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**Greek, Arab and Latin Commentators
on *Per Se* Accidents of Being *qua* Being
and the Place of Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book *Iota***

One of the most debated problems concerning Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is whether and how the science of being *qua* being there presented is structured according to the model of the demonstrative sciences proposed by Aristotle himself in the *Posterior Analytics*. According to this model, every science has as its object a determinate subject genus of which it demonstrates the *per se* accidents starting from definitions and principles proper to the particular science at issue or common to several sciences¹. Against this background picture of how a demonstrative science works, the science of being *qua* being is a problematic case. The first and in a way the most difficult problem is whether being *qua* being can constitute an appropriate object of enquiry for a single science, given that being is not a genus and that it is said in many different ways. The issue of the subject genus of Aristotle's science of being has been broadly discussed over the last two thousand years and is not the topic of this paper. Rather, I shall focus on the complementary problem of establishing what the *per se* accidents of being are and how they should be investigated.

Despite its significance for the development of metaphysical thought in late antiquity and the Middle Ages, this aspect of Aristotle's enquiry has been perhaps overshadowed by the predominance of the subject-genus question. Nevertheless, the relevance of the topic can be inferred from the very notion of a science of being *qua* being, and can also be observed *a posteriori*. *A posteriori*, we can see that bits and pieces of Aristotle's analysis of what allegedly counts as *per se* accidents of being *qua* being continue to be pertinent in the debate on simple and disjunctive transcendental predicates, which are convertible with being. In fact, the theory of the transcendentals has been regarded as one of the main areas in 'old ontology' (before Kant's revolutionary approach to metaphysical thought)² as well as the primary

¹ *An. Post.*, A, 7, 75a39-b2 ; A, 10, 76a37-b2.

² Cf. K. BÄRTHLEIN, *Die Transzendentalienlehre der alten Ontologie*, W. de Gruyter, Berlin - New York 1972, pp. 1-7.

focus of genuine philosophical investigation in the Middle Ages³. But we can also infer the importance of *per se* accidents of being *qua* being simply by analysing the very idea of a science of being *qua* being as a demonstrative science along the aforementioned lines: a demonstrative science starts with the observation of the *de facto* regular connection of its subject with some properties (its *per se* accidents) and shows why such properties belong to the subject. The identification of *per se* accidents of the subject genus is therefore crucial to determine the scope of the science at issue.

The problem of clarifying the structure and the elements of the *science* of being *qua* being arises only once it has been accepted that the knowledge of being, i.e. the eminent philosophical knowledge described by Aristotle in the *Metaphysics*, must take the form of a demonstrative science. But this point is in fact very far from being uncontroversial. Ancient as well as modern debates on the form of philosophical knowledge sought-for and practiced in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* have always involved the opposition of two main parties: according to some interpreters, the form of this kind of knowledge is dialectic⁴, whereas according to others it is demonstrative

³ Cf. J. A. AERTSEN, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals. The case of Thomas Aquinas*, Brill, Leiden-New York-Köln 1996, p. 1 ff.; see also M. PICKAVÉ ed., *Die Logik des Transzendentalen. Festschrift für Jan A. Aertsen zum 65. Geburtstag*, W. de Gruyter, Berlin - New York 2003, pp. XI-XXII.

⁴ For instance, Syrianus must take into account the fact that, from an 'orthodox' Platonic point of view, dialectic (and not scientific demonstration) is the form of the most genuine philosophical knowledge. Therefore Syrianus seems to identify the highest form of philosophical knowledge in Aristotle with dialectic and to make room for a diminished and inferior form of dialectical *technê*; first philosophy provides the latter with the basic axioms (e.g. the principle of non-contradiction). On the different kinds of dialectic in Syrianus's commentary on the *Metaphysics* see A. LONGO, *Siriano e i principi della scienza*, Bibliopolis, Napoli 2005, pp. 225-292. The modern supporters of the dialectical reading of Aristotle's metaphysics do not seem to be animated (at least not primarily) by Platonic concerns on the relevance of dialectic itself. Rather, they ground their interpretation on the textual situation of the *Metaphysics* as we have it (in which no relevant argument is structured in syllogistic form) and on the way in which Aristotle shows the validity of the principle of non-contradiction. See in particular E. BERTI, *Dimostrazione e metafisica in Aristotele*, in *Teoria della dimostrazione. Atti del convegno Padova 1962*, Gregoriana, Padova 1963, pp. 21-29 (repr. in Id., *Studi aristotelici*, Japadre, L'Aquila 1975 (Methodos 7), pp. 41-45); *La nouvelle métaphysique d'Aristote*, in *Akten des XIV Internationalen Kongresses für Philosophie*, Herder, Wien 1970, pp. 447-456 (repr. in Id., *Studi aristotelici* cit., pp. 135-142); *La dialettica in Aristotele*, in *L'attualità della problematica aristotelica*, Antenore, Padova 1973, pp. 33-80 (repr. in Id., *Studi aristotelici*, pp. 109-133); and T. H. IRWIN, *Aristotle's First Principles*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1988. Irwin in particular proposes a distinction — in a way close to Syrianus's distinction — between strong dialectic (able to deliver genuine metaphysical knowledge) and weak dialectic, somewhat indifferent to the philosophical truth of the arguments it deals with.

science⁵. The idea that Aristotle's philosophical knowledge of being is demonstrative goes back at least to Alexander⁶, but the strongest attempts to make Aristotle's project of the science of being fit together with the model of the demonstrative sciences in the *Posterior Analytics* is regarded as a main feature of the Arabic reading of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*⁷. In particular, the vigour of Avicenna's efforts to strengthen this view is unparalleled. On this aspect, it should be stressed that Avicenna is perfectly aware of his original contribution in improving and in bringing to perfection Aristotle's — in many respects missing — account. Avicenna's self-awareness is emphasized by the fact that he does not write a *commentary* on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, but a new treatise which, although heavily relying on Aristotle's work, is meant to be a new *Metaphysics* and which, in at least some cultural and geographical areas, becomes a replacement for Aristotle's *Metaphysics* itself⁸.

Avicenna's improvements on Aristotle's project are in relevant aspects built out of Aristotelian materials. In particular, the problem of the structure and nature of the science of being arises from Aristotle's text. In this paper I should like to analyse how the different *commentators* on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* come to grips with the problems emerging from Aristotle's text as it stands. I shall start by analysing the texts in which Aristotle presents and tackles the *aporia* (the fifth in Ross's enumeration of the *aporiai* in *Met.*, B, 1) of whether the sought-for science must deal only with substance or also with *per se* accidents of substance.

The texts devoted to and linked with the development and the solution of the fifth *aporia* also outline a project of enquiry into a group of notions, usually dealt with by the 'dialecticians' (henceforth: dialectical notions). At some point Aristotle seems to identify dialectical notions with *per se* accidents of being or of substance, but the argumentative steps leading to this identification are not clear. Moreover, it is not clear whether and where Aristotle actually engages in the completion of this project of enquiry, which would be nonetheless quite crucial if the science of being *qua* being is

⁵ Among the modern supporters of this interpretation see in particular I. BELL, *Metaphysics as an Aristotelian Science*, Academia Verlag, Sankt Augustin 2004; R. BOLTON, *Aristotle conception of Metaphysics as a Science*, in T. SCALTSAS, D. CHARLES, M. L. GILL eds., *Unity, Identity and Explanation in Aristotle's Metaphysics*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1994, pp. 321-354; E. C. HALPER, *One and many in Aristotle's Metaphysics Alpha- Delta*, Parmenides Publishing, Las Vegas 2008, pp. 229 ff.

⁶ M. BONELLI, *Alessandro di Afrodisia e la Metafisica come scienza dimostrativa*, Bibliopolis, Napoli 2001.

⁷ Cf. BELL, *Metaphysics* cit., pp. 10-11 refers explicitly to the tradition of the Arabic interpretation.

⁸ A. BERTOLACCI, *The Reception of Aristotle's Metaphysics in Avicenna's Kitāb al-Šifā': a milestone of Western metaphysical thought*, Brill, Leiden 2006, in particular Part Two, pp. 107-263.

supposed to fulfil its task of enquiring into its object and its *per se* accidents. Apart from doctrinal matters, these texts present some additional difficulties, among which significant shifts in terminology and some ambiguity as to what such *per se* accidents are supposed to be. In particular, Aristotle oscillates between talking of *per se* accidents of substance (in the original formulation of the *aporia*) and *per se* accidents of being (in the introduction of the alleged solution to the *aporia*). I should anticipate that almost every line of Aristotle's text on these topics gives rise to a plethora of questions and problems which have been variously addressed and tackled by ancient, medieval and modern interpreters. Of some of them I provide an account elsewhere⁹, but in general I cannot analyse them in full. My aim in Part I is to sketch the main problems — rather than the solutions — as they emerge from Aristotle's text. By doing this I should like to prepare the discussion of the different ways in which the commentators deal with them. I shall therefore sketch Aristotle's presentation of these aspects and emphasize the main issues left open by Aristotle's treatment of the matter.

As we shall see, the ways in which the different commentators deal with these conceptual *lacunae* in Aristotle's text is not unanimous. In Part II I shall consider some of the analyses provided for the passages presented in Part I. From the survey of Part II three main points emerge. First, not all the commentators are equally clear on the relation between *per se* accidents of substance, dialectical notions and *per se* accidents of being. Second, not all the commentators agree on the place in which Aristotle actually carries out his enquiry into the *per se* accidents of being *qua* being. Third, an interesting framework of textual references surfaces, which might help in understanding the perspective of the different commentators on relevant doctrinal aspects.

In Part III I shall discuss these points, with particular attention to Syrianus's apparently isolated identification of the place in which Aristotle carries out (parts or all of) the enquiry into the *per se* accidents of being with the tenth book (I) of the *Metaphysics*. In discussing the textual references emerging from Part II I shall try to provide a tentative explanation of the extent to which such an explicit (and, in my opinion, insightful) suggestion was partly lost and partly retained in the exegetical work of the following centuries.

⁹ L. M. CASTELLI, *Problems and Paradigms of Unity. Aristotle's accounts of the meanings of the one*, Academia Verlag, Sankt Augustin 2010 (International Aristotle Studies 6) ; see in particular Chapters 1 and 2.

PART I

ARISTOTLE ON PER SE ACCIDENTS OF BEING QUA BEING

The third book of the *Metaphysics* is devoted to the presentation and analysis of the so-called *aporiai*, i.e. the theoretical knots which prevent reasoning from proceeding either way. Aristotle often introduces his own enquiry with a survey of the relevant opinions of people who have already worked on the topic at issue with — at least apparently — opposite results, neither of which seems intrinsically more plausible than the other. The presentation of the *aporiai* in *Met.*, B is divided into two sections: In B, 1 Aristotle gives a somewhat sketchy list of all the *aporiai* he intends to tackle, while in the remaining chapters he analyses both sides of the theoretical dilemmas contained in each of them. From the point of view of their contents, the *aporiai* can be divided into two groups. According to Ross's enumeration of them in *Met.*, B, 1¹⁰, *aporiai* I (995b5-6), II (995b6-10), III (995b10-13) and V (995b18-27)¹¹ are methodological (in the sense that I shall presently explain), whereas the others concern specific theoretical points which must be assessed by the science of being *qua* being. *Aporiai* I, II, III and V in B, 1 are methodological or meta-theoretical in character in the sense that they do not concern problems which have to be tackled by the sought-for science, but concern the very nature of it. In particular, the fifth *aporia* is whether the sought-for science must deal only with substances or also with the *per se* accidents of substances and with a series of other notions. In the presentation in B, 1 the *aporia* is divided into two parts and syntactically articulated into three points:

« We must enquire, then, as we say, into these questions, and also whether **(1)** our investigation is concerned only with substances or also with the accidents *per se* of substances. **(2)** Further **(2a)** with regard to the same and other and similar and dissimilar and contrariety, and with regard to prior and posterior and all other such things, about which the dialecticians try to enquire starting their investigation from reputable opinions only — whose business is it to enquire into all these? Further **(2b)** the accidents *per se* of these themselves, and not only what each of these is, but also whether one thing has one contrary only » (Ross's translation, slightly modified)¹².

¹⁰ W. D. Ross, *Aristotle's Metaphysics*, 2 vols., Clarendon Press, Oxford 1924, vol. I, pp. 222-223.

¹¹ The fact that these *aporiai* constitute a homogeneous group is confirmed by their continuous analysis in the full-length discussion in B, 2, 996a18-997a34.

¹² *Met.*, B, 1, 995b18-27: Περί τε τούτων οὖν, καθάπερ φημέν, ἐπισκεπτέον, καὶ πότερον περὶ τὰς οὐσίας ἢ θεωρία μόνον ἐστὶν ἢ καὶ περὶ τὰ συμβεβηκότα καθ' αὐτὰ ταῖς οὐσίαις, πρὸς δὲ τούτοις περὶ ταύτου καὶ ἐτέρου καὶ ὁμοίου καὶ ἀνομοίου καὶ ἐναντιότητος, καὶ περὶ προτέρου καὶ ὑστέρου καὶ τῶν

All the problems raised in the passage concern the scope of the science which Aristotle is trying to define; in other words, they raise questions concerning whether the science at issue must deal with determinate objects and topics or not. The first part of the text **(1)** asks whether the science at issue must include the study of the *per se* accidents of substances. The second part **(2)** asks whether it must include the study **(2a)** of those notions which are usually considered by the dialecticians (the dialectical notions) and **(2b)** of *per se* accidents of such notions.

There are some problems with this text. The first problem is that it is not clear what the relation between **(1)** and **(2)** is and, more particularly, whether the notions described in **(2)** coincide with the accidents *per se* of substance mentioned in **(1)**. The second problem is that it is not very clear which properties would count as *per se* accidents of substance at all. I shall deal with these problems together.

I. 1 *PER SE* ACCIDENTS OF SUBSTANCE, DIALECTICAL NOTIONS AND *PER SE* ACCIDENTS OF BEING

First of all, it must be observed that in the corresponding full-length discussion of the *aporia* in B, 2, 997a25-34 only **(1)** is considered :

« Further, does our investigation deal with substances alone or also with their accidents? I mean, for instance, if the solid is a certain substance and so are lines and planes, is it the business of the same science to know these and to know the accidents of each genus (about which the mathematical sciences do demonstrations), or of a different science? If of the same, the science of substance must also be a demonstrative science, but it is thought that there is no demonstration of the essence of things. And if of another, what will be the science that investigates the accidents of substance? This is a very difficult question » (Ross's translation, modified)¹³.

ἄλλων ἀπάντων τῶν τοιούτων περὶ ὧσων οἱ διαλεκτικοὶ πειρῶνται σκοπεῖν ἐκ τῶν ἐνδόξων μόνων ποιούμενοι τὴν σκέψιν, τίνος ἐστὶ θεωρῆσαι περὶ πάντων· ἔτι δὲ τούτοις αὐτοῖς ὅσα καθ' αὐτὰ συμβέβηκεν, καὶ μὴ μόνον τί ἐστὶν τούτων ἕκαστον ἀλλὰ καὶ ἅρα ἐν ἐνὶ ἐναντίον. Unless otherwise indicated, modifications in the translation are to the effect of making the translation more literal and the vocabulary consistent throughout the paper.

¹³ *Met.*, B, 2, 997a25-34 : ἔτι δὲ πότερον περὶ τὰς οὐσίας μόνον ἢ θεωρία ἐστὶν ἢ καὶ περὶ τὰ συμβεβηκότα ταύταις; λέγω δ' οἶον, εἰ τὸ στερεὸν οὐσία τίς ἐστὶ καὶ γραμμαὶ καὶ ἐπίπεδα, πότερον τῆς αὐτῆς ταῦτα γνωρίζειν ἐστὶν ἐπιστήμης καὶ τὰ συμβεβηκότα περὶ ἕκαστον γένος περὶ ὧν αἱ μαθηματικαὶ δεικνύουσιν, ἢ ἄλλης, εἰ μὲν γὰρ τῆς αὐτῆς, ἀποδεικτικὴ τις ἂν εἴη καὶ ἡ τῆς οὐσίας, οὐ δοκεῖ δὲ τοῦ τί ἐστὶν ἀπόδειξις εἶναι· εἰ δ' ἑτέρας, τίς ἔσται ἡ θεωροῦσα περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν τὰ συμβεβηκότα; τοῦτο γὰρ ἀποδοῦναι παγγάλεπον.

The passage unpacks the idea that if a science deals with the *per se* accidents of its subject genus, then it is a demonstrative science. In fact, in this case a question about the scope of the science automatically converts into a question about the structure of the science. However, given that B, 2 deals only with (1), it is not very helpful to spell out the riddle of the connection between (1) and (2) — unless one takes the very fact that (2) is not separately mentioned as evidence *e silentio* for its straightforward identification with (1) — nor what *per se* accidents of substances are supposed to be exactly.

The connection between (1) and (2) has given rise to a comparatively rich range of interpretations among contemporary readers. Madigan¹⁴ modifies Ross's enumeration of the *aporiai* by reckoning (1) and (2) as two different *aporiai*; of the two *aporiai*, (2) would not be reconsidered in the course of *Met.*, B. On the other extreme, Bell¹⁵ claims that (1) and (2) constitute a single *aporia* and that their association in the text can be understood only by assuming that the notions mentioned in (2) coincide with the *per se* accidents of substance mentioned in (1). Ross¹⁶ offers an intermediate position: although there is only one *aporia*, of which (1) and (2) are two subsections, it is not possible to identify the accidents *per se* of substance in (1) with the dialectical notions in (2). Of these interpretations, Bell's is in line with a long tradition of ancient and medieval commentators whose positions I shall present in Part II¹⁷.

Even if, as we saw, Aristotle does not mention (2) in B, 2's full-length discussion, he does go back to all three points of the fifth *aporia* in *Met.*, Γ, 2. Having stated that the science of being *qua* being must deal with the notions mentioned in (2), he outlines a project for the enquiry into such notions. Before taking a closer look at this project and quite apart from the question of whether Aristotle eventually identifies the dialectical notions in (2) with the *per se* accidents of substance in (1), it should be stressed that Aristotle's vocabulary in these texts is far from being unambiguous. This uncertainty in vocabulary can be shown through a survey of the relevant passages. In both the presentation of (1) in *Met.*, B, 1 and of the corresponding section in Γ, 2 Aristotle refers to (*per se*) accidents of substances (τὰ συμβεβηκότα καθ' αὐτὰ ταῖς οὐσίαις):

Met., B, 1, 995b19-20: πότερον περὶ τὰς οὐσίας ἡ θεωρία μόνον ἐστὶν ἢ καὶ περὶ τὰ
συμβεβηκότα καθ' αὐτὰ ταῖς οὐσίαις.

¹⁴ A. MADIGAN, *Aristotle. Metaphysics Books B and K1-2*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1999, pp. 27, 50.

¹⁵ BELL, *Metaphysics* cit., pp. 99 ff.

¹⁶ ROSS, *Aristotle's Metaphysics* cit., vol. I, p. 224.

¹⁷ F. DE HAAS, *Aporiai 3-5*, in M. CRUBELLIER, A. LAKS eds., *Aristotle's Metaphysics Beta*, Symposium Aristotelicum, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2009, pp. 73-104 does not analyse (2) nor does E. BERTI, *Aporiai 6-7*, *ibid.*, pp. 105-133.

Met., B, 2, 997a25-26 : ἔτι δὲ πότερον περὶ τὰς οὐσίας ἢ θεωρία μόνον ἔστιν ἢ καὶ περὶ τὰ συμβεβηκότα ταύταις.

In the course of *Met.*, Γ, 1-2, though, Aristotle resorts to different expressions. In Γ, 1, 1003a21-22 he talks of « things belonging *per se* to being » :

Met., Γ, 1, 1003a21-22 : ἔστιν ἐπιστήμη τις ἢ θεωρεῖ τὸ ὄν ἢ ὄν καὶ τὰ τούτω ὑπάρχοντα καθ' αὐτό.

The use of *ὑπάρχοντα* is not a problem, because it is replaced by *συμβεβηκότα* at 1003a25. But the shift from substance (*οὐσία*) to being *qua* being (*τὸ ὄν ἢ ὄν*) as the subject (i.e. the bearer) of the *per se* accidents at issue is quite problematic. At least at this stage, Aristotle has not done anything to show that the problem of whether the same science must deal with substance and with the *per se* accidents of substances is the same as the problem whether there is a science of being and of its *per se* accidents. It is only this second formulation which is addressed at the beginning of Γ, 1, where Aristotle states that there is such a science. The shift from *per se* accidents of substance to accidents of being adds a problem to the original difficulty of the shift from *per se* accidents of substance in (1) to dialectical notions in (2).

The terminology is also inconsistent in the case of dialectical notions, which in the course of *Met.*, Γ, 2 are successively designated as :

'species (or 'forms') of the one' (1003b33 : τοῦ ἐνὸς εἶδη) ;

'affections *per se* of one *qua* one and being *qua* being' (1004b5-6 : τοῦ ἐνὸς ἢ ἔν καὶ τοῦ ὄντος ἢ ὄν ταῦτα καθ' αὐτά ἐστὶ πάθη) ;

'*propria*'¹⁸ of being *qua* being (1004b15 : οὕτω καὶ τῷ ὄντι ἢ ὄν ἔστι τινα ἴδια).

Some ambiguity on the precise characterization of these notions is kept also in the passages in which Aristotle summarizes the solutions to the *aporiai* concerning the extension of the science of being *qua* being at 1004a31-34¹⁹

¹⁸ The notion of *proprium* (necessary not essential property) belongs in particular to the conceptual framework of the *Topics* (see in particular *Top.*, A, 5, 102a18-30 ; and the whole of *Top.*, E, completely devoted to the *topoi* for dismissing and establishing the ascription of a *proprium*). There is some debate as to whether the notion of *proprium* in the *Topics* develops in the notion of *per se* accident of the *Analytics*. On this issue see G. VERBEKE, *La notion de propriété dans les Topiques*, in G. E. L. OWEN ed., *Aristotle on Dialectic. The Topics*. Proceedings of the third Symposium Aristotelicum, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1968, pp. 257-276.

¹⁹ *Met.*, Γ, 2, 1004a31-34 : φανερόν οὖν ὅτι μιᾶς περὶ τούτων καὶ τῆς οὐσίας ἔστι λόγον ἔχειν (τοῦτο δ' ἦν ἔν τῶν ἐν τοῖς ἀπορήμασιν).

and 1005a13-18²⁰. These passages do not include a full answer to the precise way in which the science of being *qua* being and of its *per se* accidents is linked to or identified with the science of substance and of its *per se* accidents. In the latter passage (1005a13-18), however, Aristotle seems to endorse the view that the *per se* accidents of substance are in fact to be identified with the dialectical notions mentioned in (2):

« Obviously then it is the work of one science to examine being *qua* being, and the attributes which belong to it *qua* being, and the same science will examine not only substances but also their attributes, both those above named and what is prior and posterior, genus and species, whole and part, and the other such things » (Ross's translation modified).

This final and apparently plain statement of Aristotle should not obscure the fact that the passages leading to it do not include any clear argument to the effect that (a) *per se* accidents of substance are the same as the dialectical notions nor that (b) *per se* accidents of being are the same as *per se* accidents of substance nor that (c) *per se* accidents of being are the same as dialectical notions. As we shall see in Part II, some commentators are aware of the gaps between *per se* accidents of substance / dialectical notions / *per se* accidents of being and try to bridge them or, at least, to clarify their differences.

I. 2 THE ENQUIRY INTO THE DIALECTICAL NOTIONS

Quite apart from the place that they are bound to occupy in his ontology, Aristotle outlines a comparatively clear and well-structured project of enquiry into the dialectical notions. The project is mainly outlined in *Met.*, Γ, 2, 1003b19-1004a2, 1004a10-31 and 1004b27-1005a11. As we shall see, it is not clear whether and where Aristotle actually accomplishes the enquiry here proposed. I shall devote the whole of Part III to the discussion and assessment of evidence in favour of and against the proposals of the various commentators. For now I shall confine myself to a sketch of the project as it is first set forth by Aristotle. I consider the first two passages as parts of a continuous argument, with 1004a2-10 (considered to be out of place by all modern commentators) introducing a different line of reasoning.

In *Met.*, Γ, 2 Aristotle proposes a battery of arguments to show that the science of being *qua* being must consider a number of topics and that the

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1005a13-18 : ὅτι μὲν οὖν μιᾶς ἐπιστήμης τὸ ὄν ἢ ὄν θεωρῆσαι καὶ τὰ ὑπάρχοντα αὐτῷ ἢ ὄν, δηλον, καὶ ὅτι οὐ μόνον τῶν οὐσιῶν ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων ἢ αὐτῆ θεωρητική, τῶν τε εἰρημένων καὶ περὶ προτέρου καὶ ὑστέρου, καὶ γένους καὶ εἴδους, καὶ ὅλου καὶ μέρους καὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν τοιούτων.

progressive extension of its range to such topics does not undermine its unity as *one* science. In other words, Aristotle shows that the progressive extension of the science of being to the topics traditionally connected with the enquiry into being and dialectic makes sense and can be justified without any loss of unity on the part of the science itself. I shall not go through all the arguments, but I shall focus on the two aforementioned portions of text, both arguing that the science of being *qua* being should deal with a set of notions such as one-many, same-other, different, contrary, similar-dissimilar, equal-unequal. These are the dialectical notions mentioned in (2).

The first argument is very complex, but the main steps can be summarized as follows: every science is science of a whole genus of objects, without restricting its interest to a specific part of it (1003b19-21; this is a general assumption of Aristotle's). Therefore (1003b21-22) the science studying all the species of being is one in genus²¹. Furthermore (1003b22-33), being and one are the same in substratum, i.e. they are said of all and only the same subjects (anything which is being is one and anything which is one is being). It follows that being has as many species as the one (1003b33-35). The species of the one are the same, similar, equal and such similar items (1003b35-36). This is the first step of the extension of the science of being: since being is the same in substratum as the one, the science of being must cover all the species of the one, which in a way are species of being²².

The second step is based on Aristotle's general assumption that the science of the opposites is one and the same (1004a9-10; 1004a10-12). Now, the opposite to the one (ἔν) (either as negation or as privation) is the plurality (πληθός)²³ (1004a10). It follows that the science of being must examine the

²¹ The passage establishing this point is very complicated and the argument quite obscure. I provide a detailed discussion of the text and of the different interpretations in *Problems and Paradigms* cit., pp. 51-55. At any rate, the main point of the argument seems to be that the kind and degree of unity of a science reflects the unity of its subject genus. If the subject of a science is one in species, the science is one in species; if the subject of a science is one in genus, the science is one in genus too.

²² Aristotle provides some arguments to show that one and being are one and the same in substratum. What he means by this is that one and being have the same extension (in particular, they range over all beings). A full analysis of the arguments is not necessary here. Among the reconstructions of the passage see M. J. LOUX, *Aristotle on the Transcendentals*, « Phronesis », 18, 1973, pp. 225-239; M. F. LOWE, *Aristotle on Being and the One*, « Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie », 59, 1977, pp. 44-55; E. C. HALPER, *Aristotle on the Convertibility of One and Being*, « The new Scholasticism », 59, 1985, pp. 213-227.

²³ It is difficult to translate πληθός: it can be translated as 'plurality', but it must be taken into account that in this context πληθός does not indicate a discrete plurality, made of units, but, rather, a principle of plurality; such principle, in conjunction with the principle of unity, can give place to discrete multiplicity.

opposite of the one and all the notions (other, dissimilar, and unequal) which are opposite to the species of the one (1004a17-20). In addition, the same science must investigate the notions which are said with reference to any of the aforementioned notions: for instance contrariety, which is a kind of difference, which is a kind of otherness (1004a20-22) (where otherness is the opposite of sameness).

The concluding remarks of the argument are worth quoting in full because they express the guidelines of a project which we shall take into account when assessing the possible candidates for being the place in which Aristotle actually accomplishes the enquiry here outlined. The passage reads as follows:

« **(i)** As a consequence, since the one is said in many ways, also these things will be said in many ways, and still it is the duty of one single science to have knowledge of them all: for it would be the duty of several sciences not if they are just said in many ways, but also if their accounts are neither said of one nor do they refer back to one. But since all these are referred back to the primary way in which they are said, as, for example, things which are said to be one are referred back to the primary one, we must maintain that things are in this same way also with respect to the same and other and the contraries: **(ii)** therefore, once one has distinguished in how many ways each is said, it must be explained how they refer to what is primary in each category²⁴: for some things will be called <in that way> in virtue of having that <which is called in that way primarily>, some other things in virtue of producing it, and some in other ways of this sort »²⁵.

The passage stresses two important guidelines for the structure of the enquiry into the one, the plurality and the pairs of opposite notions which can be referred back to either of them. I have divided the text into two sections in order to emphasize the two aspects. In the first part Aristotle refers to what he has already established in Γ, 1-2 for being: multivocity is compatible with the study by a single science of the subject signified by the multivocal term if the ways in which it is said can be referred back to one primary meaning. Aristotle now claims that this holds true also with reference to the one and the other dialectical notions, which are said in many ways. The passage makes an

²⁴ See n. 27.

²⁵ *Met.*, Γ, 2, 1004a22-31: ὅστ' ἐπειδὴ πολλαχῶς τὸ ἓν λέγεται, καὶ ταῦτα πολλαχῶς μὲν λεχθήσεται, ὁμῶς δὲ μιᾶς ἅπαντὰ ἐστι γνωρίζειν· οὐ γὰρ εἰ πολλαχῶς, ἐτέρας, ἀλλ' εἰ μήτε καθ' ἓν μήτε πρὸς ἓν οἱ λόγοι ἀναφέρονται. ἐπεὶ δὲ πάντα πρὸς τὸ πρῶτον ἀναφέρεται, οἷον ὅσα ἓν λέγεται πρὸς τὸ πρῶτον ἓν, ὡσαύτως φατέον καὶ περὶ ταυτοῦ καὶ ἐτέρου καὶ τῶν ἐναντίων ἔχειν· ὥστε διελόμενον ποσαχῶς λέγεται ἕκαστον, οὕτως ἀποδοτέον πρὸς τὸ πρῶτον ἓν ἐκάστη κατηγορία πῶς πρὸς ἐκεῖνο λέγεται· τὰ μὲν γὰρ τῷ ἔχειν ἐκεῖνο τὰ δὲ τῷ ποιεῖν τὰ δὲ κατ' ἄλλους λεχθήσεται τοιοῦτους τρόπους.

additional point: the multivocity of the other notions (presumably, those which Aristotle has just mentioned, i.e. 'the same', 'similar', 'equal' etc.) which 'belong together' with the one somehow depends on the multivocity of the one. This dependence is expressed by the first line of the quoted text: given that the one is said in many ways, also these other things will be said in many ways — but this fact shall not prevent them from being the object of a single science, if the ways in which they are said can be ordered with reference to a primary meaning. I shall refer to this aspect as **M**.

The second aspect I should like to stress (henceforth: **C**) lies in the second part of the text and concerns the way in which Aristotle expresses the fact that there are secondary ways in which things are called in a certain way and that these secondary ways refer back or depend on the primary way in which the expression at issue is used. Aristotle uses a formulation in terms of 'having', 'producing' — which, according to the *Categories*, are distinct categorial determinations²⁶. A few lines above Aristotle says that for each of the terms at issue, one must divide the ways in which it is said and explain in which relation they stand to the primary way with reference to each 'category'²⁷. I shall return to this formulation in Part III.

So much for the first argument. Turning now to the second argument (1004b27 ff.), the goal of the passage is similar to the goal of the first argument, but the conceptual tools are quite different. In the previous argument Aristotle has claimed that the study of the one and of the notions connected with the one pertains to the science of being *qua* being in virtue of the sameness in substratum of one and being. In the second argument Aristotle claims that the study of one and plurality pertains to the science of being *qua* being because (i) everyone admits that the principles of being and substance are the contraries, (ii) in each pair of contraries one term is a privation and (iii) all pairs of contraries can be brought back to (in a way: reduced to) the basic opposition of one and πλῆθος (or being and non-being) (1004b27-1005a2). If all these notions (one, plurality and the contraries referred back to them) are said in many different ways, the philosopher should order the ways in which they are said with respect to their primary

²⁶ Cf. *Cat.*, 1b26-27; 11b1-8.

²⁷ The use of κατηγορία at 1004a29 is controversial: the majority of modern interpreters take the word in the sense of 'predication' in general. The sense would be that for each of the over-mentioned general predicates (for each 'predication') the philosopher must investigate in how many ways it is said. I take κατηγορία to indicate categories strictly speaking because some reference to the fact that the general predicates at issue range over the different categories and assume different meanings in the different categories seems to be relevant for the interpretation of this passage as well as of the connected texts which I shall consider in the course of the paper.

meaning (1005a6-8). Furthermore, he should consider whether one and being exist as universal properties strictly speaking (which are said in the same way of all the particulars falling under them), whether they exist as separate substances or whether they are just said with respect to one or in some other way (1005a8-11).

Although the results of the two arguments are similar, their conceptual framework is slightly different. The main difference between the first (1003b19-1004a31) and the second (1004b27-1005a11) becomes evident by way of contrast. In particular, the second argument resorts to the tenet that the contraries are considered to be the principles of substance and being and that one and plurality or being and non-being are the basic principles to which all contraries can be referred back. In addition, the pair of basic principles is a pair of opposites which stand to each other in a relation of possession and privation. The reference to the basic pair of contraries as principles is absent from the first argument, which seems to be less ontologically committed and does not suggest any specific metaphysical value for the one and the other dialectical notions. The first argument is more neutral as to the metaphysical function of the notions it considers and resorts to a series of formal relations (like convertibility and the order of the ways in which something is said) in order to provide a relatively unified picture of why the one and all the other dialectical notions can be the object of the science of being *qua* being without undermining the unity of the science itself. Complementary to this difference in nature, the two arguments provide different indications about the basic structures along which the enquiry should be organized. The characteristic mark of the latter argument is that it sets the enquiry into the one and the related notions into the enquiry into the principles of all beings. In addition, in the final lines (1005a8-11) it mentions the problem of the ontological status of one and being.

As I mentioned, there is a problem as to whether and where the project of research outlined in these passages is actually carried out by Aristotle. Even if it is actually carried out, there is the additional problem of whether the reference to the enquiry into the principles of all beings is structurally relevant to make sense of the project (as it would appear from the second argument) or can be left aside (as it would appear from the first argument).

Before exploring the places in which Aristotle might have fulfilled this project, we should take a closer look at the notions explicitly included in the project. We have already seen some of them : one (ἓν), plurality (πλῆθος), same (ταυτόν), other (ἕτερον), different (διάφορον), contrary (ἐναντίον), similar (ὅμοιον), dissimilar (ἀνόμοιον), equal (ἴσον), unequal (ἄνισον). However, these are not the only notions mentioned in the passages at issue. In particular, in the course of the second argument, Aristotle refers to the fact that all the contraries can be brought under the opposition of one and πλῆθος, and

mentions some pairs of contraries which have been regarded as the principles of all beings. In particular, we find motion and rest (1004b29), odd and even, hot and cold, limit and unlimited, friendship and strife (1004b31-33). These are all pairs of contraries which have been invoked by different philosophers as principles of being. They can all be ordered under the main headings of one and *πλήθος*, which is the privation of the one, in such a way that for each pair one term (rest, odd, hot, limit, friendship) would fall under the one and the other term would fall under the *πλήθος*. Aristotle refers (1005a1) to a 'reduction' of the contraries to the primary opposition of one and many, which was the object of a lost treatise also mentioned at 1004a2. Aristotle refers to this treatise as the place in which he has explained and unfolded this ordering of the contraries under a primary opposition. The method he followed to do this was probably the method of the Pythagorean *systoichiai*, which consisted precisely in ordering the contraries into two columns, one including the positive and the other including the negative term of each pair²⁸. Is Aristotle implying that the science of being *qua* being should also deal with all the pairs of contraries which have been identified by other philosophers with the principles of being? Certainly not. The function of these examples is to show that different philosophers have invoked different pairs of contraries as the principles of being and that all of them can be referred back to the basic oppositions of one and *πλήθος* or being and non-being. It is precisely for this reason that one and *πλήθος* must be examined by the science of being *qua* being, i.e. as the primary pair of contraries, which are generally acknowledged as principles of being. This point may seem trivial but is not. In fact, a major discrepancy between Aristotle's account of *per se* accidents of being — which extend to all beings — and Syrianus's (and possibly Plato's) account of them in terms of μέγιστα γένη is precisely Aristotle's relegation of change and rest (κίνησις and στάσις) to a confined domain of being (i.e. to natural beings), whereas according to Plato's *Sophist*, 254d and to Syrianus change and rest extend to the whole domain of being²⁹.

There is another passage in which Aristotle seems genuinely to enlarge the set of notions which should be the object of the science of being *qua* being as long as they belong to substance. In *Met.*, Γ, 2, 1005a13-18³⁰ he explicitly adds

²⁸ Cf. *Met.*, A, 5, 986a22-26. On the scope and contents of the 'Selection of the contraries' see E. BERTI, *La « riduzione dei contrari » in Aristotele*, in *Zetesis. Bijdragen E. de Strycker, De nederlandse Boekhandel, Antwerpen - Utrecht 1973*, pp.122-146; repr. in *Id.*, *Studi aristotelici* cit., pp. 209-231; O. N. GUARIGLIA, *Quellenkritische und logische Untersuchungen zur Gegensatzlehre des Aristoteles*, Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim-New York 1978; C. ROSSITTO, *Opposizione e non contraddizione nella « Metafisica » di Aristotele*, in E. BERTI ed., *La contraddizione*, Città Nuova, Roma 1977, pp.43-69.

²⁹ SYRIANI in *Metaphysica commentaria*, ed. G. KROLL, Berlin 1902 (CAG VI.I), pp. 5.25 ff.; 6.28-34.

³⁰ Quoted on p. 161.

to the notions 'above named' a series of notions (prior, posterior, genus, species, whole, part) and the series can be enlarged to encompass other notions of a similar kind (see lin. 18: «and the other such things»). This seems to provide a further genuine extension of the scope of the science of being *qua* being.

In seeking for the place (if any) in which Aristotle develops the enquiry into such notions we must bear in mind all these qualifications. To summarize, what we can gather from Aristotle's text is that the project is meant to include the study of a set of very general notions, and at least some of them (the same, other, different, contrary, similar, dissimilar, equal, unequal) can be systematically considered as a sort of derivation from the basic opposition of one and $\pi\lambda\eta\theta\omicron\varsigma$, which are opposed as possession and privation. Each of these notions is said in many ways and such multivocity is supposed (at least in some cases) to derive from the multivocity of some other notion included in the group. Moreover, the different ways in which each of these notions is said can be referred back to a primary way or a primary meaning after which all the others are ordered.

I have tried to outline as clearly as possible a set of problems emerging from some explicit statements of Aristotle's together with the room for implementation left open by ambiguities or lacks of qualification in Aristotle's text. Before going back to Aristotle, I shall now turn to the way in which the different commentators of the *Metaphysics* have approached part or all of these problems.

PART II

GREEK, ARABIC AND LATIN COMMENTATORS ON PER SE ACCIDENTS OF BEING QUA BEING

II. 1 ALEXANDER OF APHRODISIAS

I shall start with the commentary of Alexander of Aphrodisias. Of the commentary on the *Metaphysics* handed down to us under his name only the first five books are Alexander's work, while the remaining nine books are attributed to the Byzantine scholar Michael of Ephesus (XI-XII century CE)³¹. I shall go back to Michael of Ephesus's commentary, but for now I shall

³¹ For the conclusive assessment of the identity of ps. Alexander see C. LUNA, *Trois études sur la tradition des commentaires anciens à la Métaphysique d'Aristote*, Brill, Leiden-Boston-Köln 2001, *Étude I*.

focus on Alexander's presentation of the fifth *aporia* and of the problems connected with it.

In commenting on the text corresponding to Ross's fifth *aporia* in B, 1, Alexander distinguishes three sections corresponding to **(1)**, **(2a)** and **(2b)** above³². With reference to **(1)** Alexander explains what Aristotle means by 'per se accidents' both by elucidating the locution itself and by giving some examples. In particular, Alexander distinguishes two kinds of 'things belonging per se' (καθ' αὐτὰ ὑπάρχοντα). In the first place and properly speaking (κυρίως) 'belonging per se' are the items included in the definitions (τὰ ἐν τοῖς ὀρίσμοις παραλαμβανόμενα). In the second place, by 'per se accidents' (τὰ καθ' αὐτὰ συμβεβηκότα)³³ Aristotle indicates some properties which are not separable (ἀχώριστα) from the subject to which they belong; they belong only to that subject (ἴδια) and are almost substance-like (ἐγγύς οὐσιώδη), to the point that sometimes they are included in definition-like statements³⁴, although they are not constituent parts of genuine definitions³⁵. After this distinction, Alexander gives some examples of per se accidents (i.e.: properties of the latter kind): (1) having the three angles equal to two right angles and (2) having the sum of two sides greater than the remaining side are per se accidents of the triangle; (3) being odd or even is a per se accident of number; (4) being one in so far as it is something determinate is a per se accident of each being (ἐκάστω τῶν ὄντων τὸ εἶναι ἐν καθὸ τὸδε τι ἔστι).

Of this list of examples the most interesting is the fourth. All of (1)-(3) are more or less direct quotations of Aristotle's examples of per se accidents or of propria of determinate beings, while (4) is a genuine insertion of Alexander, who is trying to explain what per se accidents of substance (and, as we shall see in a few lines, of being qua being) could look like.

The next important step is given by Alexander's discussion of **(2a)**. The passage is important because Alexander explains why the philosopher must deal with the very general notions which are usually dealt with by the dialecticians. Alexander gives a twofold pragmatic reason (177.2-6; 6-8)

³² Respectively: *ALEXANDRI APHRODISIENSIS in Aristotelis Metaphysica commentaria*, ed. M. HAYDUCK, Berlin 1891 (CAG I), 176.19-30; 176.24 - 177.14; 177.17-23. Madigan (*Alexander of Aphrodisias, On Aristotle's Metaphysics 2 & 3*, translated by W. E. DOODEY & A. MADIGAN, Duckworth, London 1992) p. 94 n. 29 and p. 95 n. 31 comments that 995b18 (= **(1)** above) becomes the fourth *aporia* considered in the full-length discussion in B, 2, while 995b20 ff. (= **(2)** above) does not figure in B, 2 ff.

³³ Alexander seems to use τὰ καθ' αὐτὰ ὑπάρχοντα as a more generic phrase, including the parts of the definition and per se accidents (τὰ καθ' αὐτὰ συμβεβηκότα).

³⁴ ALEX., *In met.*, 176.25-26: δι' ὧν εἰώθασιν καὶ οἱ δι' ὑπογραφῆς γινόμενοι τινῶν λόγοι ἀποδιδόσθαι.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 176.28-29.

together with an explanation of why such notions are relevant for first philosophy from the point of view of the contents (177.8-14). As for the pragmatic reasons, Alexander says that such notions as 'the same', 'other', 'similar', 'dissimilar' etc. must be included in the investigations of first philosophy because they are actually used by Aristotle himself in the formulation of the problems he tackles. For instance, he enquires whether « all substances are the same as each other or are, rather, other <than each other> » (177, 3-7). In this sense Aristotle resorts to 'the same', which is said precisely with reference to substances³⁶. More generally — Alexander adds — all the dialectical notions mentioned by Aristotle are « common tools for those who carry out demonstrations » (κοινὰ γὰρ ταῦτα ὄργανα τοῖς ἀποδεικνύουσι)³⁷. With reference to the contents of the enquiry into such notions, Alexander specifies that the characteristic mark of the philosophical investigation about them is that this is not a merely 'formal' or 'logical' investigation (οὐ γὰρ λογικὴ ἢ πραγματεία)³⁸ of these notions considered in themselves (οὐ γὰρ δι' αὐτὰ περὶ τούτων διαλαμβάνει)³⁹. Rather, these notions concern first philosophy and the enquiry into being *qua* being because « the study about the things which belong to being in general » (περὶ τῶν κοινῶς τῷ ὄντι ὑπαρχόντων τὴν θεωρίαν)⁴⁰ pertains to such an enquiry. In this way, Alexander seems to claim that dialectical notions coincide with what belongs to being in general and, therefore, with the *per se* accidents of being.

Finally, Alexander comments on **(2b)**, explaining that in the case of the aforementioned notions the philosopher must consider not only what they are but also their *per se* accidents. For instance, the philosopher must investigate what contrariety is and whether there is only one contrary to one notion.

Alexander's comments on the first presentation of the fifth *aporia* in B, 1 are interesting, but do not say explicitly whether the *per se* accidents of substance in **(1)** are the same as the properties belonging to being in general mentioned in his comments on **(2a)**. Nor does he say anything more explicit in his comments on the extended presentation of **(1)** in B, 2. In particular he does not mention the fact that not all three aspects of B, 1 are developed in B, 2⁴¹. Also in other passages, where he mentions one or more aspects of the fifth *aporia* in B, 1, Alexander does not put any special effort into explaining

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 177.4-7 : καὶ γὰρ τῷ ταυτῷ ὅπερ ἐπ' οὐσιῶν λέγεται χρῆται. ζητεῖ γοῦν εἰ αἱ αὐταὶ εἰσι πᾶσαι αἱ οὐσίαι ἀλλήλαις ἢ οὐ ἀλλ' ἕτεραι.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 177.7-8.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 177.9-10.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 177.10-11.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 177.13.

⁴¹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 194-195 ad 997a25 ff.

whether he takes the fifth *aporia* as one single *aporia*, articulated in three aspects in B, 1 and then contracted in B, 2, or whether he takes the points in B, 1 to be more or less significantly different⁴². This very fact could be taken as indirect evidence that Alexander does not see the distinction in B, 1 as particularly relevant, but there is more explicit evidence to the effect that in fact he does regard the *per se* accidents of substance as identical with the *per se* accidents of being *qua* being and that he identifies at least part of the *per se* accidents of being *qua* being with the 'things belonging to being in general', which are expressed by the dialectical notions. Such evidence can be mainly found in Alexander's comments on the passages in *Met.*, Γ in which Aristotle solves the fifth *aporia* taking into account all three points distinguished in B, 1.

In *Met.*, Γ, 2 Aristotle shows that the science of being *qua* being must deal with the dialectical notions by showing that the positive notions of the group ('the same', 'similar', 'equal' etc.) are 'species' (εἶδη) of the one, that one and being are somehow the same in substratum and that, therefore, a science dealing with being must deal with the one and its 'species' as well. In addition, since one and the same science must deal with the opposites, the science of being must deal with the dialectical notions opposite to the 'positive' notions ('other', 'dissimilar', 'unequal' etc.). Each of these notions is said in many ways, all ordered πρὸς ἓν and the science of being *qua* being must analyse each of them by disentangling the ways in which it is said and by ordering them with respect to the primary way in which each derivative way is said. In discussing these aspects of Aristotle's account, Alexander progressively specifies that each of such notions is said with reference to a primary meaning, which is the way in which they are said of substance for all of them⁴³. As 'being' is said in many ways, all depending on the sense in which substance is being, so for all these other predicates the ways in which they are said of other beings depend on the primary sense in which they are said of substance. In virtue of being said of substance, they extend to all beings in general. In this sense they do not belong to any determinate being in particular, but belong *per se* to being *qua* being (τῷ ὄντι ἂν ἢ ὄν ὑπάρχοι καθ' αὐτό)⁴⁴. Since the science of being *qua* being deals not only with being (and in particular: with substance) but also with the accidents of being *qua* being (and, in particular, with the *per se* accidents of substance), it must deal with the notions usually dealt with by the dialecticians, which coincide with the *per se* accidents of being and substance⁴⁵. What distinguishes the approach of the

⁴² Cf. *ibid.*, 246.16 and 22; 250.5; 257.10-16.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 251.10 ff.; 255.9-11; 255.25-31; 255.35 - 256.18; 263.6-8; 264.17-23.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 258.20-21.

⁴⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 258.20-24; 33-39; 259.19-22.

dialectician from the approach of the philosopher is precisely that the philosopher does not deal with them for their own sake, but always with reference to substance and as long as they belong to substance. This last remark echoes Alexander's presentation of **(2a)** in B, 1 and makes the connection with the fifth *aporia* quite evident⁴⁶.

The last point I would like to stress concerning Alexander's approach is his explicit indication as to where the analysis of the dialectical notions and of the *per se* accidents of being *qua* being is actually carried out. He does not say anything in the commentaries on *Met.*, B and Γ. In the commentary on Γ, 2 he mentions only twice the places in which Aristotle explains how all the contraries can be 'reduced' to the opposition of one and many. These places are the lost '*Selection of the contraries*' (ἐκλογὴ τῶν ἐναντίων)⁴⁷, also mentioned by Aristotle himself, and the second book of the (for us fragmentary) *περὶ ἀγαθοῦ*. With reference to this second work, Alexander once says that the selection of the contraries is also mentioned in the second book of the *περὶ ἀγαθοῦ* (250.17-20), while another time he says that the reduction of the contraries to one and πλῆθος is shown in the second book of the *περὶ ἀγαθοῦ* (262.18-19 : τὰ ἐν τῷ Β περὶ τὰ ἀγαθοῦ δεδειγμένα). However, at the beginning of his commentary on *Met.*, Δ Alexander clearly connects the presentation of the πολλαχῶς λεγόμενα in Δ with the project, outlined in Γ, 2, of a philosophical analysis of the dialectical notions. Alexander's prologue to Δ is interesting for different reasons, among which Alexander's defence of Δ as a genuine piece of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. He claims that the attribution to Aristotle of Δ can be proved on the basis of linguistic and stylistic considerations (ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως) as well as on the basis of content : in particular, Δ would provide the philosophical analysis of the dialectical notions⁴⁸ promised in Γ, 2. These are the notions used by all the sciences⁴⁹ ; they designate what belongs to being *qua* being⁵⁰ or to being in general (κοινῶς)⁵¹ and *per se*⁵².

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 258.33-39 ; cf. 176.9-13. A further point of contact with B, 1 can be found in the remarks about the pragmatic significance of such notions, also considered in **(2a)** above : see the example at 257.24-25 : πότερον ταῦτόν ἐστιν ἡ οὐσία ἀπλῶς λαμβανομένη καὶ μετὰ τινος συμβεβηκότος ἢ ἕτερον.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 250.17-20 ; 252.3-16.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 244.14-20. Alexander's references to *Met.*, Γ are spelled out also by Dooley (*Alexander of Aphrodisias. On Aristotle's Metaphysics 5*, transl. by W. E. DOOLEY, Duckworth, London 1993), pp. 4-5. H. Bonitz (*Commentarius in Aristotelis Metaphysicam*, Bonn 1849, repr. Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim-Zuerich-New York 1992, pp. 19-20) argues against Alexander's claims that *Met.*, Δ is in place between *Met.*, Γ and E in virtue of its structure and contents.

⁴⁹ ALEX., *In met.*, 244.6-7.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 244.10.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 244.22 ; 245.19-20.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 345.10-11.

II. 2 SYRIANUS

Syrianus explicitly sets his commentary on the *Metaphysics* against the background of Alexander's commentary. In particular, Alexander is regarded as the source of the correct and standard literal interpretation of Aristotle's text, to which not much can be added. Syrianus's additions are therefore doctrinal points presented in the form of a dialogue with Aristotle from the perspective of a Platonic philosopher. Syrianus's commentary as we have it covers books B, Γ, M and N. In introducing *Met.*, B he says that he means not only to present the literal contents of the *aporiai* (work already accomplished by Alexander), but also and primarily to indicate on which side of the *aporia* the truth eventually lies and how Platonic philosophers should deal with Aristotle's and similar attacks to Pythagorean and Platonic doctrines. The result is that the commentary on *Met.*, B offers a sort of *compendium* of Syrianus's views on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* inscribed in the structure of *Met.*, B.

One distinctive feature of Syrianus's commentary on *Met.*, B is his very careful enumeration of the *aporiai* in the list in B, 1 as well as in the expanded discussion in the rest of the book⁵³. In fact, he registers any variation in order as well as in content. In line with this general attitude, Syrianus considers (Ross's) fifth *aporia* as two distinct *aporiai*, corresponding to part **(1)** and **(2)**, which he counts, respectively, as the fifth and the sixth *aporia* in B, 1. Furthermore, he emphasizes that the sixth *aporia* (**(2)** above) is not discussed any further in B⁵⁴. Nevertheless, the omission is not seen as problematic. On the contrary, according to Syrianus the omission in the full-length discussion is partly due to the clear answer we find to it in *Met.*, Γ and partly due to the obviousness of the matter: it is clear that the dialectical notions must be investigated by first philosophy because it is clear that they belong to being *per se*. This is made obvious by the fact that they range over all beings, from intelligible beings through the whole structure of the universe all the way down to sensible beings⁵⁵. Syrianus's argument on this point is concise, but

⁵³ The only other parallel of a thorough and explicit enumeration of the *aporiai* in *Met.*, B is ps. Philoponus's commentary (see n. 146, p. 201).

⁵⁴ SYR., *In met.*, 29.13-22; see also 53.15-21.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.8 - 6.34 ad 995b20; for the relevance of this passage for the development of Proclus's and Neoplatonic metaphysics thereafter, see C. LUNA, *La doctrine des Principes: Syrianus comme source textuelle et doctrinale de Proclus. 2^e partie: Analyse des Textes*, in A. P. SEGONDS, C. STEEL eds., *Proclus et la théologie Platonicienne*, Leuven University Press - Les Belles Lettres, Leuven - Paris 2000, pp. 227-278, in particular pp. 259-262; cf. also LUNA, *Trois Etudes cit.*, pp. 149-151 on the aspects of Syrianus's argument taken over by Asclepius (143.8-144.14) and on the dependence of Asclepius on Syrianus. More generally, on the role of Syrianus's commentary for the development of Proclus's doctrine of principles, see C. D'ANCONA, *La doctrine des Principes: Syrianus comme source textuelle et doctrinale de Proclus. 1^{ère} partie: Histoire du problème*, in SEGONDS, STEEL eds., *Proclus et la théologie cit.*, pp. 189-225.

significant : he shows that these properties permeate each level of being and in this way he bridges the gap between dialectical notions and *per se* accidents of being. The crucial notion in Syrianus's argument is that of διὰ πάντων τῶν ὄντων πεφοιτηκέναι⁵⁶, which will be taken over by Asclepius in his explanation of the same point. A further relevant aspect of Syrianus's commentary on this point is that the account of how sameness (ταυτότης) and difference (έτερότης), similarity (όμοιότης) and dissimilarity (άνομοιότης) etc. permeate the whole of being is inscribed in the cosmological account of the *Timaeus* and connected with the sense in which all beings participate in the μέγιστα γένη in the *Sophist* and in the primary εἶδη of the *Parmenides*⁵⁷. I shall go back to the reference to Plato's dialogues in the course of Part III.

With reference to (1) (Syrianus's fifth *aporia*) Syrianus says⁵⁸ that philosophical wisdom (σοφία) investigates both substance and its *per se* accidents. However, Syrianus introduces a distinction as to the way in which *per se* accidents can be properly related to the different kinds of substance. He distinguishes the cases of simple substances, intermediate substances or universal forms, and individual material substances. Simple intelligible substances⁵⁹ have no accidents and are not susceptible to demonstration and definition ; intermediate substances⁶⁰ or universal forms⁶¹ are the appropriate subjects of *per se* accidents and of demonstration ; finally, material forms and individual substances are the subjects of transient accidents strictly speaking⁶² and cannot be the object of demonstration. This qualification on

⁵⁶ See in particular SYR., *In met.*, 5.12-24 : ὅτι δὲ τὰ νῦν εἰς θεωρίαν ἐκκείμενα μάλιστα ἂν δόξειε τῷ ὄντι καθ' αὐτὸ ὑπάρχειν, δηλοῖ τὸ διὰ πάντων αὐτὰ πεφοιτηκέναι τῶν ὄντων· ἡ γὰρ ταυτότης καὶ ἡ ἑτερότης καὶ ἡ ὁμοιότης καὶ ἡ ἀνομοιότης καὶ ὅσα νυνὶ προὔτεινεν οὐκ ἓν τοῖσδε μὲν ἐνορῶνται τῶν ὄντων ἄλλων δὲ τινῶν ἀποστατοῦσιν, ἀλλ' ἄνωθεν ἀπὸ τῶν νοητῶν ἀρξάμεναι καὶ πᾶν τὸ νοητὸν καὶ θεῖον διακοσμήσασαι διὰ τῆς ψυχικῆς οὐσίας ἐπὶ τὴν φύσιν τῶν ὄλων καὶ τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γένεσιν καταντήσασαι ταυτότητος μὲν καὶ ἰσότητος καὶ ὁμοιότητος <παρὰ> τῆς τοῦ ἐνόσ παναγάθου φύσεως τοῖς οὐσί μεταδεδώκασιν· ἑτερότητος δὲ καὶ ἀνομοιότητος καὶ ἀνισότητος ἐναντιώσεις τε καὶ <τὸ> πρότερόν τε καὶ ὕστερον καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα σύμπαντα παρὰ τῆς γονιμωτάτης καὶ ἀνεκλείπτου τῶν πάντων αἰτίας τῆς ἀπειροδυνάμου δυάδος ταῖς τε ἀοράτοις οὐσίαις καὶ ταῖς αἰσθηταῖς κεχορηγήκασιν [...].

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.14 - 6.1. The *Sophist* is explicitly mentioned at 5.27, the *Parmenides* at 5.31. Syrianus's account of the *per se* accidents of being and the explicit connection he establishes between these texts and Plato's *Parmenides* will be of great importance for Proclus's account of the attributes of the One in his commentary on the *Parmenides*. On this aspect see in particular L. VAN CAMPE, *Syrianus and Proclus on the attributes of the One in Plato's Parmenides*, in A. LONGO ed., *Syrianus et la Métaphysique de l'antiquité tardive*, Bibliopolis, Napoli 2009, pp. 247-280.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.21 - 5.7.

⁵⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 4.29-30 : ἐν ταῖς ἀπλουστάταις καὶ κυρίως νοηταῖς οὐσίαις.

⁶⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 4.33 : ἐν ταῖς μέσαις οὐσίαις.

⁶¹ Cf., *ibid.* 4.37 : τοῖς καθόλου λόγοις.

⁶² Cf. *ibid.*, 5.3 : τὰ κυρίως συμβεβηκότα.

the way in which different kinds of substance relate to accidents will be inherited by Asclepius⁶³.

The Platonic perspective in which Syrianus reads Aristotle's text is obviously not surprising. What is rather unexpected is that, in the same passage in which he discusses (2), Syrianus does not follow Alexander in seeing *Met.*, Δ as the place in which Aristotle deals with the dialectical notions and the *per se* accidents of being *qua* being. Rather, Syrianus regards *Met.*, I (the tenth book of the *Metaphysics*) as containing Aristotle's philosophical and scientific discussion of the notions which dialecticians consider only with reference to opinions⁶⁴. Syrianus's opinion is very important not only because it introduces a new candidate for Aristotle's actual completion of the project outlined in *Met.*, Γ, 2, but also because, by mentioning *Met.*, I in connection with the enquiry into the μέγιστα γένη of the *Sophist* and the primary εἶδη of the *Parmenides*, it inscribes it in a precise philosophical tradition, as a 'Platonic' book, in the sense of a book dealing with the most fundamental notions of Platonic metaphysics.

For the sake of completeness, I mention here *en-passant* that Syrianus does not take from Alexander the mention of the second book *περὶ ἀγαθοῦ* in connection with Aristotle's reference to the *Selection of the contraries*⁶⁵. I shall return to this point and its possible significance in Part III.

II. 3 ASCLEPIUS

Asclepius's commentary on *Met.*, A-Z is the transcription ἀπὸ φωνῆς of a course of lectures by Ammonius, Asclepius's teacher⁶⁶. Apart from Ammonius, Asclepius's work draws on both Syrianus's and Alexander's commentaries, although in different measure and form⁶⁷. The respective contributions of

⁶³ ASCLEPII in *Aristotelis Metaphysicorum libros A-Z commentaria*, ed. M. HEYDUCK, Berlin 1888 (CAG VI.2), 142.19-143.5. On the correspondences between Syrianus's and Asclepius's commentaries on this point cf. LUNA, *Trois études* cit., pp. 147-149.

⁶⁴ SYR., *In met.*, 6.6-9; cf. 29.19-20. For this pejorative sense of 'dialectician', which obviously does not designate the Platonic philosopher, but a sort of technician of language and argument cf. LONGO, *Siriano e i principi* cit., pp. 225 ff.

⁶⁵ On the absence of any reference to the *περὶ ἀγαθοῦ* in Syrianus's commentary, cf. LUNA, *Trois études* cit., p. 42.

⁶⁶ On the evidence for this description of Asclepius's commentary see LUNA, *Trois études* cit., pp. 99 ff. and p. 108, n. 35.

⁶⁷ See LUNA, *Trois études* cit., pp. 99 ff. In particular, Asclepius seems to have used a written copy of Alexander's commentary (from which he quotes long portions of text in order to provide the literal interpretation of Aristotle's text) and of Syrianus's commentary (from which he takes the style of the commentary as a sort of doctrinal dialogue with Aristotle together with more or less crucial doctrinal points). On Syrianus's position between Alexander and Asclepius see also C. LUNA, *Syrianus dans la tradition exégétique de la Métaphysique d'Aristote. I. Syrianus entre Alexandre d'Aphrodise et Asclépius*, in M. O. GOULET-CAZÉ ed., *Le commentaire entre tradition et innovation*, Vrin, Paris 2000, pp. 301-309.

Alexander, Syrianus, Ammonius and Asclepius himself in what we read as Asclepius's commentary on the *Metaphysics* are difficult to disentangle, but also quite interesting in assessing how the problem of the enquiry into the *per se* accidents of substance and being evolves in the three Greek commentaries.

Asclepius's commentary on the different sections of (Ross's) fifth *aporia* in B, 1 is highly structured. But, although Asclepius spends some time spelling out what, according to him, the problems at issue are, he does not say much on the connection between the points of the *aporia*. At first, he seems to take **(1)** and **(2)** as comparatively independent questions⁶⁸, but at the end of the discussion of *Met.*, Γ, 2 and of the sense in which the enquiry into *per se* accidents of being belongs to first philosophy, he mentions all three points (**(1)**, **(2a)**, **(2b)**) as if they were one single *aporia*⁶⁹. From Syrianus (29.13-20) he takes the explanation of why Aristotle does not discuss dialectical notions any further in *Met.*, B after mentioning them in **(2)**: Aristotle clearly answers the *aporia* in *Met.*, Γ⁷⁰. More generally, Asclepius's account of **(1)** and **(2)** relies heavily on Syrianus's account, although he seems to be influenced by Alexander on the identification of the place in which Aristotle actually carries out the enquiry outlined in Γ, 2. I shall consider these aspects separately.

With reference to **(1)**, Asclepius (142.19 ff.) distinguishes the ways in which accidents can be attributed to substances and explains what the primary subjects of *per se* accidents are. In the first place, primary substances, being simple *energeiai*, do not have accidents strictly speaking and are only 'touched' through a simple 'throwing' (ἐπιβολῆ) or intuition⁷¹ of the intellect (142.21-24); they are superior to demonstration and definition. As Syrianus has already maintained, only universals (142.24-26) have *per se* accidents (for instance, having the sum of the internal angles equal to two right angles is an accident *per se* of the universal triangle). Finally, particulars are characterized by transient accidents strictly speaking and, even if we can say that particulars are characterized by *per se* accidents, the primary subjects of *per se* accidents are universals (142.26-27)⁷². This threefold distinction clearly derives from Syrianus.

⁶⁸ ASCL., *In met.*, 143.8 introduces **(2)** with the following words: πάλιν ἐντεῦθεν ἐτέραν ἀπορίαν ἐπάγει τοιαύτην. In this as in other cases (cf., for instance, 142. 2) ἐντεῦθεν does not seem to have a causal value, i.e. it does not seem to underline logical connection with the preceding *aporia*. Rather, it seems to have a temporal connotation, alluding to the succession of the *aporiai* analyzed. On the other hand, ἐτέραν ἀπορία seems to stress a neat separation of **(2)** from **(1)**.

⁶⁹ 242.2-6: λύεται τῶν ἀποριῶν μία [...].

⁷⁰ ASCL., *In met.*, 173.11-16.

⁷¹ On the use of this terminology see LUNA, *Trois études* cit., pp. 148-149.

⁷² It is not completely clear to me whether Asclepius (and Syrianus before him) distinguishes two kinds of accidents — *per se* (τὰ καθ' αὐτὸ συμβεβηκότα) and 'accidental' accidents (also indicated by the Greek συμβεβηκότα), which are those properties that a subject can have or lack, acquire or lose without ceasing to be the being it is — or two ways in which the same kind of

With reference to **(2)**, Asclepius distinguishes clearly **(2a)** and **(2b)**. In the first place, he explains that it is the duty of first philosophy to enquire into such notions as sameness, otherness, similarity etc. because they range over all being (143.16 : διὰ πάντων τῶν ὄντων διαπεφοιτήκασιν). As in Syrianus, this aspect is inscribed in the wake of Plato's enquiry into the μέγιστα γένη in *Soph.*, 254d ff.⁷³. In addition, Asclepius regards Aristotle's treatment of the matter in these passages as in keeping with Aristotle's activity 'as first philosopher' in the *Categories*⁷⁴ : in the *Categories* Aristotle analyses the whole domain of being, which is the domain of first philosophy.

The way in which first philosophy deals with these notions contrasts with the way in which sameness and otherness are treated in the *Topics* by Aristotle himself: first philosophy deals with the dialectical notions «truly and demonstratively» (ἀληθινῶς καὶ ἀποδεικτικῶς), while dialectic deals with them only on the basis of reputable opinions (ἐνδόξως)⁷⁵. One interesting point is Asclepius's consideration (following Alexander's comments) that Aristotle adds the enquiry into these notions to the duties of first philosophy for 'pragmatic' reasons, namely

« because he himself makes use of them in what he demonstrates in this enquiry : for he makes use of the same, as it is said of substances, and asks whether all substances are the same or different from each other; but in demonstrations he must also make use of all the other notions he listed: for these are common instruments (κοινὰ ὄργανα) for those who demonstrate things »⁷⁶.

accident belongs to ontologically different subjects. According to Aristotle, the second kind of accident is typically ascribed to particulars and only derivatively to universals (cf. ARIST., *Met.*, Γ, 6, 1015b28-32). It should be noted that in Aristotle's writings it is not always clear whether by συμβεβηκός Aristotle refers to a) properties which belong to a subject, without further qualification ; b) *per se* accidents ; c) 'accidental' accidents. The ambiguity between a) and c) is particularly striking in the *Topics*, where Aristotle oscillates between the notion of accident strictly speaking (as in *Top.*, A, 5, 102b4-9) and the notion of unqualified predication (as in the whole *Top.*, B). The latter notion of unqualified predication seems to develop quite naturally into the notion of ὑπάρχειν, which indicates the relation of predicate and subject in the *Analytics*. On these issues see J. BRUNSCHWIG, *Aristote. Topiques Livres I-IV, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 2009*, pp. LIV-LV.

⁷³ ASCL., *In met.*, 143.18-26.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 143.26-31 ; cf. 235.27-29.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 143.31-38 ; the question on the relation between the account in the *Topics* and that in the *Metaphysics* is attributed to a teacher of medicine, also called Asclepius, who used to discuss doctrinal points with Asclepius the commentator under the guidance of their common teacher Ammonius. Cf. LUNA, *Trois études cit.*, pp. 100-101.

⁷⁶ ASCL., *In met.*, 144.1-6 : ἐπειδὴ καὶ αὐτὸς χρῆται αὐτοῖς ἐν τοῖς ἀποδεικνυμένοις ὑπ' αὐτοῦ κατὰ τήνδε τὴν παραγματείαν. καὶ γὰρ τῷ ταύτῳ, ὅπερ ἐπὶ οὐσιῶν λέγεται, χρῆται· ζητεῖ οὖν εἰ αἱ αὐταὶ εἰσι πᾶσαι αἱ οὐσαὶ ἀλλήλαις ἢ οὐ, ἀλλ' ἕτεραι· ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις οἷς κατέλεξε πᾶσιν ἐν ταῖς δεῖξεσιν ἀναγκαῖον αὐτῷ προσχρῆσθαι· κοινὰ γὰρ ταῦτα ὄργανα τοῖς ἀποδεικνύουσι.

(2b) is read as an *aporia* about the very determination of the *per se* accidents of dialectical notions. Asclepius suggests some examples: apart from Aristotle's example, of whether there is only one contrary of a determinate notion, we find the problem of whether it is possible that the contraries are brought back to different genera. In particular, Asclepius discusses whether good and bad are contraries which can be ordered under one and the same genus (i.e. under the genus of quality)⁷⁷. I shall go back to the relevance of this example in Part III.

The problem of the relation between *per se* accidents of substances and *per se* accidents of being is not explicitly addressed until *Met.*, Γ. At the very beginning of the commentary on *Met.*, Γ Asclepius provides an overview of the topics of the book. In particular (222.16-19) Asclepius anticipates that Aristotle solves the methodological *aporai* raised in B by showing that the first philosopher must deal with all kinds of substance, with their causes and «with their *per se* accidents; for example, as it may happen, <he has to enquire> into similarity and dissimilarity and otherness and sameness (οἶον, εἰ τύχοι, περὶ ὁμοιότητος καὶ ἀνομοιότητος καὶ ἑτερότητος καὶ ταυτότητος)». This formulation is not decisive as to the identification (or lack of identification) of *per se* accidents of substances with the dialectical notions. But Asclepius shows how the two aspects come to be the same (I shall presently come back to the way in which he does this) and, at the end of the relevant section (242.16-24) we read that, since the same, other, similar, dissimilar, equal, unequal etc. are affections (πάθη) of the one *qua* one and of being *qua* being «it is evident that, since there are *per se* affections of being, it is also the duty of that first philosophy to have knowledge of substances themselves and of their accidents, the same and other and all others» (φανερὸν ὡς ὅτι τοῦ ὄντος ὑπάρχουσι πάθη καθ' αὐτά, καὶ ἐκείνης τῆς πρώτης φιλοσοφίας ἐστὶν ἔργον γνωρίσαι καὶ τὰς οὐσίας αὐτὰς καὶ τὰ συμβεβηκότα αὐτοῖς, ταῦτόν καὶ ἕτερον καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα). This is clearly a mere paraphrase of Aristotle's text, but the steps through which Aristotle shows that the first philosopher must deal with *per se* accidents of things (τὰ καθ' αὐτὸ ὑπάρχοντα τοῖς πράγμασιν) is spelled out at 233.5 ff. After the general presentation of the overall nature of the argument, which (as in Syrianus) amounts to showing that all beings causally depend on the intelligible unity and on the intelligible plurality, from which they derive their properties, Asclepius comes to the details of his interpretation. In the first place he shows that first philosophy is concerned not only with substance, but, more generally, with the whole of being *qua* being (καθόλου περὶ παντός τοῦ ὄντος ἢ ὄν)⁷⁸: every science is of the whole genus of its object, and being

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 144.26-34.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 234.29.

qua being is a sort of genus including all beings. In fact, τὸ ὄντως ὄν is said of all beings ἀφ' ἐνός καὶ πρὸς ἕν. Therefore, the science of substance is the science of all beings as grammar is the science of articulated voice in general (not just of high-pitched voice).

In what follows (236.8 ff.), Asclepius explains Aristotle's arguments to the effect that one and being are the same in substratum: they are said of all and only the same things, which — in this case — are all things. It follows that the species or forms of the one, which are same, similar, equal, are also species or forms of being, and the philosopher must inquire into what they are (in response to **(2a)**⁷⁹). All things are one and being in different ways, which can be ordered with reference to substance. In the same way, all other predications can be ordered with reference to the primacy of substance over other beings. Finally, Asclepius shows that:

« Again, similarly other things are called 'being' in virtue of being affections of substance, others in virtue of being dispositions. And as each of them receives being, in the same way <each of them> receives the one and each of those <properties which fall> under the one. And having shown how these things are said from one and with reference to one, it follows that it is the duty of the same science to investigate these things, which have being from substance, and to have knowledge of substance »⁸⁰.

From this synthesis of Asclepius's arguments it should be possible to see how he reworks Alexander's argument for the primacy of substance to explain the identification of *per se* accidents of substance with *per se* accidents of being, along with Syrianus's argument on the identification of *per se* accidents of being and dialectical notions.

With regard to the identification of the place in which Aristotle would carry out the project of enquiry into the dialectical notions, Asclepius seems to be closer to Alexander than to Syrianus. In the course of his analysis of Γ, 2 he never mentions Δ or Ι, but at the beginning of his commentary on Δ he connects this part of Aristotle's enquiry to *Met.*, Γ, 3 ff. In the second part of Γ Aristotle discusses the most general principles, common to all sciences (in particular, the principle of non-contradiction). Now he turns to the other 'common properties' (κοινὰ ἰδιότητες), which are used by all the particular sciences⁸¹ and shows that,

⁷⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 236.31-237.4.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 241.32-36: ὁμοίως πάλιν ἄλλα ὄντα λέγεται τῷ πάθῃ τῆς οὐσίας εἶναι, καὶ ἄλλα τῷ σχέσει. ὡς δὲ τὸ ὄν ἀναδέχεται ἕκαστον αὐτῶν, οὕτως καὶ τὸ ἐν καὶ τῶν ὑπὸ τὸ ἐν ἕκαστον. δείξας δὲ πῶς ἀφ' ἐνός ἐστι καὶ πρὸς ἕν ταῦτα λεγόμενα, ἐπιφέρει τὸ τῆς αὐτῆς εἶναι ἐπιστήμης περὶ τε τούτων <ἀ> ἀπὸ τῆς οὐσίας τὸ εἶναι ἔχει καὶ περὶ τῆς οὐσίας ἔχειν ἐπιστήμην.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 303.1-5.

although they are spoken of in many different ways, they are all said with reference to one. These are the notion of principle (ἀρχή), cause (αἴτιον), element (στοιχεῖον), nature (φύσις). That these notions are regarded as a homogeneous group, in consideration of the role they have in the structure of all sciences, is made clear by the observations by which they are respectively introduced and linked together⁸². However, the following chapters on the meanings of 'one', 'substance', 'being', 'the same' etc. are not explicitly set in the frame of a determinate project. Each πολλαχῶς λεγόμενον is introduced by means of formulary expressions ('having accomplished the discussion about... he then talks about...')⁸³ marking the move from one entry to the other. Taking this into account, it seems that Asclepius does not fully develop the idea that *Met.*, Δ provides the fulfilment of a precise and comparatively well-structured project such as the one outlined in *Met.*, Γ, 2, but he clearly relies on Alexander's idea that the notions analysed in *Met.*, Δ are used by all the sciences.

Given that Asclepius's commentary is constantly influenced also by Syrianus's commentary, one might then wonder whether Asclepius at all considers Syrianus's suggestion as to the role of *Met.*, I. We must take into account that Asclepius's commentary covers the first seven books of the *Metaphysics*, so we do not know what he could have had to say about the place and role of *Met.*, I itself. However, there are some further elements to consider, which on the one hand confirm Asclepius's silence on *Met.*, I but on the other hand introduce some interesting new textual references.

In fact, in the passages in which he spells out **(2b)**, Asclepius qualifies the *per se* accidents of the properties extending to all beings and on these occasions he mentions a series of aspects which cannot be found in Aristotle's text, at least not in the passage he is commenting upon. Some of the examples can be traced back to Aristotle himself or to other commentators, but others seem to be original to Asclepius (or Ammonius).

The first of these passages is 144.18-19, where Asclepius introduces two examples of *per se* accidents of the dialectical notions. The first example is Aristotle's: whether each contrary has only one contrary. The second example, though, cannot be found in Aristotle's text: whether it is possible to bring the

⁸² Cf. the words introducing the ways in which 'nature' is said at 308.15-18: εἰρηκῶς περὶ ἀρχῶν καὶ αἰτίων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν εἰρημένων ὑπ' αὐτῶν, ἅτινα ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐπιστήμαις θεωροῦνται, ἐντεῦθεν λέγει ἡμῖν καὶ περὶ ἐτέρων τινῶν, περὶ ἃ πάσαι αἰ ἐπιστήμαι καταγίνονται, καὶ ταῦτα δὲ ὑπάρχουσιν ὡς τὰ ἀφ' ἐνός καὶ πρὸς ἓν, οἷον περὶ φύσεως.

⁸³ See, for example, *ibid.*, 312.22-23: ἐντεῦθεν περὶ τοῦ ἀναγκαίου ἡμῖν διαλέγεται πληρώσας τὸν περὶ τῆς φύσεως λόγον [...]; or *ibid.*, 313.26: πληρώσας τὸν περὶ τοῦ ἀναγκαίου λόγον ἐντεῦθεν λέγει περὶ τοῦ ἐνός [...]. and similarly for the following chapters. On the recurrence of this locution in Asclepius's commentary see LUNA, *Trois études cit.*, p. 106, n. 30; pp. 215-217.

contraries under different genera⁸⁴. Further down (145.3-4) we find another example of a *per se* accident of contrariety, namely being such as to have intermediates (τὸ ἔμμεσον) or being such as to have no intermediate (τὸ ἄμεσον). The same example is in Alexander's commentary. But the most significant passage is the θεωρία⁸⁵ on 1003b19 ff. Having said that first philosophy must deal with all the dialectical notions which can be brought under the opposition of one and plurality⁸⁶, Asclepius pursues the enquiry into the contraries and makes it clear that first philosophy must show that to each contrary only one single contrary is opposed (as contrary) (ὅτι ἐν ἐνὶ ἀντίκειται), that the opposites are said in four different ways (ὅτι τετραχῶς τὰ ἀντικείμενα λέγεται), that some opposites are contraries, namely those which are the most distant from each other (ποῖά ἐστιν ἐναντία, τὰ πλεῖστον ἀλλήλων διεστηκότα), and that the contraries are said in two different ways (ὅτι διχῶς λέγονται τὰ ἐναντία), namely as participating and as participated contraries respectively (τὰ μὲν ὡς μετέχοντα, τὰ δὲ ὡς μετεχόμενα)⁸⁷. For this last distinction Asclepius refers to Plato, *Phaed.*, 103b.

The interesting fact is that the aspects mentioned by Asclepius as concerning the enquiry on the contraries and their accidents *per se* are actually tackled by Aristotle in *Met.*, I as well. The definitions and the features of the contraries are dealt with in I, 4; the intermediates of contraries are defined in I, 7; the relation of contraries with reference to a common genus is considered in I, 8; and a distinction between two kinds of contraries (the contrary differences and the contrary species to which contrary differences give rise) is considered in I, 7. However, Asclepius never mentions *Met.*, I. Rather, he prefers to emphasize the connections of the enquiry into the dialectical notions and their *per se* accidents with Aristotle's treatment of the oppositions and of contrariety in the logical writings, in particular in the *Categories* and the *De Interpretatione*. In the *Categories*, which is regarded as a genuine piece of first philosophy⁸⁸, Aristotle

⁸⁴ In particular, Asclepius discusses Aristotle's statement that the contraries either belong to different species of the same genus or to opposite (contrary) genera. The latter case is exemplified by virtue and vice, which belong to the genus good and to the genus bad respectively. Cf. ARIST., *Cat.*, 11, 14a22-25. In contrast to Aristotle's statement in *Cat.*, 11, 14a23-25 Asclepius says that good and bad in their turn belong to the same genus, namely quality.

⁸⁵ On the articulation of the commentary in θεωρία and λέξεις see LUNA, *Trois études* cit., pp. 103-106.

⁸⁶ ASCL., *In met.*, 233.5 ff.

⁸⁷ ASCL. *In met.*, 234.16-24; the same list can be found *ibid.*, 242.11-15, with the addition of Aristotle's example that it is the duty of the philosopher to investigate whether Socrates and sitting Socrates are the same.

⁸⁸ Cf. ASCL., *In met.*, 235.28-29: [...] τῆς πρώτης φιλοσοφίας ἢ εἰς τὰ γένη τοῦ ὄντος διαίρεσις, ὃ πεποίηκεν αὐτὸ ἐν ταῖς Κατηγορίαις; 239.31: διὸ καὶ ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης ὁ πρῶτος φιλόσοφος εἶπεν ἐν Κατηγορίαις [...]. In his consideration of the *Categories* as a writing of first philosophy Asclepius is probably influenced by Alexander, who claims (ALEX., *In met.*, 245.33-35) that the division of being into genera presented in the *Categories* pertains to first philosophy.

allegedly carries out significant parts of the enquiry into being *qua* being in his full extension to all beings, by dividing the genera of being (235.27-29)⁸⁹ and also by giving an account of equal and unequal, similar and dissimilar, the same and other (239.31-34)⁹⁰. Furthermore, and problematically, Asclepius refers to the account of the oppositions in *De Int.*, 14 (144.21-22 and 242.12-13)⁹¹. I shall go back to the reference to the *Categories* and *De interpretatione* in part III.3.

To conclude the survey of textual references in connection with the enquiry into the *per se* accidents of being *qua* being it is important to underline that, in line with Alexander, Asclepius refers to the *Selection of the contraries* in connection with the second book *περὶ ἀγαθοῦ* (247.11-14, 18-19) as the place in which Aristotle supposedly carries out the reduction of the contraries under the assumption that the contraries are the elements and principles of being and substance.

II. 4 AVERROES

Having examined three Greek commentaries I shall now turn to Averroes. Averroes writes after Avicenna's explicit attempt to improve Aristotle's account of the science of being *qua* being as a demonstrative science. He is very clear on the fact that the demonstrative structure must shape the enquiry into the *per se* accidents of substance and of being, but unfortunately he does not fully explain what the relation between *per se* accidents of substance, *per se* accidents of being and dialectical notions is. In addition, he seems to resort to Alexander's considerations on the place and function of *Met.*, Δ, but on this point he fails to draw some clarificatory distinctions which would be needed in order to fully appreciate his views. I shall address these points one by one.

Averroes does not address the discrepancy between the presentations of the fifth *aporia* in B, 1 and B, 2, but in his comments on B, 1⁹² he makes it quite clear that he regards **(1)**, **(2a)** and **(2b)** as questions to be dealt with together : it is opportune to investigate the dialectical notions in conjunction with the question of whether the same science must deal with substances and with their accidents⁹³. He explains that the enquiry into the dialectical notions

⁸⁹ On this point cf. also ALEX., *In met.*, 245.33-35.

⁹⁰ Cf. also ASCL., *In met.*, 234.3-6.

⁹¹ This reference to the *De Interpretatione* is problematic, because Asclepius refers to a peculiar reason why every contrary has one and only one contrary. The reason is that it would be unfair if two were opposed to one ; Aristotle does not mention any such explanation in the *De Interpretatione*. I go back to this point in section III.3.

⁹² AVERROIS *commentaria et Introductiones in omnes libros Aristotelis cum eorum Versione Latina*, vol. VIII, Venetiis apud Junctas 1562-1574 (Frankfurt am Main 1962), f. 39raBC-bD.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 39raB : « Et cum hoc oportet nos perscrutari de eodem et de diverso... ».

coincides with the enquiry *de consequentibus essentialibus, quae appropriantur enti in eo quod est ens*. This locution seems to indicate the properties which follow *per se* any being *qua* being. For instance, Averroes says, any being compared to any other being (*omne enim ens, quando fuerit comparatum ad aliud*) is either the same as or different from, either similar to or dissimilar from it. The fact that both the dialectician (*disputator* or *logicus*) and the philosopher deal with these very same notions is explained on the grounds that both of them deal with being as such (*de ente simpliciter*). With reference to **(2b)** Averroes mainly focuses on the enquiry into the contraries and, in this perspective, he outlines a clear project of research articulated into three steps. First, we must see what each of these things is (*quid est unumquodque eorum*); Second, we must consider what their proper accidents⁹⁴ are (*quae sunt accidentia propria eis*); Third we must see which things are contrary to them and which are not (*de illis quae sunt contraria eis aut non contraria*). It is only through these three steps that a complete investigation on these notions can be carried out. This process is effectively labelled by Averroes as *per cognitionem trium, scilicet priorum et posteriorum et oppositorum*, where the cognition of what is prior is cognition of what things are, the cognition of what is posterior is cognition of *per se* accidents, and the cognition of the opposites is cognition of what is opposed as contrary or in any other way to the notions concerning which we already know what they are and what their *per se* accidents are.

The same threefold partition is found in the comments on Γ , 2, where Averroes explains that all the notions falling under the opposition of one and many (i.e. the dialectical notions) must be enquired into by the science of being *qua* being because « it is the duty of one single science to investigate all these forms and their exclusive properties and the things that follow from them » (*unius scientiae est consideratio de omnibus istis formis et de propriis eis et consequentibus ipsas*). In particular, with reference to the third aspect Averroes mentions the contraries, which are characterized as 'following being *qua* being' (*omnia enim contraria sunt consequentia ens, secundum quod est ens*)⁹⁵. More generally, it is quite clear that he identifies the dialectical notions with the accidents of being⁹⁶ and that he identifies the *per se* accidents of substance with the 'essential accidents of being' (*accidentia essentialia enti*)⁹⁷. The gaps between the three notions of *per se* accidents of substance, dialectical notions and *per se* accidents of being are not completely spelled out. However, it is likely that Averroes sees the relation between *per*

⁹⁴ See n. 00, p. 00.

⁹⁵ AVER., *Comm.*, 67vaI.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 70raD-bH.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 71vbM.

se accidents of substance and *per se* accidents of being along the lines of Alexander's commentary. In fact, on more than one occasion Averroes emphasizes the priority of substance over all other beings with reference to the different ways in which general predicates are said. This can be seen for instance from the ways in which he describes the *πολλαχῶς λεγόμενα* in *Met.*, Δ (see below). I shall consider another very clear example of this general attitude in section III.4.

As for textual references, in the course of his discussion of dialectical notions Averroes mentions a treatise about « the one and the many and the other contraries » as the place in which Aristotle spells out the opposition of one and plurality⁹⁸. It is plausible that he is referring to *Met.*, I — to which he probably also refers in a previous passage⁹⁹ where he mentions the treatise in which Aristotle says that the one which is the principle of number is the thing which is called 'one' primarily. The reference here is quite misleading, though, because Averroes refers to the 'ninth treatise' (*in nono tractatu*), while Iota is (also in Averroes's commentary) the tenth. But apart from this, it is quite clear that for Averroes (as for Alexander) the treatise in which Aristotle deals with the dialectical notions and completes the discussion outlined in Γ, 2 is *Met.*, Δ. He describes Δ as the treatise in which Aristotle considers the *intentiones omnium nominum, de quibus considerat ista scientia*, each of which must be analysed according to the different ways in which it is said in the different categories with respect to the ways in which it is said with reference to substance¹⁰⁰. It is not very clear whether Averroes realizes that the characterization he gives here of what Δ accomplishes is not — at least not obviously — equivalent to what he seems to take as two comparatively clear facts, namely that Δ deals with the dialectical notions and that dialectical notions are apparently considered by him as the accidents *per se* of being and substance. However, it is one thing to say that Δ deals with the ways in which words are said insofar as they are significant for the science of being (among such words we can reckon 'principle', 'cause', 'nature' etc.); and it is another thing to say that Δ deals with the accidents of being and carries out the project of enquiry outlined in *Met.*, Γ, 2. Somehow Averroes seems to conflate the two aspects given by Alexander as reasons why the science of being *qua* being is concerned with dialectical notions (namely: because it uses them and because they are *per se* accidents of being *qua* being). Although both aspects may be true, it is not obvious that they are two sides of one and the same coin.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 69raB : « Modus autem secundum quem unum et multum sunt opposita declarabitur in tractatu in quo loquitur de uno et multo et de aliis contrariis ».

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 67raD.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 69rbEF.

II. 5 AQUINAS

Finally, I should like to present Aquinas's views on (Ross's) fifth *aporia* and the connected problems, both because of their intrinsic significance as an interpretation of Aristotle's text and because of their persisting influence on some modern interpreters of Aristotle's thought¹⁰¹.

Although Aquinas does not linger on the fact that not all the points of the fifth *aporia* of B, 1 are discussed in B, 2¹⁰², he pays attention to all of them and there are reasons to say that he does not conflate them, although he stresses significant connections between **(1)** and **(2)**.

The fifth *aporia* is presented as the *aporia* about whether the science at issue must deal, in general, with accidents (*utrum consideratio huius scientiae de accidentibus sit*)¹⁰³. Under this main heading Aquinas distinguishes three questions, which correspond to **(1)**, **(2a)** and **(2b)** above. Terminology is relevant: Aquinas says that **(1)** is a question about substance and *per se* accidents of substances (*ea quae per se substantiis accidunt*); **(2a)** and **(2b)** concern notions « which seem to be *per se* accidents of being *i.e.* which seem to follow all beings » (*quae videntur esse per se accidentia entis, et consequi omnia entia*) and things which follow *per se* upon 'common accidents of being' (*communia accidentia entis*). According to Aquinas the problem in **(2a)** is mainly to establish the kind of knowledge which deals with such notions: it would seem that they must be considered by first philosophy, precisely because they seem to be *per se* accidents of being *qua* being; but, as a matter of fact, they are dealt with by dialectic, which is different from first philosophy.

As I mentioned, Aquinas does not comment explicitly on the fact that in B, 2 Aristotle expounds only the first part of the *aporia* about the accidents. However, towards the end of the passage concerning substance and *per se* accidents of substances, Aquinas in a way prepares Aristotle's solution to all three questions by shifting from the consideration of *substantia* and *communia accidentia substantiae* to the consideration *de substantia et ente* and *de per se accidentibus substantiae et entis*¹⁰⁴. The shift in vocabulary from 'substance' to 'substance and being' is not explained.

¹⁰¹ See in particular J. OWENS, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics*, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto 1978³ (1948¹); G. REALE, *Il concetto di "filosofia prima" e l'unità della Metafisica di Aristotele*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1961; E. C. HALPER, *One and many in Aristotle's Metaphysics. The Central Books*, with a new Introduction, Parmenides Publishing, Las Vegas 2005 (originally published by Ohio State University Press, 1989); ID., *One and many in Aristotle's Metaphysics Alpha-Delta*, Parmenides Publishing, Las Vegas 2008.

¹⁰² Cf. S. TH. AQUINATIS *in duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio*, 2 vols., Marietti, Torino 1964, L. III, l. VI, pp. 111-112.

¹⁰³ AQUINAS, *in Met.*, L. III, l. II, pp. 99-100, §§ 352-354.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, L. III, l. VI, p. 112, § 402 (cf. § 398).

In the commentary on Γ , 2 Aquinas specifies the *aporiai* that Aristotle is going to solve in it. He distinguishes three of them: first, the question whether the science at issue must consider at the same time both substance and accidents (*de substantiis et accidentibus simul*); second, whether it must consider the dialectical notions (*de omnibus istis, quae sunt unum et multa, idem et diversum, oppositum, contrarium et huiusmodi*); third, whether it must also consider the principles of demonstration. The first and the second point correspond to **(1)** and **(2)** above. The distinction between the two points is preserved in the course of the commentary, even when Aquinas recalls that they were part of the same *aporia*¹⁰⁵. As for the first point, Aquinas claims that the science of being *qua* being must deal not only with substance, but also with accidents, because it must deal with being *qua* being and both substances and accidents are beings. However, the science of being *qua* being deals primarily with substance, because all other beings are with reference to substance, which is their subject¹⁰⁶. The relevant aspect in this account of **(1)** is that, according to Aquinas, the accidents of substance are the accidental categories, which are all beings.

As for **(2)**, Aquinas's explanation of why the science of being *qua* being must consider the 'common notions' implicitly explains also why **(1)** and **(2)** are strictly connected to each other. Following Aristotle's text Aquinas says that the common notions (i.e. the dialectical notions) are 'parts' of the one which is the same in subject as being. This means that (according to Aquinas) 'one' and 'being' designate the same nature in different ways and that, therefore, what is true of what is designated by 'one' is also true of what is designated by 'being'. Among the features shared by 'one' and 'being', Aquinas believes that both 'one' and 'being' are primarily said of substance¹⁰⁷. However, the priority of substance is not particularly stressed in the passages in which Aquinas explains why the philosopher is concerned with dialectical notions. Rather, in commenting on Aristotle's solutions to the fifth *aporia*, Aquinas focuses mainly on the generality of being *qua* being and it is with this generality in view that he explains why the

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, L. IV, l. III, p. 158, § 569: « inducit conclusionem ex omnibus praecedentibus: scilicet quod huius scientiae est ratiocinari de his communibus et de substantia: et hoc fuit unum quaesitum inter quaestiones in tertio disputatas ».

¹⁰⁶ Aquinas follows Averroes in explaining the unity $\pi\rho\acute{\sigma}$ $\epsilon\nu$ of being as a unity 'with respect to a subject' (*ad subiectum*) and not with respect to an end (*ad finem*, as 'wholesome' is said with respect to health, which is an end) nor with respect to an agent (*ad principium efficiens*, as 'medical' is said with respect to the doctor who has medical science). See *ibid.*, L. IV, l. I, pp. 151-2, §§ 536-539.

¹⁰⁷ See *ibid.*, L. IV, l. II, p. 156, § 563: « ... partes substantiae, de qua dicitur principaliter ens et unum et de qua principalis est huius scientiae consideratio et intentio ».

science of being must deal not only with substances, but also with accidents and with the common notions. The latter are constantly referred to as the accidents of being *qua* being¹⁰⁸ (and not of substance). *Per se* accidents of being *qua* being are common to all beings, namely to substances and accidents. It is possible that Aquinas thinks that, given the priority of substance over accidents, the accidents of being *qua* being are primarily said of substance and only derivatively of accidental categories. Nevertheless, the characteristic feature of Aquinas's interpretation is that he seems to draw a clear distinction between the accidents of substance, which are the accidental categories, and the *per se* accidents of being, which are common to all beings.

As for the place in which Aristotle would carry out the project of enquiry into the dialectical notions, Aquinas connects *Met.*, Δ with the remarks in Γ , 2 on the *communia* which are spoken of in different ways¹⁰⁹: *Met.*, Δ distinguishes the meanings of those words which indicate aspects 'common to all beings'. In virtue of this characterization, the investigation of the ways in which these words are said pertains to the science of being *qua* being. However, Aquinas qualifies this claim and specifies that not all chapters of *Met.*, Δ are concerned with *per se* accidents of being. He divides the book into three parts, dealing respectively with terms indicating the causes enquired by the science of being (*Met.*, Δ , 1-5), with terms indicating the subject (or parts of it) of the science of being (6-15) and with the properties or the causes enquired into by the science of being *qua* being (16-30)¹¹⁰. In this framework,

¹⁰⁸ Or with expressions which seem to be equivalent in Aquinas' exposition: « primas passiones entis, per se accidentia entis et unius secundum quod huiusmodi, et ens in quantum ens habet quaedam propria, quae sunt communia praedicta » (L. IV, l. IV, p. 160, § 571); « communia accidentia entis » (L. IV, l. VII, p. 169, § 574), cf. also L. IV, l. IV, p. 162, § 587.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, L. V, l. I, p. 208, § 749: « Et quia ea quae in hac scientia considerantur, sunt omnibus communia, nec dicuntur univoce, sed secundum prius et posterius de diversis, ut in quarto libro est habitum; ideo prius distinguit intentiones nominum, quae in huius scientiae consideratione cadunt [...] ».

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*: « Cuiuslibet autem scientiae est considerare subiectum, et passiones, et causas; et ideo hic quintus liber dividitur in tres partes. Primo determinat distinctiones nominum quae significant causas; secundo, illorum nominum quae significant subiectum huius scientiae vel partes eius, ibi, "unum dicitur aliud secundum accidens". Tertio nominum quae significant passiones entis in quantum est ens, ibi, "Perfectum vero dicitur etc." ». On the structure of Aquinas's commentary to *Met.*, Δ see R. McINERNEY, *The Nature of Book Delta of the Metaphysics according to the Commentary of St. Thomas Aquinas*, in L. P. GERSON ed., *Graceful Reason: Essays in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy Presented to Joseph Owens*, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, Toronto 1983 (Papers in Medieval Studies 4), pp. 331-343. Aquinas's reading of *Met.*, Δ as a systematic book is more or less explicitly followed by OWENS, *The doctrine of being* cit. (1963²), pp. 86-87, 108 and 415-417, who stresses in particular the structural role of Δ in the place where we actually read it; REALE, *Il concetto di "filosofia prima"* cit., (1984⁴), pp. 296-304 (notice that Reale mentions and supports Bonitz' criticism against Alexander's interpretation of Δ on p. 301); HALPER, *One and many in Aristotle's Metaphysics Alpha-Delta* cit., pp. 463 ff.

the chapters on the opposite dialectical notions, reducible to the opposition of one and plurality, belong to the second group, including terms which designate the subject of the science of being. In particular ch. 6 (on the one) and 7 (on being) deal with the subject of the science of being in its generality, whereas ch. 8 (on substance) deals with the primary subject of the science of being; on the other hand, ch. 9-15 (on the same, other, similar, dissimilar, contrary, opposite, prior and posterior, potency, quantity, quality, relation) deal with terms designating 'parts' of the subject of the science of being¹¹¹.

Given that Aquinas connects *Met.*, Δ with the project outlined in *Met.*, Γ, 2, it is interesting to see how he refers to *Met.*, I in the course of the commentary. I shall return to Aquinas's commentary on *Met.*, I in Part III.4, but I should like to anticipate some considerations here. In the first *lectio* on *Met.*, Δ, *Met.*, I¹¹² is referred to three times, each time as a book on the contraries (and never, for example, as the book on the one and on the convertibility of one and being¹¹³). The first of these three passages is particularly significant. Aquinas is commenting on Aristotle's mention of his reduction of the contraries in the *Selection of the contraries* and (in the passage in which Alexander and Asclepius refer to the second book *περὶ ἀγαθοῦ*) he glosses :

« Et hoc addit, quia in quibusdam non est ita manifestum. Et tamen hoc esse necesse est ; quia cum in omnibus contrariis alterum habeat privationem inclusam, oportet fieri reductionem ad privativa prima, inter quae praecipue est unum. Et iterum multitudo, quae ex uno causatur, causa est diversitatis differentiae et contrarietatis, ut infra dicitur. Et haec dicit esse considerata "in ecloga", idest in electione "contrariorum", idest in tractatu, quae est pars electa ad tractandum de contrariis, scilicet in decimo huius ».

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, L.V, l.vii, pp. 229-230, § 842 : « Postquam Philosophus distinxit nomina quae significant causas, hic distinguit nomina quae significant id quod est subiectum aliquo modo in ista scientia. Et dividitur in duas partes. Primo ponit sive distinguit nomina, quae significant subiectum huius scientiae. Secundo ea, quae significant partes subiecti, ibi, "eadem dicuntur". Subiectum autem huius scientiae potest accipi, vel sicut communiter in tota scientia considerandum, cuiusmodi est ens et unum : vel sicut id de quo est principalis intentio, ut substantia. Et ideo primo distinguit hoc nomen unum. Secundo hoc nomen ens, ibi, "ens dicitur etc.". Tertio hoc nomen substantia, ibi, "substantia dicitur etc." ».

¹¹² *Ibid.*, L. IV, l. II, p. 156, § 562 ; L. IV, l. III, pp. 157-158, § 565 ; L. IV, l. III, p. 158, § 567.

¹¹³ In the commentary to *Met.*, I Aquinas refers back to *Met.*, Δ by saying that *Met.*, I belongs to the *Metaphysics* as a book about the subject genus and the parts of the subject genus of the science of being. However, for the reasons I shall try to explain in part III, it seems to me that, in terms of contents, the doctrinal relevance of *Met.*, I is determined also for Aquinas by the analysis of the oppositions and, in particular, of the contraries there proposed. This is somewhat in contrast with the tendency of the modern interpreters following Aquinas on other points : Both OWENS, *The doctrine of being* cit., pp. 316-317 and REALE, *Il concetto di "filosofia prima"* cit., pp. 209-214 seem to attach particular relevance to first three chapters of the book, which include clearer references to the enquiry into being and substance of the previous books.

The passage is significant because it seems to make explicit an assumption which is likely to be at work implicitly in the commentaries of Syrianus and Asclepius: the treatise on *The selection of the contraries*, the second book *De bono* and *Met.*, I come to be regarded as all dealing with exactly the same topic, *i.e.* the reduction of particular pairs of contraries under the main contrariety of one and plurality, which are opposed to each other as possession and privation. I shall make this suggestion more precise in the course of Part III.

To conclude, I should like to stress that Aquinas's interpretation of *Met.*, I must be read against the background of his opening remarks to the whole commentary: in the prologue¹¹⁴ Aquinas explains that the science at issue is called metaphysics (*metaphysica*) « in quantum considerat ens et ea quae consequuntur ipsum. Haec enim transphysica inveniuntur in via resolutionis, sicut magis communia post minus communia ». Metaphysical notions concern the whole being and are more general than physical notions, which are confined to the department of being characterized by motion. In this sense they are found out through analysis *after* or *beyond* the domain of physics. To these remarks Aquinas adds that the most universal objects of the science at issue are « ens et ea quae consequuntur ens, ut unum et multa, potential et actus ». This final remark is very interesting, because it makes of Iota (which is concerned with the one and the many) an eminently 'metaphysical' book¹¹⁵.

PART III

A NETWORK OF TEXTUAL REFERENCES AND THE PLACE OF *MET.*, I

From the presentation of the exegetical work of the commentators it should be clear by now that there is no uncontroversial answer to the questions as to where Aristotle actually carries out the enquiry into the *per se* accidents of being and of substance, whether *per se* accidents of being are the same as *per se* accidents of substance, in what relation *per se* accidents of being or of substance stand to dialectical notions. However, an interesting network of textual references emerges in the discussion on these topics. In addition to *Met.*, Δ and I, explicitly acknowledged by Alexander and Syrianus respectively as the place in which Aristotle carries out the enquiry corresponding to the fifth *aporia*, some other texts are mentioned: the *Selection of the*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

¹¹⁵ This feature of *Met.*, I could be connected with Aquinas distinction of the level of real being and the level of mental being. The first is the object of metaphysics, whereas the second is the object of logic. Perhaps *Met.*, I could also be read as a book concerned with *intentiones secundae*. I am grateful to Gabriele Galluzzo for this suggestion.

contraries and the writing *περὶ ἀγαθοῦ* ; the *Categories* and the *De interpretatione*, ch. 14. The interconnections of these writings must be spelled out in order to be significant, but we can already say that, with some qualification, they all provide (or were supposed to provide) some comparatively systematic account of Aristotle's doctrines on the opposites and, in particular, on the contraries. In *Met.*, Γ, 2 the enquiry into the contraries is placed by Aristotle in the framework of the science of being and this is the aspect on which I shall primarily focus. With reference to all these texts I shall show what their thematic and programmatic affinities and discrepancies are — as far as we can tell from what we have — and how this analysis can be of help in the attempt to answer the question of where Aristotle carries out the enquiry into the *per se* accidents of being and substance. In order to give a full answer to this question we should take into account philological and chronological issues about the relative dating of Aristotle's writings, which is not my intention here. Rather, I shall confine myself to an account of the contents of these writings. Furthermore, for *Met.*, Δ, *Met.*, I and *Cat.*, 10-15, I shall compare their structure with the guidelines of the enquiry sketched in *Met.*, Γ, 2 as I have outlined them at the end of Part I.

III. 1 *MET.*, Δ

I shall begin with *Met.*, Δ. As we have seen, Alexander reads Δ as the place in which Aristotle carries out the enquiry into the dialectical notions, which are used by all sciences and extend to all beings. Different commentators take over different aspects of Alexander's interpretation, not always clarifying how they hold together. As I mentioned, Alexander's defence of the authenticity of Δ on the ground of its contents is based precisely on the correspondence with the fifth *aporia*. In this section I should like to discuss the credentials of *Met.*, Δ for being regarded as the place in which Aristotle presents his positive account of the dialectical notions hinted at in the first presentation of the fifth *aporia* in B, 1. I shall not deal with the whole book, but I shall confine my attention to the chapters in which Aristotle deals with the notions mentioned in Γ, 2. By doing this I do not imply that the very fact that in *Met.*, Δ Aristotle considers other notions in addition to those mentioned in *Met.*, Γ, 2 speaks against the identification of *Met.*, Δ as the place in which Aristotle carries out the enquiry there outlined. In fact, it is Aristotle himself who, at the very end of Γ, 2, leaves room for an enlargement of the group of the relevant notions (see 1005a18 : « and other things of this kind »)¹¹⁶. By focusing on the chapters

¹¹⁶ See p. 161.

concerning the notions explicitly mentioned in Γ , 2 I merely intend to remain on 'safe' ground, in the sense that at least for these notions we can be sure that Aristotle meant to include them in the project.

In fact, the problem of the precise extension of the enquiry and of the determination of the notions it covers is not confined to *Met.*, Δ . From the point of view of the extension of the analysis, Δ actually has the advantage of including chapters on all the notions mentioned in the course of Γ , 2¹¹⁷, whereas other texts, such as *Met.*, I and *Cat.*, 10 ff., concern only some of them (in particular, *Met.*, I does not deal with prior, posterior and part, and it deals only partially with the notions of genus and species — only in connection with contrariety and difference in species; *Cat.*, 10 ff. does not deal with part, whole, completeness, genus and species¹¹⁸).

From the point of view of the structure of Δ as a whole, there are two main controversial questions which have been variously addressed by different interpreters. The first general question is whether there is any underlying systematic structure to the composition and disposition of Δ . The view that Δ is a sort of philosophical lexicon, not responding to any particular unifying plan, is comparatively widespread, but there are tenacious attempts to see Δ as a well-structured whole¹¹⁹. The second question is whether there is any common theoretical aspect across the single chapters. In particular, one might wonder whether all chapters display a $\pi\rho\acute{o}\varsigma\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu$ structure of the different ways in which each analysed term is spoken of and, if so, what exactly this structure amounts to¹²⁰.

As I said, my aim here is not to provide a complete reading of the book as a whole and therefore I shall not address these two general questions, for which I refer to the corresponding literature. Rather, I intend to focus on the possible correspondences between *Met.*, Δ and the precise terms in which the project is outlined in Γ , 2. As we have seen in Part I, in Γ , 2 Aristotle sketches a comparatively systematic structure according to which the dialectical notions are linked together: (i) For each pair of opposite notions, one notion can be ordered under the main heading 'the one', the other under the main

¹¹⁷ In *Met.*, Δ , ch. 6 concerns the ways in which 'the one' is said, ch. 7 'being', ch. 9 'the same', 'other', 'different', ch. 10 the opposites, ch. 11 'prior' and 'posterior', ch. 16 'complete' (or 'perfect'), ch. 25 'part', ch. 26 'whole', ch. 28 'genus'.

¹¹⁸ On the relation of *Met.*, Δ and the *Categories* in general see R. BODÉUS, *Aristote. Catégories. Texte établi et traduit*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 2001, pp. XLI-LXIV.

¹¹⁹ For references to neo-scholastic interpretations, following Aquinas's reading of *Met.*, Δ , cf. n. 101.

¹²⁰ For two recent alternative accounts of the $\pi\omicron\lambda\lambda\alpha\chi\acute{\omega}\varsigma\ \lambda\epsilon\gamma\acute{o}\mu\epsilon\nu\alpha$ see C. SHIELDS, *Order in Multiplicity: Homonymy in the Philosophy of Aristotle*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1998; HALPER, *One and many cit. Alpha-Delta*, p. 53 ff.

heading 'plurality'. (ii) The two main headings (one and plurality) are opposed to each other as possession and privation. (iii) All these notions are said in many different ways. The multivocity of the other dialectical notions is somehow connected with the fact that one and plurality are said in many ways, which must be ordered with respect to a primary way in which each notion is said. Of (i)-(iii), (i) and (ii) seem to me to be basically absent in Δ . Nowhere in the chapters concerning the one (6), same, other, different, similar and dissimilar (9), and the opposites (10) does Aristotle resort to the 'reduction' of the contraries to the primary contrariety of one and plurality, which are opposed as possession and privation.

With reference to (iii), I distinguished two aspects of Aristotle's presentation of his project, namely **(M)** the dependence of the multivocity of some dialectical notions on the multivocity of other dialectical notions, and **(C)** the formulation of the different ways in which each of these notions is said in terms of different categorial determinations. Bearing these two aspects in mind, we can see that there are some passages in the chapters of *Met.*, Δ dealing with the notions mentioned in *Met.*, Γ , 2¹²¹ which are indeed very close to Aristotle's formulation in the passage above. These passages are not many and one might wonder whether the intention they express can be extended to the other chapters of *Met.*, Δ . Be that as it may, we can divide the relevant texts into two subgroups, depending on whether they emphasize aspect **(M)** or **(C)** above.

As for **(M)**, three passages can be mentioned.

1) The first is *Met.*, Δ , 9, 1018a5-9, in which Aristotle makes explicit the dependence of the ways in which the same is said with the ways in which the one is said :

[...] τὰ δὲ καθ' αὐτὰ ὁσαχῶσπερ καὶ τὸ ἓν· καὶ γὰρ ὦν ἢ ὕλη μία ἢ εἶδει ἢ ἀριθμῷ ταῦτὰ λέγεται καὶ ὦν ἢ οὐσία μία, ὥστε φανερόν ὅτι ἡ ταυτότης ἐνόησις τίς ἐστὶν ἢ πλείονων τοῦ εἶναι ἢ ὅταν χρῆται ὡς πλείοσιν, οἷον ὅταν λέγῃ αὐτὸ αὐτῷ ταῦτόν· ὡς δυοὶ γὰρ χρῆται αὐτῷ.

2) The second passage is Δ , 10, 1018a35-38, which sounds like the conclusion of chapters 9-10, where Aristotle has distinguished the ways in which the same, the other, the similar, the dissimilar and the opposites are said. The multivocity of the other notions is connected with the multivocity of one and being. The passage is significant not only for the theoretical structure there emphasized, but also from the point of view of the vocabulary : we again find the reference to the different ways in which the multivocal terms are said according to each category (cf. **(C)** above) :

¹²¹ Text quoted on p. 163.

ἐπεὶ δὲ τὸ ἓν καὶ τὸ ὄν πολλαχῶς λέγεται, ἀκολουθεῖν ἀνάγκη καὶ τὰλλα ὅσα κατὰ ταῦτα λέγεται, ὥστε καὶ τὸ ταῦτόν καὶ τὸ ἕτερον καὶ τὸ ἐναντίον, ὥστ' εἶναι ἕτερον καθ' ἐκάστην κατηγορίαν.

3) The third passage seems to me less close to the formulation in *Γ*, 2, but it is significant nonetheless because it refers to a similar theoretical structure: the dependence of the multivocity of some terms on the multivocity of other terms. The passage is *Δ*, 11, 1019a4-11, in which Aristotle distinguishes the ways in which the prior and the posterior are said. These are two of the notions added to the list of *per se* accidents of being *qua* being at the end of *Met.*, *Γ*, 2. Aristotle connects the ways in which the prior is said with the ways in which being is said:

ἐπεὶ δὲ τὸ εἶναι πολλαχῶς, πρῶτον μὲν τὸ ὑποκείμενον πρότερον, διὸ ἡ οὐσία πρότερον, ἔπειτα ἄλλως τὰ κατὰ δύναμιν καὶ κατ' ἐντελέχειαν· τὰ μὲν γὰρ κατὰ δύναμιν πρότερά ἐστι τὰ δὲ κατὰ ἐντελέχειαν, οἷον κατὰ δύναμιν μὲν ἡ ἡμίσεια τῆς ὅλης καὶ τὸ μόνιον τοῦ ὅλου καὶ ἡ ὕλη τῆς οὐσίας, κατ' ἐντελέχειαν δ' ὕστερον· διαλυθέντος γὰρ κατ' ἐντελέχειαν ἔσται.

Although these passages could be regarded as nothing more than episodic remarks, it is significant that they are included precisely in the chapters dealing with the notions mentioned in *Γ*, 2, for they could be important for identifying a selection of chapters more or less closely connected with *Met.*, *Γ*, 2.

To these three passages, we can add other two, which emphasize the link of the same chapters in *Δ* with aspect (C) above. In particular:

4) In *Δ*, 6, 1016b6-9 Aristotle expresses the dependence of the ways in which things are derivatively said to be one from the primary ways of being one in these terms: τὰ μὲν οὖν πλεῖστα ἐν λέγεται τῷ ἕτερόν τι ἢ ποιεῖν ἢ ἔχειν ἢ πάσχειν ἢ πρὸς τι εἶναι ἓν, τὰ δὲ πρῶτως λεγόμενα ἐν ὧν ἡ οὐσία μία, μία δὲ ἢ συνεχεῖα ἢ εἶδει ἢ λόγῳ. As in the passage from *Met.*, *Γ*, 2 Aristotle expresses the secondary ways in which things are said to be one in terms of different categorial determinations.

5) A similar formulation can be found in *Met.*, *Δ*, 10, 1018a31-35, with reference to the derivative ways in which items are said to be contrary:

τὰ δ' ἄλλα ἐναντία λέγεται τὰ μὲν τῷ τὰ τοιαῦτα ἔχειν, τὰ δὲ τῷ δεκτικὰ εἶναι τῶν τοιούτων, τὰ δὲ τῷ ποιητικὰ ἢ παθητικὰ εἶναι τῶν τοιούτων, ἢ ποιοῦντα ἢ πάσχοντα, ἢ ἀποβολαὶ ἢ λήψεις, ἢ ἔξεις ἢ στερήσεις εἶναι τῶν τοιούτων.

As I said, it is difficult to draw any general conclusion about the whole of book *Δ* from these passages. What seems relevant to me is that these passages

are all included in the chapters concerning the notions mentioned in Γ, 2, and this could speak in favour of a group of chapters relating to that project more closely than others¹²².

III. 2 THE REFERENCES TO THE *SELECTION OF THE CONTRARIES* AND THE ΠΕΡΙ ΑΓΑΘΟΥ

I shall now consider the references to the second book *περὶ ἀγαθοῦ* and to the *Selection of the contraries*. Both treatises are lost. However, the *Selection of the contraries* is mentioned by Aristotle himself in *Met.*, Γ, 2 1003b33-1004 a2 and I, 3, 1054a29-32¹²³, whereas the *περὶ ἀγαθοῦ* is mentioned by Alexander and, henceforth, by Asclepius¹²⁴. The *περὶ ἀγαθοῦ* was supposed to be Aristotle's written report of Plato's controversial¹²⁵ lecture on the Good. Therefore, this writing was intended more to portray Plato's doctrines than Aristotle's and I shall not deal with it in all respects. The only point I should like to focus on is Alexander's joint mention of the second book of the *περὶ ἀγαθοῦ* and of the *Selection of the contraries* in his commentary on *Met.*, Γ, 2. Alexander¹²⁶ comments on Aristotle's reference to the reduction of all contraries to the one and the plurality (τό τε ἓν καὶ τὸ πλῆθος) as it has been carried out in the *Selection of the contraries*, and glosses that Aristotle discusses the same selection in the second book *περὶ ἀγαθοῦ* (εἶρηκε δὲ περὶ τῆς τοιαύτης ἐκλογῆς καὶ ἐν τῷ δευτέρῳ Περὶ ἀγαθοῦ). From this reference it is not clear whether Alexander wants to say that in the second book *περὶ ἀγαθοῦ* Aristotle merely mentions the same treatise on the selection of the contraries or whether he means that in the second book *περὶ ἀγαθοῦ* Aristotle provides an account similar to the one provided in the *Selection*. The doubts are spelled out in a second passage¹²⁷, in

¹²² Furthermore, of the five passages I have quoted, it is quite difficult to assess the conclusive significance of passages 4) and 5), because reference to different categorial determinations is quite frequent in Aristotle's otherwise unrelated accounts of the πολλαχῶς λεγόμενα.

¹²³ There is some controversy as to whether Aristotle is mentioning the same writing in both places : in *Met.*, Γ, 2 he speaks of what he has done in the 'selection' of contraries (ἐν τῇ ἐκλογῇ τῶν ἐναντίων), whereas in *Met.*, I, 3 he mentions a 'division' of contraries (ἐν τῇ διαιρέσει τῶν ἐναντίων). H. J. KRÄMER, *Arete bei Plato und Aristoteles*, Winter, Heidelberg 1959, pp. 271 ff., 310 and GUARIGLIA, *Quellenkritische und logische Untersuchungen* cit., pp. 44-45 think that these are just two ways of referring to the same treatise, while O. GIGON, *Aristotelis Opera*. Vol. III : *Librorum deperditorum fragmenta*, W. de Gruyter, Berlin 1987, p. 723 ff. is more cautious. In any case, even if the treatises were meant to be two, a significant overlap in contents seems very plausible.

¹²⁴ ASCL., *In met.*, 79.10 ; 237.14 ; 247.18-19.

¹²⁵ The disappointment of the participants is recorded by Aristoxenus (*Harm.* II 20.16 - 31. 3), who refers to their surprise when, instead of listening to discourses about what is commonly regarded as good by the humans, they were confronted with a lecture about numbers, geometry, astrology and the limit.

¹²⁶ ALEX., *In met.*, 250.17-20.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 262.18-26.

which Alexander explains Aristotle's words at 1004b34-1005a1 « let us assume the reduction » (εἰλήφθω γὰρ ἡ ἀναγωγὴ ἡμῖν) by saying : « he refers us again to the things which are shown in the second book *περὶ ἀγαθοῦ* (ἀναπέμπει πάλιν ἡμᾶς εἰς τὰ ἐν τῷ β Περὶ τὰγαθοῦ δεδειγμένα). Apparently, according to Alexander, the second book *περὶ ἀγαθοῦ* was supposed to include the same materials which were the object of the treatise on the *Selection of the contraries*. This could explain why ps. Alexander (i.e. Michael of Ephesus), in his commentary on the other passage in *Met.*, I in which Aristotle refers to the 'division' of the contraries says straightforwardly that Aristotle is referring to the division which he has accomplished in the *περὶ ἀγαθοῦ*¹²⁸.

As for the *Selection of the contraries*, we have a comparatively clear idea of what Aristotle intended to do in this treatise, although there is some controversy among interpreters over the number and nature of Aristotelian treatises devoted to the contraries and the oppositions. I have already mentioned¹²⁹ the controversy over the 'selection' and the 'division' of the contraries — which I assume to be one and the same treatise. The debate is further complicated by the fact that according to some interpreters¹³⁰ Aristotle would have written one or two other treatises *On the contraries* (*περὶ ἐναντίων*) and/or *On the opposites* (*περὶ τῶν ἀντικειμένων*), the contents of which can partly be inferred from Simplicius's commentary on Aristotle's *Categories*¹³¹. The details of the controversy are not relevant for the present discussion, because in any case only the *Selection of the contraries* is mentioned in the commentaries on the *Metaphysics* I have been dealing with. However, I should like to discuss very briefly one passage from Simplicius's commentary on the *Categories* which clarifies the connection of the writings about the contraries and the opposites with a further section of Aristotle's surviving writings.

¹²⁸ Ps.-AL., *In met.*, 615.14-17 ; cf. 642.38-643.3 ; 695.23-26.

¹²⁹ P. 193, n. 123.

¹³⁰ Rose (V. ROSE, *Aristotelis qui ferebantur librorum fragmenta*, Teubner, Stuttgart 1836) and Ross in their collections of fragments from Aristotle's lost writings identify the treatise *On the contraries* with the treatise *On the opposites* mentioned by Simplicius. The most extensive discussion of the issue is that of GUARIGLIA, *Quellenkritische und logische* cit. ; Guariglia identifies two kinds or two groups of writings on the contraries, the first (to which the *Selection* or *Division of the contraries* would belong) providing lists of contraries, ordered according to more or less explicit criteria ; the second (to which the writing *On the contraries* would belong) spelling out an articulated doctrine of contrariety. Guariglia thinks that *Selection* and *Division* are the same writing and that *On the contraries* and *On the opposites* are the same writings (p. 35 ff.). O. Gigon (*Aristotelis opera* cit.) says (p. 359) that it is possible that the treatise *On the contraries* was close in contents to the *On the opposites*, although we cannot assume that they were one and the same ; the same holds for the *Division* and *On the contraries*.

¹³¹ SIMPLICII *in Aristotelis Categorias commentarium*, ed. C. KALBFLEISCH, Berlin 1907 (CAG VIII), p. 382.1-28 (= 624 Gigon), 387.17-390.35 (= 625 Gigon), 402.12-403.24 (= 626 Gigon), 407.15-26 (= 627 Gigon), 409.13-410.34 (= 628 Gigon).

Among the *testimonia* on Aristotle's writing on the contraries, one is particularly interesting. In his commentary on the *Categories*, Simplicius¹³² maintains that Aristotle derives his conclusions concerning the opposites (τὰ περὶ ἀτικειμένων) from a treatise by Archytas¹³³ on the same topic. Simplicius adds that Aristotle did not include the analysis of the opposites in the treatise 'on the genera' (οὐ συνέταξεν τῷ περὶ γενῶν λόγῳ, *scil. Cat.*, 1-9) but considered it as a part of a separate enquiry (ἰδίᾳ πραγματείας ἤξιωσεν). Simplicius is commenting on the last section of the *Categories*, also known to the tradition as the *Postpraedicamenta*. In this passage Simplicius is one of the participants in a debate on the place (and the authenticity) of *Cat.*, 1-9 whose reasons and origin are quite obscure, and I shall not go through the details. Nevertheless, I shall clarify why the mention of the *Categories* in connection with (ps.) Archytas and Aristotle's work on the oppositions is relevant here. We have seen that Asclepius does not follow Syrianus in viewing *Met.*, I as the place in which Aristotle carries out the enquiry into the attributes of being *qua* being, but he often refers to the *Categories* as a work of first philosophy. The fact that in Simplicius's commentary the last chapters of the *Categories* are explicitly linked with Aristotle's work on the contraries provides a connection between the *Categories* and the project outlined in *Met.*, Γ, 2, where Aristotle himself refers to his work on the contraries. In addition, by inscribing Aristotle's work on the opposites in the wake of a Pythagorean author as Archytas, Simplicius is doing for the *Categories* something similar to what Syrianus does with *Iota*: they both inscribe Aristotle's enquiry into the most general predicates

¹³² SIMPL., *In cat.*, 382.7-10.

¹³³ The treatise to which Simplicius alludes is actually the work of a ps.-Archytas who wrote it in the first centuries of the Roman empire. The treatise of ps.-Archytas *On the opposites* belongs to a group of texts (mainly known through indirect tradition) probably written between the 1st century BC and the 2nd century CE. These pseudoepigraphic treatises, all ascribed to ancient Pythagorean philosophers, testify to a revival of interest in Pythagorean philosophy, although the precise reasons for this peculiar literary production remains somewhat obscure. Pseudo-Pythagorean treatises are edited by H. THESLEFF, *The Pythagorean Texts of the Hellenistic Period*, Åbo Akademi, Åbo 1965. Apart from the aforementioned treatise *On the opposites*, some other treatises are preserved under the name of Archytas: a treatise on the categories (Περὶ τῷ καθόλου λόγῳ, on which see T. A. SZLEZAK, *Pseudo-Archytos über die Kategorien -Text zur griechischen Aristotelesexegese*, W. de Gruyter, Berlin 1972 [Peripatoi 4]); some ethical treatises (B. CENTRONE, *Pseudopythagorica ethica. I trattati morali di Archita, Metopo, Teage, Eurifamo*. Introduzione, edizione, traduzione e commento, Bibliopolis, Napoli 1990); a treatise on the principles (περὶ ἀρχῶν); a treatise on intellect and perception (περὶ νοῦ καὶ αἰσθήσεως); a treatise on wisdom (περὶ σοφίας) and a treatise on being (περὶ ὄντος). On the spread of Pythagorean philosophy in the Imperial Age see M. BONAZZI, C. LÉVY, C. STEEL eds., *A Platonic Pythagoras. Platonism and Pythagoreanism in the Imperial Age*, Brepols, Turnhout 2007. I am very grateful to Angela Ulacco for her competent and generous help on pseudo-Pythagorean matters.

(dialectical notions or *per se* accidents of being *qua* being) in the framework of metaphysical doctrines compatible with Neoplatonic metaphysics and, moreover, connect the places in which Aristotle presents such doctrines to Pythagorean and Platonic sources.

III. 3 CATEGORIES AND DE INTERPRETATIONE

Apart from the link to Pythagorean metaphysics introduced by Simplicius, Asclepius's mention of the *Categories* and the *De Interpretatione* as sources of information on the development of Aristotle's account of the *per se* accidents of substance and of being, of the contraries and of the opposites, requires some comments. In particular, I should like to comment on two points: first, I shall address the question whether the contents of *Cat.*, 10 ff. may or may not be an answer to the kind of problems raised in *Met.*, Γ, 2; second, I shall comment on some of Asclepius's reports on Aristotle's *De. Int.*, 14 which do not match Aristotle's text as we have it.

As for the first point, it should be stressed that none of the structural indications of *Met.*, Γ, 2 have a parallel in *Cat.*, 10 ff. What we do find, though, is a reference to the good and the bad as contrary genera (14a19-25). This is important if we consider that, according to the dyadic structure of the *systoichiai*, one column of terms was always seen as the positive column, in contrast with the negative column, where positive and negative must be taken in both metaphysical or ontological and ethical sense. It is not clear how metaphysically committed Aristotle is in these chapters, but the very fact that he mentions a structure of opposite genera which can be identified with the structure referred to in *Met.*, Γ, 2 certainly leaves room for metaphysically committed readings on the part of metaphysically (in particular: Platonically) minded commentators.

At first sight the metaphysical commitment of Asclepius's reading is particularly striking in his remarks on the *De interpretatione*. In two passages¹³⁴ Asclepius comments on the property of the contraries that there is only one contrary for one term by saying that according to the *De interpretatione* only one term is contrary to another term because it would be unfair (or unjust) if more than one were opposed to one (144.19-22: φαμὲν οὖν ὅτι ἀδύνατον δύο ἐνὶ ἐναντία εἶναι· οὔτε γὰρ οὕτως ἄδικός ἐστιν ἡ φύσις, καθάπερ ἐν τῷ Περὶ ἑρμενεύσεως λέγεται, ὥστε δύο ἐνὶ ἀντιτάξει, ἡνίκα περὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ λόγος ἐγίνετο, ἀλλ' ἐν ἐνὶ ἐναντίον ἐστί). He adds that he is referring to the passage in which «the discourse comes to bear upon the good» (ἡνίκα περὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ λόγος ἐγίνετο).

¹³⁴ See p. 181.

The passage is probably *De int.*, 14, 23a40 ff., where Aristotle discusses the opposition of propositions claiming that something is good, something is not good and something is bad. These examples are used through the whole chapter 14. However, nowhere does Aristotle say that it would be unfair if two were contrary to one. Probably the reference can be explained by the fact that Ammonius, in his commentary on *De int.*, 14, explains the goal of Aristotle's chapter by referring to Syrianus's interpretation in these terms¹³⁵. In Ammonius's report, Syrianus appeals to Plato as a witness to the difference between a (contradictory) negative proposition and a contrary proposition to a given affirmative proposition. Syrianus is referring to *Soph.*, 257b, where Plato shows that, although the negative proposition signifies something other than the affirmative proposition, still it does not signify the contrary. With reference to this passage, Ammonius says¹³⁶ :

καὶ ἐπὶ πᾶσι τὸν τε θειότατον Πλάτωνα μάρτυρα παραφέρων (*scil.* Syrianus) ἐν τῷ Σοφιστῇ ἀποφαινόμενον τὴν ἀπόφασιν ἕτερον μὲν τι τῆς καταφάσεως σημαίνειν, οὐ μὴν ἐναντίον πρὸς αὐτὴν, διότι ἐν μὲν ἐνὶ ἐναντίον (οὐ γὰρ ἄδικος ἡ φύσις, ὥστε πλεῖονα ἐνὶ ποιῆσαι πολέμια).

The passage not only explains Asclepius's remark, but is also interesting for another reason. Ammonius mentions a series of texts, from both Plato's and Aristotle's writings, in order to clarify the difference between negation and contrariety. These texts are : Plato, *Resp.*, VI, 491d¹³⁷ (« the bad is more contrary to the good than what is not good ») ; Aristotle, *Met.*, I, 4, 1055a3 ff.¹³⁸ (where Aristotle shows that contrariety is the biggest difference) ; Aristotle, *Cat.*, 10, 12a17 ff.¹³⁹ (who is neither good nor bad is intermediate between the good and the bad, which are contraries) ; Aristotle, *Phys.*, Γ, 5, 205a6 (the contrary comes to be from the contrary, which are distant from each other in the highest degree and are determinate) and *Phys.*, E, 5, 229a7 ff. (in change, non-being is not contrary to being). I shall leave aside the references to the *Physics*. Ammonius's mention of *Met.*, I, 4 is interesting. Ammonius mentions *Met.*, I three times in total in his commentary on the *De interpretatione* and all three references are in his commentary on ch. 14. The first is the one already mentioned ; the second is at 255.8, where he refers to I, 7, 1057a24 ; the third is at 263.14-15, where he refers again to *Met.*, I, 4, 1055a6. This fact is

¹³⁵ AMMONIUS, *In Aristotelis De interpretatione commentarius*, ed. A. BUSSE, Berlin 1897 (CAG IV.5), 253.12 ff.

¹³⁶ AMM., *In De int.*, 253.18-21.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 253.23.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 253.29.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 254.4.

interesting in the first place because it shows that Ammonius follows Syrianus in seeing *Met.*, I as a significant text, in the second place because it shows that *Met.*, I is always referred to in virtue of the analysis of the contraries. Furthermore, Aristotle's pronouncements on the contraries in the passages mentioned by Ammonius are all inscribed in a precise metaphysical perspective: what is at issue is the metaphysical struggle between a positive and a negative principle which determine the whole structure of being. It goes almost without saying that this aspect is quite far from being unmistakable in Aristotle's texts. But *Met.*, I seems to be read in this perspective precisely *qua* a book on the contraries. As we shall see in the next section, the reading of *Met.*, I as a book on the contraries is also a constant among the commentators who do not endorse the further metaphysical perspective adopted by Syrianus, Ammonius and Asclepius.

III. 4 *MET.*, I

I shall now turn to Syrianus's claim that the enquiry into the dialectical notions — which Syrianus identifies with the *per se* accidents of being *qua* being through an explicit argument — must be found in *Met.*, I. I shall divide the discussion into two parts: first, I shall analyse the structure of *Met.*, I along the lines of *Met.*, Γ, 2 and see whether there is any explicit or at least clear parallelism between the two texts. Secondly, I shall propose some considerations concerning the consequences of Syrianus's or a Syrianus-like reading of *Met.*, I.

First of all I shall provide a brief summary of the contents of *Met.*, I. In I, 1 Aristotle distinguishes the different ways in which τὸ ἔν is said; in I, 2 he solves the *aporia*¹⁴⁰ on the nature of τὸ ἔν, by saying that it is not a separate substance but a very general predicate, which — like being — is said in many different ways of all items in all categories. In I, 3 Aristotle spells out the nature of the opposition of τὸ ἔν and τὸ πλῆθος as contraries (i.e. as indivisible and divisible) of which one is the privative negation of the other. Aristotle refers to the 'division of the contraries' and says that the same, the similar and the equal belong to the one, while the other, the dissimilar and the unequal belong to τὸ πλῆθος; he explains the different ways in which these notions are said, qualifies the difference between 'other' and 'different', and shows the connection between difference and contrariety. I, 4 distinguishes the different ways in which the contraries are defined and illustrates the definitional link between contrariety and the opposition of possession and privation. I, 5-6 discuss some questions arising from the definition of contrariety given in I, 4 with reference to some peculiar cases of apparent contrariety (the opposition

¹⁴⁰ *Met.*, B, 1, 996a4-9; B, 4, 1001a4-b25; I, 2, 1053b10-11.

of equal, great and small in I, 5, the opposition of one, many and few in I, 6). I, 7 discusses the nature of the intermediates, I, 8 the nature of otherness in species. Since I, 7-8 have established that contrary differences of the same genus give rise to a difference in species, in I, 9 Aristotle discusses the reason why some contraries, which do not belong accidentally to a determinate subject (e.g. as male and female belong to animal), do not give rise to a difference in species. Finally, in I, 10 Aristotle analyses the kind of difference (in genus) which is generated by the contraries corruptible-incorruptible.

From this schematic presentation it should be possible to see how the book may be ideally divided into two parts: Chapters 1 and 2, on the ways in which the one is said, on its nature and relation to being; and Chapters 3-10, on issues concerning the contraries, starting with the opposition of τὸ ἕν and τὸ πλῆθος and progressively moving from general accounts of determinate notions (contrariety in I, 3, intermediates in I, 7 and otherness in species in I, 8) to the analysis of specific cases (I, 5, 6, 9, 10). This fact has been observed by the commentators, who all divide the book into two parts: the first (chapters 1 and 2) on the one as such, the second (chapters 3-10) on the opposition of one and τὸ πλῆθος and on the contraries.

An interesting *datum* is that mentions of *Met.*, I outside *Met.*, I itself for the most part seem to take the second part of the book as the most representative from the doctrinal point of view. I referred to Averroes's and Aquinas's cross-references to *Met.*, I as the book or treatise on the contraries¹⁴¹. In addition, from a superficial overview of the references to *Met.*, I by the Greek commentators, it is striking that 1) apart from Syrianus, the only one who seems to have *Met.*, I in mind is Ammonius, in the commentary on *De Int.*, 14; 2) apart from Syrianus's general assessment of the book as a book on the dialectical notions (which are organized according to opposition and contrariety), all references to doctrinal points are to the second part of the book¹⁴².

It is possible that the second part of the book was felt to be more representative because both I, 1 and 2 have important parallels or, better, antecedents in some previous passages. In I, 1 Aristotle distinguishes the ways in which the one is said by explicitly recalling his treatment of the same topic in *Met.*, Δ, 6 (although the parallelism between the two chapters is controversial)¹⁴³. Furthermore, the arguments which Aristotle uses to show

¹⁴¹ See pp. 183, 187-189.

¹⁴² SYR., *In met.*, 60.18 (reference to I, 6, 1056b32), 167.25 (reference to I, 6), 23.32 and 114.18 (references to I, 10); for Ammonius's references see pp. 197-198.

¹⁴³ I provide a full account of the analogies and discrepancies between *Met.*, Δ, 6 and I, 1 in L. M. CASTELLI, *τὸ ἕν λέγεται πολλαχῶς. Questioni aristoteliche sui significati dell'uno*, « *Antiquorum philosophia* », 2, 2008, pp. 189-215; see in particular pp. 204-208.

that the one is not a substance and that it is said of all beings and in as many ways as being is said are anticipated respectively in *Met.*, Z, 16 and Γ, 2¹⁴⁴. But the analysis of the contraries, in general and in particular, with reference to the special cases (I, 4-10), and of the opposition of τὸ ἔν and τὸ πλῆθος both as contraries, opposed as possession and privation (I, 3) and as relatives (I, 6), is unprecedented in extension and systematic structure.

Additionally, from the point of view of the connection with the *aporiai* in *Met.*, B, *Met.*, I is somewhat divided: *Met.*, I, 2 refers back to the eleventh *aporia*, on the nature of one and being, whereas *Met.*, I, 3, which marks the beginning of the second part of the book, can be referred back to what Aristotle says in Γ, 2 in answer to the fifth *aporia*. In I, 3 Aristotle first illustrates the sense in which τὸ ἔν and τὸ πλῆθος are opposite to each other as contraries, one of which is the privation of the other. Then we find an explicit mention (1054b29-32) of Aristotle's work on the contraries, already mentioned in Γ, 2 1004a2 (and likely referred to in 1004b34-1005a1) and a division of the ways in which τὸ ταῦτό (1054a32-b3) and τὸ ὅμοιον (1054b3-13) are said. All the ways in which τὸ ταῦτό is said are explained in terms of unity and all the ways in which τὸ ὅμοιον is said are explained either in terms of sameness or in terms of unity. As a consequence of the multivocity of the same and the similar, the other and the dissimilar are said in many ways (1054b13-14), which are explained in opposition to the ways in which the same and the similar are said (1054b13-19). This procedure recalls *Met.*, Γ, 2, 1004a17ff., and the guidelines for the analysis of the contraries belonging to the one and of the notions opposite to these: The sought-for science must investigate « the opposites of those we have already mentioned, the other and the dissimilar and the unequal and all the other things which are said either on the basis of these (κατὰ ταῦτα) or on the basis of τὸ πλῆθος and τὸ ἔν ». Among these notions Aristotle mentions contrariety, which is a kind of difference, which is a kind of otherness (1004a20-22). By following the same line of thought Aristotle characterizes, after otherness, difference and contrariety in *Met.*, I, 3, 1054b22 ff. Furthermore, in I, 4 Aristotle explains why there is only one contrary for each contrary (i.e. why contrariety is a dyadic relation) (1055a19-23). This property of contrariety was mentioned in the fifth *aporia* (2b) in B, 1 as an example of a *per se* accident of those dialectical notions, which first philosophy must investigate. Finally, *Met.*, I, 4, 1055a33 ff. seems to take over Aristotle's hints in Γ, 2, 1004a10-15 on the characterization of negation

¹⁴⁴ Aristotle provides the main arguments to show that universals in general cannot be substances in *Met.*, Z, 13. In Z, 16, 1040b16-27 he makes the point explicit for the most general universals of all, namely one and being. The treatment of the topic in *Met.*, Z is referred to in I, 2, 1053b16-18. The arguments on the convertibility (or co-extensiveness) of one and being presented in I, 2, 1054a13-19 are similar to those in Γ, 2, 1003b22-33.

and privation, by specifying the relation of the opposition of privation and possession to the oppositions of contrariety and contradiction. In all these respects the presentation of *Met.*, I, 3 ff. (the following chapters developing more specific problems raised by the account in I, 3-4) seems to unfold along the structural lines of the project of *Met.*, Γ, 2.

In developing this account, Aristotle does not ascribe much relevance to the aspect — characteristic of the second argument in Γ, 2 — according to which τὸ πλῆθος and τὸ ἕν would be the first *principles* of all beings, precisely in so far as all the contraries can be referred back to them. This does not necessarily imply that Aristotle has completely dropped the materials out of which that argument was built. In fact, at the very end of the argument in Γ, 2, Aristotle advanced some cautionary remarks on the nature of the one. The nature of one and being is the object of an independent *aporia* (the eleventh in Ross's enumeration of B, 1) which is explicitly tackled in *Met.*, I, 2. Aristotle's solution to the *aporia* is that one and being cannot be substances and principles of being. As a consequence, the sense in which τὸ πλῆθος and τὸ ἕν provide the basic contrariety or the primary opposition of possession and privation cannot be explained in terms of ontological derivation of the other contraries from those principles. Rather, as we have seen, Aristotle spells out the ways in which the other notions (in particular: sameness and similarity) can be explained in terms of unity (and, in the case of similarity, of sameness) — and analogously for the opposite notions.

On the basis of these considerations, I think that Syrianus's reference to *Met.*, I as the place in which Aristotle deals with the second part of the fifth *aporia* is appropriate. By way of conclusion I should like to add a few remarks on how four medieval commentators have read this book and on the extent to which Syrianus's interpretation of *Met.*, I was forgotten or retained. The lives of these four commentators span over the XII and XIII centuries and they can be considered in pairs: ps. Alexander or Michael of Ephesus¹⁴⁵ (fl. early or mid-XII century) and ps. Philoponus (XII-XIII century)¹⁴⁶ are both Byzantine

¹⁴⁵ For the conclusive assessment of ps. Alexander's identity as Michael of Ephesus see LUNA, *Trois études cit.*, *Étude I*, pp. 1-71.

¹⁴⁶ Ps. Philoponus's commentary to the *Metaphysics* is preserved, as far as we know, in three Greek manuscripts: Vat. Urb. gr. 49, 204 ff.; Wien, Nationalbibliothek, phil. graec. 189, ff. 130r-214 (including *Met.*, A, 1-5; Z-N), ascribing the commentary to John Philoponus; Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, F 113 sup., ff. 173r-238v (XIV century, including the commentary to *Met.*, K-N). On the first two see Lohr's introduction (pp. V-XV) to Francesco Patrizi's Latin translation (Ferrara 1583) reprinted as *Pseudo-Johannis Philosoponi Expositiones in Omnes XIV Aristotelis Libros Metaphysicos*, Übersetzt von Franciscus Patritius, Neudruck der ersten Ausgabe Ferrara 1583 mit einer Einleitung von C. LOHR, Frommann - Holzboog, Stuttgart - Bad Cannstatt 1991. On the third ms. see S. ALEXANDRU, *A New Manuscript of Pseudo-Philoponus' Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics Containing an Hitherto Unknown Ascription of the Work*, « Phronesis », 44, 1999, pp. 347-352. The ascription is to the Byzantine scholar Georgius Pachymeres (1242-ca. 1310).

scholars. Ps. Philoponus regards Michael of Ephesus's work as his main and closest source; the latter is mentioned by name in the commentary on *Met.*, E, 4 and as ὁ ἐξηγητής in the commentary on Z, 15¹⁴⁷. The other two commentators I shall consider are Averroes (1126-1198), the *Commentator*, and Aquinas (1225-1274). As is well known, Aquinas relies on Averroes's commentary in many respects and in this final section I should like to stress in particular how the two commentaries relate to each other in their general reading on *Met.*, I. I must defer the details of the commentaries on *Met.*, I till another occasion. For now I confine myself to a few notes on their general approach to the book as a whole.

Michael of Ephesus's commentary on *Met.*, E-N is preserved after Alexander's commentary on *Met.*, A-Δ under Alexander's name. With respect to *Met.*, I, it is the oldest Greek commentary we have. For unknown reasons, Michael's commentary on *Met.*, I covers only the first six chapters. Ps. Philoponus, who could read Michael's commentary, comments on the whole book without reporting any anomaly in his model. Ps. Philoponus's commentary is very concise and we cannot gather *e silentio* that Michael of Ephesus's commentary did indeed cover the whole book I, but there does not seem to be any particular reason to believe that the restriction of Michael's commentary to the first six chapters is the result of a deliberate choice. I shall not deal with the details of Michael of Ephesus's commentary, but I should like to mention a peculiarity of his reading of *Met.*, I, a peculiarity inherited by ps. Philoponus. In the prologue¹⁴⁸ to his commentary on *Met.*, I Michael divides the book into two parts, corresponding to I, 1-2 and I, 3 ff. (which is nothing peculiar) and sets Aristotle's enquiry within a precise philosophical debate (which is something peculiar): since the philosophers who posited the Ideas maintained the existence of the one itself (αὐτοῦέν), which is by being just one, Aristotle wrote *Met.*, I in order to explore whether such a thing as the one itself exists or not¹⁴⁹. In itself the Pythagorean and Platonic tradition is explicitly addressed by Aristotle himself in *Met.*, I, 2, where he assesses the eleventh *aporia* on the nature of the one. However, Michael adds a suggestion for the curious reader, by referring those who wish to know more about the conception of the one itself to Plato's Dialogue entitled *Parmenides* or *On Ideas*¹⁵⁰. The same reference to Plato's *Parmenides* can be found in the first lines of ps. Philoponus's

¹⁴⁷ In the Latin translation the references are respectively on f. 25rb and f. 32rb.

¹⁴⁸ Ps. AL., *In met.*, 602.12-19.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 10-12: ἐπειδὴ οὖν ταύτην εἶχον περὶ τοῦ ἐνός τὴν ἔννοιαν, ζητήσαι ἐν τῷ παρόντι βιβλίῳ προτίθεται εἰ ἔστι τι τοιοῦτον ἔν ἢ μή.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 8-10: καὶ ὅτῳ φίλον πῶς ταῦτα λέγουσι μαθεῖν, ἐντυχανέτω τὸν ἐπιγραφόμενον Παρμενίδην ἢ Περὶ ἰδεῶν τοῦ Πλάτωνος διάλογον.

commentary to *Met.*, I, 1¹⁵¹. There are two things to observe here. The first is that Michael's straightforward identification of the *Parmenides* with the dialogue in which Plato would present his doctrines on the one itself seems to presuppose some acquaintance with the neo-Platonic interpretation of the dialogue. As it stands, the *Parmenides* is dramatically not explicit on its precise metaphysical scope. The second thing to observe is that nowhere in *Met.*, I does Aristotle refer to the *Parmenides*, whether explicitly or through more or less vaguely recognizable hints of whatever sort. How did Michael come to establish the link between *Met.*, I and the *Parmenides*?¹⁵² Unfortunately, we do not have any earlier commentary on *Met.*, I. Nonetheless, in his discussion of what he reckons as the sixth *aporia* (the second part of the fifth according to Ross), Syrianus explicitly mentions the *Sophist* and the *Parmenides* as the Dialogues in which Plato deals with the dialectical notions mentioned by Aristotle in the sixth *aporia*, and which, Syrianus adds, Aristotle investigates fully in *Met.*, I¹⁵³. In this respect, the Byzantine commentaries on *Met.*, I place the book within a precise philosophical tradition, somehow preserving part of Syrianus's suggestion.

How are things with Averroes and Aquinas? Again, I shall confine myself to a few points which seem to me quite revealing as to the general attitude of the two commentators. It seems to me that, although with different modalities and in some cases with different results, both Averroes and Aquinas make an effort to link as tightly as possible *Met.*, I with Aristotle's analysis of substance. In particular, both commentators tend to make the priority of substance over

¹⁵¹ PS.-PHIL., *In met.*, f. 40ra : « Quoniam ideas ponentes, et ipsum opinabantur esse, id esse ipsum dicentes naturam ipsius, et in ipsum substantia tum esse, sicuti disputatur in Platónico Parmenide, quaerere de ipso proponit in hoc libro ». The division of the book into two parts is perfectly parallel to ps. Alexander's division in the prologue, which ps. Philoponus takes over almost *verbatim*.

¹⁵² It should be added that Michael does not seem to be an illuminated philosophical mind and his commentaries are often jottings of remarks taken from other writings. The reason for this style of composition is not that he was the worst of plagiarists, but, more likely, that he was constantly under pressure to produce a considerable number of commentaries on different writings of Aristotle in order to make Aristotle intelligible to his noble patrons (on this aspect see LUNA, *Trois études* cit., pp. 70-71). Therefore it seems to me quite unlikely that he came to regard *Met.*, I as Aristotle's reply to Plato's *Parmenides* all by himself.

¹⁵³ SYR., *In met.*, 5.27 - 6.9 : καὶ διὰ τοῦτο Πλάτων ἐν τῷ Σοφιστῇ τὰ γένη τοῦ ὄντος διερευνώμενος, ἃ διὰ πάντων φοιτᾷ τῶν ὄντων, ταυτότητα καὶ ἐτερότητα καὶ οὐσίαν καὶ στάσιν καὶ κίνησιν ἀπριθμήσατο [...] καὶ ἔτι ἐν τῷ Παρμενίδῃ τὰ πρῶτα τῶν εἰδῶν ἀπριθμούμενος ὁμοιότητος μέμνηται καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὁμοίως πρότερον τῶν ὑποθέσεων <ἐν> τοῖς περὶ τῶν ἰδεῶν σκέμμασι καὶ ἐν αὐταῖς ταῖς ὑποθέσεσι, διὰ μὲν τῆς πρώτης μόνην τὴν τοῦ ἐνός ὑπερούσιον καὶ ἀπλήδυντον ἀγαθότητα τούτων ἐξαίρων, διὰ δὲ τῆς δευτέρας πάντα τὰ ὄντα ταύταις διακοσμῶν ταῖς αἰτίαις. [...] ὅθεν καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ δαιμόνιος Ἀριστοτέλης ἔν τε τῷ I ταύτης τῆς πραγματείας περὶ πάντων τούτων ἀναδιδάσκει καὶ ἐν τούτοις λεληθῶς κατεσκεύασεν, ὅτι τοῦ σοφοῦ περὶ τούτων ἐπίστασθαι.

all other beings explanatorily significant in their account of *Met.*, I. Aquinas is very explicit on the function and place of *Met.*, I within the enquiry into being and substance ; Averroes is less explicit as to the programmatic reading of the book, but is much more explicit in emphasizing the priority of substance in at least one crucial point. I shall begin with this last aspect.

In *Met.*, I, 1, 1052b18-24 Aristotle claims that being one amounts to the same as being the primary measure in each genus and, in the most appropriate way, in the genus of quantity. Therefore, the one which is the principle of number is what is primarily one, by answering to this description literally. Aristotle then devotes I, 2 to showing that there is no substance which is *the one* and to explaining that in each genus of being what plays the role of the one in that genus must belong to that very genus. In other words, the measure of a certain genus of objects must belong to the same genus as the objects of which it is the measure. After showing this for colours (1053b28 ff.), sounds (1053b32 ff.), geometrical figures (1054a3 ff.) and other genera (1054a4-8), by saying that in each of these cases the essence of what is one in each genus does not consist in being one, Aristotle says that the same holds true for the category of substance (1054a8-9) : the essence of what is one with respect to substances does not consist in being one (i.e. there is no substance which is the one). The same point is expressed a few lines later (1054 a11-13) : « [...] as in the case of colours the one itself must be investigated as one colour, in the same way also in the case of substance the one itself <must be investigated> as one substance »¹⁵⁴. Aristotle seems to be saying that, as in the case of all other genera of being, so in the case of substance, if we want to count substances, we must choose a unit of measurement which is a substance (and not simply one). It is not completely clear whether Aristotle wishes to push the statement any further than this by explaining the sense in which a substance is a measure, i.e. a principle of knowledge, for other substances. If 'measure' just equals 'principle of knowledge', any principle of knowledge can be called a measure. Averroes seems to follow this train of thought to the point of identifying the one or the measure in substance with God or the Unmoved mover, which, according to Averroes, is the final, efficient and formal cause of substances¹⁵⁵.

¹⁵⁴ ARIST., *Met.*, I, 2, 1054a11-13 : [...] ὡςπερ ἐν χρώμασι χρώμα ἐν ζητητέον αὐτὸ τὸ ἓν, οὕτω καὶ ἐν οὐσίᾳ οὐσίαν μίαν αὐτὸ τὸ ἓν : [...].

¹⁵⁵ AVER., *Comm.*, f. 257ra : « Deinde dicit "sed sicut in coloribus etc." i.e. quod est principium esse substantiarum est principium numeri eorum, quae existunt in substantia. Et intendit quod, cum huic fuerit iunctum quod declaratum est in Physicis, scilicet hoc esse primum motorem aeternum et absolutum ab amni materia, et declaravit post quod hoc non solummodo est principium tanquam motor, sed tanquam forma et finis, declarabitur, quod illud est unum, de quo declaratum fuit hoc, quod est principium substantiae : sicut est declaratum, quod est actus ultimus, cui non admiscetur potentia omnino ».

Averroes's reading of this passage, much more ontologically committed than Aristotle's text itself, can be compared with a similar and complementary remark on *Met.*, I, 1 1052a33-34. In this passage Aristotle is explaining what is primarily one in knowledge (τῷ γνωστῷ καὶ τῇ ἐπιστήμῃ) and says that, *in this sense*, the cause of unity for substances is primarily one (ὥσθ' ἐν ἄν εἴη πρῶτον τὸ ταῖς οὐσίαις αἴτιον τοῦ ἐνός). Averroes reads this passage to the effect that the cause of unity for substances is the cause of unity for all beings¹⁵⁶, i.e. the cause of unity for substances is primarily one in general. Finally, Averroes's attention to the priority of substance can be observed at the beginning of his commentary on I, 2: Aristotle says that, with reference to the one, «it must be enquired how things are with reference to substance and nature»¹⁵⁷, and by this he probably just means that we must establish what the one is, i.e. what the nature of the one is (whether it is a self-subsistent principle or a universal predicate). Averroes gives a paraphrase of Aristotle's words at the beginning of his commentary in which he seems to emphasize that we must enquire what the one is in the category of substance¹⁵⁸.

Although we do not have explicit remarks on the overall interpretation of the book as a whole, it seems to me that these remarks reveal at least a tendency, which is the tendency to read the contents of *Met.*, I by emphasizing the priority of substance emerging from *Met.*, Z-Θ and Λ. The same tendency can be seen in Averroes's reading of the πρὸς ἔν structure of the chapters in *Met.*, Δ¹⁵⁹. In this respect Averroes takes over Alexander's remark that the *focus* of all πρὸς ἔν λεγόμενα is substance¹⁶⁰.

The tendency to use the priority of substance over other beings and the centrality of the enquiry into substance as the key for understanding the other parts of the *Metaphysics* and, in our case, *Met.*, I in particular, is quite clear in Aquinas as well. But in contrast to Averroes, in Aquinas this is to be observed more in the analysis of the general structure of the *Metaphysics* than in specific points. Like all the other commentators, Aquinas divides *Met.*, I into two parts. The most interesting aspect of his approach is his constant attempt to tighten the links between Aristotle's enquiry on the one and the

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 250va: «cum primum in unoquoque genere est illud quod non dividitur secundum definitionem in illo genere et substantia est primum omnium entium secundum definitionem, manifestum est quod unum primum quod non dividitur secundum definitionem in substantiam, est causa unius in omnibus generibus entium».

¹⁵⁷ *Met.*, I, 2, 1053b9-10.

¹⁵⁸ AVER., *Comm.*, 255va: «Et cum sit declaratum quod in unoquoque generum est unum quod est primum in illo genere, perscrutemur de natura unius in substantia, quid sit [...]».

¹⁵⁹ Cf. p. 183.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. p. 170.

contraries with the rest of the *Metaphysics*. Apart from more or less sparse but revealing observations in the commentary on *Met.*, I, which I shall not consider here, Aquinas regards *Met.*, I as the appropriate sequel of the books on substance (*Met.*, Z-H) and on being in potency and actuality (*Met.*, Θ). As he has already explained in *Met.*, Δ, Aquinas takes *unum* as another way to designate beings and, therefore, as a way of designating the subject of the science of being *qua* being. To claim this Aquinas relies on *Met.*, Γ, 2, where Aristotle claims that one and being are the same in substratum¹⁶¹. In particular, *Met.*, I belongs to the section of the *Metaphysics*, including books Z-Λ, in which Aristotle deals with being *per se*, after having discussed accidental being and being as true in *Met.*, E. Aquinas divides books Z-Λ into two sections: Z-K, in which Aristotle discusses being *qua* being, and Λ, in which Aristotle discusses the first principles of being. Of books Z-K, Z-H and Θ deals with being as it is said according to the categories and as it is said in actuality and potentiality respectively, while I considers « the one and what follows the one »¹⁶².

Apart from stressing the connection with the enquiry into substance, can we find even a remote hint at Platonic metaphysics strictly speaking? I think the answer is no. References to Plato and Platonic philosophy as such are confined to the places in which Aristotle himself establishes a debate with Platonic doctrines. Even in the discussion on the nature of the one, where

¹⁶¹ AQUINAS, *In Met.*, L. X, l. 1, p. 461, § 1920: « Superius in quarto huius Philosophus ostendit quod ista scientia habet pro subiecto ens, et unum, quod cum ente convertitur. Et ideo, postquam determinavit de ente per accidens et de ente quod significat veritatem propositionis, in sexto; et de ente per se secundum quod dividitur per decem praedicamenta, in septimo et octavo; et secundum quod dividitur per potentiam et actum, in nono: Nunc in hoc decimum intendit determinare de uno, et de his quae consequuntur ad unum: et dividitur in duas partes. In prima determinat de unum secundum se. In secunda per comparisonem ad multa, ibi, "opponuntur autem unum et multa" ».

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, L. VII, l. 1, p. 315, § 1245: « Postquam Philosophus removet a principali consideratione huius scientiae ens per accidens, et ens secundum quod significat verum, hic incipit determinare de ente per se, quod est extra animam, de quo est principalis consideratio huius scientiae. Dividitur autem pars ista in duas partes. Haec enim scientia et determinat de ente in quantum est ens, et de primis principiis entium, ut in sexto libro est habitum. In prima ergo parte determinatur de ente. In secunda de primis principiis entis, in duodecimo libro, ibi "de substantia quidem etc.". Quia vero ens et unum se consequuntur, et sub eadem consideratione cadunt, ut in principio quarti est habitum, ideo prima pars dividitur in partes duas. In prima determinat de ente. In secunda de uno et de his quae consequuntur ad unum, in decimo libro, ibi, "Unum quia multis dicitur". Ens autem per se, quod est extra animam, dupliciter dividitur, ut in quinto libro est habitum. Uno modo per decem praedicamenta, alio modo per potentiam et actum. Dividitur ergo prima pars in duas. In prima determinat de ente secundum quod dividitur per decem praedicamenta. In secunda determinat de ente secundum quod dividitur per potentiam et actum, in nono libro, ibi, "ergo de primo ente etc." ».

Michael of Ephesus and ps. Philoponus refer to Plato's *Parmenides*, in this other branch of Aristotelian commentaries we rather observe the replacement of the controversy between Plato and Aristotle with the controversy with a new interlocutor: Avicenna. As I mentioned, Averroes stresses the idea that the primary one and the primary being are one and the same thing, namely the primary substance which is God. The universal predicate 'one', which is convertible with 'being', is primarily said of substance and derivatively said of any other being. In clarifying his position, Averroes starts a debate on the nature of the transcendental one by stressing an alleged mistake by Avicenna, who is accused of confusing the transcendental one with the numerical one. Aquinas takes over Averroes's polemic in a way analogous to the way in which ps. Philoponus takes over from Michael of Ephesus the idea that Aristotle writes *Met.*, I in opposition to Plato's *Parmenides*.

To conclude, it would seem that we can individuate two main general interpretative lines of *Met.*, I. At the beginning of both we find Alexander as the first authority on the *littera* of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Unfortunately we lack many rings in the chain, but, from what we have, we can trace the more or less conscious inscription of *Met.*, I in a tradition starting with Pythagorean and Platonic philosophy and texts on the Platonic branch of Syrianus-Ammonius-Asclepius down to Michael of Ephesus and ps. Philoponus; on the other 'Aristotelian' branch, in this paper represented by (Alexander-)Averroes-Aquinas, we can see the development of a substance-minded and, as it were, 'inter-Aristotelian' reading, which emphasizes the priority of substance as the basic key to read and explain Aristotle's *Metaphysics*¹⁶³.

¹⁶³ I am very grateful to all the people who read all or part of the paper providing helpful suggestions and comments. In particular I should like to thank (in alphabetical order) Mauro Bonazzi, Francesco Del Punta, Gabriele Galluzzo, Michael Griffin, Christoph Helmig and Richard Sorabji. Last but not least I should like to thank my friend and colleague Nat Stein for revising my English and proofreading the paper.

ABSTRACT

In *Met.*, B, 1-2 and Γ , 2 Aristotle outlines a project of enquiry into a group of general notions which he might want to identify with the *per se* accidents of being and substance. These passages are far from being uncontroversial both from the terminological and from the doctrinal point of view. Part I of the paper presents these texts and the main problems arising from them, while Part II shows how the different commentators try to fill in the doctrinal *lacunae* left open by Aristotle's explicit statements. The discussion of the different solutions of the commentators points at a group of writings, which are regarded as the places where Aristotle provides an analysis of the general notions included in the project of enquiry outlined in *Met.*, Γ , 2. In particular, Syrianus thinks that *Met.*, Iota is the book where Aristotle accomplishes such an enquiry. Part III presents this group of writings and, more particularly, sketches two main interpretative trends on the place and role of *Met.*, Iota.

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Greek, Arab and Latin Commentators on Per Se Accidents of Being qua Being and the Place of Aristotle, Metaphysics, Book Iota. Castelli. Die atmende Form in der Materie. Le commentaire de Syrianus à cette section (151.4-154.3) se révèle un peu décevant en ce qu'il répond pas sur ce point à Aristote. Pour Syrianus en effet, les nombres idéaux ne sont pas monadiques (idée qui sera défendue par CookWilson en 1904 et Cherniss en 1945 et qui est encore l'opinion communis des interprètes modernes). Book Epsilon is brief: it returns to the science of being qua being, and also passes some remarks on truth. Books Zeta, Eta and Theta hang together, and together they form the core of the Metaphysics. The following book, Iota, concerns itself with the notions of unity ('oneness') and identity. Book Kappa consists of 1 di 8 04/12/2013 18.14 Aristotle and the Science of Being qua Being <http://www.ontology.co/being-qua-being.htm> a résumé of Gamma, Delta, and Epsilon and of parts of the Physics. In book Lambda, we return to the study of beings and of first principles: the book contains Aristotle's theology, his account of the 'unmoved movers', which are in some sense the supreme entities in his universe.