. This would in fact be necessary for a successful deception, even though the emphasis is here on the difference between that which is and a mimetically

⁴¹ Carlos Steel, Plato as seen by Aristotle (Metaphysics A 6), 180.

⁴² Gail Fine distinguishes between an ‘extreme’ and a ‘moderate’ understanding of homonymy, by which the ‘moderate’ understanding does not exclude a possible similarity of the λόγος, or partial overlap (Gail Fine, On Ideas: Aristotle’s Criticism of Plato’s Theory of Forms, 145f.). It seems to me important to broaden this ‘moderate’ understanding through further, context-specific differentiations.

produced appearance.

The *Sophistes* passage is thus of interest for the fact that it generates a need for differentiation, for the purposes of argumentative strategy. The differentiation concerns the question what defines the separate nature of the λόγος of the predication, viz. is it defined in reference to realised definite instances, or in reference to independent versus dependent being?

The situation is a very similar in the passage in the *Timaeus*, which appears in the well-known context, relevant to the Theory of Forms, of the introduction of matter as a third principle alongside Forms (Ideas) and eidetic definition in the particulars. Here it is said of the immanent forms that they are ‘homonymous [with the Forms/Ideas], similar to them, secondary, perceptible, generated, are always moved about, came into being at a particular place and in turn perished from there, are apprehensible by opinion together with perception’ (52a5-8). Of these immanent forms Timaeus also says that they are imitations of that which always exists (50c4f.). They too are thus assigned both a substantive difference with regard to their manner of being and also a similarity with regard to the εἶδος realised in a particular thing. Thus one is entitled to translate both interpretively as either/both ‘only the same in name’ or else/as well as ‘showing their sameness in their name’.

Aristotle thus has a predecessor in Plato in using the term ‘homonymous’ in the context of an argument that calls for differentiations and makes it possible to place emphases on different aspects.

The second passage in A 9, 991a5-8, adopts the simple distinction of concepts used in the *Categories*, too, but here it is used *in the same sense* as in the *Categories*.

εἰ δὲ μὴ τὸ αὐτὸ εἶδος, ὁμώνυμα ἂν εἴη, καὶ ὅμοιον ὥσπερ ἂν εἴ τις καλοῖ ἄνθρωπον τὸν τε Καλλίαν καὶ τὸ ξύλον, μηδεμίαν κοινωνίαν ἐπιβλέψας αὐτῶν. (Arist. *Metaph.* 991a5-8)

‘But if they have not the same form, they will be homonymous, and it is as if one called both Callias and a wooden image ‘man’, without observing any commonality between them.’

Aristotle once more formulates the dilemma of the similarity of the particulars and the Forms: if one posits that the definition (εἶδος, which is the same as the λόγος in the *Categories*) of the Forms is the same, there must be something common to both Form and particular; but this leads to an infinite regress. If, in contrast, one posits that the substantial being (εἶδος or λόγος) of the two is predicated in a solely homonymous way, then we are dealing with a weak kind of similarity which does not take any account of the commonality that exists between the two. Aristotle’s example is Callias and a wooden statue of Callias.

It is implied that here too one could say that ‘Callias’ is predicated of Callias and of his likeness strictly homonymously in the sense of the *Categories*. By this, however, one would be neglecting the commonality in their definition (κοινωνία); that is, this commonality is left underdefined. Aristotle thus makes clear indirectly that to answer these questions it is necessary to differentiate the simple distinction of the *Categories* on which his argument is based, though he does so, admittedly, without presenting such a solution himself.

What is sought is a defined difference among the meanings (when some commonality exists), and this could be understood, in the spirit of the Platonic Theory of Forms, as the distinction between proper (κυρίως) and improper (μὴ κυρίως or δευτέρως) predication.

This differentiation in the predication corresponds, further, to the position that Aristotle himself favours in his analysis of homonymous relations i.e. in the *Metaphysics*, when he con-

siders the way in which two predications refer to one thing (πρὸς ἓν). With this, however, both Plato and Aristotle set up a hierarchy in which one thing is ‘properly’ something, while another thing is only ‘improperly’ or secondarily so. ‘Socrates’ is predicated properly of the teacher of Plato, but improperly of an image of Socrates. One meaning is that of the model, the other that of the likeness. The differentiation helps one to understand the substantive point that something can be similar to something else, and similar in a way defined by content, without it necessarily being granted the same ontological status.

Against this background we can (following Steel) construe the genitive in the passage at 987b9f. as a genitive of definition and translate ‘the many, which is synonymous with the Forms, is [sc. something definite] by its participation in them’. ‘Synonymous’ thus refers to the sameness in meaning (λόγος) that must necessarily be presupposed, but not to an absolute identity in essence.

We can now propose that the reading ὁμώνυμα in Par. Gr. 1853 was originally a gloss on τῶν συνωνύμων in 987b9f.⁴³ (1) It can be affirmed that the gloss indicates the need to clarify the verbal usage; when we examine the ancient commentaries we will see that this necessity was seen very clearly by the commentators and that a detailed explanation was provided. (2) It hints that assuming a relation of simple synonymy between Form and particular leads necessarily to *aporiai*, and that for that reason the other side of the relation of similarity needs to be supplemented, viz. the necessity that there be a defined dissimilarity of meaning. Thus the reading of Par. Gr. 1853 at this passage reveals that the reader is presented with a double possibility: the particulars have a homonymous relation to the Forms insofar as they stand apart in ontological status, but a synonymous relation insofar as their definition (their λόγος) depends on the Forms and is the same as them, even if, on a more differentiated view, only dependently and secondarily the same or similar.

The gloss ὁμώνυμα makes explicit these options for differentiation, which go beyond the still simple distinction of the *Categories*. It thus pursues strategies of argument that we will be able to identify also in the commentaries by Alexander, Asclepius and Syrianus on the passages in question,⁴⁴ but not in Aristotle himself. In this passage (though not in the analogous discussion in the *Περὶ ἰδεῶν*) he keeps the argumentation at a simpler level, in which the sameness of content in a predication is derived from the concept of participation, and hence he speaks of a synonymy in the sense of the *Categories*.

⁴³In this codex there are at this point two marginalia (dated by Dieter Harlfinger to the 13th or early 14th century, i.e. about 400 years after the codex had been written), that attest (1) knowledge of the other reading and (2) awareness of the three ways of understanding τῶν συνωνύμων, τῶν ὁμώνυμων (as an interpretation of τῶν συνωνύμων), τὰ πολλὰ τῶν συνωνύμων and of the problems that are involved in these meanings. In the first and shorter gloss the writer is referring to another reading in other manuscripts that have τὰ πολλὰ τῶν συνωνύμων, τοῖς εἶδεσιν. I include also a transcription of the longer one (added to τὰ πολλὰ at the bottom margin) by Dieter Harlfinger, with many thanks: τὰ καθέκαστα καὶ κατὰ μέρος ταῦτα καὶ αἰσθητὰ τῶν πραγμάτων, ἐν μεθέξει φησὶν ἔλεγε πλάτων εἶναι τῶν ἰδεῶν ἀδίων οὐσῶν καθόλου ὄντα λεγόμενα, ὁμώνυμωσ τοῖς εἶδεσι τὸ δὲ τῶν συνωνύμων οἱ μὲν, ἀντὶ τῶν [τῶν s.l.] ὁμώνυμων ὡς εἴπομεν ἐξελάβοντο οἱ δὲ, ἀντὶ τοῦ, συνωνύμων. τὰ γὰρ πολλὰ τῶν συνωνύμων. ὡς οἱ καθέκαστα πάντες ἄνθρωποι οἱ, εἰσὶν ἀλλήλοισ συνώνυμοι καὶ οἱ ἵπποι καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἕκαστοι, μεθέξει τῶν ἰδεῶν εἰσὶν εἶρηκε δὲ τοῦτο τὸ πολλὰ, διὰ τὸ, μὴ πάντων ἰδέας τὸν πλάτων τίθεσθαι τῶν γὰρ κατὰ σχέσιν οἷον τῶν πρὸς τι [vel πρόστι], οὐκ ἐτίθετο ἰδέας. ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ τινὸς τῶν παρὰ φύσιν οὐδὲ ὄλωσ τῶν κακῶν. It reflects different meanings of the term “homonymous” and “synonymous” respectively.

⁴⁴There is, of course, a sofar unresolved question whether and in which regard there is a byzantine tradition that in some way continues this kind of dealing with Aristolian concepts by transferring them into new contextes and thereby differentiating or changing them; and whether the glosses in the Par. Gr. 1853 are responding to that tradition.

3.2 Homonymy and the Acceptance of Forms of Relatives in A 9 and M 4

This differentiation enables us to work out an understanding of the argument that Aristotle briefly hinted at, namely how the acceptance of Forms of relatives comes about (on A 9, 990b15-17). For the investigation into the usage of the conceptual pair synonymous-homonymous by Aristotle in A 9 has shown that he implicitly alerts the reader to the need, in the context of the discussion of the Forms, to differentiate this terminology borrowed from the *Categories*.⁴⁵

Aristotle describes the briefly mentioned argument, as we have noted, as ‘most precise’. The thesis that will be presented here links this to the discussion above and takes the very great precision of the new argument to lie in differentiation of how the Platonic concept of participation is understood.

At the start of A 9 the Form is identified with ‘one that can be said of many in the same way’. If the argument on which 990b15-17 is based differentiates this definition, then probably by means of a more precise definition of the relation between Form and particular.⁴⁶

The complex of problems that may arise from this is made clear by Aristotle with reference to Forms like ‘equal’, ‘different’, ‘double’ etc. If, then, instead of the simple formulation ‘one that can be said of many’, here the Form is accepted as the model (παράδειγμα), which is properly (κυρίως) that which is predicated of the particulars, the question arises of how (i. e. properly or secondarily) for example, ‘equal’ can be predicated.

If we accept that ‘equal’ is predicated of the particulars in *strictly* homonymous fashion, because they are not ‘properly’ equal in the way that the Form is, but rather find themselves (quantitatively) in constant change, then we must accept a Form of the Equal in an entirely analogous way to every other thing of which a Form is accepted; for none of the particulars is ‘equal’ in the sense of a model and none in the sense of a likeness, but rather ‘equal’ is predicated of each synonymously, i. e. with the same meaning. Consequently, there is a need for a further instance that is to be distinguished, which Aristotle here calls ‘Form’.

This corresponds to the argument mentioned previously by Aristotle, which derives the Forms from knowledge of something and, on this basis, introduces Forms of everything possible of which one could form an opinion (990b11f.).⁴⁷

The ‘most precise logos’ thus, in Aristotle, still demands further differentiations, for here too more falls under the term than the Platonic tradition accepts, as Aristotle says (ὅν οὖν φάμεν εἶναι καθ’ αὐτὸ γένος 990b16f.). Aristotle argues against this assumed or constructed tradition and points out possible internal contradictions.⁴⁸

Now, it is admittedly by no means clear from the start that Aristotle is here correctly reporting ‘the’ Platonic tradition. For acceptance of a Form of the Equal is only problematic for the Platonic

⁴⁵Simplicius (in Cat. 24,6-25,9) places in his commentary on Cat. 1 a1ff. – while further developing the explanations of other (anonymous) commentators and referring to Plato as an authority– emphasis on the fact that the dissolving of homonymies itself is not a task of differentiating words but of recognizing the distinctness of certain objects. Therefore, homonymies refer to processes of differentiation by reflecting on the distinguishable object (πρᾶγμα).

⁴⁶The arguments presented here confirm and make explicit the systematic differentiation, proposed by Gail Fine in relation to Aristotle’s criticisms of the Theory of Forms in Περὶ ἰδεῶν, between less precise (i. e. abstract universal) arguments and those more precise arguments that are problematic in that they entail acceptance of Forms of things that Platonists did not wish to accept: Gail Fine, *On Ideas: Aristotle’s Criticism of Plato’s Theory of Forms*, 201ff. Dorothea Frede, too, concludes that the greater precision characterises better justification: Dorothea Frede, *The Doctrine of Forms Under Critique* (Part 1), 273 and ff.

⁴⁷Cf. this explanation in Alex. Aphr. in *Metaph.* 83,17-13.

⁴⁸Alexander stresses that the demonstration that the theory of Forms, along with its arguments, does not yield what it aims to defend, and, further, that it introduces forms of more things than it aims to, shows that the theory of Forms refutes itself and requires no external arguments to be refuted: Alex. Aphr. in *Metaph.* 78,21-25.

tradition in certain circumstances. After all, Plato in the *Phaedo*, in a central, much discussed passage, emphatically uses this very example in discussion of the Forms (Phd. 73c-75d). In the *Parmenides*, too, Forms of relatives like Size and Difference are mentioned (131cf.), as also among the μέγιστα γένη of the *Sophistes* (254a-259b).

Accepting this is problematic only if one understands relatives in the way intended in the *Categories*, which makes statements about how we predicate something of particulars and of universal concepts that we abstract from particulars. For only then is it clear that statements in the category of the πρός τι are statements about something that is in a subject and hence has no independent being. Aristotle seems here to assume this perspective as an argumentative strategy for debating the Theory of Forms.⁴⁹

This does not mean that he regards this use of terms and this method of approach as adequate to the corresponding dialogue passages and doctrines in Plato. These are models of argument that possess a value for sensitising the reader and the learner of philosophy. For they make clear the problems that arise if the Theory of Forms is interpreted against this background. The assumption that the Theory of Forms *must* be discussed or understood in this way and no other would be a further, additional assumption, which Aristotle's argumentation at least does not require.

In the discussions on the τὸ ἦν εἶναι and in Book Λ Aristotle himself uses other kinds of differentiation,⁵⁰ different from those of the *Categories*,⁵¹ which argues for the view that his confrontational combination of the *Categories'* tools for predication-analysis with the Platonists' discussion of Forms, which is concerned with the adequate grounds for knowledge, is an argumentative strategy with a didactic purpose. The argument thus has a specific function, particularly in the context of the Academy as a teaching institution, but one within a tradition that is itself continuously developing through differentiation, and not, or not necessarily, a position that is attacking it from outside.⁵²

It is with this premise, that is, with the perspective of the *Categories*, that Aristotle next treats the tensions between the Platonic theory of first principles (of monad and dyad) and the Theory of Forms, and here too the abbreviated argument presupposes that numbers are understood as something that is relative to something else. That is, numbers are understood as instruments for counting something,⁵³ which likewise corresponds to the perspective of the *Categories*, with its focus on predicating something of particulars.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Cf. Alexander's summary of the περί ἰδεῶν: in *Metaph.* 82,11-83,34 and 85,15-24.

⁵⁰ The transfer of these texts into the context of the critique of Forms is one of the most important argumentative strategies of the ancient commentators, on which see below.

⁵¹ On the problem of the concept of substance in the *Categories* and in *Metaph Z* see the outstanding analysis and explanation by Rainer Thiel, *Aristoteles' Kategorienschrift in ihrer antiken Kommentierung*, Tübingen 2004 (Philosophische Untersuchungen), 58-66.

⁵² Dorothea Frede takes the view that Aristotle himself made the argument mentioned by him here on the basis of his *Categories* and in a critical spirit as part of the school discussions within the Academy: Dorothea Frede, *The Doctrine of Forms Under Critique* (Part 1), 277 and see G.E.L. Owen, *A Proof in the Peri Ideon*, 111.

⁵³ See on this Gyburg Radke, *Die Theorie der Zahl im Platonismus. Ein systematisches Lehrbuch*, Tübingen/Basel 2003, 475-481.

⁵⁴ See the summary of the context of the περί ἰδεῶν by Alexander: in *Metaph.* 86,5f. On this see Gail Fine, *On Ideas: Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's Theory of Forms*, 174-182. Fine stresses in her analysis of Aristotle's arguments, with reference to the problems raised by Forms of relatives, that Aristotle imputes a certain position to Plato and then refutes it. She takes the view that Aristotle thus poses the right questions and indicates serious weaknesses in the Platonic position. E.g. *ibid.*, 190. One's ultimate assessment of the argumentative strategy is, as is shown by the interpretations of Owen, Fine and Frede, dependent on one's interpretation of Plato's Theory of Forms. However, as a (provisional) conclusion in this debate, Aristotle's argumentation can be seen as a strategy of differentiation which - whatever Plato's position was - made possible an increase in knowledge with regard to predication and the grounds

In this regard it is interesting to consider the other argumentative contextualisation that Aristotle gives the arguments from A 9, in M 4 and 5, because a theme in M is the link to Plato's theory of Forms of numbers. As has been shown by others⁵⁵ the two doxographical approaches that Aristotle undertakes in Chapters 6 and 9 pursue different goals: A 6, as part of the first critique in Chapters 3-6, has a limited *skopos* and is striving to maintain aspects that confirm and make plausible the correctness of its distinction of causes (A 3, 983b1-6 and A 7, 988a21-23); Chapters 7-9, on the other hand, investigate the doctrines of earlier thinkers more thoroughly and from a perspective that is expanded specifically in each case.

Against this background of the order of arguments in A, their re-arrangement in and for M 4 and 5 and their transfer into a new argumentative context in a way that differentiates the arguments (or any other kind of transfer that alters them) is noteworthy: elements of argumentation from the first approach (A 6) are now brought together with those from the second part of the critique (A 9),⁵⁶ and this is done in a new context for the discussion of the Theory of Forms from A, viz. the questions posed in M (and N) whether, and if so which, substances exist aside from the perceptible ones.

In the present inquiry, which is attempting to understand the argumentative strategies of the late antique commentators and the functions ascribed to the doxographic statements, the central issue is not the genesis of the text of the *Metaphysics*,⁵⁷ but rather the effects of this transfer on the argumentative strategy of Aristotle himself, as we have seen (on the readers of his treatise) and on the exegetical practice of the commentators.

The comment and interpretation has often been made that, in the course of the re-combination of the arguments from A 6 and A 9 in M 4, Aristotle presents a new definition of how the genesis of Plato's Theory of Forms relates to Pythagorean number theory.⁵⁸ M 4 divides consideration of the Forms or their introduction by the Platonists (among whom Plato is not mentioned by name in M), on the one hand, from the doctrine of the Pythagoreans about the Forms of Numbers on the other. The Forms are now exclusively derived from the Socratic-Heraclitean nexus.

The Pythagoreans are mentioned (alongside Democritus), but only with the statement that they, unlike Socrates, had not elevated the question 'What is F?' to a general principle of method, but had only inquired into the definition of a few things, a definition that they identified with numbers.

Socrates had in this way created the basis of a general dialectic, but had always remained focused on the things to be defined, without considering them separately from one another. This had been done first by the Platonists with the result that now, analogously to the Socratic method, they were obliged to accept that there were Forms of everything of which one can ask the question, 'What is it?' (1078b27-34).

Now, this is precisely the point at which the example from the start of A 9 is (seamlessly) attached and now, unlike in A 9, it is used to demonstrate the problems that arise from this Socratic origin. The further argumentation in M 4, unlike the identical passage of A 9, stands *directly* under the premise that it is to be related to the Socratic search for definitions and the

of knowledge.

⁵⁵ Oliver Primavesi, *Second Thoughts on Some Presocratics* (*Metaphysics* A 8, 989a18-990a32), 226-229.

⁵⁶ A 6, 987a32-b7 corresponds to M 4, 1078b12-25; A 9, 990b2-991b9 corresponds to M 4/5, 1078b34-80a8 passing over 1079b3-11.

⁵⁷ Sc. the relation of the later Book M to Book A, which was composed earlier. Cf. Werner Jaeger, *Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Metaphysik des Aristoteles*, Berlin 1912, 28-37.

⁵⁸ Dorothea Frede, *The Doctrine of Forms Under Critique* (Part 1), 266, Julia Annas, *Aristotle's Metaphysics M and N*. Translated with introductory essay and philosophical commentary (Oxford, Clarendon Aristotle Series), Oxford 1987, 152-154.

beginnings of dialectic.

The separation of mathematical substance and Form follows strictly from the argumentative strategy deployed in M 1: Aristotle wants to analyse the question of non-perceptible substances by means of a survey of the doctrines developed to date. To this end, the mathematical substances are to be considered first separately and in themselves, and then the intelligible substances separately and in themselves (1076a22-28).

Aristotle mentions explicitly that among the earlier doctrines there were positions that link the two, take them together or identify them, but for the sake of analysis they must be considered separately (1078b9-11). After the announcement of this intention follows the narrative account of the genesis of the Theory of Forms (1078b11-13 and ff.). Aristotle says we ought to consider the Forms separately from the mathematical substances and that we should also think of them in the same way as when the Theory of Forms was first devised. The doxographical narrative is thus not a justification of this way of proceeding but is brought in as additional support for the chosen form of argument.

M 4's division of Pythagoreans from Socrates (sc. and not of Pythagoreans from the Platonic theory of Forms) sets the accent on the fact that it was Socrates who first pursued the 'What is?' question with stringent and universalising logic. In contrast, in A 6 the Pythagoreans were not compared with Socrates but rather their terminology was compared with that of Plato. In M 4, in the spirit of the stated approach, no relation is posited between the Forms as substances and mathematical entities introduced by the Pythagoreans, but only between the Socratic definitions and the Platonic Forms; it is assumed that the latter were identical to the Socratic concepts but were merely assigned a different ontological status. (The question of what affinities there could have been between Plato and the Pythagoreans is not touched upon at all.)

M 4, 1079a11-13, which is identical to A 9, 990b15-17, thus has a different argumentative context from the parallel passage in A 9, namely one in which the immanent universal concepts of Socratic horistic have shown the way to address the problems that are then raised. For the question is then asked what the consequences would be if one were to say of such concepts (sc. Socratic, as just defined) that they have the status of independent substances.

This applies also for the possibilities that this argumentation offered for differentiation, or reflections on differentiation, as we find them among the ancient commentators, i.e. not with regard to the genesis of the text of the *Metaphysics*, but with regard to the arrangement of the text that existed in late antiquity. These are now involved directly in the debate about the immanent universal (which is developed by Aristotle in *Z*) and a separate universal, with Aristotle ascribing to the separate universal no other, or no more differentiated, definition than the one that has developed out of the Socratic dialectical question of definition.

4 The Commentaries on Metaphysics A 6, A 9 and M 4

The task is thus to explain, in and through the text of Aristotle, the various possible ways of understanding similarities between particulars and Forms, in the sense of the Platonic theory of Forms and its critics, and how they are contextualised or transferred into specific similar, different or new contexts. This task is taken up by the surviving commentaries in different ways, but their arguments are always based on making explicit Aristotle's argumentative structure as derived from the *Organon*.

To analyse these differences I begin from the fact – widely attested and occasionally reflected upon – that the later commentaries draw on the material and results of the oral and written exege-

sis by others and integrate this into their texts.⁵⁹ This method of text production is itself already an important characteristic of the process of tradition-formation being investigated here. However, this does not, as one might suppose, lead directly or necessarily to assuming that the process was 'merely traditional' or assuming stagnation in the production of knowledge. It is rather a means for a different kind of development in knowledge and differentiation, which cannot be adequately described by the simple dichotomy of innovation versus (uncreative) tradition.

The differences among the commentators lie essentially in the way in which Aristotle's argumentative structure is evaluated and set in relation to the doctrine that is treated and criticised, but not, however, in the evaluation of Aristotle's intentions, which are throughout assessed positively and hence also developed further in a constructive way for didactic purposes. That does not mean that harmony between Aristotle and the Platonic tradition is presupposed or hinders the philosophical analysis. In fact, every argument is sorrowfully analysed and evaluated.

The evaluations of his intentions often begin with the formulation, favoured by Aristotle, by which he himself is included by use of the first person plural in the tradition of Platonic doctrine that is being critiqued. The need to explain this inclusion by Aristotle of himself in the Platonic tradition prompts Alexander to insist, right at the start of his commentary on A 8, that Aristotle does so with the best of intentions, aiming for the truth (Alex. Aphr. in Metaph. 77,35-78,4).⁶⁰

4.1 Alexander, *editio vulgata*

Alexander's commentary on A 9 summarises the tenor of the debate about the Platonic theory of Forms into the criticism that the relation of similarity between particulars and Form contributes nothing sufficient for an analysis of causes. This is shown already in the fact that he sees the core of the first argument about the doubling of the world by the world of Forms not in numerical equality but in similarity; for the analysis of causes, he writes, this would mean that something unknown would be supposed to be explained by something else just as unknown (Alex. Aphr. in Metaph. 76,21-26).

Alexander then emphasises that Aristotle in the first argument is not making the claim that the Platonists double the particulars with the Forms, but that they double the abstract universal concepts of the species, for it is only of these, and not of the individuals, that one can seek the defining causes.⁶¹ This is important because now his basic approach becomes apparent, namely that the Theory of Forms is worked out in the course of the chapter into a means of differentiating the simple opposition of particulars and abstract universal concepts, which name the undifferentiated commonality in a set of many things and have no independent ontological status. Only then can the Theory of Forms be plausible, or at least more plausible.

The need to move beyond the identification with the abstract commonality in the definition of Forms runs through the whole of the commentary on the chapter, in which Alexander – interpreting Aristotle – stresses that if *κοινά* are equated with Forms one will necessarily have to accept many Forms of things of which the Platonists do not want to accept Forms: of negations, relatives and non-being. This is part of the summary that Alexander gives, from 79,3 to 85,13,

⁵⁹ Of importance here are the studies by Philippe Hoffmann (e.g. Philippe Hoffmann, *Les catégories aristotéliciennes* pote et pou d'après le commentaire de Simplicius. *Méthode d'exégèse et aspects doctrinaux*, in: Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé et alii (ed.) *Le Commentaire entre tradition et innovation*, Paris 2000, 355-376) and Pantelis Golitsis (Pantelis Golitsis, *Les Commentaires de Simplicius et de Jean Philopon à la "Physique" d'Aristote: Tradition et Innovation*, Berlin/New York 2008 (Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca et Byzantina)).

⁶⁰ And cf. on A 9, 990a15: 83,30-32; Ascl. in Metaph. 71,26-29; Alex. Aphr. alt. rec. 78 ad 4. On the 'we' in A and in M cf. Dorothea Frede, *The Doctrine of Forms Under Critique* (Part 1), 269f. and n. 12, who notes the possibility that the difference between A and M arises through a development in Aristotle's thought.

⁶¹ Alex. Aphr. in Metaph. 77,4-6.

of Aristotle's argument in the first book of *Περὶ ἰδεῶν*, because this forms the background to the abbreviated critique in A 9.⁶²

This is the background to Alexander's distinction between a homonymous and a synonymous predication of 'equal' of particulars and of Forms, by which he tries to elucidate the argument about positing Forms of relatives, arguing in an analogous way to his lemma on A 6, 987b6 (in *Metaph.* 50,19-51,25).

κατηγοροῦμεν δὲ τῶν ἐνταῦθα τὸ ἴσον αὐτὸ ὁμωνύμως αὐτῶν κατηγορούμενον οὔτε γὰρ ὁ αὐτὸς πᾶσιν αὐτοῖς ἐφαρμόζει λόγος, οὔτε τὰ ἀληθῶς ἴσα σημαίνουσα κινεῖται γὰρ τὸ ποσὸν ἐν τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς καὶ μεταβάλλει συνεχῶς καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἀφωρισμένον. ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ἀκριβῶς τὸν τοῦ ἴσου λόγον ἀναδεχόμενον τῶν ἐνταῦθά ἐστὶ τι. ἀλλὰ μὴν ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ὡς τὸ μὲν παράδειγμα αὐτῶν τὸ δὲ εἰκόνα οὐδὲν γὰρ μᾶλλον θάτερον θατέρου παράδειγμα ἢ εἰκὼν. εἰ δὲ καὶ δέξαιτό τις μὴ ὁμωνύμων εἶναι τὴν εἰκόνα τῷ παραδείγματι, αἰεὶ ἔπεται ταῦτα τὰ ἴσα ὡς εἰκόνας εἶναι ἴσα τοῦ κυρίως καὶ ἀληθῶς ἴσου. εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, ἔστι τι αὐτόισον καὶ κυρίως, πρὸς ὃ τὰ ἐνθάδε ὡς εἰκόνας γίνεται τε καὶ λέγεται ἴσα, τοῦτο δὲ ἐστὶν ἰδέα, παράδειγμα. † καὶ εἰκὼν † τοῖς πρὸς αὐτὸ γινομένοις (*Alex. Aphr. in Metaph.* 83,7-17)

'But we predicate the equal itself of the particulars here as a homonymous predication. For the same concept does not fit all of them, nor are we signifying the truly equal. For quantity moves in the perceptibles and constantly changes and is not defined. There is not a thing among the things here that receives the conceptual definition of the equal in a precise way. Nor in such a way that one of them is a model, the other a likeness. For each is no more model than likeness of the other. But if someone accepts that the likeness is not homonymous with the model, it always follows that these equal things are equal as likenesses of the properly and truly equal. But in that case, there will be something that is the equal itself and properly so, in relation to which the things here come into being as likenesses and are called equal, but that is idea, model †and likeness† for the things that come into being in relation to it.'⁶³

Alexander holds that when we predicate 'equal' of particulars we must be predicating the concept 'equality' homonymously (i.e. with another meaning than what we predicate of the Equal itself). To support this Alexander cites from the definition of homonymous in the first chapter of the *Categories*. The meaning λόγος of the predication is not the same if we predicate 'equal' of particulars and of the Equal itself, for we then mean not that which is truly equal, as Alexander puts it (summarising Aristotle) in Platonic terminology.

The explanation is Platonic too: for the individual perceptible is in motion and changes continuously and is not defined as something that is identical with itself. It is also not exactly that which the λόγος of the equal encompasses.

If, however, one were to concede that 'equal' is stated homonymously, the problem arises (thus Alexander) that one would have to concede that among the particulars of which

⁶² Dieter Harlfinger has provided a first-rate edition of this passage, which distinguishes between the *recensio vulgata* and the *recensio altera* as being two commentary texts that should be treated separately: Dieter Harlfinger, *Edizione critica del testo del "De ideis" di Aristotele*, in: Walter Leszl (ed.) *Il "De ideis" di Aristotele e la teoria platonica delle idee*, Firenze 1975 (*Accad. Toscana di Scienze e Lettere "La Colombaria"*), 17-39. The text provided by Harlfinger has been reprinted in Gail Fine, *On Ideas: Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's Theory of Forms*, 3-11.

⁶³ Cf. the translation by *ibid.*, 17.

one predicates 'equal', one is 'equal' in the proper sense, but the other only in a derived sense; but that would be senseless, because neither of the two is more the paradigm of the other than vice versa.

Thus from the homonymy of the predication it is inferred that a relation of model to likeness is present. If one at first only thinks, in the sense of the *Categories*, of predication always primarily as predications about particulars, one must strictly conclude that one of the two relations must be the model, the other the likeness. Hence one must accept that there is such a thing as the equal itself, as something of which something can be predicated and in relation to which the many equal things are equal.

Alexander continues with his complete treatment of all thinkable differentiations of different kinds of predicate and poses the question how one could replace the difficulties mentioned by replacing a synonymous kind of predication by one that distinguishes between proper and improper predication.

οὐδὲ γὰρ τὸ κοινὸν εἶναι τι παρὰ τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα ἀπλῶς οὗτος ὁ λόγος δοκεῖ δεικνύναι, ὥσπερ οἱ πρὸ αὐτοῦ, ἀλλὰ τὸ παράδειγμά τι εἶναι τῶν ἐνταῦθα ὄντων κυρίως ὅν τοῦτο γὰρ χαρακτηριστικὸν εἶναι δοκεῖ τῶν ἰδεῶν μάλιστα. (Alex. Aphr. in *Metaph.* 83,19-22)

'For this argument does not seem, like the ones before it, simply to show that there is some common thing besides the particulars, but that there is some model of the things that have their being here, which has being in a proper sense. For that seems to be the most characteristic for the Ideas.'

The differentiation of the simple 'One over Many' argument, i.e. the argument from the abstract commonality, by the model-likeness relation thus improves the explanatory quality of the Forms.

Against this possibility stands only (as also in Aristotle himself) the fact that this would or must be rejected by Platonists if, as is implicitly assumed, the qualification of relatives as non-independent being, as stated in the *Categories*, is applied. It is telling that Alexander first affirms that this more precise statement of the relation of similarity of particulars and (universal) Forms is characteristic of the Theory of Forms, but then cites Aristotle himself, who says, according to Alexander, that this is to posit Forms of relatives, which – now as a summary of Platonic doctrines – is rejected with Aristotle's argument from the *Categories* that relatives do not have independent being, which, however, is presupposed for the Forms.⁶⁴

Thus Alexander is developing, through an exegesis that makes explicit possible homonymous and synonymous manners of predication, the sense in which the theory of Forms distinguishes proper and improper manners of predication through the distinction between model and likeness, and thus extends an approach that assumes straightforwardly synonymous predications.

In this he builds on his exegesis of A 6, where he had already treated the question of synonymy and homonymy in detail, in relation to the interpretation of 987b9f. (Alex. Aphr. in *Metaph.* 50,19-51,25).⁶⁵

For our inquiry into the strategy and organisation of the argument it is important that Alexander understands the connection between 987b7-9 and 987b9f. as one continuous exegetical movement that leads to increasing precision: (1) Aristotle at first establishes, so Alexander,

⁶⁴ See above n. 49

⁶⁵ On this see Carlos Steel, *Plato as seen by Aristotle (Metaphysics A 6)*, 177f.

that that which can be thought and grasped as something definite is termed Form by the Platonists. He then adds that every sensible-perceptible thing exists besides these Forms and is named according to them. According to Alexander, Aristotle makes this point more precise in his exegesis (ἐξηγήσατο) by the explanation that the sensible-perceptible particulars are 'by participation', that is, they are 'by participation' a definite something. Alexander supplements the text of Aristotle when he understands this last addition as 'for most of the particulars are by participation' and so supplements 'τὰ πολλά' with 'τῶν αἰσθητῶν', matching his interpretation. Through this (so Alexander) a further increase in precision is needed, which Aristotle has provided exegetically (ἐξηγοῦμενος) through the addition 'τῶν συνωνύμων τοῖς εἶδεσιν', that is, 'of the things synonymous to the Forms', which means the same as 'of the things synonymous to these synonymous Forms'. For, so Alexander, that which is synonymous to the Forms is of this kind. The final exegesis thus stresses the reciprocity of the synonymous relation - understood in the sense of the *Categories*.

Alexander sees the ground for this exegetical move towards greater precision in the fact that the Platonists do not accept Forms of everything.

Up to this point Alexander has stayed entirely with the exegetical movement of the Aristotelian argument and has been retracing it. The further exegeses supplement this basic clarification. They do not present exclusive, alternative understandings (above all of the genitive 'τὰ πολλά τῶν συνωνύμων'), but extend the context in which the argument is understood and to which it is referred, that is, into which (for Alexander) it needs to be transferred. In the first step (2) he undertakes an identification of 'τὰ πολλά' with 'τὰ αἰσθητά'. That is merely a repetition of the previous exegetical move and makes clear the connection between participation and synonymy between perceptible particulars and Forms; however, it leads to a different definition of syntactic function.

The perceptible particulars are something definite according to the participation in those Forms to which they are synonymous. The genitive 'τῶν συνωνύμων τοῖς εἶδεσιν' is thus read as an abbreviated relative clause (51,3-7). In this movement an aspect is thus highlighted which names the relation between definite Form and definite particular.

Something analogous occurs in the next exegetical move, which is introduced not as an alternative but as a further possible interpretation (3): 'one could understand the lexis (i.e. the words of the text) also in the following way' (51,7). This further possibility makes explicit the relation between one Form and many particulars. It is not just any particulars that participate in a Form, but only those that have an equal definition and are synonymous with each other.⁶⁶

In this context he extends the argumentative context with reference to Plato's own language in the dialogues; Plato, says Alexander, spoke about the particulars being homonymous to the Forms, not synonymous (51,11-25). How then could Aristotle talk, in a 'ἱστορία' about Plato, of a synonymy between Forms and particulars?

To explain this, Alexander differentiates the sense intended by Plato and comes to the conclusion that Plato in these texts founded his argument on a generic concept of homonymy, which does not require that the particulars share only their name with the Forms. For Plato must mean a similarity according to the λόγος or εἶδος, if the particulars have their being in relation to the Forms, that is, they are recognised and get their definition from them. Alexander's transfer into the context of Platonic thought itself differentiates the exegesis further: there must be a similarity between particular and Form with regard to substantive definition or meaning. That, however, is the definition of synonymy (sc. in the *Categories*).

At the end of this differentiating move Alexander finally (4) supplements it with a comple-

⁶⁶ See above p. 7 (on the need for differentiation of the concept of homonymy).

mentary differentiation which addresses the distinctness of the ways in which particulars and Forms are predicated, a distinction that must exist but which is of a different kind. This is the Platonic distinction between a proper (*κυρίως*) and an improper or derived predication (51,24f.).

The four exegetical and differentiating moves described are thus not alternative proposals of how the text is to be constituted or how the syntax of the sentence commented upon is to be construed. Rather the different substantive aspects that are to be considered are unfolded one after the other as a movement of thought that draws in different intellectual and textual contexts.

What arises from this is a panorama of all the distinctions that are necessary and helpful for the understanding of Aristotle's account of the problem of the relation between particulars and Forms. Alexander builds on what he calls, in Aristotle, an exegetical movement, imitating him in method. The knowledge that is generated by this expands a simple, preliminary understanding of the Aristotelian text through a plethora of references and differentiations.

4.2 Ps.-Alexander, *editio altera*

In the *editio altera* that has been transmitted of Alexander's commentary, but which recent scholarship has convincingly shown to be an independent, later commentary that builds on Alexander,⁶⁷ this movement of differentiation by means of, among other things, the conceptual armoury of the *Categories* is taken further and made more explicit. The explanations on homonymous and synonymous kinds of predication introduce as further differentiations a properly (*κυρίως*) synonymous kind of predication, as distinct from an improperly synonymous kind of predication.

This distinction is intended to clarify the problem, discussed by Alexander, of why homonymous predication is, on the one hand, to be rejected, while on the other hand the differentiation of model and likeness is productive. The argument against 'proper' synonymy is exactly as in Alexander. However, because, as with Alexander, a homonymous kind of predication is rejected as impossible, a third possibility arises by establishing a systematic terminology, namely the kind of predication that is synonymous but improperly so, which is identified with that of the predication of particulars, on the one hand, and Forms (or: the equal itself) on the other. Alexander's approach of differentiating via the Platonic differentiation of proper from improper is thus systematised.

Λείπεται οὖν τὸ αὐτόισον κατηγορεῖσθαι αὐτῶν συνωνύμως οὐ κυρίως δέ. Τὸ γοῦν αὐτόισον οὐ τῶνδε τῶν ἴσων τῶν αἰσθητῶν κυρίως κατηγορεῖται ἀλλὰ ἄλλου παρὰ ταῦτα, οὗ εἰκόνες ὡς ὁμοιώματα τὰ τῆδε εἰσὶν ἴσα. Τοῦτο δ'ἔστιν ἡ ἰδέα. Φησὶν οὖν ὅτι εἰ καὶ ἀκριβῶς οὗτος ὁ λόγος κατασκευάζει τὰς ἰδέας ὡς οὐ καθόλου τι λέγων τὸ κατηγορούμενον, ἀλλ' ὡς παράδειγμα καθ' ὃ τὰ κατ' ἐκεῖνο λεγόμενά εἰσιν, ἀλλ' οὖν πρὸς τί γε ἰδέας ποιοῦσι (τὸ γὰρ ἴσον ἐφ' οὗ νῦν ὁ λόγος προέβη τῶν πρὸς τί ἐστι πρὸς ἴσον γὰρ τὸ ἴσον λέγεται), οἱ δὲ τὰς ἰδέας εἰσάγοντες οὐκ ἐβούλοντο ἰδέας εἶναι τῶν πρὸς τι. (Alex.Aphr. in Metaph. 82, alt.rec. gr. discr. 11.12)

'Thus it remains that the Equal itself is predicated of them (sc. the sensible things) synonymously but not properly. For the Equal itself is not predicated of these equal sensible things properly, but of something else beside them, of which these equal things here are likenesses like assimilations. That is the Form (idea). He thus says that, even if this argument produces the Forms accurately, because it does not call

⁶⁷Pantelis Golitsis, *La recensio altera du Commentaire d'Alexandre d'Aphrodise à la Métaphysique d'Aristote et le témoignage des manuscrits byzantins Laurentianus plut. 87,12 et Ambrosianus F 113 sup.*, in: J. Signes Codoñer - I. Pérez Martín (Hg.), *Between Textual Criticism and Quellenforschung (Lectio)*, Turnhout: Brepols (in print).

that which is predicated something universal, but a model according to which the things that are named after it are, they produce Forms in the category of relation (for the equal about which the argument is conducted belongs to the category of relation, because the equal is said in relation to something equal), those who adduce Forms do not want Forms in the category of relation.'

With this explanation, Aristotle's praise of this argument as 'most exact' (ἀκριβέστατος) in comparison to the preceding one is at the same time made explicit.

4.3 Asclepius of Tralles

Alexander's commentary is ever-present in the Alexandrian commentator Asclepius of Tralles as in all other commentators of the 5th and 6th centuries⁶⁸ and it is frequently summarised and quoted.⁶⁹

A comparable explicit adoption and repetition of commentary cannot, on the other hand, be demonstrated with reference to Syrianus' commentary on the *Metaphysics*, but it is nonetheless more than likely that there are references and developments that build on it. For Asclepius' commentary is entitled an '*Apo phones*' commentary from the lectures of his teacher Ammonius.⁷⁰ As in all other instances of *Apo phones* commentaries, here we can identify the contribution of Ammonius vis-a-vis the contribution of the writer of the commentary only vaguely if at all. The students of Ammonius all attest to the decisive role that he played in the constitution of an Alexandrian Neoplatonism and of an exegetical method by adapting the inheritance of Syrianus and Proclus.

As Ammonius was a student of Proclus, himself a student of Syrianus, a proximity in content and similarity in argumentative strategies between Syrianus and Asclepius is probable even where explicit references are lacking and even though the exact words or interpretation of Syrianus are for the most part inaccessible to us. In two passages in the commentary on Book Z Asclepius mentions Syrianus by name (433,9-14 and 450,22-25), and these are in contexts that are relevant to the debate about the Platonic Theory of Forms.⁷¹ The commentary can thus be linked at least indirectly to Syrianus' commentary on M and N.⁷²

⁶⁸ Cf. on this Cristina D'Ancona, Syrianus dans la tradition exégétique de la 'Métaphysique' d'Aristote, Pantelis Golitsis, Les Commentaires de Simplicius et de Jean Philopon à la "Physique" d'Aristote: Tradition et Innovation, 60.

⁶⁹ For that reason modern scholars have generally not given a sympathetic portrait of Asclepius as a commentator on the *Metaphysics*. He has seemed too heavily dependent on Alexander of Aphrodisias, whom he uses and quotes in detail. That is actually the most positive thing that Hayduck, the editor of the commentary in the CAG series, is prepared to say about Asclepius: 'nam Asclepius cum ipse ad verba philosophi accurate et subtiliter explicanda neque ingenio satis valeat nec disciplina Ammonii magistri, qui placita magis Aristotelis refutare quam verba diligenter excutere studeat, satis paratus instructusque sit, ex commentariis Alexandri Aphrodisiensis, cui principem inter omnes Aristotelis interpretes locum Bonitzius recte ac merito adsignat, multa saepe aut excerpsit aut ad verbum descripsit.' ('Praefatio' to the edition of Asclepius' *Metaphysics* commentary by Michael Hayduck, CAG VI,2, Berlin 1888, v). 'For while Asclepius himself has for the precise and subtle exegesis of the philosopher's words neither sufficient acuity nor adequate training and instruction in the technique of his teacher Ammonius, who is more concerned to refute the views of Aristotle than to weigh his words carefully, he has often taken from the commentaries of Alexander of Aphrodisias, to whom Hermann Bonitz has rightly and admirably given first place among all commentators on Aristotle, many things either as excerpts or paraphrases.'

⁷⁰ Taran in his edition of Asclepius' commentary on Nicomachus, 8, n. 31-35. See also Concetta Luna, Trois études sur la tradition des commentaires anciens à la Métaphysique d'Aristote, Leiden 2001.

⁷¹ Dominic O'Meara, Pythagoras revived, e.g. 121f. See also Concetta Luna, Trois études sur la tradition des commentaires anciens à la Métaphysique d'Aristote, 142-189.

⁷² D'Ancona argues that it was Syrianus who established Aristotle as a teaching authority not only in propaedeutic logic but also in philosophy in the Neoplatonic schools: Cristina D'Ancona, Syrianus dans la tradition exégétique de la

Asclepius (or his report of the lectures of Ammonius) makes even more explicit what is implicit in Alexander's analysis and in that of the commentator of the *altera recensio*.⁷³ This occurs also through direct references to texts from the Corpus Platonium and through further explication and transfer by expanding the contextualisation of the Aristotelian arguments within the Corpus Aristotelicum.

At the start of this explication he refers (69,17f.) to an earlier lemma to A 6, in which he points out the way in which Aristotle himself (in *Metaphysics* Λ and in *De gen. et corr.* I 3) maintains the dependence of (knowledge of) the particulars on ideas that are prior to them, which had been developed by Plato in succession to Socrates.⁷⁴ In a double apostrophe, Asclepius confronts Aristotle with his own doctrine and its agreement with the basis of the Platonic position being criticised, which is elucidated through references to *Phaedo* (44,37-45,3), *Cratylus* (45,3f.) and *Theaetetus* (45,5-12), set in debate with Aristotle's summary of the genesis of the Theory of Forms.⁷⁵ This explicitly expands the textual context in which the matter under examination is to be analysed and understood, i.e. it calls for an intellectual and exegetical transfer.

Here in the commentary on A 9, *De anima* Γ 4 and 5 are included as an additional new context, as proof of Aristotle's closeness to the Theory of Forms in his own philosophy (69,18-22). This time Asclepius uses the tactic of first setting up a possible objection ('someone might say...') by directly confronting Aristotle with the contradiction that he himself accepts Forms but is criticising precisely this acceptance of Forms (69,22).

Asclepius answers in Aristotle's place and proposes to understand Aristotle's criticism not as criticism of Plato, but of another specific theory of Forms, different from that of Plato, which assumes Forms that subsist in themselves and independent of the intellect (69,23-27).

Agreement with Plato is thus derived as a resolution to an argumentative contradiction within the Corpus Aristotelicum. This occurs through a massive expansion of the exegetical context in the Corpus Aristotelicum and in the Corpus Platonium. The presentation of the argument explicitly takes a position on what the relation of these textual contexts is to each other and among themselves as a group. Here too the argumentative contradiction concerns the different way in which the relation between particulars and Forms is understood and it is clarified through reference to different kinds of predication.

In the commentary that follows, Asclepius then clearly and unambiguously divides off what Aristotle says from the true explanation. 'That is what Aristotle says. But one must know that the number (sc. the number of things) is by no means doubled by the Forms.' For the latter, according to Asclepius, subsist as causes, the former as that which is caused. As abstracted causes, however, it makes no sense to add them to the number of the perceptible things, because they are not on the same ontological level (70,1-5). Here again Aristotle is confronted with his own doctrine in Λ , this time in Λ 8, which, according to the unanimous view (sc. of ancient interpreters of Aristotle), is based on an acceptance of causes (70,5-13).

An interesting aspect is the reference to homology at this point. Asclepius thus cites the commentary tradition into which he is placing himself in his argument and upon which he is building to draw further, much more explicit, conclusions than his predecessors.

In the further commentary on A 9, in an analogous way, the internal contradictions be-

'Métaphysique' d'Aristote, 313-319.

⁷³ Pantelis Golitsis, *Les Commentaires de Simplicius et de Jean Philopon à la "Physique" d'Aristote: Tradition et Innovation*, 58-64 describes (together with Philipp Hofmann) the manner of commentary as a work of inlay, in which in the lemmata compiled from lemma-text, *theoria* and *lexis*-explanation are compiled or supplemented from the commentary texts transmitted in the tradition, often without naming the earlier commentator.

⁷⁴ Ascl. in *Metaph.* 44,32-45,14.

⁷⁵ Ascl. in *Metaph.* 44,35 and 45,13.

tween Aristotle's critique and his own doctrine, on the one hand, and between his critique and the doctrine of Plato himself, on the other, are made explicit and lead to resolutions through differentiations. That is true also in the second part of the argument of Aristotle presented above, who says of the most exact argument that it leads to the acceptance of Forms of relatives and to the Third Man.

τρίτον μὲν οὖν ἄνθρωπον εἰσάγουσι τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον. φασὶ γὰρ ὅτι τῶν ὁμοιοτήτων ὑπάρχουσιν αἱ ἰδέαι. εἰ τοίνυν φασὶν ὁμοίαν τὴν ἰδέαν εἶναι τῷ αἰσθητῷ ἀνθρώπῳ, ἐξ ἧς καὶ γέγονε, φανερόν ὅτι ἔσται ἰδέα τῆς ὁμοιότητος ταύτης καὶ οὕτως ἔσται τρίτος ἄνθρωπος. (Ascl. in Met. 75,21-24)

'Now they introduce the argument from the Third Man like this: for they say that there are Ideas of similarities. But if they say that the Idea is similar to the perceptible man, out of which he has also come into being, then it is clear that there will be an Idea of this similarity. And so it will come to the Third Man.'

Asclepius adds, in order to establish that the Form is not similar to the particulars in the same sense as the particulars can be similar, first the addition ἐξ ἧς καὶ γέγονε; what is meant by the expression 'Form' is thus defined as the (formal or paradigmatic) cause of the particulars or individual persons. Thus the hypothetical syllogism already contains, as an addition, the argument against its substantive valence. The argument from the Third Man is by this at once marked as substantively false.

ἀπολογούμεθα τοίνυν ἡμεῖς ὑπὲρ τοῦ Πλάτωνος τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον, φάσκοντες ὅτι ἡ ὁμοιότης ἐν τοῖς στοιχείοις θεωρεῖται, τουτέστιν ἐν τοῖς καθ' ἕκαστα αἰσθητοῖς. ἡ γὰρ ἰδέα οὐκ ἔστιν ὁμοία τῷ αἰσθητῷ, εἴ γε τὸ μὲν αἰσθητὸν ἔστι, τὸ δὲ λόγος ἐξηρημένος τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ. ὥστε οὐ δυνατόν εἶναι ἰδέαν ἰδέας,... (Ascl. in Metaph. 75,29-33)

'We reply in defence of Plato in this way, saying that the similarity is seen in the elements, that is, in the particular perceptible things. For the Idea is not similar to the perceptible, if the one is perceptible and the other is the Logos abstracted from that which is perceived. Therefore it is not possible that there could be an Idea of an Idea...'

What has been prepared in this way is then made explicit with reference to Plato, whom Asclepius mentions by name. He makes the ontological distinction of the two compared objects into the principal object of consideration and in so doing uses a terminology current in Proclus but attested since at least⁷⁶ Porphyry, who terms the Forms, insofar as they are principles of the particulars, as ἐξηρημέναι in contrast to the particulars.⁷⁷

Asclepius thus criticises Aristotle for accepting an ontological similarity between perceptible particulars and Forms; however (for Asclepius), there is in fact no such similarity as Aristotle

⁷⁶ In Plotinus the formulation occurs twice in tractates of the 6th Ennead: VI.2.9.29; VI.4.16.43.

⁷⁷ Porph. in Platonis Parmenidem commentaria (fragmenta. Section 6 line 28 und f.). On the term as a characterisation of the kind of universal that functions as a principle in the *Analytica Priora* see Arbogast Schmitt, *Anschauung und Denken bei Duns Scotus. Über eine für die neuzeitliche Erkenntnistheorie folgenreiche Akzentverlagerung in der spätmittelalterlichen Aristoteles-Deutung*, in: Enno Rudolph (ed.) *Die Renaissance und ihre Antike. Die Renaissance als erste Aufklärung*, Tübingen 1998, 17-34.

must assume for his argument, because the conceptual is 'ἐξηρημένον', that is, dimensionally separated from the perceptible. Asclepius in this way utilises the uncovering of homonymy to defend Plato and in doing so applies an essential insight into Aristotle's method in debate with Plato to elucidate the argumentation in question.

Unlike Alexander, he explicitly takes up a position in his re-contextualising arguments, and takes sides on behalf of the Platonists. However, a point he has in common with Alexander is that his extensions of the context and exegeses serve to elucidate individual aspects of the text commented upon, which in this way is illuminated from all sides and transferred into a wider discussion context and so extended intellectually.

4.4 Syrianus

Syrianus' commentary probably did not cover Book A even in its original form.⁷⁸

However, we find in the commentary on M 4, which is in large parts identical to A 6 and A 9,⁷⁹ an interpretation of the Aristotelian argumentation from A and an analogous argumentation and exegetical differentiation, which engages with the same, or the same but differently combined, doxographies.⁸⁰

Above we have already traced, from the perspective of the changing contexts and strategies of argument, how parts from A 6 and A 9 are recombined in M 4 in the *Metaphysics*.⁸¹ For Syrianus' commentary on M 4, the effect of this is that the commentary as a whole is based on the premise of demonstrating the need for differentiation with respect to the summary about the Forms in A 6. In this it is above all the thesis about the genesis of the theory of Forms out of Socrates' pursuit of definitions and the debate with Heraclitus that repeatedly moves Syrianus not only to set up the whole argumentative movement as a set of differentiating attacks, but also to refer explicitly to the confusions and failures to differentiate in Aristotle's account (e. g. 105,40; 106,6f.).

Even though a certain emotional involvement can be detected in Syrianus' commentary on M 4, it is more than just an angry defence against the Aristotelian critique. As we have seen,⁸² Syrianus recognises Aristotle as a central teaching authority and writes for students of philosophy who are not to be led astray by this authority in their understanding of the Theory of Forms.

With this didactic aim, Syrianus makes something completely different out of his exegetical correction and, what is more, he unfolds it as a movement of differentiation in intense debate with a style of interpretation that discusses the language of the Platonists with the resources of the Aristotelian *Organon* and which locates it at the conceptual level of this propaedeutic logic.⁸³ Syrianus' commentary, too, is thus – in a notably explicit fashion – a resolution of contradictions by further differentiating distinctions that are too simple and inadequate for the matter

⁷⁸ A subtle argument on this is presented in Dominic O'Meara, *Pythagoras revived*, 120.

⁷⁹ A 6, 987a32-b7 corresponds to M 4, 1078b12-25; A 9, 990b2-991b9 corresponds to M 4/5, 1078b34-80a8 leaving out the passage 1079b3-11.

⁸⁰ On the divergences between A 6 and 9 and M 4/5 see William David Ross, *Aristotle's Metaphysics*, ad loc. and Julia Annas, *Aristotle's Metaphysics M and N*, 131f.

⁸¹ See above p. 18.

⁸² Cf. p. 8f.

⁸³ Inspiring approaches to the role of Syrianus in the tradition of commentary on the *Metaphysics* have been presented by Dominic J. O'Meara, *Le problème de la métaphysique dans l'antiquité tardive*, in: *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 33, 1986, 3-22, who traces the formation of a metaphysical tradition through the identification of Aristotle's metaphysics with a form of Platonic dialectic, and in doing so investigates both the different textual genres (commentary and deductive treatise) and the didactic perspective through which Aristotle's *Metaphysics* could be a basic text in teaching in the schools. O'Meara has, unfortunately, only pursued these approaches in a different perspective (with regard to Iamblichus' work 'On Pythagoreanism'), so that there remains a research gap to be filled.

in question. This differentiating movement includes both a doxographical differentiation and a substantive differentiation, each of which defines equality, similarity and difference in the matter considered in a different way, and so derives different requirements for differentiation. Thus, doxographically, it is affirmed by Syrianus that Aristotle has made differentiations where no distinctions are required on the one hand, while leaving out necessary differentiations in another respect on the other. For Aristotle is separating Forms and eidetic numbers substantively, in spite of the fact that, according to Syrianus, there is no substantive difference between them ('for Form and eidetic number are not designated in reference to something else, but (...) obviously in relation to the functional definition as model...' 103,20-23). And in another case he is confounding the views of the Heracliteans with those of Socrates and Plato (102,7-15).⁸⁴

The greatest and most erroneous (τὸ σχετλιώτατον (104,37)) confusions are seen by Syrianus in Aristotle's summary of the relation between Socrates' universal and Plato's Forms (104,31-37). Not only does this misunderstand the doctrines of Socrates and Plato, it describes the teacher-student relation between Socrates and Plato falsely, and wrongly implies that Plato has ascribed views to his Socrates that would be quite contrary to Socrates' real views. This focus also reflects the relation between teacher or school head and students in Syrianus' Platonic Academy of the 5th century AD. As a glance at Proclus' *Parmenides* commentary makes clear, historical truthfulness in regard to the teaching and life of one's own teacher is, in the view of this school, a high - and for the exegetical tradition even a very high - good.⁸⁵

Syrianus transfers Aristotle's argument into a plethora of new contexts that he draws into the exegesis and into which he embeds Aristotle's statements in order to illuminate their inappropriateness to the matter in hand; these include a series of Platonic dialogues, as well as Pythagoras and the Eleatics. These expansions of the context, however, are merely anagogic doxographical differentiations, which have the real goal of a substantively precise definition and ontological and gnoseological localisation of the Forms.

For this, as well as the dialogue contexts - here again in an anagogic structure, beginning with simple differentiations and obvious distinctions - Stoic philosophemes, too, are established as new contexts and Aristotle's questions are transferred into these. Through this recontextualisation, in a most interesting way - the explication of which must be the subject of a different paper, which can address Syrianus' doxographic exegetical strategies as a whole⁸⁶ - the Stoics' raising of linguistic phenomena to the principle and criterion for factual distinctions is contrasted with the Platonic procedure, in order to derive the basic localisation of the Forms in the sphere not of abstract universals but of paradigmatic conceptual distinctions (105,21-30).

To delimit a localisation of Forms themselves at the psychic-dianoetic level, Syrianus seeks a debate with the Middle Platonists (105,35-106,2) in order finally to stress the intermediary role of Aristotle himself and to define the way in which Aristotle's confusing report has influenced others and - within a tradition of Academic Platonism thought of as continuous - has also misled them into mixing up what should be separated (106,5-13).

These positions, which in different ways confound things, can admittedly not pursue matters into the most complex differentiations on the question of defining the ontological status of the Forms, so Syrianus here limits himself to the reference to Pythagoras and Orphic texts

⁸⁴ I am currently addressing this doxographical analysis and differentiating exegetical practice of the late antique *Metaphysics* commentators intensively in a research project and further planned publications.

⁸⁵ On the characters of the teachers in the *Parmenides* see Gyburg Radke, *Das Lächeln des Parmenides. Proklos' Interpretation zur Platonischen Dialogform (Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte 78)*, Berlin 2006, 314-346 (on the figure of ideal teacher), 373-517 (on the historicity of the teacher Parmenides).

⁸⁶ One such is planned under the working title 'Doxographische Argumentationsstrategien bei Alexander, Syrian und Asklepios' (Doxographical argumentation strategies in Alexander, Syrianus and Asclepius).

(106,14-107,3). In this last argumentative move the separation in thought between Forms and eidetic numbers, as demanded by Aristotle but rejected by Syrianus right at the start of his commentary on M 4 as a merely apparent need for differentiation, is completely dropped.

This context from A 6 which is, as sketched above, extended by Syrianus through a whole series of further textual and conceptual contexts, into which the exegetic contribution is embedded as a movement of transferring knowledge, is decisive for the subsequent exegesis of the passage in question from A 9, which Aristotle repeats from 1078b34 in M 4. The movement of differentiation that had already begun with the distinction of different ways of speaking and thinking of something universal (esp. 105,30ff.), is continued for the exegesis of Aristotle's argument that the theory of Forms cannot provide any ground for the claim that there should not be Forms of everything that can be predicated.

Through the debate with what Syrianus characterises as the most shocking description of the relation between Socrates' method of definition and Plato's Theory of Forms, the distinction between different levels of thought and levels of Forms becomes necessary and is called for by Syrianus, citing Platonic discourses.

That is reflected, for example, in the systematic division of the problems that were introduced within the Platonic tradition to differentiate the findings about the Forms and which are made explicit paradigmatically in Proclus' commentary on the *Parmenides* (Procl. in Prm. 784,16-25). Syrianus uses them as an introduction for a part of the commentary that is concerned with the discussion of Forms as also formulated in A 9 (108,31-109,4). Through this, what appears in Aristotle's argumentation as apparently sporadic catalogues of questions about the theory of Forms becomes systematised, but above all it is drawn into the internal Platonic tradition of discussion and so functionalised for the differentiating clarification needed for questions that may arise about Plato's theory of Forms.

δοκεῖ τοίνυν τοῦτο τὸ ἐπιχείρημα τοῦ τρίτου προβλήματος εἶναι, εἴ τι κοινὸν εἶδος καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς γενητοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς αἰδίοις ἀπολείπουσιν οἱ ἄνδρες, οἷον τὸ τῆς ὁμοιότητος ἢ ἰσότητος ἢ ταυτότητος εἶδος, οὗ μετέχει μὲν καὶ ὁ οὐρανός, μετέχει δὲ καὶ τὰ τῆδε. (Syrian. in Metaph. 109,4-7)

'This attack now seems to concern the third question, of whether the men posit a common form both in the things that come into being and in the eternal things, as for example a Form of similarity or equality or identity in which the heavens participate but so also do the things here.'

Syrianus' summary refers to an already established tradition of disputation. He picks out of an extensive set of problems and an equally extensive discussion-context the four questions that are essential, viz. whether there are Forms, what Forms there are, what is their quality, and why there are Forms. In exactly this sense Proclus, too, refers at an early point in his *Parmenides* commentary to a practice of discussion and differentiation that was already established in the tradition:

Τετάρων τοίνυν ὄντων ἐν ταῖς περὶ τῶν ἰδεῶν ζητήσεσι προβλημάτων, πρώτου μὲν, εἴ ἔστι τὰ εἶδη (τί γὰρ ἂν τις καὶ περὶ αὐτῶν ἐπισκέψοιτο μὴ τοῦτο προδιομολογησάμενος) δευτέρου δὲ, τίνων ἔστι καὶ τίνων οὐκ ἔστι τὰ εἶδη (καὶ γὰρ τοῦτο πολλὰς ἔχει διαμφισβητήσεις) τρίτου δὲ, ὅποια δὴ τινὰ ἔστι τὰ εἶδη καὶ τίς ἡ ἰδιότης αὐτῶν τετάρτου δὲ, πῶς μετέχεται ὑπὸ τῶν τῆδε καὶ τίς ὁ τρόπος τῆς μεθέξεως (Procl. in Prm. 784,16-25)

‘There are four problems in the investigations about the Ideas: The first of them is whether there are Ideas (for what would one investigate about them, if there was no agreement about that first?); the second is, of what are there Ideas and of what not (for on that too there is much disagreement); the third is of what kind the Ideas are and what is their specific quality; the fourth is how the things here participate in them and what the character of this participation is.’

This is the announcement of a systematic account and discussion of the theory of Forms as established in the Platonic schools of late antiquity, which takes up the next 23 pages of Proclus’ commentary (to 807,23). However, the passage is above all relevant for us and important as a reference-text for Syrianus’ more precise system, because, shortly before the cited passage, Proclus has expressly addressed Aristotle’s account in A 6, in which Socrates’ definitional philosophy is far removed from Plato’s Theory of Forms.

Καὶ δεῖ λαβεῖν ἐκ τούτων ἐχεγγωτέρων ὄντων, ὅτι ἄρα οὐ μόνον τῶν ὀριστῶν ἔσχεν ἔννοιαν ὁ Σωκράτης, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτῶν τῶν χωριστῶν εἰδῶν οὐδ’, ὡς Ἀριστοτέλης φησὶν, ἐπήχθη ἂν εἰς τὴν ἐκείνων θέσιν ἐκ τῆς περὶ τοὺς ὀρισμοὺς διατριβῆς, ἀλλ’ ὅτι διὰ θείαν ὄντως ὀρμὴν καὶ ταῖς ιδέαις αὐτὸς ἐπέβαλεν (Procl. in Prm. 784,3-10)

‘One must take from this that which is more reliable, that is, that Socrates did not just have a concept of definitions but also of the Forms possessing separate definition. And he was not, as Aristotle says, misled into assuming them through his pursuit of definitions, but because he himself, through a divine inspiration, grasped the Ideas too.’

Admittedly, the passage in the *Parmenides* and its situation in the dialogue would tend to prompt citation of Aristotle’s attempts at dividing Socrates from Plato, as here the young Socrates enters a discussion with the wise old Eleatic Parmenides and is described by Plato as being right at the start of his philosophical activity. What occurs here is the generation of a new context within which the commenting text and the text commented upon are read and understood. For there is a difference whether one sees Aristotle in the systematic context and traditional setting of the Platonic tradition or whether one understands him as coming from outside and without access to this differentiated tradition. Proclus embeds Aristotle’s account in the horizon devised by Plato in the dialogue; conversely, with the systematic division of the problems of the Forms, both the preceding Platonic tradition and the Aristotelian text are drawn into the exegesis of the dialogue *Parmenides*.

Admittedly we do not know when the commentary on the *Parmenides* was written. Marinus mentions (*Marin. Procl.*, 13,14-17) that Proclus had written the commentary on the *Timaeus* and ‘many other commentaries’ by the age of 27. As Syrianus died in 437 when Proclus was 25, Syrianus’ commentary on the *Metaphysics* must certainly be dated before the *Timaeus* commentary and the other Plato commentaries. Proclus explicitly developed his exegesis of the *Parmenides* as a continuation of the hermeneutic work of his teacher Syrianus. For that reason one may suspect that the systematic structuring of the discussions within the school about accepting Forms was, if not developed by Syrianus, then at least passed on in the Athenian School.

In Proclus we thus find the first (?) explicit reference made to Aristotle for the discussion of Forms outside the commentaries on Aristotle. It achieves an expansion of the context for the commented text in a way analogous to how Syrianus transferred Plato’s texts and texts from the Platonic tradition for the debate with Aristotle’s arguments in M 4 in his commentary. That fits well

with Marinus' report that Syrianus had guided Proclus in reading the entire Corpus Aristotelicum and had taught him, arising from this study, Plato's *Metaphysics* (Marinus, *Procli Vita*, 12f.).⁸⁷

In this transfer, texts from the commentary tradition are adduced: that is true, for example, for the discussion of which entities participate in the Forms. Syrianus refers to these discussions in his exegesis of 1079a3ff.⁸⁸ By referring to Numenius and Cronius he is citing the exegetical tradition of the 2nd century, probably specifically the commentaries on the *Timaeus*; by referring to Porphyry, the student of Plotinus, he is citing the first of the Platonic commentators who systematically commented upon Aristotle as well as Plato for didactic purposes.⁸⁹ Syrianus functionalises this tradition 'of the best among the Platonists' (109, 11f.) to clear up possible confusions and errors that Aristotle's argumentation could have prompted. The following passage (109, 12-26) is presented as a summary of a complex discussion which is able to clear up the *aporiai* formulated by Aristotle as substantive problems.

In this context fits the cue from A 6 for the critical debate with A 9, as combined by Aristotle in M. Syrianus does not reflect on aspects of the genesis of the text or on the repetition from Book A. However, for his method, which expands the context of the interpreted text and transfers Aristotle's arguments into the context of the whole Platonic discussion of Forms beginning with Plato and Middle Platonism, this synthesis is revealed as helpful, because the discussion of the theory of Forms can build on the differentiations that arise from the analysis of the relation of the Socratic universal to the Platonic Form.

In this context, expanded by transfer, Syrianus also adds the work of differentiation achieved by Alexander with reference to the possibility of predicating something of Form and particular things either synonymously or homonymously. For this he begins once again with a synoptic survey of the differentiations that the Platonic tradition has achieved so far with reference to different eidetic levels, which makes the question of the 'third man' appear as something that lies far below the niveau of this discussion:

πῶς δὲ καὶ τὸν τρίτον εἰσάγουσιν ἄνθρωπον εἰ μὲν γὰρ ὅτι καθ' ἑκάστην τῶν ὄντων τάξιν ἐστὶ πάντα τὰ εἶδη, οὐ τρεῖς μόνον, πολλοὶ δὲ οἱ ἄνθρωποι, ἐπεὶ καὶ πάντα πολλαπλαῖα (Syrian. in *Metaph.* 111, 27-29)

'How then do they introduce the Third Man? For if it is because all the Ideas are at each level of being, then there would be not just three but many men, for everything is multiple.'

Against this background the differentiation between synonymy and homonymy may appear useful and productive, but of only subordinate importance.

⁸⁷ Henri Dominique Saffrey, *Recherches sur le néoplatonisme après Plotin*, Paris 1990, 176-179.

⁸⁸ That is the same textual context that Proclus uses in his lemma to Ti. 37cd, where he refers to Porphyry, Numenius and Amelius and finally, as the interpretation that provides the solution, Iamblichus (Procl. in Ti. 3, 33, 31-34,7: εἰ μὲν γὰρ, ὡς ᾤετο Πορφύριος καὶ τινες ἄλλοι Πλατωνικοί, μόνα μετεῖχε τῶν ὄντως ὄντων τὰ αἰσθητά, ἐν αὐτοῖς μόνον ἂν ἐζητούμεν τὰς εἰκόνας. εἰ δ', ὡς Ἀμέλιος γράφει καὶ πρὸ Ἀμελίου Νουμήνιος, μέθεξις ἐστὶ καὶ τοῖς νοητοῖς, εἴεν ἂν εἰκόνας καὶ ἐν αὐτοῖς. εἰ δὲ ὁ θεῖος Πλάτων οὕτε ἐν τοῖς πρωτίστοις τῶν ὄντων ἀπέθετο εἰκόνας οὐτ' ἐν μόνον τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς, νικήη ἂν καὶ τούτοις ὁ πάντας ἐν πᾶσιν ὀλίγου δέω φάναι κρατῶν Ἰάμβλιχος ὁ τὰς μεθέξεις ἐπὶ τε τῶν μέσων καὶ τῶν τελευταίων θεωρεῖν παρακελευόμενος.)

⁸⁹ George Karamanolis, *Porphyry, the first Platonist Commentator of Aristotle and id., Plato and Aristotle in Agreement? Platonists on Aristotle from Antiochus to Porphyry*, Oxford 2006 and id., *Why Porphyry wrote Aristotelian Commentaries?*, in: Benedikt Strobel (ed.) *Die Kunst der philosophischen Exegese bei den antiken Platon- und Aristoteles-Kommentatoren*, Berlin/New York 2014, 1-35 (pagination from the the online self-publication).

εἰ δ' ὅτι συνώνυμος μὲν ὁ αὐτοάνθρωπος τοῖς τῆδε, καθά φησιν ἐξηγούμενος τὸ ῥητὸν ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος, πάντα δὲ τὰ συνώνυμα μετουσίᾳ τινὸς εἶδους συνώνυμα γίνονται, τρίτος ἀναφανήσεται τις ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἰδέας καὶ τῶν τῆδε κατηγορούμενος, γελοῖον γίνονται τὸ ἐπιχείρημα οὔτε γὰρ συνώνυμα τὰ τῆδε τῇ ἰδέᾳ πότε γὰρ αἱ εἰκόνες συνώνυμοι τῷ σφετέρῳ γένοιντ' ἂν παραδείγματι οὔθ' ὅλως μετέχειν τινὸς τὴν ἰδέαν οἰητέον αὐτῇ γὰρ ἔκκειται πᾶσιν εἰς μετοχὴν τὸ πρότιστον εἶδος οὔσα. εἰ δὲ ὁμωνύμως κατηγορεῖται αὐτῶν ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ἐν δὲ ταῖς ὁμωνύμοις κατηγορίαις οὐδὲν ἐστὶ πρᾶγμα συνεισφερόμενον ὑπὸ τῆς φωνῆς παρὰ τὰ ὑποκείμενα καὶ ὁμώνυμα λεγόμενα, πῶς ἂν ἔτι χώραν ὁ τρίτος ἄνθρωπος ἔχοι, τῆς φωνῆς οἰονεὶ δαπανωμένης καὶ διαιρουμένης εἷς τε τὸν αὐτὸ καὶ τὸν θνητὸν ἄνθρωπον (Syrian. in *Metaph.* 111,33-112,6)

'If, however, Man itself is <predicated> synonymously to the men here, as Alexander interprets what is said, and everything that is synonymous becomes synonymous through commonality (*metousia*) with an Eidos, a third man who is predicated of the Idea and of the <men> here, will appear, then the approach becomes laughable. For neither are the things here synonymous to the Ideas – for when would likenesses become synonymous to their model? – nor can one believe that the Idea participates in anything at all, for it stands ready for participation by everything, as it is the primary Form (εἶδος). If 'man' is predicated homonymously of these, however, and among the homonymous predications no thing is introduced by the word-form besides that of which the predicate is made and that which is homonymously predicated, how can there be room there for the Third Man, for an expression that, so to speak, can be divided and cut up into the 'itself' and the 'mortal man'?'

Thus, as by Asclepius so also by Syrianus, Alexander's argument is picked up and its implication, that Aristotle's argument against the theory of Forms has no valence, is made explicit. This occurs within the context, newly created by Syrianus for the Aristotelian argument, of the whole Platonic discussion of the relation of Form and participating instances.

5 Conclusion

The analysis of how Platonic discussions are functionalised for the differentiating exegesis of the text of Aristotle at A 9, A 6 and M 4 of the *Metaphysics* has shown that by re-contextualising the Aristotelian arguments in a long-standing Platonic discussion of Forms and of the Platonic discussions in the context of the works of the *Organon*, which formed the basic logical instruction in the philosophical schools, movements of knowledge occur, and so differentiated knowledge is generated in the context of the institution of the late antique Platonic philosophical schools.

With his strategies of argument at *Metaphysics* A and M, Aristotle himself provides models for the exegetical techniques of the ancient commentators. By analysing the Platonic Theory of Forms with the conceptual instruments of the *Categories*, the perspective of the descriptive analysis of our linguistic access to what we grasp of things intellectually has been transferred into the discussion of Forms. Together with this, a certain niveau is assumed in differentiation. Aristotle's arguments show that, and in what respect, this degree of differentiation is inadequate for the complex substantive questions in the discussion of Forms and so must lead to *aporia*. They also show how Aristotle gives argumentative functions to the doxographic survey of Platonic positions, for the purpose of extending knowledge. In these functions, the confrontation with the

simple conceptual instruments of the *Categories* plays a central role.

Aristotle himself in the *Topics* shows ways in which the simple differentiating tools of the *Categories* can be developed further and transferred into other contexts. The conceptual pair homonymous-synonymous is extended in the *Topics* and in the *Sophistici Elenchi* and in *Metaphysics* Γ into a differentiated concept of homonymy. This concept inquires, when further developed again, into the διὰ τί of the coincidence in name and into the specific kind of substantive similarity and proximity to which the coincidence in name can be traced. In this way, a substantive connection is proposed between the homonymous meanings. This supplements the approach of the *Categories* by adding an explanatory level that can be used methodically. For Aristotle describes the discovery of homonymies as a first step to the resolution of contradictions, with the goal of the differentiating explication of the substantive content.

The ancient commentators use this model of differentiation provided by the tools of the *Categories* (and the works of the *Organon* as a whole) for the didactic study of Aristotle's debate with earlier thinkers. The potential expansions of the textual context for the sake of differentiating the concepts are used in such a way that texts from the Corpus Aristotelicum (and in the case of Alexander also from the exoteric work *Περὶ ἰδεῶν*), those from the Corpus Platonicum and those of the commentary tradition on both authors are set alongside each other and drawn into conversation.

The result is a new text that, faced with the intentionally reductive Aristotelian argument, opens up for the reader the possibility of making other texts of the tradition useful for differentiation and so of generating new knowledge. In these argumentative strategies there is a transfer of concepts and methodical approaches. For these, as for any other form of transfer, that which is transferred undergoes a change through the very fact that it is transferred. The terms and models must be re-thought for and in reference to the new context, and must be explained and differentiated anew.⁹⁰

Thus the commentaries contribute to elucidating the Aristotelian argument by establishing a concrete, linked Platonic-Aristotelian tradition, within which the argument is localised and hence differentiated. In a context that consists both of contributions from the tradition of Platonic thought right back to Plato, which attempts to differentiate the issue of the function and definition of the Forms, and of the differentiation of the simple tools for making distinctions provided by the *Organon*, Aristotle's *Metaphysics* becomes knowledge set in motion.

⁹⁰ A certain tendency can be discerned that tends to an ever greater degree of explicitness as regards the discovery of possible errors or erroneous interpretations. The confrontation of three parallel texts admittedly permits such a statement only as an impression that needs to be verified by the analysis of other commentaries.

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