The Classical Quarterly (2026) 1–20
doi:10.1017/S0009838826101979

TEXTUAL MISPLACEMENT IN ARISTOTLE'S *METAPHYSICS* 12

ABSTRACT

Aristotle discusses intellect in Metaph. *12.9. This chapter, however, seems incomplete, because a question posed in it (1074b36–8) remains unaddressed. Another passage (1072b14–30) in* Metaph. *12.7 seems to address a similar topic, yet appears extraneous to its present chapter. This article argues that the placing of the aforementioned passage within* Metaph. *12.7 is incorrect, and that its original position is actually at the end of* Metaph. *12.9. This alternative reading offers a better understanding of 1072b14–30, and has the potential to finalize the unfinished discussion in* Metaph. *12.9.*

Keywords: Aristotle; intellect; the Prime Mover; God's well-being; *Metaphysics*; textual criticism

INTRODUCTION

The *locus classicus* for a discussion of intellect[1] in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* 12 is 12.9. This chapter appears incomplete, though, as the question posed in 1074b36–8 remains unaddressed. Meanwhile, within *Metaph.* 12.7—amidst a discussion of the Prime Mover (henceforth PM)—a passage (1072b14–30) seems extraneous. This article argues that the placing of 1072b14–30 (henceforth MP [= Misplaced Passage]) within 12.7 is incorrect, and that its original position was at the end of 12.9. It first shows that MP cannot reasonably belong in 12.7 (section 1). Next, it examines the argument structure of 12.9 to establish it as the proper context for MP (section 2). After that, it shows that 12.9 is unfinished, thereby paving the way for the introduction of MP (section 3). Finally, it offers a close reading of MP to provide a positive account of the thesis, arguing that it constitutes a continuation of 12.9 (section 4).

1. AN ALIEN PASSAGE WITHIN *METAPHYSICS* 12.7

To recognize MP's misplacement within *Metaph.* 12.7, we must first discern the chapter's purpose, revealed by its placement in the sequence initiated in 12.6. The latter sets out to establish that 'an everlasting unmoved substance is necessary' (1071b4–5). *Metaph.* 12.6 concentrates on the attribute 'everlasting' and demonstrates the existence of a substance that is everlasting (1071b5–11) yet distinct from everlasting material entities—namely, the heavenly bodies—because its essence, unlike theirs, is activity and devoid of matter (1071b12–22).[2] This distinction positions this everlasting substance as a

[1] Following J. Brunschwig, '*Metaphysics* Λ 9: a short-lived thought-experiment', in M. Frede and D. Charles (edd.), *Aristotle's* Metaphysics *Lambda* (*Symposium Aristotelicum*) (Oxford, 2000), 275–306, at 275 n. 6, I translate the word-family as νοῦς = intellect; νόησις = intellection; νοεῖν, νοεῖσθαι = intelligize, to be intelligized; νοούμενον = what is intelligized, the intelligized object; νοητόν = intelligible.

[2] ἀϊδίους in 1071b21 seems out of place. Perhaps ἐνέργεια (1071b22) was a marginal correction to ἀϊδίους (1071b21), with ἄρα (1071b22) indicating that something which had not been grasped before is now apprehended. See L. Elders, *Aristotle's Theology: A Commentary on Book Λ of the Metaphysics* (Assen, 1972), 145. Therefore, 1071b20–2 could be revised as follows: 'Moreover, these substances

© The Author(s), 2026. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of The Classical Association.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838826101979 Published online by Cambridge University Press

promising candidate for being an unmoved substance, yet the explicit justification for the attribute 'unmoved' is deferred to 12.7.

Metaph. 12.7 states that the first heaven is a substance with everlasting motion (1072a21–3). The mover of this moved object, the everlasting substance of 12.6, must not itself be moved, since something that is both moving and moved is intermediate. Thus, that mover must be an ultimate mover that remains unmoved (1072a23–6; cf. *Ph.* 8.5, 256b14–24).

After establishing that PM is immovable—and, consequently, that an immovable substance exists—the discourse centres on its modus operandi and how it can move without being moved (1072a26–b4). The response posits that it moves in a manner akin to the object of desire (τὸ ὀρεκτόν) and the intelligible (τὸ νοητόν) (1072a26–7). Rational (or intellectual) desire (βούλεσθαι), though, is directed towards what is καλόν—that is, beautiful and fine (1072a27–8).

Since the primary kind of substance—namely, simple and active—is the most καλόν, occupying the highest position on the positive side of the Pythagorean columns (1072a30–b1), PM emerges as the most desired being. It serves as the for-the-sake-of-which—not in the sense of that for whose benefit actions are carried out, but in the sense of that at which actions aim (1072b1–3).[3] Consequently, it moves as what is beloved (ἐρώμενον) (1072b3) and operates as a final cause. Although intertwined, three distinct moments emerge from the discussion above: (1) the establishment of an unmoved mover (the intermediate–ultimate argument); (2) its beauty and fineness (the argument based on the Pythagorean columns); and (3) its desirability and, consequently, its role as a final cause (the argument of desire and love).

The subsequent lines of 12.7 (1072b4–14) advocate for the first two moments in a distinct manner while also alluding to the third. The discussion unfolds as follows. The mover of the first moved object cannot itself be in motion, as it engenders the most fundamental type of motion in the first heaven, leaving no primary motion for itself to possess (1072b4–10) (first moment). Since it lacks motion and thus cannot exist in any other way, it exists of necessity—since a necessary thing is that which cannot be otherwise (1072b13)—and, inasmuch as it exists of necessity, it exists in a beautiful and fine manner (καλῶς) (1072b10–11) (second moment). In this way, it serves as a principle (1072b11) (third moment).

The cornerstone of the discussion on PM's modus operandi is its beauty and fineness (τὸ καλόν). This point is reinforced by the closing sentence of the preceding passage at the threshold of MP: 'On such a principle, therefore, depend the heaven and nature' (1072b13–14). Thus, it would be fitting to address the Pythagoreans and Speusippus—who denied that the most beautiful (κάλλιστον) and the best (ἄριστον) were at the beginning—at this juncture. Ironically, immediately following MP, a passage (1072b30–1073a3) engages with them, which may indicate MP's irrelevance in this context.

The continuity of the discussion before and after MP may not be sufficient to establish it as an interpolation. It is essential to examine MP itself and demonstrate that it cannot be smoothly integrated into the ongoing argument. There, in fact, seems to be a discontinuity between MP and the preceding discussion.

MP begins by addressing the quality of PM's διαγωγή—that is, its course of existence—an idea that may seem peculiar, since nothing in the preceding discussion suggests that

must be without matter; for if, in fact, something else [apart from the heavenly bodies] is everlasting, it must be activity.'

[3] Reading <καὶ> τινός at 1072b2 with Ross and Jaeger.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838826101979 Published online by Cambridge University Press

PM should be a kind of being that possesses διαγωγή, a subjective experience. The passage then states that its activity is pleasure (1072b16–17), again without any prior indication that PM is the kind of being capable of experiencing pleasure.

In short, the earlier discussion in 12.6–7 does not, at least explicitly, imply that PM should be a conscious being with cognitive activity.[4] Only afterwards does the text mention that intellection-by-itself belongs to the best being (1072b18–19), yet this appears more as a reiteration of a previously established fact, one substantiated only later in 12.9 (1074b33–5).[5]

Another indication of MP's irrelevance here is that the features it highlights—life, pleasure, intellection and divinity—are absent from the rest of the chapter, both before and after, including the concluding lines (1073a3–13), which summarize the findings of 12.6–7. MP's language appears distinctive, diverging from that of 12.7 and aligning with 12.9.

MP also differs from 12.7 in argumentative approach. MP diverges from the rest of 12.7 in that it offers a specific activity for PM. While 12.6 establishes that PM is pure activity, 12.7 describes it as being intelligized by the intellect of the first heaven; neither chapter (excluding MP) explicitly states that PM's activity is intellection. The determination of PM's specific form of activity belongs to a different project from that of 12.6–7.

To elucidate this, we must examine how Aristotle could have established PM's identity as intellect in the first place. Some scholars argue that previously established facts about PM necessitate its identification as intellect. So, Laks argues that the nature of PM as pure activity, established in 12.6, implies that it must be intellect, since *De an.* 3.5, 430a18 asserts that only intellect can be pure activity.[6] Alternatively, DeFilippo argues that (1) PM cannot be merely an intelligible object but must possess an existence independent of the heavenly intellect's intelligizing; otherwise, its existence would depend on the operation of the heavenly νοῦς. Moreover, (2) according to Aristotle, intelligible objects are forms; thus, PM should be a form independent of the heavenly intellect. Additionally, (3) in Aristotle's system, forms may exist in two ways: either compounded with matter or within a νοῦς as objects of thought. A form in matter is intelligible only potentially, whereas PM is an actual object of thought. To satisfy this requirement, it must exist in an intellect as an object. Finally, (4) 'since, according to Aristotle's theory of νοῦς, an intellect at the highest level of actuality is necessarily thinking itself, the PM is not simply an object of thought; it is also the intellect that thinks this object.'[7]

These arguments are not compelling. Contrary to Laks, *De an.* 3.5, 430a18 merely establishes that intellect—specifically, the so-called active intellect—is activity in its substance. But this does not entail that every pure activity must be intellect. Regarding

[4] Some scholars have attempted to deduce the identity of PM with the intellect from the discussion in 12.6–7. I shall argue that these interpretations have deficiencies. Even if they were correct, though, they would be of little benefit to the reader, as such deductions are too remote to dispel the bizarre impression encountered upon entering MP.

[5] It has already been suggested that 12.9 predates 12.7 (Brunschwig [n. 1], 301–4). This claim does not align with my argument that MP constitutes the concluding part of 12.9, however, nor are all its underlying premises entirely convincing.

[6] A. Laks, '*Metaphysics* Λ 7', in M. Frede and D. Charles (edd.), *Aristotle's* Metaphysics *Lambda* (*Symposium Aristotelicum*) (Oxford, 2000), 207–44, at 231.

[7] J.G. DeFilippo, 'Aristotle's identification of the Prime Mover as god', *CQ* 44 (1994), 393–409, at 402–3.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838826101979 Published online by Cambridge University Press

DeFilippo's argument, (2) is disputable. While Plato conceives of intelligible objects as Forms, Aristotle regards ἐνέργεια as the cornerstone of his substance theory, considering all substances as ἐνέργειαι rather than forms—even if, in the case of sensible objects, ἐνέργεια is one with the form.[8] Concerning (3), PM's being intelligible is mentioned in 12.7 only in so far as it is intelligized by the intellect of another being—that is, the first heaven. To the extent that PM is intelligized by another, it need not be intelligized always *in actu*, since its being thus intelligized depends not on PM's own substance but on the intellect that intelligizes. Thus, we cannot deduce that PM, though acknowledged as intelligible, must be intelligized necessarily from the fact that it is pure activity in its substance—at least not until its identity as intellect, or rather as self-intellection, has been established, which is precisely the question at issue. As for (4), this is merely an appeal to 12.9; so, if the argument holds, it would support the misplacement hypothesis.

We may wonder whether Aristotle ever pursued such approaches; there is no indication that he did. He does not even state that PM is intellect. As we shall see in 12.9, he merely examines PM as intellect—or, rather, intellect as PM—and seeks to formulate a proper conception of it.

The project of 12.6–7 is not to establish the existence of a prime mover—this was already acknowledged by all who recognized that an efficient cause must exist alongside material and formal causes. Figures such as Empedocles, Anaxagoras and Plato, cited in 12.6, already accepted this principle. Rather, these two chapters establish the existence of an unmoved substance. Aristotle demonstrates its existence by laying out the logical requirements for being a prime mover:

- its status as pure activity: establishes it as an everlasting substance distinct from the heavenly bodies (12.6, 1071b12–22).
- its immovability: ensures the existence of an everlasting immovable substance (12.7, 1073a3–5).
- its nature as the best being: explains its mode of causality (12.7, 1072b1–3).

This project is a formal enquiry, as it remains independent of the specific nature of PM's activity or essence. It centres on deducing the features of PM only in so far as it is a prime mover.

Various thinkers proposed different identifications of PM. *Metaph.* 12.6 mentions Plato's self-moving souls, Empedocles' φιλία and Anaxagoras' νοῦς. Yet the strongest candidate for PM was perhaps νοῦς—not because it possessed characteristics that inherently suited PM, but because there existed a Platonic ἔνδοξον concerning the identification of PM with intellect (see section 2). Since Aristotle accepted this identity as an ἔνδοξον, he had no need to demonstrate it. His task was merely to integrate this ἔνδοξον within his previously established formal discussion—to provide an appropriate conception of the Intellect Prime Mover (henceforth IPM) that aligned with the conception of PM already developed in 12.6–7. This project consisted in conceiving intellect as an immovable substance that is both pure activity and the best—a task undertaken in 12.9 through dialectical argumentation, relying on ἔνδοξα, as we shall see.

Therefore, while the project of 12.6–7 constitutes a philosophical investigation, the project of 12.9 is a dialectical enquiry. MP, which contains the principal ἔνδοξον in this

[8] I thus align with scholars who maintain that PM is not a form at all; for a list, see L. Judson, *Aristotle Metaphysics Book Λ* (Oxford, 2019), 282 n. 49.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838826101979 Published online by Cambridge University Press

regard—namely, the identification of PM with intellect—aligns with the latter, not with the former.[9]

2. THE MAIN PART OF *METAPHYSICS* 12.9

Before interpreting MP as the concluding part of *Metaph.* 12.9, we must first examine this chapter to explore its aim and argument. This discussion clarifies the chapter's nature as a dialectical enquiry and lays the groundwork for situating MP within this context.

Metaph. 12.9 opens with the statement: 'issues concerning intellect involve certain aporias' (τὰ δὲ περὶ τὸν νοῦν ἔχει τινὰς ἀπορίας, 1074b15). This phrasing presupposes familiarity on the part of the audience with intellect, perhaps as a prime mover, as if they had already encountered this idea. In scholarly discussions, this passage is generally taken as a reference to MP in 12.7. But what if we remove MP from 12.7?

First, even if MP remains in 12.7, it does not resolve the issue, as MP offers no foundation for identifying PM with intellect. Thus, preserving MP in its current context merely shifts the problem from 12.9 to 12.7. Worse still, this preservation introduces contextual difficulties, as noted in the previous section.

Second, the opening of 12.9 presents no difficulty in so far as the identification of PM with intellect may be regarded as an ἔνδοξον. Although Aristotle attributes to Anaxagoras the notion that intellect is the first moving or ordering cause, the significance he assigns to this idea largely reflects a Platonic attitude.

Having abandoned Anaxagoras' theory of intellect as the first ordering cause in the *Phaedo*, Plato later returned to it, most explicitly in the *Philebus*, even asserting that 'all the wise are agreed … that intellect is, for us, king of both heaven and earth' (28c6–8). In the *Laws*, he suggests that contemporary thinkers believe that the heavenly bodies possess soul and intellect, further implying that, according to them, intellect is the orderer of all that exists in the heavens (12.967a–b). Even the δημιουργός in the *Timaeus* can be regarded as the mythical equivalent of intellect.[10] Thus, Plato revived Anaxagoras' theory and passed it on to his disciples and successors. The theory of intellect can be found in all Platonic philosophers, in varying forms and formulations.

Therefore, when Aristotle states at the beginning of 12.9 that 'issues concerning intellect involve certain aporias', he probably refers to the intellect familiar to his audience through Plato's dialogues and doctrines. Plato, however, introduced this theory as an inheritance from Anaxagoras (cf. *Phd.* 97c). Accordingly, Aristotle regarded these two thinkers as its principal advocates. Yet Aristotle maintained that neither conceived intellect in a manner sufficient for it to serve as a first principle. Thus, in 12.9, he seeks to present a new conception of IPM that may meet the requirements of being a first principle, as demonstrated in the project of 12.6–7—that is, (1) being pure activity, (2) being immovable, and (3) being the best. The last requirement plays the main role in the argument of the chapter, but, as the discussion progresses, all three attributes will ultimately be established. The discussion begins as follows (12.9, 1074b15–17):

δοκεῖ μὲν γὰρ εἶναι τῶν φαινομένων θειότατον, πῶς δ' ἔχων τοιοῦτος ἂν εἴη, ἔχει τινὰς δυσκολίας.

[9] MP presents this ἔνδοξον not in its raw form (PM = intellect) but in a modified manner (PM = self-intellection; cf. 1072b18–19)—an identification that only becomes evident in light of the discussion in 12.9.

[10] Cf. R. Hackforth, 'Plato's theism', *CQ* 30 (1936), 4–9, at 4.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838826101979 Published online by Cambridge University Press

For while it is thought to be the most divine of the appearances, the state in which it would be so involves certain difficulties.

Being the most divine signifies occupying the highest position in being. Accordingly, Aristotle is concerned that, although intellect is regarded as the highest being and the primary ordering cause (cf. the disputed passage at *Leg.* 10.897b2), it is not conceived in the manner it ought to be.

θεῖος signifies perfection and loftiness and is closely related to καλός and ἀγαθός,[11] such that θειότατον would approximate κάλλιστον and ἄριστον.[12] The choice of this wording reflects the dialectical method of this chapter, which may favour rhetorical terms over technical ones. The same method necessitates an unusual term such as τὰ φαινόμενα. A φαινόμενον refers to a reality commonly acknowledged, whether through perception or through general agreement (ἔνδοξον).[13] Thus, Aristotle suggests that, although intellect is regarded as the best among things generally accepted as beings, this assumption requires further scrutiny. Intellect, conventionally conceived, does not appear to be the best, and to establish that it is, we must revise its conception so as to render it truly suitable for being so.

The argument of the chapter consists of two parts, each forming a distinct sub-argument—one to the principles (ἐπὶ τὰς ἀρχάς), the other from them (ἀπὸ τῶν ἀρχῶν; cf. *Eth. Nic.* 1.4, 1095a30–b1).[14] In the argument to the principles (1074b17–27), Aristotle analyses the proposition to be proved—namely, that IPM is the most divine being—and seeks to identify its elements and principles, that is, its necessary and sufficient conditions.

The two so-called aporias of the chapter fulfil this function. In the first aporia (A1) (1074b17–21), Aristotle argues that for IPM to be the most divine, it is not sufficient for it merely to intelligize; rather, it must be entirely devoid of potentiality. That is, IPM's substance must be the activity of intelligizing or intellection (νόησις), not merely a faculty of intellect (νοῦς) (with 'intellect' implied in 'IPM'—as mentioned in the subject of this sentence—being merely a name and neutral with respect to the substance of the named being). Therefore, the first condition is that IPM must be pure activity (the first attribute among the three listed above).

In the second aporia (A2) (1074b21–7), Aristotle examines the object of IPM's intellection—whether it is always one thing or varies across multiple objects at different times. He argues that, if IPM is to be the most divine, it must intelligize the most divine and honourable thing without changing its object; otherwise, it would end up intelligizing an inferior one (χεῖρον), which contradicts its status as the most divine.[15] Thus, if IPM is

[11] See Pl. *Phdr.* 246d8–e1; Arist. *Ph.* 192a17; *Gen. an.* 731b25–6; *Eth. Nic.* 1177a15. Sometimes θεῖος denotes everlastingness rather than beauty or fineness (e.g. Arist. *Cael.* 286a9–11; *Gen. an.* 731b24); its comparative and superlative forms, however, do not carry this meaning, since everlastingness does not admit degrees.

[12] θειότατον is replaced by ἄριστον twice in the course of the chapter (1074b20, 33), three times if we take MP into account (1072b19).

[13] As generally accepted since G.E.L. Owen, '*Tithenai ta phainomena*', in S. Mansion (ed.), *Aristote et les problèmes de méthode* (Louvain, 1961), 83–103 = S. Mansion, *Logic, Science and Dialectic: Collected Papers in Greek Philosophy*, ed. M. Nussbaum (New York, 1986), 239–51.

[14] The successive use of these two arguments in dialectical procedure reflects a Platonic heritage (cf. *Resp.* 6.511b). Plato and Aristotle's disagreement on the nature of 'dialectic' leads to differences in what qualifies as a principle, however.

[15] The sentence καὶ κίνησίς τις ἤδη τὸ τοιοῦτον (1074b27) should be bracketed as a later gloss, since the immovable nature of IPM is not a given fact but rather a conclusion to be established.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838826101979 Published online by Cambridge University Press

to be the best, it must not only intelligize the best object but also remain immovable in doing so (the second attribute of the three listed above).

The first sub-argument, which establishes two attributes—namely, being pure activity and immovable—as conditions for being the best and most divine, can be seen as points of contention with Plato and Anaxagoras. Plato accepts that intellect is the most divine being (cf. *Leg.* 10.897b2). He conceives it, however, as something added to the soul (cf. προσλαβοῦσα in *Leg.* 10.897b1–2; also *Ti.* 46d5–6, *Soph.* 249a4–8). This implies that IPM is not a separate substance but rather a psychical faculty, and thus a potentiality—at least, this would be Aristotle's conclusion.[16]

But Anaxagoras may be interpreted as maintaining that IPM is a separate substance, as he states that it 'is mixed with nothing, but is alone itself by itself' (μέμεικται οὐδενὶ χρήματι, ἀλλὰ μόνος αὐτὸς ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ ἐστιν). He holds, however, that it 'has all knowledge about everything' (γνώμην γε περὶ παντὸς πᾶσαν ἴσχει) and that 'the things that are mingled as well as those that are detached and divided off, all these, intellect knew' (τὰ συμμισγόμενά τε καὶ ἀποκρινόμενα καὶ διακρινόμενα πάντα ἔγνω νοῦς, DK B12). Once again, Aristotle's conclusion would be that IPM must continually change its object to intelligize all things, since it is not possible to intelligize more than one thing at a time (cf. 1075a5–6).

Having identified the principles underlying the proposition to be proved, the next step is synthesis—that is, demonstrating that these two principles hold true in the case of IPM. This is precisely what the second sub-argument achieves (1074b28–35). As the dialectical nature of the discussion demands, the argument proceeds from commonly acknowledged premises (ἔνδοξα). First, Aristotle states that IPM cannot be a faculty, since the continuity of intelligizing would otherwise be burdensome to it (1074b28–9). (The continuity of intelligizing for IPM is taken as an ἔνδοξον; cf. *Leg.* 10.898a.) Thus, if IPM were a psychical faculty, as Plato implies, this continuity would be taxing, and its intelligizing could not persist without interruption. Therefore, IPM's substance must be activity (νόησις), not potentiality (νοῦς).

The transmitted text which establishes that the second condition or principle holds true in the case of IPM reads as follows (1074b29–35):

> ἔπειτα δῆλον ὅτι ἄλλο τι ἂν εἴη τὸ τιμιώτερον ἢ ὁ νοῦς, τὸ νοούμενον. καὶ γὰρ τὸ νοεῖν καὶ ἡ νόησις ὑπάρξει καὶ τὸ χείριστον νοοῦντι, ὥστ' εἰ φευκτὸν τοῦτο (καὶ γὰρ μὴ ὁρᾶν ἔνια κρεῖττον ἢ ὁρᾶν), οὐκ ἂν εἴη τὸ ἄριστον ἡ νόησις. αὐτὸν ἄρα νοεῖ, εἴπερ ἐστὶ τὸ κράτιστον, καὶ ἔστιν ἡ νόησις νοήσεως νόησις.

This famous passage is challenging, particularly regarding the relationship between *explanans* (καὶ γὰρ κ.τ.λ.) and *explanandum* (δῆλον ὅτι κ.τ.λ.). Whether we translate the *explanandum* as 'there would be something else more honourable than intellect, namely that which is intelligized', like most translators, or as 'something other than intellect would be very honourable, namely that which is intelligized', as some propose,[17] it remains unclear why this should be explained by the fact that intelligizing belongs even to the one that intelligizes the most inferior being.[18]

[16] This is why Aristotle attributes the theory of IPM exclusively to Anaxagoras (*Metaph.* 1.3, 984b18; 1.4, 985a18–19; 12.6, 1072b5; 12.10, 1075b8) or, at most, to Hermotimus (*Metaph.* 1.3, 984b19–20), but not to Plato. Instead, he assigns to Plato the theory of self-moving souls, developed in *Leg.* 10 (see *Metaph.* 12.6, 1071b37–1072a3).

[17] So Brunschwig (n. 1) as well as the old Arabic translator.

[18] This situation has led some to argue that καὶ γὰρ κ.τ.λ. serves as a response to an unmentioned objection rather than as an explanation of the preceding sentence (Judson [n. 8], 311).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838826101979 Published online by Cambridge University Press

If, though, we bracket τὸ νοούμενον as a later gloss, the argument proceeds smoothly. It has already been established that IPM's substance is not intellect (νοῦς) but intellection (νόησις). Now, a question arises: is it sufficient to assert that the substance of IPM is intellection? Aristotle answers in the negative as follows:

> Next, it is clear that what [that is, the essence which] is more honourable [that is, more divine; cf. 1074b26] than intellect would be something else [other than intellection as such],[19] because both intelligizing and intellection will also belong to the most inferior being (τὸ χείριστον), so that if this [assumption] is to be avoided (for even not seeing some things is more appropriate [κρεῖττον] than seeing), the best thing [that is, the best essence, which we are seeking for IPM] would not be intellection [as such]. Itself, therefore, it [that is, IPM] intelligizes, if it is really the highest being (τὸ κράτιστον), and it is intellection, intellection of intellection (ἡ νόησις νοήσεως νόησις).[20]

τὸ χείριστον (1074b31) and τὸ κράτιστον (1074b34) are selected deliberately and are relative to the dialectical method of the argument. They do not simply mean 'the worst' and 'the best'; τὸ κράτιστον is not synonymous with τὸ θειότατον. The argument aims to establish that IPM intelligizes the most divine being in order to guarantee its status as the most divine being. Therefore, it should not be taken for granted that IPM is the most divine being, and the argument cannot proceed as follows: IPM must intelligize the most divine being, and since it is the most divine being, it intelligizes itself. This kind of reasoning would beg the question.

The word κράτιστον ('the strongest, the most sovereign, the highest in rank') alludes to ἔνδοξα about IPM. Anaxagoras asserts that IPM is self-sovereign (αὐτοκρατές), has sovereignty (κρατεῖν) over things, and is sovereign (κρατεῖ) over things that have soul; it also has been sovereign (ἐκράτησεν) over the whole rotation (DK B12).[21] So, IPM is, according to Anaxagoras and perhaps other thinkers, the most sovereign (κράτιστος) of all. Aristotle argues that, if IPM is the most sovereign being (τὸ κράτιστον), it is not appropriate for it to intelligize the weakest or lowest being in rank (τὸ χείριστον).[22] He perhaps also has in mind that IPM cannot change its object (1074b26–7) and that its object cannot be multiple things simultaneously (1075a5–7). So, what could be better than itself—the strongest and most sovereign—to be its object of intellection? Therefore, by extending this appropriateness to reality—a mark of dialectical reasoning (cf. *Eth. Nic.* 1.9, 1099b20–5)—it would be itself, τὸ κράτιστον, that IPM intelligizes.[23]

The result of the whole argument is that IPM should be considered as intellection belonging to intellection, not as intellect. Only this conception guarantees its status as the

[19] Thus, after bracketing τὸ νοούμενον, I interpret ἄλλο τι as the predicate and τὸ τιμιώτερον ἢ ὁ νοῦς as the subject.

[20] I interpret the entire phrase ἡ νόησις νοήσεως νόησις (1074b34–5) as the predicate in the sentence καὶ ἔστιν ἡ νόησις νοήσεως νόησις, with the subject implied—namely, the intellect (IPM). Cf. αὐτὴ αὑτῆς ἡ νόησις (1075a10).

[21] Aristotle interprets Anaxagoras' κρατεῖν as κινεῖν in *Ph.* 8.5, 256b27, whereas in psychological contexts he renders it as γνωρίζειν (*De an.* 3.4, 429a19–20). Anaxagoras' wording does not distinguish between psychological intellect and cosmological intellect, and Aristotle applies his statements alternately to each.

[22] See LSJ s.v. χείρων, A.I.1, where χείρων, meaning '*inferior*, either in bodily strength and bravery or in rank', is contrasted with κρείσσων.

[23] The second principle or condition was formulated somewhat carelessly in A2 with the statement δῆλον τοίνυν ὅτι τὸ θειότατον καὶ τιμιώτατον νοεῖ (1074b25–6). In reality, this is the consequence of satisfying the true condition—namely, the necessity of intelligizing the most appropriate object. Once IPM intelligizes the most appropriate object (thus satisfying the second condition), which is itself, and provided that the first condition is also met, it will be the most divine being by fulfilling both conditions. Consequently, we may then say that IPM intelligizes the most divine being.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838826101979 Published online by Cambridge University Press

most divine being and grants it the role of PM. Aristotle never explicitly calls IPM by the title νοῦς, except at the first line of the chapter, where he refers to an ἔνδοξον. After that, he primarily refers to it by pronouns.[24] This suggests that he is not fully content with the title, perhaps owing to its undesired connotations—such as potentiality and indifference regarding the object. Instead, he uses titles such as αὐτὴ αὐτῆς ἡ νόησις (1075a10), τοῦ καθ᾽ αὑτὸ ἀρίστου (1072b19) and θεός (1072b25).

The new conception—or essence—of IPM does justice to the attribute 'most divine', and guarantees the other two attributes of a prime mover: pure activity and immovability.

3. THE EPILOGUE OF *METAPHYSICS* 12.9

The issues concerning intellect raised at the beginning of 12.9 are now addressed. Aristotle argues that IPM is self-intellection in its substance and, accordingly, the most divine being. The subsequent discussion functions as an epilogue, addressing two issues related to the result of the previous argument: (1) an objection to that result (henceforth Obj.) and (2) a question introducing a further theme (henceforth Quest.). These are presented sequentially as follows (1074b35–6, 1074b36–8):

φαίνεται δ᾽ ἀεὶ ἄλλου ἡ ἐπιστήμη καὶ ἡ αἴσθησις καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ ἡ διάνοια, αὑτῆς δ᾽ ἐν παρέργῳ.

ἔτι εἰ ἄλλο τὸ νοεῖν καὶ τὸ νοεῖσθαι, κατὰ πότερον αὐτῷ τὸ εὖ ὑπάρχει; οὐδὲ γὰρ ταὐτὸ τὸ εἶναι νοήσει καὶ νοουμένῳ.

[Obj.] But knowledge, perception, opinion and thought always appear to be of something else, but of themselves by the way.

[Quest.] Further, if intelligizing and being intelligized are different, in respect of which does the good belong to it, since to-be-intellection and [to-be-]what-is-intelligized are not the same?

Obj. seems to be based on an ἔνδοξον about the soul, which states that the soul is the place of forms (τόπος εἰδῶν; cf. *De an.* 3.4, 429a27–8). The objector perhaps suggests that, when the soul, say, looks at one of these forms within itself, it only sees an object other than itself, for an internal form functions like a mirror reflecting an external object. Therefore, while it is true that cognitive activity belongs to itself, it does not involve seeing itself but rather seeing something else, so that self-orientation occurs only as a πάρεργον (unintended by-product). This being so, in the case of IPM, intellection is assumed to belong to itself as an ἔργον (main task), for nothing else is supposed to be seen; hence Obj.

In his response (1074b38–1075a5; cf. *De an.* 3.4, 430a2–9), Aristotle asserts that it is not the case in all cognitive activities that the object (τὸ πρᾶγμα) or what is intelligized (τὸ νοούμενον) must be distinct from the activity itself. Specifically, in epistemic activities, where the object lacks matter—meaning that it is purely intelligible—there is no separate being to play the role of an external object.[25] Aristotle states that such a situation occurs at the two epistemic levels of Plato's line in *Republic* 6—namely, in mathematics (the productive knowledge without matter in 1075a1–2; cf. Elders [n. 2],

[24] As we have seen, the usage at 1074b30 does not refer to IPM but rather to intellect as an essence (so too the usage at 1072b27, as we shall see). Moreover, the occurrences at 1075a4, 1075a7 and 1072b20–3 all pertain to human intellect.

[25] This is, perhaps, another ἔνδοξον; cf. ὡς δοκεῖ in *De an.* 3.8, 432a4.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838826101979 Published online by Cambridge University Press

263–4), where the object is the substance, that is, the essence, and also in dialectic (the theoretical knowledge in 1075a2),[26] where the object is the account and the intellection (cf. *De an.* 1.1, 403a29–31). In these cases, the internal form functions as a photo board rather than a mirror. Consequently, seeing these intelligible forms within the intellect is precisely seeing the intellect itself.[27]

Aristotle concludes his response by saying 'and intellection is one with what is intelligized' (καὶ ἡ νόησις τοῦ νοουμένου μία [1075a4–5]). 'Intellection' refers to the kind of cognitive activity that belongs to an intelligible (immaterial) object, whether within the realm of human knowledge or not. Therefore, it includes IPM's intellection as well, meaning that IPM too would be one with what is intelligized.[28]

The lines (1075a5–10) following the above response are particularly challenging. Most commentators regard them as a unified passage posing an independent aporia. The passage involves numerous difficulties, however, as is often acknowledged.[29] These partly arise from treating it as a unified passage. While this unification has its justifications, they are, as we shall see, not compelling. I divide the passage into two parts, deferring the discussion on unity. The first goes as follows (1075a5–7):

ἔτι δὴ λείπεται ἀπορία, εἰ σύνθετον τὸ νοούμενον: μεταβάλλοι γὰρ ἂν ἐν τοῖς μέρεσι τοῦ ὅλου. ἢ ἀδιαίρετον πᾶν τὸ μὴ ἔχον ὕλην;

It remains, then, a further aporia, if what is intelligized is composite; since it would change in the parts of the whole. Or is what having no matter indivisible?

This aporia (henceforth Apr.) challenges what was established in the response to Obj., namely that intellection is always one with what is intelligized. It asserts that the identity theory encounters a difficulty in the case of human knowledge,[30] because mathematics and dialectic involve certain composite objects—for example lines and definitions. If our intellect is supposed to become identical with the object, this implies that our intellect would change in the parts of the object (since it cannot be one with the whole at the same time, given that intellect itself is simple). The consequence would be that we never intelligize a whole as a whole.

[26] It is not at all unusual to refer to dialectic in a Platonic context as 'the theoretical knowledge', since, while the mathematician is also a θεώμενος (*Resp.* 511c8), he does not claim to perceive the intelligible—even though that is his true object (511c8–d1). According to Plato, only the philosopher, who advances through dialectic, should be called φιλοθεάμων (*Resp*. 475e).

[27] There may appear to be a gap in this response, as being in the intellect is not the same as being the intellect. But Aristotle is drawing on the ἔνδοξον of the *place of forms*. I shall elaborate on another occasion that this ἔνδοξον requires identity rather than distinction between content and container. For now, it suffices to note that this ἔνδοξον is invoked in the *De anima* as confirmation of the notion that intellect has no nature of its own (429a21–6), thereby rendering it identical with the forms within it. In a reformulation of the ἔνδοξον, Aristotle employs an identity proposition, asserting that intellect is the forms (429a29). This ἔνδοξον entails identity. Even the Objector, then, implicitly concedes what we might call the Identity Theory, though only in its weak form, whereas Aristotle defends a strong version of the Identity Theory in relation to intellection. While both theories affirm the identity of the soul (or intellect) with the forms, the strong theory holds that the soul (or intellect), in looking at one of the forms, perceives itself, whereas the weak theory maintains that it perceives an external object.

[28] The content of IPM may differ from that of human intellect, which is, *ex hypothesi*, filled with forms. While we may never ascertain the content of IPM, we can none the less assert that, whatever its content may be, IPM is capable of intelligizing and perceiving itself—just as human intellect does.

[29] See Elders (n. 2), 266–8; Brunschwig (n. 1), 298–301; Judson (n. 8), 323–6.

[30] The purpose of Apr. is to challenge the strong Identity Theory, since an adherent of the weak theory may argue that a simple form in the soul can reveal an external composite object.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838826101979 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Aristotle engages with the same problem in *De an.* 3.6, implying that what is intelligized must be indivisible (430b7). He argues, however, that, in cases where the object appears composite, it is in fact indivisible and simple. The objects of mathematics, including lengths and similar things, are indivisible (430b6–21); those of dialectic—definitions and accounts—are likewise simple (430b27–31; cf. *Metaph.* 7.12). All these are without matter and, therefore, indivisible and simple. Thus, there is no issue in assuming the identity theory in epistemic fields of knowledge.

The remaining words (henceforth RW) of 12.9 (1075a7–10) are not connected to Apr. Instead, they mark the beginning of an answer to Quest. Before establishing this point, I address a controversy regarding the answer to Quest., which some scholars believe is left unanswered,[31] while others think that the above response to Obj. addresses Quest. as well.[32] Neither view is entirely correct. Quest. is indeed answered—not through the above response to Obj. but in RW plus MP, which should be attached to 12.9. For my argument to hold, the above response to Obj. cannot have been intended as an answer to Quest. as well. So I must examine this thesis too.

Key to the thesis that both Obj. and Quest. are answered simultaneously is the claim that the answer to Obj. denies that self-intellection 'is equivalent to reflexive self-consciousness, in which the self is alienated from itself as subject from object' (Kosman [n. 32], 323). Having rejected a subject–object relationship in self-intellection, it would then be straightforward to assert that the distinction between intellection and what is intelligized 'is only notional' (Kosman [n. 32], 322). Consequently, it would not be correct to ask which aspect provides the good to IPM, meaning that Quest. would ultimately prove to be misguided.

True, the self-intellection in question is not akin to reflexive self-consciousness. But this does not imply that the distinction between the two aspects of IPM is merely notional. It is true that '*intellection* (ἡ νόησις) is one with *what is intelligized* (τὸ νοούμενον)' (1075a4–5), but does this mean that *intelligizing* (τὸ νοεῖν) and *being intelligized* (τὸ νοεῖσθαι) are also identical? The questioner himself anticipates that someone might assume such sameness, leading him to argue in favour of this distinction by stating: 'for *to-be-intellection* (τὸ εἶναι νοήσει) and [*to-be-*]*what-is-intelligized* ([τὸ εἶναι] νοουμένῳ) are not the same' (1074b38). These expressions are formulas Aristotle employs when referring to essences. Accordingly, the argument proceeds as follows: since the essence of intellection and the essence of what is intelligized are distinct, so too are intelligizing and being intelligized. Although both essences are instantiated in one substance, their reality cannot be dismissed (cf. *Ph.* 192b25–30 together with *Metaph.* 1075b4–6). If there is a substance that truly intelligizes itself—whether as reflexive self-consciousness or merely as self-presence—the distinction between to-be-intellection (or intelligizing) and to-be-what-is-intelligized (or being intelligized) must have a basis in reality and cannot be a purely notional distinction (cf. Elders [n. 2], 262). As two real aspects, they can yield different effects. Therefore, it remains conceivable that only one of them may provide the good to IPM.

[31] See W.D. Ross, *Aristotle's* Metaphysics, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1924), 2.398; Elders (n. 2), 262; Brunschwig (n. 1), 292.

[32] See A. Kosman, '*Metaphysics* Λ 9: divine thought', in M. Frede and D. Charles (edd.), *Aristotle's* Metaphysics *Lambda* (*Symposium Aristotelicum*) (Oxford, 2000), 307–26, at 318 and 322; J. Beere, 'Thinking thinking thinking: on God's self-thinking in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Λ.9', https://ancient-philosophy.hu-berlin.de/en/ancient-philosophy/hpold/downloads/beere-thinking-thinking (2010), 28. Cf. Judson (n. 8), 317, 322.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838826101979 Published online by Cambridge University Press

There is more to say about Quest., as we have yet to determine what the good (τὸ εὖ) signifies in this context. Brunschwig (n. 1), 293 asks whether it refers to the objective perfection of the divine intellect or to its subjective felicity. He answers that, since there is no question of any divine enjoyment in the rest of the chapter but only of the supreme value of the intellect, it is wiser to stick to the first solution.

If we now take MP as the final part of 12.9, we do find references to divine enjoyment later in the chapter, since MP includes discussions on divine pleasure. But let us set aside this for now and attempt to determine the meaning of τὸ εὖ based on what has preceded.

Quest. asks about the source of IPM's good or well-being—whether it lies in intelligizing or in being intelligized. But can this good signify objective perfection? In fact, we know from the main part of the chapter that being intelligized plays no role in objective fineness. As we have seen, A1 and A2 were designed to identify the conditions for IPM's ultimate objective fineness—namely, its substance being intellection and its object being the most divine being—while neither included anything pertaining to being intelligized.

When we were told in A1 that 'it is because of intelligizing that honour belongs to it' (1074b20–1), there was no assumption yet that IPM is the object of its own intelligizing. Thus, according to A1, intelligizing—independent of being intelligized—can be the source of τὸ τίμιον, that is, τὸ θεῖον, which is objective perfection.

We learned in A2 that the object of intelligizing plays an important role in IPM's objective fineness, in so far as its object must be the most divine—or, rather, the most appropriate. It turned out that IPM itself was the most appropriate object. But this identification was incidental in relation to the second condition, since what A2 implies is that IPM's perfection arises from its role as a subject intelligizing the most appropriate object, not from its role as an object being intelligized. In short, the requirements for objective fineness and perfection—the two conditions outlined in A1 and A2—do not involve being intelligized, so that, if these conditions could be fulfilled without IPM being intelligized, ultimate perfection would none the less exist.

The previous discussion shows that being intelligized cannot be the source of objective fineness or perfection—neither alone nor together with intelligizing—and it would be unreasonable to ask about it again in Quest. Thus, the good (τὸ εὖ) in question must be subjective felicity (cf. Elders [n. 2], 261–2). This makes better sense of Quest. by showing that it asks which experience is the source of IPM's enjoyment: that of intelligizing or of being intelligized. This question will be addressed in MP, as we shall see.

Let us turn to the answer to Quest. We have seen that Apr. serves as a supplement to the answer to Obj. Accordingly, at this juncture—where Obj. has been fully addressed—we should expect an answer to Quest. The remaining words of 12.9 (1075a7–10) constitute the beginning of a response to Quest. RW are as follows (1075a7–10):

ὥσπερ οὖν ὁ ἀνθρώπινος νοῦς ἢ ὅ γε τῶν συνθέτων ἔχει ἔν τινι χρόνῳ (οὐ γὰρ ἔχει τὸ εὖ ἐν τῳδὶ ἢ ἐν τῳδί, ἀλλ᾽ ἐν ὅλῳ τινὶ τὸ ἄριστον, ὃν ἄλλο τι), οὕτως δ᾽ ἔχει αὐτὴ αὐτῆς ἡ νόησις τὸν ἅπαντα αἰῶνα.

Then, just as human intellect or rather that of composites is in a certain period of time (for it does not have the good at this moment or at that, but it has its best, being something different, in a whole period), so throughout all eternity is the intellection which is of itself.

First, let us consider what led commentators to view this passage as a continuation of the response to Apr. One possible reason is the absence of any particle at the beginning of

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838826101979 Published online by Cambridge University Press

RW indicating transition to a new topic (οὖν at 1075a7,[33] translated here as 'then', is not included in the editions of Bekker, Ross, and Jaeger), while such an asyndetic transition would seem intolerable. Nevertheless, recognizing the discrepancy between RW and what precedes, some scholars have detached them from what precedes at the cost of such an asyndeton.[34]

Another factor could be the presence of 'composites' (τῶν συνθέτων) in 1075a8. The composite object of intelligizing was a key aspect of Apr., and the word 'composite' (σύνθετον) had been mentioned in 1075a5. Its inclusion might suggest a connection with Apr., leading some to assume that both instances of 'composites' refer to the same thing.[35] By contrast, other commentators have recognized that the genitive case of τῶν συνθέτων cannot be objective here but is instead subjective. Therefore, ὅ … τῶν συνθέτων should indicate the intellect that is possessed by composite beings, rather than the intellect that has composites as its objects.[36]

We will examine this phrase later. For now, suffice to say that the term 'composite' by itself allows for multiple interpretations. The inclination to perceive it in the same way as in 1075a5 may stem from regarding RW as a unified passage with Apr. If we disassociate RW from Apr., this inclination would no longer hold. Therefore, the mere repetition of this term does not indicate continuity.

A third reason for recognizing a continuum could be the inadequacy of RW for introducing a new theme. A commentator might ask: 'What can I do with this passage if I detach it from what precedes?' This deficiency is what I aim to rectify by connecting MP to RW.

Now let us examine RW. If we interpret them as introducing a theme distinct from Apr., then the presence of the ὥσπερ … οὕτως construction, signifying comparison, becomes indisputable.[37] It is unnecessary to provide a wholly new explanation of RW: Ross's interpretation—slightly augmented—satisfies our needs.[38]

A first issue concerns the phrase ἔν τινι χρόνῳ. Bonitz had drawn a comparison with μικρὸν χρόνον ἡμῖν (1072b15) and ὡς ἡμεῖς ποτέ (1072b25) in MP.[39] Ross argues that this comparison is misleading, maintaining that, when ἔν is used with χρόνος, it should signify 'in' (cf. 1101a12, 1174a27–9). Consequently, ἔν τινι χρόνῳ should mean not 'for a certain time' or 'at certain times' but 'in a certain time'. He concludes that the reference is not to the enjoyment of the *summum bonum* in moments of illumination but to its progressive attainment (Ross [n. 31], 2.399). Therefore, excluding the parenthetical part, the meaning of RW would be as follows: IPM is in its best subjective state for all eternity, a state that human intellect achieves only over a period of time.

A second issue, as previously suggested, concerns the composites (τῶν συνθέτων). Ross calls it a subjective genitive, saying that the phrase refers 'to any beings other than man who have reason and also have matter' (Ross [n. 31], 2.399). With regard to the overall meaning of the comparison, Ross's assertion is justified. There is no basis for

[33] With S. Alexandru, *Aristotle's* Metaphysics *Lambda. Annotated Critical Edition Based upon a Systematic Investigation of Greek, Latin, Arabic and Hebrew Sources* (Leiden and Boston, 2014).

[34] For instance, V. Cousin, *De la Métaphysique d'Aristote* (Paris, 1838), 215 n. 1 and Kosman (n. 32), 322, 325 have regarded RW as expressing a new topic.

[35] See Elders (n. 2), 267; Brunschwig (n. 1), 299–300.

[36] See Ross (n. 31), 2.398–9; DeFilippo (n. 7), 562.

[37] The δέ after οὕτως is apodotic, as is sometimes found in the principal clause of comparative sentences: H.W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar for Colleges* (New York / Cincinnati / Chicago / Boston / Atlanta, 1920), § 2837; see also Ross (n. 31), 1.256 and 2.399.

[38] As appears from his translation, Ross (n. 31) reads RW as a new beginning, at least grammatically.

[39] H. Bonitz, *Observationes criticae in Aristotelis libros Metaphysicos* (Berlin, 1842), 20.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838826101979 Published online by Cambridge University Press

interpreting the genitive case as objective, since whether the object of human intellect is simple or composite does not pertain to this comparison. The subjective interpretation is not without difficulties, though. We must still clarify what these composite entities are, because for Aristotle the only composite beings possessing intellect are humans (cf. Judson [n. 8], 324–5).

One possible option, heavenly bodies,[40] seems implausible, as RW juxtapose the intellect of composites with that of human beings, contrasting both with IPM, while heavenly intellects, like IPM, are always in their best state and do not oppose IPM in this respect. Rather, ὅ in ἢ ὅ γε τῶν συνθέτων should not be understood as referring to intellect in general but rather to human intellect (ὁ ἀνθρώπινος νοῦς). The intended meaning would be 'or at least that human intellect which is possessed by composites'. What this qualification excludes is the active intellect (νοῦς ποιητικός), which does not belong to the composite of soul and body—at least not in the same manner as the passive intellect does.

This is evident from *Metaph.* 12.3, where substances are divided into three kinds: matter, nature (or form) and the composite of both (1070a9–13).[41] It is then asserted that forms do not survive the destruction of the composite unless the form is a soul. Even in this case, though, the form does not survive as a whole—only the intellect does (1070a21–7). This intellect, which remains after the destruction of the composite, can rightly be described as human since it is regarded as a part of the human soul. Yet this surviving human intellect is always in its best state and, therefore, cannot be contrasted with IPM in this respect. We know this because the *De anima* states that the surviving intellect is the active intellect, while the passive intellect is destructible (3.5, 430a23–5), and that the active intellect is perpetually engaged in intellectual activity (430a22), which implies that it is always in its best state.

Accordingly, since the human active intellect does not attain its best over time, it must be excluded from the comparison in question. This is precisely what the phrase ἢ ὅ γε τῶν συνθέτων accomplishes. Both passive and active intellects belong to the composite in some manner, yet the passive intellect, unlike the active one, belongs to the composite in a way that prevents its survival after destruction. Thus, only the passive intellect belongs to the composite in the strict sense and is best included in the phrase ὅ γε τῶν συνθέτων.[42]

Let us examine the parenthetical passage. Ross translates it: 'for it does not possess the good (τὸ εὖ) at this moment or at that, but its best (τὸ ἄριστον), being something *different* from it, is attained only in a whole period of time' [his emphasis]. This sentence is meant to clarify the preceding subordinate clause, which asserts that the human intellect achieves its subjective felicity over a certain period of time (ἔν τινι χρόνῳ). It states that the human intellect does not possess this felicity (τὸ εὖ) instantaneously; rather, its best state (τὸ ἄριστον) is attained only over an entire period of time, being something different (ὂν ἄλλο τι).

The shift from τὸ εὖ to τὸ ἄριστον is intentional, as the latter denotes objective perfection. The argument therefore proceeds as follows: subjective felicity (τὸ εὖ) does

[40] Xenocrates calls the Heaven 'composite', since it is visible by sense and intelligible by means of astronomy (fr. 5 Heinze).

[41] The word 'composite' is mentioned in 1070a14.

[42] Among the five interpretations of the active intellect listed by F.D. Miller, 'Aristotle on the separability of mind', in C. Shields (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Aristotle* (Oxford, 2012), 306–39, at 321, the depiction provided here mostly aligns with the first interpretation in that list, abbreviated as PMO.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838826101979 Published online by Cambridge University Press

not occur instantaneously without a temporal lapse, because it takes place within the state of its objective perfection, which is something distinct from human intellect itself. This perfection is activity (νόησις), whereas the substance of human intellect is mere potentiality (νοῦς); thus, bridging this gap requires a period of time (cf. Ross [n. 31], 2.399). By contrast, while the substance of IPM is self-intellection rather than intellect, there is no distinction between its substance and its perfection—they are simply identical. Therefore, IPM possesses its subjective good for all eternity.

I have argued that a question (Quest.) within 12.9 does not receive its answer in the transmitted text for this chapter, while its final part (RW) marks the beginning of such an answer. The following section interprets MP as the continuation of RW, reading the whole as a response to Quest.

4. READING 1072B14–30 AS THE CONTINUATION OF *METAPHYSICS* 12.9

The comparison made in RW is reiterated and further explicated in the opening lines of MP, which should be interpreted as a continuation of RW (1072b14–18):

διαγωγὴ[43] δ' ἐστὶν οἵα ἡ ἀρίστη μικρὸν χρόνον ἡμῖν (οὕτω γὰρ ἀεὶ ἐκείνῳ:[44] ἡμῖν μὲν γὰρ ἀδύνατον), ἐπεὶ καὶ ἡδονὴ ἡ ἐνέργεια τούτου (καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐγρήγορσις αἴσθησις νόησις ἥδιστον, ἐλπίδες δὲ καὶ μνῆμαι διὰ ταῦτα).

And its course of existence is such as the best that we have for a short time (because for it, it is always thus; whereas for us, that is indeed impossible), since its activity is also pleasure (it is also because of this that waking, perception and intellection are most pleasant, and hopes and memories because of these).

διαγωγή—'course of existence'—explicitly reflects the subjective feature (cf. *Eth. Nic.* 10.7, 1177a26–7) that τὸ εὖ is about to characterize.[45] The passage suggests that IPM always experiences its well-being, while we experience it only for a limited time. This duration is relatively long (cf. *Eth. Nic.* 10.7, 1177a21–2), but in comparison to that of

[43] That is, ἡ διαγωγή (like ἡ νόησις of 1075a10) with its possessive definite article omitted.

[44] In the dative case, with Alexandru (n. 33), instead of ἐκεῖνο of Bekker, Ross, and Jaeger. ἐκείνῳ (1072b15) as well as τούτου (1072b17) are masculine, not neuter. They refer to IPM which was being referred to during 12.9 by masculine words (e.g. 1074b22, 33), according to τὸν νοῦν at 1074b15.

[45] Various translations for διαγωγή are suggested: 'life' (Ross [Oxford's translation]); 'way of life' (Judson [n. 8]); 'course of life' (J. Sachs, *Aristotle's Metaphysics* [Santa Fe, 1999]); 'pastime' (C.D.C. Reeve, *Aristotle Metaphysics* [Indianapolis and Cambridge, 2016]); 'occupation' (Laks [n. 6]); 'activity' (H.G. Apostle, *Aristotle's Metaphysics* [Bloomington and London, 1966]). None seems entirely plausible. A suitable translation should avoid explicit mention of 'life', as the passage in 1072b26 suggests that IPM's life is not yet a certain idea. In Greek thought, 'life' is associated with the notion of soul, which IPM lacks (C. Cohoe, 'Living without a soul: why God and the heavenly movers fall outside of Aristotle's psychology', *Phronesis* 65 [2020], 281–323) or, at least, does not possess overtly (cf. Pl. *Soph.* 249a). Therefore, while its διαγωγή may be certain owing to its intellection and consciousness, its 'life' remains uncertain. Aristotle's attribution of life to IPM at 1072b26 is, in fact, an extension of the conventional meaning of 'life'. Consequently, translations explicitly mentioning 'life' are not suitable. Yet the alternative translations lack any reference to the subjective aspect of experience. Ross translates this term as 'passing of time' in *Eth. Nic.* 10.7, 1177a26–7—a rendering that appears to satisfy both criteria. While this translation may be appropriate within the context of human life, its explicit reference to 'time' becomes problematic in the case of IPM. My translation, 'course of existence', also implies temporal succession, but such an implication is at least metaphorically embedded in Aristotle's own term.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838826101979 Published online by Cambridge University Press

IPM it should be considered a short time. The passage also includes the reason for that permanent subjective felicity, stating that its permanent activity is also pleasure.[46]

From the beginning of RW up to this point, Aristotle has been establishing that IPM possesses the good and well-being to a far greater degree than human intellect does. But he emphasizes that the good of IPM is, at its foundation, the same as that of human intellect. This fundamental sameness paves the way for analysing human intellection as a means to answer Quest.

The argument proceeds as follows (1072b18–20):

ἡ δὲ νόησις ἡ καθ᾽ αὑτὴν τοῦ καθ᾽ αὑτὸ ἀρίστου, καὶ ἡ μάλιστα τοῦ μάλιστα. αὑτὸν δὲ νοεῖ ὁ νοῦς κατὰ μετάληψιν τοῦ νοητοῦ.

Intellection-by-itself is of the best-by-itself, and the most excellent of the most excellent. But intellect intelligizes itself by partaking of the intelligible.

As a result of the answer to Obj., every intellection—whether human or not—belongs to itself, since intelligible objects lack matter. This implies that every intellection is a self-intellection.

In the passage above, two types of (self-)intellection are distinguished: one occurs by itself, the other by partaking of the intelligible. This distinction parallels the one found in the main part of 12.9, where Aristotle differentiates between a being whose substance is intellection and a being whose substance is intellect but only later becomes intellection.

The first kind of (self-)intellection, namely that which is by itself, is exclusive to the best being—not simply any being in its best state but rather the being whose best state is intrinsic and essential (ἡ δὲ νόησις ἡ καθ᾽ αὑτὴν τοῦ καθ᾽ αὑτὸ ἀρίστου).[47] Why is this so? Why does only the best-by-itself (that is, IPM) possess (self-)intellection-by-itself? Because this form of intellection is the most excellent, and therefore only the most excellent being can possess it (ἡ μάλιστα τοῦ μάλιστα). (Note the dialectical way of reasoning.)

Yet the faculty of intellect intelligizes itself only by partaking of the intelligible (κατὰ μετάληψιν τοῦ νοητοῦ).[48] The language here refers to the ἔνδοξον about the soul as the τόπος εἰδῶν. But the notion of τόπος in this ἔνδοξον should not be understood in terms of Aristotle's conception of place; rather, as a Platonic or Academic ἔνδοξον, it must be interpreted within its own context.

Accordingly, the Platonic conception of τόπος is most relevant here. Plato's τόπος (or χώρα)— akin to Aristotelian matter (*Ph.* 4.2, 209b11–16, 22–3)—is a substance that receives within itself all kinds and is devoid of all forms (Pl. *Ti.* 50e). It is described as 'a Kind invisible and unshaped, all-receptive, and in some most perplexing and most baffling way partaking of the intelligible' (μεταλαμβάνον … τοῦ νοητοῦ, *Ti.* 51a–b, transl. Bury).[49] Therefore, when Aristotle states that human intellect intelligizes itself by

[46] The subsequent sentence in the parentheses, 'it is also because of this', aims to provide evidence for this claim. It suggests that it is because activity is pleasure that we find waking, perception and intellection most pleasant. Thus, their enjoyable nature, combined with their status as activities, supports the assertion that activity is pleasure.

[47] Reading the predicative genitive as subjective rather than objective.

[48] In the sentence αὑτὸν δὲ νοεῖ ὁ νοῦς κατὰ μετάληψιν τοῦ νοητοῦ (1072b20), αὑτόν is fronted to emphasize self-intellection as the central idea, while the contrast with the preceding sentence primarily hinges on the notion of κατὰ μετάληψιν τοῦ νοητοῦ.

[49] R.G. Bury (transl.), *Plato in Twelve Volumes, IX: Timaeus, Critias, Cleitophon, Menexenus, Epistles* (Cambridge, MA and London, 1929).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838826101979 Published online by Cambridge University Press

partaking of the intelligible, it is likely that he is conceptualizing intellect[50] as the τόπος εἰδῶν within a Platonic framework.

Then, in a passage I place in parentheses (1072b20–3), Aristotle explains how partaking of the intelligible leads to self-intelligizing. More precisely, he clarifies how self-intelligizing is compatible with intelligizing an intelligible form—or, given that every intellection is a self-intellection, how intelligizing an intelligible form occurs at all. The answer (1072b20–3) asserts that, when human intellect encounters a substance to intelligize, it becomes identical with that substance. This occurs because human intellect is purely receptive of other substances (cf. *De an.* 3.4, 429a15–16)—meaning it lacks any inherent form of its own (429a21–4), so that, when it receives a substance, it effectively becomes identical with that substance, as the latter functions as the intellect's form (*De an.* 3.4, 429b5–7; 2.5, 417b5–9). Since the intellect intelligizes a substance actively while it has it (ἐνεργεῖ δὲ ἔχων)—that is, while it is identical with that substance (cf. *De an.* 2.5, 417a25; b5)—it effectively intelligizes itself.

Aristotle still appeals to common beliefs about the soul, as his dialectical method requires. The idea presented in the preceding lines should not be regarded as strictly Aristotelian, despite the widespread tendency to interpret it as such. Following this parenthetical section, Aristotle moves to the core of his argument (1072b23–4):

ὥστ' ἐκεῖνο μᾶλλον τούτου[51] ὃ δοκεῖ ὁ νοῦς θεῖον ἔχειν, καὶ ἡ θεωρία τὸ ἥδιστον καὶ ἄριστον.

Accordingly, it is that rather than this that intellect is thought to have as divine, and beholding is that which is the most pleasant and best thing.

I interpret ἐκεῖνο and τοῦτο as referring to the two aspects mentioned in Quest.—namely, intelligizing and being intelligized. Accordingly, the compressed argument at stake can be unpacked as follows:

1- There is a consensus that human intellect intelligizes itself by partaking of the intelligible.[52] This means that its intelligizing is simultaneously an intellection of an intelligible object and an intellection of itself—two identical aspects standing in contrast to the other aspect of intellect—namely, being intelligized by itself.
2- Yet the prevailing belief is that the divine and pleasurable aspect of human intellect lies in its intelligizing of intelligible objects, which, in turn, is identical with intelligizing itself.
3- Accordingly (ὥστ'), intelligizing itself (ἐκεῖνο), rather than being intelligized by itself (τούτου), is that which is thought (δοκεῖ) to be the divine aspect of human intellect, and beholding (θεωρία)—that is, intelligizing—is the source of its good and subjective felicity.

In 2, Aristotle draws on a Platonic viewpoint, the most explicit formulation of which can be found in the myth of the *Phaedrus*. Plato describes immortal souls—those of

[50] But not the whole soul. Aristotle makes two reservations to that ἔνδοξον. The first is that it is the intellective soul, rather than the whole soul, that serves as the τόπος εἰδῶν (*De an.* 3.4, 429a28).

[51] Rejecting Ross and Jaeger's emendation to ὥστ' ἐκείνου μᾶλλον τοῦτο.

[52] Both Aristotle and others agree that human intellect intelligizes itself through partaking of the intelligible. While they maintain that it does so only ἐν παρέργῳ (the weak Identity Theory), Aristotle holds that it is an ἔργον (the strong Identity Theory). That said, this controversy is not relevant to the present argument, in so far as both parties concede self-intelligizing.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838826101979 Published online by Cambridge University Press

gods—ascending to behold (θεωρεῖν) the Forms before descending again to their homes (247a–e). Mortal souls also attempt to ascend and behold, but only some succeed (248a–b), thereby qualifying for incarnation as human beings (249b). But only the philosopher's διάνοια grows wings to ascend once more, since—so far as it is able—it always remains near, through memory, to those things by being near to which a god is divine (πρὸς οἷσπερ θεὸς ὢν θεῖός ἐστιν, 249c).

Therefore, according to the Platonic view, nearness to the Forms—that is, beholding them—constitutes the divine aspect not only of human thought but also of divine thought. Although Aristotle does not assert that the gods behold the Forms, he none the less draws on the Platonic perspective to emphasize that the act of beholding and intelligizing marks the divine element and serves as the source of pleasure, both in human intellect and in IPM. For IPM functions as a demythologized counterpart to the mythical gods depicted in the *Phaedrus*, and thus may be referred to by this title (1072b24–6):

εἰ οὖν οὕτως εὖ ἔχει, ὡς ἡμεῖς ποτέ, ὁ θεὸς ἀεί, θαυμαστόν· εἰ δὲ μᾶλλον, ἔτι θαυμασιώτερον. ἔχει δὲ ὧδε.

If, then, the god is always in such a good state as we sometimes are, that is wondrous; and if more, that is still more wondrous. But he is so.

The assumption that the god—namely, IPM—is in a better state (μᾶλλον) than we sometimes are serves as a qualification of the Platonic view. In *Phaedrus*' myth, gods behold the same realities as human beings; in Aristotle's framework, however, while human intellect intelligizes forms that are identical with itself, IPM intelligizes the most beautiful substance—namely, itself—which, unsurprisingly, yields greater pleasure.

Though Quest. has already been addressed, a new issue arises in making IPM a counterpart to the gods depicted in the *Phaedrus*. In *Phdr.* 246d, a god is described as an immortal living being (ἀθάνατόν τι ζῷον), and according to the same dialogue (246c) a living being must consist of both soul and body—a condition that does not hold for IPM. This raises an implicit question: can IPM be considered a living being at all, thereby qualifying to be regarded as a god? Aristotle subtly addresses this question as follows (1072b26–8):

καὶ ζωὴ δέ γε ὑπάρχει· ἡ γὰρ νοῦ ἐνέργεια ζωή, ἐκεῖνος δὲ ἡ ἐνέργεια· ἐνέργεια δὲ ἡ καθ' αὑτὴν ἐκείνου ζωὴ ἀρίστη καὶ ἀΐδιος.

And, as a matter of fact,[53] life too belongs [to it], for the activity of intellect[54] is life, and it[55] is this activity; its activity which is by itself is life, best and everlasting.

The activity of IPM is life (cf. *Cael.* 286a9), and this activity is an essential characteristic—existing by itself rather than through an everlasting unification of soul and body (cf. *Phdr.* 246d). Its life, as one would expect of a god, is the best life. Here ἀρίστη is more straightforwardly understood—in contrast to its previous usages, except perhaps that at 1072b24—as derived from τὸ εὖ, indicating a subjective good. Consequently,

[53] For responsive δέ γε, see J.D. Denniston, *The Greek Particles* (Oxford, 1954[2]), 152–6, especially 155.

[54] That is, the genus of intellect as a whole, not IPM. The statement affirms that the activity of this type of substance, termed 'intellect', is life.

[55] Like other previous masculine words, ἐκεῖνος refers to IPM, not to θεός at 1072b25. Therefore, I translate it 'it', not 'he'.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838826101979 Published online by Cambridge University Press

IPM's life is both everlasting and extraordinarily pleasant. So, why should we not call it 'god'?

Aristotle argues that even the common definition of 'god' does not require a combination of soul and body; indeed, it outright denies such a requirement (1072b28–30):

φαμὲν δὲ[56] τὸν θεὸν εἶναι ζῷον ἀΐδιον ἄριστον, ὥστε ζωὴ καὶ αἰὼν συνεχὴς καὶ ἀΐδιος ὑπάρχει τῷ θεῷ: τοῦτο γὰρ ὁ θεός.

And we say that god is a living being, everlasting and best, so that life and *eternity*, continuous and everlasting, belong to god; for *this* is god.

Here, Aristotle introduces the notion of eternity (αἰών) in his interpretation of the common definition (cf. φαμέν) of 'god'.[57] He argues that, when we say that god is a living being, everlasting and best, we do not mean that god is a combination of soul and body, as in the *Phaedrus*. Rather, as an everlasting living being, god transcends corporeality and belongs to the realm of eternity (αἰών), rather than that of time (χρόνος; cf. Pl. *Ti.* 37c–d).

Therefore, in this respect, gods more closely resemble the Platonic Forms, referred to in the *Phaedrus* as 'things outside the heaven' (τὰ ἔξω τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, 247c2) and 'things there' (τἀκεῖ, 250a2). In the *De caelo*, Aristotle asserts that neither body (278b25–279a7) nor time (279a11–16) exists outside the heaven (ἔξω τοῦ οὐρανοῦ). He characterizes the beings of that realm as living beings, stating that the things there (τἀκεῖ, 279a18) 'continue throughout all eternity (τὸν ἅπαντα αἰῶνα; cf. 1075a10), unalterable and unaffectable, possessing the best and most self-sufficient life' (279a20–2).

Consequently, we should regard IPM—being a living being outside the heaven, yet neither corporeal nor temporal—as a god, and reject the notion that entities composed of soul and body qualify as gods at all. This is what the famous definition—if understood correctly—also demands.

CONCLUSION

Thanks to the new positioning of MP, we now understand why and in which context διαγωγή and pleasure are mentioned (1072b14–18), why the concept of intellection-by-itself is introduced (1072b18–19), why the discussion abruptly shifts to human intellect (1072b20–3), and for what purpose beholding is declared as the most pleasant act (1072b24). Previously, these points were difficult to grasp, given MP's placement in the midst of 12.7. Furthermore, this repositioning helps finalize the unfinished 12.9, providing an answer to Quest. (1074b36–8) and clarifying the chapter's closing words.

[56] Rejecting Bonitz's widely accepted emendation of δέ to δή.

[57] The definition of 'god' mentioned here has undoubtedly been a renowned one. It is enough to compare it with the definition found in the ps.-Platonic *Definitions*: 'an immortal living being, self-sufficient for happiness' (ζῷον ἀθάνατον, αὔταρκες πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν [411a3]). This definition closely aligns with that given by Aristotle, since 'immortal' (ἀθάνατον) in this definition carries the same meaning as 'everlasting' (ἀΐδιον) in Aristotle's. Both imply that the being has no beginning and no end (see the definition of 'immortality' in the same book: 'the everlasting duration of an ensouled substance' [οὐσίας ἐμψύχου ἀΐδιος μονή] [415a8], and the definition of 'everlasting': 'What is at all times, both in the past and in the present, without being destroyed' [τὸ κατὰ πάντα χρόνον καὶ πρότερον ὂν καὶ νῦν μὴ ἐφθαρμένον] [411a1–2]). Moreover, the word ἄριστον in Aristotle's definition very likely carries the meaning of most εὖ-ἔχον, as I conjectured in 1072b28, so that it accords well with αὔταρκες πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν in the ps.-Platonic definition. Therefore, this definition must have been widely recognized, at least among the elites.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838826101979 Published online by Cambridge University Press

These considerations provide adequate grounds to assert a misplacement. How might it have occurred?

While many misplacements are identified throughout the corpus, the misplacement concerning *Metaph.* 7.4, 1029b3–12 is particularly noteworthy. Bonitz suggests that it should be read after 1029a34 (Ross [n. 31], 2.166). In explaining this misplacement, Jaeger argues that the whole passage (1029a33–4 plus 1029b3–12) is a later addition. He proposes that 'the first words of the insertion were written between the lines of the old manuscript, and hence occur in their proper place in our copies. The rest, for which there was no room, was written on a separate sheet';[58] thus, it was misplaced by a later scribe.

In our case, if we entertain the possibility of a later addition, we must first determine its extent. MP alone cannot be a viable candidate, as it is not an independent text but rather a complement to RW. Thus, MP does not stand as a plausible later insertion. As for RW plus MP together, forming the complete answer to Quest., this also appears unlikely, since one might reasonably ask how the answer to Quest. could be a later addition when Quest. itself is not—and, indeed, cannot be—given its position preceding the response to Obj.

Perhaps it would be reasonable to claim that the entire epilogue of 12.9 (1074b35–1075a10 plus MP) is a later addition. This assumption seems plausible if we consider Jaeger's thesis[59] that various parts of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* were composed by Aristotle as *logoi* to be read aloud in school circles. Thus, the epilogue probably consists of questions posed by students and responses from the master during a reading session. Consequently, it may have been recorded on two separate sheets rather than on the main papyrus scroll, with the first sheet correctly positioned by a later scribe while the second was already erroneously placed in 12.7.[60] Unlike the misplacement of 1029b3–12, we cannot assume a single sheet in this instance, as the properly placed portion is too large to have been written between the lines of an earlier manuscript.[61]

Department of Philosophy MOHAMMAD HABIBOLLAHI
Shahid Beheshti University mohammadhabibollahi92@gmail.com

[58] W. Jaeger, *Aristotle: Fundamentals of the History of his Development* (London, 1934), 199 n. 1.

[59] W. Jaeger, *Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Metaphysik des Aristoteles* (Berlin, 1912), 138–48.

[60] The first part of the epilogue, 1074b35–1075a10, comprises about six hundred characters, while the second part, MP, contains about seven hundred characters. This aligns with the typical length of a papyrus column (cf. G. Betegh, *The Derveni Papyrus: Cosmology, Theology and Interpretation* [Cambridge, 2004], 60), and it is safe to assume a separate sheet large enough to accommodate at least one column.

[61] A single-sheet scenario is conceivable if we reject the idea of a later addition and instead posit that the writer concluded their scroll at 1075a10 and preserved MP on a separate sheet which was subsequently misplaced by a later scribe. Under this assumption, however, we must consider *Metaph.* 12.10 as not originally part of *Metaphysics* 12, a proposition that requires independent substantiation.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838826101979 Published online by Cambridge University Press