

Critolaus, Atticus, and the Conclusive Evidence that Aristotle Dropped the Unmoved Mover

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Atticus

For as he [Aristotle] neither left anything outside the world, nor gave his gods access to things on earth, he was compelled either to confess himself altogether an atheist, or to preserve the appearance of allowing gods to remain, by banishing his gods to some such place as that [the outer spheres].¹

Introduction

This is the final “digital extension” of Aristotle’s “Not to Fear” Proof for the Necessary Eternality of the Universe (2019), covering two figures, Critolaus, the head of the Peripatos in the 2nd century BCE, and Atticus, the Christian theologian from the 2nd century CE (not the Atticus who was the friend of Cicero in the 1st century BCE).² The figures came to my attention only after the previous, seventh extension was published, and an examination of their views confirms my hypothesis that Aristotle dropped his youthful theory of the absolutely immaterial Unmoved Mover of *Metaphysics* Lambda 6, which most throughout history have identified with the God (*ho theos*) of Lambda 7-8 that has a blessed life.³

Moreover, Critolaus and Atticus confirm that the Northern Greek from Stagira evolved to the theory of the fifth element, the eternal aether, and that *ho theos* was in, or kept in, the library of manuscripts, sometimes in the form of exhortations to students or potential readers, only for political cover so that he did not receive the same treatment as Anaxagoras and Socrates from zealous religious Athenians. Other times any reference to “god” by the Northern Greek is a rhetorical flourish or figure of speech, like the atheist who occasional blurts “God damn it” or “God bless you.” I have already amply discussed the crucial issues in this regard with respect to Myles

¹ From Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel*, Book 15; my bracketed words. All passages from Eusebius are E.H. Gifford’s translation (1903), available at: https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/eusebius_pe_15_book15.htm

² Published at www.epspress.com/NTF/CritolausAndAtticusOnAristotle.pdf on 8/29/2022. The first seven digital extensions of the book (Gregory L. Scott, *Aristotle’s “Not to Fear” Proof for the Necessary Eternality of the Universe*, New York: ExistencePS Press, 2019) are also freely downloadable pdf files, the URL’s of which are provided at the very end of this extension. I had put closure, I thought, to all the important issues by the seventh extension and was starting other projects, but the subsequent discovery of Atticus and then of Critolaus was so telling that I had to add this extension. I do not provide typically the references and page numbers for the subthemes and particular claims of my publications, above and beyond pointing the reader to the pdf’s, which can be searched easily on any key word. Also, the book itself is indexed thoroughly.

³ One exception, who powerfully argues that the two cannot be identical, is Michael Bordt (2011). This is discussed in the fifth digital extension—*Consigning Aristotle’s “God” to Oblivion*—and additionally at <https://epspress.com/NotToFearUpdates.html#Bordt>

Burnyeat and his attributions of an anthropomorphic deity to the Stagirite based on *Generation and Corruption* II 10, 336b25-337a15 and *Metaphysics* Θ 8, 1050b28- 30.⁴

No book or even book title exists for Critolaus, according to David Hahm in his excellent article on the Peripatetic that I will leverage in detail, “Critolaus and Late Hellenistic Peripatetic Philosophy,”⁵ even though I have a few disagreements. Some of Critolaus’ views are reported by both Cicero and the later doxography and a more rigorous look at the accounts reveals that Critolaus in no way defends either the Unmoved Mover or *ho theos* of Lambda, which itself is a super-Narcissus that thinks only of itself thinking for all eternity. In fact, Critolaus is completely silent on the two topics, even though he is concerned according to Philo with the fifth element,⁶ all of which confirms that Aristotle evolved to a doctrine which Sarah Broadie indicates provides “considerable theoretical advantages” (see the sixth digital extension).

I expect some readers to complain that the argument from silence is unpersuasive. However, we could completely omit Critolaus but all the evidence I have adduced so far would still be overwhelming. Critolaus merely provides confirmation. Moreover, leaving aside Cicero’s completely muddled summary of Aristotle’s inconsistent views on theology (based on an equally confused Epicurean source), to my knowledge for the first time ever after the Stagirite’s own text (Lambda)—at least until Alexander of Aphrodisias around 200 CE mistakenly sets for posterity the attribution of the Unmoved Mover to the Northern Greek—Atticus actually names Aristotle on the question of theology. Yet Atticus suggests, as in part conveyed by the quotation at the very beginning of this work, that the Stagirite was either an atheist or that “god” is enmattered and identifiable with the outer spheres, which, in essence if not exactly, is Aristotle’s position that the fifth element is “divine.”

A die-hard believer in Aristotle’s “god” of Lambda (whether it is the Unmoved Mover or *ho theos* or a combination of the two) might continue to object, asserting that Aristotle simply did not believe in a *providential* god but that such a position still allows him to champion the “god” of Lambda. One reason I add quotation marks to “god,” above and beyond the issue of the identity or mis-identity of the Unmoved Mover and *ho theos*, is that Philip Merlan and others, including Broadie, have been sympathetic to multiple *immaterial* “unmoved movers” existing for Aristotle, as presented in Lambda. However, as I will demonstrate, other passages of Atticus seem to refute Aristotle rejecting only a providential deity while holding onto the “god” of Lambda.

The various reasons for Aristotle not maintaining the Unmoved Mover after about 360-357, while he was still obviously in the Academy, are scattered among both my original book and the seven previous digital extensions. Hence, at the end of this digital extension, I summarize the numerous absurdities that Plato himself and others, including perhaps Theophrastus, would have easily levelled against the youthful Stagirite on the topic, although Theophrastus may well have come into the Academy shortly after Aristotle had already dropped the Unmoved Mover, as I amply discuss at the end of the book. If a journeyman philosopher like myself can recognize the numerous, ridiculous consequences of the theory of the Unmoved Mover, it stands to reason that

⁴ Aristotle’s “Not to Fear” Proof, pp. 292ff.

⁵ David E. Hahm, “Critolaus and Late Hellenistic Peripatetic Philosophy,” in *Pyrrhonists, Patricians, Platonizers: Hellenistic Philosophy in the Period 155-86 BC* (47-102). Eds. Anna Maria Ioppolo and David N. Sedley, Naples: Bibliopolis, 2007.

⁶ Hahm also provides some of the background of the fifth element in his “The Fifth Element in Aristotle’s *De Philosophia*: A Critical Re-Examination,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol. 102 (1982), pp. 60-74, published by *The Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies*.

the brilliant thinkers in the Academy would have had no trouble conveying the ramifications to the attention of the outstanding but still relatively young Stagirite of 23-27 years of age, with 6-10 years of full-time study and writing under his belt, equivalent obviously to a 21st-century dissertation-defending top PhD student or a full-time professor in the first years of an extremely illustrious career.

Critolaus

As Hahm indicates, the dates of the birth and death of the philosopher from the 2nd century BCE are unknown. However, he adds that Critolaus

was head of the Peripatos for a substantial portion of the second century B.C. [and...] was chosen by the Athenians along with the Academic Carneades and the Stoic Diogenes of Seleucia to represent Athenian interests to the Romans in 155 B.C. (Crit. fr. 5-10)" (1982, 50-51).

Hahm depicts Critolaus as defending Peripatetic positions in general but creating novel arguments, with four notable interests being rhetoric, cosmology, psychology and ethics. However, as mentioned, not a single title of any book of his is recorded (2007, 51-52). Hahm stresses that Critolaus differs from the Stagirite in that the later Peripatetic:

rejects the claims of rhetoric to be art (Crit. fr. 26), claims the soul is made of the material fifth element (Crit. fr. 17-8) and identifies the principles of Aristotle as god and matter (Crit. fr. 15), an identification and nomenclature that sound Stoic (2007, 52, ft. 8).

Except for one question, I only focus here on Hahm's discussion of the last two topics: the fifth element and god. The question is rhetorical in a double sense, given the subject matter: If Critolaus differs from Aristotle when it comes to rhetoric, why not in any or all other fields? Regarding the topics at hand: The fifth element and theology are developed by Hahm after a very detailed examination of Critolaus' views on rhetoric and ethics, but the latter in no way involves emulating a god or satisfying the wishes of a god; rather, roughly, ethics primarily involves external and internal goods (of the body and soul), with happiness being very Aristotelian but also seemingly Stoic, at least in part: perfecting one's nature in accordance with right reason. That is, the word "god" (whether *theos* or any concept expressing the Unmoved Mover) is *not even mentioned once* in the 20 pages on ethics in the article.

Considering that the relevant Greek and Latin sources and the discussion by Hahm on issues pertaining to the fifth element and to "god" amount to seven short pages, and considering that the crucial points are much less, let us cover each and every one, for the sake of rigor. Hahm reports Philo attributing two arguments to Critolaus for the eternity of the universe (2007, 81ff). The first need not concern us, except for one point. As Hahm states:

Aristotle inferred the eternity of the human race from the eternity of the heavenly motions (*de gen. et corr.* I 10, 336a 15-9), whereas Critolaus turns it around and infers the eternity of the cosmos from the eternity of the human race (2007, 83).

Logically, however, Critolaus might also properly infer that if the human race is eternal, the universe must be, given the well-known and obvious Aristotelian preconditions for life: the species requires an earth, nutrition and air, among other factors. However, any *ontological*

implication that the heavenly motions are affected, or caused, by human beings—if that is the suggestion ascribed to Critolaus—is contrary to solid Aristotelian doctrine, of which more later, and at that point Hahm’s own relevant citation of *de gen. et corr.* will be worth recalling. Now we come to the crucial analysis. Hahm continues:

Critolaus' second argument contends that the cosmos causes itself to exist, since it causes everything else to exist. This is also an innovative argument; for Aristotle was not at all clear, either in his treatises or in his published *De philosophia*, how he allocated responsibility for the existence or movements of the universe and its parts. It is tempting to see in this argument a reference to a heavenly divinity. If so, one can use it to construct a coherent theory of cosmology for Critolaus out of the handful of other references to him. Critolaus is cited by Stobaeus as holding that god is "mind derived from aether, which is not subject to being acted on" (*noun ap'aitheras apathous* Crit. fr. 16). Tertullian and Macrobius report that Critolaus claimed the soul was made out of the fifth substance (Crit. fr. 17-8).

If Critolaus considered the material of the heavens (called "aether" or "fifth substance" by the doxographers) to be mind and responsible for the orderly movements of the heaven and for rational thinking among humans, he could claim that the cosmos causes itself and everything else to exist by virtue of Aristotle's theory that the sun's motion along the ecliptic drives the cycle of perpetual generation among animate and inanimate entities (Aristot. *de gen. et corr.* II 10). *But if so, it came at the cost of a major Aristotelian principle, the incorporeal extra-cosmic Prime Mover of Metaphysics xii.* For Critolaus the equivalent of Aristotle's Prime Mover was mind inhering in the material constituent of the heavenly bodies and extending into human beings to constitute the human mind or soul (2007, 83-84; my italics).

I comment upon each important statement in turn.

Critolaus' second argument contends that the cosmos causes itself to exist, since it causes everything else to exist.

Comment

In essence, this is perfectly correct, depending on how one conceives “causes,” because for the mature Stagirite the universe is eternal *in virtue of its own nature*, as I have covered exhaustively starting with *Aristotle’s “Not to Fear” Proof*. The cause, however, is a formal one, of explanation, rather than an efficient or final cause, and as a result, for instance, we have no oft-debated paradox about which comes first, essence or existence. They are always together and will always be together. Similarly, as I have amply discussed in the previous publications, many other paradoxes in (Aristotelian) metaphysics simply dissolve. The “cause” may also be considered a material one, because it is the natural make-up of the outer spheres that provide, or explain, their eternity, just as it is the natural make-up of fire that causes it to rise and of water to descend.

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Comment

Whether the argument is innovative is doubtful. Hahm already perspicuously cited *de gen. et corr.* above in laying out the asymmetrical causation from the outer spheres to the earth and humanity. He may be perfectly right that Aristotle did not allocate responsibility for *all* parts and movements of the universe, if Hahm intends a universal statement, but the Northern Greek “allocated responsibility” for many movements and parts of the universe in his various treatises,

as I have amply discussed before. This topic gets addressed more even in Hahm's article, so let us continue.

It is tempting to see in this argument a reference to a heavenly divinity.

Comment

There should be no objection to this: Aristotle even calls the outer spheres and the fifth element "divine," e.g., in *De Anima* when discussing Alcmaeon of Croton, as I detail in the previous digital extension. However, as with Diogenes of Apollonia's "divine" air, there is no *necessary* implication that what is divine can *think* (even if mind is somehow made up of air, because there are many other things composed of air that do not, and cannot, think).

Critolaus is cited by Stobaeus as holding that god is 'mind derived from aether, which is not subject to being acted on'.

Comment

We also should not object to the final phrase, of the aether not being acted upon by anything else, because it is eternal and unchanging *by nature* except for the precise *movement* of the spheres, which never change in any *other* way and which, I have emphasized, ensures that a collision, and a partial destruction of some of the outer spheres, will never happen in all eternity for Aristotle. ("Aether" is ambiguous and typically suggests the outer heaven as a whole "sphere," but it includes the outer spheres like stars, and thus, applying synecdoche, one might simply say "outer spheres.")

What about Critolaus holding that god is mind derived from aether? Either (1) Stobaeus misunderstood the claim of the Peripatetic from the 2nd century BCE, or (2) Critolaus had an inaccurate or confused conception of the god of Lambda, if that god was of any interest to him (and, if not, again, my thesis that Aristotle dropped the Unmoved Mover is seemingly confirmed). On either option, the god-mind cannot be the Unmoved Mover *per se*, because the Unmoved Mover has no matter, no life and thus no mind. If the god-mind is the *theos* of Lambda 7-8, there is no hint anywhere in the corpus that this kind of mind with a blessed life *was derived from aether*, which itself is an eternal *element*, and it is utterly baffling at how such a derivation could have proceeded. If Stobaeus cited him correctly, Critolaus conflates various doctrines, probably because he does not have all the texts that Hahm discusses were buried at Scepsis and which I have deduced from historical, geographical, political, legal and economic considerations seemingly only came back to Athens when Apellicon got them too hastily repaired for resale, about 132-120 BCE.⁷

It is possible that Critolaus was able to see some, maybe all of the manuscripts, but recall that he was an envoy to Rome on behalf of Athens in 155, along with Carneades and Diogenes. He must have been an esteemed and fairly mature man to be entrusted with such a mission, and we must wonder how much of the massive Aristotelian library he could have digested, in late life especially, once it re-appeared with hasty corrections. That is, when it returned to Athens it was a chaotic assortment of manuscripts, for, on all accepted accounts to my knowledge, it was not

⁷ See "Appendix 2: The Transmission of the *Dramatics*" in my *A Primer on Aristotle's DRAMATICS: also known as the Poetics* (New York: ExistencePS Press, 2019), espec. pp. 249– 296, for an evaluation of the various claims about the transmission of the library, even though the discussion is motivated by the problems of the transmission of the so-called "Poetics" (that has not one poem). Many of the same questions apply to the confused agglomeration of texts called the *Metaphysics*, and I am far from the first to make such a point, as recounted in my previous publications.

until about 50-75 years later in Rome that Andronicus put the heap into what he considered a reasonable order (with, unfortunately, Lambda after Theta, suggesting to posterity and perhaps to Alexander that the Unmoved Mover was the most reflective Aristotelian position). In fact, if my timeline is correct, it is very possible Critolaus was too old to benefit in the slightest from the return of the library, no matter what shape the texts were in. In short, it is an open question whether (1) or (2) is best.

Tertullian and Macrobius report that Critolaus claimed the soul was made out of the fifth substance.

Comment

If Tertullian and Macrobius report correctly, then for the following reasons Critolaus was gravely mistaken, again perhaps because he had only a few, or a few dozen, authentic manuscripts. Anything made out of the eternal fifth substance, like the alleged soul, would presumably also be eternal; yet then a number of paradoxes are engendered. The fifth element, like fire and water, is perceptible and thus indubitably material and it is puzzling how the soul could be material in the relevant way. Moreover, all of this all suggests that the aether, something enmattered and eternally moving, causes the soul, which is contrary to what both Aristotle and hold: The soul itself in the cause of motion for relevant substances (like animals), as discussed in the previous digital extension. Finally, whichever direction the causation is, the soul and eternal fifth substance are somehow combined, which contradicts *De Caelo* II 1, as we will see in Appendix 2 below, when we examine that chapter in detail.

If Critolaus considered the material of the heavens (called "aether" or "fifth substance" by the doxographers) to be mind and responsible for the orderly movements of the heaven..., he could claim that the cosmos causes itself and everything else to exist by virtue of Aristotle's theory that the sun's motion along the ecliptic drives the cycle of perpetual generation among animate and inanimate entities (Aristot. *de gen. et corr.* II 10).

Comment

This is mostly correct, but even if aether is not mind (and it is not), then, assuming that "responsible for" is synonymous with, or metaphorical for, "being the cause of," aether for the Northern Greek is indeed responsible for the orderly movements of the heaven. That is, as explained already, the aether is a formal and material cause of the orderly movements of the heaven. However, the aether cannot be mind because it is an element, not an ensouled being. "Responsibility" is something that volitional animate beings have; it is a category mistake to say that the rock was responsible for breaking the window, unless the phrase is symbolic or elliptical and we mean that a responsible individual chose to throw it in the direction of the window or the like.

Critolaus might have truly believed that the outer heavens were mind for Aristotle, based on Lambda in which the spheres must have a soul; otherwise, they could not desire or love the Unmoved Mover and move in the way a lover moves when perceiving the beloved. However, this only means that Critolaus missed that *ho theos* of Lambda 7-8 had the most important *Nous* and, like generations starting with Alexander of Aphrodisias, did not recognize the utter absurdities of such a theory (as I recapitulate at the end). Nor does Critolaus recognize that the fifth element replaces and makes otiose for the Northern Greek the theory of the Unmoved Mover, even though on multiple accounts Critolaus acknowledges the fifth element. Yet even Broadie in her "On Heavenly Bodies and First Causes" (2009) thinks that Aristotle held both theories simultaneously,

without attempting to resolve the tensions and inconsistencies, as I discuss in my sixth digital extension.

In any event, to emphasize, the Unmoved Mover is not even mentioned, much less debated, in Critolaus' account. It is the outer spheres being ensouled that are eternal and that are the "first causes" for everything else. This was the position that I myself was left with in the book from 2019, when, not recalling *De Caelo* II 1 and not being aware of Broadie having argued in 2009 that the fifth element was a theoretically stronger position, I could not settle whether the eternally ensouled outer cosmos *without* the Unmoved Mover or the fifth element was Aristotle's final, most mature ontology. With the sixth digital extension, the crucial pieces fell into place concerning this issue.

But if so, it [the aether causing itself and the rest of the cosmos] came at the cost of a major Aristotelian principle, the incorporeal extra-cosmic Prime Mover of *Metaphysics* xii. For Critolaus the equivalent of Aristotle's Prime Mover was mind inhering in the material constituent of the heavenly bodies and extending into human beings to constitute the human mind or soul.

Comment

Leaving aside both the already discussed issue of mind inhering in the aether and mind extending from there into humans, which will be addressed in Appendix 2, and keeping only the aether itself as the divine element for the Stagirite, I applaud Hahm for recognizing the ramification of the heavenly bodies taking over the function of the Prime Mover (which, again, itself cannot be the efficient cause of the universe because the universe, the *to pan* or The All, existed infinitely to the past and consequently cannot have had an *efficient* cause). However, Hahm simply misses that the cost is irrelevant. In other words, Aristotle had already thrown his youthful "major...principle" into the philosophical trash bin, and hence the cost was zero drachmas.

Two final points: Hahm purposely leaves aside any further discussion of the Unmoved Mover and he mentions how Epiphanius suggests that Aristotle maintained god and matter as the two fundamental ontological principles (2007, 85). Moreover, as Hahm adds, Epiphanius claims that Critolaus had the same view as Aristotle in this respect (2007, 86). Hahm emphasizes, though, that this "doctrine of two principles, god and matter, sounds Stoic. This led Wehrli to suspect it was contaminated by the bias of Antiochus (2007, 86)."⁸ Hahm then tries to justify how Critolaus might have maintained god and matter as two legitimate Peripatetic principles; yet, as I understand the matters, the complicated reasons on behalf of the ancient thinker from the 2nd century BCE fail on at least two critical junctures, as follows. As a preliminary remark, it is true that one could divide reality (although not the universe, the term that Hahm uses, which is presumably enmattered) into god and matter for Aristotle if one looks (only) at Lambda 6: the *immaterial* Unmoved Mover, if assumed to be "god" and if the blessed *life* of *ho theos* of Lambda 7-8 is ignored, covers the first "half" and matter (that is the whole physical universe) is all the rest. Yet then the arguments that Hahm provides for Critolaus seemingly cannot support, for instance, Hahm's contention that "if 'god'...refers to the celestial aether...and constitutes the soul of the heavens...we can read the text in acceptable Peripatetic terms (2007, 86)."

⁸ For more on how the recent literature about Antiochus, starting with an article by George Boys-Stones, independently seems to support my overall theme about Plato and Aristotle, see the new footnote 45 added to the previous digital extension on 6 August 2022.

The fatal problems with defending Critolaus as an authentic Peripatetic in this context and in this way, assuming that the Unmoved Mover is a Peripatetic doctrine, are these: The aether is not immaterial because we can see it, and, as emphasized repeatedly and as will be seen more in the second Appendix, the soul for (at least the mature) Aristotle cannot exist eternally. It is something that only finite creatures have.

Therefore, if Epiphanius is a reliable source, Critolaus could not really have understood Aristotle's views. Yet it is very doubtful that Epiphanius is a reliable source because he was a Christian apologist writing about 100 years after Alexander of Aphrodisias had already perverted Aristotelian ontology, with Alexander ignoring the fifth element in favor of the youthful absurdity of the Unmoved Mover. It hardly needs stating that placing "god" in the metaphysics of Aristotle would benefit Epiphanius's religiosity. One value of Hahn's discussion is that it illustrates how the mistaken interpretation by Alexander may have been already established as authentic philosophical history by the time of Epiphanius. That is, Aristotle is at that moment being understood as a theist, in contrast to the explicit earlier statements by Atticus, which takes us to the next section.

Atticus

We apparently know Atticus (fl. c. 175 CE) only through passages preserved by Eusebius (c. 260 – c. 340 CE), specifically in the latter's *Preparation for the Gospel*, Book 15.⁹ There, before introducing Atticus, Eusebius writes at the beginning of Chapter 5:

Again, whereas Moses and the Hebrew prophets, and Plato moreover in agreement with them on this point, have very clearly treated the doctrine of the universal providence, *Aristotle stays the divine power at the moon, and marks off the remaining portions of the world from God's government* (my italics).

In other words, the "divine" power and God's government is confined for Aristotle to the region above (or starting with and going higher than) the moon. I have covered amply that the aether is divine for the Northern Greek and Eusebius's passage is consistent with that understanding. Is it consistent, though, with Lambda?

The divine power cannot be the Unmoved Mover itself, because that is immaterial and we see the outer heavens. It also seemingly cannot be the "god" of Lambda 7-8 with a blessed life because that life is not bounded by the moon and Eusebius suggests that providence applies above the moon. Besides, Aristotle's "god" only thinks of itself thinking so it would not even be aware of the outer heaven or the moon or the sublunary realm. Perhaps Eusebius only suggests that because the upper spheres apperceive the "beloved" Unmoved Mover/*ho theos* and because they move as a result, *they* are *in* the (realm of the) divine power, not that they are the divine power

⁹ I discovered the views of Atticus at a conference organized by George Boys-Stones and held at the University of Toronto on December 9-11, 2021. Entitled "Apuleius and the Aristotelian *De Mundo*," it presented sessions on both the pseudo-Aristotle *Peri Kosmou* ("On the Cosmos" or "On the World") and Apuleius's *De Mundo*. Apuleius of Madauros (c. 124 – c. 170 CE) presents what could be called a plagiarized version of *Peri Kosmou* in the Latin. However, he escapes any serious charge of plagiarism because he states at the beginning that he follows in the footsteps of Plato and Aristotle while adding some drastically Platonizing passages to his own version. His work either has no bearing on the themes of this paper or has but very indirect bearing that does not justify lengthening it. However, I am extremely grateful to Boys-Stones because Atticus was also introduced.

per se. This would apparently be consistent with Lambda, although from my book onwards I have demonstrated the absurdity of the upper spheres moving in the heavenly circle rather than, e.g., rotating in place or heading directly at what they “love.”

Another problem still exists: “God’s government” implies a being that governs, and nowhere in Lambda or in the rest of the corpus does Aristotle suggest, apart perhaps from metaphorical or hortatory passages, that a god governs the universe, whether in the upper or lower *cosmoi*.

We now arrive at the next passages, in which Eusebius reproduces Atticus’s words:

...neither Epicurus nor Aristotle can rightly be reckoned on the side of providence. For if according to Epicurus providence disappears, although the gods according to him employ the utmost solicitude for the preservation of their own goods, so must providence disappear according to Aristotle also, *even if the heavenly motions are arranged in a certain order and array*.

...[Aristotle] our super-excellent discoverer of nature, and accurate judge of things divine, after putting human affairs under the very eyes of the gods yet left them uncared for and unregarded, being administered by some force of nature, and not by divine reason. Wherefore *he himself cannot fairly escape that other charge* which some imagine against Epicurus, *that it was not according to his judgement, but through fear of men*, that he allotted room in the universe to the gods, just like a spectator's place in a theatre.

...for by his [Aristotle] both putting them [the gods] far off *and giving over the proof to sight only, an operation too feeble to judge of things at so great a distance*, it may readily be thought that from shame he admits the existence of gods there. For *as he neither left anything outside the world, nor gave his gods access to things on earth, he was compelled either to confess himself altogether an atheist, or to preserve the appearance of allowing gods to remain, by banishing his gods to some such place as that* (Ch. 5; my italics).

Both Eusebius and Atticus are correct in denying that Aristotle accepted a providential god. As emphasized perhaps *ad nauseum*, even *ho theos* of Lambda 7-8 only thinks of itself thinking for all eternity and cannot even be aware of the physical universe, much less care about any part of it, including human life. Atticus suggests that the order of the heavenly motions should not be construed as divine providence, howsoever the arrangement came about. Indeed, the arrangement may not have come about at all and may always have been there, whether or not in virtue of the aether’s own nature. What the two Christian writers now say, as follows, is most relevant in this setting.

The first issue is that “it was not according to his [the Northern Greek’s] judgement, but through fear of men that he allotted room in the universe to the gods, just like a spectator’s place in a theatre.” The most natural interpretation is that the gods are the analogs of the spectators watching the action, but for Aristotle this cannot be right for Lambda, as the Narcissistic nature of *ho theos* makes perfectly clear. In any event, Atticus’s claim confirms my arguments about Aristotle maintaining *ho theos* simply for political cover, to evade possible prosecution for not believing in the gods of the Athenians (be it because of atheism or because he accepted other, unapproved “divinities”): The Stagirite maintained godhood not because of his “judgement,” that is, the strength of his theories, but because of his fear of the theists. This is discussed amply in the previous digital extension, “Plato Imitating Aristotle,” considering that even the Athenian Stranger in the *Laws X* would kill one type of atheist and jail the second and final type for at least 5 years, to try to rehabilitate them, and if unsuccessful, to kill them also. This type of recommendation must have caused great consternation, if not outright fear, to the Northern Greek, whether the Athenian Stranger represents the views of Plato (as I believe) or not.

The next passage settles, though, that the gods for Aristotle are the outer spheres, not the Unmoved Mover or Unmoved Movers, whether or not in combination with a super-Narcissus. The gods, plural, are visible to, and proven by, sight and thus Atticus cannot mean that Aristotle holds the Unmoved Mover/*ho theos* of Lambda. More emphatically, the Northern Greek did not leave “*anything outside the world*,” i.e., outside the universe, which is where the Unmoved Mover, being completely immaterial, must be if one can speak sensibly of it having location (and, if not, this is yet another reason why it cannot be “in the world”).

The only question, then, at this point for us is whether Atticus thought that Aristotle maintained those (visible) gods to be ensouled outer spheres or part of the fifth element. The issue cannot be settled yet and we must look to some later passages but what is clear immediately is that Atticus thinks that Aristotle is an atheist in some sense of that word: Either the Stagirite was compelled to confess it or he accepted gods *but only for the sake of appearances*. These two disjuncts are of course in line with my view that *ho theos* was kept in the manuscripts merely for political expediency and that Aristotle dropped the Unmoved Mover, although considering that “atheist” may mean for Atticus not believing in a *providential* god, the passage is not absolutely conclusive. Still, it would be very puzzling that he does not even mention the Unmoved Mover and *ho theos* of Lambda if he were aware that they were part of Aristotle’s theology, because the account given by him applies equally well to the divine *aether*, and we will see soon that he recognizes the fifth element. This respective silence and recognition strike me as evidence that the Stagirite was not thought to believe in an immaterial Unmoved Mover in lieu of the fifth element or was not even thought to hold both doctrines simultaneously.

Immediately following, in Ch. 6 Eusebius switches to the related topic of Plato holding that the universe was created by God and to Atticus’s criticisms of Aristotle holding the eternity of the whole. As Atticus reputedly says:

For we must neither admit that *the sole cause of the imperishable is derived from its being uncreated*, nor must we leave the passing of the created to destruction as admitting no remedy. Whence then are we to get any help on these points from the doctrines of Aristotle, a man who pursues the argument on these subjects, not indirectly, nor merely as stating his own opinion, but sets himself in direct opposition to Plato, and both brings the created under a necessity of perishing, and says that *what is imperishable maintains its imperishable condition only from the fact of not having been created*, nor even leaves any power in God, which He can use to do any good. *For what has never existed before now, this, he says, never can come into existence* [my italics].

Hence, the infinite past is the ground in and of itself of the imperishability of the universe, not the Unmoved Mover being loved by the outer spheres. Actually, the desiring of the outer spheres only pertains to them being in motion eternally (and “accidentally”), not perishing, but, as I have discussed previously and as I will cover more shortly below, the complete rest of the physical universe (or at least of the outer spheres) for the Northern Greek effectively entails its destruction. The reliance on the infinite past is exactly what helps ground Aristotle’s “Not to Fear” Proof for the necessary eternity of the universe. Atticus rejects the proposition that “what has never existed...never can come into existence” by using examples of, e.g., a builder creating a new house that had not existed before. However, as I have also shown in detail, passages from the *Dramatics aka Poetics* and *De Interpretatione* reveal that Aristotle really only cares about “kinds” or “sortals” in this context and is not so stupid as to deny that new *particulars* (or even sub-types of certain natural or artificial kinds) can come into existence. Given that the species is eternal, and

that *kinds* like artifacts, which the species makes, are also therefore eternal, Atticus completely misses the point.

At the very end of Ch. 6, Eusebius makes the transition to the fifth element, or what the translator Gifford calls the fifth essence, which in this case must be synonymous with the fifth element (and with “body”), considering the explanation that follows without pause in Ch. 7. That is, according to the words of Atticus:

For instance, with regard to the so-called elements, which are the primary constituents of bodies, Plato, like those before him...said that they were these four which are generally acknowledged, namely, fire, earth, air, and water... But Aristotle, as it seems, hoped to appear extraordinarily wise, if he could add another body, *and counted in with the four visible bodies the fifth essence*: and he thus made a very brilliant and bountiful use of nature, but failed to observe that in physical inquiry one must not lay down laws, but search out nature’s own facts [my italics].

Clearly, “essence,” “body,” and “element” are being treated the same in this context. Later, in Ch. 23, on the topic “Of the Sun,” Eusebius quotes Plutarch, who himself had captured differing views of earlier thinkers, writing: “Aristotle: a globe of the fifth corporeal element.”

Atticus continues in Chapters 7-8 with a diatribe against Aristotle that exposes both understandings and misunderstandings of the fifth element and the related physics-astronomy of the Stagirite. One passage suffices for us:

Aristotle claims absolutely an essence in all other things *which is impassible [that is, something which cannot suffer or feel emotion], and imperishable, and unchangeable*, lest forsooth he should seem to be the inventor of something contemptible...

In like manner also Aristotle *hearing from Plato that there is a certain essence intelligible in itself abstractedly, and incorporeal colourless and intangible, neither coming into being, nor perishing, nor turning, nor changing, but always existing* in the same conditions and manner, and hearing again at another time of the things in heaven that being divine and imperishable and impassible they are yet bodies, he *combined out of both and stuck together things not at all congruous*: for from the one he took the property of body, and from the others the property of impassibility, and so framed an impassible body... *But the body could never be impassible: for being combined with a passible and changeable nature, it must necessarily suffer* with its yokefellow. And if there were anything impassible, it must be separated and free from that which suffers; so that it would be *without the matter*, and when separated from that *it must necessarily be acknowledged to be incorporeal* [Ch. 7, my italics & comment].

What Atticus correctly gleaned is that Aristotle was influenced in his youth by Plato. This was the reason the Northern Greek took the model of being unchanging and imperishable to be properties of the *incorporeal* Unmoved Mover, as I have explained in detail in the previous publications, before the Stagirite applied those properties to the fifth element, with one caveat to be explained in a moment. This early theory allowed Aristotle to proffer an advanced ontology along Platonic-Parmenidean lines, in effect, to hoist Plato on his own petard, because if the Unmoved Mover was unchanging and imperishable, which is to say, if it had no potential in Aristotle’s words, then it could not go out of existence. It was guaranteed to exist, and *this* is the ground of Lambda 6. However, the absurdities of such a position quickly became apparent to the Stagirite, whether or not because of feedback from colleagues, and he therefore soon dropped the assumption that something purely immaterial could interact with the physical universe. He evolved to the fifth element, which is divine (not because it thinks but because it is eternal or at least eternal in a certain way), and he relaxed the condition that the eternal *aether* is unchanging *in all ways*: As

Theta 9 allows explicitly, it, and specifically the sun and stars, have the ability to move in a certain way for all time. Hence, he decides, there is no fear that they will ever go out of existence (the conclusion of the “Not to Fear” Proof). Yet these (and the other) outer spheres have no potential for any other kind of change, like going out of existence. That is simply their nature, just as it is the nature of a crab to move sideways, humans not to fly and fire to always go up (to its limit). Moreover, as the sentences immediately after that conclusion in Theta make clear 9 (and as confirmed in *De Caelo* II 1), the movement is not exhausting, as it would be for creatures with other potentials or natures.

What Atticus missed is that the fifth element or essence is not a body in the sense that pertains to earthly bodies. It is more like fire and earth, and thus, as *De Caelo* II 1 entails, without soul. *A fortiori* it must be “impassible,” just as water, earth, fire and air are, as such, impassible.

In Ch. 8, Eusebius presents Atticus’s criticisms of the motivation of the circular motion of the fifth element for the Northern Greek, in contrast to Plato’s motivations for similar theories pertaining to the stars and heaven, but those criticisms, whether they are right or wrong, need not detain us here, except to confirm that Aristotle was recognized as having the important fifth element.

In Ch. 9, Atticus is additionally quoted: “For though he [Aristotle] will not admit the whole soul to be immortal, yet he acknowledges the mind at least to be divine and imperishable.” Presumably this was inspired by *De Anima* III 4-5, but this can hardly be the theory of the mature Stagirite. At the best, it was of the same period when he accepted the Unmoved Mover in his youthful professional life and tried to fit his psychology to the theology (unless that particular aspect of his psychology was the result of a later, wrong-headed editor, as has been amply explained in my previous work). Interestingly, however, Atticus does properly recognize that something immaterial cannot interact with the physical universe, which surely entails that he would have criticized Aristotle were the Stagirite to be recognized as maintaining the immaterial Unmoved Mover interacting with the outer spheres. Yet not a word by Atticus is to be found on this topic.

I am not the first to see (most of) this: While discussing the views of the soul and intellect, Robert Sharples reports a similar discussion by Alexander and two unknown predecessors, perhaps Aristoteles of Mytilene, Alexander’s mentor, and Aristotle of Stagira, and Sharples recalls the Christian thinker:

...if intellect is incorporeal it could not *come* from outside, *since what is incorporeal cannot move at all*. The objection was brought against the Peripatetics by the anti-Aristotelian Platonist Atticus.¹⁰

Thus, Atticus had good reason to claim, as we saw earlier, that the Stagirite did not leave “anything outside the world” because even if what is coming “from outside” is not intellect, then, whatever it is, being incorporeal, it cannot move and thus could neither come nor go. Curiously, notwithstanding that the issue is (more narrowly of) movement rather than interaction in general, the objection at hand could be against Lambda 6-8, assuming that the Unmoved Mover and *ho theos* are identified as a combined entity or assuming that the thinking *theos* is considered the

¹⁰ Robert W. Sharples, “Peripatetics on Soul and Intellect,” in *Greek & Roman Philosophy 100 BC–200AD: Volume II (Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies. Supplement, 2007, No. 94)* 607-620, p. 618; my italics.

real “god.” Historically, some commentators have suggested that the godly *intellect* is somehow moving thoughts into the active intellects of individual human souls as posited in *De Anima* III 4-5, and we saw an example above of Hahm devising a Critolean variation: “For Critolaus the equivalent of Aristotle’s Prime Mover was mind inhering in the material constituent of the heavenly bodies and *extending into human beings to constitute the human mind or soul* [my italics].” To return to Atticus, though, and his objection to the Peripatetics that “what is incorporeal cannot move at all,” he—and the commentators who have championed the godly intellect extending itself into individual souls—then ignore how Aristotle approvingly takes the same stance as Atticus on this point: At *Metaphysics* Theta 3, 1047a31-36, quoted at the very top of my seventh digital extension, what is incorporeal cannot move and is not actual in the strict sense.

After introducing Plutarch to quote some of his passages (as we saw once before with the sun being a globe of the fifth element), Eusebius adds in *Chapter XXXIV—Whether the World has a Soul, and is Administered by Providence*:

Aristotle says that, as a whole and throughout, it [the world] has neither a soul, nor reason, nor intelligence, nor is it administered by providence. For while the heavenly regions partake of all these properties, *because they include spheres which are endowed with a soul and life*, the terrestrial regions have none of them, but share in the orderly arrangement by accident and not directly [my italics & bracketed comment].

Clearly this understanding of Aristotle is confused. Why do the terrestrial regions have none of the good properties “directly” as a result of the spheres having soul and life? The cause-and-effect connection in this regard is baffling. At any rate, if the heavenly regions have *living* spheres, they can die, which is inconsistent with the Northern Greek’s view even in Lambda that the outer spheres are eternal. Moreover, as will be seen more fully with the texts from *De Caelo* II 1 in Appendix 2, other fatal paradoxes arise for Aristotle as a result of assuming eternal spheres are ensouled. It is much better for us, then, simply to pay attention to what Eusebius recounts later, in *Chapter XXXVIII—Of the Arrangement of the World*:

Aristotle: first impassible ether, that is a fifth body; after that passibles, fire, air, water, and earth last. Of these the celestial portions have the circular motion assigned to them: and of the portions ranged beneath them the light have the upward, and the heavy the downward motion.¹¹

Summary

Neither Critolaus nor Atticus ever mention “god” as the Unmoved Mover (whether alone or in possible combination with *ho theos* of Lambda 7-8). Rather, even though Critolaus construes god monotheistically for the Northern Greek and Atticus polytheistically, god and gods are visible for Aristotle for both thinkers. Whatever else can be claimed, the deity or deities cannot be the *immaterial* Unmoved Mover(s).

In addition, the fifth element is considered Aristotelian by both, as it was for Xenarchus, even if they misconstrue some of the details. However, the fifth element is utterly inconsistent

¹¹ A semi-colon or the comment “[followed by]” after the word “passibles” would keep this passage unambiguous: “fire, air...” are *not* examples of “passibles,” but some might read the sentence as if they are, were “passible” ambiguous or equivocal for them.

with ensouled outer spheres that love god and that move as a result of that love. Worse, arguably, the fifth element makes the Unmoved Mover completely otiose.

If Lambda were Aristotle's mature theory, and if the spheres could not love, they would stop. All other motion would stop and the universe, although perhaps not perishing into nothingness, would be in an equally deplorable state for the Northern Greek, for reasons that follow pertaining to the importance of motion for nature (and hence for the universe). As mentioned in previous publications, but as bears repeating, in contrast to Parmenides and Melissus, he presents one account of nature in *Physics* II 1: "it is the primary underlying matter of things which have in themselves *a principle of motion or change* (*kinēseōs kai metabolēs*)."¹² Furthermore, he emphasizes motion at the beginning of III 1, indicating that "...nature is a principle of motion and change (*kinēseōs kai metabolēs*), and it is the subject of our inquiry. We must therefore see that we understand what motion is" (200b12-15), and as he begins to analyze the terms "motion" and "change," he adds "there are as many types of motion or change as there are of being" (201a8-9). Thus, if no motion exists, then no nature exists. The unmoving universe would be like a cosmic Sleeping Beauty who has gone to sleep not only for 100 years but for eons or infinity, unless the Unmoved Mover were to play the Prince and functionally kiss the sleeping cosmos, a rather preposterous idea because the Unmoved Mover is immaterial (and even if combined with *ho theos*, it would always be thinking only of itself).

In agreement with Aristotle on this one point, Heraclitus must be expressing some delightful, or at least curious, choreography in Hades, whether or not he is singing about flux at the same time.

To emphasize, the divinity of the fifth element, whether or not fully understood, is often recognized by later figures, with Critolaus, Atticus, and Xenarchus being only three. Given the similarity of *theos/theios/to theion*, it is easily understandable how confusion arose for some later thinkers, especially considering how so many ancients and moderns have considered Aristotle's views to be static, that is, held by him throughout his whole professional life, rather than developmental. Any statement about Aristotle holding an ensouled heaven, although probably stemming from Lambda, cannot be right given *De Caelo* II 1 (and, again, I reproduce the translation in Appendix 2). In addition, a fifth element, like the other four, cannot have a soul and thus if the fifth element is maintained, an ensouled heaven *per se* (as opposed to a heaven that has in the sublunary world some ensouled creatures) is ruled out, and vice-versa, insofar as the same entities or system of entities is being described.

Conclusion

The review of the two ancient figures, one Peripatetic and one both Christian and anti-Aristotelian, confirms the history expressed in both my book and in the previous digital extensions: After Theophrastus merely posed as an *aporia* the subject of an (immaterial) unmoved mover—as opposed to a material unmoved mover, such as the man of *Physics* VIII 5 whose hand grips a stick that moves a stone (a type of unmoved mover that Theophrastus does not bring up in that context)—not one Peripatetic or anyone else for that matter explicitly considered Aristotle to hold the Unmoved Mover of Lambda for 500 years. It was Alexander positively, and Plotinus negatively, who mistook Lambda for the true view of the (mature)

¹² 193a28-29, transl. by R.P. Hardie and R.K. Gaye, as are other passages from the *Physics*; my italics.

Stagirite, setting scholars down a path that to this day might be considered a Holy Grail, if not a fool's errand.

If anything comes out of this series of publications, apart from the textual and historical evidence that Aristotle did not keep the Unmoved Mover, hopefully it is understanding that he—and Plato—evolved as thinkers over their professional lives, especially considering their close association for 20 years.

A number of prestigious scholars over the last 130 years have, whether or not they agree on *all* the details (and they presumably do not), to greater or lesser extent accepted an “evolutionary stance”—Thomas Case, Werner Jaeger, Gilbert Ryle, Dorothea Frede, and Brad Inwood—even though to my knowledge none addressed the topic of the Unmoved Mover versus the fifth element *per se*.¹³ However, they appear to be far outnumbered by others who try to preserve the texts as if they were statically held by Aristotle for his whole career and who hold, by action or explicit word, that we have to reconcile both the Unmoved Mover and the fifth element. Broadie comes closest in this respect, given my own experience.

¹³ Case, Jaeger and Ryle are so well-known in this respect that I need not add a citation about them. Frede was very explicit about accepting Aristotle as an evolutionist in “What Plato Taught: A Riddle of His Academy,” the third lecture of the *Leuven Colloquia on Ancient Platonism* (KU Leuven Institute of Philosophy, Leuven, BE; March 4, 2022). Inwood may not be widely known as accepting an evolutionary view but, with a more profound understanding of the post-Aristotelian exegetical options than I recognized and with his own scholarship providing further evidence, writes the following:

I do think that Aristotle in some works uses the fifth element (Broadie is right about that), but that the corpus as a whole was probably seen by followers as having evidence for other views as well. So it became a matter of contention in the later school what A's view was in the final analysis. This is also the pattern I argue for in ethics in my little book: that Aristotle's works as a whole sometimes have indications of more than one view on a topic and that the school argued over what he thought. Since I am anything but a unitarian about Aristotle – he was an enquiring, developing, exploratory thinker, not a textbook writer – I am content to think that there are various views in the corpus on many issues and that his followers who wanted a canonical view of A's doctrines forced unity onto the corpus, while the more independent-minded worked things out for themselves within the parameters set by the Master. I think you've done a real service in showing how wide the range of legitimate interpretations is. I also think that later Aristotelians can 'retroject' onto Aristotle a view that is actually in the corpus, in that they present as his unique canonical doctrine something that is really only one facet of his work. More of that in the ethics, perhaps, than elsewhere.

(private correspondence, Jan. 8, 2022; his “little book” is *Ethics after Aristotle*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

APPENDIX 1

The Easily Seen Fatal Problems of the Theology of *Metaphysics* Lambda

The Unmoved Mover (of No Matter and No Potentiality) of Lambda 6

1. The Unmoved Mover is absolutely immaterial and thus has no way of physically interacting with the universe; *nor does the universe have a way to interact with it.*
2. That is, having no potential means it can have *no active or passive potential*, both of which are clearly recognized by not only the Stagirite but by Plato, whom Aristotle presumably follows.¹⁴
3. As Aristotle describes the Unmoved Mover, it has properties no different from “nothingness” (see the aforementioned citation at the top of the previous digital extension, from *Metaphysics* Theta 3, 1047a31-36). The only difference are the *labels* being used, but these are meaningless as evidence of the existence of something, as is commonly known for Aristotle (and in the book I give the textual citations).
4. Hence, not even ensouled outer spheres would be able to apperceive the Mover or, as some have contended throughout history to explain how the spheres are aware of it, *share* in it (“sharing” is something that only material things with location can do).
5. Individual human immaterial minds as posited in *De Anima* III 4-5 surely need a location in space for the associated individual bodies, all of which merely duplicates the problem of how a body could interact with the (immaterial) mind. No one to this day has been able to offer a plausible account of this interaction, and reputations have been severely tarnished for those proposing a solution to how completely immaterial “substances” and (parts of) the physical universe can interact (e.g., Descartes and the pineal gland).
6. Leaving aside these problems and granting for the sake of argument, but only for the sake of argument, that a material thing *could* interact with something absolutely immaterial, with *no* alleged potential whatsoever, why and how would the outer spheres move as they do as a result of loving the Unmoved Mover?
7. That is, why would they not move directly at where they think the Unmoved Mover might be, given the analogy that Aristotle provides for how something unmoved can move, namely, a lover moving as a result of presumably seeing the beloved?
8. Granting also for the sake of argument that a lover might move in different ways from going directly at the beloved if the lover thinks that somehow the non-direct movement benefits the beloved, why would the lover-planet move in a big circle rather than stay in place and pirouette eternally, which for Plato was the perfect kind of movement?

¹⁴ Plato explicitly separates active and passive potentialities in *Phaedrus* 270dff, in what I call the “recursive method.” Aristotle must have been very sympathetic to the doctrine because, starting in the *Dramatics aka Poetics* 1, he mimics the recursive method without naming it; for the detailed explanation see my *Aristotle on Dramatic Musical Composition: The Real Role of Literature, Catharsis, Music and Dance in the POETICS* (New York: ExistencePS Press) 2nd ed., 2018; pp. 141-142. At least this is how most scholars would view the relationship between Mentor and Student. However, as covered in the previous digital extension, it might have been that Plato mimicked Aristotle in this regard, considering that the *Phaedrus* seemingly has later interpolations, some surprisingly influenced by Aristotle. The final option may be the most sensible: Because of long conversations at the Academy, they both can be credited with having articulated the notion of both active and passive potentialities.

9. If the issue is emulating the Unmoved Mover, as many throughout history have thought was the pertinent issue, then, as Theophrastus remarked, why do the outer spheres not emulate the *lack* of motion of the Unmoved Mover?
10. Again, all of this assumes that the outer spheres have souls, which is a prerequisite for desiring or loving, and yet Aristotle explicitly denies that the outer spheres or anything eternal could have a soul in *De Caelo* II 1, as reproduced in Appendix 2.

The Fatal Problems with God (ho Theos) of Lambda 7-8

11. As something that only “thinks of itself thinking” it is as selfish as Narcissus, but on an exponentially grander scale.
12. If the issue of loving and emulating pertains to god rather than to motion as caused by the Unmoved Mover, why should we not only care about thinking about ourselves? Narcissus should be our ideal.
13. Thinking requires an object of thought, and the mind is different from the thought; otherwise, one speaks absurdly. Thus, the psychology of “god” is fantastical, even if (the youthful) Aristotle tries to argue that thinking and the object are the same. Moreover, he and those in his trusted inner circle may well have understood this but, as a letter to Alexander the Great suggests (as I discuss at the end of the book), he may well have kept these ideas in the manuscript to deflect possible Athenian religious criticisms that he was an atheist.
14. Thus, “god” for Aristotle cannot even be aware that a physical universe exists.
15. *A fortiori* it could not care in any degree whatsoever about humanity and the state of the universe; thus, there should be no question about providence for this kind of “god”—we might as well ask Narcissus to be the paradigmatic altruist.
16. As something with a (blessed) life, “god” must have matter and, since matter has potentiality, including the potentiality to go out of existence, this “god” will presumably not last eternally (the Unmoved Mover was different by hypothesis, because Aristotle emphasizes it has no potentiality, which, *if true*, would guarantee that it has to be eternal, but hypothesizing is different from proving existence).¹⁵

The Fatal Problems that Result from Identifying the Unmoved Mover with ho Theos

17. How can something with a (blessed) life be the same substance as that which is completely immaterial?
18. How can thinking and an object of thought, which are attributed to the “god” with a blessed life and which, at least with respect to thinking, are clearly an activity for Aristotle (1072b14-35), not have *or not presuppose* some materiality and potentiality?
19. If the mind (*nous*) of “god” is what is *completely* immaterial and itself is the Unmoved Mover (apart from some kind of body or matter that involves the blessed life and that is “god” *per se*), we return to the familiar, seemingly irresolvable dilemma, namely,

¹⁵ The precept that something eternal can have no potentiality, which is the flip side of the principle at hand, is given an exception by Aristotle: Theta 9 involves a particular movement being allowed to the eternal spheres, which we have empirical evidence for according to the Stagirite, unlike the “god” of Lambda. Nevertheless, the spheres *aka* the fifth element still do not have the potential to disappear, that is, to quit existing, being eternal by nature.

something completely immaterial and ostensibly with no potential interacting with a material entity that has a blessed life.

APPENDIX 2

R.W. Sharples, “Aristotelian Theology after Aristotle”¹⁶

After the penultimate draft was finished, I discovered this work of Sharples. It deserves more than just a few footnotes, being the most rigorous and impressive attempt at capturing the views of thinkers after Aristotle for the periods that have concerned me pertaining to his theology. For good and for bad, Sharples writes:

There has been no shortage of discussion among modern scholars as to just what Aristotle's own views on god were. I cannot hope to reproduce that whole debate here, let alone develop it further...

Recent scholars have rightly supposed that we can trace developments in Aristotle's thought about god and about the heavens from one of his works to another. The ancients, however, did not consider such developmental hypotheses; their aim was to extract a coherent position from consideration of Aristotle's works. This means that they had a motivation which we do not for reconciling apparently conflicting claims in different Aristotelian texts. It also means—fortunately—that questions of Aristotle's own development are peripheral to our enquiry (pp. 2-3).

The bad, at least for my purposes, is that Sharples does not then consider whether the Northern Greek could have had a developmental approach regarding ontology and theology in the manner I have constructed, which even Jaeger, arguably the first champion of developmentalism for Aristotle, ironically missed. Also, Sharples does not even appear to recognize, much less acknowledge, that no Peripatetic for 500 years after the Stagirite embraced the Unmoved Mover or, leaving aside Theophrastus's short remarks, even cared to discuss it (much less discuss it thoroughly), until Alexander of Aphrodisias took Lambda to be the true and only Aristotelian onto-theology.

The good is that Sharples lays out the extremely complex views of dozens of figures from Theophrastus to Alexander, Atticus and Proclus (412 – 485 CE), exactly my purview, for by then Alexander's position that the Stagirite held the Unmoved Mover as his god was set for posterity. If Sharples had tried to evaluate and resolve the dozens, if not hundreds, of various doctrines in the way he attributes to the ancients, he would probably still be writing, 20 years later, although to his great credit he is astutely critical of the plausibility of individual claims that some post-Aristotelians articulate. Much of that 20-year imagined scholarship would have been wasted effort, though, from my perspective, because it is impossible to reconcile, for example, the outer spheres having a soul versus them being part of the fifth element *qua aether* that as an element cannot have a soul. This is confirmed in part, I have submitted, by *De Caelo* II 1, in a long passage reproduced below that Sharples, unlike virtually everyone else, at least touches. Unfortunately, in my opinion, he only touches it in passing while missing its crucial import.

In short, many of the authors and texts that Sharples reports are ones that I have already discussed and some of them absolutely confirm the evidence I provide for the Northern Greek dropping his youthful but absurd Unmoved Mover. Everyone having read my previous publications will understand as (or if) they go through Sharples's 40 pages how and why I would

¹⁶ R. W. Sharples, “Aristotelian Theology after Aristotle,” in *Traditions of Theology*, eds. D. Frede & A. Laks (Leiden: Brill) 2002; 1–40.

agree or disagree, point by point, and line by line, insofar as his findings are relevant to my digital extensions and to the book itself. Unsurprisingly, some of the passages are irrelevant and thus of no concern for us: For instance, divine providence, which Sharples devotes many pages to, cannot apply whatsoever to the Unmoved Mover of Lambda 6 or to the god of Lambda 7-8 or to a combination of the two, even though the section 3.2 entitled “Providence in Alexander” (pp. 30-36) might be of interest to those wanting to understand some of the ramifications of my thesis that Alexander was the one who mistakenly set for posterity the “god” of Lambda. Perhaps like Cicero and the Stoics, Alexander was committed personally to advocating a providential power and was therefore unduly influenced to make the Unmoved Mover the important onto-theological Aristotelian position. However, even on Sharples’s own account, the section has no bearing on my focus on Aristotle’s theories per se:

...it is strange that he [Alexander] apparently presents “Providence extends as far as the sphere of the Moon” as a direct quotation from Aristotle which he needs to explain, or rather to explain away; *for it actually appears nowhere in Aristotle's surviving works* (p. 30; my italics).

Nevertheless, despite a few disagreements with Sharples, out of respect for his accomplishments and because in many ways his chapter provides test cases for my interpretation as well as occasionally confirming parts of it, I now highlight some miscellaneous noteworthy items, especially pertaining to *De Caelo* II 1 and to novel ideas that I missed in my own research.

I.

Sharples suggests that Cicero and the Epicurean Velleius misjudged Aristotle’s theology because, from an Epicurean perspective, “without sensation there can be no wisdom” (pp. 1-2, ft. 3). Sharples appeals to, e.g., Werner Jaeger for support, but the two pages cited only appear to have one relevant statement: “The God to whom the world is subordinated is the transcendental unmoved mover, who guides the world as its final cause, by reason of the perfection of his pure thought. This is the original nucleus of Aristotelian metaphysics (Werner Jaeger, *Aristotle: Fundamentals of the History of his Development*, tr. R. Robinson, Oxford, 2nd ed. 1948. First German edition: Berlin, 1923; p. 139).”

That is, for Sharples the Unmoved Mover of Lambda 6, which has absolutely no matter, is identified with the thinking god of Lambda 7-8. This indeed may have been the view of the very youthful Aristotle, which means ironically Jaeger was correct about it being the “*original nucleus*,” and, more or less the one that Alexander champions for posterity 500 years later. Yet for the reasons given previously, the view is so absurd that Aristotle can no longer be held by specialists to have held it when mature, when he had the theoretically stronger fifth element (and the “Not to Fear” Proof) to ensure eternal motion. Moreover, the “god” of Lambda does not “guide the world.” As has been emphasized frequently, it cannot even be aware that the universe exists, much less guide it, because it only thinks of itself thinking forever. Finally, as deserves reiterating, leaving aside the issue of thinking, the god with a blessed life, having matter and potential, has the potential to not exist, which means in an eternity it will not exist, for the reasons given in my previous publications.

II.

Sharples asserts:

For Aristotle the heavens are ensouled. It is true that he does not himself refer to a *soul* of the sphere in setting out his views in *Physics* book eight or in the latter part of *Metaphysics* Lambda. But the spheres cannot be moved by intellect alone without appetite, so at least these two soul-faculties must be present in the heavens (p. 4).

Going in reverse: If the aether *aka* fifth element moves forever in virtue of its nature, like fire moving upward notwithstanding that fire has no soul, then the outer spheres need neither intellect nor appetite. Moreover, the (eternal) heavens cannot be ensouled according to *De Caelo* II 1, which we examine now. As alluded to, Sharples considers *De Caelo* II 1 in a footnote via another author, claiming that it shows Aristotle accepting that the outer spheres have a soul. Sharples does all of this. in discussing the various options for how an immaterial Unmoved Mover could somehow move the outer spheres, with the Mover itself an unmoved object of desire by the spheres themselves. In covering Alexander and Simplicius and their clever explanations, which certainly could have applied to the doctrine of the *youthful* Stagirite, Sharples states:

When the pseudo-Alexander commentary on *Metaphysics* Lambda argues that the efficient causes of the spheres are not their souls as these are not gods (706.31), it must be the Unmoved Movers that are referred to as efficient causes... At 701.4ff., *where each sphere is said to be moved by its own soul, not in the way that animals are moved by their souls exerting force on their bodies but rather in the way described in book two of De caelo* (Hayduck ad loc. identifies the passage referred to as II 12, 292a18ff., where Aristotle argues that the heavenly bodies are not inanimate but share in action and life) pseudo-Alexander is simply endeavouring to accommodate the argument at *Cael.* II 1, 284a27ff. that the *soul of the heaven cannot move it by force* (p. 20, ft. 96; my italics).

I will only concentrate on II 1, ignoring, except for a brief remark, Hayduck's assumption that in II 12 Aristotle argues that "the heavenly bodies are not inanimate but share in action and life." The reasons for ignoring the assumption are these: The crucial part of the assertion is "and life," because no one doubts that the heavenly bodies move and, in a fundamental sense, share in action, just as no one doubts that fire moves and thus shares in some kind of action. Yet, whether the heavenly bodies have *life* is very dubious in that chapter, and is part of an *aporia* that the Stagirite is considering, when discussing the problem of why the primary movement is *simpler* than the *complex* movements of lower forms, like men, who perish. Other suggestions throughout any other part of *De Caelo* that the Unmoved Mover as an immaterial being (as opposed to a material unmoved mover of *Physics* like the man holding the stick that hits a stone) exists and moves the outer spheres because of *their* ensouled desire can easily be handled by emphasizing the development of Aristotle's thought or by assuming that a later editor interpolated the phrase in order to harmonize the texts with Lambda.

Let us examine the whole chapter, II 1, given how short it is, because it has been extremely underappreciated historically, especially compared to, say, Lambda 6. We will determine whether and how, as Sharples recounts for pseudo-Alexander, "each sphere is said to be moved by its own soul...in the way described in book two" and whether it is by force or by any other method.

De Caelo II 1

That the heaven as a whole neither came into being nor admits of destruction, as some assert, but is one and eternal, with no end or beginning of its total duration, containing and embracing in itself the infinity of time, we may convince ourselves not only by the arguments already set forth but also by a consideration of the views of those who differ

from us in providing for its generation. If our view is a possible one, and the manner of generation which they assert is impossible, this fact will have great weight in convincing us of the immortality and eternity of the world. Hence it is well to persuade oneself of *the truth of the ancient and truly traditional theories, that 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 goal, having itself no beginning or end, but unceasing through the infinity of time, and of other movements, to some the cause of their beginning, to others offering the goal. *The ancients gave to the Gods the heaven or upper place, as being alone immortal;* and our present argument testifies that it is indestructible and ungenerated. Further, **it is unaffected by any mortal discomfort, and, in addition, effortless; for it needs no constraining necessity to keep it to its path,** and prevent it from moving with some other movement **more natural to itself.** Such a constrained movement would necessarily involve effort the more so, the more eternal it were—**and would be inconsistent with perfection.** Hence we must not believe the old tale which says that the world needs some Atlas to keep it safe—a tale composed, it would seem, by men who, like later thinkers, conceived of all the upper bodies as earthy and endowed with weight, and therefore supported it *in their fabulous way upon animate necessity.* We must no more believe that than follow Empedocles when he says that the world, by being whirled round, received a movement quick enough to overpower its own downward tendency, and thus has been kept from destruction all this time. **Nor, again, is it conceivable that it should persist eternally by the necessitation of a soul. For a soul could not live in such conditions painlessly or happily,** since the movement involves constraint, being imposed on the first body, whose natural motion is different, and imposed continuously. It must therefore be uneasy and devoid of all rational satisfaction; **for it could not even, like the soul of mortal animals, take recreation in the bodily relaxation of sleep. An Ixion's lot must needs possess it, without end or respite.** If then, as we said, the view already stated of the first motion is a possible one, it is not only more appropriate so to conceive of its eternity, but also on this hypothesis alone *are we able to advance a theory consistent with popular divinations of the divine nature.*¹⁷

In short, not only is Aristotle trying to advance the traditional beliefs in god in a way that is philosophically plausible and that supports his own views but there is no claim that a soul moves the first body—“the *immortal and divine thing which possesses movement*” —whether by force or by any other way. In fact, just the opposite: No soul could necessitate eternal movement. Moreover, the eternal, perfect movement is the most natural, as implied by the qualification “more natural to itself.” If the first body, that is, the outermost sphere, were to have a soul in the meaningful sense of the term, with life, it would be devoid of “all rational satisfaction” while not even having the benefit of sleep! It would be like Ixion, the X-rated analog of Prometheus already amply discussed in my previous work, forever suffering because of a sexual indiscretion pertaining to Zeus and a cloud appearing to be Hera. Rather, we can deduce, the perfect motion of the first body must be of the (divine) *aether*, which moves always exactly the same way in virtue of its own nature, simply and without (any other) change, all of which is utterly consistent with, or simply repeats some of, my previous arguments. In this context, complex changes of movement would be dangerous and would permit the spheres to go off course and at some moment in eternity to crash into, and destroy, each other. Hence, even though the complex motions of mortal creatures might *seem* more advantageous, in one way the eternally simple consistent motion is of the utmost importance.

¹⁷ Translated by J. L. Stocks. Available online at <http://classics.mit.edu//Aristotle/heavens.html>

III.

Sharples continues:

There is also a question, which we will have cause to return to in connection with Alexander, whether the mere presence of order deriving from a divine principle is sufficient to justify application of the term "providence" at all (p. 25)

This is something alluded to by Atticus, and it is clear that if the outer spheres are regular and ordered simply in virtue of their own nature, always proceeding on the exact same path, no providence need be implied. Providence requires thought and the aether *qua* fifth element, not being ensouled, simply does not think, just as fire, air, earth and water do not think.

IV.

Sharples embellishes another point made above by himself in a different publication with respect to Atticus, who, to re-iterate, in discussing the views of the soul and intellect by Alexander and two unknown predecessors, perhaps Aristoteles of Mytilene or Aristotle of Stagira, notes that if intellect is incorporeal it could not *come* from outside, since what is incorporeal cannot move at all:

At GA II 3, 736b27 he [the Stagirite] refers to intellect being divine and entering the human embryo "from outside." That part of the human soul enters from outside was asserted by the first-century-B.C. Peripatetic Cratippus, and Moraux notes that this doctrine is attributed to a range of philosophers by Aetius and was attacked by Atticus. And a further attack prompted the response which will concern us here. In the final section, beginning at 112.5, of the treatise *de Intellectu* (= *de Anima libri mantissa* 106-113) attributed to Alexander of Aphrodisias the objection is recorded that intellect could not "enter from outside" because, ***being immaterial, it could not move at all*** (112.6-8). Someone—presumably a Peripatetic—replied to this by arguing (112.8-113.12) that divine intellect does not need to move, because it is spatially extended throughout the universe, becoming manifest as intellect only in those places where there are bodies suitable for this—i.e. human bodies, and presumably, though the text does not say so, the heavenly bodies also. This theory...may be described as Stoicizing in so far as it is pantheistic, but it is emphatically not materialist or corporeal. The author of *de Intellectu*, or at least of this section of it, for his part then *rejects this defence* (113.12-24), arguing that ***it is unworthy of the divine to be present everywhere in the sublunary world***, and suggests instead that, just because intellect is immaterial, its coming "from outside" need not involve spatial movement at all. In effect, ***to say that an immaterial substance is everywhere is just as inappropriate as to raise problems about its movement from place to place*** (pp. 26-27; my emphases).

I hardly need supply examples of how foul and evil and thus unworthy of "divinity" some parts of the world are. Also, the comment about an immaterial intellect coming from outside not needing spatial movement at all is absolutely baffling. What is being implied,—that the intellect can come from outside with non-spatial movement? What is *that*? The idea seems utter nonsense. It should be added that saying an immaterial substance is *anywhere* (as an alternative to *everywhere*) is equally inappropriate. How does it move "from place to place"? If the answer is that the physical object with which it is aligned does the moving, the dilemma is only pushed down a level: How does the immaterial substance stay aligned with the physical object? "Where-ness" or location only applies to physical things. Hence, for this and already given reasons, it is impossible,

practically speaking, that a thinker like the (mature) Aristotle could have considered individual souls, whether human or heavenly, to have their own immaterial Active Intellects.

I finish with a thought that some may find too bold, but that I believe is completely justified by the already given reasons and publications: Those modern scholars who continue to attempt to resolve the dilemmas of *De Anima* III 4-5 might as well attempt to resolve the dilemmas of how the Unmoved Movers of Anaxagoras and Xenophanes cause and explain the physical universe, and if the scholars have the courage to accept that the dilemmas of the two earlier Unmoved Movers need never be resolved (because presumably they cannot be), then they should have the same courage with respect to III 4-5.¹⁸

¹⁸ One relatively recent example is Victor Caston, "Aristotle's Two Intellects: A Modest Proposal," *Phronesis* XLIV 13, 1999, 199-227. A few of his discussions, such as the meaning of "divine" in different contexts in the Aristotelian corpus, and some of his claims like "But to be "divine" clearly does not imply identity with God or anything supernatural (p. 216)" are meritorious in my view. However, his final sentence, to select just one example of many, reveals how I would disagree with much of the article. That sentence is: "...we, like the heavenly spheres, are moved in all we do through our imperfect imitation of God (p. 224)." Caston contends this without resolving why or how, in emulating the Unmoved Mover, which does not move, we ourselves do *not* aim to be always at rest. Nor does Caston seem to recognize, much less grapple with, a host of related dilemmas, inconsistencies and outright contradictions in the rest of Aristotle's corpus, as I have laid out in the book and digital extensions.

Previous Digital Extensions of

Aristotle's "Not to Fear" Proof for the Necessary Eternality of the Universe

1. www.epspress.com/NecessaryImplication.pdf
2. www.epspress.com/NTF/VariousVersionsOfThePrinciple.pdf
3. www.epspress.com/NTF/CantorAndTheAttemptToRefuteAristotle.pdf
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