

# Consigning Aristotle’s “God” to Oblivion

## Three Objections to the Conclusion that Aristotle Disowns the Unmoved Mover, and the Replies<sup>1</sup>

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This is the fifth “digital extension” to Aristotle’s “Not to Fear” Proof for the Necessary Eternality of the Universe (New York: ExistencePS Press, 2019).

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The time is ripe to reconsider the relation between  $\Lambda$  and the rest of the *Metaphysics*. There may be various ways to show that *Metaphysics*  $\Lambda$  is, after all, precisely the book we were waiting for (M.L. Gill, 2005).<sup>2</sup>

...we must...assign *causality in the sense of the originating principle of motion* to the power of the *eternally moving bodies* (Aristotle, *Meteorology* 1.2)<sup>3</sup>

### Introduction

What follows is the penultimate set of arguments, starting with my book itself and the four previous digital extensions (with URL’s below), for why the Northern Greek from Stagira dropped the Unmoved Mover of *Metaphysics* Lambda 6, often called “God,” by mid-career. The final set of arguments, expected in early 2021, focusses on the Stagirite’s historical influences, especially Alcmaeon of Croton, whose theories seemingly helped Aristotle realize the better ontological doctrine, which I call the “Not to Fear” Proof. Its conclusion and some of its premises are found in *Metaphysics* Theta 8, with the rest being standard Aristotelian doctrine. The Proof champions the necessarily eternal physical universe, with the outer spheres being the “unmoved movers” that travel omnitemporally in their uniquely defined circles *simply on account of their own nature*.

The (plural) movers are “unmoved” in the sense that Werner Jaeger once explained, as not moved by anything else or moved only incidentally, or in the sense that I give, with Aristotle’s example of the “unmoved mover” *qua* man who hits a stone with a stick: from the perspective of comprehension. No one is foolish enough to doubt that the man had moved previously and, indeed, was moving while hitting the stick and while being called “unmoved.” In addition, the Northern Greek is perfectly clear that motion for the universe goes back *ad infinitum*, and thus, from the standpoint of kinetics or efficient causes, there could never have been a *first* mover.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Published on Sept. 30, 2020 at [www.EPSpress.com/NTF/3ObjectionsAndReplies.pdf](http://www.EPSpress.com/NTF/3ObjectionsAndReplies.pdf). Updated on later dates, with changes noted at the end.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Louise Gill, “Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* Reconsidered,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 43 (2005), 223–51; p. 35. She gives a rewarding summary of the recent scholarship.

<sup>3</sup> 339a29–32. Transl. E.W. Webster; my italics.

<sup>4</sup> How Christian theologians, especially Aquinas, rely on the Unmoved Mover to help justify a deity is so well known as to need no reminder. How the tradition also gets set at least partially for the Arabic Aristotelians, who mistook part of the *Enneads* of Plotinus for Aristotle’s work, calling it *Theology*, is

The Unmoved Mover of Pure Actuality, with neither matter nor potential, therefore becomes otiose, and the recognition of the "Not to Fear" Proof entails that we send the Mover to where Aristotle probably hoped it would be consigned when he dropped it with no fanfare: to oblivion. Apart from mere historical interest, had it not been for Alexander of Aphrodisias, who 500 years later mistakenly assumed that the Unmoved Mover was the Stagirite's mature doctrine, oblivion is where it would and should have stayed, to make an ancient Trinity with Anaxagoras's and Xenophanes's own Unmoved Movers. Even by Aristotle's time those theological predecessors had become relics despite the Stagirite having some praise for Anaxagoras's Mover in *Physics* VIII 5, and, if Alexander had had the vision to detect Aristotle's mature doctrine, he would not have dusted off the third relic that has perplexed generations of later scholars, many of whom have spent careers trying to explicate how an "entity" that is absolutely non-physical could interact with the physical universe, actively or passively.

### Recapitulation until this Point

In the fourth digital extension, I clarified different notions of "possible" and "necessary" in Lambda, because, when Aristotle introduces the reasons for the Unmoved Mover, he says "we must assert that it is *necessary* there should be an eternal unmovable substance" (6.1071b4-5<sup>5</sup>), and he adds that the substance would be without potential, being "(pure) actuality." By definition, in effect, Aristotle makes the Unmoved Mover indestructible: Without potential of any kind, it has no potential to go out of existence.

However, the Stagirite does *not* say "it is necessary that there should be an unmovable substance that is eternal *and necessary*." Given that the first clause may only involve logical necessity, it follows even less that the *de re* necessity of *the whole physical universe* is *also* being asserted in Lambda 6; at most "the" necessity applies to the Unmoved Mover. Moreover, if substance has matter, it would have potentiality and be destructible, entailing that the physical universe would be destructible, too, being comprised of enmattered stars, planets, elements, animals, and plants. Hence, the universe cannot have the guaranteed type of eternity that the Mover does. The latter's eternity results from the Mover having no potential of any kind, not from "necessary" having an ontological meaning, namely, "existing always throughout eternity." One must not confuse the scopes of the modal operators in this case, and similarly, one could say: "It is

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reflected by Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 950-951), often called "the second Aristotle," but perhaps more accurately by Soheil Afnan, "'the second teacher' (Aristotle being the first)" (Soheil M. Afnan, *Avicenna: His Life and Works*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1958, p. 26.) Fārābī accepts that the *Theology* is Aristotelian and, as Afnan adds:

tries to show that Aristotle never really meant that the world was eternal; adding and here comes the source of confusion already referred to 'he who looks into his statements on the Deity in the book known as the *Theology*, will not fail to understand his [Aristotle's] position, and his proof for an original creator of this world.' He [the Stagirite] was thus asserting that a creation must have an original creator, as the theologians insisted. God as the efficient cause was the originator of all things. He is the One and the True. Fārābī proceeds to quote from Plato's *Timaeus* and *Politeia*, as well as from Book Lambda of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, **what he regards as proofs for the existence of God as the first cause**. But his chief source is always the *Theology* (p. 28; my emphasis).

<sup>5</sup> Transl. W.D. Ross, as are all other passages of the *Metaphysics* unless noted.

necessary that the world's possibilities include changing mass and energy throughout eternity." The first modal operator ("necessary") might well be *de dicto*; the second ("possibilities") is *de re*. Having been inspired by Naomi Reshotko's focus on similar issues in the *Timaeus* at the recent conference in honor of Sarah Broadie, I first demonstrated in the previous digital extension that in Lambda the Stagirite may have been using "necessary" in the third sense of *Metaphysics* V 5, as "bound" or "constrained," a sense that he says goes back to Sophocles. This would be especially fitting if he was advancing Plato's theories of either the Divine Craftsman of the *Timaeus* by proposing instead the Unmoved Mover of Lambda 6, or, as Philip Merlan argues, by proposing the 47 unmoved movers of Lambda 8 instead of Plato's Ideal Numbers (or both). Indeed, I showed how Reshotko in her presentation expressed a Platonic sense of necessity, and a corresponding sense of possibility, that accords with all of this, and none of the many, well-respected scholars there rejected her usage in the question-and-answer period (nor should they have). In the Postscript below, I explain how Merlan also says that Aristotle follows his mentor's "logic" and it stands to reason that the Northern Greek also follows the Platonic senses of the modalities; otherwise he would be arguing at cross purposes.

Certainly, as I show in the book and the fourth digital extension, Aristotle in Lambda 6 could not be using "necessary" in the ontological sense of his triangular model alluded to above, which apparently I am the first to uncover in this precise metaphysical context, stemming from passages in the *Prior Analytics* but more explicitly in Theta 8: "necessary" is always existing throughout eternity; "impossible" is never existing in eternity; and "possible (*qua* contingent)" is existing at least once in eternity, but finitely (although years ago, van Rijen had noticed this sense of possibility in the context of logic, as mentioned in the previous digital extension). All of this has been ignored historically, surely in part because of the ambiguity of "possibility": The Stagirite explicitly says that sometimes it is in accord with necessity, sometimes not, and, also, that it has a third sense, of "potentiality," as I discuss in the 4<sup>th</sup> digital extension (pp. 1-3).

In other words, at least at times and at some stages of his career, the Stagirite does *not* have a modern modal model (at least not one that I am aware of), nor is he concerned with mere conceptual possibility that could be as fantastical as anything ever written in myth, epic or drama. Nor does the third sense of "necessary" from V 5 convey that the eternity of the physical universe is *guaranteed* to last forever: as any jailed convict will tell you, being "constrained" hopefully does not even come close to 50 years (or better yet 5-10 years) much less eternity.

As the above suggests, Aristotle may have been optionally using "necessity" in Lambda 6 as "logical necessity," the fifth sense in *Metaphysics* V 5. In any event, in writing Lambda, he had only a non-ontological sense of the modals and never committed himself to the *ontological, de re* necessity of the *physical universe*, as we see more below. At most it was the necessity of the Unmoved Mover, however one construes the modal.

One scholar that I cited, Jonathan Beere, accepts in his recently published work on Theta that the physical universe is eternal for Aristotle even if a Creator-type Being like the Unmoved Mover *qua* God *could* let it disappear but does not, just as the Divine Craftsman for Plato *could* end the

universe that He created and that is infinite from that point onwards.<sup>6</sup> For Plato, of course, as discussed in the previous digital extension, the Craftsman would never destroy that sensory universe because the Craftsman would not wish to ruin anything "well-designed and good." No one to my knowledge has discussed whether the universe on the Stagirite's account could cause self-destruction, even without the choice of an Unmoved Mover *qua* God. That is, the later doctrine in Lambda involves the motion of the universe being caused by the Unmoved Mover because of the analogy of the lover and its beloved. Yet the loving universe, on the same analogy, could commit in effect "metaphysical suicide" for reasons I give below, dealing with unrequited love, and thus *might* go out of existence despite the *claim* that it is eternal, no matter what the Unmoved Mover does (or, more aptly, does not do). Thus, again, the universe cannot be *necessarily* eternal in Lambda; it is contingent or at least finite on one end, if infinite to the past. However, Aristotle confirms in *De Caelo* I and II that there are no such things as one-sided infinities. Either they are infinite on both "sides" or they are finite, having an (ontological) beginning *and* an end. A merely logical or conceptual *terminus* might be a different story.

The discussions following Reshotko's presentation helped me clarify why the physical universe in Lambda could be neither *ontologically* necessary nor *ontologically* possible (that is, contingent in the strict sense) for Aristotle. Those are the only two options that need be considered, because it goes without saying that the universe cannot be (ontologically) impossible, since obviously we exist. This exhausts all the options (namely, the three modals of Aristotle's triangular model). Other reasons now follow.

If the universe were contingent (in the strict sense), it would be finite, but without question the universe is eternal for the Northern Greek. If it were (ontologically) necessary, it could *not* be destructible, because destructibility is a possibility (or potentiality, which in this context means the same, following the *Prior Analytics*, as discussed in the book and the previous digital extension).<sup>7</sup> Yet, being enmattered, the universe presumably *is* destructible. Besides, if the universe is (ontologically) necessary, which implies eternity in and of itself, there is no reason to invoke the redundant Unmoved Mover of Pure Actuality. At least this is what I have argued previously, and below I discuss one scholar's reaction to this ultimate conclusion.

To emphasize, possibility (*qua* contingency) is *not* in accord with, or implied by, necessity (and in the ontological sense is *contrasted* with it). Necessity is omnitemporal and contingency is finite. The universe might have "accidental," "logical" or "fictional" possibilities asserted about it, but those are completely different concerns and discussions. We do not care in this context about fictional gods or fictional aspects of the *to pan* ("The All") or of people's imaginations; rather, we care about what really exists. In addition, there is a difference between a necessarily eternal

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<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Beere, *Doing and Being: An Interpretation of Aristotle's Metaphysics Theta*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Aristotle associates potentiality and possibility also in Lambda 6, 1071b19-20: "for that which is potentially may possibly not be." It follows that *both* possibility and potentiality involve "to be *or* not to be." This disjunction *with two options* is, I believe, the commonality that allows Aristotle to say in the *Prior Analytics* that possibility can mean potentiality and is also what causes possibility to be contrasted at times with necessity and impossibility (in the ontological senses), which, respectively, have *only* one option *always*.

universe including possible (finite) objects and events, which is perfectly fine, and the universe being possible itself, which cannot be Aristotle's view given the meaning of the terms (and this all was discussed more in my first digital extension).

At best, therefore, the *physical universe* in Lambda for the Northern Greek is *conceptually* necessary or *conceptually* contingent in some notion of that word, similar, in the latter case, to the notion above of "conceptual possibility" or "logical possibility" (given that there is no Greek word for "contingent" separate from "possible," typically *tò éndeichómenon* or *dunatos*). Aristotle may well have been using a notion that scholars like Reshotko have plausibly attributed to Plato or that we find in other treatises, like the *Dramatics aka Poetics*. To summarize the topic at hand: Even if I am wrong about the third sense of necessity of V 5 existing in Lambda 6 concerning the Unmoved Mover, with some opposite of "not constrained" being the sense of "possible," the most plausible remaining option is that Aristotle uses "necessity" as "logical necessity." Nevertheless, the *necessity* of the *physical universe* was not at issue in Lambda 6, and, indeed, Aristotle's emphasis on enmattered substances having potential suggests (but, as we will see, only suggests) that ontological necessity could not even be suggested for the universe.

To begin finishing the recapitulation: As a way of arriving at one of my conclusions that the physical universe in *Theta 8* is indeed eternal *and* necessary (in the *de re*, ontological sense), I employed the Principle of Plenitude ("for eternal things, what may be, is") that the Northern Greek propounds in the *Physics*, and invoked the infinite past. The two doctrines help demonstrate that the infinitely-existing universe could *not* disappear; otherwise, the possibility would have already occurred in the (infinite) past and we would be long gone, had we ever been born to begin with. Moreover, granting for the sake of argument that the Unmoved Mover of Pure Actuality is *ontologically* necessary, this implies that any infinite thing that depends on it or follows from it is also necessary, as I discuss in the book in the section on "eternal accidents" and in the first digital extension. Thus, the eternal universe would have to be necessary, too. That is, as one of the *eternal* accidents, the universe could not be a mere *possible* implication, contrary to what some modern modal logics might suggest (because *any and all* ontological possibilities that *might* stem from the ontologically necessary Pure Actuality, or even an ontologically necessary universe, are individually finite).

Let us now turn to the primary goal of this digital extension, to cover the final arguments for the Northern Greek dropping by mid-career the Unmoved Mover *qua* God, whether or not Aristotle had already recognized the "Not to Fear" Proof or whether that mature doctrine was only understood later. By "final arguments" I mean the following: During and after the discussions of Reshotko's presentation at Marquette and in a series of private exchanges, a specialist of Aristotle and Plato, whom I shall call "Anon" (for "Anonymous Scholar"), and I disagreed on two points. Even though we both accept that Aristotle embraced the universe as eternal and necessary, I think it is after Lambda and *De Caelo*, while Anon thinks that he held the view during both books (and I leave aside a detailed examination of this issue in what follows, because it is not clear to me which sense of "necessary" Anon holds). The other disagreement in this context, at least as I interpret our exchanges, and the focus of this digital extension, is *why* the Northern Greek would need the Unmoved Mover of Pure Actuality if the universe is *both eternal and necessary in the ontological sense*. Why is the Unmoved Mover not then utterly redundant, or, to use the term

above, otiose, and why is a previous incarnation of Ockham not ready and eager to enter with his famous razor?

Anon has three objections to my claim that the Unmoved Mover is redundant and dispensable. I repeat the objections in Anon's own words (and emphases) and reply to them in order. By the end, I trust we will have confirmation for why the final nail in the coffin of the Mover has been firmly struck, why we should let it rest in peace in the Pre-Socratic cemetery of Unmoved Movers, and, finally, why we should henceforth ignore it as being part of Aristotle's mature theory.

### Three Objections and the Replies

#### Objection 1

Grant that the eternal universe, which we know does exist, is necessary: I don't see how it **follows** that there is no need for the Unmoved Mover. First, it is, though necessary, a universe in perpetual motion, and for Ar. the chain of causes of motion has to terminate in something unmoved. This holds whether the universe, given that it exists, exists for a both-ways infinite number of years or a finite number of years.

**Reply:** It is universally accepted that for Aristotle motion is infinite to the past. As was confirmed in Part 1 of my book and as I show more below with respect to the *Physics*, there was never a first motion and thus no unmoved motion *as far as kinetics* go. Moreover, since the universe is eternal for the Northern Greek, there should be no question of it containing *only* a "finite number of years." Of course, we might focus on a certain block of time for any number of reasons, but that would be a different topic.

Thus, the universe need not and does not "terminate in something unmoved (kinetically)." Nevertheless, in my book,<sup>8</sup> and as suggested above, I show passages in the corpus where a legitimate "termination" (or first cause) for the mature Northern Greek can be, and in this case must be, from the perspective of comprehension, not kinetics, and I give Aristotle's example of the unmoved mover of the man with the stick hitting a stone in *Physics* VIII 5 256a22ff. Surely, to reiterate, the man had moved *many* times before hitting the stone and moves *while* hitting the stone and *while* being called an unmoved mover. Similarly, the "beginning" of a drama has actions (by the protagonists) before the start, which are omitted because they are irrelevant to comprehending the play as an organic whole. Hence, the initial "termination" in the "*beginning-middle-end*" of the drama is "first" only with respect to comprehension. Likewise, the "end": There is no suggestion that existence in its entirety stops at that moment. All of this allows, though, with respect to kinetics that there was motion beforehand and, depending on the subject that moves, *always* motion beforehand. Hence, the outer (moving) sphere(s) are eternal, but, from the perspective of understanding, they are the actual unmoved movers (plural) of the rest of the universe.<sup>9</sup> Another option that I was reminded of recently by Merlan was noted above, of Jaeger's own interpretation of the unmoved mover as "never moved (or only moved incidentally)

<sup>8</sup> Aristotle's "*Not to Fear*" Proof, pp. 252-4; a summary is in the 4<sup>th</sup> digital extension, p. 10.

<sup>9</sup> See my pp. 3-4; 251-4; 297; and 302-3.

by something else," perhaps, with respect to incidental movement, when something like a sleeping baby is being carried by the mother."<sup>10</sup> In that case, the incidentally moved infant is "unmoved" or at rest *relative to the mother*, although it is moved incidentally because of the mother's movement. An eternal planet, or the outer *aither* of the heavens, that moves *because of its own nature* is also not moved by anything else and so in that sense, too, is "unmoved." Naturally, some of these three options of the meaning of "unmoved" might be simultaneously compatible, and in that case Aristotle could have combined them, depending on the context.

**Objection 2** [with my bracketed numbering and emphases]

Secondly, the *APo* [=Posterior Analytics] recognises truths which are necessary but not primary. **{1}** 'The universe exists' could be like that, requiring a logically prior truth about the existence of something that is not a universe *and not physical at all*. **{2}** I think that the arguments to the Unmoved Mover in **{2A}** *Physics* VIII and **{2B}** *Lambda* do not presuppose that the world exists contingently whether in the sense of 'it might not have existed at all' or in the sense of 'given that it exists, it either has not existed at some time or will not exist at some time'. **{3}** What they presuppose, I guess, is that the world is not such a perfect entity as to need no prior principle to explain it. **{4}** *This is consistent with the world's necessarily existing however one construes that.*

**Reply:** The issue is not whether the universe exists eternally in *Lambda* and the *Physics* (or in *De Caelo* and *Metaphysics* Theta 8). We agree on that. The first dispute is about "necessarily" and what sense it has, point **{4}**. Biding my time to see if Anon's meaning can be determined, I address each of the claims in pointed brackets, bringing in the discussion of "necessarily" (or its associated modalities) throughout, as, dare I say?, is necessary.

I go from easiest to perhaps most difficult: **{3}**, **{1}**, **{2A}** then **{2B}**.

Regarding **{3}**, and the world being an imperfect entity that needs a prior principle: I assume "world" here means "universe" and not just the "earth." Yet what if the outer spheres or the outer *aither* as a whole provides all of the fundamental, primary requirements for eternal motion of the whole physical universe, *The All (to pan)*, which itself exists necessarily? Then the universe or the outer heaven is, indeed, perfect in that (ontological) context, in which "perfect" means something like "complete" concerning the basic requirements of ontology (such as "I scored a perfect 100 on the math test" means I completed all the answers correctly even if my penmanship was sloppy, even if the instructor had to spend extra time deciphering my answers, and even if other pieces of information, like my name and a personal note to the grader, were on the test pages). Try to give a counter-example that Aristotle would countenance as "real," which does not get affected by the outermost sphere, which itself helps cause movement both for the inner spheres and the four elements (cf. my pp. 155-7 and 233-4). Even fictional thoughts *qua* thoughts in a composer's mind depends on the existence of the mind itself, but the mind depends on the composer's body, which itself depends on the earth, parents, grandparents, great-grandparents

<sup>10</sup> Philip Merlan, "Aristotle's Unmoved Movers," *Traditio* Vol. 4 (1946), 1-30, p. 26. This article is hardly discussed nowadays in the USA to my knowledge and was recommended by Anon (although whether its conclusions were being recommended might be a very different story). It is revealing enough in my view to merit a Postscript, which I provide.

and so forth. Of course, for the Northern Greek, as for us, the earth is also affected by the sun. None of this denies the importance of, e.g., psychology, art and ethics, but here we are focused only on ontology and metaphysics.<sup>11</sup>

Optionally, we might contend that, if the universe is indeed imperfect, imperfect principles suffice to explain it. Finally, we might ask Anon what would make the universe more "perfect," if The All had only the sensible eternal substances, the four elements and the sensible non-eternal ones. That is, what is *realistically* missing that makes it "imperfect" and that, if supplied, would make it perfect? Goblins and mythological gods *of any sort* do not count.

Regarding {1}, and the universe requiring a logically prior truth: Why no need similarly for a logically prior truth for the Unmoved Mover? Obviously, we then get an infinite regress, but if the "upper motions," namely, the outermost sphere, planets and stars, suffice for eternal motion for the rest of the universe in and of themselves, as Aristotle says in the *Meteorology*, why not simply nip the regress in the bud and jettison the Mover?<sup>12</sup>

Another reason that the physical universe does not need a "logically prior" ground is presented, if indirectly, by the Northern Greek explicitly treating "nature exists" as a fundamental axiom, analogous to the basic axioms that undergird all proofs, such as the Law of Non-Contradiction or the Law of Excluded Middle:

*What* nature is...has been stated. *That* nature exists, it would be absurd to try to prove; for it is obvious that there are many things of this kind, and to prove what is obvious by what is not is the mark of a man who is unable to distinguish what is

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<sup>11</sup> When publishing the first version of this digital extension, I had forgotten what the Northern Greek says in *De Caelo* II 1 and now repeat his own position, in which the "world" is perfect (without the Unmoved Mover):

...the heaven as a whole neither came into being nor admits of destruction, as some assert, but is one and eternal...*containing and embracing in itself the infinity of time...*[and] *there is some immortal and divine thing which possesses movement*, but movement such as has no limit and is rather itself the limit of all other movement. A limit is a thing which contains; and **this motion, being perfect, contains those imperfect motions** which have a limit and a cessation... (283b27-284a7; transl. J.L. Stocks, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. J. Barnes, *op. cit.*; my different emphases).

For Aristotle, then, the divine thing *possesses movement* and "this motion" is perfect, all of which surely excludes the unmoving Mover of Lambda 6.

<sup>12</sup> *Meteorology* 1.2, 339a19-32; see my p. 256. Aristotle does not say there that the outer movers are necessary, only that they are eternal, but given the ontological equivalence of eternal and necessary in at least some domains in his later thought, it follows that the outer spheres are also (ontologically) necessary. Furthermore, he says something which *implies* that the outer spheres are indeed necessary, although perhaps, but only perhaps, this is mere logical necessity: "The whole world surrounding the earth, the affections of which are our subject, is made up of these bodies [i.e., fire, air, water, and earth]. This world **necessarily** has a certain continuity with the upper motions; consequently all its power is derived from them. (For the originating principle of all motion **must** be deemed **the first cause**. Besides, that element is eternal...)" (transl. E.W. Webster, in J. Barnes, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Princeton: Princeton Univ. Pr., 1985, first printing 1984; my bolding).



self-evident from what is not... Presumably therefore such persons must be talking about words without any thought to correspond.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, no "logically prior truth" is needed for either (the existence of) nature or the physical universe, whose constitutive parts exist "by nature" and have motion and rest as a primary principle, as explained, e.g., in *Physics* II 1, just as no logically prior truth is needed for axioms. Reality is prior to logic and truth. However, indeed a "proof," or at least a good explanation, is arguably needed to show that the universe is eternal *and (ontologically) necessary*, just as an argument was needed for the Laws of Excluded Middle and Non-Contradiction.

Finally, recall that the other Peripatetics and at least most, if not all, of the other schools of philosophy until Alexander of Aphrodisias had no need of a "logically prior truth" for an observable universe that lasts forever.<sup>14</sup> Based on their utter lack of attention to the Unmoved Mover, they seemingly deny with a resounding silence that the mature Aristotle held a "fat metaphysics," which includes entities (like the Unmoved Mover) that have no role to play in ontology, of which more below when examining the analogy of the lover and beloved.

Regarding **{2}**, and, more precisely, arguments for the Unmoved Mover **{2A}** in the *Physics* and **{2B}** in *Lambda*: These are two separate issues, because the reasons given for the Unmoved Mover in the two treatises are different. In *Lambda* 6, Aristotle distinguishes between three classes of substances and says one cannot have matter *and potentiality*; it must therefore be eternal. We examined above whether this "must" is *de re* or *de dicto*, and I have already given reasons, including in the previous digital extension, why at best it is *de dicto* or conceptual-logical, even concerning the Pure Actuality. In the *Physics*, on the other hand, the most detailed arguments for an Unmoved Mover are given in VIII 5-10, dealing with becoming, self-motion versus motion imparted externally, etc., which I need not repeat in their complexity here. Except for the claims about an immaterial Unmoved Mover and some other, minor details, these various arguments could be applied usually, if not always, to what I claim is Aristotle's final position: Each and every unmoved mover (with matter) of the outer sphere satisfies the important conditions given in the *Physics*. In that treatise, and this repeats what I emphasized above regarding the *Metaphysics*, those "unmoved movers" move eternally but are unmoved from the standpoint of understanding because, obviously, there could be no first motion or creation of the universe if motion exists infinitely to the past.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Physics* II 1, 193a3-9; transl. R.P. Hardie and R.K. Gaye, in J. Barnes, *The Complete Works of Aristotle, op. cit.*, as are all other passages below from the *Physics*; italics by Hardie & Gaye.

It might be considered odd that "thought" (*noein*) rather than "reality" is used by Aristotle, but typically a concept in the mind *represents* the things, with words then being *mediated* by those concepts. As Taneli Kukkonen writes: "as the sixth-century CE commentator Ammonius puts what became the standard interpretation, words 'signify things through the intermediary of concepts'" (*Dividing Being: Before and after Avicenna*, in Leila Haaparanta & Heikki Koskinen, eds., *Categories of Being*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012; 36-61, p. 38).

<sup>14</sup> pp. 229; 240; 279-82; 299; and 317-8.

<sup>15</sup> One might follow, e.g., W.K.C. Guthrie (*VI. Aristotle: an encounter. A History of Greek Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, reprinted 1990, pp. 251-254), who indicates that *Physics* VIII 5 excludes a self-mover moving itself eternally, as a whole. This would seem to rule out my ultimate solution that the outermost *aither*, or the outermost spheres like planets and stars, move as part of their own nature, being in effect self-moved. More on this later, but one option is that the outermost (spherical) *aither* is more like a fifth element than an ensouled creature; another option is that as an

The Stagirite can therefore keep the condition of being "unmoved" for his whole career, depending on how one interprets the word. However, the conditions of "immaterial" and "lacking any potential" is a different story. The Unmoved Mover of *Physics* VIII 10 is, e.g., indivisible and has no magnitude, which means it could not have matter and therefore, presumably, could not be one of the unmoved movers of Theta 8 or *Meteorology* (or even one of the unmoved movers with matter of Lambda 8).<sup>16</sup> Let us now examine, then, more of that related doctrine, to grasp what Aristotle moved away from as he matured, even assuming that the manuscripts are authentic, although we will also detect grounds for why they are not authentic regarding immateriality.

As a prefatory remark, *Physics* VIII (indeed seemingly the whole *Physics*) presupposes the view that Anon notes: The world is eternal and not contingent, if "contingent" has the ontological sense (and not the dictionary sense of "by accident" or "depending on certain circumstances"). That is, because the primary Principle of Plenitude ("For eternal things, what may be, is") is specified in *Physics* III 4, 203b30; because the "world" has lasted to the infinite past; and because, as Sarah Broadie correctly says, infinity functions like eternity for Aristotle,<sup>17</sup> Anon is correct: The "world" cannot be contingent in the *Physics*. This is, though, not only perfectly consistent with the "Not to Fear" Proof but emphasized in it. Again, contingency, meaning "happening at least once in all eternity, finitely," is contrasted with both necessity and impossibility. Since in the *Physics* the universe is eternal, it cannot be finite and thus cannot be contingent.

As alluded to, I disagree with Anon on the *immateriality* and *lack of potentiality* of the unmoved movers of the mature Aristotle. Anon seemingly accepts that the Unmoved Mover of *Physics* and of Lambda are static and consistent doctrines that Aristotle championed to the end of his life (if an imaginative construct that may be no better than a mythological creature can be properly called an "entity"). Rather, I have explained how Aristotle develops the "Unmoved Mover"/*Nous* of Anaxagoras, whom Aristotle praises in the *Physics*,<sup>18</sup> to arrive at his own notion of the (immaterial) First Mover of *Physics* VIII. I also have explained how Anaxagoras himself had developed the Unmoved Mover of Xenophanes, who is under-appreciated in this whole context,

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ensouled creature it, or at least the stars and planets, can think and thus be like the man hitting the stone, with the huge difference that, unlike the man, they are eternal by nature and therefore indeed self-moved. The analogy of the lover and the beloved requires that the *aither* or the outermost spheres feel desire and presumably think, and, according to the Northern Greek "the heaven is alive and has its own source of motion" (*de Caelo* 285a29-30; transl. Guthrie, who discusses the issue on p. 255-6). Furthermore, Aristotle acknowledges that desire and thought can be the unmoved element that causes something as a whole to move (Lambda 7 1072a29-30), as Guthrie recognizes to some extent. In short, then, the doctrine of VIII 5 either was revised by Aristotle by the time he wrote Theta 8 or he can have eternal self-movers, for the reasons just given.

<sup>16</sup> However, cf. the Postscript below, regarding Merlan's attempted reconciliation of monotheism with Aristotle's polytheism in Lambda. Merlan contends that Aristotle has multiple unmoved movers that have no matter.

<sup>17</sup> Sarah Broadie (publishing as "Waterlow"), *Passage and Possibility: A Study of Aristotle's Modal Concepts*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982, p. 65. This insight ("infinity functions like eternity") is one of the premises of the "Not to Fear" Proof; see my pp. 175-6.

<sup>18</sup> "Anaxagoras is right when he says that Mind (*Nous*) is impassive and unmixed, since he makes it the principle of motion; for it could cause motion in this way *only by being itself unmoved*, and have control only by being unmixed" (*Physics* VIII 5, 256b25-28; my italics).

and how the Stagirite then develops his view of the *Physics* still further to get his position in Lambda.<sup>19</sup> However, on my interpretation, Lambda 6 and the condition of immateriality in the *Physics* are Aristotle's earlier views, and Theta 8 expresses his most mature view. Lastly, I have already explained what little had to change in Lambda for Aristotle to arrive at this final theory (or what little had to change in the parts of Lambda dealing with an Unmoved Mover of Pure Actuality that has no matter because it is generally accepted that the multiple "unmoved movers" in Lambda 8 have matter, which is consistent with Theta 8).<sup>20</sup>

We need to pause for a correction here. Given the exchanges with Anon and after Merlan's article, my timeline of the evolution of the Stagirite's thought should be revised, although the new one has absolutely no impact on my final conclusions or on the "Not to Fear" Proof. I assumed that *Metaphysics* Lambda 6 was later than the *Physics* and thus would have had more sophisticated and powerful ideas, perhaps subconsciously thinking that *ta meta ta physica* ("after the *Physics*") was indeed written *as a whole* after the *Physics*. On that assumption, I noticed the new focus on potentiality, with the Unmoved Mover not having any, which, to reiterate, means it could not go out of existence. "What a brilliant advance on the *Physics*," I thought. Now, though, it strikes me that the absurd baggage that comes with positing an immaterial, "guaranteed" Being is actually less profound and more the mark of a young, brilliant thinker who has not had time to consider in depth the ramifications of such a theory. It is "eternal guarantee" by mere fiat and the *consequences* are stupendously unacceptable. Thus, Lambda 6 need not be later than the *Physics*.

To continue with **{2A}** and the *Physics*: In my book I accept VIII 10 as being entirely legitimate in order not to get sidetracked by another complex issue, as I explain in a moment. As I also show concerning the issue of "immateriality," by the time of both Theta 8 and *Meteorology*, Aristotle drops the parts of his theory from the *Physics* concerning "(unmoved) movers" *that have no magnitude*. Spatial magnitude and matter are intertwined, and, again, in his final ontology the unmoved movers of the outer spheres are enmattered. Hence, they have magnitude; otherwise, they would not be visible.

Another option is that the very first and very last sentence of VIII 10 (dealing with the first mover having neither magnitude nor parts nor divisibility) were wrongly interpolated, perhaps by an editor trying to reconcile either Plato and Aristotle or early Aristotle and late Aristotle. That is, the two sentences were added by an editor simply not understanding Aristotle's presumably uncorrupted text, and, indeed, the final *couple* of sentences in VIII 10 are very suspect. Alternatively, there may have been more than one text and they were combined. Let us corroborate all of this by first re-examining the crucial passage from the very end of VIII 9:

### **VIII 9**

...We have argued that there always was motion and always will be motion throughout all of time, and we have explained what is the first principle of this eternal motion; we have explained further which is the primary motion and which

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<sup>19</sup> Pp. 228-42.

<sup>20</sup> Pp. 9; 243; 263-4; 266-7; 274-5; 283; 295; and 305-6. Again, for a competing view and other considerations, see the Postscript on Merlan.

is the only motion that can be eternal; and we have pronounced the first mover to be unmoved (266a5-10).

The condition of "immateriality" is not mentioned here. Given that motion is infinite to the past and that there can be no "first" mover temporally, I assume, again, that the "first" mover is unmoved from the perspective of comprehension (or, as Jaeger says, because nothing *else* moves it). We need not assume, as some specialists in medieval philosophy still do to this day, that the "first mover" is a completely non-physical entity that also lasts through infinite time *and that somehow keeps the motion going minute by minute, second by second, and millisecond by millisecond*, as in Lambda. Of course, for some commentators this kind of "first mover" is the Christian God. Rather, what the Northern Greek has just said in VIII 9 could apply perfectly well to the *aither* or the unmoved movers of the outer spheres (that is, the multiple enmattered unmoved movers of Lambda 8, Theta 8, and *Meteorology*). Aristotle continues without a break:

### **VIII 10**

We have now to assert that the first mover must be without parts and without magnitude, beginning with the establishment of the premises on which this conclusion depends. *One* of these premises is that nothing *finite* can cause motions during *an infinite time* (266a10-13; my italics).

The rest of this final chapter is a development of this *one, and only one, (surely true) premise*. The Stagirite concludes the whole chapter and the whole treatise as follows:

Now that these points are settled, *it is clear that the first unmoved mover cannot have any magnitude*. For if it has magnitude, this must be either a finite or an infinite magnitude. Now ***we have already proved in our course on Physics*** that there cannot be an infinite [spatial] magnitude; and we have now proved that it is impossible for a thing to be moved by a finite magnitude during an infinite time. ***But the first mover causes a motion that is eternal and causes it during an infinite time***. It is clear, therefore, that [the first mover] is **indivisible and is without parts and without magnitude** (267b18-26) [my emphases and bracketed words].

The final conclusion seems consistent with Lambda 6, because the mover is without magnitude in both places (and without magnitude it would be without parts and thus indivisible). However, since I believe Aristotle advances beyond Lambda 6 to Theta 8, I will waste no time here on how Lambda may involve a more powerful theory of an Unmoved Mover than the *Physics* (cf. my pp. 234-46), or, as introduced above, vice-versa. Again, the reader should simply note that the issue of potentiality is not employed here in VIII 10 at all, as it is in Lambda 6.

Consider, now, these oddities. Aristotle acts in VIII 10 as if he will take up multiple premises at the beginning of the chapter and yet he really only deals with one, the issue of whether something finite can cause infinite motion. The first sentence, again, is "We have now to assert that the first mover must be without parts and without magnitude" (255a10-11) and the final conclusion is "It is clear, therefore, that [the first mover] is indivisible and is without parts and without magnitude" (267b18-26). Omit these two sentences and we have a *much* more sensible and unified discussion, of Aristotle continuing to argue in VIII 10 what he had been arguing earlier in VIII, namely, that

**(i) finite sources cannot give infinite motion and (ii) the only true infinite motion is a (single and continuous) rotatory one.** *Lack of magnitude, parts and indivisibility* play no role in those arguments!

Furthermore, these two very authentic conditions of Book VIII—**(i)** and **(ii)**—are satisfied by the outer spheres being the prime movers (again from the perspective of comprehension). They are eternal in and of themselves (by their very nature) and have a single, continuous rotation, on very delimited and eternally unique paths that I have explained are guaranteed to never change, analogous to the MAC address on my computer, all of which ensures that the outer spheres *never* stray off course and *never* collide and destroy each other.<sup>21</sup>

The Northern Greek has argued for the importance of rotary movement at length in the earlier chapters, as being the only kind that can be continuous and eternal, and the oddity of, for instance, at least some of the planets moving in a large circle rather than revolving in one spot, like a spinning top or, in case the Greeks had no spinning tops, a dancer doing pirouettes, or vice-versa, pirouetting rather than travelling in a large circle, will enter more below when discussing why multiple unmoved movers cause one type of rotary motion like a circle rather than *elliptical* movement. Suffice it to say now that the Northern Greek would have been well aware of at least pirouettes, as bodies rotating in place, even had he been so uncultured as to never have attended a dramatic performance and to never have seen a dancer perform one in the choruses. The reason is that Plato in the *Timaeus* discusses at length circular motion (at 34aff) and says finally:

This, then, was the reason why all those everlasting and unwandering stars—*divine living things which stay fixed by revolving without variation in the same place*—came to be...

To describe the dancing movements of these gods, their juxtapositions and the back-circlings and advances of their circular courses on themselves;...without the use of visible models would be labor spent in vain. We will make do with this account, and so let this be the conclusion of our discussion of the nature of the visible and generated gods.<sup>22</sup>

Aristotle could not have been unaware of this passage. In short, what *is* authentic in VIII, and especially in VIII 10, is the argument for an infinite (temporal) source being crucial for infinite, rotary movement, and what might well be inauthentic are the first and last sentences of VIII 10. The interpolation of the catharsis-clause in the *Dramatics aka Poetics*, of which more in a moment (and of "immaterial minds" in *De Anima* III 5) are, I think, two other clear examples of our texts being corrupted and wrongly repaired or simply added to. If Anon does not think all of this is plausible, he or she should, again, just consider that Aristotle drops the immature doctrine of immateriality of the *Physics* as he got older and wiser (maybe having been inordinately influenced initially as a student by Parmenides's immaterial Way of Truth or by Plato's Forms or

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<sup>21</sup> Pp. 261-3.

<sup>22</sup> 40b-c, my emphases; transl. Donald J. Zeyl, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. by John M. Cooper; Assoc. Editor D.S. Hutchinson, Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997.

by both doctrines, of which more later, and maybe already having the view of Lambda 6 when he wrote *Physics* VIII or at least VIII 10).

That is, I will not be surprised if Anon responds about the wrongful interpolations in *Physics* VIII 10 in the way an editor of a scholarly journal replied about ten years ago while rejecting a part of my book on "musical" dramatic theory regarding why Aristotle could not have written *katharsis* in the definition of "serious drama" (*tragōidia*),<sup>23</sup> a position that, I am glad to say, more and more internationally-known specialists are supporting. The submitted part was more a continuing debate than original research and the editor (reasonably) rejected it accordingly. What is relevant here, though, is that he was also extremely worried about my thesis that the *Dramatics aka Poetics* has wrongful interpolations, suggesting we have to protect the manuscript *at any and all costs* (despite 31 copies having many differences). However, the formidable Eduard Zeller long ago wrote that the "*Poetics*" has interpolations, inversions and corruptions, and Appendix 2 of my *A Primer on Aristotle's DRAMATICS* reveals that Zeller was right in general but often wrong on the particulars, namely, the specific interpolations and inversions, etc.

In my view, we hardly do Aristotle and, more importantly, the Aristotelian spirit a service by treating a manuscript as if it were a sacred Bible. If a certain phrase or sentence goes against what is clearly his developed theme, we need to consider that Posidonius (and Jonathan Barnes, who argues in support of him<sup>24</sup>), Strabo and Plutarch were all right against Athenaeus regarding the corruption of Aristotle's and Theophrastus's library at Scepsis. I evaluate at length this whole topic in Appendix 2 of *A Primer* and, again, side with Barnes, although I also show a way in which we could reconcile all the claims. *The crucial point here is that the corruptions and interpolations could have applied to many manuscripts, not just the Dramatics.* Hence, I would have no hesitancy, if I ever get the time, to defend the option that VIII 10 has wrongful interpolations or that VIII 10 was a different text that was combined with the rest of an earlier *Physics*. Try to make sense of the connection between the actual detailed arguments in the chapter (and indeed in VIII overall) with the two opening and closing statements involving "no magnitude and no parts and no divisibility." It is like trying to connect catharsis to the rest of the *Dramatics*,—mostly guesswork and indeed even extremely inconsistent with what Aristotle says in various places, as we can see further here by addressing just a few more of the points.

Why does Aristotle write "Now we have already proved in our course on *Physics*..." when the words are *in* "our" *Physics*? Also, recall again: "Now that these points are settled, it is clear that the first unmoved mover cannot have any magnitude." Maybe it is clear to people with supernatural powers of reasoning, but I am shocked that Aristotle *himself* would and could have written such an obtuse conclusion. The conclusion is not clear at all given the arguments in the

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<sup>23</sup> 6.1449b28. *Tragōidia* cannot be reasonably translated in English as "tragedy" because the Northern Greek says three times in the treatise that the plot (and primary protagonists) can go from fortune to misfortune *or vice-versa*. Besides, the best examples in Chapter 14 of *tragōidia* are those that end happily, *Cresphontes* and *Iphigenia (in Tauris)*; see my *A Primer on Aristotle's DRAMATICS: also known as the Poetics* (New York: ExistencePS Press, 2019), espec. pp. 19, 34, 81, and 182, and also my *Aristotle's Favorite Tragedy: Oedipus or Cresphontes?* (New York: ExistencePS Press), 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2018.

<sup>24</sup> *Philosophia Togata II: Plato and Aristotle in Rome*, ed. by Jonathan Barnes and Miriam Griffin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997, espec. p. 29).

chapter and in fact boggles the mind. However, maybe he meant that the first unmoved mover cannot have any *finite* magnitude, which itself *would* be perfectly legitimate, especially given the arguments he has just provided about finite things not causing infinite movement. However, this option then presupposes that the text was corrupted. In any event, *this* interpretation—that the unmoved mover cannot have any *finite* magnitude—reveals the Stagirite still focussing properly on *infinite* magnitude; however, not as a single body, because Aristotle does not accept that a body can be infinite in space, but as a temporal cause of eternal motion. Infinite (temporal) magnitude is the, or one of the, crucial aspects of his whole argument in VIII and especially in VIII 10: only things with infinite (temporal) magnitude can involve (or cause) infinite motion. Maybe, therefore, only parts of these final sentences were changed by a later editor.

Be that as it may, how does the Northern Greek think that he is entitled to the conclusion that the unmoved mover *has no parts and is indivisible*, notwithstanding that infinite time has finite blocks of time within it? This portion of the conclusion comes out of the blue, even if "parts" had been briefly and obliquely mentioned at the very beginning of the chapter, in explaining the point pertaining to the one premise *regarding infinite magnitude being needed for infinite motion*. Again, it is very possible that the sentence or final couple of sentences were tacked on later by someone not fully understanding Aristotle's arguments or by someone who had other motives. Alternatively, some words were changed or this chapter was later and an editor tried to pull in points from much earlier, in what is now considered Book VIII. At any rate, based on the arguments given in the whole book and in the chapter, the conclusion in the very last sentence of VIII 10 *should be* something like "It is clear, therefore, that [the first mover] is ~~indivisible and is without parts and without magnitude~~ *eternally moving itself*." This conclusion is compelling.

As mentioned, everything else that is major in VIII 10 seems consistent with Theta 8 and Aristotle's position that the true unmoved movers of the universe are the outermost spheres. At the least, given the most trivial of changes (e.g., allowing the movers to be plural rather than singular, as was covered in VIII 6, when the Northern Greek acknowledges both but chooses a single one provisionally), the authentic paragraphs would be consistent with Theta 8. Even if the whole *Physics* was authentic, would the evolutionary changes in Aristotle's thought be significant enough to cause him to write a whole new version of VIII 10? Perhaps not, and even less a whole revised VIII. In short, almost all of VIII, and even of VIII 10, is doctrine that Aristotle could have held until his dying breath. The phrases or few sentences noted above are a very different story, and determining how they got there would be as difficult a matter as determining who wrongly interpolated *katharsis* in *Dramatics* 6.

Regarding **{2B}**, whether Lambda presupposes the world is contingent or not: To a large extent I addressed this issue in the previous, fourth digital extension and above. I add to those arguments now, given the reflections on the *Physics*.

First, as suggested, Lambda 6 may well have been written before Aristotle established in the *Physics* that the universe is both eternal *and ontologically necessary*. Of course, if the Unmoved Mover of *Pure Actuality* grounds the existence of the physical universe in the *Physics*, then the *necessity* of The All (*to pan*) is determined by that Unmoved Mover. This would be similar to Lambda 6, all of which need only mean that *part* of the *Physics*—the condition of immateriality—

was dropped by Aristotle when he arrived at his most mature doctrine of Theta 8 (in addition to a strange doctrine of potentiality that I discuss below). I should add for those who are not specialists that the *Metaphysics* is a chaotic assemblage of manuscripts (and this is so well known in the profession that I do not even cite previous scholars), and *sections* like Lambda 8 dealing with at least 47 enmattered "unmoved movers" could be later because they seem to be entirely consistent with Theta 8 (but, again, see the Postscript on Merlan). As with the *Dramatics*, in my view it is crucial to determine a consistent and mature system for Aristotle, not act like the texts represent his life-long, static theory, written in the order we now have. Jaeger and Zeller were often correct.

At any rate, as covered in the fourth digital extension, the "world" in *Lambda* might well be, and from my perspective is, contingent (that is, possible) *in a conceptual sense*, as Reshotko and Plato use the term for "possibility" that for Aristotle at other times, but only at times, conveys "(ontological) contingency." Again, recall there is no separate Greek word apart from *tò êndechómenon* or *dunatos* to distinguish contingency from possibility in general or to distinguish between its three senses explained before. We need to determine the word's sense from its behavior. Moreover, as emphasized not only in the previous digital extension but above, even Beere in his recent book uses contingency in a merely conceptual or fictional manner when addressing Aristotle's eternal universe in Theta 8, a chapter that is obviously absolutely crucial in my interpretation of the Stagirite's ontology and that many others also consider his late doctrine.<sup>25</sup>

To summarize this portion: I failed to spell all of this out clearly in Part 2 of my book *relative to Lambda* (and to the *Physics*) and am very grateful to Anon for helping me clarify the related issues in the private exchanges. I primarily handled in the previous digital extension Aristotle using the modals in a Platonic sense that, concerning "necessary," goes back to Sophocles (i.e., the third sense of "necessity" as given in *Metaphysics* V 5), and I touched above on how "necessity" instead may have been meant from the standpoint of demonstration (the fifth sense in V 5), with the "definition" and the "necessity" of the Unmoved Mover being a result of Aristotle's *deducing* what *to pan* must involve to ensure its eternality and to progress beyond Plato's ontology of the Divine Craftsman. On this line, the Stagirite merely establishes *logically*—like in a valid syllogism with terms that, like "unicorn," could be imaginary—that the Unmoved Mover has no potentiality, which "guarantees" its existence. Unfortunately, the necessity is not *de re*, and the deduction also generates absurdities that, being taken as Aristotle's mature theory, shocked Cicero, Jaeger and Franz Brentano, the latter of whom rightly said that the doctrine is "prattle without all sense or reason." Anyone who has followed the history of theology even superficially knows that many more thinkers have rejected the Stagirite's Unmoved Mover without even knowing about his triangular modal model, whether on "mere" empirical grounds or metaphysical reasoning.

### **Objection 3**

I see no difficulty for my view from 1071b [in which Aristotle argues for a primary cause *qua* substance without matter, the Unmoved Mover, because anything with matter can perish, having potentiality and thus "not-to-be" potentiality]. It shows he thinks the existence of the cosmos is **necessary**, and from this he infers that

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<sup>25</sup> Beere, *op. cit.*, espec. p. 316; see my full discussion, pp. 257-265, espec. 264-5.



the cause is only an *energeia*. Why should that show that the cosmos has no cause apart from itself, **which is the view you want Aristotle to be compatible with?** [the bracketed comment and emphases are mine]

**Reply:** Let us start by re-examining the passage in Lambda 6:

Since there were three kinds of substance, two of them natural and one unmovable, regarding the latter we must assert **that it is necessary that there should be an eternal unmovable substance.** For substances are the first of existing things, and **if they are all destructible, all things are destructible...** [Moreover] if there is something which is capable of moving things or acting on them, but is not actually doing so, there will not be movement; **for that which has a capacity need not exercise it...** [Thus] even if it [a mover] acts, this will not be enough, if its substance is potentiality; for there will not be *eternal* movement; **for that which is potentially may possibly not be. There must, then, be such a principle, whose very substance is actuality.** Further, then, **these substances must be without matter; for they must be eternal, at least if anything else is eternal.** Therefore they must be actuality. Further, then, **these substances must be without matter;** for they must be eternal, at least if anything else is eternal.<sup>26</sup>

Let us leave aside the *plural* "substances" until the Postscript. I began, in effect, already to answer Objection 3 in my book and in the first and fourth digital extensions. One argument is that the "cosmos" for the Stagirite is what exists physically, namely, the outer spheres and the rest of the "inner" universe. Various authors like Monte Ransome Johnson deal with Aristotle's single or multiple *cosmoi* based primarily on the meteorological texts, *and the Unmoved Mover is not part of that discussion.* Thus, arguably it is improper to include the Unmoved Mover in the "cosmos," strictly speaking. Alternatively, to take an unusual meaning of the "cosmos" merely to illustrate a point, the cosmos is necessary because the cosmos is only the Unmoved Mover. However, this is a very strange notion of the cosmos and one I will not entertain.

Let us grant, instead, for the sake of argument that "cosmos" is synecdochal for *to pan*, which is how at least most commentators have interpreted Aristotle. Thus, as noted above concerning the *Physics*, the cosmos is arguably necessary because The All *also* includes the entirely non-physical Unmoved Mover, *which itself is primary and necessary.* We must be careful, though, because the necessity in Lambda 6 at best seems to be only a *logical* necessity. In other words, to reiterate, the "guarantee" is only one *by definition or by deduction*: By logical reasoning and by merely positing that the Unmoved Mover has no potentiality (and thus no potentiality to disappear), it follows, *qua deduction*, that it exists forever. What about the universe itself?

It is only *because* of the Unmoved Mover that the physical spheres and everything affected by them will be always kept in existence or at least in motion, which for Aristotle is the same when it comes to the physical universe. That is, the necessary-by-definition (or necessary-by-deduction) Unmoved Mover always keeps the outer spheres going, and if only as a consequence of *it* not going out of existence, *they* always continue for the Stagirite, and they always continue moreover in the

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<sup>26</sup> 1071b2-22; Ross's italics but my words in brackets & my boldfacing.

*proper kind* of motion that we see daily (namely, eternal, circular motions on their unique, never conflicting paths). To emphasize, the Unmoved Mover is *not* a first temporal cause that kicks off the infinite motion; that would instead be somewhat like Plato's Divine Craftsman, which creates the ordered motion of the infinite sensory universe from the preceding chaos, and would be inconsistent with *De Caelo*, which forbids asymmetry for not only finite temporal events (which must have delimited beginnings *and* endings) but infinite temporal events (which must be open-ended on *both* sides). The Unmoved Mover, rather, ostensibly guarantees the (movement of the) physical universe minute-by-minute, month-my-month, and eon-by-eon *in virtue of the love of the physical universe at every moment*, which I address more below.

Now, I grant that, in trying initially to advance beyond the *Timaeus*, the Northern Greek posits or, better yet, deduces in his youth that the first cause is "only an *energeia*." I also grant, but only for the sake of argument, that at that point in his career a pure *energeia* can, or must, be part of the cosmos for Aristotle in some sense of the modalities, again, presumably a logical sense. However, I argue, he thereby utters nonsense, foists incredible dilemmas on his colleagues and potential followers, and imperils his own reputation. As discussed in my book and in earlier digital extensions, and as I cover more in the upcoming sixth and final digital extension, *Phaedrus* 245c-e shows Plato even by about 365-358 BCE focusing on very similar arguments for the necessity and eternity of both the soul and the "divine" universe.<sup>27</sup> Thus, surely other Academics and Aristotle himself would have been dealing with objections to theories similar to the Unmoved Mover long before the Stagirite left Athens around 347, about the age of 37, whether or not he wrote Lambda early, as I propose. Even if not, the objections in his own mind to *Phaedrus* 245c-3 would have prevented him from positing *in later years* the nonsense of the Unmoved Mover of Pure Actuality, that is, a cause of the *to pan* that is "only an *energeia*." Three reasons follow, with the discussion of the *Phaedrus* reserved for the next and final planned digital extension.

### The First Reason

How does something with absolutely no physicality or potentiality interact in any way with the (rest of the) universe, actively *or* passively? I won't repeat here all, or even most, of the dilemmas articulated in my book (especially pages 280-307) and in the previous digital extensions, and I simply note a passage from the *Physics*: Things move something else in one of only four possible ways: pulling, pushing, carrying, and twirling.<sup>28</sup> Anyone who argues that X can push or pull Y without having matter and power (or potentiality) is living in a completely different universe than I and the Aristotle of this passage from the *Physics*. Moreover, Aristotle criticizes Plato's Forms in Lambda and M 5 because they cause neither existence nor movement, e.g., "if the Forms or the numbers are to exist, *they will be causes of nothing*: or if not that, *at least not of movement*" (12.10.1075b27-8; my italics). Why would he adopt in his mature years a doctrine that has the same failing? One might reply that the analogy of the lover and the beloved does not seem to fall under one of the four ways of causing movement just noted; hence, I examine that analogy under "Metaphysical Divorce" below to show that it is even more embarrassingly absurd than the fairly

<sup>27</sup> Anna Usacheva, "Concerning the Dating of Plato's *Phaedrus*," *Hermathena*, 2012, 53-70, espec. pp. 63, 66 and 68.

<sup>28</sup> *Physics* VII 2, 243a15-8. Also see *Mechanics* 24 (855b35-856a1) and 31 & 33 (858a3ff); my pp. 94-5.

sophisticated doctrine of the Forms, which at least have epistemic and ontological grounds for their alleged existence (e.g., to handle Heraclitus and the world being always in flux).

### The Second Reason

Let us return to the crucial passage in Lambda 6, with the important parts boldfaced:

if there is something which is capable of moving things or acting on them, but is not actually doing so, there will not be movement; **for that which has a capacity need not exercise it...** [Thus] even if it [a mover] acts, this will not be enough, if its **substance is potentiality**; for there will not be **eternal** movement.

Clearly, at this stage in his career, the Northern Greek had not understood, or was not employing, the ontological sense of possibility (that here seems synonymous or equivalent to potentiality/capacity), because in *that* sense, if something eternal has a capacity, the capacity *must* get realized at least once in infinity, and thus there *would* be movement. This confirms our findings in the Reply to **{2B}** above, although one might here object and indicate that Aristotle switches to "eternal movement" at the end in the passage at hand. Yet, that is not seemingly an issue of ontological possibility; it is an issue of substance *qua* potentiality.

The next point pertains to this emphasis on substance as potentiality. This is one of the doctrines that I demonstrate (pp. 234-5) Aristotle relinquished as he matured. Contrary to Lambda 6, the *substance* of the eternally moving spheres in Theta 8 is *actuality combined with a very specific potentiality*, not (pure) potentiality *per se*. Theta 8 reveals that the eternally moving spheres each have a potential *qua* "eternal accident" for only a certain movement, *one that is always getting realized*, to move on a precisely delimited path. Thus, they have a very specific kind of matter that permits potentiality *not as substance* but as an eternal attribute, which itself would stem from eternal *essential* characteristics (as I explain in the section entitled "Aristotle and Eternal Accidents," pp. 197-200). However, for the Stagirite, the outermost *aither* and the eternally moving spheres have no other kinds of potential, like the potential to stop or change course or disappear (and as a result they never tire, 50b24).<sup>29</sup> All of this is simply their nature, like ours is to walk and breathe, *not* to sprout wings and fly, and, if you wish, call the eternal spheres the cosmic epitome of the Energizer Bunny.

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. my pp. 257ff, espec. 263-4 and 268-76. The assertion about "tiring" may suggest that for Aristotle the eternal spheres are animate and have a soul like vertebrates have. However, the Northern Greek's claim is arguably more a figure of speech, in dealing with traditional issues stemming from Xenophanes or earlier, of the divinities not getting exhausting, and is akin to people nowadays calling a virus (like the current Covid-19) "alive." Technically, the virus is not alive and cannot locomote and reproduce; rather it can only multiply in a parasitic manner. Nevertheless, people often say the viruses live or die. Strictly speaking, the unmoved movers *qua aither* or outer moving spheres are either a fifth element or are a special kind of animate being with very restricted movement, like a fish (or a race car) that cannot go in reverse. If the latter, it has a very special kind of soul. Cf., though, Guthrie, *op. cit.*, p. 247, on Aristotle seemingly rejecting in *de Caelo* II, 284a27-35 that the heaven or upper place should need a soul. However, if this is correct the whole analogy of lover and beloved seems to be impossible, for how can a being desire or love the Unmoved Mover if it has no soul?

In short, the eternal spheres' *substance* is not their *potentiality* in Theta 8, one of Aristotle's primary worries in Lambda 6 and one of the few points he needed to correct to arrive at his mature position.<sup>30</sup> The substance is an actuality that has existence or movement (or both) as part of its essential conditions. In this case, essence and existence in effect turn out to be the same or at least *always* aligned with each other, and so, for what it is worth, we need not debate with Sartre, Hegel and any others in modern philosophy who wonder which came first, essence or existence.

To conclude this "Second Reason": For Aristotle to maintain past his early career that the Unmoved Mover of *Pure Actuality* can cause, even passively, the physical universe to move is as problematic as Platonists advocating Forms or numbers being the source of physical existence or of movement. Thus, the first cause for the mature Stagirite need not be, *and is not*, "only an *energeia*." To claim the opposite, as Anon and others over centuries have done, is to run into dilemmas that have never been solved in over 2000 years and will never be solved, whether in 20,000 years or  $10^{200000}$  years, because of the inherent absurdities of such a doctrine. The first cause for the wiser Stagirite is *both energeia* and a very precise kind of "tireless" matter that only the outer spheres (and the sun) have. That is their "nature."

### The Third Reason

We can now easily demarcate these two options for the Northern Greek:

- *Option 1*: His thinnest primary ontology is of Theta 8 and the *Meteorology*, namely, The All having the unmoved movers of the outermost spheres (as presumably part of the *aither* or outermost heaven that also moves in a circle around the earth), whose own eternal, rotary, and continuous single motions are part of their natures and need no other justification. They guarantee the motion of the rest of the universe, as Anthony Preus, Johnson and others have seen before me (although most or all of the commentators seemingly keep the Unmoved Mover, if they even consider it in their publications).<sup>31</sup> This Option can therefore even include the 47 unmoved movers (minimum) of Lambda 8, assuming they have matter and are the outermost spheres (perhaps because, at worst, Aristotle dropped that they each need an *immaterial* source of their eternal movement and used the notion of "unmoved" explained before).
- *Option 2*: The All includes Option 1 *plus the Unmoved Mover of Pure Actuality of Lambda 6* (and, if Merlan is right, the 47 *immaterial* unmoved movers that correspond to, or are included in, the Unmoved Mover or what Merlan renders the "Unmoved Entity").

What does Option 2 offer, though, that Option 1 does not, other than utter perplexity concerning how the Unmoved Mover interacts with the universe? If you say, "an ideal god for people to emulate," all of this merely points to a dilemma that Michael Bordt recently articulated, or at least strongly implied, without resolution: The Unmoved Mover cannot be the "God" (*ho theos*) of Lambda that thinks of itself thinking, because thinking requires a mind and thus potentiality.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Pp. 231-2.

<sup>31</sup> For instance, see <https://www.epspress.com/NotToFearUpdates.html#Preus>

<sup>32</sup> See my pp. 251, 264-5, 275, and especially 291-5, and, with respect to Bordt: [www.epspress.com/NotToFearUpdates.html#Bordt](http://www.epspress.com/NotToFearUpdates.html#Bordt)

Otherwise, not only do we have now all the stunning dilemmas of the Unmoved Mover interacting with the universe (and causing circular orbits rather, e.g., than outer spheres pirouetting in place, or vice-versa) but how the Unmoved Mover of Pure Actuality *and no potentiality* could think and, like a super-Narcissus, think only of itself thinking, when thinking requires a mind.<sup>33</sup> Speak about multiplying paradoxes exponentially and simultaneously advocating that we should all be like Narcissus...

To anticipate one final point, which Anon might voice on reflection: "Aren't eternity and (ontological) necessity the same on your view? Hence, if Aristotle held the universe in Lambda to be eternal (as you and I agree), he must have held it to be necessary." Let us leave aside the statement noted in the previous digital extension from Lambda 8 where the Northern Greek postpones "the assertion of necessity" for more powerful thinkers. First, eternity could also have a merely conceptual sense, like infinity, and perhaps, following Plato, there are one-sided eternities (= one-sided infinities). In addition, necessity is indubitably equivocal for Aristotle, having *at least* the five meanings in *Metaphysics* V 5. In that manner it is like the senses of "unity." As noted, the necessity he ascribed by definition or by deduction in Lambda 6 may well be a logical necessity. He also may only have realized some of the senses of the modalities only later in life, after Lambda and V 5. Similarly, others have shown that a fifth sense of "unity" for the Stagirite came after Theophrastus wrote also about unity, when, as Theophrastus assumes, unity only has four senses (as I discuss in my pp. 229 and 301). The recognition of the fifth sense helps specialists date Theophrastus's own work to an earlier period, before Aristotle realized the

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<sup>33</sup> I recently read a perhaps more tactful reaction to the Unmoved Mover, by Michael Ruse, who wittily conveys the same point but who does not realize that "God" and the Unmoved Mover could be, following Bordt, different:

"He [Aristotle] believed in a God, but not one that cared about the universe and its inhabitants. (Rather like some junior members of my family, this God spent Its time thinking mostly of Its own importance.)" ("Does Life have a Purpose," *Psyche*, a division of *Aeon*; as of 6/27/20: <https://aeon.co/essays/what-s-a-stegosaur-for-why-life-is-design-like>).

The kind of creativity that even scholars as astute as Guthrie rely on is amazing, when they deny that thinking requires a mind or assert that God's thinking involves no potentiality. Guthrie realizes the Unmoved Mover has no potentiality (p. 253), identifies the Mover with the God that thinks of itself thinking and then claims that there is no potentiality in the thinking because the act is identical with the object of the thought. Thus, there is no "actualization of a potency, involving a change in what is informed" [and the] "last trace of distinction between thought and its object vanishes; their essence is for ever one" (*op. cit.*, p. 262). So, mind, God and the *act* of thinking disappear; we only have a thought-object lasting eternally, again, without body, without mind and without the act of thinking. This is all despite Guthrie acknowledging that God has life (p. 260).

This is all so absurd that we would not give it a second thought, were, for instance, a corner palm-reader in the Village in New York City to utter it. Given his reputation, however, Guthrie deserves a rejoinder. As Parmenides himself had shown, if you have at least two things that are different, you must have change or difference, and as soon as Guthrie acknowledges the existence of two aspects of Godhood, however he tries to explain it, you must have potentiality or power of some sort. That is, one aspect must have the power to somehow interact with the other but then you now contradict the assumption that the Unmoved Mover has no potentiality. Bordt does not have this problem because "God" is different from "Unmoved Mover," but Bordt has arguably worse dilemmas, as alluded to, when the two "entities" are separated by Aristotle. This is not to deny that Aristotle had Guthrie's view in the later chapters of Lambda; only to deny that, as the matchless biologist matured, he would have countenanced thinking *without* a mind and body. In short, Guthrie's example reveals that the scholastic practice from the Middle Ages of demoting philosophy to the "handmaiden of theology" continues in certain places to this day.

fifth sense. Moreover, and here I return to the point I made in the previous digital extension about the Northern Greek finishing V 5 after delineating the five senses of "necessity":

some things owe their necessity to something other than themselves; others do not  
 ... If, then, there are *certain eternal and unmovable things, nothing compulsory or against their nature attaches to them* (1015b10-15).

Because the "eternal and unmovable things" are plural, they must have matter. There is no other way in which multiple, separate entities can exist for Aristotle without being enmattered. There cannot be (at least) 47 Unmoved Movers of *Pure Actuality* (*contra* Merlan, whose view I rebut in the Postscript). Thus, the necessity here, in V 5, must be relevant only to the unmoved movers of Theta 8 and the *Meteorology* that have matter, and as explained many times, that are unmoved from the perspective of comprehension or because nothing else moves them. That is, the above passage does not pertain to the *singular* Unmoved Mover of Lambda 6, and the Northern Greek is seemingly considering only the kind of unmoved movers that are like the man hitting a stone with a stick (with the difference obviously being that the type of unmoved mover in a theological context is eternal).

For Broadie in *Passage and Possibility*, whom I believe I follow lock-step in this regard, *in general* ontology comes first in terms of priority for the current issues, if not necessarily in terms of understanding (although I am not sure of her views on some particular points I am developing here): Yet, Aristotle may have first thought *logically* and not *ontologically* in the domain of metaphysics in his early years with Plato, no matter how sensible and empirical he was in other areas of philosophy as a young expatriate from Stagira. Optionally, he many have intermixed logical senses of "possibility" with ontological senses of "necessity," or vice-versa. Given all of his different senses of "possibility" and "necessity," which I examine in the book and further in the fourth "digital extension," the permutations are many. It is absolutely crucial, therefore, in any given discussion to understand *which* sense of the modals he is using, and often we can only determine that by his goals and conclusions. As he says in the *Dramatics* 6, shortly after the definition of *tragōidia*, "the end [or goal] is *everywhere* the chief thing" (1450a22).

Speaking of that treatise, we could leave aside Plato. In a fiction one might compose as if the eternal universe holds by infinite luck or by the choice of a Creator or because one imagines it or because someone else says it, and, as I have emphasized, Beere writes that Aristotle could have held this view, where the so-called eternal universe is contingent (at least in a loose sense, because Beere never explains the term to my knowledge). Again, the universe might be considered a one-sided infinity because it *could* end if a Creator-type Being desires it ends. Even leaving aside these options, scholars in general, including specialists of Aristotle, often have more conceptually-oriented notions of possibility than Broadie, Hintikka, van Rijen and I, at least at times and for some domains of thought for the Northern Greek. Only, I contend, when the scholars in general realize that Aristotle in his theoretical toolbox has a broader range of meanings for the modals (including the sense of possibility *qua* contingency that Hintikka and Broadie championed at least

for some of their careers) will the Stagirite's best views sometimes be most distinctly seen.<sup>34</sup> By best, I mean most mature and most plausible for his time.

In short, the above reasons, and more of the history that I turn to now in closing, reflect Aristotle holding Option 1, all of which assumes the kind of evolutionary development, if not each and every detail, that, for instance, Jaeger famously championed for the Northern Greek.<sup>35</sup>

### Metaphysical Divorce

As mentioned, and as is very well known, for Aristotle the Unmoved Mover keeps the universe in motion by the analogy of the lover and the beloved: The beloved who is at rest (the Unmoved Mover) *causes* the lover (the universe) to move *because* the beloved is the object of attraction and the lover's desire (as the efficient cause *per se*) will "force" the lover to move, although not as with us, towards the beloved or towards some goal that benefits the beloved, but in a circle. How and why the love causes circular movement in a large orbit rather than a pirouette in place or vice-versa, or how this circular movement is of any benefit to the Unmoved Mover, is, to say the least, completely baffling.

Given some of the new thoughts above, it is fitting to analyze this metaphor further and to add to the absurdities of this doctrine as presented in my previous publications, because obviously the Unmoved Mover with no potential whatsoever has no choice in the whole scenario. We need to explore what happens when a lover or lovers, in this case the outer sphere(s) of the universe that love and desire the Mover, are ignored, for months, years and eons after eons after eons. To be perfectly clear, given the infinite motion to the past, the source of motion for Aristotle cannot be a single temporal event—an efficient cause—but must be an ongoing event, a "loving sustenance," similar in a way to daily meals being the ongoing source of nutrition and thus motion for a living animal. What we need to examine now is not an infinite series of meals but the possibility of "metaphysical divorce" or "celestial anorexia," given the above analogy.

I have touched previously upon how the Stagirite's colleagues in the Academy or Lyceum or both would have immediately criticized his doctrine of the Unmoved Mover with no potential of any kind whatsoever, a Mover that nevertheless causes heavenly spheres (or the *aither*) to move in a circle, forever. No human lover starts going in circles when he apperceives a beloved, unless he is in a very strange ballet or is pathologically shy and does not know how to approach the beloved. It would have been remarkably easy for any ancient Greek friend or critic to have contested Aristotle's doctrine, gently or viciously, because, whether or not we grant that "God" and the

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<sup>34</sup> As explained in the previous digital extension, I follow Broadie in calling possibility "contingency" when she cites the passage in the *Prior Analytics* that contrasts it with (only) necessity and impossibility. However, when she recognized this passage, she was *not* assuming the triangular *ontological* model *per se*. Rather, she seems to have assumed that Aristotle's passage was within the context of a modal square or the like, perhaps a logical rather than ontological one.

<sup>35</sup> I do not follow Jaeger in all ways, and in fact demonstrate in my books on dramatic "musical" theory how the Stagirite is more Platonic than almost always assumed, e.g., following Diotima in the *Symposium* 205c on the fundamental meaning of *poiēsis* (as "*mousikē kai metra*"), stressing the importance and the *primacy* of good character in "serious drama" in *Dramatics* 15, and advocating certain types of censorship in *Politics* VII.

Unmoved Mover are identical, the Unmoved Mover has absolutely no concern with, or even cognizance of, the universe. If only an unthinking "being," the Unmoved Mover cannot be aware of the universe, and, if instead also a thinking "God," it thinks *only* of itself thinking. *Consequently, it does not even know, intuit, or grasp in any way whatsoever that the universe, outer spheres and human beings exist, much less concern itself with them.* This was, in effect, the conclusion that greatly dismayed Cicero, and it is the conclusion that should cause any medieval theologian to shy completely away from a doctrine that has been taken for centuries to suggest that Aristotle's theory supports Christianity (or any anthropomorphic religion for that matter).

To add the new thoughts, which the exchanges with Anon have inspired: The Unmoved Mover *qua* "God," if it has the ability that puny human beings have, could simply "divorce" the lover, and the lover would presumably, if falling out of love, have no reason to move for any reason. Given how nature depends on movement, the final result would be unimaginable chaos or destruction, although to my knowledge Aristotle never even begins to consider the option, either in general or in particulars, despite his willingness to state that he never wishes to try to prove that nature exists (*Physics* II 1, 193a4). This "new thought" is so obvious on reflection that it is amazing that, at least to my knowledge, it has never been considered before in print, despite it surely having been considered by the Stagirite's colleagues, either in the Academy or Lyceum, for additional reasons that follow.

The reader might object, saying, as mentioned, that the Unmoved Mover does not think and cannot make the choice to be a beloved, because choice presupposes potentiality and the Mover, at least if it is *not* coupled with "God," has no potentiality of any kind whatsoever. Therefore, the Mover would never choose divorce. In that case, the more vexing question, already alluded to, surfaces: Does not the universe, as the unrequited lover, itself have the ability to choose to divorce itself from the heartless, seemingly cruel Unmoved Mover, just as an anorexic individual chooses because of a romantic fiasco to stop eating, despite the risk of death? As a result of the Unmoved Mover itself never paying any attention to the outer spheres whatsoever and contributing nothing but perpetual indifference of the most extreme kind in return, what is to stop the universe from loving and from moving in what seems to be a pointless circle? Nothing.

All philosophers in the Academy, Lyceum and later schools surely knew what it meant to love or be loved and what happened when love was unrequited. This is hardly such a subtle or rare phenomenon that the later philosophers would have had difficulty thinking about it, if and when discussing not only the analogy of the lover and the beloved but what happens when the loving outer spheres never enjoy reciprocity by the Unmoved Mover in a year, decade or epoch that lasts  $10^{2985}$  years (a quattuornonagintanongentillion years), much less infinity. Obviously, if we can compare loosely (because for Aristotle strict comparisons between infinity and finitudes are not legitimate, as demonstrated many times in my related previous publications), infinity is much "larger than"  $10^{2985}$  because, as the Northern Greek writes, infinity *always* has something more.

Why did Aristotle himself not write about these obvious ramifications, including metaphysical divorce, if only to defend his theory? His colleagues would have not only considered it but easily embarrassed him by addressing it. The answer is quite simple. As Part 2 of *Aristotle's "Not to*



*Fear*” *Proof* explains, he does not, and could not, have kept the Unmoved Mover as he matured, and thus neither he nor subsequent thinkers had any reason to consider more seriously the shocking result of “metaphysical divorce.” Presumably, colleagues explaining the ridiculous complications caused him very quickly and silently to drop the analogy of the moving lover and the unmoved beloved, as I discuss more in the next digital extension when considering especially *Phaedrus* 245c-e. Dropping the doctrine, though, does not mean he destroyed the manuscript or all of its copies, which colleagues might have had.

I now close with a few additional points, even though some overlap with what was published previously, because Anon seems not to have read either my book or the first digital extension:

[www.epspress.com/NecessaryImplication.pdf](http://www.epspress.com/NecessaryImplication.pdf)

To start with, on the Stagirite’s own account, someone (including the Northern Greek himself) defining Z, or saying that it exists, gives no real evidence that Z actually exists.<sup>36</sup> Thus, despite having a certain bifurcated goal, namely, to show how *to pan* might exist forever and to ameliorate Plato’s ontology, and despite Aristotle’s positing by definition or logically deducing that the Unmoved Mover is a pure actuality, the Unmoved Mover need not, and in fact does not, exist.<sup>37</sup> I can define Hamlet as a Prince of Denmark or King George the 93<sup>rd</sup> as the sovereign of England, and outline a marvelous pedigree with a series of valid syllogisms stemming from Queen Victoria or, better yet, from Henry the 8<sup>th</sup>, but neither the definition nor the deduction ensures the real existence of either character.

Second, as mentioned earlier, our own flesh-and-blood lovers can perceive a physical beloved, but the completely non-physical Mover is not perceivable by anything whatsoever (even mentally as an intuition). The doctrine is preposterous, as the Northern Greek himself satirically remarks relative to another case when dealing with someone trying to claim that the hypotenuse could be equal to another side of a triangle. As we saw him saying in the *Physics*, they are “words without any thought [= thing] to correspond.”

A modern scholar has claimed in private correspondence, and others will surely also (correctly) claim, that Aristotle could have held views we consider utterly ludicrous. However, the subsequent history of philosophy until Alexander of Aphrodisias shows this not to be the case *for the issue at hand*: None of the later Peripatetics, Epicureans, Sceptics or Stoics show any interest whatsoever in eviscerating the incredibly paradoxical doctrine of something as allegedly important for the Stagirite as the Unmoved Mover, which functions as the prime cause of movement of the universe, especially the outer spheres, moving not just in any way but in a very particular way *ad infinitum* because they love the Unmoved Mover. Indisputably, the later

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<sup>36</sup> *On Interpretation* 5, 17a7-9; also cf. Hintikka, “Necessity, Universality, and Time in Aristotle,” in *Articles on Aristotle 3. Metaphysics*, ed. by Jonathan Barnes *et al*, 1979, p. 113.

<sup>37</sup> One might try, as Lloyd Gerson recently did, to give arguments and evidence for the existence of the Unmoved Mover, but even he seems to have dropped them, as I discuss at pp. 284-9. I should add, however, that I rely, with sincere gratitude, on his other views to support why the Northern Greek relinquished the Unmoved Mover by late career, even if, as I imagine is the case, Gerson in no way intended his own research to be applied to what he might consider a “diabolical” end (pp. 279-82 and 290ff).

philosophers, who were not timid and not beholden to the founder of the Peripatos, would have eviscerated the Unmoved Mover, or at least offered objections, including "metaphysical divorce," if the Stagirite held such a doctrine in his final days. Rather, to my knowledge, the later Peripatetics and all the subsequent major schools of philosophy accept Aristotle's truly mature view as shown in the "Not to Fear" Proof, despite variations in detail: The universe is necessarily eternal, in virtue of its own nature, and it needs no other explanatory ground—just as we breathe, walk (even in reverse), talk, sit, swim and create art in virtue of our own nature.

In summary, the Stagirite simply, if quietly, discarded the doctrine of the Unmoved Mover as he matured and became one of the "more powerful thinkers" referred to, literally or symbolically, in Lambda 8. Jaeger's interpretation is in large part confirmed.

### Postscript on Philip Merlan

Aristotle's unmoved movers are gods certainly  
not resembling men; but still they are many.<sup>38</sup>

Merlan (1897-1968) tries to resolve the discrepancy between the single Unmoved Mover (with no matter) in Lambda 6 and the at least 47 unmoved movers of Lambda 8 that seemingly require matter, when Aristotle in the same chapter states: "all things that are many in number have matter. (For one and the same formula applies to *many* things, e.g., the formula of man; but Socrates is *one*)."<sup>39</sup>

Merlan's solution comprises two major parts: (i) assume that Aristotle replies in Lambda 8 to Plato's theory of the Ideal Numbers with Plato's own "logic," because Aristotle suggests there that this is the topic he addresses, and (ii) rely on a close reading of the Greek in Lambda 6, which reflects Aristotle speaking of movers (plural) even in this chapter, when almost all, if not all, scholars focus on a single Unmoved Mover, perhaps construing the use of the plural as a mere figure of speech, as I have. It follows, Merlan claims, that Aristotle has either a "polytheism" or what may be more aptly termed a "polykinetism."

Let us examine, to be more precise, the three important points of Merlan's own summary:

The main results of this study may now be recapitulated as follows:

- (1) The belief in a plurality of unmoved movers voiced in *Metaph.*  $\Lambda$  8 is not in contradiction with the doctrine propounded in the rest of this book [because for Merlan the Unmoved Mover *qua* "sphere of Being" of  $\Lambda$  6 can *include* the movers of  $\Lambda$  8 and because, as Merlan rightly points out, at one point the Stagirite uses the plural form for "movers" in  $\Lambda$  6]...
- (2) Nor is the belief in a plurality of immaterial movers incompatible with any other doctrines essential to the Aristotelian system and, in particular, with the assumption that matter is the principle of individuation. Every one of the

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<sup>38</sup> Merlan, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>39</sup> 8.1074a33-36. I should note that Merlan convinces Guthrie, as Guthrie acknowledges, *op. cit.*, pp. 267-76, and espec. 271-5.

immaterial movers forms a species by itself (like Plato's ideal numbers, or St. Thomas's angels) and the movers are not individuals of a common species or genus 'unmoved mover' since they constitute a series the terms of which stand to one another in the relationship of 'prior and posterior'.

- (3) ... [GS: this point is irrelevant to my concerns];  
 (4) In Aristotle's system the Unmoved Movers held a position closely analogous to that held, in Plato's philosophy, by the Ideal Numbers, and thus it was natural that the latter should function, as it were, as pattern for Aristotle's conception of the former (p. 24).

I address these three points individually, but starting with (4) and (2), in part because they both deal with the claim that the unmoved movers are like the angels or the Ideal Numbers, having no genus and being each a species unto itself. As Merlan contends, this allows Aristotle to dispense with his requirement that matter differentiates many things under the "same formula."

#### **Regarding (4):**

Merlan couches (4) also as follows.

...it is obvious from his own words that Aristotle's teaching regarding the plurality and the number of the movers [especially in Lambda 8] was by him meant to be an improvement on...the views current among Platonists with respect to the plurality and number of ideal numbers (p. 7).

Yet, even Aristotle's 47 unmoved movers *that have matter* could be improving upon Plato's Ideal Numbers in and of themselves. The crux of the issue is the better ontological explanation, not whether the unmoved movers have matter or not (with "unmoved" being understood from the perspective of comprehension or of "not being moved by anything else," in which case, as emphasized many times in the body of this paper, an outer sphere that is eternally moving in virtue of its own nature would be "unmoved"). A more devastating problem for Plato with Ideal Numbers and Forms, according to his brilliant student, is that they do not cause movement and thus are ineffectual in this context (of explaining eternal motion). Indeed, Merlan later recognizes this and correctly summarizes Aristotle's objection that the Forms would be worthless if they cannot function to move anything and, moreover, even if they can, are not doing so (pp. 15-16). However, Merlan then never considers the same weakness relative to the immaterial movers, which he should, of which more below.

Moreover, why would the Ideal Numbers be the *pattern* for Aristotle's conception of the Unmoved Mover(s) when Aristotle rejects those Numbers, whether or not they have the power in and of themselves to move or to create anything? Appealing, as Merlan does, to a doctrine of Numbers that the Northern Greek does not accept to justify Aristotle's purported theory (that movers can be individuated even if they have no matter)—a purported theory that is inconsistent with the rest of his at least mature philosophy—is no better than appealing to magical practices or Santa Claus, which one accepted when young, to justify time-travel. No empiricist would consider magical practices or Santa Claus or anything else to be sensible evidence for time-travel, and, similarly, why would an empiricist champion immaterial objects? Finally, no empiricist would accept that because the sensible moving spheres are "ordered" in a series, that their "unmoved immaterial 'spouses'", which may not even exist, do not have matter. It is a false analogy. We might as well

say that the word "Forms" has five letters and so does "witch," and hence each and every soul of a (flying) witch exists and lasts forever because of the same "pattern."

In this context, Merlan claims that "Aristotle's sole innovation consisted in turning philosophy into astronomy, instead of mathematics" (p. 9). Yet astronomy deals with sensible objects and so Merlan would need to claim instead that Aristotle turns "philosophy into mere logic" or the like, if he were to follow Plato's idealism. Alternatively, what Merlan should have said is that *ontology* is turned into astronomy, or as I would put it—because reality for Aristotle indubitably includes also the lower spheres, animals, and plants—that *primary ontology*, or "first philosophy," gets associated in some ways with meteorology and with the eternal sensible outer sphere(s). This is not accepting a "pattern" of mathematics, with the innovation being an equally abstract Unmoved Mover, except, I would agree, if Aristotle was in his early to mid-20's, trying to innovate on Platonic theology, and if the Unmoved Mover was as imaginative an entity as Forms or Ideal Numbers. Rather, the more mature Aristotle, to apply Merlan's idea, switches from mathematics to meteorology, and the eternally moving outer spheres *function* like Forms, as the foundation of ontology. Indeed, I have stressed since my book that the Stagirite continues to embrace the *primary importance of eternal objects and truths*, all of which is Platonic, but, again, *without* Aristotle himself accepting Forms or Ideal Numbers *per se* (see my pp. 103-5).

Let us, though, for the sake of argument grant Merlan his view that the 47 unmoved movers are immaterial or better yet, non-physical, because an element like fire (for Aristotle) and energy like radiation (for us), might be considered immaterial and yet energy is part of the physical universe, can be measured, can cause cold items to get hot, can cause cancer, etc. The crucial issue is whether the movers have *potentiality*, and Merlan grants that "...where there is potentiality there is *always* at least the possibility of corruption and destruction" (p. 22; my italics). Even for Merlan, then, the unmoved movers cannot have any type of potentiality, whether or not we use the terms "matter," "material," or "physical."

This returns us to the weakness of the Forms and Ideal Numbers. Again, that weakness applies to the Stagirite's own Unmoved Mover of Pure Actuality or unmoved movers of pure actuality insofar they have no potentiality whatsoever. Because they have no potentiality, they have no potentiality to move anything or to think or to be passively altered or to passively interact in any way whatsoever. Pure Actuality is an ingenious moniker but ultimately is purely imaginative: The Actuality has no nature in the strict sense of the word and no power to do anything whatsoever. This is the unintended consequence of Aristotle's positing that the Mover has no potentiality (or power) whatsoever, ensuring that it would have no potentiality (power, ability, capacity, or however one wishes to phrase *dunamis* and its synonyms) to ever go out of existence. It is guaranteed, eternally, if only by definition. *However, as we have seen many times, the resulting, unintended problem is that the Unmoved Mover now has no power to affect the universe!* In the context at hand, the new solution is no better than positing Forms or Ideal Numbers.

As we have also seen, the Stagirite defends the solution by switching both the causation and the responsibility to the universe itself, again, the analogy of the lover and the beloved. That is, the responsibility is thrust onto the backs of the entities that "love," to wit, the outer planets, stars or *aither*. They move as a *consequence of their love and desire*. As I have already discussed, this

leads to a number of absurdities, but there are additional ones relative to Merlan's interpretation, given the 47 beloveds and 47 lovers. Merlan's position is no more persuasive than the monotheistic/monokinetic account and arguably worse. If a mathematician mistaken calculates, repeating it 47 times in no ways is better; arguably, it is much more deplorable. To put this in Platonic terminology, 47 Forms are no better than 1 Form in terms of generating movement or existence. There is a related absurdity that Merlan never touches upon, even though the notion of "God" comes in very briefly for him (p. 25). How can the Unmoved Mover as a thinking being exist, when thinking requires a brain and a brain requires matter and potentiality (see footnote 33)? How does positing now the existence of 47 of these Unmoved Movers resolve this difficulty, and how are these "gods" differentiated if they have no matter?

This takes us to the next section **(2)** and to Aristotle embracing for Merlan the "logic" of Plato, namely, because Ideal Number is not a genus to the numbers, the numbers are each a separate species and yet can be many despite not having matter. For Merlan, the unmoved movers are similar in this way. In concluding the preceding section, though, I should emphasize that whether or not Merlan correctly interprets the related details *and ramifications for Aristotle's general theory*, he appears to intuit correctly that *somehow* Lambda is primarily an attempt to advance Platonic theology specifically rather than traditional theology in general.

### **Regarding (2):**

Again, Merlan writes:

Nor is the belief in a plurality of immaterial movers incompatible with any other doctrines essential to the Aristotelian system and, in particular, with the assumption that matter is the principle of individuation. Every one of the immaterial movers forms a species by itself (like Plato's ideal numbers, or St. Thomas's angels) and the movers are not individuals of a common species or genus 'unmoved mover' since they constitute a series the terms of which stand to one another in the relationship of 'prior and posterior'.

Merlan adds "St. Thomas interpreted the Unmoved Movers as angels and held every one of them to be individual and a species at the same time" (p. 10). Now, I will not consider whether Aristotle accepted a theory like the angels of Aquinas because, for others, the angels have some matter, if they exist, and share common features like having wings, etc., although maybe those who are expert on angels, witches, and warlocks will correct me. Until that time, though, I assume that angels, even if they are as fantastical as witches flying on broomsticks, must be part of one fictional species or genus, like minotaurs or flying horses. The Stagirite knew full well what a *daimon* was and could have used that term rather the ones for an "unmoved mover" or "unmoved substance and principle" (*tina ousian akinēton* at 1071b5 or *tas ousias kai tas archas tas akinētous* at 1074a15-16).

Consider, then, Merlan's precise account on this point:

though ordinarily the genus may indeed be the "intelligible matter" whereby its several species differ from one another, yet, for the Unmoved Movers, just as for the Ideal Numbers, an exception would have to be made, since the relationship of 'prior and posterior' obviously applied to them in the same sense in which it applies

to the celestial spheres in which they move. According to Aristotle, Plato had defined the relation of 'prior and posterior' as follows: *a* is prior to *b* when *a* can exist without *b* whereas *b* can not exist without *a*. Now, according to Aristotle, every outer sphere contributes to the revolutions of all inner spheres while these do not react on its movement [meaning, presumably, that the movements and revolutions of the inner spheres do not affect those of the outer spheres, which is admittedly Aristotle's doctrine]. *Hence, the spheres evidently form a series wherein every outer sphere is prior to every inner one.*

Consequently Aristotle says explicitly that the Unmoved Movers are ordered according to the order of their spheres, so as to form a series: the first mover, second mover, etc. In this respect too, then, the Unmoved Movers resemble the Ideal Numbers. Since, among the latter, there is the relationship 'prior and posterior', there is no genus 'Ideal Number'. In the same way, since among the Unmoved Movers there is the same relationship, there is likewise no genus 'Unmoved Mover' (p. 11; my italics).

As I understand the issue, the crucial consideration is that "Every one of the immaterial movers forms a species *by itself* ... and the movers *are not individuals of a common species* or genus 'unmoved mover'...". The additional qualification "since they constitute a series the terms of which stand to one another in the relationship of 'prior and posterior'" to me is meaningless or a smoke screen: Fictional characters can have a "prior" relationship and that gives us nothing but a fictional differentiation or fictional priority, and there might be other reasons to claim certain individuals of a same name or label—a "formula"—are not the same species (my brother is named Randy and my sister's dog is named Randy and when the family is together and *Randy* is called, confusion can amusingly occur). The crucial issue is whether *each* of the immaterial movers can form a *species by itself and what follows if the movers are thereby each different species.*




A variety of problems undercut Merlan's claims, despite his correct assessment of "prior and posterior" when we are dealing with things truly known to exist (like a mother and her baby, or like "numbers" and "odd," for without the prior "number," the posterior "odd" makes no sense).

First, there is no good reason to call "unmoved movers" by the same name, or same "formula," if they are not included under a species or genus.

Second, what holds for empirically observable phenomena is much stricter or narrower than what holds for imaginative entities or fictions. We can fabricate any relation or set of attributes we wish about things that are completely unknown to us and unknown to anyone else who has ever lived, like a "prior" flying mother horse and her "posterior" flying foals. Why, though, in the case of Lambda are the allegedly (plural) "entities" *immaterial unmoved movers* rather than multiple *invisible moved movers* or "spots of nothingness" or anything else properly called "immaterial"? Optionally, why are they not a combination of something that does not exist (a nothingness) and one of the other "entities," maybe a mere name or fantasy? If the "entities," call them Unmoved Movers or anything else you wish, are all immaterial, why are they all the *same type* of "immateriality"? Aristotle is calling them by the same name. If the same name means nothing, why are they not *pure* nothingness, or if you like, *impure* nothingness? Merlan does not even recognize this problem, much less address it. If we are going to begin babbling about "immaterial" things (and here, again, the immaterial is synecdochal for "non-physical," as having no

potentiality whatsoever, of any kind, which Merlan agrees with), then what is to stop anyone and everyone from babbling more and more about these “immaterial” things and speaking at cross purposes for generations, even if they *think* they are speaking about the same “thing”?

Third, the motions that the immaterial unmoved movers might trigger, *if* we allow that their lovers truly apperceive them *and* are attracted in such a way as to cause motion (neither of which I myself would allow), would be different and therefore not be the similar circular motions that we see in the sky. That is, if the immaterial unmoved movers are not the same generically or specifically, why would the 47 *individual different species* cause the *same* kind of interaction or movement on the part of their loving associated moving spheres (because for Merlan one moving sphere gets one unmoved “spouse”)? That would be like saying 47 people love—and move—the same way to deers, bears, kittens, tiny babies, King Cobras, and black widow spiders. If any defenders of Merlan show me that they kiss and hug Cobras and spiders, I might consider more seriously his view in this respect.

The reader might complain that my reply is merely *ad hominem*, so let us return to the antecedent point: It is important to match Aristotle’s theory of the outer spheres (that supposedly “love” the Pure Actualities and move eternally as a result) with the perceived circular motion that is absolutely crucial in the *Physics*. Why would unmoved mover #1 cause the same kind of circular motion as unmoved mover #2 *if they are different in species or genus*? Even if circular, why would mover #2 not cause a pirouette in place even though #1 causes the kind of balletic manèges we see in the heavens (analogous to a danseur doing steps in a circle)? Even granting that movers #1 and #2 cause these two kinds of “perfect circles,” which we saw Plato favoring in the *Timaeus* when speaking of the dancing gods, why are there not 45 other kinds of movement for the other 45 species of unmattered movers: triangular, boxed-shaped, figure-8, hexagonal, very-widely-stretched oval,  , not-so-widely-stretched oval,  , moderately-stretched oval,  , egg-shaped, pear-shaped, etc? Merlan might fairly reject geometrical shapes that have angles because, following the *Physics*, they might prevent eternal movement, but any kind of circle or oval would presumably qualify as rotatory for the Northern Greek and could be eternal. The three examples just given are a mere sample of the kinds of elliptical or rotary movement that could hold. Aristotle simply could not have been unaware of the similar passages in the *Timaeus*, especially given Merlan’s motivations, and yet all the motions of the outer spheres that we see (for Aristotle) are apparently *similar* circular motions, thus suggesting similarity not only of the alleged interaction between the lover and the beloved but of the species of things interacting. Indeed, the Northern Greek states in *Physics* VIII 6 that “the motion imparted by the unmoved *will always be imparted in the same way and be one and the same*, since the unmoved does not itself change in relation to that which is moved by it” (260a4-5; my italics).

Thus, Merlan’s own premises lead to a *reductio*, or at least to an incongruity with the phenomena.

**Regarding (1):**

Recall what Merlan also claims:

...in Aristotle’s mind there was not the slightest contradiction between ch. 8 [of Lambda] and the preceding sections of the book. What he felt he had proved in

these sections was that there is a sphere (and of course, one sphere only) of 'Unmoved Entity'. But...the *sphere* of 'unmoved entity' comprised more than one unmoved entity [my italics].

The first chief problem here is Merlan's ambiguity. What is "a sphere of 'Unmoved Entity'" or, as Merlan phrases it in many other places (e.g., pp. 23 & 24), "sphere of Being" and how does it relate to the other immaterial movers, which are also "spheres of Being," given that the spheres are *not* the sensible, spherical moved planets, stars or sun?

If immaterial, they cannot have any shape, whether spherical or elliptical. They are obviously not the individual spatial shapes (large or small) of each of the 47 *unmoved* movers, which might be associated with different sized planets, because that entails that each one has matter and hence potentiality, which contradicts the original assumptions.

Is the "sphere of Being" like a chalk circle on a blackboard or on the ground that the ballerina or Plato's "dancing gods" travel along? Again, however, having a shape in this sense would require something ostensibly immaterial being shaped, like the three blue ovals diagrammed above.

Also, do we now have 47 "spheres of being" for Merlan, or 48, with 47 *included* in the grand Unmoved Entity? Or is it that the 47 taken as a whole are "one," but only as a concept, just as a basketball team plays five players, and we count them as one team? However, counting the group as one does not add a sixth (playing) member to those on the court. In other words, is the singular "sphere of Being" (and the synonymous "sphere of Unmoved Entity") the overall spatial configuration of the perceived universe that includes all the movers and all the circular paths they travel on? That is, is the "sphere of Being" the cosmic balloon that includes the 47 associated bodies with their corresponding 47 immaterial "spouses"? This seems to follow from Merlan's last claim above that "the *sphere* of 'unmoved entity' *comprised* more than one unmoved entity." Given Merlan's view that the Northern Greek is adapting Plato, perhaps this is just a variation of Plato's divine spherical world-shape which is the most excellent shape for an entity that, among other things, consumes its own waste, arguably the most perfect recycler in history (*Timaeus* 33 a-c). However, for Merlan, the Stagirite's "sphere of Being" must be different; otherwise, it, *qua* the physical sphere of The All, now contains also the 47 unmoved movers, and we thus have the double paradox that, yet again, the *ostensibly immaterial* sphere of Being has shape and location and that the 47 immaterial things have location *within* the grand (immaterial) sphere. Moreover, why does one moved sphere not get distracted by a *different* unmoved mover, ignoring its typical "spouse," just as a husband sometimes falls in love with someone other than his wife?

Worse, how does a non-spatial "sphere of Unmoved Entity" cause the eternal circular motion of the 47 planets, or does it cause the motion to begin with? If it does not cause the motion, it is otiose in this context. Perhaps it causes motion *via* the 47 unmoved movers that, to use Merlan's term, "comprise" that "sphere of Being," but this simply multiplies the paradoxes noted above, because now there is the added problem of causation from the immaterial Unmoved Entity, which cannot have potentiality, to the individual 47 immaterial unmoved movers that also cannot have potentiality, which are nevertheless the immediate cause of motion for the corresponding moved spheres, being, in effect, their "spouses." Besides, even leaving this set of dilemmas, if each of the



moved objects wish to be like their corresponding unmoved mover because they love it, following Myles Burnyeat's theory that they try to imitate the Unmoved Mover,<sup>40</sup> why are the 47 moved spheres not at rest rather than speeding around in some kind of motion (whether circular or elliptical)? After all, the 47 "spheres of Being," just like the one grand "Unmoved Entity," are all immaterial, *unmoving and thus at rest*.

One final option: Is "sphere of Being" metaphorical, like the "sphere of influence" in international politics? If so, it is useless in this context, in which we want a literal explanation, not a vague metaphor.

The second chief problem is that Merlan also says in **(1)**: "in Aristotle's mind there was not the slightest contradiction between ch. 8 [of Lambda] and the preceding sections of the book." Actually, the problem is not so much this particular claim as the almost identical claim Merlan makes in **(2)** above, which I left aside: "Nor is the belief in a plurality of immaterial movers incompatible with any other doctrines essential to the Aristotelian system."

I happily grant that Merlan might have reconciled  $\Lambda$  6 & 8 and the rest of Lambda with respect to what he calls "monotheism (or monokinetism)" and "polytheism (or polykinetism)" (p. 28). Again, insofar as Lambda is the Northern Greek's youthful reaction to Plato, this is all perfectly acceptable. In my opinion, the value of Merlan's article is that, in 30 pages, he gives a strong flavor of the type of sophisticated ontological discourse that might well have occurred in the Academy in the 360's and how the interlocutors debated some of the issues. From a historical perspective, this is extremely worthwhile.

However, the claim from **(2)** is the truly problematic one, because the doctrine that underlies the immaterial movers (construed as pure actualities with no potential whatsoever) is incompatible with Theta 8's conclusion that an eternally moving sphere can have one, and only one, potential to move on a path from "whence to whither." Because of that one potential, as Aristotle says there, we need not fear that the "sun and moon and the remaining pantheon of planets" will ever stop (1050b19-24). Once the Northern Greek understood that the eternal spheres could have an enmattered nature with *one* potential, also known as an "eternal accident" (and not with potentiality as its *substance* or eternal essence, his worry in Lambda 6), the path was clear for him to drop forever the Unmoved Mover(s) of Pure Actuality, although he could keep the need for eternal *unmoved* movers from the standpoint of, for instance, comprehension.

As a blueprint or summary for everything, Merlan also describes two spheres of being for Aristotle: the *sensible*, subdivided into perishable and eternal, and the (non-sensible) *Unmoved* (p. 20). However, this ignores that in the Stagirite's mature ontology, with Theta 8 and the *Meteorology*, "unmoved" can be included *under* "eternal." Just as we sometimes reorganize a top folder on a computer and include it then as a subfolder under another folder, likewise, the mature Aristotle has dropped immateriality in this context and transferred "unmoved" as a category to where it belongs. The sphere of being can be still binary, but in this arrangement, all involving sensible substances (the primary entities of ontology), "eternal" and "non-eternal" are the top

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. my pp. 11-2; 249; and 292-9.

divisions, with "moved" and "unmoved" being sub-divisions under *each* top division. Aristotle's example of the man hitting the stone is a clear instance of an unmoved mover under "non-eternal."

## CONCLUSION

Aristotle may have had the "sole innovation" that Merlan mentions, of turning mathematics into astronomy, whether over the period of a few days, weeks or months, when the Stagirite was a precocious young thinker in the Academy.<sup>41</sup> However, the better, or equally good, characterization of the sole innovation at that moment in his life, when dealing with ontology, is that he realized there could be no Divine Craftsman as Plato depicted the Creator. The Unmoved Mover was just his first attempt to supplant the Craftsman, and the other doctrines in Lambda were subordinate to that insight. Optionally, we can renounce the simplistic view that a sole innovation has to be one claim or one doctrine: Other doctrines like the 47 movers also could have become part of the one new "full" innovative set that supplants both the *Timaeus* and Parmenidean ontology.

In short, Merlan offers a discerning, and perhaps historically correct, way of reconciling Lambda 6 & 8, but he then has the Stagirite jumping from the warm pan into the intensely hot fire, given the ensuing paradoxes. Although Aristotle might have been content to be burned intellectually and socially when young, it is doubtful in my view that, as he grew older and wiser, he would have suffered not only the obvious criticisms noted above (including "metaphysical suicide") but the others articulated in my book and previous digital extensions. Rather, the "Not to Fear" Proof, with a conclusion that every school of philosophy (including the later Peripatos) seemingly embraced except for variations in details until Alexander of Aphrodisias, is a *much* more fitting position for one of the greatest empirical philosophers, if not the greatest, of all time.

On that theme, Merlan barely touches upon the later Peripatetics and the whole subsequent tradition of ancient Greek philosophy for 500 years, which is puzzling because he asks a very important question: "Was not the concept of a First Mover the great discovery by which Aristotle ceased being a disciple among disciples?" (p. 6). If it were such a "great discovery," why was it never adopted, addressed, attacked, or supported with a similar theory by generations until Alexander? Merlan gives an appendix noting some passages from Theophrastus but, as more recent scholarship has shown, those passages are irrelevant in this context: Theophrastus is not accepting the Stagirite's doctrine of the Unmoved Mover. Rather, he is at best outlining an *aporia*

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<sup>41</sup> Without taking any position on whether Lambda is early or late, Alexander Mourelatos, in conversation, has commented that Aristotle's Unmoved Mover comes closer to fulfilling Parmenides's criteria for 'what-is' or 'Being' *than any other entity countenanced in classical Greek philosophy*. This is extremely persuasive to me: The Unmoved Mover is the prime Reality and is guaranteed to last forever, like Parmenides's ontological Being in the Way of Truth, because, being immaterial *with no potential*, it has no potential to "not exist," similar also to the Forms of Plato. Thus, the Mover is seemingly impervious to both Parmenidean and Platonic criticism. Of course, I believe that Aristotle evolved his view as he matured and dropped the Mover. Nevertheless, that the Stagirite was appropriating a Parmenidean-Platonic model at the early stage of his thought—a position both Merlan, at least regarding the Athenian mentor, and I (differences aside) favor—is surely plausible enough. (Merlan, of course, accepts that Aristotle continued to appropriate the Platonic model to the very end of his life.)

(puzzle) that we should consider in eventually coming to a solution. As I cover,<sup>42</sup> Theophrastus himself (as second head of the Peripatos), Strato (as third head) and at least some of the other schools accepted that the eternal kinetic universe *was necessary in and of itself*, simply in virtue of its own nature, with no "immaterial" substances needed to start it or to keep it going. This is Aristotle's "Not to Fear" Proof, and it was amazingly influential, even if the influence was perpetrated initially through private conversations, or through the kind of "multi-layered" writing that Arthur Melzer explains, to protect the metic Stagirite from the religious sects that would have treated him like Anaxagoras or Socrates.<sup>43</sup> As Carlo Natali reminds us: "Almost all ancient authors report that Aristotle left Athens to avoid being condemned to death *for impiety*."<sup>44</sup> In other words, the "God" of Lambda—however it relates to the Unmoved Mover—was a subterfuge even for the early Aristotle, analogous to Jews throughout the centuries sometimes pretending in public to be Christians, especially in Europe, to escape persecution.

Furthermore, Merlan does not recognize Aristotle's "triangular" model for the modal terms, which is unsurprising given that he flourished in the decades before Hintikka and Broadie. In his own arguments, Merlan presupposes the kind of Platonic or conceptual-logical senses of the modals that Reshotko applies to Plato, which is especially fitting given that the Stagirite follows, as Merlan explicitly phrases it, "Plato's logic." However, by not recognizing the more sophisticated, albeit simple and powerful, ontological modal model that the Northern Greek uses in at least some of his late doctrines, Merlan misses how the rest of Jaeger's theory of Aristotle's "evolutionary" development offers better options for the Stagirite, even though Merlan knows Jaeger's work and even though Jaeger himself never grasped the triangular modal model and has Aristotle seemingly keeping something akin to the "transcendental" Unmoved Mover.<sup>45</sup>

Ironically, Merlan perspicaciously recognizes, albeit unknowingly, the Northern Greek's most mature view:

...Aristotle...indeed, reserved full immutability to the highest sphere, but extended both eternity and indestructibility not...to the mathematical objects (because [contra Plato] he denied the existence of such objects), but, instead, *to the heavenly bodies*.<sup>46</sup>

Because those bodies are eternal and indestructible—and hence necessary in the ontological sense—for the Stagirite, and because their motion is part of their nature for him, not only can he drop concerns about mathematical objects or any similar pattern being ontologically "prior" to the rest of reality but he need not worry in any way about carrying the baggage of the Unmoved

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<sup>42</sup> pp. 279-83; 287; 292; espec. 300-4; 309-10; and 313-4.

<sup>43</sup> Arthur M. Melzer, *Philosophy Between the Lines: The Lost History of Esoteric Writings* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press) 2014. Cf. also my pp. 310-18.

<sup>44</sup> Carlo Natali, *Aristotle: His Life and School*, ed. by D.S. Hutchinson, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013, p. 61; my italics. Cf. also my pp. 308-9.

<sup>45</sup> Werner Jaeger, *Aristotle: Fundamentals of the History of his Development* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), translated with the author's corrections and additions by Richard Robinson; orig. published in German in 1923; espec. pp. 380-2 and 385-6.

<sup>46</sup> Merlan, *op. cit.*, p. 6; my italics.

Mover on his back. Indeed, he can even be proud that he chucked the rucksack, or, more sensibly, emptied it and filled it with more suitable belongings.

Since "circularity" has been so crucial in this whole discussion, let me end here, except for one final remark, with this emphasis on the "heavenly bodies," because the topic takes us back to the passage from the *Meteorology* at the very top. Next to that passage, of course, was Gill's seeming hope from 2005 that *Metaphysics*  $\Lambda$  might be "precisely the book we were waiting for." Despite the continued, historical importance of various passages like the astronomical views of Eudoxus and the examination of the ontological status of mathematical entities, which buttress Aristotle's Third-Man argument against the Forms, this digital extension has hopefully shown, to the contrary, that some of Lambda's doctrine, especially the Unmoved Mover of Chapter 6, deserves no more (if admittedly no less) attention going forward than the Unmoved Movers of Anaxagoras and Xenophanes.

The final remark pertains to Guthrie, who brings a remarkable fount of knowledge to this whole issue and to ancient Greek philosophy in general, but who says:

Aristotle's bent [in contrast to Plato] resembled rather that of a nineteenth-century scientist, as opposed to uncritical religious faith on the one hand and *a priori* rationalism on the other. So far as the limited means at his disposal allowed, he rested his system on particular cases in the sensible world. Had he been less concerned to work out his metaphysics to its highest point on the same principles which he detected in the works of nature, *his god might have borne more resemblance to the Creator of the Timaeus, and provided a Cause more satisfying to the religious instinct.* As it was, his god stood at the end of a chain of reasoning, not the beginning and his nature was strictly limited by all that had gone before.<sup>47</sup>

In part because Guthrie never noticed Aristotle's triangular model of the modals, what he misses is that the Stagirite was not only a brilliant empiricist-scientist but a superbly-evolving logician *and* metaphysician *who was willing to grapple with theological issues in their own domain.* We do not empirically observe whether and how the universe begins, or what causes it; we must engage in critical, deductive thinking instead. That is, science and empiricism are only partially relevant (the observation of the motions of the planets and stars being one fact to take into consideration). *Metaphysical thinking*, what Hume had wanted to cast into the bonfire, is absolutely crucial, and it was sustained metaphysical thinking that led the older and more sagacious Aristotle to conclude that gods of all sorts, unless they were identified with the "divine" outer heaven and the eternal spheres, were utterly untenable. As he avers: "we must not believe the old tale which says that the world needs some Atlas to keep it safe."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 244; my italics and comment in brackets.

<sup>48</sup> *de Caelo* II 1, 284a19-20; transl. J.L. Stocks, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. J. Barnes, *op. cit.*

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Upcoming sixth “digital extension” (anticipated by Spring 2021):

**“Alcmaeon of Croton, *Phaedrus* 245c-e, and Aristotle”<sup>49</sup>**

This provides some of the history leading up to Aristotle dropping the Unmoved Mover of Pure Actuality. It reveals the Stagirite not only championing a more sophisticated version of the divine hylomorphism of the Milesians, which Alcmaeon arguably also embraced, but ironically Aristotle possibly influencing his Athenian mentor, who has a similar, but different, doctrine in the *Phaedrus*, a doctrine which reflects the same concerns that Aristotle has in the *De Caelo* and *Metaphysics* despite differences in details.

Edited 10/20/20: Footnote 11 was added to the Reply to Objection (2) {3}.

Edited 10/23/20: On p. 35, replaced “and even though Jaeger himself, if I remember correctly, also never grasped the triangular modal model and has Aristotle dropping the Unmoved Mover for other reasons.” with the words after “...even though Merlan knows Jaeger’s work”.

Edited 11/4/20: Deleted “lucidly” in Footnote 2.

Edited 11/5/20: Added “at least some of” to the second line, page 35, for disambiguation.

Edited 12/19/2021: The oft-used modern “Alcmeon” replaced with the traditional spelling “Alcmaeon.”

Edited 5/28/2023: The following words were added on p. 3—“in this precise metaphysical context” and “(although years ago, van Rijen had noticed this sense of possibility in the context of logic, as mentioned in the previous digital extension).”

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<sup>49</sup> When published in May 2021, but as the 7<sup>th</sup> digital extension, the title changed to “Plato Imitates Aristotle: Alcmaeon of Croton, *Phaedrus* 245c-e, and *Laws* 10”:

<https://epspress.com/NTF/AlcmaeonOfCroton.pdf>