

COMMENTARIES VERSUS MANUSCRIPTS IN *METAPH.* Λ2.1069a20-3

Aristotle's text (ed. Bekker)

καὶ τοῦτ' ἔστι τὸ Ἄναξαγόρου ἔν (βέλτιον γὰρ ἢ ὁμοῦ πάντα) καὶ Ἐμπεδοκέους τὸ μῖγμα καὶ Ἀναξαγόρου. καὶ ὡς Δημόκριτός φησιν, ἦν ὁμοῦ πάντα δυνάμει, ἐνεργεία δ' οὔ.

Translation And this is the One of Anaxagoras (for that is better than “all things together” and the mixture of Empedocles and Anaxagoras. And, as Democritus says, “all things were together in potentiality and not in actuality.”

Aristotle's text (as in Jaeger OCT)

καὶ τοῦτ' ἔστι τὸ Ἄναξαγόρου ἔν· βέλτιον γὰρ ἢ “ὁμοῦ πάντα”—καὶ Ἐμπεδοκέους τὸ μῖγμα καὶ Ἀναξαγόρου, καὶ ὡς Δημόκριτός φησιν —“ἦν μὲν πάντα δυνάμει, ἐνεργεία δ' οὔ” . . .

23 μὲν correxi: ἡμῖν codd. (cf. ad 1072b16): ὁμοῦ E γρ coniectura, edd.; utrumque mire conciliare studet Alr. non omnia ‘potentialiter mixta’ fuisse, sed omnia ‘potentialiter exsistisse’ mavult Ar., suam notionem τῆς ὕλης veteribus philosophis supponens

Translation And this is the One of Anaxagoras; for better than “all things together”—and the mixture of Empedocles and Anaxagoras, and what Democritus says—is “all things were in potentiality and not in actuality.”

Ps-Alexander (673,5-22)

. . . [A]fter Aristotle has referred us to what it is that comes to be and changes from form to privation and from privation to form—namely, that it is matter—he adds, ‘this is the One of Anaxagoras’. Aristotle is saying in effect that when Anaxagoras declares that all things were together (ὁμοῦ) and the universe was one, and the Intellect began to separate these things at some beginning, he is showing that he had envisioned matter without comprehending it, and for this reason he did not teach it clearly to us. It is better, therefore, Aristotle states, to say that everything comes to be from one thing, since the one is capable of changing into all things, and then to make clear that this one thing is matter, than to say that all things were together. For who in hearing that all things were together can understand that this locution refers to the matter which is potentially all things? Now, just as Anaxagoras, when he said that all things were together, had envisioned matter but failed to recognise it, the same goes for Empedocles when he said that things here came to be from the mixture (and by ‘mixture’ he would mean the Sphere). Because he was unable to grasp it, instead of saying that they were from matter, he said that things here are from the mixture. Democritus, however, also indicates with ‘all things were together in potentiality’ that he had got a notion of matter in an obscure way; for ‘all things were together (ὁμοῦ) in potentiality’ is equivalent to saying that there is in us (ἐν ἡμῖν) that which is capable of being all things.

Alexander in Averroes (fr. 9F=Tafsīr 1445-6)

Alexander says: it is probable that “all were potentially for us, but not actually” is not all a quotation of Democritus’ phrase, but the words of Democritus are only “were for us” (ἦν ἡμῖν), that is to say: they are necessarily eternal, because in that sense, they resemble matter; and “all potentially, not actually” (πάντα δυνάμει, ἐνεργεία δ' οὔ) are the words of Aristotle himself, a correction as it were of the words of Democritus, who said that the atoms are eternal, expressed by this the nature of matter, especially the fact that it is potentially all things generated from it, not actually.