

ARISTOTLE, METAPHYSICS, BOOK EIGHT

READING ONE

One should syllogize from what has been said, and bringing things to a head, complete the consideration.

It has been said that the causes and the beginnings and the elements of substances are sought.

And some substances are agreed upon by all, but some have spoken privately about some. Those agreed upon are the natural ones, such as fire, earth, water, air, and the other simple bodies; then plants and their parts, and animals and the parts of animals; and last, the heavens and the parts of the heavens; but others say privately that the Forms and mathematical things are substances.

But in another way it follows from thoughts that the what was to be and the underlying subject are substances. Again, in another way the genus more than the species, and the universal, than the singulars. And with the universal and the genus the Forms are connected. For by the same argument, they seem to be substances.

Since the what was to be is substance, and the definition is a speech about this, because of this it has been determined about definition and about the through itself. Since the definition is a speech, and a speech has parts, it was necessary to consider about the parts, what are parts of the substance and what are not, and if they were the same of the definition. Further, too, neither the universal nor the genus is a substance. But we must inquire later about the Forms and mathematical things; for some say these are substances as well as the sensible substances. But let us now go through the substances which are agreed upon. These are the sensible substances.

All sensible substances have matter. The underlying subject is substance: for in one way the matter is substance (I call matter what is not this something in act, but is this something in ability); and in another way the thought of what it is and the form which being a this something is separated in thought; and thirdly what is from these of which alone there is generation and corruption, and is, without qualification, separated. For of substances according to the thought of what it is, some are separable, and some are not.

But it is clear that matter is substance. For in all changes between opposites there is something underlying the changes, such as in respect of place that which is now here and again elsewhere, and in respect of growth that which is now of one size and again less or more, and in respect of alteration that which is now healthy and again sick. And likewise according to substance, what is now being generated and again being destroyed, and now underlies as a this something and again underlies according to a lack.

And the other changes follow upon this one. But this does not follow upon one or two of the others. For it is not necessary, if a thing has matter for change of place, that it should also have matter for generation and destruction. What is the difference between becoming simply and not simply has been said in our natural books.

READING TWO

Since the substance as underlying and as matter is agreed upon, and this is the one in ability, it remains to say what is the substance as act of sensible things.

Democritus then seems to think there are three differences. The underlying body, the matter, is one and the same. But they differ either in rhythm, which is shape, or in turning, which is position, or in disposition, which is order.

But there seems to be many differences; such as, some things are said by the mode of composition of their matter, as whatever are by mixture, such as honey-water; and others by being bound together, such as a bundle; and others by being glued together, such as a book; and others by being nailed together, such as a wooden box; and some in many of these ways; and others by position, such as threshold and lintel (for these differ by being placed in a certain way); and others by time, such as dinner and breakfast; and others by place, such as the winds. And others by undergoing the sensible: such as hardness and softness, density and rareness, dryness and wetness; and some by some of these while others by them all, and in general some by excess and some by defect.

So it is clear that the [what] it is will be said in so many ways. It is a threshold because it is placed thus, and the being of threshold means its being placed thus while being for ice means having been solidified thus. And

the being of some things will be defined by all these, because some parts of them are mixed, others are blended, others are bound together, others are solidified, and others use other differences as the hand or the foot.

The genera of differences should be taken (for these will be the beginnings of being), such as those by the more and less, or by the dense and the rare, and by other such as these; for all these are excess and defect. If something is by shape or by smoothness and roughness, all will be by straight and curved. And for other things, their being will be to be mixed, and their not being will mean the opposite.

It is clear, then, from these that, if substance is the cause of each thing's being, one ought to seek in these what is the cause of the being of each of these things. Now none of these is substance, even when joined [with matter], yet it is the proportional in each. And as in substances that which is said of the matter is the act itself, and especially in the other definitions. For example, if threshold should be defined, we should say wood or stone placed thus, and a house we should define as bricks and boards placed thus, (and further in some that for the sake of which). If ice, water frozen or solidified in such a way. And if harmony, such a mix of high and low. And likewise in others.

From these things, it is clear that the act, and thought of what it is, is other when the matter is other. For of some, it is the composition; of some, the mixture; and of some, another of those said.

Whence of those defining, those saying what a house is, that it is stones, bricks, and boards, are speaking of the house in ability - for these are the matter; but those proposing a covering protecting possessions and bodies, or something of the sort, speak of the act. But those who put together both of these speak of the third and the substance from these. For the account through the differences seems to be of the form or act while that through what exists within is more of the matter. And it is likewise in the definitions which Archytas would accept; they are of both together. For example, what is a calm? Rest in much air. Air is the matter, and rest is the act and substance. What is calm-sea? Smoothness of sea. The sea is the underlying as matter while the evenness is the act and the form.

It is clear, then, from what has been said, what sensible substance is, and how it is. For this is as matter; this as form and act; and the third, what is from these.

READING THREE

One should not ignore that sometimes it is hidden whether a name signifies the composed substance, or the act and the form; for example, whether *house* is a sign of the common, that is, a covering consisting of bricks and stones laid thus, or of the act and the form, that is a covering; and whether a line is two in length or two; and whether an animal is soul in a body or a soul (for this is the substance and act of some body).

Animal might even be said of both, not by one definition, but as towards one. This makes a difference towards something else, but nothing towards the investigation of sensible substance. For what was to be belongs to the form and to the act. For soul and what it is to be soul are the same, but what it is to be man and man are not the same, unless even the soul is to be called man. And thus in some and not in some.

To those examining, the syllable does not seem to be from the elements and composition, nor is the house bricks and composition. And this is right. For neither the composition, nor the mixture is from those things of which it is the composition or mixture. Likewise, in none of the others. For example, if the threshold is by position, the position is not from the threshold, but rather the latter is from the former. Nor is man animal and twofooted, but there must be something which is besides these, if these are matter, neither an element nor from a element, but which taking away, they state the matter. If, then, this is the cause of the being and substance, they will be saying this is the substance itself.

This, then, must either be eternal or it must be corrupted without ever being corrupted, and must have come to be without ever coming to be. But it has been proved and shown elsewhere that no one makes or begets the form, but it is the individual that is made and what is from these that is generated.

Whether the substances of destructible things are separated, is not yet at all clear. But that it is not possible for some is clear : whatever are such as not to be apart from some things, such as house or utensil.

Perhaps, indeed, neither these things themselves, nor any of the other things which are not formed by nature, are substances at all. For one would lay down only nature as substance in corruptible things.

Therefore the difficulty which the followers of Antisthenes, and others without *paideia*, raised has a certain timeliness, that the what it is cannot be

defined (for the definition is a long speech). But how it is what it is can be taught, as silver, not what it is, but that it is like tin. Thus, there is able to be a definition and account of substance that is composed whether it be sensible or understandable. But that from which first it is cannot since defining speech says something of something and it is necessary that one part of the definition be as matter and the other as form.

It is also clear why, if substances are in some way numbers, they are so thus and not, as some say, as of units. For a definition is a number in a qualified way. For it is divisible and into indivisibles (for definitions are not unlimited), and number is also such.

And as, when something is taken from or added that from which is a number, it is no longer the same number, but another, even if the least has been taken away or added, so neither the definition nor the what was to be will be when anything has been taken away or added.

And it is necessary that a number be one by something which these thinkers cannot state by what it is one, if it is one. For either it is not one but as a heap: or if it is, it should be said what is making it one from many. And the definition is one, but likewise they cannot say how. And this happens reasonably; for there is the same reason why the substance is thus one, and not, as some say, by being some unit or point; but each is an act and some nature.

And as number does not have the more and the less, neither does substance according to the form; but if any does, it is the one with matter.

About the generation and corruption then of the foresaid substances, how it can happen and how impossible, and about the reduction of things to number, let it be determined as far as these.

READING FOUR

It should not remain hidden about the material substance that even if all things come from the same first cause or the same first causes and the same matter is as beginning for the things coming to be, yet there is its own for each; for example, of phlegm the sweet or the fat, and of bile the bitter, or something else (though perhaps these come from the same).

And there come to be many matters of the same thing, when one is matter of the other; for example, phlegm comes from fat and sweet, if the fat is from the sweet. But it comes from bile when bile is broken down into the first matter. For this comes from that in two ways: either because it will be further along the way, or because it is taken apart into its beginning.

It is possible for other things to be generated when the matter is one because of the moving cause, as chest and bed from wood. But necessarily the matter of some different things is other; such as a saw could not come to be from wood, nor is this in the ability of the moving cause. For it could not make a saw of wool or of wood. But if the same thing can be made from a different matter, it is clear that the art and the beginning as mover is the same. For if both the matter and the mover were different, so also what comes to be would be different.

When one seeks the cause, one should state all the causes that happen to be, since the causes are said in many ways. For example: what is the cause of man as matter? Is it the menstrual fluid? What then as mover? Is it not the seed? What as the form? The what was to be. What as that for the sake of which? The end. But perhaps both of these are the same.

It is necessary to say the proximate causes. What is the matter? Not fire or earth, but the thing's own matter.

About natural and generable substances, it is necessary to search thus if one is going to search rightly if the causes are such and so many and it is necessary to know the causes.

But there is another account of natural and eternal substances. For perhaps some have no matter, or not such, but only the movable according to place.

Nor does matter belong to those things which exist by nature but are not substances; their subject is the substance. For example, what is the cause of eclipse, what is its matter? There is none; but the moon is what undergoes. What is the cause as mover and corrupting the light? The earth. Probably there is no that for the sake of which. The definition is as form, but this is obscure if the account were not with the cause. For example, what is an eclipse? A lack of light. But if is added by the earth's coming in between, this is the definition with the cause. It is not clear what first undergoes sleep. But that it is animal? Yes, but this according to what and what first? The heart or some other part. Then, by what? Next, what is the undergoing

of that, not of the whole? That it is such an immobility? Yes, but what in the first subject undergoing what?

Since some things are and are not, without coming to be and ceasing to be, such as points, if they can be said to be, and in general forms. For the white does not come to be, but the white wood, if everything that comes to be comes from something and comes to be something. Not all contraries can come from one another, but it is in other ways that a white man comes to be from a black man, and white from black. Nor is there a matter of everything, but of those there is coming to be and change into each other. Whatever things are or are not without changing have no matter.

There is difficulty about how the matter of each is toward the contraries. For example if the body is healthy in ability, and disease is contrary to health, is it therefore both in ability? And is water wine and vinegar in ability? Or is it the matter of one by having and by form, and of the other by lack and the corruption besides its nature.

Further, there is a doubt why wine is not the matter of vinegar, nor vinegar in ability, even though vinegar come to be from it, and why the living is not in ability dead. Or is it not so, but the corruptions are accidental, and it is the matter of the animal that is the ability to be dead and its matter and it is water that is the matter of vinegar. They come from these as night from day. For the dead body comes from the animal, and vinegar from wine, as night from day. And all the things which change thus into one another must go back to their matter; for example, if from a corpse is produced an animal, the corpse first goes back to their matter, and only then becomes an animal. For example, if the living body from the dead body, first it goes into matter and from this animal. And vinegar first goes back to water, and only then becomes wine.

READING FIVE

In regard to the foresaid difficulty about definitions and about numbers, what is the cause of their being one? All things which have many parts and in which the whole is not, as it were, a heap, but the whole is something beside the parts, there is some cause. For even in bodies contact is the cause of unity in some, and in others stickiness or some such other undergoing. And a definition is one speech, not by being bound together, like the *Iliad*, but by being of one thing. Why, then, is it one and not many; for example, animal and two-footed?

Further, if there are, as some say, an animal itself and a twofooted itself, why is not man these, so that men would be by participation not of man, nor of one, but of two, animal and twofooted. And in general man would be not one but many, animal and twofooted.

It is clear, then, that if people proceed thus as they are accustomed to define and speak, it will not be possible to answer and untie the difficulty. But if, as we say, this is matter and that is form, and this is in ability and that in act, what is sought would no longer seem a difficulty.

For this difficulty is the same as would arise if spherical bronze were the definition of cloak. For this word would be a sign of the definition so that what is sought is the cause of sphere and bronze being one. The difficulty no longer appears, because the one is matter, the other form. What is the cause of this, of what was a sphere in ability being actually a sphere besides the maker in those things of which there is coming to be. For there is no other cause of the sphere in ability becoming a sphere in act, but this was the what was to be for each..

Of matter some is understandable and some sensible. And always in a definition, this is matter and that, act. For example, the circle is a plane figure.

But whatever things have no matter, either understandable or sensible, are right away each something one, just as being itself [is right away] individual substance, how, how much (whence neither being nor one is in definitions). And their what was to be is right away something one just as some being. Whence there is no other cause of being one for any of these, nor of their being a being in act. For right away each one is some being and something one; but not in being or one as a genus, nor as separated from singulars.

Because of this difficulty, some speak of participation and ask what is the cause of participation and what is it to participate. And others speak of being together, as Lycophron says knowledge is of knowing and the soul. And yet others say that living is the putting together or binding together of the soul with the body

Yet the same account would apply to all. For being healthy, too, will be either the being together or the binding together or the putting together of the soul and health; and the bronze to be a triangle will be the putting

together of bronze and triangle; and to be white will be a putting together of surface and whiteness.

The cause is that they seek a reason making one and a difference of ability and act. But, as has been said, the last matter and the form are the same and one, the one in ability and the other in act, so that it is like seeking the cause of something one and of its being one. For each thing is something one, and what is in ability and what is in act are in some way one, so that the cause is nothing other besides what is moving it from ability to act. And whatever things have no matter are all simply something one.