

# *Metaphysics* Λ 2

Among Substances, Some are Capable of Motion

# Prefatory to $\Lambda$ 2

- The chapter is best taken to begin towards the end of  $\Lambda$  1, at 1069b-7—and will be so treated here.
- It characterizes one of the kinds of substance Aristotle mentions:
  - *Met.*  $\Lambda$  1 1069a30-36 affirms that there are three types of substances, falling under to general headings:
    - ‘There are three [kinds of] substance’ (οὐσίαι δὲ τρεῖς; *Met.*  $\Lambda$  1 1069a30)
    - perceptible substances
      - which are perishable (plants and animals)
      - which are eternal (heavenly bodies)
    - unchanging substances (which are imperceptible)
      - Here we investigate perceptible substances, and in particular its being capable of change (‘Perceptible substance is subject to change’ (ἢ δ’ αἰσθητὴ οὐσία μεταβλητὴ; *Met.*  $\Lambda$  1, 1069b3).
- The chapter plainly presupposes an account of the character of change, which it draws upon and telescopes.
  - This account is given more fully, and justified there; it is not actively justified in *Met.*  $\Lambda$  2.
    - N.b. that we have been given a direction to this effect in *Met.*  $\Lambda$  1,1069a36-37.

# The Goal of Λ2

- Its immediate goal is stated in the final lines of the chapter:
  - There are, therefore, three causes (αἴτια) and three principles (ἀρχαί): the contrary [pair] being two, of which one is the account (λόγος), that is, the form (εἶδος), and the other the privation, and the third is matter (*Met.* Λ 2, 1069b32-34).
  - τρία δὴ τὰ αἴτια καὶ τρεῖς αἱ ἀρχαί, δύο μὲν ἢ ἐναντίωσις, ἧς τὸ μὲν λόγος καὶ εἶδος τὸ δὲ στέρησις, τὸ δὲ τρίτον ἢ ὕλη

# The Structure of $\Lambda 2$

- 1069b3-9: Change involves contraries and something underlying, which remains
- 1069b9-14: Types of change
- 1069b14-24: Matter and potentiality, earlier approaches to matter
- 1069b26-32: A puzzle and its resolution
- 1069b32-34: Final conclusion, viz. that the causes and principles of change are three

# 1069b3-9: Change and Contrariety

- 'Perceptible substance is subject to change' (ή δ' αἰσθητὴ οὐσία μεταβλητή; *Met.* Λ 1, 1069b3)
  - The suggestion seems to be, though this is not stated, that this is a non-contingent fact.
    - Nec. (if  $x$  is material, then it is the kind of thing (or even essentially the kind of thing), that is subject to change.
      - This does not state or entail that if  $x$  is not material  $x$  is not subject to change, but the suggestion or implication may be lurking, if we think that changeability is somehow *grounded* in materiality.
        - This we may do, if we understand the connection between matter and potentiality in one way.

# An Argument for Contrariety

- If change is from things lying opposed to one another or from what is between [such things], but not from all [sorts of things] lying opposed to one another (for voice, too, is not pale), but from something contrary (ἐναντίος), it is necessary that what changes into the contrary condition be something underlying; for the contraries do not change. Further, while something remains, the contrary does not remain. There is, then, some third something, beyond the contraries, the matter.
- εἰ δ' ἢ μεταβολὴ ἐκ τῶν ἀντικειμένων ἢ τῶν μεταξύ, ἀντικειμένων δὲ μὴ πάντων (οὐ λευκὸν γὰρ ἢ φωνή) ἀλλ' ἐκ τοῦ ἐναντίου, ἀνάγκη ὑπεῖναι τι τὸ μεταβάλλον εἰς τὴν ἐναντίωσιν· οὐ γὰρ τὰ ἐναντία μεταβάλλει. ἔτι τὸ μὲν ὑπομένει, τὸ δ' ἐναντίον οὐχ ὑπομένει· ἔστιν ἄρα τι τρίτον παρὰ τὰ ἐναντία, ἢ ὕλη (*Met.* Λ 2, 1069b3-9)

# The Argument

- (1) If change is from things lying opposed (or from things lying betwixt such things), then change is either between things lying opposed as (a) contradictories, or as (b) contraries (or from things lying betwixt two contradictories or contraries serving as *termini*).
- (2) If change is between contradictories, then anything can change into anything.
- (3) It is not the case that anything can change into anything (for instance, voice cannot become white).
- (4) So, if change is from things lying opposed, then it is between things lying opposed as contraries (or from things lying betwixt two contradictories or contraries serving as *termini*).
- (5) If change is from things lying opposed as contraries, then the changing thing remaining is either (a) one of the contraries or (b) some third thing.
- (6) The contraries do not remain.
- (7) So, the changing thing remaining is not one of the contraries.
- (8) So, the changing thing remaining is some third thing, beyond the contraries (*παρὰ τὰ ἐναντία*).
- (9) So, there is some third principle of change, beyond the contraries. (We may dub this *tertium quid* 'matter'.)
- (10) So, the changing thing remaining is matter.

## (6) The contraries do not remain.

- ‘The forms (εἶδη) and affections (πάθη) and the place—that into which things being moved are moved—are immobile (ἀκίνητα), as for instance, knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) and heat (θερμότης). Yet someone might raise an objection: if affections (πάθη) are motions (κινήσεις), and whiteness (λευκότης) is an affection (πάθος), there will be a change (μεταβολή) into a motion (κίνησις). (*Phys.* v 1, 224b11-15).
- Aristotle’s response is brief: ‘Rather, it is not the whiteness (λευκότης) which is the change, but the whitening (λεύκανσις)’ (*Phys.* v 1, 224b15-16).



# (3) It is not the case that anything can change into anything.

- One relevant text from *Physics* i 5: 'For how could something white come to be from something musical, unless something musical were to co-incide with what is not white or black? Rather, white comes to be from not white—and not from anything which is which this (viz. not white), but from black or what is betwixt, and what is musical from what is not musical, except not from anything [not musical] but from what is not musical or is something betwixt (*Phys.* i 5 (188a35-b3))
- πῶς γὰρ ἂν γένοιτο λευκὸν ἐκ μουσικοῦ, πλὴν εἰ μὴ συμβεβηκὸς εἴη τῷ μὴ λευκῷ ἢ τῷ μέλανι τὸ μουσικόν; ἀλλὰ λευκὸν μὲν γίγνεται ἐξ οὐ λευκοῦ, καὶ τούτου οὐκ ἐκ παντὸς ἀλλ' ἐκ μέλανος ἢ τῶν μεταξὺ, καὶ μουσικὸν οὐκ ἐκ μουσικοῦ, πλὴν οὐκ ἐκ παντὸς ἀλλ' ἐξ ἀμούσου ἢ εἴ τι αὐτῶν ἐστι μεταξὺ.
- This contention is two-fold:
  - All change is intra-categorical.
    - That is, nothing can change, for instance, from being pale yellow to being 25 cm. tall.
  - All change must accrue between modally suited pairs
    - That is, nothing can change from being actually  $\phi$  to being  $\phi$ ; and
    - something can become actually  $\phi$  only if it is potentially  $\phi$ , where this requires still more fineness of grain than the constraint that all change be intra-categorical.
      - Thus, for instance, nothing can change in the category of quantity from being 8 cm. tall to weighing .45 kg.

# Yes, but?

- Yes, but what about that soufflé you baked last evening?
  - This was (8): So, the changing thing remaining is some third thing, beyond the contraries (παρὰ τὰ ἐναντία).
  - It did all those things only if there is something remaining changing.

# Revisiting Aristotle's Account of Change

- Recall, then, that 'definition' of change:
  - Given that being in actuality and in potentiality is has been distinguished with respect to each kind of thing, the actuality (ἐντελέχεια) of being in potentiality, *qua* such, is change (διηρημένου δὲ καθ' ἕκαστον γένος τοῦ μὲν ἐντελεχία τοῦ δὲ δυνάμει, ἢ τοῦ δυνάμει ὄντος ἐντελέχεια, ἧ τοιοῦτον, κίνησις ἐστίν; *Phys.* iii 1, 201a9-11).
  - Change (κίνησις) =<sub>df</sub> the actuality of what is potentially  $\phi$ , *qua* such.

# Assessing this Argument

- Does the argument presuppose the existence of change, and thus simply beg the question against the Eleatics?
- Or does the argument, in offering an account of change, at the same moment diagnose and disarm the Eleatic argument?
  - That is, if we start out with the thought that Parmenides has endeavoured to deny the deep, deep *phainomenon* that there is change by showing that change is impossible, then the response is to show that change is after all possible.
    - The argument would then be a reversion to the *phainomena*, ushered in by the articulation of a metaphysically rich framework, namely the intertwined distinctions between (i) matter and form; and (ii) potentiality and actuality.

# On this Reversion

- This would be a reversion which makes the conciliatory point that *ex nihilo nihil fit*, even while insisting that something can come to be from what is not:
  - Consequently, not only is it possible for something to come to be co-incidentally from what is not, and still all things come to be from what is—from what is in potentiality, and from what is not in actuality (*Met.* Λ 2, 1069b18-20).
  - ὥστε οὐ μόνον κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς ἐνδέχεται γίγνεσθαι ἐκ μὴ ὄντος, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐξ ὄντος γίγνεται πάντα, δυνάμει μέντοι ὄντος, ἐκ μὴ ὄντος δὲ ἐνεργείᾳ.