

COMMENTARIES VERSUS MANUSCRIPTS: AN EXAMPLE IN *METAPHYSICS* Λ

1

Aristotle's text (as in Jaeger OCT)

1069a30-3 οὐσίαι δὲ τρεῖς, μία μὲν αἰσθητή—ἧς ἡ μὲν αἰδῖος ἡ δὲ φθαρτή, ἦν πάντες ὁμολογοῦσιν, οἷον τὰ φυτὰ καὶ τὰ ζῷα [ἡ δ' αἰδῖος]—ἧς ἀνάγκη τὰ στοιχεῖα λαβεῖν, εἴτε ἓν εἴτε πολλά· ἄλλη δὲ ἀκίνητος . . .

Translation

Now, there are three substances: one is perceptible—of which one is everlasting and one is perishable, upon which all are agreed, for example, plants and animals, [and another is everlasting]—of which it is necessary to grasp the elements, whether they are one or many; and another is immovable . . .

Jaeger critical apparatus

1069a32 ἡ δ' αἰδῖος Π Αβ ΑΙ (qui dicitur): om ΑΙ genuinus (sed γρ) apud Averroem et Them, secl. Freudenthal; ἧς . . . 33 λαβεῖν ad 31 φθαρτή perinere vidit etiam 'ΑΙ' noster

Conventions:

[. . .] the words . . . in the manuscripts should be omitted

Π = MSS E and J in agreement

ΑΙ (qui dicitur) the phrase appears in Alexander's commentary

ΑΙ genuinus . . . apud Averroem et Them: the real Alexander and Themistius as cited by Averroes

γρ: abbr. γραφόμενον, written as an alternative

'ΑΙ' noster: ps.-Alexander

Alexander of Aphrodisias (fr. 4 ap. Averroem *Tafsīr* 1420-1)

[Aristotle] says: "of which it is necessary to grasp the elements". Alexander says: one must not understand by that the substance subject to generation and corruption, but the two substances: sensible and subject to generation, and not subject to generation . . .

What he says after this mention of the sensible substance subject to generation and corruption: "of which it is necessary to grasp the elements", is found in one manuscript . . . Instead of that, another manuscript has: "and that is eternal and it is that the elements of which we must grasp etc." Alexander says: what he means here according to this manuscript is that we must grasp the principles of the elements of the eternal substance; the first cause, which is what the present treatise is concerned with, is the cause and the principle of the divine body. [Alexander] says: the first manuscript is better, for his declared aim is a discussion of the elements of the sensible substance, in which are included the things which are in the universe, and that is exactly what he will do when he inquires a little more closely . . .

Ps.-Alexander (670,29-34; 671,18-21)

One substance, therefore, is the perceptible, on which everyone agrees; and of the perceptible, the one is perishable, for example, plants and animals, while the other is everlasting (, for example, the spheres and the stars in them. And [Aristotle] says “of which it is necessary to grasp the elements, [inquiring whether they are] one or many”—not of everlasting substance, but of perceptible (*aisthêtês*) substance, which is predicated both of the perishable (ἡ δ’ αἰδιος) and of the imperishable bodies. We must inquire, then, into the elements of this [i.e. perceptible substance]. . . . The continuous text at the beginning is as follows: “Now, there are three substances: one is perceptible (upon which all are agreed), of which it is also necessary to grasp the elements, [inquiring whether they are] one or many”; and then “of which” (namely, perceptible [*aisthêtês*]) “the one is perishable (*phthartê*) and the other everlasting”.