

Metaphysics Λ 6-7

Unmoving Being

The Structure of $\Lambda 6$ (and into 7)

- 1071b3-6: Everlasting, unchanging substances
- 1071b6-22: Essential active substance
- 1071b22-1072a7: An *aporia* about the priority of actuality / activity
- 1072a7-18: There is always coming to be
- 1072a19-26: Why there must be an unmoved mover

Everlasting, Unchanging Substances

- Since there were three [kinds of] substance, two natural and one unchanging, concerning this last it must be said that some everlasting unchanging substance exists. For substances are the primary among things that are; and if all substances are perishable, everything is perishable. (*Met.* Λ 6, 1071b3-6)
- Ἐπεὶ δ' ἦσαν τρεῖς οὐσίαι, δύο μὲν αἰ φυσικαὶ μία δ' ἡ ἀκίνητος, περὶ ταύτης λεκτέον ὅτι ἀνάγκη εἶναι ἀϊδιὸν τινα οὐσίαν ἀκίνητον. αἶ τε γὰρ οὐσίαι πρῶται τῶν ὄντων, καὶ εἰ πᾶσαι φθαρταί, πάντα φθαρτά.
 - Recall *Met.* Λ 1, 1069a30-36: Three types of substance: (i) perceptible and perishable; (ii) perceptible and eternal; and (iii) imperceptible

Some Observations

- The inference patterns in this stretch of text are unusually opaque.
- Generally it is clear *what* is being argued but unclear *how* the argument are intended to go.
 - It becomes necessary, then, to offer some *argument expansions*, roughly, text-based conjectural reconstructions.
 - Witness, for example, Ross (1921 vol. II, 368): ‘The argument is: If all substances are perishable, everything else is perishable (since everything else is posterior to and depends on substance). But movement and time are not perishable. Therefore not all substances are perishable.’

Argument Expansion I

- (1) Substance are ontologically prior to beings in other categories.
- (2) If x is ontologically prior to y , then if x is perishable, so too is y perishable.
- (3) So, if all substances are perishable, all beings in other categories are perishable.
- (4) [It is not the case that all beings in other categories are perishable.]
- (5) So, it is not the case that substances are perishable.
- (6) If (5), there is some everlasting substance.
- (7) Hence, 'it must be said that some everlasting unchanging substance exists.'

Two Takes

- Unflattering:
 - (6) relies on an unhappy quantifier swap: for every time, there is a substance ($\forall x\exists y$), and there some substance such that it exists at every time ($\exists y\forall x$).
- Less unflattering:
 - Perhaps (6) itself is the conditional conclusion of an ancillary argument. So, e.g., if (a) the category of substance is always exemplified [=5] and (b) the category of substance is everlastingly exemplified only if there is some everlasting substance, then there is some everlasting substance.
 - This would need still further expansion; but at least in this case Aristotle would not be guilty of an ungainly quantifier swap.
 - This also leaves open the question of Aristotle's support for (4), if indeed he intends to rely upon (4), the claim that it is not the case that all beings in other categories are perishable.
 - This Aristotle does seem to support in the ensuing passage, by arguing that motion is everlasting.

Motion Must Always Be

- But it is impossible for motion either to come to be or cease to be (for it always was [cf. *Phys.* viii 1, 251a8-10, 251b28-252b5]); nor can time [come to be or cease to be]. For there cannot be earlier or later if time does not exist. Motion, then, is continuous in this way: just as time is; for it [*scil.* time] is either the same as motion or an attribute of it. No motion is continuous except for motion in respect of place, and of this only motion in a circle. Yet if there is something which can initiate motion or can act [on things], but is not activating anything, there will be no motion; for it is possible for what has potential not to activate. (*Met.* Λ 6, 1071b6-14)
- ἀλλ' ἀδύνατο κίνησιν ἢ γενέσθαι ἢ φθαρεῖναι (ἀεὶ γὰρ ἦν), οὐδὲ χρόνον. οὐ γὰρ οἷόν τε τὸ πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον εἶναι μὴ ὄντος χρόνου· καὶ ἡ κίνησις ἄρα οὕτω συνεχῆς ὥσπερ καὶ ὁ χρόνος· ἢ γὰρ τὸ αὐτὸ ἢ κινήσεώς τι πάθος. κίνησις δ' οὐκ ἔστι συνεχῆς ἀλλ' ἢ ἡ κατὰ τόπον, καὶ ταύτης ἢ κύκλω. Ἀλλὰ μὴν εἰ ἔστι κινητικὸν ἢ ποιητικόν, μὴ ἐνεργοῦν δέ τι, οὐκ ἔσται κίνησις· ἐνδέχεται γὰρ τὸ δύναμιν ἔχον μὴ ἐνεργεῖν.

Argument Expansion II

- (1) If time is either the same as motion or an attribute of it, then motion can come to be or cease to be *iff* time can come to be or cease to be.
- (2) Time is an attribute of motion.
- (3) So, motion can come to be or cease to be *iff* time can come to be or cease to be.
- (4) Time can come to be or cease to be only if there is not a before and an after.
- (5) If there is a now, there is a before and after.
- (6) There is a now.
- (7) So, time cannot come to be or cease to be.
- (8) So, motion cannot come to be or cease to be.

An Observation and a Question

- On Aristotle's conception, 'time is the number of motion with respect to the before and after' (*Phys.* iv 11, 219b1).
 - He adds: 'Hence time is not motion, but only motion as enumerable.' (*Phys* iv 11, 291b2-3)
 - This is to say that time is a quantity of motion, that aspect of motion in terms of which it is numerable (cf *Phys.* 220b8 and 251b28)
- A question: could there not be a first/last now?
 - That is, what justifies (5)?

Argument Expansion III

- (1) What is potential cannot activate anything (that is, in so far as it is potential).
- (2) If (1), then what activates motion is not in potentiality (in respect of that by which it activates motion).
- (3) So, there is motion only if there is something in actuality (in respect of that by which it activates motion)
- (4) Hence, 'if there is something which can initiate motion or can act [on things], but is not activating anything, there will be no motion.'

A Query about (3)

- (3) So, there is motion only if there is something in actuality (in respect of that by which it activates motion)
 - One question about 'actuality' (ἐνέργεια) here: is this 'activity' (=doing) or 'actuality' (=being in actuality)?
 - I have, perhaps tendentiously, been rendering the verbal form *energein* (ἐνεργεῖν) as transitive (=effect or activate—doing); it also has, at least as often, an intransitive sense (=to be actual or to be active—being)
 - We evidently need some manner of *sufficient condition* if the arguments are to go through.
 - This is consistent with the intransitive use, but it tends leave a gap: we seem to need a mover whose actuality, well, moves_T—which effects motion.

Not Enough

- Nor would it be any advantage, then, if we were to make substances everlasting—as those make the Forms [everlasting do]—unless there is to be in them some principle able to effect change. Nor accordingly is this at all sufficient, nor even [if there is] some other substance beyond the Forms—for unless it activates [something] there will be no motion. Further, it will not be sufficient if it is activating [something] but its essence (οὐσία) is a potentiality; for [in that case] there will not be everlasting change, since what is potentially [φ] can be not [φ]. It is necessary, therefore, that there be a principle of this sort, one whose essence (οὐσία) is actuality. Further, accordingly, it is necessary that these substances be without matter, for it is necessary that they be everlasting, if indeed something else is everlasting. So, actuality. (*Met.* Λ 6, 1071b14-22)
- οὐθὲν ἄρα ὄφελος οὐδ' ἐὰν οὐσίας ποιήσωμεν αἰδίους, ὥσπερ οἱ τὰ εἶδη, εἰ μὴ τις δυναμένη ἐνέσται ἀρχὴ μεταβάλλειν· οὐ τοίνυν οὐδ' αὕτη ἰκανή, οὐδ' ἄλλη οὐσία παρὰ τὰ εἶδη· εἰ γὰρ μὴ ἐνεργήσει, οὐκ ἔσται κίνησις. ἔτι οὐδ' εἰ ἐνεργήσει, ἢ δ' οὐσία αὐτῆς δύναμις· οὐ γὰρ ἔσται κίνησις αἰδιος· ἐνδέχεται γὰρ τὸ δυνάμει ὄν μὴ εἶναι. δεῖ ἄρα εἶναι ἀρχὴν τοιαύτην ἧς ἢ οὐσία ἐνέργεια. ἔτι τοίνυν ταύτας δεῖ τὰς οὐσίας εἶναι ἄνευ ὕλης· αἰδίους γὰρ δεῖ, εἶπερ γε καὶ ἄλλο τι αἶδιον. ἐνέργεια ἄρα.

Argument Expansion IV

- (1) An everlasting substance is explanatorily adequate with respect to producing everlasting change only if it has within it some principle / source (ἀρχή) capable of producing everlasting change.
 - (1) Forms or other eternal substances or their ilk do not have within them any principle / source (ἀρχή) capable of producing change at all.
 - (2) So, Forms and other substances of their ilk are not explanatorily adequate.
- (2) *Something* is explanatorily adequate to the task of explaining everlasting change. [Call this the Principle of Explanatory Adequacy.]
- (3) So, there is something which has within it some principle / source (ἀρχή) capable of producing everlasting change.
 - (1) It is possible for what has the potential to ϕ not to ϕ .
 - (2) If x can be not ϕ , then x is not explanatorily adequate to the task of explaining what is everlastingly ϕ .
 - (3) So, what can be not ϕ is not explanatorily adequate to the task of explaining what is everlastingly ϕ . [So, e.g., whatever is such that it's possible for it not to initiate motion is not explanatorily adequate to the task of explaining what is everlastingly in motion.]
- (4) 'It is necessary, therefore, that there be a principle of this sort, one whose essence (οὐσία) is activity'