

Online Appendix A, Supplement 5
Aristotle's Halfway House: Out of the Frying Pan

Of particular importance for the history of Western philosophy is an outstanding classical attempt to modify or correct or even escape the *Noûs as Arché* paradigm, but one which backfires in a different way from the backfirings we note in the case of monotheist religious reformers (See online appendix A, supplement 2). In this case, the attempt ends up only further entrenching that paradigm's most severe consequences while discarding its outward form. I have in mind here the metaphysics of Plato's student Aristotle.

Spinoza will be our first case study in Part Two, for it was he who first wedged open the door for atheist mysticism in monotheist Europe. He did so under the banner of Descartes' overturning of the medieval teleological view of the world—it was precisely Descartes' physics, his mechanistic cosmos working without purpose through efficient cause only, in a plenum with no possibility of empty gaps, that brought things to the breaking point and allowed Spinoza to identify extension (the physical world as a whole) with (one of infinite attributes adequately expressing the absolutely infinite essence of) God. This overturning of teleology in nature, far more than Descartes' doctrines about mind and will, was the decisive precursor of Spinoza, although the *cogito* continued to play an essential role in defining the contours and inner structure of indubitability, i.e., of something that is affirmed even in its negation. This is viewed by Spinoza (against Descartes) as the very hallmark of an essence that necessarily involves existence, which informs Spinoza's notion of *causa sui*, and thus for the inescapable identification of extension and thought as two ways of reading the same eternal infinite necessary Substance/Nature/God. Descartes' efficient-causal physics and its view of extension (=all space and matter) as substantially real, was a pointed rejection of the teleological physics and status of matter as sub-actual potential inherited from Aristotle. But Aristotle's teleological view of causation, and the concomitant view of matter, was itself an odd bird that plays an interesting role in our story.

Aristotle did something really amazing: he dumped the Socratic-Platonic experiment with demiurge intelligent design as suggested in the *Timeaus*, which had been one of several Platonic attempts to follow through on the Anaxagoran *Noûs as Arché* idea, but kept its main result: the *single-purpose* which is inseparable from being, in a certain sense even identical to all that was actual in being: a single purpose as ontologically at the root of every actual entity. Indeed, by removing the intuitive source of this idea (intelligent design, with or without creation *ex nihilo*), and instead finding a way to embed it the very being of beings, he has entrenched it all the more firmly: the *result* of the creator God idea but without the creator God. God becomes a vanishing mediator. The God he retains, *Noûs* as Unmoved Mover, perhaps seems to eliminate precisely what was most objectionable, not to mention most implausible, about the crypto-creator God, *Noûs* as demiurge, of the *Timaieus*: God does not direct events, he does not consciously plan or create anyone or anything, he is not an artisan or fashioner or molder of things, he doesn't plan or deliberate or even know about anyone or anything other than himself. Aristotle takes up the problem of deliberation explicitly in *Physics*, II.8: there can be purpose without deliberation, because "craft does not deliberate." I follow Sedley's interpretation of this cryptic line: "craft" is the lore which the craftsman learns, which is the real moving (efficient) cause of the completed artifact. Hence Aristotle goes on to say that if the craft of shipbuilding were "in" the wood as it is in the shipbuilder, then the wood would itself make the ship, not needing the shipbuilder at all.¹ God is telos of all things, the emulative cause, the final cause in that everything that exists succeeds in doing so to the extent that it is an attempt to be as like to God as possible. "To be" is to be attracted to this God, to be in love with God, to be trying to be Godlike. This is Emulative Theism at its purest. Aristotle's God doesn't know or love us, but we all live and move and have our being through our innate love of this God, and are moved in all

¹See David Sedley, *Creationism and its Critics in Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), pp. 177-181. I am in general deeply indebted to Sedley's work for my understanding of *Noûs* in Anaxagoras, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, as well as the problem of infinity as an explanatory device in the ancient atomists. Stephen Menn goes a step farther and offers an interpretation even of *Noûs* itself as closely analogous to craft—not a mind, but intelligence or sensibleness as such, which minds may or may not tap into as the minds of prospective craftsman may or may not tap into their pre-existing crafts—in his paper "Aristotle and Plato on God as *Noûs*," also relying heavily on this passage in *Physics* II.8. See *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 45, No. 3, March 1992, pp. 543-573.) The sense of *techne* informing this move has interesting parallels to the (non-ironic) use of the term Dao in early China, as well as interesting divergences.

we do and all we are to try to be as like him as possible, and that is what gives us our very being, the purpose that moves us to actualize ourselves as what we are. This God is manifest to us as love in the sense sketched out in Plato's *Symposium* (as we've seen), not the God-is-love in the sense of the Epistles of John in the New Testament: God experienced in *eros*, not God as *agápē*. So the horror-show of judgment and surveillance and intersubjective anxiety is removed from this version of the love that moves the sun and the other stars. But Aristotle has kept, and consolidated, the main thing: a single final cause or telos that is literally the very actuality of any existing thing.

This happens through a very amazing combination of moves, conflating several ideas in a brilliant *tour de force* that has echoed through the ages. The first move is to introduce a whole new idea: *matter as potentiality*. Indeed, Aristotle *invents* this idea of matter as such. It is given an exceptionally weird ontological status: strictly speaking, it neither exists nor does not exist: it exists "as potential." That this flagrant violation of the Excluded Middle is invented almost on the same page as that on which that Law is first articulated is one of the great and beautiful ironies of Aristotle's genius; he does it with his concept of *ousia*, essences which do not all have to "exist" in the same way—as he declares by fiat. To be charitable, we might say that it is not really a violation of the Law of the Excluded Middle and its sister the Law of Non-Contradiction, but rather the hidden inner meaning of them: for what Aristotle actually says is that "in one respect" matter or potentiality exists and "in another respect" it does not—and it turns out that this is what he says about nearly everything. And lo and behold, he states explicitly that the Law of Non-Contradiction merely means that something cannot be both p and non-p at the same time and *in the same respect*. In other words, from now on let's talk about the inextricable non-p of the p thing as a whole different "respect"—that way that non-p aspect will get more air time, and the inherent contradiction intrinsic to any entity is made all the *more* manifest! In this sense, with this Law Aristotle honors the multifacetedness of things more than he suppresses it. For without this doubleness introduced by the idea of a thing having various "respects," the main keystone of Aristotle's entire metaphysics, the idea of potentiality that is neither strictly an entity nor a non-entity, is impossible, and his entire system collapses, along with any possible solution he could offer to Zeno's paradoxes, any explanation of change and motion which doesn't end in either

pure static being or pure substanceless flux. On this reading, the Law of Non-Contradiction turns out to be a way to *preserve* and indeed *accentuate* the paradoxicality of reality, rather than to outlaw it, as future generations of logicians took it to do. Aristotle himself generally keeps his potentiality, his matter, his “lumber” (*hylē* ὕλη, matter, potentiality) relative, rather than worrying about “prime matter” which would have to be absolutely indeterminate, and for which the paradox of non-existent existent becomes a real problem; but later interpreters cannot be blamed for seeing that this prime matter is implied by the entire conception. For Aristotle the potentiality of matter always remains relative to a given form, and thus in one respect can unproblematically be said to exist. The potentiality for an animal is not pure indeterminate matter, nor wood, nor metal, but specifically flesh. Now flesh is itself an actuality, whose matter is perhaps fire and water or other elements, but the process of activity realized in flesh as flesh is soul, not something else. This stacking of levels of potential is alone what allows Aristotle to avoid regress to infinity—and it is infinity above all that Aristotle fears and shuns, on all levels of his thinking. Each type of matter has a specific limited potential, not an infinite potential. That means it is really a halfway house between actual and potential; it is actual with respect to the “lower” potentials but potential with respect to the “higher” ones. Consequences of wholly indeterminate matter conceived as the infinite potential, if seen directly in each actualized entity, would be a big problem: should it not be striving to be *all things*, as it were? This would undermine the specificity of purpose as cause, which is the point of Aristotle’s whole system. Once we refuse to stop our inquiry, and see all entities as composed out of the prime matter, we would have immanence and oneness, and the primacy of potential over actuality, of indeterminacy over determinacy, of formless over form, of infinity over finitude, which is just what Aristotle does not want. The exclusion of infinity and indeterminacy is crucial for making the whole single-purpose idea work.

Now form (*morphē* μορφή) is at once “actuality” as opposed to potentiality, “determinateness” as opposed to indeterminacy, “a particular essence” rather than a homogenous universality, the definite rather than the formless. It is, further, “activity” as opposed both to mere “process” and to passivity. For form is the internal “final cause,” not the external goal for which something exists. It is the taking of its own maintenance and the fully realized definiteness

of itself, complete at every instant, as the purpose of all its activity. This is what makes it “activity” rather than mere “process.” The first model for this is circular motion: an activity that acts in order to continue acting, the motion of which is not intended to get to something else but rather to maintain precisely that activity that it is. It is “entelechy” as the homeostasis of something that is “at work staying itself” (Joe Sachs’ inventive translation of *entelechy*²). To be is to be active, which is to be actual: no passive thing can be determined as any specific thing in particular, the determinate part of it is not the passive part but whatever is actively being accomplished in it. To be determinate is to be doing something, namely, the activity of maintaining a certain form, a certain characteristic essence. The potential/actual (matter/form, hylomorphic) system is designed to solve the problems of motion found both in Zeno’s paradoxes and in the atomists (the latter attempting to solve them, as we have seen, instead with the notions of chance and infinity). The essence of an entity is its form’s dominance of its matter; the form uses the matter to maintain itself as this form, like an animal consuming and excreting food, but thereby remaining the same animal. It maintains itself as form by shaping available matter to itself; the specific bits of matter are not essential to it being what it is; the matter comes and goes, but the form remains. So atomist reductionism (similar to the reductionism of wholes to parts we find also in early Buddhism) is overcome, as is Parmenidean illusoriness of determinate separate beings and of change. Change can only correctly be understood as development, realization of a definite potential, from a particular potentiality in a particular kind of matter to its fully realized actuality.

Now this actuality is necessarily an “exclusive oneness”—the key structural peculiarity that we have already seen defining *personality* as such. It is just this essence and no other which is the final cause toward which all its activity is directed, and which all its activity maintains once it is achieved. That activity of maintenance of this essence is precisely the constant endeavor to exclude anything which violates or contravenes that particular form of flourishing, of *telos*, of goodness; whatever is not assimilated to it is either matter still in potential (food) or a positive harm, matter which obstructs and harms it. Once that *telos* is reached, there is only one thing that is good: maintaining it with continued activity. Once the heavens find their orbit, their

² See Joe Sachs, *Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, Santa Fe: Green Lion Press, 1999.

sole goal is themselves: they are this orbit, and their activity is forever to maintain this orbit. Why “are” they their orbit, why am I my own goal? Because Aristotle has stacked the deck so that “determinacy” (essence, form as formal cause) and “goal” (final cause, activity, actuality) are one and the same. What is passive and merely potential is unknowable, has no characteristics. Hence, anything experienced or describable is ipso facto an *activity* of experiencing, a form, like the imprinting of a seal on wax. Definiteness per se, essence per se, is activity, is actuality, and this is now identified with the *telos*, the *single* form that the activity is striving to attain in growth and to maintain once it is attained. Being is goodness, just as Socrates and Plato of the *Phaedo* had wanted and had promoted the *Noûs-as-Arche* idea to ensure.

It is useful to note here that this is just the opposite of the apparently similar doctrine we will find in Spinoza, i.e., that the actual essence of any finite thing is its *conatus*, its striving to preserve its being. In Spinoza’s case, *that* I am a certain essence is not itself good or bad, but *once* I am an essence, I will define as good whatever continues or expands the activity and existence of that essence. “We do not desire things because they are good; we call them good because we desire them,” as Spinoza himself points out in this context. In Aristotle, in contrast, I am this essence because it is good to be this essence, and it is the goodness that produces the being. Things are what they are because it is good that they be so. Why? Because of the nature of Aristotle’s *God* as opposed to Spinoza’s *God*. An individual *conatus* in Spinoza exists because it follows from the necessity of *God*’s nature, which is simply to be an essence that involves existence, that is, to be Substance, that is, to be actively indivisible infinity expressed in infinite ways. It is one of these infinite way (modes) of expressing infinity. There must be this essence because the lack of any possible essence would make *God* less than infinite; it follows necessarily from *God* being what it is. But an essence exists in Aristotle because it has a *telos* in *God*: it *is* because it seeks the Good. This is because Aristotle’s *God* is himself obsessed with Goodness, with *telos*, since Aristotle has made thinking into the thinking of determinate form, activity into something best instantiated by this thinking, and form itself as effectively a synonym for *telos*. The perfectly autotelic contemplation-of-contemplation that is Aristotle’s *God*, though in a certain way freed from the subservience to the rule of purpose (but only in a

certain way), has put all other entities forever under its dominion. Aristotle has boldly removed intelligent design, yet retained its result.

The crucial change, however, is the replacement of external goal with internal goal. This seems, of course, huge. But does it really change anything? Once the category of purpose is introduced as essential to ontology, it is like a runaway horse; attempts to contain it in its circular pen are bound to fail. For that matter, Aristotle already fudges the issue in *De Anima* 2.4: there are two ways in which something can be for the sake of something else: “But ‘for the sake of which’ is in two ways, on the one hand ‘for the purpose of which’ and on the other that ‘for whose sake.’”³ Sachs has, “That for the sake of which is twofold, referring to the one to which the activity belongs, but also to the one for which it is done.” Lawson-Tancred says in his note, “The distinction being drawn here is that between an objective and a beneficiary....”⁴ A beneficiary would mean external teleology. Aristotle casually admits both.

We have noted already that the habit of thought encouraged, even required, by this linkage of purpose and being will inevitably search out an infinite regress of applications: A exists for the sake of B, B for C, C for D, all the way up to Z. But what is Z for? For that matter, what is the alphabet for? When purpose has been made inseparable from being, this question is hardly avoidable. Even if we say “Z is for the sake of Z, and so are all the other letters, and so is the alphabet as a whole; Z is the telos of everything else, but Z is autotelic, it is an end in itself, it is its own self-fulfilment—it is pure activity, action for the sake of action, enjoying itself fully in the bliss of being itself its own goal,” even if we don’t jump out of that very proposition and ask, “So? What’s so good about that?” we still have a problem here. For in the very structure of “purpose” there is an inevitable division, a duality, between ends and means. To say “autotelic” simply puts the duality *into the self*. Aristotle as much as admits this by dividing the active from

³Aristotle, *De Anima*, translated by Lawson-Tancred, (London: Penguin Books, 1986), note 47, p.436. Sachs takes this as referring to the offspring in reproduction: for the sake of self is nutrition, for the sake of other is the species in the offspring, a way of approximating eternity and divinity insofar as it is possible for this kind of being. But see what he goes on to say in the same chapter about “different nourishing different”—an important question for his whole theory of purpose and desire, since desire for food seems to be a desire for something “other than” myself, but really for my self-preservation. The problem is, Aristotle’s whole theory, including his theology of the unmoved mover, is *modeled on* desire as conscious awareness of an object of desire, something perfectly determinate, limited, formed, itself and no other, even when he has to disavow full consciousness of this desire in the agent.

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the passive intellect in *De Anima* 3.5, and in the division of self-moving into two parts in *Physics* 8. If I am an end in myself, if I am the goal of my own activity, it no longer makes sense to speak of this as purpose (which I am committed to do once I embrace the inseparability of purpose and actuality as such) unless I can somehow specify something which is end and something which is means in myself: if not some part, then at least some aspect, some phase, some dimension, some respect. If we admit that “activity” in its ordinary sense is correlative to and hence unthinkable without a relation to “passivity,” we might try, as perhaps Maimonides and Aquinas do, to suggest that the term “act” is here used only homonymously, i.e., “eminently,” to one degree or another: God’s “activity” is something entirely unlike our “activity” in just this way. But if “pure activity” and autotelos somehow end up being only “eminently” active and only “eminently” purposeful, then it should be neither active nor passive in the ordinary sense of those terms, neither purposive nor purposeless. And then we ought to be able to say, again deferring only to the ordinary finite senses of the terms, that it is *both* active and passive, *both* purposive and purposeless. Contemplation-of-contemplation, as a characterization of the divine *Noûs*, *could* have been developed in this direction—but ringingly was not. For in Aristotle’s development of *theoria* (θεωρία), translated as “contemplation” but rooted in its basic sense of “seeing,” we have, at last, a possible Greek word for consciousness, pure awareness, that is *not* merely *Noûs*, i.e., that is not the active intelligence that is intrinsically oriented toward an external goal. If the meaning is understood not as “contemplation of contemplation” as an intrinsically truth-seeking activity of intelligence, but “seeing of seeing,” or “awareness of awareness” as a simple allowing and enjoyment of the very disclosure itself of *any* manifestation of consciousness, we genuinely have something that is complete at every moment, ongoing and finished at once, something which seeks nothing beyond what it is doing anywhere and anywhen—and which should, in principle, be already operating, totally and completely and required to go nowhere else to fulfil itself, in and as any and every possible object seen, every content of awareness, like the non-*Noûs* universal awareness we find in Chinese Buddhist mind-only doctrines (see online appendix

B, “World Without Anaxagoras”).⁵ But this is just what does *not* happen in Aristotle: instead, the hierarchy building upward toward this mind, rather than its exceptionless completeness in any and every entity, again gains the upper hand. We attribute this to the built-in characteristics of the founding idea of mind only as *Noûs*, as intelligence acting always for the Good, which shipwreck the attempts to escape its basic teleological structure even here where a heroic attempt is made to overcome precisely these limitations.

And this has enormous consequences, because the framework here is intensely Emulative Theistic: all things move in trying to become more and more like God, to be unified in the way God is. If they were trying to become more like a *neither-purposive-nor-purposeless God*, pure awareness that enables and allows and enjoys the disclosure of both purposeful and purposeless events, rather than an eminently purposive one, there is a fruitful contradiction in their emulation: their purpose in emulating this is to overcome ultimacy of purpose, and with it the mutual exclusivity of purpose and purposelessness entailed in this ultimacy. Purpose per se would then, as in early Buddhism, become a raft to get beyond itself, beyond the constitutively either-or structure intrinsic to desire qua desire, beyond its essence as an attempt to remove paradox and ambiguity. For desire is the drive to dichotomy, to mutual exclusivity: wanting this *rather than* that, *to the exclusion* of that. And as we’ll see, this is the way Plotinus construes the upshot of the Emulative model: every finite determinate oneness is just a shadow of the infinite indeterminate oneness. A determinate oneness is an exclusive oneness. An indeterminate oneness *can be* the inclusive oneness (and would become just that in the fully omnipresent indeterminate awareness which discloses and allows any and every content equally, as in the Chinese Buddhist cases), though it is just here that we find Plotinus succumbing to a failure of nerve; he sees that the One cannot be autotelic in a way that would involve a division in itself into ends and means, and recognizes that this means it can only be completely unknowable even to itself. But the explosive implications of this end to the dominance of determinateness, and with it the end of the dichotomy of determinate/indeterminate, shipwreck on the lingering dichotomization of order

⁵ See David Roochnik, “What is Theoria? *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.7-8,) *Classical Philology*, Vol. 104, No. 1 (January 2009), pp. 69-82, for a robust defense of this sense of *theoria* in Aristotle.

and chaos, of will and accident, of purpose and purposelessness--a legacy of precisely that dominance of determinateness entailed in the already overcome primacy of *Noûs*, and which, by rights, he was thus already within striking distance of overcoming. Plotinus is right at the cusp of ending the universal dominance of the determination/indetermination dichotomy of the hylomorphic system, via an immanent self-overcoming, through its intrinsic self-contradictions. Monotheism ends up serving as an intervention cutting short this development, however, ensuring that the purpose/purposeless dichotomy of an ultimately exclusive oneness remains locked into place as the ultimate reality throughout all existence.

Could an reform Aristotelian theist perhaps say: “All finite things have a purpose: to emulate and strive toward divinity. Divinity, on the other hand, as autotelic contemplation of contemplation (self-reflective *Theoria* rather than self-reflective *Noûs*), or even as awareness of awareness, in one sense has a purpose (Itself) and in another sense is beyond all purpose.” That may well be what certain theologians want to say. But even in that case, the worst consequence of God becomes all the more glaring: precisely in his own overcoming of the tyranny of single-order non-negotiable purpose (existence as work rather than, say, play), he has imposed it all the more inescapably on every other possible being. God buys his freedom from the subordination from work by locking all other creatures into his servitude, into the servitude of the purpose-driven life, where there is only one purpose for each and one purpose for all: God, the transcendence of purpose.⁶ And this too is where Plotinus ends up, again subordinating all determinate beings exclusively to purpose, even though that never-attained purpose is the end of all purpose. We work so God may play. We work toward the playful self-absorption of God—but by definition, we never get there.⁷

⁶And this same problem recurs in the isomorphic raft structure of Buddhism, leading to its own monomaniacal monastic tendency where Buddhist practice is first and foremost a kind of obsessive purposiveness; the difference is that the thoroughgoingness of Buddhist atheism allows, even ensures, that this is precisely the point that subsequent developments in Buddhist incessantly find ways to undermine and transcend, whether in the Mahāyāna exultation of the bodhisattvas (means) over the Buddhas (end), or in the Tiantai intersubsumption of the two, where the means become an end in themselves, or in Soto Zen’s “practice is enlightenment.” A similar problem might be found in some forms of Confucianism, where the goal of *wu-wei* virtuosity subordinates all to effort and discipline. But as we shall see in the online Appendix “World Without iAnaxagoras,” precisely the non-theistic structure prevents any of these doctrines from getting locked into single-purposiveness even for finite beings in the same way.

⁷ Maybe this is the inner psychological meaning of the crucifixion and Paul’s glee over the blood sacrifice: God owes it to us, this is His way of paying us back for the freedom He stole from us, paying us back in kind: what we are doing to God there is an externalization of what God is always doing to us, crucifying us on the cross of purpose, of

The structure of this Aristotelean picture of the world, by the way, is the reverse of what we find in the New Testament version of monotheist teleology. There, as explored in the online appendix A, supplement 7 (“Why So Hard on Love Incarnate?”), on balance it is inclusion that serves exclusion, openness that is enlisted in the service of final absolute purposivity, loving acceptance and inclusion that serves ultimate judgment and exclusion, purposelessness put into the service of purpose. Here in Aristotle, as in Plotinus’s adaptation of it, and as independently arrived at in the general structure of systems like Buddhism and Confucianism, we have the reverse: exclusion (purpose) emerges from and leads to inclusion (purposelessness). The difference is that, while at least in theory we can become the karma-free Arhat or Buddha in Buddhism, or the effortless sage in Confucianism, in Aristotle even in theory we are not and will never *be God*: we never have been and never will be (except insofar as the eternal active intellect is what thinks in us—but then only intermittently). Our essences are fixed and determinate, having their specific places in the hierarchy of beings. We get closest to being God in the act of *contemplation*, which is when we are most divine, thinking about thought, but not discursive step-by-step thinking that is moving toward a conclusion outside itself, but contemplation of the very act of contemplation which, like seeing, is complete at each instant. And perhaps Aristotle’s slippery digressive lecture-note style is modeling for us the closest possible approximation of God’s thought about God’s thought, the perfect enjoyment of purposelessness as autotelos.⁸ But in general, the effortlessness of the non-personal, the world of chance and play, is simply *defined* as what we are not, so that even the playfulness of Aristotle’s own contemplative “activity,” which perhaps really just wants to be contemplating rather than getting anywhere, can never quite escape the structure of aiming at a bivalent conclusion, at a truth to the *exclusion* of error. Even contemplation in all its autotelic completeness is still conceived under the category of seeing a *truth*, as when we intuit a logical proof, rather than equally contemplating the equal reality of all error, as it were (as we will find, for example, in Spinoza). This means it is never

subordination to the purpose which is Him. The crucifixion is man’s revenge on God—and what could be more redemptive than that?

⁸ Nietzsche would say, instead, that this is just a bit of hyperbolic self-celebration on Aristotle’s part: *of course* he thinks thinking about thinking is the most divine of all possible activities: that’s what he’s good at, what he happens by random chance to find himself excelling others in, when he exercises his greatest skill and dominant drive so happily he *feels divine*—and then he concocts an elaborate metaphysic to persuade the world that thinking is divinity as such. It’s no surprise that thinkers think thinking is the essence of God!

really free of the dichotomous mutual exclusivity that pertains to desire and purpose. All of which is a backwards way of saying that a very narrow conception of human existence is singled out and reinforced here as the only option: we are only our consciously purposive selves, and nothing more, forever. This deep structural consonance with Christianity is perhaps what allowed them to finally integrate, in spite of other large differences in structure noted above.

To make the determinate the source of activity, Aristotle has to marry himself to a studiously superficial account of desire: seeking a consciously recognized goal as the essence of desire (*De Anima* 3.10). This model continues to structure the conception of determinate purpose, even when full consciousness of a desire is disavowed, as in animal reproduction. Of course this singling out of an exclusive determinate object is a necessary element of desire as desire, but it is really the inert by-product, the husk of it, rather than the living core of desire, which is rather closer to the union of the purposive and the purposeless, along the lines we will see in Kant's account of beauty in online appendix A, supplement 11 ("Europe's Missed Exit"). But here we see again the importance of "the Great Asymmetry"—for this union of desire as both purpose and purposelessness is actually accomplished in Spinoza's idea of *conatus*, derived from the Spinozistic notion of the infinite indivisible whole (purposelessness can include purpose) while it becomes almost inconceivable for Aristotle (purpose must exclude purposelessness.) But Aristotle needs this conception for his whole theology: the Unmoved Mover moves all things by being desired by them, and under the constraints of this model of desire, this requires that they *know* it, however indirectly and obscurely. They *all* know it obscurely, in some way, in and as whatever their explicit desideratum may be: this is in the background of his discussion of nutrition and reproduction in *De Anima* 2.4: to reproduce is the closest non-rational animals can get to it, and it is why he struggles so with the question of difference-to-difference in the digestion of food: what do I want when I want food? The disconnect between conscious object and real purpose here presents him with a huge problem that he feels obliged to solve in a rather ad hoc way. This disconnect leading to the misdirection of love in ordinary consciousness, this particular manner of that love being everywhere and nowhere, is one of the great ideas of the Form tradition and its monotheistic offshoots. It is given its most beautiful and its earliest expression in Plato's *Symposium*. The same idea survives intact

in Aquinas; it is a natural concomitant of the Form version of attempting to accomplish the required everywhere/nowhere, of “all being is good”: whatever you desire is a stand-in for God, which is what you really desire.⁹

Still, the attempt to make autotelos truly omnipresent, as applying to every being equally, is a step in the right direction. Some even argue that with this move, the full overcoming of external purpose is already accomplished in Aristotle. But Sedley argues pretty convincingly that for Aristotle, in addition to the self-telos of any individual thing (as for example alluded to in *Physics* II: each seeks the good, but not absolutely—rather the good for each thing is what makes it so), there is a superadded global teleology (see the general/army metaphor in *Metaphysics* 12.10, which seems to settle the matter: the army is good in its order and in its leader, but *more* in its leader—and even its order is not in any straightforward way the individual good of each member), which puts the final cause of all things outside of those things themselves. Even Sachs, who is generally vying hard for a kinder, gentler Aristotle, seems unable to completely deny this. The *Politics* casually gives us external teleology with all things existing for the sake of mankind. And if that move remains even marginally possible in the system, it completely undermines the autotelos of the individual parts. This is what tells us once and for all that the notion of *telos* in Aristotle is still first and foremost external, and *external by nature*, that built into the notion of purpose is a mutual externality that even his best efforts at making it intrinsic to each being cannot erase: it is built-in to the mutual externality of ends and means as such, the irreducible structure even of autotelos. That is the decisive tip toward monotheism in Aristotle, who had done so much already to pry open a non-materialistic, non-atomistic alternative to the proto-monotheism of his teacher, Plato. That is why Europe’s first internal overcoming of monotheistic purposiveness crashed back eventually into a tool for monotheists, in the form of medieval

⁹It remains to be seen, though, whether a truly omniautotelic system could be worked out using Aristotle’s premises (something like what we find in the great Neo-Daoist thinker and Zhuangzi commentator Guo Xiang, for whom all things were self-so and free from subordination to any external purpose), but with additional theoretical riches, perhaps. (For an account, see my *The Penumbra Unbound: The Neo-Taoist Philosophy of Guo Xiang* (Albany: SUNY, 2003).) Schelling-Hegel may be attempting this, as we’ll see in the online Supplement “Europe’s Missed Exit to Atheist Mysticism,” but still flagrantly hierarchizing; ala Orwell, some things are *more* their own goal than others: matter least, chemical processes a bit more, then life, then consciousness, then reason, etc.—and for later Hegel at least, this ends up looking a lot like a claim that all the other things actually exist for animals, animals for humans, humans for philosophy—not to mention, among humans, some human cultures existing for the sake of producing other human cultures rather than themselves.

theological usages of Aristotle as a bulwark rather than a destroyer of the monotheistic idea. It was not until Hegel rediscovered Aristotle's strange idea of teleology and was able to re-integrate it with his own new insights into internal purpose as the overcoming of purpose, the fruits of his encounter with Spinoza and Kant, that Aristotle's potential use for atheist mysticism was recovered. But this again proved to be a false spring to the extent that Hegel arguably backslides toward external (i.e., *real*) teleology in his later works. There, at least on this least tortuous reading of Hegel, the autotelic remains unestablished or merely transcendent, far away from us, though, as we shall see in online appendix A, supplement 11, "Europe's Missed Exit," this is by no means the only possible way we can read Hegel. But to see clearly the atheist possibility opened up by Spinoza's break with teleology, where all being is not simply autotelic but really also atelic/omnitelic, we have to look more closely at what happens to our view of *all* causality once its teleological underpinnings have been exploded, the way to immanent self-presentation in every time and place of the timeless, the absolute, the omnipresent, the unconditioned.