

IIIγ2: Λ7, Λ9: the ἀρχή as νοῦς and as the good

Aristotle thinks that the ἀρχή that moves the heavens is νοῦς. But how does he know? At what stage in the argument of Λ is this conclusion supposed to be justified, and how?

Certainly by some point in Λ7 1072b14-30 Aristotle must think he has a right to describe the moving ἀρχή as νοῦς--"and [the ἀρχή, or 'the god'] is life: for the ἐνέργεια of νοῦς is life, and [the ἀρχή, or 'the god'] is the ἐνέργεια" (1072b26-7)--but how has the application of the terms "νοῦς" and "god" been justified? From the part of Λ7 before 1072b14-30 it seems that all we knew about the ἀρχή was that it was an object of thought and desire, and (as we knew already from Λ6) a simple subsistent ἐνέργεια. Of course, much of what Aristotle has said about the ἀρχή is a refinement of what Anaxagoras and Plato has said about νοῦς; so perhaps he feels that, once he has purged whatever in their descriptions would imply δύναμις or materiality, he has the right to take over whatever survives, including the description of the ἀρχή as νοῦς. And if it is νοῦς, perhaps it is safe to infer that it is a divine νοῦς--it is certainly not a human νοῦς. But given how careful Aristotle has been to derive each predicate of the ἀρχή step by step, it would be disconcerting if, in Λ7 1072b14-30, he simply lapsed into hymnody, uttering a succession of divine attributes without logical connection or justification. At first sight, it can certainly look as if this is what he is doing.

In fact, there is an argument. And Aristotle is not simply inferring further predicates of a being which is "god" and "νοῦς", but justifying the application of those names to the ἀρχή he has been discussing throughout Λ7. The argument is not fully explicit, but after all most of the arguments of Λ are not fully explicit. Throughout Λ, Aristotle uses compressed formulae to call up arguments that he is made earlier in the Metaphysics or in the physical or ethical works. How much he would have filled in this background in an oral presentation of Λ, and how much he would have expected his hearers (assumed to have followed his lectures on first philosophy from the beginning, and to have heard his courses on everything else already) to fill it in for themselves, we do not know. But in any case we will have to fill some of it in for him.

In this section I will consider the arguments of Λ7 1072b14-30 that the moving ἀρχή is νοῦς and a god together with the arguments of Λ9 about what this νοῦς νοεῖ and how it νοεῖ it, and with the (mostly implicit) argument of Λ10 that this νοῦς is the good-itself (which is only one of many things that happen in Λ10). These arguments function together, not simply as sequential stages of a long argument, but as different aspects of the development of a single concept of νοῦς. And sometimes the underlying assumptions which are needed to make sense of Λ7 1072b14-30 are stated more clearly in Λ9 or Λ10.

One strategy for showing that the ἀρχή is a νοῦς, and for determining what it νοεῖ and how, is to argue: "it is a god; the gods, to be happy, must be active (they cannot be asleep, especially not eternally asleep); but every activity that we can imagine it engaging in, except thinking, presupposes something inconsistent with divinity; furthermore, most kinds of thinking also presuppose something inconsistent with divinity; therefore it must engage in a special kind of νόησις which does not have these presuppositions." Aristotle argues in this way in Nicomachean Ethics X,8 to show that the gods engage in contemplation, although he does not there try to determine what they contemplate or in what special way. Some of Λ9 is taking up this argument-strategy and trying to determine what νοῦς must contemplate and how, in order to be most divine: "the doctrine of νοῦς [τὰ περὶ τὸν νοῦν] involves some aporiai. For this [sc. νοῦς] seems to be the most divine of the things which are evident to us; but how it would be disposed in order

to be such [sc. most divine] involves some difficulties. If it νοεῖ nothing, what in it would be worthy of worship [σεμνόν]? it would be as if it were asleep. But if it νοεῖ, and something else is master over it (for what its οὐσία is is not νόησις but δύναμις), it would not be the best οὐσία: for what is valuable [τίμιον] belongs to it through νοεῖν [sc. and therefore it would acquire its value from something else--what it νοεῖ, or what makes it νοεῖν--so this must be more valuable, contrary to hypothesis]" (1074b15-21).¹ But this argument cannot get started unless we first establish that the thing we are talking about--the ἀρχή that moves the heavens--is a god. Certainly we know from arguments early in Λ7 that this ἀρχή is good, and perhaps even that it is the best. But the inference "it is best, therefore it is a god" would be controversial: the Republic's form of the good is in some sense "divine," but there is nothing to suggest that it is itself a god or that it lives or thinks. Perhaps, without using the word "god," we could say that, to be best, it must have some ἐνέργεια, and then argue by elimination that this ἐνέργεια can only be νόησις. But, while Aristotle certainly thinks he can show that it must be essentially ἐνέργεια rather than δύναμις, it is not obvious why this must be ἐνέργεια in the sense of activity rather than simply actuality; or, if it is ἐνέργεια in the sense of activity, why it cannot be simply its acting on the heaven to make itself known and desired. So, to show that the ἀρχή has (and therefore is) an activity of thinking, Aristotle needs another argument that will not depend on the premiss that it is a god; he will show that it is a god from the fact that it is νοῦς, rather than vice versa.

This is how Aristotle seems to be proceeding in Λ7 1072b14-30. The structure of the argument is unclear, and much of it is merely implicit, but 1072b26-30 do (as we will see) infer that the being under discussion is a god from the fact that it is νοῦς, and so the preceding argument should not be arguing that it is νοῦς from the fact that it is a god; and there is nothing in the passage to suggest an elimination-argument that this being's activity can only be νόησις.

What we know antecedently about this being is that it is "eternal and substance and ἐνέργεια" (Λ7 1072a25), and therefore without matter (which would imply δύναμις), and that it is the object of the heaven's thought and desire, presumably not due to any failure or limitation on the heaven's part, but because it is capable and worthy of being thought and desired. The step that gets us from here to the conclusion that this being is νοῦς is that "the same thing is νοῦς and νοητόν" (Λ7 1072b21); more fully, "in some cases the knowledge is the object ... the νοούμενον and the νοῦς not being different [in] such things as do not have matter [i.e. in cases where the νοούμενον has no matter], they will be the same, and the νόησις will be one with the νοούμενον" (Λ9 1074b38-1075a1, 1075a3-5). Λ does not properly argue for the claim that, in cases where the νοητόν has no matter, the νοῦς or the νόησις is identical with the νοητόν, nor does it spell out fully in what sense this assertion is meant. To clarify the meaning and the argument, we will need to fill out Λ with material from the De Anima.²

¹check for consistency of translation. it is tempting to translate εἴτε ... εἴτε as "either ... or," to get an aporia with a dilemmatic structure. but each half is supplied with what looks like an apodosis, in the optative with ἄν; "either P1, in which case Q1, or P2, in which case Q2"? on this reading, what is the function of τούτου δ' ἄλλο κύριον? "if P2 and P2', then Q2"? if so, not a logically exhaustive dilemma, and the result seems not much different from Ross' construal (which I have largely followed above). or "if P2, then P2' and Q2," filling out the aporia with a prima facie (although ultimately false) inference from P2 to P2'? but then why isn't P2' put in the optative with ἄν like Q2?

²much of what follows, on De Anima III,4-5, is a summary of my paper "From De Anima III,4 to De Anima III,5," given at Davis in October 2002; I argue for some claims more fully there. I am also drawing some points from "Aristotle and Plato on God as Nous and as the Good" about the possibility of a separately existing virtue for Aristotle. {have I said anything about this earlier in the present manuscript? I've restated some conclusions of Plato on God as Nous, and said that the world-ordering νοῦς for Anaxagoras and Plato is a νοῦς-itself in which souls participate in order to think and act rationally or wisely, that is, a separately existing virtue. not sure I've said this is also Aristotle's view; and must go through why the other virtues can't exist apart and this one can (no objection to

De Anima III,4 on the identity of νοῦς with its object

One basic problem is to determine what sense of "νοῦς" is meant when it is said that νοῦς is identical with its νοητόν, or with its νοητόν stripped of matter if it originally had matter. There is much opportunity for ambiguity here, since "νοῦς" can mean (at least) the intellectual part or power of the soul, an intellectual virtue or ἔξις which the soul participates in (often indistinguishable from ἐπιστήμη, sometimes concerned with simples and principles while ἐπιστήμη is concerned with conclusions), or an act of intellectual perception. To begin with, Aristotle clearly intends this identity to apply to νοῦς in the sense of an ἐνέργεια, and not (or only in a weakened sense) to νοῦς in the sense of a δύναμις: "ἐπιστήμη κατ' ἐνέργειαν is the same as the object" (DA III,5 430a19-20 [wrongly bracketed in Ross' editio maior], repeated III,7 431a1-2); "ἐπιστήμη and αἴσθησις are divided in correspondence with the objects, the potential [δυνάμει] with the potential and the actual [ἐντελεχείᾳ] with the actual; the αἰσθητικόν and ἐπιστημονικόν [parts or powers] of the soul are [only] potentially these things, the ἐπιστητόν and the αἰσθητόν" (DA III,8 431b24-8). However, this is not enough to solve the problem, since the contrast between the knower κατὰ δύναμιν and the knower κατ' ἐνέργειαν can mean either of two things in Aristotle: it can distinguish the person who merely can acquire some art or science from the person who has actually acquired it, or it can distinguish the person who merely has the ἔξις, the art or science, from the person who is currently exercising the art by acting or the science by contemplating (DA II,5 417a21-b2 etc.). So is it the ἔξις of knowledge, or the ἐνέργεια in the strict sense (the exercise of the ἔξις), or both, that are identical with their objects? It might easily be thought that when Aristotle says "ἐπιστήμη κατ' ἐνέργειαν is the same as the object," he means this to hold only for ἐνέργεια in the strict sense.³ But, taking all the texts together, this cannot be his view. "The art of medicine [ἡ ἰατρικὴ τέχνη] is the λόγος of health" (Metaphysics Λ3 1070a29-30) refers unambiguously to the ἔξις. The longer parallel "in a way health comes-to-be from health and house from house, the one that has matter from the one without matter, for medicine [ἡ ἰατρικὴ] and housebuilding [ἡ οἰκοδομικὴ] are the form of health and house, by οὐσία without matter I mean the essence" (Z7 1032b11-14),⁴ although it does not use the word "τέχνη", is really not any more ambiguous, since the ending -ική implies an ability (it is also feminine because it modifies an implicit "τέχνη" or "ἐπιστήμη" or conceivably "δύναμις"); so likewise "medicine [ἡ ἰατρικὴ] is in a way health" (Λ10 1075b10). De Anima III,4 speaks of νοῦς "becoming each thing in the way [in which one] is called ἐπιστημῶν κατ' ἐνέργειαν--and this happens when one is able to act [δύνηται ἐνεργεῖν] on one's own" (429b6-8): this νοῦς it is still δυνάμει, although not in the same way as

separate virtues as such, rather a series of tests for whether a given virtue can exist separately, cp. NE X,8 testing whether the gods can have these virtues); this is connected with tanzīh/tashbīh, a subject I've danced around but never properly introduced, but should go back and introduce it. I came closest in Ia4, and I did there discuss the related issue of the good-itself, d go back and compare.} on many points, but not all, I think I am in agreement with Alexander's interpretation (in his De Anima, which, though not formally a commentary, closely follows Aristotle's thought and often his wording); however, Alexander's text is often so abbreviated that interpreting him is not much easier than interpreting Aristotle. my main disagreement is to reject his theory of abstraction, and, in particular, to deny that the ποιητικὸς νοῦς plays any role in abstracting forms from matter

³so e.g. Kosman: "[i]t is always the case, on Aristotle's view, that in the act of awareness, the activity and its object are one. This identity of course occurs only in the active exercise of sense and cognition, and only with respect to the actualization of the sensible and intelligible object" (FC p.319)

⁴uniformize translation with IIγ2

before (b8-9), but this "second δύναμις" or ἔξις is nonetheless identical with its object. And when *De Anima* III, 4 says that "θεωρητικὴ ἐπιστήμη and what is known in this way are the same" (430a4-5), and when the parallel in *Metaphysics* Λ9 says that "in some cases the ἐπιστήμη is the object ... ἐπὶ τῶν θεωρητικῶν the λόγος is both the object and the νόησις" (1074b38-1075a3), once again θεωρητικὴ ἐπιστήμη is unambiguously the ἔξις.⁵ So it is clear enough that Aristotle thinks the ἔξις-knowledge of X is just X itself, or X stripped of its matter, somehow present in the soul. But why should he think this?⁶

It seems clear that when Aristotle works out his psychology of knowledge in *DA* III,4-8, he is starting from his theory of sensation and trying to make the theory of knowledge analogous as far as possible. Both in sensation and in intellectual knowledge, we cognize X by having X itself, or the form of X without its matter, somehow present in us--and not, say, by having present in us a likeness or a symbolic representation of X. "Universally about every sense [αἴσθησις] one must grasp that the sense is what is receptive of sensible forms without the matter, as wax receives the sign of the signet ring without the iron or the gold, taking on the golden or brazen sign but not qua gold or bronze" (*DA* II,12 424a17-21); what comes to be in the soul "must be either [the objects] themselves or the forms; but not themselves, for the stone is not in the soul, but rather the form" (III,8 431b28-432a1). Aristotle does not make it explicit why sensation must come about in this way, but a plausible line of thought is as follows: sensation is an ἐνέργεια simultaneously of the sentient and of the sensible, being an action of the sensible and a passion of the sentient; if the sensible object were not acting on us in sensation, the sensation would not genuinely be of the object. But an agent cannot act at a distance: the sensible and the sentient must meet up, not in the space between as in the *Theaetetus* and *Timaeus*, but in the sentient. The ἐνέργεια of the agent is in the patient, and if the sensible is to have its ἐνέργεια in us, then either it must be somehow present "to" or "in" us beforehand so as to be able to act in us; or else it must now come-to-be present to or in us, in order to act in us; or else its coming-to-be present to or in us just is how it acts on us. Now if these are good reasons why the sensible object or sensible form must be present in us in sensation, they should be equally good reasons why the intelligible object or its form should be present to us in intellectual cognition, since Aristotle explicitly assimilates the causal role of the objects of intellection and of sensation: "if νοεῖν is like sensing, it would be being-acted-on by the νοητόν, or something else similar" (*DA* III,4 429a13-15). But there is an important difference, because in sensation there is only the δύναμις and the ἐνέργεια, whereas in intellectual cognition there is also the intermediate state of the

⁵Richard Norman, commenting on the *DA* III,4 passage, says that Aristotle uses "the phrase 'theoretic knowledge' to describe the second stage of thinking" (*Articles on Aristotle* v.4 p.95), i.e. ἐνέργεια- rather than ἔξις-knowledge. conceivably he thinks that "θεωρητικὴ ἐπιστήμη" means "ἐπιστήμη in the sense of the θεωρία"; or perhaps he just takes it for granted that the ἔξις-knowledge cannot be identical with its object, and concludes that Aristotle must be talking about the ἐνέργεια here. in any case, this is not what "θεωρητικὴ ἐπιστήμη" means.

⁶note also, as in the added note to the Davis paper, that *DA* III,4 430a4-6, passing immediately from the identity of θεωρητικὴ ἐπιστήμη with its object to the question about the cause τοῦ μὴ ἀεὶ νοεῖν, strongly supports my claim that it is the ἔξις-knowledge that it is being identified with its object. I have been discussing whether it is the ἔξις-knowledge or the ἐνέργεια-knowledge that is identical with the object. but it may be suggested that it is the soul (or the rational part of the soul) that becomes identical with the object. I do not think this view can be seriously defended (is my soul really the form of horse? is it also the form of camel, when I know both horse and camel? are the forms of horse and camel therefore the same?), but Aristotle does sometimes talk this way. however, he easily modulates out of this language into the more correct language of the identity of the knowledge (not the knowing soul) with its object. a nice example is in *DA* III,8: "the soul somehow is all the things that are: for the things that are are either sensibles or intelligibles, and the knowledge [ἐπιστήμη] is somehow the knowables, and the sensation the sensibles, but how, we must investigate" (431b21-4)

ἔξις. "There is a difference, because in the first case the things productive of the ἐνέργεια are from outside, the visible and the audible and likewise for the other sensibles. The reason is that sensation κατ' ἐνέργειαν is of individuals, whereas ἐπιστήμη is of universals, and these are somehow in the soul itself; for this reason it is up to it to νοῆσαι whenever it wants, but not to sense, for the sensible must be present" (DA II,5 417b19-26). This acquired ability to contemplate whenever we want does not mean that the object does not act on us when we contemplate, but rather that the object has already come to be present in us (without its matter if any), and remains present in us, in such a way that it can act on us without anything further coming to us from outside. For the object to act on us, and so ἐνεργεῖν in us, is also for us to ἐνεργεῖν κατὰ the object; and for us to be able to ἐνεργεῖν κατὰ X, or (equivalently) to be able to use or exercise [χρηῆσθαι] X, whenever we want, is just what it is for us to have [ἔχειν] X, and this is true equally whether X is simply a ἔξις of the soul (say, a virtue) or whether X is something external (money, or a tool, or a part of our own body). And for S to have X in some sense is also for X to be in S in some sense: "'to be in something' is said in similar and corresponding ways to 'to have'" (Metaphysics Δ23 1023a23-5).⁷ There is no difference between the intelligible object X (stripped of its matter if any) being in us so that it can act in us, and the knowledge of X being in us so that we can exercise it; the object X (without its matter if any) and the knowledge of X simply are the same thing, present in our soul. At any rate, this is what Aristotle is claiming in De Anima III,4 when he says that "theoretical knowledge and what is known in this way are the same" (430a4-5); more clarification on his intentions will come when we examine the argument-context of this assertion.

First, however, we should note a reservation in Aristotle's contrast between intellectual and sensory cognition, when he says that the presence of an intelligible object (or its form) in us yields a ἔξις which we can exercise in thinking the object whenever we want. "It is up to [the cognizer] to νοῆσαι whenever it wants, but not to sense, for the sensible must be present, and this holds likewise in the ἐπιστήμαι which are of sensible things, and for the same reason, namely that sensibles are individual and external" (DA II,5 417b24-8, partly quoted above, new emphasis). These "ἐπιστήμαι which are of sensible things" cannot be simply sensations; they must be intellectual ἔξεις, directed toward a universal. But they cannot be exercised without sensation. The characteristic exercise of such a science would be recognizing some sensible individual as falling under the universal type which the science is of. Indeed, in Metaphysics M10, Aristotle claims that the exercise of knowledge is always directed toward an individual: "the [claim that] all knowledge [ἐπιστήμη] is universal ... is true in one way and not true in another way. For knowledge, like to-know, is twofold, in potentiality and in actuality. The potentiality [= the ἔξις], like matter, being universal and indeterminate,⁸ is [knowledge] of what is universal and indeterminate, but the actuality is determinate and of what is determinate, a this and of a this: [only] per accidens does sight see the universal color, because this color which it sees is [a] color, and [the literate person {γραμματικός} perceives the universal alpha per accidens, because] what the literate person discerns [θεωρεῖ], this alpha, is [an] alpha" (1087a10-21; cp. DA II,5 417a28-9, where the person exercising γραμματική is described as "already contemplating, being in actuality and in the primary sense knowing this-alpha-here"). It

⁷note that "the affairs of Greece are in the King" (Physics IV,3 210a21-2), i.e. in his control; this is correlative to the first sense of ἔχειν from Metaphysics Δ23, "to lead [something] according to one's own nature or impulse, whence the fever is said to ἔχειν the man, and the tyrants the cities, and the wearers the clothes" (1023a8-11). this seems to be ἔχειν = δύνασθαι χρηῆσθαι.

⁸deleting τοῦ before καθόλου (with Bonitz, Jaeger, Ross, Annas)

is not clear how far Aristotle really means this claim to extend. Surely even in sciences which can be applied to make judgments about sensible things, not every exercise depends on a sensible instance being present to us: even in γραμματική, I could contemplate a universal theorem such as "alpha is a vowel" or "there are seven vowels." However, even in such cases, where no external sensible instance is needed, Aristotle will say that the exercise depends on our having at least a sensory image, a "phantasm": "since nothing at all exists separated beyond [κεχωρισμένον παρά] sensible magnitudes, as it seems [ὡς δοκεῖ], the intelligibles are in sensible forms, both those [intelligibles] which are said by abstraction [i.e. mathematical] and those which are states and affections of sensibles. And for this reason, if [the knower] did not sense anything, he would not learn or understand anything, and whenever he contemplates, he must always contemplate some image at the same time [ἄμα]" (DA III,8 432a3-9), so that thoughts "are not images, but are not without images" (a13-14). Someone who thinks in this way would be like the geometers of the Republic, who are not thinking about their diagrams but cannot think without them--and who could presumably sometimes dispense with external diagrams, but not with diagrams in the imagination, and who thus could not contemplate, could not prove their theorems, without the sensory powers and their organs. Here too it is not clear how far Aristotle means his claim to extend: he wants it to include physics and mathematics, but his argument that every exercise of thought is not without sensation turns on the "seeming" premiss that "nothing at all exists separated beyond sensible magnitudes," and Aristotle does not believe this to be true without exception. Presumably Aristotle does not in the end believe that the exercise of our knowledge of separate immaterial substances depends on a sensory instance or image: these sciences are not "sciences of sensibles" in any way. Still, Aristotle is pointing out that many intellectual cognitions do have a surprising degree of dependence on the senses. This is apparently also the point of the passage in De Anima III,4, qualifying the initial claim that "the sensory [power] is not without body, but νοῦς is separable [χωριστός]" (429b4-5). As Aristotle says at the end of this passage, "as the objects are separable from matter, so too will what concerns νοῦς [be likewise separable from matter]" (429b21-2). Thus while there is νοῦς of an enmattered form such as the essence of flesh, this νοῦς is not separable from matter, because "flesh is not without matter, but is like the snub, this-[form]-in-this-[matter]" (429b13-14), and therefore cannot be known without its appropriate matter, which cannot be known without sensation and its organs. So Aristotle says that while the soul judges this matter "by the sensitive [power]," it judges the essence "either by something else which is separable [from the sensitive power] or by [something which is to the sensitive power] as a line bent back is to itself extended straight" (429b16-17): the intention is apparently that although the νοῦς which cognizes separate immaterial things is separable from sensation and from matter, the νοῦς which cognizes material forms like the essence of flesh is not a separable power, but is the sensitive power somehow disposed, related to the sensitive power as line bent back to same line straight; it will therefore have some indirect dependence on bodies. And this result is not because the essence of flesh is a particularly bad case of a form: all natural forms are like this, indeed so are all mathematical forms ("the straight is like the snub, for it is together with [i.e. cannot be without] the continuous," 429b18-19), and only what exists separately from all matter can be cognized apart from the cognition of its appropriate matter.

With this clarified, we can turn to examine Aristotle's assertion that "theoretical knowledge and what is known in this way are the same" in its context in De Anima III,4, in the hope that the argument-context will shed light on its meaning both here and in the Λ9 parallel. In De Anima III,4 it comes up in solving an aporia that Aristotle raises at the end of the chapter, after settling

the points we have discussed so far. Aristotle starts by asking "whether [νοῦς] is itself νοητός" (429b26).⁹ Clearly it should be, if by νοῦς we mean the ἔξις, and if the ἔξις simply is the intelligible object (or its form) present in the soul; the *De Anima* affirms further down that "[νοῦς] itself is νοητός just as the νοητά are" (430a2-3) and Λ7 confirms, "νοῦς νοεῖ itself according to its participation [μετάληψις] in the νοητόν, for when it touches and νοεῖ, it becomes νοητός, so that the same thing is νοῦς and νοητόν" (1072b19-21). But then there is a dilemma: either the νοῦς (meaning apparently the ἔξις), besides what it is in common with the intelligible (if nothing else, the attribute of being intelligible), also has some additional attribute that distinguishes it from the intelligible (we might think of this additional attribute either as a νοῦς-differentia added to the genus of the intelligible, or as a νοῦς-substratum to which the intelligible is added), or else it does not have any additional attribute, and so is identical with the intelligible at least in species. In the second case, "νοῦς will belong to the other [νοητά] as well" (429b27), so that everything that is thinkable and knowable will itself be thinking and knowing, which seems absurd. In the first case, "[νοῦς] will have some admixture which makes it intelligible like the others" (429b28-9), contradicting the claim developed earlier in *De Anima* III,4 that νοῦς is simple and unmixed. How much of a problem this is may depend on what we mean by "νοῦς": Aristotle seems not to object to a composition between an underlying νοῦς-δύναμις and a νοῦς-ἔξις, because (as *De Anima* III,4 stresses) the δύναμις has no nature of its own, but he certainly wants to avoid any composition in the ἔξις itself, say between something it has in common with its νοητόν and something that makes it distinctively νοῦς.

To understand how Aristotle solves this aporia, the key point is to see that he distinguishes between the case where the νοητόν is without matter and the case where the νοητόν has matter:

In [ἐπί + gen.] things that are without matter the νοοῦν and the νοούμενον are the same thing: for theoretical knowledge [ἐπιστήμη] and what is known in this way are the same But in [ἐν] things that have matter, [the νοῦς] is potentially each of the νοητά, so that νοῦς will not belong to them [= the νοητά] (for the νοῦς of such things is a δύναμις without matter), but the νοητόν [= being νοητόν] will belong to it [= νοῦς]. (430a3-9)¹⁰

So νοητά that have matter will not themselves be thinking and knowing, because in this case the νοῦς is not identical with the νοητόν: rather, the νοῦς of these things is only potentially [δυνάμει] each of the νοητά, which must be connected with the claim that the νοῦς of such things is a δύναμις without matter, and thus is distinguished from the things themselves, which contain matter. The clearest case for such a claim would be where the νοῦς-ἔξις is a productive art such as the art of housebuilding, and the νοητά are the houses: the ἔξις of knowledge about houses is the art of housebuilding, which is a δύναμις without matter for producing houses, and is in that sense δυνάμει a house (not because it can become a house but because it can produce one), but is not actually a house. But in denying the identity of νοῦς with νοητόν in this case, does Aristotle not fall onto one horn of the dilemma, by admitting that νοῦς has an additional

⁹actually this is the second aporia he raises here; I'll skip the first

¹⁰note the Budé, following its favorite manuscript Ha (not collated by Ross), reads "only potentially each of the νοητά". footnote summarizing arguments of the Davis paper against some other construals here (i) on ἐπί and ἐν; (ii) on "in things that have matter, [the νοῦς] is potentially each of the νοητά", construed in one way by Ross ("each of the νοητά is potentially present in the things that have matter"), and in another by Alexander (roughly "in things that have matter, each of the νοητά is potentially [νοητόν]")

attribute distinguishing it from the νοητόν, so that it will contain some admixture and not be simple? No, because the νοῦς (the art) is distinguished from the νοητά (the artifacts) not by containing something additional, but by not containing the matter which the νοητά contain: it is not more composite than the νοητά, but less composite.

The way Aristotle treats the other case, the νοητά that are without matter, is very different. His conclusion that "νοῦς will not belong to them [= the νοητά]" is explicitly limited to νοητά that have matter, and rests on the premiss that because νοῦς is without matter it will not be actually identical with these νοητά. Since "in things that are without matter the νοοῦν and the νοούμενον are the same thing," in this case Aristotle must simply accept the conclusion that the intelligible object itself thinks and knows. He must then try to show that this conclusion, restricted to this case, is not as absurd as it seems.

There is sometimes felt to be a difficulty about where the dividing line between the "things that are without matter" and the "things that have matter" is supposed to fall. From the way Aristotle argues it seems clear that the objects of "theoretical ἐπιστήμη" are all supposed to be "things that are without matter"; and, as we have seen, the clearest case for Aristotle's description of the "things that have matter" would be the objects of a productive ἐπιστήμη like the art of housebuilding. Since physics is a theoretical science according to Metaphysics E1, this suggests that the objects of physics should be included among the "things that are without matter": we would therefore have to take the objects of physics to be, not natural matter-form composites, but natural forms somehow abstracted from their matter. But this cannot be what Aristotle means here, since, if it were, he would be committed to the absurd conclusion that the objects of physics are themselves thinking and knowing; and it is no improvement to say that these objects are not composite minerals and vegetables but the forms of minerals and vegetables instead. Aristotle nowhere describes the forms that physics studies as being "without matter": on the contrary, these forms are like snubness, "neither without matter nor according to matter" (Physics II,2 194a12-15, longer parallel Metaphysics E1 1025b30-1026a6). And if, against his usual practice, Aristotle were here to describe the form of a natural thing as "without matter," then the form of an artifact would be equally "without matter," and so the knowledge of things without matter would have to include productive ἐπιστήμη as well, rather than, as Aristotle intends here, being coextensive with "theoretical ἐπιστήμη". It seems clear, then, that the "things that are without matter" in DA III,4 430a3 are not forms of material things, but are things really existing separated from matter, and that the "theoretical ἐπιστήμη" which is identical with its object at 430a4-5 is restricted to the knowledge of these separated things, and therefore does not include physics. This usage certainly contrasts with that of Metaphysics E1, which says that physics "is neither practical nor productive" (1025b21, argument through b24), and concludes that "if all thought is either practical or productive or theoretical, physics would be θεωρητική τις, but [ἀλλά] theoretical about that sort of being which is capable of being moved, and about an οὐσία-in-the-sense-of-λόγος for the most part only as inseparable" (b25-8). But another passage, De Partibus Animalium I,1 639b30-640a9, contrasts physics with the "theoretical ἐπιστήμη", which argue from "what is" to what follows from that, whereas physics argues from "what will be" to what must be for that to come about: since physics shares this characteristic with the arts, the implication is apparently that physics is a productive ἐπιστήμη, not because we ourselves use this knowledge to produce anything, but because we reproduce nature's own deliberations about how to produce things, or, rather, we reproduce how nature would have deliberated if nature were the sort of agent that deliberated. Indeed, when Metaphysics E1 speaks of physics as "θεωρητική τις, but [ἀλλά] ...", it seems that this text is either deliberately weakening the sense

of "θεωρητική" or at least controversially widening its extension. So it is not shocking that the De Partibus Animalium I,1 and De Anima III,4 should assume that only the sciences of things without matter are θεωρητικά.¹¹

Aristotle has thus resolved the aporia of De Anima III,4 429b26-9 except in the case of the knowledge of things really existing separated from matter, in which case he accepts one horn of the dilemma and says that the νοῦς-ἔξις is identical with the νοητόν, and that the νοητόν therefore νοεῖ. The De Anima contains no arguments sufficient to determine whether there are any such cases or not. As we saw, De Anima III,8 says that "nothing at all exists separated beyond [κεχωρισμένον παρά] sensible magnitudes, as it seems [ὡς δοκεῖ], the intelligibles are in sensible forms, both those [intelligibles] which are said by abstraction [i.e. mathematical] and those which are states and affections of sensibles" (432a3-6). But the qualification "ὡς δοκεῖ" must be meant seriously, since we know that Aristotle does not accept the conclusion. A "thing that is without matter" might be, say, a Platonic form: certainly the De Anima gives no arguments against such forms, and it does not even speak against them until the passage from DA III,8, which speaks equally against things that Aristotle himself believes in; so, for the time being, the possible case of Platonic forms must be taken seriously. It is certainly surprising to be told that something like the Platonic form of triangle or of horse is a thinking and knowing being. It is not manifestly absurd, as it would be manifestly absurd to say that the immanent form of a natural body is thinking and knowing, but we cannot say that the aporia of De Anima III,4 429b26-9 is fully resolved at this point in the argument; to resolve it, we would want to determine more about how such immaterial νοητά would think and know, and how their thinking and knowing is related to ordinary human thinking and knowing.

From De Anima III,4 to De Anima III,5

This seems to be the point of De Anima III,5, where Aristotle distinguishes two ways of being νοῦς.

Since in every nature there is one thing which is matter for each genus (this is what is potentially all those things), and another which is the cause and agent/maker [ποιεῖν], through making [them] all, as the art is related to the matter, necessarily these distinctions must exist also in the case of the soul [ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ]: what is like this [= what plays the role of matter] is νοῦς through becoming all things, and the latter [is νοῦς] through making them all, as a kind of ἔξις, like light: for in a way light too makes what are potentially colors actually colors. And this νοῦς is separate and impassible and unmixed, being essentially ἐνέργεια: for the agent is always superior to the patient and the ἀρχή to the matter. Knowledge [ἐπιστήμη] κατ' ἐνέργειαν is the same as the object;

¹¹note the end of Physics II,8 on nature as-if-deliberating: "if [the art of] shipbuilding were in the wood". note that De Partibus Animalium I,1 itself uses θεωρ- terms liberally, and says that physics or the physicist is θεωρητικός of this or that (but not, I think, just θεωρητικός without a dependent genitive). but when there is an official classification of the sciences, physics is not among the θεωρητικά. in Metaphysics E1, to make an important point (some forms cannot exist apart from matter and cannot even be studied scientifically apart from matter), Aristotle classifies differently. the Metaphysics view is presumably Aristotle's considered decision, but the view of the other texts is a natural default position for him when he is not putting any special effort into revising the standard classification. the Stoics apparently think that physics, like ethics, is both theoretical and practical (where they, like Aristotle sometimes, seem not to distinguish practical from productive knowledge): see my "Physics as a Virtue"

knowledge κατὰ δύναμιν is temporally prior [to knowledge κατ' ἐνέργειαν] in the individual, but universally it is not prior even temporally.¹² Rather, [knowledge or νοῦς κατ' ἐνέργειαν] does not sometimes think/know [νοεῖν] and sometimes not think/know: and when it has been separated it is just what it is [i.e. it is just knowledge/νοῦς and nothing else], and this alone is immortal and eternal (but we do not remember, because this is impassible, whereas the passive νοῦς is corruptible), and without this nothing thinks/knows [or "and without this it thinks/knows nothing"]. (430a10-25)

There are of course an enormous number of difficult and controversial points in this passage; I will not try to address them all, but only to pull out the points most necessary for seeing how Aristotle resolves the aporia left hanging from De Anima III,4, and for filling out the argument of Metaphysics Λ7, 9 and 10.¹³ Aristotle is distinguishing two kinds of νοῦς, or two senses of "νοῦς". One he explicitly calls the "passive νοῦς" [παθητικός νοῦς], and from his description here could equally be called νοῦς δυνάμει; the other, on the basis of descriptions here, can be called active or productive νοῦς [ποιητικός νοῦς] or νοῦς essentially ἐνέργεια. It is clear that the "νοῦς of the soul" that was the announced subject of De Anima III,4 (this phrase 429a22), which "is none of the beings in ἐνέργεια until it thinks/knows them" (429a24), and "has no nature except this, that it is δυνατόν" (429a21-2),¹⁴ can only be the νοῦς δυνάμει and not the νοῦς essentially ἐνέργεια, which must be a further being beyond the rational part of the soul. (his is confirmed by Theophrastus' contrast between ὁ ψυχικός νοῦς and ὁ ἐνέργεια νοῦς, τούτέστι ὁ χωριστός (Fr. 307B), and agrees with the interpretation of Alexander of Aphrodisias. Nonetheless, a strong tradition, going back to Themistius and the neo-Platonic commentators on the De Anima and endorsed by St. Thomas and more recently by Brentano and Ross, maintains that the ποιητικός νοῦς is a part or power of the human soul. (The chief motivation at least for ancient and medieval writers is to save Aristotle for the doctrine of the immortality of [at least part of] the human soul: this can be done only by making the ποιητικός νοῦς part of the human soul, since Aristotle says that "this alone is immortal and eternal.") Ross (following many earlier writers) argues that Aristotle's saying that "these distinctions must exist ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ" must mean not simply that they exist "in the case of the soul" but that the παθητικός and ποιητικός νοῦς exist within each soul.¹⁵ But Aristotle's language implies nothing of the kind--just seven lines further up, "ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἔχουσιν ὕλην" at III,4 430a6 meant "in the case of things that have matter," parallel to "ἐπὶ μὲν τῶν ἀνευ ὕλης", "in the case of things that are without matter," at 430a3.¹⁶ And just now Aristotle has said that "in every nature" there are the art and the matter or

¹²retaining the passage wrongly deleted by Ross in his editio maior (but kept in Ross' editio minor and in the Budé)

¹³fuller account in the Davis paper

¹⁴keeping the manuscript reading, with the Budé, against Ross' δυνατός (no difference in meaning, but see my Davis paper for why there is something at stake here)

¹⁵Brentano Psychology of Aristotle p.111, Ross' editio maior p.45; Ross argues that "ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ can hardly mean only 'in the case of the soul'" (Ross, Aristotle, 1959 edition, p.304 n85)

¹⁶Ross, however, takes "ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἔχουσιν ὕλην δυνάμει ἕκαστον ἔστι τῶν νοητῶν" (430a6-7) to mean not "it [sc. νοῦς] is potentially each of the νοητά," but "in things that possess matter each of the objects of reason is potentially present" (editio maior p.291). I find this bizarre. One might say in some contexts that in matter all of the νοητά are potentially present, although that would need some qualifications (only those νοητά which are forms in matter, and only those νοητά which can inform this particular kind of matter--e.g. celestial νοητά aren't potentially present in sublunar matter), but it doesn't make much sense to say that all these νοητά are potentially present in the things that have matter. But in any case, if Aristotle were saying this here it would have no connection at all with the argument he is making (Ross' comment, "meaning presumably that these objects are there, ready to be picked out and

their analogues: the art is an agent external to the matter, not a part or power of it (or a part or power of the same substance), and the ποιητικὸς will be related to the παθητικὸς νοῦς in the same way.

Aristotle is saying that, although a separately existing immaterial νοητόν will not be anything like a human rational soul, or a part or power of that soul, it can still be a νοῦς, if "νοῦς" is understood in a higher sense, as something which acts on the soul to bring it about that the soul νοεῖ.¹⁷ Aristotle describes this higher νοῦς as ἐπιστήμη κατ' ἐνέργειαν existing separately--not a soul having knowledge as an attribute, but simply knowledge itself. He also says that this knowledge is identical with its object. Undoubtedly, the only knowledge that can exist in this way is the knowledge of a separate immaterial object, not the knowledge of a material form (because it is only knowledge of things without matter that is identical with its object; because, if the object is identical with the knowledge and the knowledge exists separately and eternally, the object must exist separately and eternally; and because the knowledge of a material form cannot exist separately from sensation or imagination and their organs). Now, when *De Anima* III,4 argued that a separate immaterial νοητόν X is a νοῦς, what it argued was that X is the "theoretical ἐπιστήμη" of X--that is, that it is νοῦς in the sense of a ἔξις, and specifically the ἔξις of knowledge of X, rather than a soul that has this ἔξις of knowledge. Of course, in most ordinary cases of knowledge or science, the ἔξις which we have is not capable of existing separately from souls (indeed, the knowledge of material forms is not capable of existing separately from bodies, namely the organs of sensation or imagination). But there seems to be no reason why, in the exceptional case of the knowledge of something purely immaterial, the ἔξις which we have, or which we participate in, should not be a substance existing separately from souls, a substance which will deserve the name of νοῦς.

As I have argued, Plato thinks that the world-ordering νοῦς is just such a separately existing virtue of reason-itself, which souls participate in in order to think and act rationally. Aristotle has no reason to reject this claim, and indeed he is arguing that, if there is any separate immaterial νοητόν, it must be such a νοῦς. However, his argument leads to some important modifications of the way Plato has described this νοῦς. For Plato, we participate in νοῦς in order to know separately existing forms, not in order to know νοῦς itself: the demiurge contemplates the forms in the animal-itself, and applies this knowledge by making the world in their likeness, and the animal-itself seems to be entirely separate from the demiurge (if doubtless somehow "akin" to him).¹⁸ Plato seems to have two options. Either νοῦς is the ἔξις-knowledge of the forms, which would seem to imply that νοῦς is not a single thing but a composite of many different ἔξις-knowledges of different forms; or else νοῦς is not the knowledge of anything in particular, but is simply a general ability to perceive intellectually, equally applicable to any intelligible object, in

recognized by reason," p.295, does not seem to me to help). It is obvious that "ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἔχουσιν ὄλην" at 430a6 is parallel to "ἐπὶ μὲν τῶν ἀνευ ὄλης" at 430a3; in both cases Aristotle is supposed to be arguing that νοῦς is related to the νοητά in such a way that it too is νοητός, although in the material case the νοητά do not themselves have νοῦς; on Ross' interpretation, what Aristotle is saying at 430a6-7 would have nothing to do with this argument. Aristotle has said at a2-5 that in the immaterial case the νοῦς (or the νοῦν or the ἐπιστήμη) is simply the same as the νοητόν, and he goes on to say in the parenthesis at a7-8 that in the material case the νοῦς is the δύναμις without matter of the νοητά: surely at a6-7 he is saying that in the material case the νοῦς is δυνάμει the νοητά, rather than that all the νοητά are δυνάμει present in things that have matter.

¹⁷note use and transformation of the GC model (a non-reciprocal agent, which as we saw from Λ7/DA III,10 a νοητόν/ὄρεκτόν is, is like an art; here said that νοῦς is such)

¹⁸note the *Timaeus* passage actually says that νοῦς contemplates the forms in the animal-itself; note *Philebus* on kinship between νοῦς/cause and the class of limit, = presumably form

which case Aristotle will press his criticism from the end of Θ8, that "there would be something much more knowing than knowledge-itself ... for [ordinary acts of knowledge] are more ἐνέργειαι, and [νοῦς or knowledge-itself is merely a] δύναμις for [those ἐνέργειαι]" (1050b36-1051a2). On either way, the form will not itself be a νοῦς or a kind of knowledge. Aristotle, by contrast, is arguing that each immaterial νοητόν X is itself a νοῦς, a νοῦς which is neither a general power of knowing, nor the knowledge of all the νοητά together, but is specifically the separately existing knowledge of the immaterial νοητόν X; since X is also the knowledge of X, it eternally knows itself by its essence, and sometimes it also causes us to participate in it and thus to know it. Since each immaterial νοητόν simply causes us to know itself, there is no reason to think that there is one special immaterial νοητόν, either like the Platonic νοῦς-itself or like the Platonic Good-itself, which causes us to know other immaterial νοητά. Nor does an immaterial ποιητικός νοῦς cause us to know many material νοητά, say by abstracting them from matter. Aristotle brings up the ποιητικός νοῦς in De Anima III,5 to solve a problem about our cognition of separate immaterial objects, not about our cognition of material forms, and it could not help to explain our cognition of material forms. As we have seen, according to De Anima III,4, material forms are like the essence of snubness, and as the form is inseparable from the matter, so the intellectual cognition of the form is inseparable from the sensory cognition of the material composite. Thus the knowledge of snubness does not exist separately from souls, or even separately from bodies, so that it could act on our souls from without and cause us to know the form of the snub; or, to put the point in more colorful terms, God himself does not know the form of the snub, and there is nothing he can do to communicate it to us. Thus although Aristotle in comparing the ποιητικός νοῦς to light is certainly alluding to Plato's comparison of the Good-itself to the sun, he is also, in the end, undermining that comparison. An Aristotelian immaterial νοητόν does not reveal to us either material νοητά or other immaterial νοητά, but only itself: it is like a star shining through the darkness, not like the sun illuminating all things.

Although a ποιητικός νοῦς is not "in the soul" in the sense of being a part of the soul, it can nonetheless be said to be in us whenever we can be said to have it. As we saw above, I have the knowledge of X, or the knowledge of X is present in me, whenever I have the ability to ἐνεργεῖν according to this knowledge, that is, whenever I have the ability to contemplate X. Since, for a separate immaterial νοητόν X, the knowledge of X is just X itself, it is equally true to say that I have X, or that X is present in me, whenever I have the ability to contemplate X; at those moments when I am actually contemplating X, X is not only present in me but acting in me and on me. On this account, even though no part of my soul is immortal, it is correct to say that I have something which is "immortal and eternal": namely, I have this knowledge, which currently, while it is present in my soul, denominates my soul as knowing, and which "when it has been separated ... is just what it is," i.e., it is from eternity just knowledge, rather than my knowledge or your knowledge. This knowledge "does not sometimes know and sometimes not-know," and it existed before we were born. Nonetheless, "we do not remember"--when we contemplate, we are not remembering some knowledge we had before our birth--because we did not exist before our birth, and so it was not at that time our knowledge: "the passive νοῦς is corruptible," so did not exist before our birth and cannot remember anything from our birth, while "this [active νοῦς] is impassive," and so cannot forget and so cannot remember.¹⁹ Contemplation is simply the active νοῦς acting on the passive νοῦς, with no reference to the past.

¹⁹as in Davis paper, note other possibilities of reading--I am not sure this reading is right although I think it is the most likely

An oddity of this account is that, although the ποιητικὸς νοῦς X is essentially a second ἐνέργεια--it is eternally contemplating X, through its own nature and not through a superadded accident--it can also be described as my ἔξις or first ἐνέργεια, i.e. an ability for a further second ἐνέργεια of my contemplating X.²⁰ This seems to mean that the same ποιητικὸς νοῦς has two different activities or second ἐνέργεια, one which it performs eternally in itself, and one which it performs from time to time in me or you. But I do not think that this implies any objectionable composition or potentiality in the ποιητικὸς νοῦς. The two activities are distinct only as the sun's shining is distinct from the sun's shining on me. The sun's characteristic activity is simply to shine, and in order to carry out this activity it does not need the cooperation of any other being. When the sun is not shining on me, this does not mean that it is frustrated or prevented from carrying out its characteristic activity; the obstacle is in me, or between me and the sun, and makes no difference to the sun. So, although the ποιητικὸς νοῦς is sometimes correctly described as being my ἔξις and sometimes not, and, when it is my ἔξις, sometimes it acts on me so that I contemplate and sometimes does not--perhaps the analogy is that the sun is sometimes shining on me and sometimes not, and, when it is shining on me, sometimes I have my eyes open and sometimes not--all of these denominations are extrinsic to the ποιητικὸς νοῦς itself, which always acts in the same way and suffers no changes.

Applications: Λ7

To return to Λ7 1072b14-30. Our question was: how does Aristotle know that the ἀρχή that moves the heaven is god and νοῦς, and how does he determine what it νοεῖ and how? One Aristotelian strategy of argument is to begin from the premiss that the ἀρχή is a god, and then, as in Nicomachean Ethics X,8, infer that it must be acting (not asleep like Endymion), and proceed to rule out every possible activity other than νοεῖν, or other than one particular kind of νοεῖν. But this argument-strategy seems inadequate for the needs of Λ7, since it does not show how to justify the premiss that the ἀρχή is a god. A second argument-strategy, which is also Aristotelian and which seems to be present (in highly compressed form) in Λ7 1072b14-30, seems more promising: we argue from the fact that the ἀρχή is νοητόν to the fact that it is νοῦς (and νοῦς of a particular kind), and thence to the fact that it is a god.²¹

We know from Λ6 that the ἀρχή that moves the heaven is an immaterial intelligible substance, the object of the heaven's νόησις. But the De Anima has argued that "in things that are without matter the νοοῦν and the νοούμενον are the same thing: for theoretical knowledge [ἐπιστήμη] and what is known in this way are the same" (DA III,4 430a3-5): Λ9 closely echoes this passage, suggesting "perhaps in some cases the knowledge is the object: in the productive [sciences, the knowledge is] the οὐσία-without-the-matter and the essence, [but] in the theoretical [sciences] the λόγος is both the object and the νόησις. So the νοούμενον and the νοῦς not being different [in] such things as do not have matter [i.e. in cases where the νοούμενον has no matter], they will be the same, and the νόησις will be one with the νοούμενον" (Λ9 1074b38-1075a5). Λ7 abbreviates this to the point of saying that "the same thing is νοῦς and νοητόν" (1072b21), but this must be interpreted through the fuller statements in Λ9 and De Anima III,4, whose meaning we have discussed above: the identity holds without qualification only in cases of "theoretical

²⁰as I understand it, this was also Alexander's view

²¹I agree with DeFilippo 1994 [and apparently Laks in FC p.231-2, although I have been unable to figure out what his reservation against DeFilippo amounts to] that this latter strategy is at least one of the ways Aristotle argues. {or put this note back near the beginning of the section?}

knowledge," that is cases where the object is without matter, that is, cases where the object is a separate immaterial νοητόν, all cases where the object is a form in matter being assimilated to "productive knowledge." Fortunately, the object we are studying in Λ7 is the object of the heaven's νόησις, which we know to be a separate immaterial νοητόν, so the conclusion holds that this object is also νοῦς. Furthermore, we can determine in what sense it is νοῦς. It is not identical with the soul of the heaven that thinks it, nor is it any other rational soul or παθητικός νοῦς. Rather, the object is identical with the νόησις (Λ9's term) or the ἐπιστήμη which the soul of the heaven possesses. This is νοῦς in the sense of being a ποιητικός νοῦς, something which acts on souls to make them know, or which souls participate in in order to know. Such as separately existing knowledge is immaterial and unchanging; it "does not sometimes νοεῖν and sometimes not νοεῖν" (DA III,5 430a22), and can be described as eternally contemplating, that is, enjoying the second ἐνέργεια of knowledge, through its essence rather than through any superadded attribute. But whenever the soul of the heaven, or any other soul, possesses it, it can also be described as that soul's ἐπιστήμη, that is, its ἔξις or first ἐνέργεια of knowledge. And when the soul exercises this knowledge in contemplation, the νοῦς can be described as acting on the soul, and also as acting on and moving the heavenly body. However, Λ7 and Λ9 show very little interest in distinguishing between the heavenly soul's ἔξις of knowledge and its ἐνέργεια of contemplation, or between the νοῦς's activity in itself and its activity on the heavenly soul and body. And this is not surprising. Whenever the heavenly soul has the ἔξις of knowledge--which is always--it will exercise this ἔξις in contemplation unless it is obstructed. And while a human soul is often obstructed from contemplating, because it is distracted by passions or images in the sensitive soul or because it must attend to bodily concerns or because of fatigue or sleep, none of these disturbances can arise in the heavenly soul, and so its first ἐνέργεια of knowledge is automatically and eternally followed by a second ἐνέργεια of contemplation; it is no surprise if Aristotle usually does not bother to distinguish two levels of ἐνέργεια here. Likewise the νοῦς's eternal activity of contemplation, the activity which is intrinsic to it and in which its perfection consists, is automatically and eternally followed by its activity of illuminating the heavenly soul and moving the heavenly body; and there is normally no more need to distinguish between the intrinsic and the extrinsic activities than between the sun's activity of shining and its activity of shining on the earth.

This argument allows us to unpack Averroes' brief description of how Aristotle knows that the mover of the heaven is a νοῦς: "it has been explained in the eighth book of the Physics that the mover of these heavenly bodies is without matter and a separate form, and in the De Anima that the separate forms are νοῦς. It follows that this mover is a νοῦς" (Tafsîr 1593,14-1594,3, on Λ7 1072a26-9, tr. Genequand p.149 slightly modified; on Aristotelian grounds Averroes should not describe immaterial substances as "form," but this does not affect his argument). Genequand in his introduction to Averroes' commentary on Λ objects to this reasoning: "The argument is not quite convincing because what the de Anima shows is that the intellect is a separate form, not that any separate form is an intellect as Ibn Rushd says" (Genequand p.36). However, what we know is not simply that the mover is a separate immaterial substance, but also that it is the object of the heavens' νόησις; and, if we accept the results of De Anima III,4-5, those two premisses together are enough to show that the mover is νοῦς of a particular kind, namely the νόησις which the heaven has of it, existing separately as a ποιητικός νοῦς.

This argument not only shows that the ἀρχή that moves the heaven is νοῦς, and what kind of νοῦς it is, but also allows the inference that this ἀρχή is a god. DeFilippo and Laks speak of Aristotle as arguing that the mover of the heavens is "God", but--apart from the fact that there are

many movers of the many heavens, which cannot all be "God" with a capital G--the notion of "God" is vague, while the notion of a god is relatively precise, and Aristotle is presenting what he intends as a precise argument that the moving ἀρχή whose existence he has established in Λ6 falls under the definition of a god.

Aristotle says:

Thus on such an ἀρχή heaven and nature depend. And its way-of-life [διαγωγή] is like the best which we have for a little time--for it is always in this state, while for us it is impossible--since its activity is also pleasure²² (and for this reason [sc. because they are activities] being-awake and sensing and thinking [νόησις] are most pleasant, and hopes and memories [are pleasant to a lesser degree] on account of these). Νόησις-by-itself is of what is best-by-itself [ἢ νόησις ἢ καθ' αὐτὴν τοῦ καθ' αὐτὸ ἀρίστου], and what is [νόησις] most of all is of what is [best] most of all. And νοῦς νοεῖ itself according to its participation [μετάληψις] in the νοητόν, for when it touches and νοεῖ, it becomes νοητός, so that the same thing is νοῦς and νοητόν. For what is receptive of the νοητόν and of the οὐσία is νοῦς; and when it has [the νοητόν], then it ἐνεργεῖ; so that the latter [= ἐνέργεια] is more what νοῦς seems to have divine about it,²³ and contemplation [rather than ἔξις-knowledge] is the most pleasant and the best. So if the god is always in as good a state as we are in for a moment, it is wonderful; and if more so [= if it is always in a still better state], then yet more wonderful--and thus it is. And it is also life: for the ἐνέργεια of νοῦς is life, and it is the ἐνέργεια: and its ἐνέργεια-by-itself is a best and eternal life. But²⁴ we say that god is a best eternal living thing, so that a continuous and eternal life or life-span [or eternity: αἰών] belongs to the god: for this is god [or: this is what god is]. (Λ7 1072b13-30)

This text is remarkably compressed even by the standards of Λ, and involves many difficulties, most of which I will not discuss here in detail. The main lines of what Aristotle believes about the ἀρχή emerge clearly enough; it is much less clear what he claims to be deducing from what. Since before this passage Aristotle has not said (much less argued) that the ἀρχή is νοῦς or a god or a living thing, much less that it has pleasure or a way-of-life, he should somehow be justifying all these claims here. The argument that it is νοῦς seems to be the argument I have suggested, drawing on De Anima III,4-5, using the premisses that it is an immaterial νοητόν and that "the same thing is νοῦς and νοητόν": the immaterial νοητόν X will thus also be a νοῦς, namely a νοῦς of X itself. In speaking of νόησις-by-itself, whose object is the best-by-itself, Aristotle is

²²with Ross and Jaeger I read Ab's ἐκεῖνο at the end of b15, where EJ Bonitz have ἐκεῖνό ἐστιν; with Bonitz and Ross and Jaeger I accept a variant reported in E in b16, ἡδονὴ ἢ ἐνέργεια τούτου, where the manuscripts have ἡδονὴ ἐνέργεια τούτου. (I agree with Laks on both)

²³the manuscripts have ὥστ' ἐκεῖνο μᾶλλον τούτου ὃ δοκεῖ ὁ νοῦς θεῖον ἔχειν, printed by Bonitz and now defended by Laks; pseudo-Alexander presupposes ὥστ' ἐκεῖνου μᾶλλον τοῦτο, and this is conjectured by Bonitz and printed by Ross and Jaeger; I read (without great confidence) ὥστ' ἐκεῖνο μᾶλλον τοῦτο. some rather strange interpretive possibilities have been put forward by Ross in his commentary and by Laks in FC p.235n72, but I think the basic sense is clear and will not be affected by the textual question. the only other interpretive possibility that bothers me at all is one followed by Ross in his translation, which would contrast actual possession as the more divine thing with receptivity = potentiality, thus making no distinction between ἔξις-knowledge and contemplation. but that seems unlikely, since humans can have ἔξις-knowledge without interruption

²⁴reading EJ's ἐκεῖνο in b27, against Ab Bonitz Ross Jaeger Laks ἐκεῖνος, tentatively keeping the manuscript φαμὲν δέ in b28, against φαμὲν δὴ, conjectured by Bonitz and printed by Ross Jaeger Laks

recalling the conclusions of Λ7 1072a26-b1, that the mover of the heavens is νοητόν and ὀρεκτόν, where the ὀρεκτόν is what is thought to be good and the first ὀρεκτόν must be truly good, indeed must be what is intrinsically best; and this is the same as the first νοητόν, namely the head of the positive συστοιχία, where the whole positive συστοιχία is "νοητή-by-itself" (1072a30-31) and its head is subsistent uncompounded ἐνέργεια. For Aristotle to be able to draw further inferences here from those conclusions, the "νόησις-by-itself" directed to the "best-by-itself" of 1072b18-19 must be in the first instance the heaven's νόησις of its mover, not the mover's or the god's νόησις: at this stage of the argument the mover cannot yet be assumed to νοεῖν or to be a god.²⁵ But because the νοῦς becomes νοητόν, it can be argued that the νοητόν too νοεῖ, and it can be determined what kind of νοῦς it is. The mover which the heaven νοεῖ is certainly not identical with the rational soul of the heaven, what is "receptive" as he says here, in the terms of De Anima III,5 the παθητικὸς or δυνάμει νοῦς--at Λ7 1072a30 he had described νοῦς in this sense as being "moved by the νοητόν," and it is certainly not identical with its mover. Rather, the νοητόν mover is identical with the knowledge that the heaven's soul has when it has the νοητόν (cf. 1072b22-3); and, in itself, it is an ἐνέργεια of contemplation.

Aristotle furthermore tries to argue that this ἐνέργεια is most pleasant and best, and also that it is most divine; where to say that this ἐνέργεια is most divine is to say that the substance that has this ἐνέργεια--or, rather, the substance that is this ἐνέργεια--is most deserving of being characterized as a god. The claims that this ἐνέργεια is divine, or is itself a god, is closely connected with the claims that it is a life or an αἰών.

In speaking of pleasure, Aristotle is drawing on his doctrine (constant from the Protrepticus on, despite all refinements) that pleasure need not be a restoration of a natural condition, but that on the contrary the primary pleasures are ἐνέργεια of natural states, such as sensation and contemplation, which do not require any change or presuppose any deficiency. Thus since the best life is an ἐνέργεια of virtue, the best life will also be the most pleasant life, both for human beings and for gods--"god always enjoys a single simple pleasure: for there is an ἐνέργεια not only of motion, but also of immobility, and pleasure is more in rest than in motion" (EE VI,14 = NE VII,14 1154b26-8). Aristotle is not here drawing on the refinement of his doctrine of pleasure in Nicomachean Ethics X, according to which pleasure is not the intrinsically valuable activity but a further thing that supervenes on the activity and is not itself a τέλος--here in Λ7 there seems to be no distinction drawn between the ἐνέργεια which is the best kind of pleasure and the ἐνέργεια which is happiness. The primary pleasures here are those of "being-awake and sensing and thinking." This language and the argument recall the Protrepticus, where living consists in sensing or intellectual knowing (B73-77), and since each of these are said more strictly of the ἐνέργεια than of the δύναμις (B79), "living too will consequently be said in two ways: for the person who is awake must be said to live in the true and principal sense," the sleeper in a weaker sense (B80). Since the person lives more who exercises his soul, who exercises it in its highest and proper function (namely thinking), and who does so rightly (B84-85), "he lives more who thinks rightly, and most of all who most grasps the truth, and this is he who thinks/is-wise [φρονεῖ] and contemplates according to the most precise knowledge" (B85). And such a person also lives the most pleasantly, not that he necessarily has the most pleasure, but that he has the most pleasure in living (B88-89):

²⁵against, for instance, Ross ad 1072b18-21: "when Aristotle says that the divine νόησις ἢ καθ' αὐτήν is of τὸ καθ' αὐτὸ ἄριστον he means the conclusion to be drawn 'and therefore of the divine νοῦς itself', which has been exhibited as the πρῶτον ὀρεκτόν (a27), in other words as the ἄριστον (a35)."

we attribute living more to the waking than to the sleeping, and more to the wise than to the foolish, and we say that the pleasure of living is the pleasure that arises from the exercise of the soul, for that is truly living. So even if there are many exercises of the soul, that of thinking/being-wise as much as possible is the most principal of all; so it is clear that the pleasure that arises from thinking/being-wise and contemplating must either solely or most of all be pleasure from living. Therefore living pleasantly and enjoyment in truth belong either solely or most of all to the philosophers: for the ἐνέργεια of the truest thoughts [νοήσεις], being filled by what most of all are, and always stably preserving the perfection that is received, is of all the most productive of joy. (B90-91, the last sentence closely echoing Republic IX 585-6)

Now the ἀρχή that moves the heaven does not have a body, and therefore does not have senses, and it is not initially obvious that it has life, much less that it has pleasure. But Aristotle has argued that it has νοῦς, indeed that it eternally has the activity of νόησις, indeed that it is that activity; and since νοῦς is a kind of life, and νόησις more so--as Aristotle puts it here in Λ7, "the ἐνέργεια of νοῦς is [a] life"²⁶--it follows that the ἀρχή is a living thing, and further that it has the best life and the highest pleasure in living. Its activity is like those moments of contemplation around which, according to the end of the Eudemian Ethics, we should build our whole lives; but its condition is better, not just because it has this activity eternally, but because it has it by its essence, while we have it only by being acted on from without by a ποιητικός νοῦς.²⁷ This ἀρχή is a strange kind of living thing, very different from the familiar embodied ones, but no stranger than the αὐτοζῶον of the Timaeus, and it is in some ways a purified version of that αὐτοζῶον (a point I will return to below). Likewise, the Sophist protests against the idea "that motion and life and φρόνησις are not present in complete being, and that it neither lives nor φρονεῖ, but stands unmoved, august [σεμνόν] and holy, not having νοῦς" (248e6-249a2): probably "complete being" here is not just the intelligible world but is meant to include the sensibles too, but Plato nonetheless infers to an intelligible paradigm-form of motion, and presumably by the same reasoning there will also be intelligible paradigms of life and νοῦς. Again, Aristotle's ἀρχή will be a purified version, a first immaterial paradigm of motion (purified to "ἐνέργεια"), of life and of νοῦς, not a universal type but a perfectly actualized instance, so that it will be free from the criticism that "there would be something much more knowing than knowledge-itself, and more moved than motion[-itself]: for [ordinary instances of knowledge and motion] are more ἐνέργεια, and [the ideas of knowledge and motion] are [merely] δυνάμεις for [those ἐνέργεια]" (Θ8 1050b36-1051a2).

The ἀρχή, besides living, and living well and pleasantly, is also said to be a god. Aristotle tries to prove this by showing that it falls under a definition of "god": "we say that god is a best eternal living thing." It is sometimes said that Aristotle is here connecting up his account of the ἀρχή with popular conceptions of divinity, but his immediate point seems to involve not popular conceptions but a technical philosophical definition: the formula he cites is close to the first of

²⁶ a phrase grossly abused by Jaeger when he took it as the epigraph of his Aristoteles of 1923, presumably to suggest that to understand someone's thought we must trace its development; Aristotle is talking about a kind of life that involves no change

²⁷ on being better not just by being eternal, cp. EE I,8/NE I,6 on an eternal good not being ipso facto better (and so not a candidate for being a good-itself), just as an eternal white is no whiter than a perishable white. by contrast, the ἀρχή can be a νοῦς-itself (and happiness-itself and good-itself) because it has the activity in an essentially different way, and is the cause to us of our having the activity in our inferior way

the two definitions of "god" in the pseudo-Platonic Definitions, "immortal living thing, self-sufficient as to happiness" (411a3). Aristotle had promised in A2 that wisdom, the science of the ἀρχαί, would be "divine science" in two ways, both as the science that a god would have, and as a science of god, since "god seems to everyone to be a cause and an ἀρχή" (983a8-9). Now in Λ, having at last delivered his own positive account of the ἀρχή, Aristotle shows that it is a god, so that the science he is offering will meet this expectation of wisdom; and this is only one part of a strategy, throughout Λ6-10 and intensifying in Λ10, to "close" the Metaphysics by showing that Aristotle's account of the ἀρχαί can resolve aporiai from B and meet expectations of wisdom from A, and that competing accounts of the ἀρχαί cannot. Indeed, we can see the present passage from Λ7 as also picking up on the complementary promise that wisdom would be the science that a god would have. The heaven has its νόησις, not on account of the necessities of life (for it is by nature immortal and free from all fears or bodily needs), but simply because νόησις is intrinsically worth having; and presumably, besides having eternal leisure for contemplation (by contrast with the miserable heavenly soul of De Caelo II,1 284a27-35, discussed above), it is also free from the cognitive limitations of human beings. So the knowledge that it has should be the wisdom described in Metaphysics A1-2, and (by the same token) the contemplation attributed to the gods in Nicomachean Ethics X,8: which is as it should be, since the heavenly bodies are gods, even though it is their movers that are the highest gods (at Metaphysics Λ8 1074a38-b14, the ancient theology alleged to have been preserved from before the deluge seems to maintain that the heavenly bodies are gods, rather than that their movers are). The heaven's knowledge is "νόησις-by-itself," νόησις freed from any limitation, and so it will be "of what is best-by-itself," that is, of the ἀρχή as Aristotle describes it: so that the highest bodily god has, and the higher incorporeal god is, the same intuitive knowledge which Aristotle has discursively and schematically described.

Finally, besides connecting his account of the ἀρχή with what we expect of the gods, Aristotle also connects it with the notion of αἰών, "eternity" but before that "life-span" (the original meaning may have been more like "life-force"; Homer can use the word interchangeably with "soul"). Aristotle here draws on this original meaning, saying that "a continuous and eternal [αἰδῖος] life or αἰών belongs to the god": having shown that the ἀρχή is alive, he has also shown that it has an αἰών, and having shown that the ἀρχή is itself a life, he has also shown that it is itself an αἰών; and since it is vital activity without limitation, continuous and eternal, it is αἰών in the absolute sense, eternity. "Αἰών" was etymologized (rightly or wrongly) as from αἰεὶ εἶναι, and so connected with the gods through the Homeric formula θεοὶ αἰὲν ἔόντες; Plato speaks of an αἰών "remaining in [the] one" of which time is a moving image (Timaeus 37d5-7). In describing the divine life of the ἀρχή, Aristotle is claiming to have revealed this αἰών of which poets and philosophers have spoken: as he says elsewhere in describing the things beyond the heaven, "unaltered and unaffected, having the best and most self-sufficient life, they live out all the αἰών. For this word was uttered by the ancients with a divine sense. For the limit [τέλος] which surrounds the time of each life, beyond which there is nothing by nature, was called the αἰών of each [person or animal]; and in the same way the limit of the whole heaven, the limit which surrounds all time and infinity, is αἰών, taking its name from αἰεὶ εἶναι, immortal and divine" (De Caelo I,9 279a20-28).²⁸

Applications: Λ9

²⁸ have I quoted this elsewhere? uniformize translation if so. note this is rather like the apparently Pythagorean argument, reported at Physics IV,10 218b5-9, that time is the heaven because both embrace all things

Λ9 is a neatly self-contained discussion of "aporiai about νοῦς" (1074b15) intended to develop Λ7's very sketchy description of the ἀρχή as νοῦς: νοῦς "seems to be the most divine of the things that are apparent to us" (Λ9 1074b15-16), but difficulties arise about "how it would be disposed in order to be such [sc. most divine]" (b16-17), that is, in order not to imply any deficiency.²⁹ Λ9 is thus a familiar Aristotelian "purification" [*tanzîh*] of descriptions of a divine ἀρχή as νοῦς, and especially of the *Timaeus*' description of the demiurge. As throughout Λ6-10, Aristotle's main tool in this purification is the premiss that the ἀρχή is pure ἐνέργεια; any description incompatible with this must be eliminated. We saw in discussing *De Anima* III,4-5 how Aristotle distinguishes between what can be said of the δυνάμει νοῦς and what can be said of the νοῦς that is essentially ἐνεργεία, and Λ9 is a straightforward development of this contrast.³⁰ But also, as we have seen, Aristotle's account of the ἀρχή is not only a purification of Plato's demiurgic νοῦς, but at the same time of his animal-itself, of his knowledge-itself, and a replacement of the idea of the good and of the One as a candidate for a separate good-itself. To say that νοῦς is "the most divine of the things that are apparent to us" is to say that we cannot clearly conceive anything superior to νοῦς, despite Plato's attempts to imagine a higher good-itself, whether as an idea of the good or as the One. Aristotle will maintain that νοῦς when properly conceived--that is, when conceived as essentially ἐνεργεία--is indeed the best thing, and that this conception will show the identity of νοῦς-itself or knowledge-itself with the animal-itself and good-itself which for Plato are the objects of its νόησις.

Aristotle poses two main interlacing aporiai: (1) is this νοῦς (νοῦς described in such a way as to be most divine) merely a δύναμις for νόησις, or is it essentially an ἐνέργεια of νόησις; and (2) what does it νοεῖν--itself or something else, always the same things or different things at different times, a single simple thing or a complex? Aristotle's answers are, of course, (1) that this νοῦς is an ἐνέργεια of νόησις, and (2) that it always νοεῖ the same single simple thing, namely itself. Aristotle has two main strategies available for establishing his answer to (2). A first strategy proceeds from the premisses that it νοεῖ what is best and that it is itself what is best: we might just support this second premiss negatively, by our inability to conceive anything better than νοῦς, or we might argue (as in Λ7) that any immaterial νοητόν must itself be νοῦς, and conclude that anything superior to νοῦς would be unintelligible. A second strategy starts from the premiss that this νοῦς is essentially ἐνεργεία, and concludes that it is identical with its

²⁹add footnote against Ross' translation of the opening of Λ9 (cite Kosman in FC); perhaps add general ref to Brunschwig in FC. here's old version of Ross note, from arngood: {Ross translates the first sentence by "the nature of the divine thought involves certain problems," and this is indeed what Aristotle means; but the word "divine" does not correspond to anything in the Greek. Ross' translation might suggest that "thought" is just something God has, or at least, if God is thought, that there could be other thoughts which are not "the divine thought." In fact Aristotle takes ta peri ton noun by itself, without any additional word for divinity, as marking out a certain scientific study, call it "noetics," namely the study of the divine being named by "nous." Aristotle assumes that his audience (at least by this point in the argument) recognizes a being called "nous," and that this is the highest being they can distinctly conceive, but that they will not yet have reached agreement on how further it is to be described; so he proceeds to address this further question.}

³⁰while there are some textual and construal difficulties in Λ9, they are certainly no worse than in many other chapters of Λ, and the chapter as a whole hangs together very well. the apparently common view that this chapter is especially difficult, and perhaps confused in its structure, seems to me to arise simply from dislike of Aristotle's conclusions, which has given rise to a series of desperate attempts to deny that he says what he rather obviously does say. Brunschwig's very useful and interesting article on Λ9 in FC admits that it says what it says, but nonetheless insists that Λ9 is a piece of Aristotle's juvenilia and that he repented of his views here in later works such as Λ7 (!)

object. Aristotle seems to be applying both of these strategies for solving aporia (2) in Λ9.³¹ But to establish his answer to (1), the only available strategy is to argue that this νοῦς is what is best and that if it were a δύναμις, "it would not be the best οὐσία" (1074b20).

The two aporiai have such close implications for each other that it is not always clear which one Aristotle is addressing. Aristotle starts by saying, "if it νοεῖ nothing, what in it would be worthy of worship [σεμνόν]? it would be as if it were asleep. But if it νοεῖ, and something else is master [κύριον] over this (for what its οὐσία is is not νόησις but δύναμις), it would not be the best οὐσία: for what is valuable [τίμιον] belongs to it through νοεῖν. Further, whether its οὐσία is νοῦς or νόησις, what does it νοεῖν? [It νοεῖ] either itself or something else, and, if something else, either always the same thing, or different things" (1074b17-23). We might take Aristotle here to be starting from aporia (2), "what does it νοεῖν?", starting with the crudest question "something or nothing?" and then refining to ask more precisely what kind of something it νοεῖ. But it is better to take him as starting from aporia (1), "is it a δύναμις or an ἐνέργεια", and only reaching aporia (2) at the end of the quoted passage. If it νοεῖ nothing, it is an unactualized δύναμις, and, if it is supposed to be divine, this is absurd--this is the familiar argument from Nicomachean Ethics X,8, "everyone supposes that [the gods] live and therefore that they ἐνεργεῖν: for they are not asleep like Endymion" (1178b18-20).^{32, 33} But if it does νοεῖν, its

³¹cp. my comments in the first pages of this section on two strategies for showing that the ἀρχή is νοῦς, a god, etcetera. also: an influential article of Richard Norman (available in Articles on Aristotle v.4) poses sharply the question of these two strategies of argument, and argues that Aristotle applies only the second. Norman is right that the second strategy is present and is more philosophically important, but (as Brunschwig says, FC p.288 and n45) it is hard to deny that the first strategy is being used at Λ9 1074b31-5 (although see below for some difficulties and options here), and (as Brunschwig points out, FC pp.304-5) it is mentioned and endorsed at EE VII,12 1245b14-19 (picking up 1244b7-10), and mentioned and probably endorsed at Magna Moralia II,15 1212b34-1213a7. however, my more serious disagreement with Norman is that he minimizes and trivializes the sense in which Aristotle is committed to the identity of knowledge and its object: he says Aristotle is talking about the kind of identity of knowledge and its object that he describes in DA III,4-5, which is true, but Norman minimizes what that is, in part because he takes Aristotle's restriction to immaterial objects to restrict to abstract knowledge of universal truths about material things vs. knowledge of a concrete material individual, whereas in fact it restricts to knowledge of immaterial individuals. Norman does all this with a view to making God's thought something very much like human thought of universal theorems, and to allowing God to know a plurality of things, if not individual sensible things then at least a plurality of universal truths. this is and always has been an untenable reading of Λ9, and Norman is merely one in a long series of philosophers using whatever philosophical tools are currently available to bend Aristotle to what they find a more palatable theology. what Norman says about Aristotle's arguments is discussable and at least partly right, but what he says about Aristotle's conclusions must be totally rejected

³²Brunschwig rightly notes (FC p.279 n23, citing Elders) that σεμνόν echoes the passage of the Sophist cited above, asking whether "complete being ... neither lives nor φρονεῖ, but stands unmoved, august [σεμνόν] and holy, not having νοῦς"; but, as Brunschwig notes, Aristotle is implying that if it neither lives nor φρονεῖ it would not be σεμνόν, whereas Plato is asking ironically whether it is too σεμνόν and too pure to degrade itself by vital activities ("a mind so pure it could never be violated by an idea"); for σεμνόν cp. also Theophrastus Metaphysics 4a8-9. Brunschwig raises the question (pp.279-80) whether Aristotle is considering the case of something that is sleeping eternally, or of something that only sleeps from time to time. in my view, he is only asking whether it is sleeping now; although, of course, the same reasons that show that it is not sleeping now also show that it does not sleep at any other time either

³³in case anyone is interested: it's not so easy to say what Endymion's story was--different sources have a wild variety of versions of the myth. he is often said to have come from Thessaly and to be the founder of Elis; on the other hand, sometimes he lives in Caria (in a cave on Mount Latmos)--apparently his resting-place is shown in both places. usually the Moon falls in love with him; but sometimes Sleep does. sometimes the god/goddess, so as to be able to enjoy looking on him always, keeps him always asleep; sometimes, after the god/goddess falls in love with him, Zeus gives him a choice of mortality or immortality, and he chooses to be immortal but always asleep, with the consequence that he will never grow old (thus apparently he has a better fate than Tithonus, also beloved of a

οὐσία might still be δύναμις--it would be an actualized δύναμις, so that it would be true, but not true by its essence, that it actually νοεῖ. Aristotle briefly argues that, if so, this νοῦς would be not be the best, since its perfection would come to it from something else, namely from whatever causes it to νοεῖν, since something other than itself would be master over this.³⁴ The (at least provisionally) implied conclusion is that its essence is actual νόησις. But whether its οὐσία is δύναμις or νόησις, as long as it is not an unactualized δύναμις, it νοεῖ something and it is fair to ask what it νοεῖ, and so aporia (2) arises, which it would not if the νοῦς were an unactualized δύναμις.

The structure of Aristotle's further argument in resolving aporia (2), and in confirming his solution to aporia (1), is also not entirely clear. I take him to be arguing at 1074b23-35 both that its essence is νόησις rather than δύναμις, and that, even if we say that its essence is νόησις, this is still not sufficient for it to be the best thing, unless we add that it is νόησις of the best thing, and thus that it is νόησις of itself. Here Aristotle seems to be pursuing what I described above as the "first strategy" for resolving aporia (2), arguing that because it νοεῖ what is best and because it is itself what is best, it must νοεῖν itself; he does not seem to be using the philosophically deeper "second strategy" of arguing that, because it is a subsisting ἐνέργεια of knowledge rather than an underlying δύναμις, it must be identical to its object. However, at 1074b35-8 he raises an objection against the solution he has provisionally given to aporia (2); and in responding to this objection at 1074b38-1075a5, Aristotle does indeed invoke the deeper "second strategy." Finally, at 1075a5-10, Aristotle raises and resolves the further aporia about whether its νοούμενον is simple or composite, which I have classified as part of aporia (2), but which is not automatically resolved by our saying that its essence is νόησις, that it νοεῖ the best thing, and that it νοεῖ itself; once again, however, Aristotle thinks that the fact that it is pure ἐνέργεια is sufficient to purify it from all inadequate descriptions.

Aristotle argues: "well, is there or is there not a difference between νοεῖν the καλόν and νοεῖν any chance thing? It is absurd [for it] to be thinking about some things. So clearly it νοεῖ what is most divine and most valuable, and it does not change [from thinking one thing to thinking another]: for change would be for the worse, and this would already be a movement [sc. which by hypothesis it does not have]. So, first, if it is not νόησις but δύναμις, it is likely that the continuity of its νόησις would be laborious for it; and, also, it is clear that something else would be more valuable than νοῦς, namely the νοούμενον. For νοεῖν and νόησις will belong even to what νοεῖ the worst of things; so that if this is to be avoided (for some things it is better not to see than to see), νόησις would not be the best thing. So it νοεῖ itself, if it is the supreme [κράτιστον], and the νόησις is νόησις of νόησις" (1074b23-35). The point that it is best for νοῦς to νοεῖν the καλόν rather than any chance thing is straightforward enough, and picks up Λ7's

goddess, who winds up immortal but hopelessly decrepit). or, contrariwise, he is a guest of the gods who falls in love with Hera, and Zeus punishes him with eternal sleep; or, like Ixion, he pursues a cloud which he mistakes for Hera, and is expelled to Hades (no mention of sleep); or he was an outstandingly just man who is rewarded with eternal sleep among the gods. but sometimes he just sleeps through the days and is awake at night, which is when he and the Moon spend their time together (rationalizing versions say that he was really just an astronomer who went on a nocturnal schedule to study the nightly course of the moon; or he used to go hunting by moonlight). he has various genealogies and various offspring, and there are stories that have nothing to do with being asleep (e.g. he has his sons run a footrace at Olympia for who succeeds him as king of Elis). perhaps he is originally just a variant on Tithonus; or perhaps he began as a sleeping hero destined to wake in the future and save his people, like the heroes of Sardis mentioned by Aristotle in *Physics* IV and similar legends elsewhere

³⁴I agree with Brunschwig (FC p.278 n18) that "master over this" means "master over the fact that it νοεῖ, rather than "master over the νοῦς that we have been talking about": as Brunschwig notes, this is supported by the fact that Aristotle writes τούτου ... κύριον rather than αὐτοῦ ... κύριον.

saying that "νόησις-by-itself is of what is best-by-itself" (1072b18-19, and cp. καλόν at 1072a34-5). Aristotle now infers that if (i) its οὐσία is δύναμις rather than νόησις, and (ii) it is not allowed to sleep and cease to νοεῖν for a time, and (iii) it is not allowed to νοεῖν any chance thing but must keep its attention perpetually on the best thing, then the continuity of its νόησις will be laborious. Aristotle is here drawing immediately on the conclusion of Θ8, using exactly the same terms, that "the continuity of motion," or more generally of ἐνεργεῖν, is "laborious" for things whose οὐσία is "matter and δύναμις and not ἐνέργεια" (1050b26-8, cited in IIIα3 above); but the argument also depends on the conclusions of Λ9 that it must always νοεῖν and must always νοεῖν the same thing, so that it must indeed continue in the same ἐνέργεια.³⁵ It is most often thought that Aristotle's next argument ("it is clear that something else would be more valuable than νοῦς" etc.) also draws on the premiss that the νοῦς is essentially δύναμις,³⁶ but I think this is wrong: Aristotle concludes that "νόησις would not be the best thing," not simply that the νοῦς-δύναμις would not be the best thing. Aristotle seems to be saying, rather, that even if we say that the νοῦς is essentially νόησις, this description is still not sufficient to make it the best thing. If this νοῦς is a subsisting science, then it will by its essence be νόησις of the object of that science, and it will not find it laborious to stick to the same object; nonetheless, its value will still be derived from the value of its object (if the object is bad, the contemplation is bad, and still worse if it is eternally continued), so that if it is good, its object will be better than it is.³⁷ This does not show that the best thing is not νόησις, merely that "νόησις" simpliciter is not an adequate description of it: we have to say νόησις of what, and so we must say that it is νόησις of

³⁵the idea that being unable ever to sleep would make the burden of eternal ἐνέργεια worse also recalls DC II,1, cited above. Aristotle may also be recalling another passage (partly cited above) from EE VI,14 = NE VII,14 1154b, where humans but not gods need change in order to continue to find their state pleasurable: "for change in all things is sweet, according to the poet, on account of some wretchedness [πονηρία]: for as among men it is the wretched/bad who is given to change, so with the nature that needs change: for it is neither simple nor good [ἐπιεικής]". the quote is from Euripides' Orestes (234), where Orestes, when not in a fit of madness, is left weak by his illness and "hard to satisfy on account of aporia," and keeps asking to be shifted to another position where he can briefly get an "appearance [to himself] of health," the reality being unattainable (Phaedra at the beginning of the Hippolytus is in the same condition). Aristotle is here taking the sick Orestes as a metaphor for human as opposed to divine nature

³⁶so Ross, Brunschwig, DeFilippo 1995; but apparently not Kosman in FC, although I have difficulties interpreting Kosman. Ross' reading can be supported by the ἂν εἴη in 1074b30, since it's not obvious what the implied protasis is if not "if it is not νόησις but δύναμις". the structure of the sentence is ambiguous: in "first, if P, it is likely that Q; and, also, it is clear that R," does the last clause mean "it is clear that, if P, then R" or not? Aristotle's conclusion that "something else would be more valuable than νοῦς, namely the νοούμενον" does not seem to depend on the premiss that the νοῦς is δύναμις, but Ross supplies the argument that, since every δύναμις is simultaneously of contraries, a δύναμις for νοεῖν the good could also νοεῖν the bad; since to νοεῖν the bad would itself be bad, the goodness of the νοεῖν cannot come from the νοῦς itself, but only from the object it encounters

³⁷on this interpretation, the present argument will be different from the argument earlier in the chapter, 1074b21-3, that if its οὐσία is δύναμις, it will not be the best because it will acquire its value through the accident of νοεῖν. there what would be better is whatever causes it to νοεῖν (a higher νοῦς that it participates in?), and the argument was against its being essentially δύναμις; here what would be better is its object, and the argument is against its being νόησις of something other than itself. it seems to me to be a good result if Aristotle is not simply repeating himself here. if this cannot be sustained, I would be tempted by the proposal of Sandbach to move all of 1074b28-30 to after "it would be the best οὐσία" in 1074b20. but that would leave a rude jump from b28 to b31 (this is Brunschwig's third objection to Sandbach, FC p.287, and it strikes me as decisive, although I am not sure his other objections are) {ref from Brunschwig: F.H. Sandbach, "A Transposition in Aristotle, Metaphysics Λ9 1074b," in Mnemosyne 7 (1954), pp.39-43}

the best, and we can only spell that out by saying that it is νόησις of νόησις.³⁸ So the present argument takes us up by degrees: rather than saying simply that it is νοῦς, we must say that it is νόησις, and rather than saying simply that it is νόησις, we must say that it is νόησις of νόησις. Aristotle is here deliberately taking up an option from a familiar Platonic dilemma: those who say that the good is not pleasure but knowledge "are not able to explain which knowledge, but in the end are compelled to say that it is [knowledge] of the good" (Republic VI 505b5-6),³⁹ with the result that the good is a knowledge that is simply knowledge of itself. As Plato points out, even if such a circular knowledge is possible, and even if it would be good (and it is certainly not obvious what it would be good for), to tell us that the good is such a knowledge is not to tell us what the good is: these people, "although they criticize us for not knowing the good, proceed to speak to us as if we knew it: for they say that it is knowledge of the good, as if we understood what they are speaking of when they pronounce the word 'good'" (505c1-4). Plato's own solution is to say that there is a good-itself which is not any kind of knowledge, and to try to describe this either as an idea of the good or as the One; and presumably the best kind of knowledge will be a knowledge of this higher good, rather than a knowledge of knowledge. Aristotle of course rejects the theses that the good-itself is an idea of the good or that it is the One; and given his commitment that knowledge is identical with its object (if the object is immaterial), the good-itself that is the object of the highest knowledge cannot be anything other than that knowledge itself. So Aristotle accepts the option that Plato is rejecting in the Republic, of saying that the good is a knowledge which is simply knowledge of the good, and thus simply knowledge of itself: this may not fully communicate what the good is, but it has the advantage of being true, and it helps to purify our conception of the most divine being by stripping away some things that it is not.

To this solution Aristotle raises an objection: "but it seems that knowledge [ἐπιστήμη] and sensation are and opinion and thought are always of something else, and of themselves [only] as a byproduct. But if νοεῖν and νοεῖσθαι are different, under which aspect will goodness [τὸ εὖ] belong to it? For to be νόησις and to be νοούμενον are not the same" (1074b35-8). This starts from a familiar objection against a circular knowledge: can there be "a knowledge [ἐπιστήμη] ... which is not knowledge of any knowable object [μάθημα], but is knowledge of itself and other knowledges" (Charmides 168a6-8), any more than "a vision which is not vision of the things the other visions are of, but us a vision of itself and the other visions, and likewise of non-visions, and although it is a vision, sees not a color, but itself and the other visions" (167c8-d2; same question asked for opinion, 168a-4, and other cognitive and appetitive states)? Certainly a single soul can know itself as well as other things, and perhaps (as Aristotle's theory holds) even a single ἕξις or ἐνέργεια of knowledge (or of sensation) can be a cognition of itself as well of its

³⁸Joseph DeFilippo, "The 'Thinking of Thinking' in Metaphysics Λ9," in the Journal of the History of Philosophy for 1995, heroically maintains that νόησις νοήσεως is subjective genitive, a νόησις whose subject is simply itself, or which subsists with no further subject, rather than a νόησις possessed by a power of νοῦς. Aristotle certainly agrees that the best thing is a νόησις νοήσεως in this sense, but this is certainly not the natural way to take the phrase, and seems unlikely as a reading of the present passage, which seems to be talking about what the object of the νοήσις is, rather than about whether it is δύναμις or ἐνέργεια. DeFilippo takes "if it is κράτιστον" here to mean not "if it is the best," but rather, literally, "if it is the most powerful," i.e. "if nothing is κύριον over it," which he takes (I think rightly) to mean not "if it has some object other than itself" but rather "if it is essentially ἐνέργεια, so that it does not depend on anything else to actualize it." in this way DeFilippo tries to defend the possibility that God νοεῖ, by his essence, things other than himself (this depends on trivializing the thesis of the identity of knowledge with its object, following Norman). he probably defends the indefensible about as well as it can be done

³⁹the word I have translated "knowledge" is φρόνησις, but this seems the only possible translation, if we can ask which φρόνησις something is, whether it is the φρόνησις of X or the φρόνησις of Y.

primary object. But in these cases the knowledge is originally constituted as knowledge of something else, and only as a further consequence is also knowledge of itself. So, although one and the same thing is νόησις and νοούμενον, its being-νόησις and its being-νοούμενον are not the same, since it is originally νόησις, and only consequently νοούμενον. Or, looking at it from the other end: if something is knowledge of itself, then in order for there to be some non-circular content of its self-knowledge, it must originally be constituted as something else (perhaps as knowledge of some other object); so it will first be a νοούμενον, or more precisely a νοητόν, for itself to know, and then consequently it will be νόησις of itself. (And if it decides to contemplate itself because it is itself the best available object for contemplation, then goodness will belong to it prior to its knowing itself, so it will be good not because it is νόησις but because it is νοούμενον or νοητόν.) The presuppositions of the aporia are close to those of the aporia at De Anima III,4 429b26-9: "is [νοῦς] itself, too, νοητός? Then either νοῦς will belong to the other [νοητά] as well, if it is not itself νοητὸς κατ' ἄλλο, and the νοητόν will be one in species; or [νοῦς] will have some admixture, which renders it νοητός like the others" (discussed, although not quoted in full, above). The point was: if it is not the same for something to be νοῦς and to be νοητόν, then there will be composition in νοῦς (whether we think of this as a νοῦς-differentia added to the genus of the νοητόν, or νοητόν-attribute added to a νοῦς-subject), which contradicts the assumption that νοῦς is simple; but if it is indeed the same for something to be νοῦς and to be νοητόν, then every νοητόν will be a νοῦς, which seems paradoxical. And the same principle that was the basis for solving that aporia is again invoked to solve the present aporia in Λ9: namely, that the knowledge is the object stripped of its matter if any, so that "in the productive [sciences]" (meaning the sciences of material things, as argued above) the knowledge is "the οὐσία-without-the-matter and the essence," but "in the theoretical [sciences]" (the sciences of separate immaterial things, as argued above) "the λόγος is both the object and the νόησις," so that "the νοούμενον and the νοῦς [are] not different [in] such things as do not have matter" (Λ9 1075a1-4, parallel to DA III,4 430a3-7, cited above).⁴⁰ In the De Anima, this principle led to different resolutions of the aporia in the material and immaterial cases. If the νοητόν is material, then the νοῦς is distinguished from the νοητόν, not by containing something additional to the νοητόν, but by not containing the matter which the νοητόν contains. But in the case of a separate immaterial νοητόν, there is nothing on either side to distinguish the νοῦς from the νοητόν: νοῦς does not have being νοητόν as a superadded attribute, but has the same simple nature that the νοητόν has, and so Aristotle accepts the conclusion that the νοητόν is itself a νοῦς, that is, a ποιητικὸς νοῦς as described in De Anima III,5 (all summarizing from above). This second case is of course the only relevant case in Λ9, and in this case there is no composition at all, of νοῦς-subject and νοητόν-attribute or of νοητόν-genus and νοῦς-differentia: so Aristotle simply denies the assumption of the Λ9 aporia that "to be νόησις and to be νοούμενον are not the same." The knowledge is not first constituted as knowledge of something else and only then as knowledge of itself; nor is the thing known first constituted as, say, a good-itself, and only then as knowledge of that good. So there is no choice whether it is the good-itself because it is the highest νοῦς or

⁴⁰note the textual difficulties in this passage (what's written in the margins of the manuscript; note discrepancy between Ross' and Jaeger's reports of E, and note that Ab probably doesn't reflect the β tradition, need C or M), note Brunschwig's proposal. perhaps also deal with some interpretive issues, if not adequately dealt with above: e.g. the people who want theoretical knowledge/knowledge of things without matter to include knowledge of material forms, and the rather bizarre proposal that identity of knowledge and its object holds even in productive cases; see your notes on Norma, Brunschwig, Kosman, DeFilippo, Bradshaw; perhaps note Brunschwig's odd idea that νοεῖν would be better than νοεῖσθαι (because "active"--but surely if there were an opposition here νοεῖν would be the passion)

because it is the highest νοητόν: the appearance of a distinction is caused only by our inevitable human tendency to assimilate it to a knowing soul like our own.

The present argument, Λ9 1074b38-1075a5, uses the fact that the νοῦς we are investigating is an ἐπιστήμη (1075a1) or even a νόησις (1075a3, 1075a5), rather than an underlying δύναμις of which an ἐπιστήμη or a νόησις is predicated, to conclude that this νοῦς is identical with its object. It thus follows a quite different strategy from the argument of 1074b23-35, which argued that the νοῦς is identical with its object from the premisses that it is itself the best and that its object is the best. The present strategy has at least two important advantages. First, it avoids dependence on the premiss that there is nothing better than νοῦς, which rested only on the Platonists' failure to provide a clear conception of a good-itself superior to νοῦς. Second, it avoids the suggestion that the good is already constituted as the good prior to its act of νοεῖν itself (as seems to be implied if the god "looks around for the perfection which he wishes to contemplate, finds nothing to rival his own self, and settles into a posture of permanent self-admiration"--Richard Norman's sarcastic description of the results of the first argument-strategy, Articles on Aristotle v.4 p.93). Something quite similar to the present argument-strategy is developed by Plotinus, certainly largely on the basis of his reflections on Metaphysics Λ9 and De Anima III,4-5; Plotinus is of course debarred from pursuing Aristotle's first argument-strategy, since he thinks there is indeed a first good-itself superior to νοῦς. A brief comparison with Plotinus will be useful both because Plotinus gives a rather clearer statement of Aristotle's underlying argument than Aristotle himself does, and because Plotinus, while appropriating much of Aristotle's understanding of νοῦς, nonetheless ends up with an importantly differently position especially on the question of the simplicity or complexity of νοῦς and of its object, which Aristotle addresses in the last lines of Λ9, 1075a5-10. Contrasting Aristotle with Plotinus will help to bring out the different metaphysical assumptions that lead Aristotle and Plotinus to their different answers to this last question; it will also bring out their differing attitudes toward the Timaeus, which lies in the background of the arguments of Λ9.

Plotinus argues about the relations between νοῦς-in-the-highest-sense ("νοῦς ... if we are true to the word," V.9.5,1-2) and its νοητά especially in the treatises V.9, On Noῦς, Ideas and Being, and V.5, That the Νοητά are not outside Noῦς and on the Good. The title of V.5 states Plotinus' main thesis, which is an Aristotelian thesis, directed against a common Platonist view that the νοητά are primitive ἀρχαί independent of the demiurgic νοῦς.⁴¹ Plotinus argues: "since νοῦς knows, and knows the νοητά, if it knows them as something other than itself, how will it encounter them? It will be possible [on this assumption] that it should not, so it will be possible that it will not know them, or that it will know them only after it has encountered them, and it will not always have knowledge" (V.5.1,19-23). So, since νοῦς "if we are true to the word" must be "actually and always νοῦς" (V.9.5,1-4; that is, it must be essentially actually knowing what it knows), its knowledge cannot depend on its "encountering" things outside it, since then of its own nature it would be only potentially knowing. So, "if it does not have its intelligence [φρονεῖν] as something borrowed [i.e. as something which it does not have essentially, but only by dependence on something higher which does have it essentially], then if it νοεῖ something, it νοεῖ it of itself, and if it possesses something, it possesses it of itself; but if it νοεῖ of itself and from itself, it is itself the things it νοεῖ" (V.9.5,4-7). If, by contrast, a given so-called νοῦς knows its objects only by having encountered them outside itself, then it is only "potentially νοῦς," νοῦς of the kind that "has passed from unintelligence [ἀφροσύνη] to νοῦς" (V.9.5,2-3); and if so, we must "search for yet another νοῦς prior to it" (V.9.5,3), which actualizes this first νοῦς, or which

⁴¹also against Longinus' view that the νοητά (that is, Ideas) are posterior and dependent on the νοῦς's activity

the first νοῦς participates in to become νοῦς; and this prior νοῦς will be identical with what it knows. Here Plotinus is clearly taking from De Anima III,5 the assumption that a νοῦς that has only potential νοεῖν by its essence will have actual νοεῖν only through a higher νοῦς that has actual νοεῖν by its essence.⁴² Like Aristotle in Λ9, he is assuming that the divine νοῦς, or the νοῦς-in-the-highest-sense, is of the essentially actual kind, and using this premiss to resolve the question τί νοεῖ ὁ νοῦς. Like Aristotle, he claims that something whose essence is just knowledge must be identical with its object, and, more clearly than Aristotle, he spells out an argument: if the knowledge had an object outside of itself, then in order to come into contact with the object it would have to "look" outside itself, and so would be dependent on its "encountering" something outside itself; and then the actualization of the knowledge would not result simply from its essence but would depend on an external cause.

Plotinus' treatises are clearly set within a context of Platonist controversies about the relation between the demiurgic νοῦς and his νοητά, the Ideas, the animal-itself as model for the sensible world and the particular ideas contained within it as models for particular parts of the sensible world. Plotinus' argument is supposed to show that, contrary to what we might think from a naive reading of the Timaeus, the demiurge does not simply look around for the best model for the sensible world and catch sight of the animal-itself; rather, the demiurge is the animal-itself, and he knows himself not by looking at himself as if he were something external, but simply by being a separately existing knowledge, which, because it is knowing by its essence, does not know by "looking" outside itself. Aristotle in Λ9 is equally concluding that νοῦς does not know by "looking" outside itself, and he too is reflecting on and criticizing the Timaeus picture of the demiurge looking to the Ideas. The obvious difference is that Plotinus takes himself to be giving the true interpretation of the demiurge (not something like a knowing soul, but a separately existing knowledge of immaterial things, which must be identical with what it knows) and of the Ideas (not perfect triangles and immortal horses, but, again, separately existing knowledge), while Aristotle takes himself to be refuting the Ideas. In part this means simply that Aristotle has chosen to interpret Plato literally and "uncharitably," Plotinus, with much more effort, to interpret him "charitably" and allegorically. But there is also an important difference between the positive views of Aristotle and Plotinus, in that Plotinus identifies νοῦς with a plurality of νοητά, and thus can more plausibly claim to be preserving the Platonic Ideas. The thesis that νοῦς is what it knows forces Plotinus to identify the demiurge with the animal-itself, but it does not force him to deny the internal complexity of the animal-itself: each Idea is identical with the science of that Idea, and the many sciences are contained within a single all-comprehending science, νοῦς, which exercises these many sciences in producing the sensible world in its own image. So at least part of the issue between Aristotle and Plotinus on Ideas is about whether the νοῦς νοεῖ a complex or a single simple thing; or, equivalently, whether the νοῦς is itself a complex of sciences or a single simple act of knowledge.

Simplicity or complexity: Aristotle and Plotinus

⁴²in my view, DA III,5 asserts this only when the object of the νοεῖν exists separately from matter; but Plotinus will have accepted the interpretation of Alexander of Aphrodisias, in which every νοεῖν involves an act of the ποιητικός νοῦς (to abstract the form from matter, if it was originally encountered in matter). anyway, Plotinus may think that every νοητόν worth the name is separable from matter (I'm not sure what he thinks about cases like snubness, but he certainly doesn't think they're ubiquitous in nature, in the way Aristotle does; see VI.7, where animals that have horns here have horns in the intelligible world, not for defensive purposes but simply for the perfection of their natures)

This is the issue Aristotle is addressing in the last lines of Λ9: "there still remains an aporia, whether the νοούμενον is composite: [if it were, the νόησις] would change among the parts of the whole. But everything which does not have matter is indivisible; and as the human νοῦς, or the νοῦς of composites, is in some [period of] time (for it does not have the good [τὸ εὖ] in this or that [instant? or: in cognizing this or that object?], but its best, being something other [than the νοῦς itself?]) [consists] in some whole), so this νόησις-of-itself is for all eternity" (1075a5-10). While there are difficulties particularly in the last few lines, it is clear that Aristotle is denying that the νοούμενον of the divine νοῦς--that is, the divine νοῦς itself--is composite; and his ground is the general claim that "everything which does not have matter is indivisible," that is, that separate immaterial things do not have a part-whole structure, in the way that, for Plato, a species-form is composed out of genera and differentiae as constituents, and a number is composed out of units as constituents.⁴³ This is an argument that Aristotle makes relatively fully at *Metaphysics* N2 1088b14-28, concluding that, because "there is no eternal οὐσία which is not ἐνέργεια", it follows that "no eternal οὐσία has στοιχεῖα out-of which as constituents [ἐνυπαρχόντων] it is" (b25-8). And this is a further consequence of the more basic argument developed in Z13, that "it is impossible for an οὐσία to be out-of οὐσίαι present in it [ἐνυπαρχουσῶν] in actuality: for things that are two in actuality are never one in actuality, but if they are [only] potentially two they will be one (as the double [line] is out-of two halves, in potentiality; for actuality separates). Thus if the οὐσία is one thing, it will not be out-of constituent [ἐνυπαρχουσῶν] οὐσίαι, as Democritus rightly says: he says it is impossible for one thing to come-to-be out-of two or two out-of one: for he makes the indivisible magnitudes the οὐσίαι. So it is clear that it will be likewise with number, if number is a combination of units, as some people say: for either the dyad is not one thing, or there is no unit in it in actuality" (1039a3-14). The fundamental thought is that the same thing cannot simultaneously be actually one whole and actually many parts, because one and many are contraries. The idea that one and many are contraries, and therefore that anything that is a whole of parts has contrary attributes at once, is in Plato's *Parmenides*--thus in the second Hypothesis, "the one-which-is is somehow both one and many, both whole and parts, both limited and unlimited in multiplicity" (145a2-3)--but Plato is apparently willing to tolerate such a compresence of contraries, not only in sensible things but also in intelligibles. Aristotle, however, finds it intolerable that the same thing should simultaneously have two contrary attributes in actuality. So he concludes (in the Z13 passage) that the only way for something to be a whole of parts, and thus both one and many, is for it to be actually one but potentially many: one circle (say) is two semicircles, not because the two semicircles actually exist, but because they can exist, because they can be separated from the whole and from each other, and so the circle can become two semicircles. Likewise a number, assuming that it is a substance, would have to be potentially many units, on pain of not being many at all, and thus of not being a number. But--and this is the further step taken by the N2 passage, beyond the Z13 passage--a separate immaterial substance is pure actuality, with no non-actualized potentialities. So if such a substance, actually one, were a whole of parts, it would have to be actually many, an absurdity. So, as N2 says, such a substance cannot have στοιχεῖα or ἐνυπάρχοντα; or, as our passage from Λ9 says, "everything which does not have matter is indivisible," and, because it has no potentiality for being divided, it cannot be composite. There is no reason why there might not be many separate immaterial substances, but these many could not also be in any way one, so they would have to be separate from each other, and not parts

⁴³hopefully much of this will have been treated in some not yet (Feb 2003) written section of the book, e.g. IIδ or the appendix on MN, to which I will be able to refer in revisions

within a single whole. To put in another way, there might be one or many separate intelligibles, but there cannot be an "intelligible world," if "world" requires a part-whole structure; in particular, against Plato and also against Plotinus' reinterpretation, there cannot be internal complexity within the animal-itself.

Aristotle concludes that divine νόησις too is entirely simple, being knowledge of a single simple object. Certainly it cannot be knowledge of a complex immaterial νοούμενον (like an animal-itself containing many particular Ideas), since, as we have seen, there are no complex immaterial νοούμενα. We might imagine that it might know several separate simple νοούμενα; but since it, being a single thing, is identical with its νοούμενα, it would again have to be one whole and many parts, and the same absurdity would result. There might indeed be several separate immaterial νοούμενα, but there cannot be a single ποιητικὸς νοῦς which νοεῖ them all (and which must therefore be them all). Given this background, Aristotle is justified in concluding at the end of Λ9 that if the νοούμενον were composite, the νόησις "would change among the parts of the whole," or at least that it could so change, and thus that the νοῦς would be changeable and essentially potential, contrary to assumption: if it is essentially actually contemplating each part of the composite νοούμενον, then there is no potentiality for its νόησις of one part to exist separately from its νόησις of another part, and so there is no real plurality of νοήσεις, and so (since the νοήσεις are their νοούμενα) no real plurality of νοούμενα. "The human νοῦς, or the νοῦς of composites,"⁴⁴ finds its τέλος not simply in its own essence, or indeed in any one act of νόησις, but in a complex of νοήσεις (say, a grasping of different scientific propositions, some inferred from others), which we typically cannot exercise all at once, but only in a whole life;⁴⁵ but since the divine νοῦς has its perfection in an act which is its own essence, and which is necessarily unchanging for eternity, there is, given Aristotle's denial of composition in things that have no potentiality, no composition in this νοῦς or in its object.⁴⁶

It is worth reflecting briefly on how Plotinus tries to avoid this conclusion, insofar as this helps to illuminate Aristotle's differences from the Platonist position. Plotinus, with Plato and against Aristotle, maintains that an immaterial substance can be a whole of parts, and thus both one and many: indeed, the many Ideas, rather than being entirely distinct substances, are all parts of a single intelligible world. Thus to some extent Plotinus is just more willing to tolerate the compresence of contraries than Aristotle is. But he also recognizes that part-whole structures in the intelligible world must be different from their counterparts in the sensible world, because (as Aristotle points out) in the intelligible world the parts would have no potentiality for existing

⁴⁴Ross raises the question whether ὁ [νοῦς] τῶν συνθέτων is subjective or objective genitive, and, following pseudo-Alexander, opts for the former (the νοῦς possessed by things compounded of soul and body, or of rational and irrational soul-powers). but Aristotle is asking whether the νοούμενον is σύνθετον, that is, whether the νοῦς is about something composite; I think the argument requires construing the genitive as objective. (I am not sure why Ross thinks that νοῦς with objective genitive is any more "difficult" than ἐπιστήμη with objective genitive; for a striking example see Plato Laws XII 967d8-e2, the νοῦς τῶν ὄντων in the stars). on the other hand, it follows from Aristotle's argument here that any νοῦς τῶν συνθέτων cannot belong to a νοῦς that is pure ἐνέργεια, but only to a νοῦς composed out of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια, and thus to a [νοῦς] τῶν συνθέτων in the subjective sense too. for discussion of this construal issue and of other difficulties of this passage, see Brunschwig in FC pp.298-301

⁴⁵note DC II,12, cited above (in IIIγ1?) on intermediate beings, like us, needing many actions to complete their τέλος.

⁴⁶many notes and corrigenda. should really say "most divine νοῦς", since there are also subordinate gods (i.e. immortal blessed rational animals) whose νοῦς is essentially potential, even if always actualized. stress, if not adequately before, why non-δύναμις implies that this νοῦς must be an immediate intellectual intuition (νοῦς in the sense of Posterior Analytics II,19) rather than deductive ἐπιστήμη (which depends on my, at some stage, actually knowing the premisses and only potentially knowing the conclusion)

separately from each other or from the whole. But even though the many parts (the many Ideas) are necessarily united to one another, Plotinus wants to explain how they can still be a genuine multiplicity. Since the many Ideas are many habits or acts of knowledge within the single all-comprehending knowledge, νοῦς, Plotinus gives as a model for their multiplicity-but-inseparability the many theorems within a single science, where these theorems must be interpreted not as propositional intentional contents (like Stoic λεκτά) but rather as the habits or acts of knowing these propositions, like many mini-ἐπιστήμαι within a single ἐπιστήμη. These "parts" of the science will be inseparable if the theorems are mutually implying, but they will still be many if what the different theorems are explicitly asserting or thematizing is different. This model allows Plotinus to agree with Aristotle that a part-whole structure requires δύναμις: each theorem contains the others δυνάμει, since the other theorems can be derived from it; but this is not a passive δύναμις (each part can become something) but rather an active δύναμις (each part can generate the others), and, Plotinus thinks, there is no reason why there should not be active δυνάμεις in immaterial things.⁴⁷

Aristotle would of course be unconvinced that this is sufficient to yield a real plurality in νοῦς (if knowing X entails knowing Y and vice versa, then the knowledge of X and the knowledge of Y are the same science), or, therefore, that it yields an "intelligible world" with a rich enough internal structure that it can be a paradigm for the structure of the sensible world. But there is a further important point that hangs on this disagreement. Plato and Aristotle and Plotinus agree that the first ἀρχή is single and simple, and that it is the good-itself. Aristotle thinks that the highest νοῦς is simple, so that nothing prevents it from being the first ἀρχή, or from being the good-itself. For Plotinus, however, because νοῦς is internally complex, the first ἀρχή must be something simple and superior to νοῦς, the unity in which both νοῦς-as-a-whole and its individual parts participate (this is how, for Plato, the one-itself is related to a number, or to the one-being of the Parmenides); and this simple unity, rather than νοῦς, will be the good-itself. This leads to an aporia: since for Plotinus, as for Aristotle, νοῦς is identical with what it νοεῖ, and since he is maintaining that νοῦς is not identical with the good, does it follow that νοῦς does not νοεῖν the good? If it fails to νοεῖν the good, is it not a badly deficient virtue? Plotinus' answer is that it tries to νοεῖν the good, and does so insofar as this is possible, but that it does not grasp it adequately, that is, in a way commensurate with the simple unity of the object; νοῦς is actual νοεῖν precisely in grasping the good, but this inadequate grasping constitutes a plurality of partial acts of νοεῖν, and these many partial acts of νοεῖν the good are the many Ideas. Thus for Plotinus νοῦς is a complex discursive science which unfolds a multiplicity of deductively interconnected contents from the simple good-itself which it cannot adequately grasp; where for Aristotle νοῦς is a simple and adequate intellectual intuition of the simple good-itself, and is that simple good-itself.⁴⁸

⁴⁷refer to sources in Plotinus (I've done this before, not sure where exactly). note also two other models in Plotinus: the seed containing δυνάμει all the other parts of the plant, and Stoics on plurality of interentailing virtues (with points about their theoretical content)

⁴⁸Plotinus references again (perhaps note that Plotinus on the activity of νοῦς here is rather like "the human νοῦς, or the νοῦς of composites" at the end of Λ9, except that there is no element of temporality, since all these acts are necessarily eternal). then: notes on things to add or change. insert more subsection divisions. insert a note or notes on translation-policy in Λ9: not translating ἦ in responses to aporiai, and ignoring question-marks in rhetorical questions (d flag where this might make a difference). somewhere add on not discursive/deductive ἐπιστήμη but intuitive νοῦς. somewhere cite the fragment of the On Prayer, as in old arnoux paper. perhaps modify comment about straightforward application of DA III,5: straightforward only in that, to escape the imperfection of a νοῦς which must be acted on in order to operate, develop notion of a νοῦς which has its operation of its essence and must

therefore be identical with its object. review Broadie article, add some footnotes whether in IIIγ1 or IIIγ2, showing how my interp differs both from her "orthodoxy" and from her own view. notes to other literature as appropriate. in particular, notes on various ancient, medieval and modern attempts to allow God's knowledge to have a plurality of contents (besides Plotinus', described in the main text): problems about complexity, passivity/potentiality (if God knows by "looking" at something outside him), contingency, changeability, snublikeness. the best bet is Scotus': God knows contingent things by knowing himself and what is in himself, including his own will; since he knows that his will is efficacious, he can infer what actually happens. many other attempts simply fail to recognize the seriousness of Aristotle's arguments