

## An Introduction To James Doull's Interpretation Of Aristotle

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My goal in this paper is a modest one: I want to draw your attention to what I see as some of the central aspects of James Doull's interpretation of Aristotle. My treatment of these points will remain fairly general and it will not even approach being comprehensive. My intention is to provide one possible entry into Doull's interpretation, not to encapsulate it. Those who have studied Doull's work closely will recognize the limitations of what I have to say. I will attempt to introduce Doull's interpretation using language and categories which, if not my own, are at least familiar to me. This will make it difficult for me not to fall into the kind of one-sidedness that it was Doull's virtue as a philosopher to overcome. (Whether he does so completely is a deep and difficult question which is beyond the scope of this paper.) Doull is similar to Aristotle and Hegel in that his language is so scientific and so precise that one finds oneself, having tried to express his thought in other terms, often coming back to his own as the most appropriate form to its content. Hegel criticizes those interpreters of Aristotle who rely too heavily on Aristotle's illustrative similes (such as the simile of the wax and the signet-ring in the discussion of sense-perception in the *De Anima*, commonly taken to be a straight-forward statement of empiricism).<sup>1</sup> Hegel's point is that these are meant by Aristotle to illustrate one aspect of a particular thought but are not sufficient to the whole thought. I fear that what I have to say about Doull is similar, latching on to the easier images, though this is not quite the right way to put the matter, because in Doull there are no images (this is a virtue of his thought and necessary to it, but for us it is part of the difficulty in comprehending it). My fear is that the attempt to grasp his thought in categories inadequate to it is to make something like an image of it. However, Aristotle wisely says that we must start with what is most intelligible to us and progress to what is most intelligible in itself. In relation to Doull's thought this paper is at the beginning of that process, but perhaps for that reason it will be helpful to those less familiar with his work.

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<sup>1</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Lectures on The History of Philosophy*, trans. E.S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1894, reprinted 1974), vol. 2, 189-194. Hegel is commenting on *De Anima* Book B, ch. 12. Similarly cf. Hegel's remarks on interpreting Aristotle's conception of the mind as a *tabula rasa*, *ibid.*, 196-7.

Professor Doull developed a comprehensive understanding of Aristotle which reveals a certain kind of systematic and dialectical thought in Aristotle's philosophy not commonly held to be present by recent scholarship. The systematic nature of Aristotle's thought is not explicit in the form of his treatises, but is to be found in the content which emerges from them. Doull argues that the speculative character of Aristotle's thought is lost sight of in Aristotle's immediate successors and is not fully recognized again until the modern period.<sup>2</sup> Doull's idea, I think, is that in the tradition which develops, Aristotle is taken as the spokesman of what Hegel (as he is usually translated) calls the 'understanding' ('*Verstand*') while Plato is taken as the complementary spokesman of what Hegel calls 'reason' ('*Vernunft*'). This is to reverse the relation of the original Platonism and Aristotelianism, for in this it is Aristotle, Doull argues, who has successfully moved from the penultimate to the ultimate standpoint in Plato's simile of the line, from *dianoia* to *noesis*. (This is not only Doull's judgement. In the *Metaphysics* Aristotle says that the Platonic dialectic is merely critical while philosophy knows.)<sup>3</sup> I will say something about the first insight (that is, the systematic and dialectical nature of Aristotle's thought) and I will say something about the last point regarding Aristotle's achievement, but I am not competent to elucidate nor to judge Doull's interpretation of the Hellenistic and mediaeval reception and incorporation of Aristotle.

Important to Doull's interpretation of Aristotle is an argument that there is a continuity and development from Plato to Aristotle. Contrary to most standard interpretations, Doull argues that Aristotle not only understands Plato but is sympathetic to Plato's specific philosophical aspirations.<sup>4</sup> Aristotle is understood by Doull to arrive at a first principle which is actual and is an effectual teleological principle. This is what Plato was seeking and had poetically expressed in the middle dialogues but was frustrated in articulating in its logical form (that is, in thought rather than image) in the later dialogues from the *Parmenides* on. I should note that Doull accepts, on philosophical grounds, J.N. Findlay's division of the Platonic dialogues into four groups according to the extent to which the Platonic philosophy is disclosed in them: 1. Socratic; 2. ideological (*Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, *Republic*); 3. stoicheiological (*Cratylus*, *Theaetetus*, *Parmenides*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Philebus*, *Epistles*); and 4. Plato's philosophy of the

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2 Cf. for example, James A. Doull, "Plato's *Parmenides*" in *Philosophy and Freedom: The Legacy of James Doull* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 137-8.

3 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. W.D. Ross in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), Book G, ch. 2, 1004b25-6. On Aristotle's criticism of Platonic dialectic cf. Dennis K. House, "Did Aristotle Understand Plato?", *Animus*, vol. 1 (1996), [www.swgc.mun.ca/animus/1996vol1/house.htm](http://www.swgc.mun.ca/animus/1996vol1/house.htm), §§16, 29. On this issue also cf. Dennis K. House's discussion of the sense in which Plato has not completely advanced beyond a sophistic attitude in "The Criticism of Plato's Doctrine of Participation in *Parmenides*" in *Philosophy and Freedom: The Legacy of James Doull* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 152.

4 Cf. James A. Doull, "The Christian Origin of Contemporary Institutions", *Dionysius VI* (1982), 142-145 and "Plato's *Parmenides*". Also cf. "Did Aristotle Understand Plato?". I have discussed this previously in my "A Commentary on Book *Alpha Elatton* of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*", *Animus*, vol. 7 (2002), <http://www.swgc.mun.ca/animus/2002vol7/robertson7.htm>.

concrete (*Timaeus*, *Critias*, *Laws*, *Epinomis*).<sup>5</sup> However, Doull would make an important correction to Findlay's view about the Platonism which is gradually revealed in the dialogues:

While certainly Plato nowhere reveals his philosophy directly in the Dialogues, as would be incompatible with that literary form, it would not depart far from Findlay's view to think that the same Platonism can be elicited from them as in the Unwritten Doctrines - that the sin of those who depend solely on the Dialogues for their account is also that they read them in a capricious, selective manner, and with assumptions quite arbitrary about the developments and changes in Plato's thought. If the Dialogues are read speculatively and with the knowledge that, as Hegel says, the philosopher does not possess and use such philosophy as Plato's, but is rather possessed by it and must disclose it, then one can find this Platonism also there.<sup>6</sup>

Doull's interpretation brings into question the predominant interpretation of Aristotle as an empiricist in contrast to Plato the idealist. He challenges us to ask whether the terms of this supposed opposition between Aristotle and Plato are not anachronistically imposed on Aristotle's texts.<sup>7</sup> An important factor in the tenacity of accepting the assumption of an opposition between Aristotle and Plato as a starting point of interpretation can be found in the influence of Werner Jaeger's developmental hypothesis which claims to find a multiplicity of irreconcilable strands in Aristotle's thought and to explain these in terms of significant shifts in his philosophical views and preoccupations.<sup>8</sup> The multifarious and often diametrically opposed conclusions about Aristotle's intellectual development arrived at by scholars employing Jaeger's methodology have revealed the limitations of that methodology. However, the general view that there is a multiplicity of divergent strands in Aristotle's thought has continued to have a pervasive influence. In particular it is often assumed that aetiology (the science of causes), ontology (the science of being *qua* being), *ousiology* (the science of substance) and theology (the science of God) do not sit well together in the *Metaphysics*.<sup>9</sup> What is important in this is that if we assume

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5 Cf. J.N. Findlay, *Plato: The Written and Unwritten Doctrines* (New York: Humanities Press, 1974) and James A. Doull, "Findlay and Plato" in *Studies in the Philosophy of J.N. Findlay*, Robert S. Cohen, Richard M. Martin, Merold Westphal eds. (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985), 250-262.

6 "Findlay and Plato", 255.

7 Cf. "The Christian Origin of Contemporary Institutions", 141: the original Aristotelianism could not be "an empiricism contaminated still with a mythological remnant, especially in its theology and psychology" because "there was not then a reason so well settled into finite interests as to see the principal questions of an older philosophy as mythical, linguistic, speculative in a bad sense; to take as standard a mathematicized logic which had lost the power to discriminate categories; to look for a knowledge of the soul through its powers fragmented and frozen into various empirical attitudes."

8. Werner Jaeger, *Aristotle: Fundamentals of the History of His Development*, trans. R. Robinson, 2nd edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

9. The alternative to this view need not be, and surely is not, the naïve view of "Aristotle as a man born with a golden system in his mind" to use the words of John M. Rist, *The Mind of Aristotle: a Study in Philosophical*

that at different stages in his intellectual development Aristotle contradicts himself or has different interests then it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to rely on the content of Aristotle's thought itself as our interpretative guide. Thus such an assumption lends itself to construing isolated sections of Aristotle's texts in the categories of later philosophical debates, and in particular encourages the dismissal of or inattention to Aristotle's theology. Doull, by contrast, argues that the articulation of God as the concrete actuality of self-thinking thought (*noesis noeseos*) is central to the illumination of Aristotle's works (and indeed to the illumination of philosophy itself), rather than an anomaly or a remnant of superstition in them. Doull argues that it is the development of pure categories of thought which allows Aristotle to succeed where Plato had been frustrated, allowing him to explicate the first principle and to understand nature and the soul in their distinction from and relation to that principle.

Crucial to Doull's interpretation of Aristotle is his philosophical judgement that Aristotle's philosophy has its genesis in the problems with which Plato is struggling by the time he writes the *Parmenides* and the attempt to answer these problems in the dialogues which follow the *Parmenides*. This judgement, of course, involves as much an interpretation of Plato as it does of Aristotle.

In what follows I am going to try to give a somewhat schematic view of how Doull understands the problem facing Plato in the later dialogues. I will then say something about Aristotle's reformulation of this problem. And then I will try to make some headway in understanding how Doull understands Aristotle to have come to a resolution of Plato's problem. My idea in following this course is that if we can understand the nature of Aristotle's resolution as Doull sees it, then we will be in a better position to understand Doull's interpretation of Aristotle more generally. In this I am following Doull's lead. He argues that to understand the original Aristotelianism we need to understand its genesis in the Platonic philosophy.

The central problem facing Plato in the later dialogues is to show how the (Platonic) One is productive of what is other than it. Doull says of J.N. Findlay's systematic Platonism and Heidegger's pluralism that they are complementary rather than exclusive attitudes towards Plato. Doull comments that in Plato "to be systematic, while it depends on an enlightenment and insight, is also a choice whether one will regard the ambiguous phenomena primarily according to their eidetic order and limit or as indeterminate and disordered. In *Timaeus*, the Demiurgos himself is represented as making that choice".<sup>10</sup> I think Doull's point here is a two-fold one. First, Plato's system, as it stands by the time of the later dialogues, is susceptible to falling into either one of these extremes and is inadequate when it does. But second, Plato's intention is to hold the two together. We might state this second point by saying that Plato, in the dialogues from the *Parmenides* on, is trying to comprehend how the (Platonic) One is the (Platonic) Good.

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*Growth* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), xi. For a detailed discussion of Jaeger's method and influence, and a response to this cf. G. Reale, *The Concept of First Philosophy and the Unity of the Metaphysics of Aristotle* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979).

10. "Findlay and Plato", 254. For a parallel comment regarding *Laws X*, cf. *ibid.* 259-60.

In the middle (ideological or *eidetic*) dialogues, when the Forms are laid down as hypotheses, their principle is what Socrates refers to as the Good. In the later dialogues, which concern themselves with an examination of the elements or principles of the Forms, these principles, Doull argues, are properly thought of as what Aristotle refers to as the One and the Dyad.<sup>11</sup> Plato moves in this direction because he takes unity to be a substantial principle. There is a tension between the one principle of the middle dialogues and the two principles of the later dialogues, and this is a frustration for Plato. What he wants and incipiently knows is necessary, is that he be able to come to one principle which is productive of determinations which are self-determinations. This is how Doull understands the imagery of the *Republic*: the Forms are the self-determinations of the Good. In the *Phaedo*, Plato has Socrates give his intellectual biography.<sup>12</sup> In this he tells us how excited he was by the reports about Anaxagoras' discovery that it is *nous* (mind) that produces order and is the cause of everything. Socrates says: "This explanation pleased me. Somehow it seemed right that mind should be the cause of everything, and I reflected that if this is so, mind in producing order sets everything in order and arranges each individual thing in the way that is best for it".<sup>13</sup> It is significant here that we have an identification between the rational and the Good. Socrates continues: "I assumed that he [Anaxagoras] would begin by informing us whether the earth is flat or round, and would then proceed to explain in detail the reason and logical necessity for this by stating how and why it was better that it should be so. ... if he made this clear, I was prepared to give up hankering after any other kind of cause".<sup>14</sup> In his commentary on the *Phaedo*, Dennis House has very nicely summed up what is at issue here, and so I will quote him at length:

Socrates obtained Anaxagoras' books hoping that he would find how *Nous* is effectively the total cause of Becoming. He expected Anaxagoras would generate the cosmos from *Nous* explaining that it is best and rationally necessary that the heavenly bodies and each phenomenon in turn be of such and such a nature and arranged in such and such a way [*Phaedo* 97d5 - 98b6]. The knowledge Socrates sought would explain how *Nous* is cause both as that from which all things are derived and determined, and as that to which all things are returning. In other words, Socrates hoped to discover how *Nous* is implicitly and explicitly the determined end of all the objects of nature.<sup>15</sup>

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11. Cf. the earlier citation of "Findlay and Plato", 255 (note 6). For Aristotle's discussion of the One and the Dyad cf. *Metaphysics*, Book A, ch. 6 and 9; Book M, ch. 6-9; Book N, ch. 3-4, and *De Anima*, trans. J.A. Smith in *The basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), Book A, ch. 2, 404b16-26.

12. Plato, *Phaedo* in *Plato: Five Dialogues*, trans. G.M.A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1981), 96a-101e.

13. Plato, *Phaedo* in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963, reprinted 1973), 97b-c.

14. *Ibid.*, 97d-e.

15. Dennis K. House, "A Commentary on Plato's *Phaedo*", *Dionysius V* (1981), 58.

Now it is not Plato's primary concern to save the phenomena. However, it is a primary concern of his to save the self-identity (the substantiality) of the many Forms, to know how there can be anything other than the One. Doull argues that in the dialogue *Parmenides* the character Parmenides (for clarity let us call him, as Doull does, the Platonic Parmenides) challenges Plato on this very point. Zeno had argued that a plurality of sensible beings is unthinkable. His argument is in the form of a *reductio* in support of the historical Parmenides' one undivided being. In the dialogue Socrates has listened to this argument in a reading of Zeno's book. And Socrates' response is to accept the contradictoriness of the sensible but to claim that in the plurality of Forms we have proper, stable objects for thought. The Platonic Parmenides then directs Zeno's criticism to this realm of the Forms and the relation of participation through which Socrates would save the sensible. Doull's interpretation is that Plato is not satisfied with either Socrates' position or with the position of the Platonic Parmenides.<sup>16</sup> If Plato can show how the One is the Good, then he will have moved beyond the opposition of Socrates and the Platonic Parmenides.<sup>17</sup> The dialogue *Parmenides* does not successfully resolve this opposition. Doull argues that the reflections in the dialogues *Sophist* and *Philebus* move closer to knowing what a resolution would be, but still fall short of it. That they do fall short is evidenced in the last dialogues. Doull interprets these dialogues as attempting to give a philosophy of nature and spirit: "In these writings Plato has before him the relation of Nature, and then of human life and history, to the principle—their separation from the principle and relation as separate to it."<sup>18</sup> But these works are found ultimately to be inadequate to their task. There is need, in the *Timaeus* for example, of a *demiourgos* who brings what are naturally opposed principles together to produce the world (to produce nature and the soul). That there is a return to myth in the *Timaeus* is itself evidence that an adequate resolution of Plato's problem has not been grasped. The mythical

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16. Here, of course, I am referring to the position of the Socrates of the dialogue. In the criticisms of participation the logic of the *deuteros plous* (literally 'second sailing' though not incorrectly translated as 'second best method') is being tested. Commenting on Doull's interpretation of the *Parmenides* House writes: "What is present in the doctrine of participation, but hidden in it, is the problem of how one effectively brings together both in knowing and in the known the elements of identity and otherness or difference. The language of [sensibles] 'sharing and not sharing in' [their Ideas or Forms] hides the fact that the connection of the positive and negative moments is not expressed." ("The Criticism of Plato's Doctrine of Participation in *Parmenides*", 152). In each of the criticisms Socrates emphasizes the former element (undivided unity) while Parmenides emphasizes the latter (endless dividedness). In this we can see the opposition of the principles which Aristotle refers to as the One and the Dyad. For a concise account of Doull's view of the common structure of the criticisms in the *Parmenides* cf. "Plato's *Parmenides*", 91.

17. Doull's considered judgement of the second section of the *Parmenides* which treats of hypotheses dialectically is as follows: "Out of [Parmenides'] criticism of Socrates emerges a new dialectic which for the first time attends seriously to the logic of the production of a *kosmos* or finite order from one or more *archai*. The new dialectic attempts to express in a perfectly universal form or logically that the principle cannot be an abstraction beyond its product but must also be comprehensive of it; secondly what the division of product from its cause is logically; and thirdly the relation and dependence of the caused or, as Plato calls it, 'the others' is to the Principle. The result of the dialectic would thus be to have shown the Good as principle." James A. Doull, "The Problem of Participation in Plato's *Parmenides*", *Dionysius* XIX (2001), 13.

18. "Findlay and Plato", 258.

element here is not, as John Cooper, the editor of the recent complete works of Plato, would have it, a rhetorical display rather than Plato's usual straight-forward philosophizing.<sup>19</sup> Rather it is Plato's philosophical honesty in treating matters which are not yet within his theoretical grasp. The importance of Plato's images is that they allow us to stand in relation to something which, even if it is intelligible (even if it is the most intelligible of all), we as yet do not understand. For Doull, the impulse of philosophy is to free oneself from a dependency on such images and enter into a pure thinking. Plato's images then could be called a 'third best method'. These are very different from the more circumscribed role of image in Aristotle as illustrative. Even the final myths of Platonic dialogues are not illustrations of a logic which has been adequately explicated earlier in the dialogue. They are Plato's intuitive grasp of what lies beyond the argument and awaits full comprehension.

The problems in the *Timaeus* are even more evident in the *Laws*. Here there is an incapacity to reveal adequately the embodiment of rationality. J.N. Findlay was of the opinion that the confusion of the *Laws* was consequent on a mental failure of Plato's - perhaps a stroke or seizure.<sup>20</sup> Doull responds to this suggestion with the following: "may one not accept Findlay's judgement of the philosophical quality of the *Laws* and see the explanation of it in the difficulty, or perhaps impossibility, of bringing the Platonic principle concretely into the half-reality of political life?"<sup>21</sup>

Aristotle's interest, according to Doull, is to resolve the central problem of the *Parmenides* and the dialogues which follow this. His interest is to understand the finite in relation to the infinite in a way in which the finite is not simply nothing. (This needs to be qualified and I will come back to it later). Doull used to say that the problem of the One and the Many is the problem of philosophy. This is to use the language of Plato. When Plato's principles have been revised and corrected by Aristotle, it becomes clearer to speak in terms of the infinite and the finite (though these are not Aristotle's own terms for his comprehensive principle and the principled). Philosophy's question is how we do not just have the infinite or just have the finite. Aristotle's great achievement, according to Doull, is that he has resolved Plato's problem. This is to say that Aristotle is Plato's greatest disciple. He is this in part because he is Plato's greatest critic: he has seen the force of Plato's self-criticism and has not retreated from the demands that this makes.

Aristotle can move beyond Platonic imagery, philosophy can be truly scientific for the first time, because, Doull argues, Aristotle has found a way to unite the sensible and the intelligible. From the standpoint of Aristotelian actuality, Doull writes: "the separation of ideal and sensible is known as within their unity, the sensible known as realizing the potentiality of the

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19. Cf. Cooper's introductory remarks to the dialogue in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed., with introduction and notes, John M. Cooper, associate ed. D.S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 1224-5.

20. *Plato: The Written and Unwritten Doctrines*, 333.

21. "Findlay and Plato", 259.

universal and returned to it in its difference".<sup>22</sup> This is to say that the Platonic *chorismos*, the radical separation of principle and principled, is overcome. Plato's image of participation becomes Aristotle's concept of substantial unity. What is distinctive in Doull's interpretation of this is that in it, to express it somewhat crudely, it is not that Aristotle has drawn the Forms down into the sensible, but that he has drawn the sensible up into the intelligible. Form in Aristotle is not a mere property of a thing. Form in Aristotle is an intrinsic teleological principle. It is *physis*. In this intrinsic teleology thought and life are united.

I will now turn to a restatement of Plato's problem from the standpoint of a developed Aristotelian science. Aristotle says in *Metaphysics* B that the most difficult *aporia* of all is "whether unity and being, as the Pythagoreans and Plato said, are not attributes of something else but the substance of existing things".<sup>23</sup> In *Metaphysics* A Aristotle says, somewhat cryptically, that Plato's principles are posterior to what they are supposed to be principles of.<sup>24</sup> That is, rather than accounting for the many Forms, or the sensibles which participate in these, the One and the Dyad are abstractions, and as such are posterior to that from which they are abstracted. Aristotle says further that all of his predecessors "make all things out of contraries. But neither 'all things' nor 'out of contraries' is right".<sup>25</sup> In the *Parmenides* Plato has recognized these criticisms but has not found a way through them. Dennis House draws these points together as follows: "If there is an actual concretion of self-identity and 'otherness' in the *eide* [Forms] then the *eide* are what is primary and the One and the dyadic Principle are posterior abstractions. But if the Principles are truly principles what is other than them must be constituted out of absolute identity and pure indeterminacy, which is impossible, because contraries do not combine".<sup>26</sup> We could say in the latter case that the efficacy of the principles cannot be thought but only imagined by a third principle, namely, the activity of the dialectician who separates and unites. I take this to be Doull's point when he writes: "To use the Eleatic forms, abstract and inadequate to what one would think by them was indeed inevitable for Plato so long as he took for principles the 'one' and the 'indeterminate dyad' and on the assumption of their difference sought their unity through an external reflection and did not know their relation as the intrinsic self-determination of an original unity or as actuality."<sup>27</sup>

Aristotle's answer to the *aporia* about unity and being is that they are not substances, not principles, but rather the highest abstractions. And they are correlative abstractions: whatever is

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22. "Plato's *Parmenides*", 122.

23. *Metaphysics* Book B, ch. 1, 996a5 ff.

24. *Metaphysics* Book A, ch. 9, 990b17-22.

25. *Metaphysics* Book L, ch. 10, 1075a25.

26. "Did Aristotle Understand Plato?" §29.

27. "Plato's *Parmenides*", 88.

one, is and whatever is, is one. And what is, is substance. Unlike his predecessors, Aristotle begins with what is one: substance. This is not a contrary, but is receptive of contraries.

In looking back at the history of philosophy Aristotle can see this history as bringing out the elements of substance. The course of the history is not, for Aristotle, made up of haphazard opinions. It is, he says "the truth itself" which has been moving it.<sup>28</sup> The four causes are imperfectly discovered by his predecessors. The inadequacies of previous accounts of these reveal that they are not separate, independent things. Taken separately, they are abstractions. Known as distinct yet united, relative to each other, they are the rational elements of substance. This is why Aristotle says that while "in a sense they have all been described before, in a sense they have not been described at all."<sup>29</sup> Doull would correct Aristotle on this point: "one would have to say of the successive attempts to think the finite that there was in them not one or more of the causes but them all and an incapacity of the category constitutive of a particular position to contain them."<sup>30</sup> The difference here is subtle. I think what Doull means to stress is that the previous philosophers have had substance before them but have not recognized it. Each position has been unable to recognize the unity in and through diversity which is substance because of a deficiency in the category through which it was trying to think the world.

What we have in the four causes are pure principles of thought. These ultimately reduce to two: form and matter, and these in turn are more properly understood as actuality and potentiality. In Plato, matter falls outside of thought. But in Aristotle, what is other than form is nothing without form: matter is form potentially. Non-being is *steresis* - the privation of a determinate form. And form is relative to matter in that it needs the underlying. In contrast to Doull's interpretation, standard accounts of Aristotelian matter continue to treat this in the way of the Presocratics: they take matter to be a thing. Aristotle criticizes this. As an example we can look at what he says of Anaxagoras in *Metaphysics A*.<sup>31</sup> Anaxagoras attempts to explain the world with two principles which are absolutely separate from each other in the beginning: *nous* (mind) and the 'indeterminate'. When he tries to articulate what this 'indeterminate' is, he says that it is 'all things mixed'. Aristotle's criticism is that 'all things mixed' must be posterior to 'all things unmixed'. Why is this? Aristotle's point is that we must first think the determinate elements of the mixture and then take them as mixed in order to have a mixture. If 'all things mixed' were prior, it could not have any form or determination. But if we were to extract form from the world completely, we would not be left with an unintelligible residue, but rather with nothing at all.

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28. *Metaphysics* Book A, ch. 3, 984b10.

29. *Metaphysics* Book A, ch. 10, 993a14-15.

30. "Plato's *Parmenides*", 87.

31. Cf. *Metaphysics* Book A, ch. 8, 989a30-989b20.

*Metaphysics* G expresses this in terms of the law of the excluded middle: between two contraries there is no middle indeterminate term. To be is to be determinate. Matter, Aristotle says, is always *pros ti*. It is always relative to form. This is why Aristotle comes to speak of it as potentiality (*dynamis*) and comes to express the criticism of Anaxagoras in terms of the priority of the actual to the potential. With this in mind we can see that the causes are not elements in the sense of independent principles, but are, rather, the intelligible structure of substance. Aetiology (the science of causes) is taken into *ousiology* (the science of substance). Ontology is likewise taken into *ousiology* if the accidental categories are seen as dependent upon substance. The first *aporia* of *Metaphysics* B asks whether one science investigates all the causes. Aristotle answers this affirmatively because substance is the first genus of being to which the other genera are related.<sup>32</sup>

In *Metaphysics* G Aristotle discusses the law of non-contradiction and the law of the excluded middle. Part of what is being accomplished here is that he is working out what is a possible object for thought: the law of non-contradiction expresses that the object of thought cannot be self-contradictory, that is, it must have a unity proper to itself (it must be self-identical). The law of the excluded middle expresses that the object of thought must be determinate, it cannot be an intermediary between contraries. We are then in a position to judge whether finite being can be thought. If these laws hold for what is, no less than for thought, then what is can be an object for thought. Aristotle's point is that in substance we have such an object. But this is not the whole account. *Metaphysics* G ends with a dense and cryptic paragraph which denies the simple, immediately self-identical being of the historical Parmenides on the one hand and a pure pluralism on the other, and refers us to the unmoved mover.<sup>33</sup> Doull is equally dense. He writes: "If Aristotle can discover the presence of an unmoved mover in all the genera of nature, that is because division and syllogism, as well as the categories, are for him the form of what is other than the divine self-thinking."<sup>34</sup> I can only make an inadequate attempt to say what is involved here. I have stressed the relativity of matter to form since this is where I think Doull's interpretation is strikingly different from standard interpretations. But it is important to see that matter and form each, if taken as separate and independent, are abstractions. United in their mutual relativity they are substance understood as the (incomplete) activity of motion (at the level of inanimate nature), and substance as the activity of life and thought (at the level of animate nature).<sup>35</sup> Aristotle allows the distinction of matter and form but then negates this in the sense that they are moments within one activity. This activity is determinate because it has within it a determinate end. This is what makes it, strictly speaking, an activity. Using 'actuality' instead of 'form', Aristotle expresses this in the *De Anima* as follows: "Unity has many

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32. I will note later the relation of theology to aetiology, *ousiology*, and ontology.

33. Cf. *Metaphysics* Book G, ch. 8, 1012b23 ff.

34. "The Christian Origin of Contemporary Institutions", 143-4.

35. On motion as an incomplete actuality cf. Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. R.P. Hardie and R.K. Gaye in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941) Book *Theta*, ch. 5, 257b8, and also *Physics* Book G, ch. 2, 201b31 and *De Anima*, Book B, ch. 5, 417a15.

senses (as many as 'is' has), but the most proper and fundamental sense of both [of 'unity' and of 'is' or 'being'] is the relation of an actuality to that of which it is the actuality."<sup>36</sup>

I said earlier that Doull takes Aristotle's thought to be dialectical. This is brought out in his interpretation of substance as activity: Aristotle spends much time in the *Metaphysics* arguing on one side that substance is matter, on another that substance is the composite of matter and form, and yet another that substance is form. One might take his texts simply to be leaving the solution to this open. But as Doull interprets it, Aristotle is bringing out the truth in each claim, but then negating their independence from each other.

It is in the *De Anima* where we most clearly have the view of what is and is one as substance, understood as activity, worked out and thus where we best understand just what that activity is. The vegetative soul is the first grade of actuality of a body having life potentially in it.<sup>37</sup> What it means for there to be life in the plant is that its principle of unity is found within it. There is a real concretion of form and matter. The growth of the plant is not the mere chance aggregation of elements. The plant takes in what is other than it, organizes it and makes it into itself.<sup>38</sup> There is, we can say, an incipient freedom in the self-relation to which the plant attains.<sup>39</sup> The limitation of this self-relation at the level of the vegetative soul is that it is realized, not in the individual, but in the species. The individual decays but it reproduces another individual. Aristotle says in the *De Anima*: "it remains not indeed as the self-same individual but continues its existence in something *like* itself - not numerically but specifically one."<sup>40</sup> Doull notes that at each level of the soul Aristotle treats of the relation of subject to object and he argues that "The powers of the soul which appear in this development are not faculties of substance but the unfolding of substance itself."<sup>41</sup> The sensitive soul, like the vegetative, takes what is other than it and makes it its own, though it does not initiate this. Rather, when it is presented with an actual object, it takes on the form of that object without its matter. In the act of sensation there is a unity of subject and object in relation to which the sense organ and the sensible object are potencies. There is passivity and externality here. The rational soul, or intellect, Aristotle says, has no peculiar nature of its own except in being the potency to think all

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36. *De Anima* Book B, ch.1, 412b5.

37. Cf. *De Anima* Book B, ch. 1, 412a20-29. This definition results from the endeavour "to give a precise answer to the question, What is soul? i.e. to formulate the most general possible definition of it." (*ibid.*, 412a 5-6). Among commentators it is uncommon to equate the most general definition of soul with the definition of the vegetative (or nutritive) soul. I thank Eli Diamond for pointing out to me a notable exception to this in the argument of Johannes Hübner, "Die aristotelische Konzeption der Seele als Aktivität in *de Anima* II 1", *Archiv Für Geschichte Der Philosophie*, 81, Band 1999, Heft 1.

38. Cf. *De Anima* Book B, ch. 4, especially 416a18 ff.

39. Cf. "The Christian Origin of Contemporary Institutions", 146.

40. *De Anima* Book B, ch. 4, 415b5.

41. "The Christian Origin of Contemporary Institutions", 146.

things (hence it must be separable from body, for if it were not, it would have particular qualities). Once it has become its objects (as the potential man of science has become a man of science) the intellect is free to think its objects which are not other than itself. It can actuate itself and is thought thinking thought. The passivity and externality still present at the level of the sensible is overcome. The distinction between subject and object is not obliterated, but their unity is complete. This comes out in Aristotle's comment that the intellect cannot be overpowered by an object too strong for it, as can the senses. To the extent that we are this activity, we partake in the divine activity.

In each of the levels of soul we can discern the desire for actuality, the desire to be in complete possession of oneself. To be so is to be free, to be self-determined. The accomplishment of this necessarily involves one in a relation to what is other, and a movement to overcome the externality of the other, to lose one's passivity in relation to it. In this sense God, the pure actuality of self-thinking thought, is moving all things, and so, even at the level of the plant, Aristotle can say in *De Anima*: "as far as its nature allows, it may partake in the eternal and divine. That is the goal towards which all things strive, that for the sake of which they do whatsoever their nature renders possible."<sup>42</sup> It is in this sense that *ousiology* necessitates theology.

I will not say anything about the *Nicomachean Ethics* except to note that we find a similar hierarchy in the productive, practical and theoretical activities in which there is found an increasing freedom, an increasingly complete possession of the end moving the activity.

I said earlier that Doull discovers Aristotle's thought to be systematic. It is not, however, a systematic philosophy that would explain why there is the plurality of finite genera of being. But, presupposing this plurality, Aristotle can think it, as Plato could not, in its relation to the first principle. To use the image of a descent from and a return to that principle, Aristotle can think the finite as a return to the infinite. That there is a descent or fall away from the principle is only implicit in the universal desire to be that principle.<sup>43</sup>

There are two sides to Aristotle's solution to Plato's problem: on the one hand everything, understood through the category of substance, is comprehended through its relation to the divine; on the other hand there is found to be a substantiality in the rational soul. Regarding this last point Doull says of all the genera of nature that "The argument shows them in the end to be a nullity, to pass into the divine self-consciousness."<sup>44</sup> Doull then says that to this "there is found one exception. The true division of God from himself which can stand in free relation to him is the rational soul."<sup>45</sup> I find this distinction between the rational soul and all the other genera of

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42. *De Anima* Book B, ch. 4, 415b1-3.

43. Cf. "The Christian Origin of Contemporary Institutions", 144.

44. *Ibid.*, 146.

45. *Ibid.*, 146.

nature a difficult one to grasp though its significance is obviously profound. At a minimum I can say that by 'nullity' is meant that the externality of nature is completely overcome in divine activity. There is nothing which stands opposed to the divine self-consciousness. This explains why Aristotle says that God could not be jealous.<sup>46</sup> The substantiality or freedom of the human in relation to the divine I cannot adequately give an account of. Hegel comments with respect to this that the human soul is neither simply finite nor simply infinite. There are three very dense pages in "The Christian Origin of Contemporary Institutions" where I take Doull's point to be similar.<sup>47</sup> It is this human freedom which Doull takes Aristotle's immediate successors to assume but without an understanding of how it is grounded, of how it is a hard-won result in the Aristotelian philosophy rather than a dogmatic beginning point.

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46. *Metaphysics* Book A, ch. 2, 983a3.

47. "The Christian Origin of Contemporary Institutions", 147-9.