ARISTOTLE, *METAPHYSICS Z* 1029a6[1]

W.D. Ross's edition of the *Metaphysics* has the following passage: τοιοῦτον δὲ τρόπον μέν τινα ἡ ὕλη λέγεται, ἄλλον δὲ τρόπον ἡ μορφή, τρίτον δὲ τὸ ἐκ τούτων […] ὥστε εἰ τὸ εἶδος τῆς ὕλης πρότερον καὶ μᾶλλον ὄν, καὶ τοῦ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν πρότερον ἔσται διὰ τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον (*Met. Z* 1029a2–7). The reading τοῦ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν is supported by one branch of the manuscript tradition (MS Vindob. Phil. gr. C and MS Parisinus gr. 1853); the other branch, which we know mostly on the basis of MS Laurentianus 87.12, presents the interesting variant τὸ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν, but the reading is a correction of an original τοῦ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν. The difference between the two readings is philosophically worthwhile: the printed reading supports the idea that if form is prior to matter, then it must be prior to the composite of matter and form, because matter is part of the composite. Hence if the true substance is what is prior, then individual form is the true substance. On the other hand the reading τὸ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν suggests that if form is prior to matter, then also what is composite by form and something different from form (namely matter), is prior to matter. Such a reading does not exclude the possibility that individual form is the true substance, but it makes room also for the composite of matter and form to be a possible candidate for substance. From these considerations it can be argued that a detailed discussion of the choice between these readings is needed in order to achieve a clearer understanding of Aristotle's philosophical claims.

From the inspection of the manuscript it is impossible to establish whether the correction of Laurentianus 87.12 (τὸ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν) may be attributed to a reader who has corrected the text following presumably his own philosophical opinions or to the copyist (and hence it would be reasonable that in his copy there was the reading τὸ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν, that he firstly understood wrongly). From these considerations it seems correct to choose the reading τοῦ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν, which has been preferred by Ross and by all modern editions of the *Metaphysics*. An alternative reading is suggested by Alexander's *De anima*, in which there is an indirect reference to these lines of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Alexander writes: ὡς γὰρ ἡ ὕλη, οὕτως δὲ καὶ τὸ φυσικὸν εἶδος οὐσία. οὐσίαι γὰρ τὰ μέρη τῆς οὐσίας, μᾶλλον δέ, διότι ἑκάτερον ἐκείνων οὐσία, καὶ τὸ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν οὐσία καὶ μία τις φύσις (ed. Bruns, 6. 2–4). The commentator is not simply asking what the term 'substance' can refer to, but he is also presenting a hierarchy among the possible candidates for substance and he argues that the composite is μᾶλλον […] οὐσία καὶ μία τις φύσις. Alexander of Aphrodisias, as is well known, looked for various copies of Aristotle's texts and he often discussed in his commentaries the variants which he found (cf. Alex. Aphr. *in An. pr.* 9.10–20, 144.5–6, 151.15, 210.30–4, 304.13–17, 320.14).[2] If Alexander thought that τὸ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν was μᾶλλον […] οὐσία καὶ μία τις φύσις, i.e. μᾶλλον ὄν, it is reasonable that either all his copies of the *Metaphysics* presented the reading τὸ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν or he thought that this reading was the better one, even though it was not supported by all his copies of the text.

[1] I am grateful to Giuseppe Pezzini, to John Wilkins and to the anonymous referee of this journal for helpful comments on a previous draft of this note. Remaining shortcomings are solely my responsibility.

[2] A detailed discussion of Alexander's philology may be found in P. Moraux, 'Les débuts de la philologie aristotélicienne', in G. Cambiano, *Storiografia e dossografia nella filosofia antica* (Turin, 1986), 127–47.

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This argument has shown that τὸ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν is a variant of the reading printed by modern editors, at least since Alexander's times. I think that it is possible to go further. Alexander usually chose the readings of Aristotle's texts according to his own interpretation of Aristotelian philosophy (cf. Alex. Aphr. *in Met.* 54.11–13, 186.3–187.6, 223.23–8, 251.2–6, 267.14–21, 357.24–30, 368.7–15). But the reading τὸ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν favours the idea that the true substance is the composite, whilst according to Alexander the individual form, as in the case of human intellect, is substance in a more proper sense. Therefore it is possible to suppose that if he had had the opportunity, he would have chosen the reading τοῦ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν in his lost commentary and in his other works, as in the extant passage from his *De anima*, which is presumably a quotation from *Metaphysics Z* 3. If he did not do that, it seems quite reasonable to conclude that in his time either only one reading was attested, namely τὸ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν, or that only this reading was preserved in Alexander's copies of the *Metaphysics*. This argument definitely rules out the possibility that τὸ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν is a medieval correction of a unanimous testimony of both branches of the manuscript tradition. Is it the authentic reading? I think that such a conclusion could be precipitate: even if it is reasonable to suppose that Alexander had only this reading, it is unsound method to exclude the possibility that in his time there were other readings not available to him, which preserved the authentic text. A possible criterion for the selection of the authentic reading could be the coherence of the philosophical doctrine expressed by *Metaphysics Z* 1029a6 with the general theory of substance advanced by Aristotle in *Metaphysics Z*. Unfortunately there is no agreement among scholars about the right interpretation of this book: it has been said either that true substance is individual form, or that true substance is the composite of matter and form. Hence both readings can be defended on the basis of those conflicting interpretations.[3] However, I think that such a doubt about the right reading is philosophically worthwhile, because it rules out the possibility of taking *Metaphysics Z* 1029a6 – with the reading of modern editions – as evidence in favour of the interpretation of substance as individual form. As a consequence, such a doubt about the right reading of this passage turns out to be puzzling for Aristotle's interpreters and I hope that future inquiries may offer a solution to the general problem of the interpretation of Book *Z*, so that there will also be a reasonable foundation for argument in favour of one of the two possible readings of *Metaphysics Z* 1029a6.

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[3] Cf. M. Frede and G. Patzig, *Aristoteles. "Metaphysik Z". Zweiter Band. Kommentar* (Munich, 1988), 40–1. Frede and Patzig take individual form as the true substance and therefore they coherently consider the printed reading as the authentic one.

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