cancels, but rather a plenitudinous infinitely actual Being expressed somehow in the finite being that it provides or lets be.

This notion of participation in the source of all situations and events, which is an infinite unified multiple, implies that what emerges as event is a gift, since it is good in its harmony. As good, it expresses a good will, for how can the notion of goodness be detached from the notion of an intention of bestowed benefits? For this reason, participation requires that the event be the event of grace. At the same time, however, it also requires that the mystery of the source be preserved, since in seeing that the event is a gift from a higher source means that such source is recognized only in its self-manifestation as inexhaustible and infinitely reserved. Participation is always in the impossible; grace announces the unknown god.

By comparison, postmodern thought is unable to hold together grace and the *via negativa*. It seems to search for secular equivalents to theological themes. Thus, Levinas and Derrida provide a secular negative theology; Badiou, a secular account of grace. Yet, the former delivers only a formalism of civility more formal than the Kantian formalism of rights, and can also serve as a mask for terror. Inversely, the latter ascribes to a mystique of *avant-garde* self-grounding that renders grace a mask for pure human affirmation without possibility of redress or analogical mediation or appeal to a higher authority.

Does not one require both grace and negative theology? Then, political ethics could cease to be reactive and primacy could be accorded to the projects of the human imagination that combine appearing bodies and do not just futilely acknowledge invisible subjects. But one could remain suspicious of these projects as only partially and inadequately displaying what can never be fully commanded, while also acknowledging that that mystery was somewhat present in human beings irreducible to players in civic processes. Thus, the secular equivalent of both grace and the *via negativa* would go beyond either the idolatry of the humanly instituted or the more subtly idolatrous hypostasization of the unknown "beyond being." It would conceive the appearance of the withheld or the witholding within appearance. This thought also requires the liturgical practice of searching to receive as a mystery from an unknown source that grace which binds human beings. To think such a thing is to think theologically; the "secular equivalent" fades into the thinking of incarnation and deification, and the search for a liturgical practice that would allow for the continuous arrival of divine glory to humanity. Thus, postmodern secular theologies were never anything so grand. They were ultimately only partial theologies.

Between the Universal and the Singular in Aristotle

Christopher P. Long

Although most commentators on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* agree that form emerges as the primary principle of being, the ideological dimensions of this position are rarely considered critically. If an ideology is the tendency to reduce what is encountered to the logic of an idea implicitly conditioned by existing power structures, then for all its conceptual sophistication, the philological approach to Aristotle reinforces the underlying ideology of ancient Greek thought and action the moment it secures the primacy of form. As the principle that orders beings, form functions authoritatively to legitimate the laws of knowledge and the possibilities of action determined by those laws. Yet, the dynamic path of Aristotle's thinking, as opposed to his system of thought, does not easily fit into this metaphysical ideology of form. Nowhere is this clearer than in the ongoing debate concerning the problem of whether form is universal or singular.[1]

There are four standard responses to this question. The first two embrace the dichotomy in which the problem is expressed, arguing either that form is universal or that there are singular forms. Aristotle has clarified the difficulty with these two positions: if the principle of being is universal, it will be unable to account for the singularity of the composite. As

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1.   The Greek "*to kath' hekaston*" is translated as "singular" for two reasons. First, as Owens suggests, "singular" is cognate with the Latin "*singuli*" which, as a distributive numeral meaning "each one," captures the distributive sense of *to kath' hekaston* — literally, "that according to each." Second, the term "singular" suggests irreducible uniqueness and, as such, reinforces Aristotle's contention that *to kath' hekaston* is unknowable. See Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics* (Toronto, Canada: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978).

he puts it: "Socrates will be many things: Himself and a human-being and an animal," but if the principle is singular, it will not be known, for knowledge is always of the universal.[2] There are, however, two other ways to address the *aporia* that do not naively accept the dichotomy between the universal and the singular. One is to suggest, as Owens has, that form is neither universal nor singular; since it is the cause of the singularity of the composite, the form is, strictly speaking, prior to the universal/singular dichotomy.[3] The other, defended by Edward Halper, argues that form must be understood as both universal and singular. Form exhibits two different sorts of unity: it is one in number and thus singular, and it is one in formula, and thus a universal predicate.[4]

Whatever their differences, these four philological approaches remain similar, to the extent that they all intend to reconstruct the systematic unity of Aristotle's thought by defending the priority of form. While it can hardly be doubted that, in the end, Aristotle turns to the primacy of form as the ultimate principle of order, the great insight of his thinking lies in the irreducible tension between form and matter that emerges as he struggles to do justice to finite sensible *ousia* (being or substance). Theodor W. Adorno thematizes this tension in terms of mediation: ". . . if one takes seriously the idea of *mediation*, which is sketched but not really worked out in Aristotle, the idea that form and matter are really *moments* which can only be conceived in relation to each other, the question as to which of them comes absolutely first or is ranked absolutely higher becomes transparent as a false abstraction. And one will then trace the forms of the concrete mediation of these moments as the only rightful source of truth, instead of treating the product of abstraction which keeps them apart."[5]

Although, as Adorno recognizes, to ascribe the notion of mediation to Aristotle's concept of the relation between form and matter is to some degree anachronistic, much of the tension that animates the middle books of the *Metaphysics* is the result of an attempt to think the mediated identity of form and matter. Here, mediation is not yet dialectical in the Hegelian sense; although form and matter are seen to belong together in some way, their irreducible difference resists the unifying grasp of the Hegelian concept.[6] This pre-dialectical concept of mediation is perhaps even more important than the Hegelian concept, in which difference is always incorporated back into the system by means of the unforgiving *Aufhebung* of the dialectic. The truth of Aristotle's thinking is expressed not in the ultimate affirmation of form abstracted from matter, but rather, in his attempt to think the concrete composite individual in terms of form and matter, without giving in to the temptation to reduce the one to the other. The moment Aristotle turns away from the composite individual and posits form as the ultimate principle of order, a metaphysics directed toward justice is transformed into an ideology intent on securing Truth.

Although the ideological dimensions of Aristotle's first philosophy, and of metaphysics in general, have always hovered just under the surface of every authoritative claim to Truth, in the wake of 20th century atrocities, it is no longer possible to investigate metaphysics as if it were ideologically neutral and divorced from the world. Adorno draws this out by pointing to metaphysics' qualitative leap in view of what has happened: "the assertion of a purpose or meaning which is formally embedded in metaphysics is transformed into ideology, that is to say, into an empty solace which at the same time fulfills a very precise function in the world as it is: that of keeping people in line."[7] If today Aristotle's thinking is engaged philosophically, i.e., with a critical eye toward the hegemonic manner in which form sets beings into order, the perspective dictated by what has happened cannot be eschewed.

Ironically, the ideological dimensions of Aristotle's first philosophy is revealed most perspicuously by those philological approaches that, in the name of reconstructing the original, attempt to neutralize the distorting effects of their own historical embeddedness. Furthermore, the tension generated by these approaches points directly to the continuing philosophical significance of Aristotle's thinking and opens the space from which to deal with the ideological dimensions of his metaphysical position. The following will discuss the four approaches concerning the universal/singular *aporia* in Aristotle, by focusing on the work of Joseph Owens, Edward Halper, Michael Loux, Michael Frede and Günther Patzig. The analysis will not be guided by an attempt to designate the most convincing reconstruction of the text, but by identifying both the underlying ideological dimensions of Aristotle's thought and the fundamental tension that animates his thinking. In turn, this will lead back to

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2.   Aristotle, *Aristotelis Metaphysica*, ed. by Werner Wilhelm Jaeger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), III.6 1003a10-14.

3.   Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics, op. cit.*, p. xiv.

4.   Edward Halper, *One and Many in Aristotle's Metaphysics* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1989), p. 244.

5.   Theodor W. Adorno, *Metaphysics: Concept and Problems*, tr. by Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 41 (translation modified).

6.   *Ibid.*, p. 50.

7.   Adorno, *Metaphysics, op. cit.*, p. 104.

his *Metaphysics*, in order to illustrate how this tension determines the very language through which Aristotle articulates *ousia*. This may generate insights into a *logos* that reflects its own conditioned finitude and is thus able of articulate its own ideological tendencies. The tension between the universal and the singular in Aristotle turns out to be symptomatic of a thinking intent on saving the phenomena by doing justice to the finite contingent individual. When this intention is sacrificed in the name of Truth and order, metaphysics becomes ideology, and the thinking behind all critically transformative action gives way to the coercive force of an idea that renders all action mere obedience.[8]

Form as Universal: The Ideology of the Pure Concept

Recognizing that *Metaphysics* Z.13 poses a formidable obstacle to his claim that substantial forms are primary *ousiai*, Loux argues that Aristotle does not mean what he suggests in Z.13 and explicitly states in a number of other places: no universal is *ousia*.[9] Loux contends that Z.13 establishes the weaker claim that "nothing predicated universally" is the substance of what is truly predicated.[10] In order to read a contradiction out of Aristotle, Loux introduces a distinction between species- and form-predication. The former, active in sentences such as "Socrates is a human-being," designates the individual by subsuming it under its lowest level; the latter, active in sentences such as "This pack of flesh and bone is a human," designates nothing generic, but the form of the matter of which it is predicated. Although predicated universally of substances, for Loux form survives the critique of Z.13 which denies that species is *ousia*.

Although Loux deploys the notion of form-predication to resolve the apparent contradictions that emerge from Aristotle's denial in Z.13 that

8. For a more detailed discussion of critically transformative action, see Christopher P. Long and Richard A. Lee, "Between Reification and Mystification: Rethinking the Economy of Principles," in *Telos* 120 (Summer 2001), pp. 92-112.

9. Loux suggests that, at Z.13, 1038b8-9, Aristotle hedges his bets about whether *ousia* can be universal by saying: "It seems (*eoike*) impossible that any universal [or, anything said universally] be *ousia*." Loux suggests that *eoike* indicates a sense of uncertainty or caution. See Michael J. Loux, *Primary Ousia: An Essay on Aristotle's Metaphysics Z and H* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 199. Frede and Patzig take issue with this reading and argue that in Greek literature *eoike* is not used to express how the speaker judges the state of affairs. See Michael Frede and Günther Patzig, *Aristoteles "Metaphysik Z" Kommentar* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1988), Vol. II, pp. 244-5. Whatever the force of the *eoike*, however, it is clear that Aristotle has no qualms about denying that *ousia* is universal. See, e.g., Z.10, 1035b27-29; Z.16, 1040b23; and H.1, 1042a21-22.

10. Michael J. Loux, "Form, Species and Predication in *Metaphysics* Zeta, Eta, and Theta," in *Mind* 88 (1979), p. 23. See also Loux, *Primary Ousia, op. cit.*, Ch. 6.

ousia is universal, there is a clear sense in which species-predication has a certain necessity form-predication lacks.[11] In the end, Loux holds firmly to the priority of species-predication because he is convinced that the "what is it?" question seeks a general explanation: "But to be for an individual just is to be a member of its proper species, which means we need a single account for all the members of a given species. There is a single species-predicate that identifies what being consists in for all the members of a kind, and it is because a single form is predicated of distinct parcels of matter of one and the same sort that each is the kind of thing it is."[12]

Here, it is clear that species-predication takes priority over form-predication when it comes to ontological knowledge which, in the end, seems to depend on the ability of the *eidos* (form) to capture the being of the individual. Thus, the singularity of the composite is sacrificed in the name of a stable *eidos*, its essence is to be nothing other than a member of its kind. The singular is rendered particular. The assumption underlying this appeal to the authority of form is not only that the being of the individual is completely captured by the *eidos*, but also that the individual is ontologically determined by the idea. If the nature of an ideology is to determine each being it encounters according to the logic of its own idea, then the argument for universal form in Aristotle turns his metaphysics into an ideology of the pure concept; the objective truth of each being is said to be captured and determined by the unforgiving logic of the *eidos*.[13]

Even on Loux's account, however, the recalcitrance of the individual's singularity is felt in the ineluctable tension between species- and form-predication. Rather than seeking to dissolve this tension by appealing to the authority of the *eidos*, it is advisable to think it through more vigilantly; although access to the individual is always already the result of the deployment of concepts, it is hubristic to believe that these concepts not only capture the being of the individual but also determine it ontologically. If the appeal to the authority of the universal *eidos* inevitably violates the unity of the individual, perhaps it is better to claim that each individual has a form of its own. This is precisely what Michael Frede and Günter Patzig argue.

11. Loux, *Primary Ousia, op. cit.*, pp. 120-1.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 225.

13. For a discussion of the meaning of "ideology" in modern political life, see Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), pp. 469ff. Although Arendt distinguishes 20th century totalitarian ideologies from Plato's eternal ideas and Kant's regulative principles, the ideological structure of such systems have more in common with traditional Western philosophical thinking than it seems.

Singular Forms: The Ideology of Immediate Intuition

Unlike Loux, Frede and Patzig argue that Aristotle's ontology implies that forms are singular.[14] This claim is made with regard to one side of the twofold meaning of *eidos*. They do not deny that when understood as the species, *to eidos* is in fact universal. When understood as form, however, the question arises as to whether it is universal or singular. Frede and Patzig suggest that the claim "no universal is *ousia*" leaves no room for any universality to be ascribed to form. They point to the claim that in Z.6, where Aristotle establishes a strong identity between the essence (to *ti én einai*) of a thing and the thing itself, forms are singular. By appealing to this identity, Frede and Patzig draw out one of Aristotle's primary ontological intuitions: the principle of a being must be immanent in the being itself. This may be seen as Aristotle's loyalty to the autarchy of beings and that the most important feature of the argument for singular forms is its attempt to do justice to this loyalty. But so long as this autarchy is thought exclusively in terms of form, it turns into ideology. Here, it expresses not the ideology of the authoritative universal, but of the radically independent singular. As Loux has suggested, Frede and Patzig's position becomes "radically nominalistic"[15] when it posits an unlimited plurality of unique singulars without recognizing that access to such singulars is mediated by a *logos* whose "brutal syntax forces them under concepts."[16]

Frede and Patzig attempt to circumvent this problem by appealing to the notion of knowledge in actuality that Aristotle introduces in *Metaphysics* M.10. There, Aristotle suggests the possibility that there is knowledge of what he refers to as the *tode ti*. Frede and Patzig seem to take this as evidence for the possibility that there is direct, noetic knowledge of singular forms. By affirming singular forms, identifying the form as the ultimate principle of being, and then suggesting that knowledge of these forms is predicated on direct noetic contact, Frede and Patzig end up endorsing a radical pluralism in which immediate intuition provides direct access to the being of each being. If the argument for universal forms turns Aristotle's metaphysics into an ideology of the pure concept, the argument for singular forms renders it an ideology of immediate intuition.

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14.   Frede and Patzig use the term "*individuell*" when speaking of the universal/singular *aporia* and of forms.

15.   For the claim that Frede and Patzig's position becomes radically nominalistic, see Loux, *Primary Ousia, op. cit.*, p. 103.

16.   Reiner Schürmann, *Broken Hegemonies*, tr. by Reginald Lilly (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), p. 19.

Neither account, however, can do justice to the mediated nature of the ontological encounter in which beings are both revealed and concealed by a *logos* at once conceptual and intuitive.

Neither Universal nor Singular: Toward a Totalizing Ideology

Owens undermines the rigid logic of disjunction in which form must be understood as *either* universal *or* singular by suggesting that Aristotle locates a way between the terms of the universal/singular *aporia* by developing a concept of form that is neither universal nor singular, but prior to both.[17] By thinking form as something prior to its instantiation in matter, Owens argues that, although form accounts for universality and singularity once it is conceptualized as inhering in some matter, it must be seen as neither universal nor singular. As Edward Halper suggests, here the advantage of Owen's position is that it accounts for the manner in which form functions as the ultimate cause of the composite individual. If the form were universal, it could not account for the unity of the composite; if it were singular, it would threaten the unity of the composite as a whole.[18]

This interpretation is animated by two insights. First, because it understands form as an act, it does not fall naively into the rigid dichotomous logic of entitative thinking in which the ultimate principle of being and knowledge is understood as some *thing*, either universal or singular.[19] When Aristotle introduces the distinction between a principle (*archè*) and an element (*stoicheion*) at the end of *Metaphysics* Z,[20] he opens up the

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17.   To find a way between the universal and the singular is more than a mere metaphor. For Owens, an "*aporia*" is a "lack of passage" — a connotation lost in its translation as "problem" or even "difficulty." See Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics, op. cit.*, pp. 211-219. Aristotle's answer to many of the *aporiae* is rarely to opt for one of the extremes over the other, but to find a safe passage by developing a conceptual apparatus able to address the concerns expressed in the formulation of the *aporia*.

18.   Cf. Halper, *One and Many in Aristotle's Metaphysics, op. cit.*, 241.

19.   The suggestion that form is neither universal nor particular has been considered incoherent. Thus, Albritton writes: "I doubt that Aristotle would have understood any better than I do the suggestion that a thing may be neither universal nor particular." See Rogers Albritton, "Forms of Particular Substances in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*," in *The Journal of Philosophy* Vol. LIV (1957), pp. 699-708. Halper sees this response as the result of an intense dedication to contemporary logic which recognizes only two sorts of entities: predicates and the individuals that receive them. See, Halper, *One and Many in Aristotle's Metaphysics, op. cit.*, p. 241. However, it may also be seen as symptomatic of a loyalty to "entitative thinking," i.e., a thinking that reifies being by conceptualizing it as a thing.

20.   *Metaphysics*, Z.17 1041b25-33. For a detailed discussion of this non-entitative concept of form, see Christopher P. Long, *The Ethics of Ontology: Rethinking an Aristotelian Legacy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004).

space for the non-entitative understanding of form that is developed in books H and Θ. Owens recognizes the significance of this shift and argues that the ensuing discussion of the meaning of *dunamis* (potency) and *energeia* (actuality), in book Θ is meant to explicate precisely how form can serve as the ultimate *arché* of the composite without being universal or singular. This argument depends on recognizing the meaning of the term *tode ti* that Aristotle deploys in his treatment of sensible *ousia*. Highlighting the significance of this term is the second insight of Owens' interpretation.

The term is constructed by placing the demonstrative pronoun, *tode* (this)," next to an indefinite pronoun, *ti* (something). It is used by Aristotle most often to designate the demonstrably present composite sensible *ousia*. From this perspective, the *tode ti* points to what is clearly individual. Yet, there are also places where Aristotle uses the term to refer to the form understood as separate in notion (or *logos*) from matter.[21] Owens argues that this use of *tode ti* allows Aristotle to conceptualize form in a way that escapes the either/or determination of the universal/singular *aporia*. As a *tode ti*, form finds a way between universality and singularity.[22]

While Owens is correct in pointing to *tode ti* as the most fundamental development of Aristotle's thinking, this is for reasons other than Owens suggests. For Owens, the significance of the term lies in its ability to conceptualize form as the ultimate cause of the being of the composite. To think otherwise, he insists, is to go against the grain of the entire trajectory of the discussion of *ousia* found in *Metaphysics* Z. It would be to take the composite as prior to form and to understand form as existing only for the sake of the composite.[23] This would challenge the ability of form to function as the ultimate principle of being and knowledge. It would force ontology back to the site of its finite and contingent encounter with the concrete composite. To rivet ontological thinking to the site of this encounter, however, is to give up any hope of establishing an ultimate science of being *qua* being. Because this seems radically un-Aristotelian, when it comes to the question of the possibility of ontological knowledge, Owens, like Frede and Patzig, turns to *Metaphysics M.10* and argues that what is directly encountered in ontological knowledge is not the composite *tode ti*, but the *tode ti* as form. In so doing, he explicitly defends what is only implied in Frede's and Patzig's position, i.e., that something like the direct noetic apprehension of form ultimately secures the exact correspondence between knowledge and

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21.   *Ibid.*, H.1 1042a27-31.
22.   Owens, *The Doctrine of Being, op. cit.*, pp. 388-389.
23.   *Ibid.*, p. 388.

that which is known.[24] Ultimately, the ontological and epistemological priority of form establishes not only the stable order of being, but also the possibility of developing a rigorous science of being *qua* being.

Thus, Owens suggests that by understanding form in terms of *energeia* and by developing the concept of the *tode ti*, which when applied to form, must be recognized as prior to the distinction between universality and singularity, Aristotle points beyond the composite to form and thus already to a higher type of *ousia* than the sensible. Ultimately, it is form as a pure act, devoid of potency, God, that accounts for the being of sensible *ousia*. According to Owens, Aristotle's ontological engagement with sensible *ousia* leads directly to the onto-theology developed in *Metaphysics* book Λ and the concept of God as the ultimate principle of order and security. Here, again, metaphysics becomes ideology the moment it eschews its concrete encounter with the composite individual and seeks solace in an ultimate principle beyond all history. Owens' account focuses on this, because it is so successful in arguing for the systematic unity of the *Metaphysics* as a whole. As a system, Aristotle's *Metaphysics* embraces the ultimate hegemony of God as pure form. Here, the ideology of the pure concept and that of immediate intuition merge into a single totalizing ideology in which the ability of the concept to capture the nature and structure of reality is simply posited in the name of security and order.[25] That Aristotle's metaphysics tends toward such a totalizing ideology is clearly suggested by the final approach to the universal/singular *aporia* found in the literature, for this account explicitly embraces the overarching hegemony of form as both universal and singular.

Both Universal and Singular: The Ideology of Unity

Like Owens, Halper is committed to reconstructing the systematic unity of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Like Loux, Frede, Patzig, and Owens, Halper recognizes that in Aristotle form emerges as the ultimate principle. But Halper takes a different approach than the others insofar as he reads the *Metaphysics* through the lens of what he understands to be a peculiarly Greek perspective: the problem of the one and the many.[26] Here, unity turns out to be the fundamental concept through which most of the

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24.   *Ibid.*, p. 428.
25.   For a detailed discussion of the totalizing dimension of Aristotle's thinking, see Christopher P. Long, "Totalizing Identities: The Ambiguous Legacy of Aristotle and Hegel after Auschwitz," in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (2003), pp. 213-244.
26.   Halper, *One and Many in Aristotle's Metaphysics, op. cit.*, pp. xxxvi-xxxix.

arguments of the middle books come into focus.

From this perspective, form emerges as primary, because it exhibits two sorts of unity: it is one in number and one in formula. To explain how this is possible, however, Halper argues that Aristotle extends the usual understanding of singularity and universality. The singular, which more narrowly refers to the composite *ousia* individuated by matter, often takes on the more general sense of what is one in number; while the universal, which usually refers to the genus ranging over a plurality of members, takes on the wider meaning of what is one in formula. Halper suggests that the extended understanding of the singular is found in passages that refer to the unmoved mover, which is singular without being at all burdened by the exigencies of matter: it is singular precisely because it does not have matter. The extended sense of the universal, he suggests, is found in those passages where Aristotle conceptualizes the species as having an essence because it is one in formula.[27] Like Owens, Halper can sidestep the entitative logic that requires the universal and the singular to refer to things — either predicates or sensible composites — by thematizing the universal and the singular as characteristics of form, i.e., as "ways of being one."[28] Thus, ultimately it is the peculiar kind of unity of form that allows it to be both universal and singular in the extended senses of these terms.

This account seems to depend on conceptualizing form as a non-composite, indivisible principle — a position that runs into difficulties when the focus is the form of sensible composites. Halper recognizes this and argues that the peculiar nature of sensible forms is that they must exist in some matter: that they sustain themselves only insofar as they reproduce many instances of the same nature. This dependence of form on matter seems to threaten the singularity of the form, and Halper suggests that, in a sense, it does. "But in another sense, the one that Aristotle fastens on, it does not because form remains a single entity, a single actuality."[29] Ultimately, it is this other sense of form as a simple, indivisible, and indeed eternal principle of being that subverts the unstable tension between form and matter that manifests itself in the investigation of sensible *ousia*. Halper clarifies the implication of the maneuver when he writes that, once form is grasped as an activity that necessarily occurs in matter, "the particularity of individuals becomes irrelevant. From the perspective of form,

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27.   Halper, *One and Many in Aristotle's Metaphysics*, op. cit., 243. For the former, Halper points to *Metaphysics*, XII.8 1074a31-37; for the latter, to *Metaphysics*, Z.4.
28.   *Ibid.*, p. 243.
29.   *Ibid.*, p. 252.

individuals are merely vehicles for form's continued existence, and it is this perspective that reveals the nature of form."

Here, the nature of form turns out to be that of a supreme, hegemonic principle that seeks, in the name of order, to subvert the singular to its authority. What matters is not the matter, the source of contingency and uncertainty, but the continued existence, the necessary, ordered progression of the form. Accordingly, the composite individual is nothing more than the expression of form; its unique identity evaporates into the identity of the idea. If Halper is correct in assuming that a concern for unity was characteristic of Greek thinking, perhaps it was the ideology of unity that drove Aristotle to posit form as the overarching principle of order. This may be the underlying ideology of Western philosophical thinking, which conveniently permits itself to forget the finitude of the concepts with which it operates, and so continues to allow itself to be duped by the false belief in its concepts's ability to completely capture the nature and structure of reality. Although Aristotle and even many of his followers can be excused for failing to recognize the ideology on which the metaphysics of form is based, in view of what has happened this is no longer an option. Because of the finitude of human concepts, every attempt to discover the ultimate purpose of being is doomed to degenerate into the mere positing of absolute ultimates — principles designed to do to the plurality of perspectives what Aristotle's form was shown to do to the individuality of the composite: reduce it to a mere expression of the totalizing principle.

Not surprisingly, the ideological underpinnings of Aristotle's metaphysical position come into focus in the reconstruction of the Aristotelian system of thought. Ironically, these very accounts also reveal a dimension of Aristotle's thinking that refuses to succumb to ideology: his loyalty to *ta phenomena* — beings as they appear. If Aristotle continues to be philosophically relevant, it is not due to his ultimate "discovery" of the highest principle of being, but to his sensitivity to contingent phenomena. His attention to the individual generates the tension between the universal and the singular that runs through the entire discussion of sensible *ousia* in the *Metaphysics* and, by extension, through the whole history of Western ontology.

The Onto-logical Encounter

The ideological underpinnings of metaphysics emerge most clearly when the ambiguity endemic to the ontological encounter with contingent individuals is most vehemently denied. Ambiguity enters the onto-logical encounter from two directions. From the side of *logos*, which

attends each being as it enters into appearance, the irreducible singularity of the individual remains inaccessible. From the side of *to on*, which for Aristotle can only be investigated as *hè ousia*, singularity does not give way without a trace as the individual enters the community of concepts.[30] Traditionally, this ambiguity, this trace of singularity, has been eclipsed by an ideology that posits a simple correspondence between *logos* and being, knowledge and what is known. Despite Aristotle's tendency to embrace some version of this ideology, the trace of onto-logical ambiguity is discernible in the ways Aristotle speaks as he pursues the meaning of sensible *ousia*. In the end, the ambiguity of that manifests itself in the very *logoi* Aristotle deploys, infusing his metaphysics with a recalcitrance to ideology. If metaphysics is to resist its ideological tendencies, it must pay more attention to the *logos* that belongs to the process through which beings enter into appearance.

Thus, one should begin with the peculiar formulation by which Aristotle designates the concrete composite individual: *tode ti*. Although most commentators recognize the significance of the term, there is much debate on its precise meaning. Whatever their differences, most interpreters recognize the centrality of the term to Aristotle's ontological investigation of sensible *ousia* and seek to minimize its ambiguity. But what if the term is inherently ambiguous because it refers to an ambiguous site — the concrete encounter with finite, contingent being? Ernst Tugendhat's interpretation points in this direction. He argues that the term designates the sort of independence of finite sensible *ousia* — an independence that is at once determinate and indeterminate.[31] If the demonstrative *tode* designates the individual as determinate, the indefinite *ti* subverts this designation by pointing to its inherent indeterminacy. Yet, the individual's ambiguity is no simple objective characteristic of finite sensible *ousia*; rather, it is the direct result of the very process through which beings manifest themselves. Adorno puts it this way: "*Tode ti* . . . is not really a concept at all, but a gesture; *tode ti* amounts to 'this,' and points to something. Aristotle

30. Cf. *Metaphysics*, Z.1 1028b1-7. The importance of the shift from *to on* to *hè ousia* cannot be over-emphasized. It shows how Aristotle's investigation of being is guided by an engagement with concrete, determinate being, rather than with an empty abstraction.

31. Ernst Tugendhat, *Ti Kata Tinos: Eine Untersuchung zu Struktur und Ursprung Aristotelischer Grundbegriffe* (Munich: Verlag Karl Alber, 1958), p. 26. His critique of the other interpretations of the *tode ti* is that they only understand the term in relation to *ousia* and do not see it as related to the other accidental categories. For Tugendhat, it is not only the finitude of *ousia* that accounts for the indeterminate nature of the *tode ti*, but also the fact that finite sensible *ousia* is accidentally determinable through other presences.

realized that a concept for this, by its nature, non-conceptual thing could not actually be formed, that it could only be expressed by a gesture. . . ."[32]

As a demonstrative gesture, the *tode ti* implicitly points to what escapes the concept's grasp, yet, as a conceptual formulation, it is concerned with meaning. From this perspective, the term's ambiguity may be seen as the result of the attempt to render conceptual what escapes the concept's grasp. The *tode ti* names the individual precisely *as* it enters into the community of concepts. It is necessarily ambiguous because the singular never fully appears; it remains recalcitrant, retaining something of its autonomous independence.

This recalcitrance haunts philosophy by expressing the finitude of the concepts with which it operates. This finitude is expressed in the irreconcilable tension between the universal and the singular — a tension Aristotle recognized. For him, the singular (*to kath' hekaston*) escapes the concept's grasp, so it is unknowable; yet, it does enter the sphere of appearance; it presents itself as puzzling, indeed, as something wonderful. Too often, the desire to capture the singular as it appears leads to the delusion of the correspondence between concept and reality. This delusion is a sort of amnesia that allows philosophy to forget that access to the singular is always mediated by *logos*. Philosophical amnesia posits the particular, the instantiation of the universal, as the singular, ideologically obfuscating the remainder that reminds philosophy of the inherently coercive nature of the *logos* through which beings appear. In Aristotle, the *tode ti* points, literally, to the individual, itself no longer singular, but not yet particular. To deal with the ambiguity of this term is to begin to hear something of a *logos* acutely aware of its own finitude. Such a *logos* is a kind of *pharmakon*, serving at once as a remedy for philosophical amnesia, and as a poison to the naïve faith in immediate access to the individual's very being.[33]

The ambiguity of this *logos* can be found in other ways Aristotle speaks about *ousia* as well, for it is symptomatic of a thinking seeking to do justice to singularity as it enters the sphere of appearance. Thus, there is the rather peculiar phrase *to ti èn einai* (the what it was to be), which is usually translated as "essence." This translation, which has come to designate objective being, covers over the puzzling presence in the phrase of *èn* — the imperfect of the verb *einai* (to be). Indeed, the familiarity of the translation in the philosophical lexicon ought not be permitted to eclipse

32. Adorno, *Metaphysics, op. cit.*, p. 35.

33. For a discussion of *pharmakon* as both poison and remedy, see Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, tr. by Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 70ff.

the complexity of the term. Constructed by appending the definite article to the phrase *ti èn einai*, which iwas designed to point to the proper answer to *the* ontological question *ti esti*? (what is it?) the "what-it-was-to-be" for a given being was thought to designate the very being of the being under consideration. Most commentators seeking to account for the strange presence of the imperfect in this phrase argue that it must not be understood in a naively temporal sense.[34] Yet, perhaps the imperfect points to the contingency of all onto-logical encounter, to the inability of concepts to capture the finite singular. The imperfect indicates an implicit recognition that the being of the singular does not enter completely into the concept, that what a being *is* cannot be purely intuited — despite Aristotle's endorsement of the ideology of immediate intuition. What each being is presents itself as always already past; the what is it? question can only be answered in terms of the "what-it-was-to-be" because access to the singular's very being is necessarily mediated by the deployment of concepts that always come too late. The imperfect in the *ti èn einai*, like the *tode ti*, points to an ambiguity that emerges only in a thinking that remains loyal to the site of the onto-logical encounter with the singular as it enters into appearance. Once the peculiarity of Aristotle's formulation is turned into the familiar concept of "essence" and seen as designating true, objective being, the ambiguity endemic to all onto-logical encounters is covered over, metaphysics becomes ideology, and philosophy uncritically embraces its self-imposed *amnesia*.

There is yet a third formulation in Aristotle's thinking that points to the contingency of all onto-logical encounters. Like the imperfect in *ti èn einai*, this formulation also involves a peculiar verbal construction. After recognizing, at the end of *Metaphysics* H.6, that he must develop a conceptual apparatus capable of accounting for the manner in which the composite is a unity of form and matter, Aristotle introduces the distinction between *kinèsis* (motion) and *praxis* (action). While the model of motion could not account for the dynamic unity of form and matter, because it understood process in isolation from product, the model of *praxis*, which does not

sequester the two, but rather thinks being as process, is far more capable of accounting for the contingent life of the composite individual. In order to clarify the nature of this peculiar concept of ontological *praxis*, Aristotle hits upon a rather strange formulation. Unlike a motion, which is incomplete because its end remains outside itself, an action is complete in the sense that its end inheres in it. "For example," says Aristotle, "one is seeing and has seen at the same time, and one is practically wise and has been practically wise, and one is thinking and has thought, but it is not the case that one is learning and has learned, nor that one is cured and has been cured."[35] The former are examples of what Aristotle calls *praxeis* (actions), the latter of *kinèseis* (motions). He clarifies the difference by placing the present tense of a verb next to an iteration of the same verb in the perfect tense. Because verb tense in Greek includes not only time but aspect as well, the combination of the present tense, with its progressive/repeated aspect, and the perfect tense, with its completed aspect, suggests a kind of activity that is at once continuous and complete.[36] What makes this formulation significant is not only its ability to capture something of the openness of contingent existence — that it is simultaneously determinate and indeterminate, complete and open — but also its recognition that the present is saturated by the past, that the "is" is only accessible as a "has been."

Thus, what might appear to be immediately present is always already mediated by the *logos* that conditions appearance. To thematize this *has been* in terms of the pure present, appearance as objective reality, is to obfuscate the finite temporality of the onto-logical encounter on which all knowledge depends. Yet, to insist on the *has been* is not to call into doubt the reality of the *is*, to reduce the singular to the ideality of the concept. The power of Aristotle's thinking derives from his faith in the reality of the singular and the tension this faith brings to his ontological engagement with finite being.

This tension, discernible in the various ways Aristotle speaks about

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34.   Frede and Patzig argue that the so-called philosophical imperfect indicates logical, rather than temporal priority. See Michael Frede and Günther Patzig, *Aristoteles "Metaphysik Z" Einleitung, Text Und Übersetzung* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1988), Vol. I, p. 35. Owens argues that: "the Greek imperfect cannot here be taken as denoting *past* time. It refers in this phrase to something still present, and applies equally well to the timeless separate Forms. It indicates 'timeless Being,' and so implies exemption from the *contingency* of matter and change, upon which time follows." See Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics, op. cit.*, p. 183.

35.   *Metaphysics*, Θ.6 1048b23-25. Most readings of this passage have focused on a discussion of the "tense test" that Aristotle allegedly introduces here. Obviously, the present interpretation could hardly be more different. For a strong formulation of the notion of the "tense test," see Daniel W. Graham, "States and Performances: Aristotle's Test," in *Philosophical Quarterly* 30 (1980), pp. 117-129; for a critique of the attempt to read this passage as a test, see Charles Hagen, "The *Energeia-Kinesis* Distinction and Aristotle's Conception of *Praxis*," in the *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (1984), pp. 263-280.

36.   For a discussion of the present progressive in Aristotle, see R. Allan Cobb, "The Present Progressive Periphrasis and the Metaphysics of Aristotle," in *Phronesis* 18 (1973). pp. 80-90.

ousia, resists the ideological thrust of a metaphysics intent on determining the individual according to existing structures of power. Once metaphysics posits the particular, a figment of its own conceptual imagination, as the very being of the individual, the unique singularity of the individual succumbs to a violent fantasm that effectively annihilates the possibility of critically transformative action. Action becomes critical only when it recognizes that it is determined by thinking, which is mediated by a *logos* at once coercive and able to subvert its own brutality. Action becomes transformative only when it embraces the responsibility concomitant with this *logos* that conditions all onto-logical encounters. Responsibility in this onto-logical sense entails both the ability to respond to the individual as it appears, and the recognition that all such responses, because finite and contingent, carry with them unavoidable social-political implications and so must remain open always to the corrective presence endemic to the concrete encounter with the individual.

Metaphysics can resist its own ideological tendencies by recognizing that truth is ultimately grounded in the justice it does to this onto-logical encounter. If it is to be able to critically transform the structures of power that seek to reduce the individual to particularity, action must be directed by this sense of onto-logical justice. The tension between the universal and the singular stands irreducible, a reminder of the limits of the *logos* through which being appears — indeed, a reminder of the *logos* through which justice first becomes possible.

On Adorno's "Subject and Object"

Michael Marder

Definition and Confinement

Adorno begins his essay "Subject and Object" by claiming that: "The terms [subject and object] are patently equivocal."[1] This may seem banal; after all, a serious theoretical approach must define its terms rigorously. For Adorno, however, the equivocal meaning of "subject" and "object" is only a symptom of the underlying condition, which he terms the problem of defining. To reflect on these terms, it is not enough to create better definitions, if one does not also rethink what the definition of definition implies and how it frustrates the specific definitions of subject and object. For Adorno, "Defining means that something objective, no matter what it may be . . . , is subjectively captured by means of a fixed concept."[2] Incidentally, the definition of definition reinforces the severity of philosophy's predicament, since it relates something performed subjectively (an adverb) and an object (a noun) before each of these concepts is defined in its own right. In other words, if one is to determine what subject and object are, one must define these terms. But any definition entails a prior understanding of them. Such triangulated overarching of subject, object, and definition fashions both the theoretical beginning and the first irreducible *aporia* that marks the rest of Adorno's meditation.

In light of this *aporia*, any beginning of the analysis of subject and object is not absolute, as it is for Hegel, but qualified, conditional, and more or less accidental. Given the initial limitation implying the impossibility of beginning, Adorno provisionally "begins" his analysis with the

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1.   Theodor Adorno, "Subject and Object," in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, ed. by Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (New York: Continuum, 1982), p. 497.
2.   *Ibid.*, p. 498.