COMMENTARIES VERSUS MANUSCRIPTS IN *METAPH.* Λ.3.1070a13-20

Aristotle’s text (as in Jaeger OCT)

ἐπὶ μὲν οὖν τινῶν τὸ τόδε τι οὐκ ἔστι παρὰ τὴν συνθετὴν οὐσίαν, οἷον οἰκίας τὸ εἶδος, εἰ μὴ ἡ τέχνη (οὐδ’ ἔστι γένεσις καὶ φθορὰ τούτων, ἀλλ’ ἄλλον τρόπον εἰσὶ καὶ οὐκ εἰσὶν οἰκία τε ἡ ἄνευ ὕλης καὶ ὑγίεια καὶ πᾶν τὸ κατὰ τέχνην), αλλ’ εἴπερ, ἐπὶ τῶν φύσει· διὸ δὴ οὐ κακῶς Πλάτων ἔφη ὅτι εἴδη ἔστιν ὁπόσα φύσει, εἴπερ ἔστιν εἴδη, ἀλλ’ οὐ τούτων οἷον πῦρ σάρξ κεφαλή· ἅπαντα γὰρ ὕλη ἐστί, καὶ τῆς μάλιστ’ οὐσίας ἡ τελευταία.

13 τι om. Π 16 τε om. Π 18 δὴ om. Ab Πλάτων Π Alp: ὁ Ab 19 ἄλλου J quod ἀλλ’ οὐ legendum est (sic ci. Cherniss, ἀλλά γ’ οὐ Christ): ἄλλα Alp corr. Ab Bonitz, Ross: ἀλλὰ E Ab Al apud Averroem signum α super οἷον sicut super ἡ μὲν ὕλη (9) sscr. J 20 γὰρ om. Al apud Averroem

Translation

Now in some cases the this-something does not exist apart from the compound substance (for instance, the form of house, unless it is the art; nor is there coming-to-be and perishing of these things, but it is in another way that there is or is not a house without matter as well as health and anything that depends on art), but if it does, it is in the case of things that are by nature. That is why, then, Plato was not incorrect when he said that there are as many Forms as things that are by nature, if indeed there are Forms, but not of these things, for example, fire, flesh, and head; for all these things are matter, and the last [matter] belongs to what is substance most of all.

Alexander in Averroes (fr. 12F and 13a&bF=*Tafsīr* 1481-4)

[fr. 12aF] Alexander says: these words refer to Plato, as is found in some manuscripts. He says: he (Aristotle) does not say that they are right in an absolute way, but merely that it was right to suppose them to be the natural things. It would be easier to understand if it was put in this way: therefore, those who postulated the Forms were right, if they exist at all, in assuming them to be by nature. . . . [fr. 13aF] “But among these, fire, flesh, bone and head are all matter.” According to Alexander, we can understand that in two ways: the first is that he is not thinking of all natural forms, but some of the natural forms are known to be inseparable from matter, e.g. the form of fire, of bone, of head of flesh. . . . We can also understand this as meaning that it is not possible to believe that in the case of all forms, because some of the forms of natural things are forms of things which constitute matter of something else, like fire and the other elements which are the matter of other things. Likewise, flesh and bone are the matter of the head; the latter interpretation is more likely in view of his expression, I mean “all are matter.” [fr. 13bf] “And of substance, that which is most (substance); it is the last and indivisible.” . . Alexander says: the meaning of this passage is more clearly expressed in another manuscript: “therefore, he who postulated that the Forms are all things that are by nature, if there are Forms at all, was not wrong, except for these things: for fire, flesh, bone, and head are all ultimate matter to the thing that is worthier to be existing.”

Ps-Alexander (677, 11-26)

Further, Aristotle called the same form of a house and of the health in our imagination ‘a house and health without matter’. This is why, he says, Plato was not incorrect when he said that there are Forms not of artefacts but of natural things. For if there were Forms at all, they would belong to things that come to be by nature but not to things that come to be from art. For ‘different from these things’ suggests that there will be Forms of natural things, Forms which are different from these things, that is, from the perceptible objects here. But the words ‘for example, fire, flesh, [and] head; for all these things are matter, and the last [matter] belongs to what is most of all substance’ do not follow from the adjacent text, nor do they go with it; but they go with [the earlier clause] ‘[the matter which is a this-something by appearing] (for whatever things are by contact and not by natural coherence are matter and /20/ substratum)’ (1070a10-11). [ἡ μὲν ὕλη τόδε τι οὖσα τῷ φαίνεσθαι (ὅσα γὰρ ἁφῇ καὶ μὴ συμφύσει, ὕλη καὶ ὑποκείμενον).] And the continuous text is as follows: ‘For whatever things are by contact and not by natural conjunction are matter and substratum, for example, fire, flesh, [and] head; for all of these are matter, and the last matter belongs to what is substance most of all’. Next is ‘the nature, a this-something and a state-towards-which’ and so forth (1070a11-12). And Aristotle says that the indivisible substance, Socrates or Callias, is substance most of all. For fire is matter of this sort of substance; but, most of all, its matter is the last, that is, the proximate, matter of it, for example, flesh, sinews, and bones.

Miller note on 677,20

Ps.-Alexander’s contention that the words οἷον πῦρ σάρξ κεφαλή, ‘for example, fire, flesh, [and] head’, are misplaced from 1070a10 where they originally preceded ‘for such things as are by contact etc.’ must be evaluated in the light of textual issues at 1070a19-20. The manuscripts and commentators differ over whether to read ἄλλα or ἀλλὰ (acute paroxytone or grave oxytone respectively, the Greek words differing in placement of the accent). The word ἄλλα is found in ps.-Alexander’s paraphrase (as well as in a scribal correction in Ab) and is assumed by the Latin translations. On this reading Aristotle’s text would be straightforwardly translated: ‘there are as many Forms as there are natural [kinds], if there are Forms different from these things (ἄλλα τούτων), for example, fire, flesh, [and] head’. In this case ps.-Alexander’s proposed transposition seems plausible; for what would be the point of supposing that the Forms are different from fire, flesh, etc.? (Judson retains ἄλλα without the transposition, understanding Aristotle to mean, rather maladroitly, that there are no Forms of fire, flesh, etc.) And granting the transposition, τούτων could refer to the natural (i.e. particular perceptible) things in our world, as ps.-Alexander suggests. Ross accordingly follows ps.-Alexander in reading ἄλλα and transposing the οἷον clause in his Oxford translation. The alternative is to read ἀλλὰ with EAb so that Aristotle’s text would be translated ‘there are as many Forms as there are natural [kinds] (if there are Forms) but of these things (ἀλλὰ τούτων), for example, fire, flesh, [and] head’. However, this seems to commit Plato to questionable Forms of fire, flesh, etc. (which are called into question at *Parm* 130c-d). Alexander in Averroes tries to avoid this implication though his text had ἀλλὰ (fr. 13aF=*Tafsīr* 1483; see Genequand 1986, 100-2 nn.78,79). A third alternative is to emend ἄλλα to ἀλλ’ οὐ on the basis of ἄλλου in J with Jaeger (translated ‘though not’ in Barnes’ Revised Oxford Translation). Unfortunately, however, ἄλλου has subsequently been found to be a mistaken reading of J, which has instead αλλα with no accent (cf. Alexandru and Fazzo). Consequently ps.-Alexander’s proposal remains an attractive alternative. (Note the transposition may be indicated by a later scribe in J; cf. Jaeger’s last note for line 19.)