

Book IV (Book Γ)

The Study of Being as Being¹

Chapter 1 There is a kind of knowledge that contemplates what is insofar as it is, and what belongs to it in its own right. And this is not the same as any of those that are spoken of as partial, since none of the other kinds of knowledge examines universally what pertains to being as being,² but cutting off some part of it, they consider this attribute, as do the mathematical kinds of knowledge. But since we are seeking the sources and the highest causes, it is clear that they must belong to some nature in its own right. So if also those who were seeking the elements of beings were in quest of these sources, the elements too must belong to what is, not incidentally but insofar as it is. For this reason, for us too it is the first causes of being as being that must be gotten hold of.

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Chapter 2 Being is meant in more than one way, but pointing toward one meaning and some one nature rather than ambiguously.³ And just as every healthful thing points toward health, one thing by protecting it, another by producing it, another by being a sign of health, and another because it is receptive of it, and also what is medical points toward the medical art (for one thing is called medical by having the medical art, another by being well suited to it, another by being an action belonging to the

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¹ This title for Book IV supplied by the translator.

² This is one of two ways that Aristotle describes the topic of first philosophy, or metaphysics. He also calls it the study of the highest kind of being, which is separate and motionless. (1026a 17–18) Many commentators find these accounts incompatible. The latter makes metaphysics a theology, but the study of being as such, they say, would be an ontology, seeking the common structure or lowest common denominator of all beings. This and the following chapter explain, however, that being as such belongs only to the highest kind of being. Only it could have the attribute of being in its own right, rather than incidentally or derivatively. (See the Introduction.)

³ Aristotle has argued, beginning at 998b²², that being is not a class that includes all beings, but neither is it simply an ambiguous word like the English "bark." While the meanings of being are irreducibly different, they are all governed by one primary meaning, just as, in the following example, there would be no such thing as a healthy diet or a healthy blood sample if there were not, in the primary sense of the word, a healthy animal.

1003b 10 medical art, and we shall find other things spoken of in a similar way to these), so too is *being* meant in more than one way, but all of them pointing toward one source. For some things are called beings because they are independent things, others because they are attributes of independent things, others because they are ways into thinghood, or destructions or deprivations or qualities of thinghood, or are productive or generative of independent things, or of things spoken of in relation to independent things, or negations of any of these or of thinghood, on account of which we even say that nonbeing *is* nonbeing. So just as there is one kind of knowledge of all healthful things, this is similarly the case with the other things as well. For it is not only about things meant in one way that it belongs to one kind of knowledge to contemplate them, but also about things meant in ways that point toward one nature, for these too are in a certain manner meant in one way. Therefore it is clear that it belongs to one kind of knowledge also to contemplate beings as beings. And knowledge is always chiefly about what is first, on which other things depend and through which they are named. So if this is thinghood, the philosopher would need to understand the sources and causes of independent things.

1003b 20 Now of every class that is one there is both one perception and one kind of knowledge, as the grammatical art, which is one, considers all utterances; and for this reason it also belongs to a kind of knowledge that is generically one to study as many forms as there are of being as being, and to the species of it to study their species. But if being and oneness are one and the same nature in that they follow upon one another, as do source and cause, though not as being revealed in a single articulation (though it makes no difference even if we do understand them alike, but is even more convenient)—for “one human being” and “a human being that *is*” and “a human being” are the same thing, and nothing different is revealed by the redoubled statement that the human being is one or that the human being that is one *is*, and it is clear that they are not distinct with respect to either coming into being or passing away, and similarly with oneness, so that obviously the addition in these statements signifies the same thing, and what is one is nothing different aside from what is, while further the thinghood of each thing is not incidental but is likewise the very thing that something

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is⁴—therefore, just as many forms as there are of oneness, so many also are there of being. It belongs to a kind of knowledge that is generically the same to consider what pertains to what these are; I mean, for example, about sameness and similarity and other such things. And just about all opposites lead back to this starting point; but let these have been examined by us in the passages about contraries.⁵

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And there are as many parts of philosophy as there are kinds of thinghood, so that there must necessarily be among them some part that is primary and some part that follows upon it. For being starts right out already having classes, on account of which the kinds of knowledge also follow along with these. For the philosopher is described just as the mathematician is, since this study too has parts, and there is a certain first and second kind of knowledge, and others in sequence among mathematical things.

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But since it belongs to one study to examine opposites, while manyness is opposite to oneness, it belongs to one study to examine negation and deprivation since what is examined in both cases is the one thing of which there is a negation or deprivation. For we either say simply that that one thing is not present, or that it is not present in some class; in the latter case a difference is attached to the one thing aside from what is in the negation, since the negation is the absence of it, but in the deprivation some underlying nature comes along to which the deprivation is attributed. Therefore also the things opposite to the ones mentioned, otherness and dissimilarity and inequality, and as many other things as are spoken of as consequences of these, or of manyness and oneness, belong to the kind of knowledge mentioned for their being known. And among these is also oppositeness, since oppositeness is a certain kind of difference and difference a kind of otherness. So since oneness is meant in more than one way, these too will be meant in more than one way, even though it belongs to one study to know them all. For it is not when something is meant in more than one way that the kinds of knowledge are different, but when the

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⁴ An atomist would deny both of Aristotle's claims here, asserting not only that a being such as an animal is really many, but that its thinghood is an incidental result of collisions and adhesions.

⁵ The reference is unknown. There is an extended discussion of the topics mentioned here in Bk. X, Ch. 3-9.

- meanings neither refer back directly to a single one nor point toward a single one. But since they do all refer back by pointing toward a primary meaning, as whatever is called one points toward the primary unity, one must likewise say that this holds also concerning sameness, difference, and contraries; so having distinguished in how many ways each of them is meant, in this way one must give an account of how each one is intended to point toward that which is the primary instance of each attribute. For some point toward it by having it, others by making it, and still others will be meant according to other such ways. It is clear, then, that it belongs to one kind of knowledge to have a reasoned account about these things and about thinghood (and this was one of the things contained among the impasses).
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- 1004b And it belongs to the philosopher to be capable of considering all things. For if it does not belong to the philosopher, who will it be who examines whether Socrates and Socrates sitting down are the same, or whether one thing is contrary to one thing, or what a contrary is, or in how many ways it is meant? And it is the same with the other such things. So since these things are attributes of oneness as oneness and of being as being in their own right, but not insofar as things are numbers or lines or fire, it is clear that it belongs to that kind of knowledge to know what they are as well as the attributes of them. And those who do examine these topics go wrong not in the sense that they are not philosophic, but because thinghood, to which they pay no attention, is prior. Seeing that, just as there are also attributes proper to number as number (such as oddness, evenness, commensurability, equality, being greater, and being less) and these belong to numbers both on their own and in relation to one another (and similarly there are other attributes proper to what is solid and either motionless or moving, either weightless or having weight), so too to being as being certain attributes are proper, it is these about which it belongs to the philosopher to investigate the truth. Here is a sign of this: those who engage in dialectic and the sophists slip into the same outward appearance as the philosopher. For sophistry is wisdom in appearance only, while dialectic discourses about everything, and being is common to all things, so it is clear that they discourse about these topics just because they are proper to philosophy, for sophistry and dialectic turn themselves to the same class of things as philosophy, but it differs from one of them in the way its power is turned, and from the other in the choice of a way of life it makes; dialectic is tentative
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about those things that philosophy seeks to know, and sophistry is a seeming without a being.

Further, one of the two rows of corresponding contraries is a list of deprivations, and they all lead back to being and nonbeing, or to oneness and manyness, as, for example, rest belongs to oneness and motion to manyness, and almost everyone agrees that beings and thinghood are put together out of contraries. At least they all say that the sources are contraries, since some say they are the odd and the even, others the hot and the cold, others the limit and the unlimited, and others friendship and strife. And all the other things obviously lead back to oneness and manyness (for let the derivation be granted by us), while the sources received from the other thinkers also fall wholly within these classes. So it is clear from these things too that it belongs to one kind of knowledge to study being as being. For all things either are contraries or are derived from contraries, and the origins of the contraries are oneness and manyness. But these belong to one kind of knowledge, whether they are meant in one sense, or even if they are not, as presumably the truth has it. But notwithstanding that oneness is meant in more than one way, the other ways will be meant to point toward the primary meaning, as will, similarly, the contraries, even if being or oneness is not a universal that is the same in every instance nor anything separate, as presumably they are not, but rather some meanings of them point toward a single one, while others are in a series successively derived.

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For this reason it does not belong to the geometer to study what contrariety or completeness or oneness or being or sameness or difference are, except as based on a hypothesis. That, then, it belongs to one kind of knowledge to study being as being and the things that belong to it insofar as it is being, is clear, and that the same contemplative study is about not only independent things but also what belongs to them, the ones mentioned as well as what is prior and posterior, genus and species, whole and part, and the other such things.

Chapter 3 One must discuss whether it belongs to one kind of knowledge or to different ones to be concerned with the things that are called axioms in mathematics as well as with thinghood. And it is evident that the inquiry about these things belongs to one kind of knowledge and that this is the one that belongs to the philosopher; for they belong to all beings and not to some particular class separate

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from the rest. And everyone uses them, because they belong to being as being, and each class of things is a class of beings; but people use them only so far as is sufficient for them, and this is as far as the class of things extends about which they are carrying out demonstrations. So since it is clear that they belong to all things insofar as they are beings (since this is what is common to them), the study of the one who knows about being as being is also about these things. For this reason, 1005a 30 no one who is engaged in particular kinds of inquiry says anything about them, whether they are true or not, neither the geometer nor the arithmetician, though some of those who study nature do, and do so appropriately; for they suppose that they alone inquire about the whole of nature and about being. But since there is something still higher than what is natural (for nature is one particular class of being), 1005b the inquiry about these axioms would belong to the contemplative study that is universal and directed toward the primary kind of being. The study of nature is a kind of wisdom too, but not the primary one. However much some of those who speak about truth try to say in what way one must receive it, they do this through a lack of education in the arts of logical analysis; for one must arrive already knowing about these things, and not find them out while studying.⁶

1005b 10 So it is clear that it belongs to the philosopher and the one who studies all thinghood, insofar as it is by nature, to investigate also about the starting points of demonstrative reasoning; and it is appropriate for the one who most of all knows each class of things to be able to state the most certain sources of what he is concerned with, so that the one who knows about being as being would be able to state the most certain sources of all things. And this is the philosopher. And the most certain of all principles is that about which it is impossible to be in error; for such a principle must be the best known (since all people are deceived about things they do not know) and nonhypothetical. For that which is necessary for one who understands any of the beings whatever to have is not a hypothesis; and that which is necessary for one who knows anything whatever to know is necessary for him to arrive having.

⁶ In Bk. II, Ch. 3, this same point is made in the context of whether mathematical precision is appropriate in all kinds of argument. Here it has the effect of setting the study of logic outside of and preparatory to the properly philosophic studies, among which metaphysics is primary and physics secondary.

That, then, such a principle is the most certain of all, is obvious; what it is, after this prelude, let us state. It is not possible for the same thing at the same time both to belong and not belong to the same thing in the same respect⁷ (and as many other things as we ought to specify in addition for the sake of logical difficulties, let them have been specified in addition⁸). And this is the most certain of all principles, since it has the distinction mentioned. For it is impossible for anyone at all to conceive the same thing to be and not be, as some people think Heracleitus says.⁹ For it is not necessary that someone take what he says into his understanding. And if contraries cannot belong at the same time to the same thing (and let the usual things be specified in addition for us in this proposition too), and an opinion is contrary to the opinion that contradicts it, it is clear that it is impossible for the same person at one time to believe the same thing to be and not be. For one who is in error about this would have contrary opinions at the same time. For this reason everyone who demonstrates traces things back to this as an ultimate opinion, since this is by nature a source even of all the other axioms.

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Chapter 4 There are some people who, as we say, themselves claim that it is possible for the same thing to be and not be, and also claim that it is possible to conceive something this way. And in fact many of the writers about nature use this way of speaking. But we have just taken it as understood that it is impossible to be and not be at the same time, and by means of this we have shown that this is the most certain of all principles. Yet some people expect even this to be demonstrated, but on account of lack of education, for it is a lack of education not to know of what one ought to seek a demonstration and of what one ought not. For it is impossible that there be a demonstration of absolutely everything (since one would go on to infinity, so that not even so would there be

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⁷ The axioms about which this chapter speaks are sometimes called "laws of thought." This formulation already makes it clear that Aristotle considers them principles that govern being rather than thinking.

⁸ Examples of these hairsplitting difficulties are given by Socrates in Plato's *Republic*, 436B–437A.

⁹ See especially fragments 32, 51, and 62 in the Diels numbering. Heracleitus uses the tension of naked and unexplained contradictions to shock the hearer out of superficial habits of thought. See also 1010a 10–16 and note.

1006a 10 a demonstration), and if there are certain things of which one ought not to seek a demonstration, these people are not able to say what they think would be of that kind more than would such a principle.

But even about this there are ways to demonstrate that it is impossible by means of refutation, if only the one disputing it says something; if he says nothing, it is absurd to seek an argument to meet someone who has no argument, insofar as he has none, for such a person, insofar as he is such, is from that point on like a plant. I say that demonstrating by means of refutation is different from demonstrating because the one demonstrating would seem to require from the outset the thing to be shown, while if someone else is responsible for such a requirement, there would be a refutation rather than a demonstration. And the starting point for all such arguments is not the demand that one say something either to be or not to be (for perhaps one might suppose that this would require from the outset the thing to be shown), but that what he says must *mean* something to both himself and someone else; for this is necessary, if he is going to say anything. For if this is not the case, there would be no argument with such a person, neither by himself in relation to himself, nor with anyone else. But if someone grants this, there will be a demonstration, for there will already be something determinate. But the one responsible for it is not the one demonstrating but the one who submits to it, for while doing away with reason he submits to reason. Furthermore, the one who concedes this has conceded that something is true without demonstration.¹⁰

1006a 30 In the first place, then, it is clear that this very thing is true, that the words *be* or *not be* mean something definite, so that not everything could be so and not so. Further, if "human being" signifies one thing, let this be "two-footed animal."¹¹ Now by signifying one thing, I mean

¹⁰ This beautiful passage sometimes overshadows the rest of the chapter. One might think that by choosing not to speak, one could avoid the necessity of refraining from self-contradiction. But without such a principle, one could not even have any experience, as the rest of the chapter shows. Agreeing to speak is only required to make the necessity of the principle of contradiction manifest, without obliging anyone to assume that principle from the outset.

¹¹ Since Aristotle elsewhere gives better definitions of a human being, that are just as brief, why does he use this one here? He does sometimes use nonsense definitions (e. g., at 1029b 27–8) to keep a line of argument distinct, and this one does recall Academic jokes about "featherless bipeds," but there is a subtle and serious point underlying it. Aristotle has just compared the one who refuses to speak to a plant, and later in this chapter (1008b 14–18) argues from footedness to choices to implicit

this: if this is a human being, then if anything is a human being, this will be its being-human. (And it makes no difference if one says it means more than one thing, but only a limited number, since one could set down a different word for each formulation; I mean, for instance, if one says that "human being" means not one thing but many, of which the definition of one would be "two-footed animal," while there would also be a number of others, but limited in number, then one could set down a special name for each of the definitions. But if one were not to posit this, but said it meant infinitely many things, it is clear that there would be no definition; for not to mean one thing is to mean nothing, and when words have no meaning, conversation with one another, and in truth, even with oneself, is abolished. For it is not possible to think without thinking one thing, so if thinking is possible, one could set down one name for this thing.) So let there be, as was said at first, some meaning for the name, and one meaning. Now it is not possible that being-human should mean just exactly *not* being-human, if "human being" not only signifies something belonging to one thing but also one meaning. (For we do not regard what belongs to one thing as having one meaning, since in that way even educated, white, and human would mean one thing, so that all things would be one, since they would be synonyms.)

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And it will not be possible to be and not be the same thing other than ambiguously, as in the case that what we call "human being," other people were to call "not human being"; but the thing raising an impasse is not this, whether it is possible for the same thing at the same time to be and not be a human being in name, but in respect to the thing. Now if "human being" and "not human being" mean nothing different, it is obvious that not being human will be nothing different from being human, so that being human would *be* not being human, since they would be one. For this is what it means to be one thing, as are a robe and a cloak, that the meaning of the definition is one; and if they are to be one, being human and not being human must mean one thing. But it was shown that they mean different things. So it is necessary, if it is true to say that something is a human being, that it be a two-footed animal (since this was what "human being" was to

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philosophic opinions. The necessary sequence from two-footed animal to rational animal is traced in Erwin Straus's splendid essay "The Upright Posture," in his book *Phenomenological Psychology* (Basic Books, 1966).

mean); but if this is necessary, it is not possible for the same thing not to be a two-footed animal (for this is what it means to be necessary, that it be impossible for something not to be). Therefore it is not possible for it to be true at the same time to say that the same thing is and is not a human being.

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And the same argument also applies to not being a human being. For to be a human and not to be human mean different things, if to be white and to be human are different; for the former is much more opposed to being human than the latter is, and therefore means something different. And if someone is going to say that "white" means one and the same thing as "human being," we in turn will say just the same thing that was said before, that all things would be one, and not only opposites. But if this is not possible, then what was said follows, if the person being questioned gives an answer. But if, when the question is asked simply, he also gives denials, he is not answering the question.

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For nothing prevents the same thing from being human and white and a countless multitude of other things; but nevertheless, upon being asked if it is true to say that this is a human being or not, one must answer the one thing meant and not give the extra answers that it is also white and big. For it is not even possible to go through all the attributes, since they are infinite, so then let them all be gone through or none. So likewise, even if the same thing is human and not human ten thousand times over, one ought not to give an extra answer to the question whether it is a human being, saying that it is at the same time also not a human being, unless one must also answer in addition as many other things as incidentally go along with it, both as many as it is and as many as it is not; but if one does this, there is no conversation.

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In general, those who say this do away with thinghood and what it is for something to be. For it is necessary for them to say that all things are incidental, and that there is not anything which is the very thing it is to be human or to be an animal. For if there is to be anything which is the very thing it is to be a human being, this will not be not being-human or being not-human (in fact these are negations of it); for there was one thing that it meant, and this was the thinghood of some particular thing. But to signify thinghood is to mean that nothing else is the being of it. But if the very thing that it is to be human is the same as the very thing that it is either not to be human or to be not human,

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then something else would be the being of it, so that they would have to say that nothing has any such defining articulation, but all things

are incidental; for in this respect thinghood and what is incidental are distinguished. For whiteness is incidental to a human being because, even if he is white, white is not the very thing that he is.

But if all things are meant as incidental, there will be no first thing about which they are meant, if the incidental always signifies a predication about some underlying subject. Therefore it must go on to infinity. But that is impossible, since no more than two things are intertwined; for what is incidental is not incidental to something incidental, unless it is because both are incidental to the same thing. I mean, for instance, that the white thing is educated and this is white because both are incidental to a human being. But it is not the case with the educated Socrates that both things are incidental to something else. So since some things are spoken of as incidental in the latter way and others in the former, all those that are meant in the latter way, in which whiteness is incidental to Socrates, do not admit of being infinite on the higher side, such that something else could be incidental to the white Socrates; for no one thing comes into being out of all of them. But neither would anything else be incidental to whiteness, such as being-educated; for this is no more incidental to that than that is to this, and at the same time it was distinguished that some things are incidental in this way but others in the way that being educated is incidental to Socrates. For all those of the latter kind, the incidental is not incidental to the incidental, but rather for those of the former kind, so not everything will have been meant as incidental. Therefore there will also be something signifying thinghood. But if this is so, it has been shown that it is impossible for contradictory things to be attributed at the same time.¹²

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What's more, if contradictory things are all true of the same thing at the same time, it is obvious that all things will be one. For the same thing would be a battleship and a wall and a human being, if something admits of being affirmed or denied of everything, as it must be for those

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¹² The "law of contradiction" has now been taken a step deeper than the way it first came to sight. Even if the world consisted of random collections of changing attributes, nothing could be and not be the same thing at the same time and in the same respect. But thinghood brings with it enduring unity. Something is or is not a human being simply, for as long as it is at all, and the two qualifications (same time and same respect) need not be added.

1007b 30 who repeat the saying of Protagoras.¹³ For if the human being seems to someone not to be a battleship, it is clear that he is not a battleship; and so he also is one, if the contradictory is true. And so the claim of Anaxagoras comes true, that all things are mixed together, so that nothing is truly any one thing. They seem, then, to be talking about the indeterminate, and though supposing they are talking about what is, they are talking about what is not; for the indeterminate is that which has being potentially, and not in full activity. But surely they are obliged to state either the assertion or the denial of everything about everything; for it is strange if its own denial belongs to each thing, while the denial of something else that does not belong to it would not belong to it. I mean, for example, if it is true to say that a human being is not a human being, it is clear that he also either is a battleship or is not a battleship. Then if the assertion can belong, then necessarily the denial can too; while if the assertion does not belong, then the denial at any rate would belong more than would the thing's own denial.

1008a So if even that denial belongs, the denial of the battleship would also belong, and if that can, then so can its assertion.

These things follow, then, for those who make this argument, and it also follows that it is not necessary either to assert or to deny something. For if it is true that it is a human being and is not a human being, it is clear that it will also be *neither* a human being nor a nonhuman being. For there are two denials for the two statements, and if the former pair makes one claim composed of both, the latter would also be one claim opposite to it.

1008a 10 Further, either things are this way about everything, and it is both white and not white, and something that is and something that is not, and assertions and denials in a similar way apply to the rest, or this is not so but applies to some things and not to others. And if it does not apply to everything, these exceptions would be agreed to; while if it does apply to everything, again either to all things that the assertion applies, the denial does as well, and to all things that the denial applies, the assertion does as well, *or* to those to which the assertion applies, the denial does too, while to those to which the denial applies, the assertion does not apply to all. And if it is this way, there will be something that

¹³ "A human being is the measure of all things—of the things that are, that they are, and of the things that are not, that they are not."

is unqualifiedly not the case, and this would be an established opinion; and if what is not the case is something established and known, the opposite affirmation would be more known. But if it is likewise also necessary to assert everything that is denied, it must either be true to state them separately, for example that something is white and in turn that it is not white, or not. And if it is not true to state them separately, one is not even saying these things, and in fact one is not anything (for how could nonbeings utter a sound or walk?), and all things would be one, just as was said before, and the same thing will be a human being and a god and a battleship and the contradictories of these. (For if it is similar with each thing, there will be no difference of one from another; for if something were to differ, that would be true and peculiar to it.) And likewise, even if something admits of being true separately, what was said follows, and in addition to this, that everyone would be right and everyone would be wrong, and one agrees that one is wrong. But at the same time it is clear that the investigation on the part of this person is about nothing, since he says nothing. For he says neither that it is this way or that it is not this way, but that it both is and is not this way, and then in turn he states the denial of both, and says that it neither is nor is not this way, for if that were not so, something would already be determinate.

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Yet if whenever the assertion is true, the denial is false, and if this is true, the assertion is false, it would not be possible truly to assert and deny the same thing at the same time. But perhaps one might say that this is what was assumed at the outset.

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Yet can it be that the one who conceives that something either is or is not a certain way is in the wrong, while the one who conceives it both ways is in the right? For if he is in the right, what would it mean that the nature of beings is of this kind? But if he is not in the right, but more in the right than the one who conceived things in the former way, beings would already be a certain way, and this would be true, and not at the same time also not true. But if everyone alike is both in the wrong and speaks the truth, it will not be possible for such a person to utter or say anything; for at the same time he says both these things and not these things. But if one conceives nothing, but alike believes and does not believe, how would he be in any different condition from plants? And from this most of all it is obvious that no one is in this condition, neither anyone else nor those stating this argument. For why does he walk to Megara and not sit still, when he thinks he ought to walk? And

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1008b 20 why does he not march straight into a well in the morning, or straight over a cliff, if it happens that way, but why does he obviously take care, as though not believing that falling was both good and not good? Therefore it is clear that he does conceive of one thing as better and the other as not better. But if this is so, it is necessary that he also conceive of one thing as a human being and another as not a human being, and one thing as sweet and another as not sweet. For he does not seek after and conceive of all things equally when, supposing that it is better to drink water or see some human beings, he thereupon seeks after them; and yet he would have to, if the same thing were alike both a human being and not a human being. But, just as was said, there is no one who does not obviously take care about some things and not about others; therefore, as it seems, everyone conceives things to be simply a certain way, if not about everything, at least about what is better and worse. And if they do so not knowing but having opinion, one ought to be much more concerned about the truth, just as one who is sick ought to be more concerned about health than one who is healthy. For one who has an opinion, as compared with the one who has knowledge, is not disposed in a healthy way toward truth.

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1009a On top of this, if all things are so and not so as much as one could wish, still at least the more and the less are present in the nature of things. For we would not say that two and three are even in just the same way, nor that the one who thinks four things are five is just as wrong as the one who thinks they are a thousand. So if they are not equally wrong, it is clear that one of the two is less wrong and therefore more right. Then if what is more is nearer, there would be something true to which what is more right is nearer. And even if there is not, still there is already something more stable and more trustworthy, and we would be set free from the anarchic argument that prevents anything from being made definite in our thinking.

1009a 10 **Chapter 5** As a consequence of the same opinion, there is also the pronouncement of Protagoras,¹⁴ and they must both alike either be so or not be so; for if all opinions and appearances are true, it is necessary that all things be at the same time both true and false (for many people conceive of things that are contrary to one another, and consider those

¹⁴ See note to 1007b 23.

And if each thing is relative to the one thinking, the thinker would be relative to things infinite in kind.²²

So to the effect that the best established of all opinions is that contradictory statements are not true at the same time, and what follows for those who say that they are, and why they talk that way, let so much have been said. But since it is impossible for a contradiction to be *true* at one time of the same thing, it is clear that neither could contrary properties *belong* to the same thing at the same time. For it is no less so that one of the two contraries is a deprivation, and a deprivation of thinghood, while a deprivation is a negation of some definite class. So if it is impossible at the same time to assert and deny truly, it is also impossible for contraries to be present together, unless both are present in certain respects, or one of them in a certain respect, and the other simply.

1011b 20

Chapter 7 But neither is it possible that there be anything between contradictories, but about any one thing whatever, it is necessary either to affirm or deny one of them. This is evident first of all to those who define what the true and the false are. For to say that what is is not or that what is not is, is false, but to say that what is is and what is not is not, is true,²³ so that the one who says that something is or is not is either right or wrong. But if there is a middle ground, neither what is nor what is not is said either to be or not to be. What's more, the thing between the contradictories would be between them either as gray is between black and white, or as what is neither one is between human being and horse. Now if it is between in this latter way, it could not change (for something changes from, say, not-good to good, or from that to not-good), but as it is, in-between things always seem to be involved in change (for there is no change other than into opposites or what is in-between). On the other hand, if it is in-between in the

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²² To say that *everything* is relative to human opinion would mean that there is no such thing even as human opinion, in two ways: it would itself only be what it is in relation to human opinion, and it would dissolve into an infinity of relations. The first consequence means that there is nothing to be on the other side of the relation to opinion, and the second means there is no one thing to be part of each distinct relation.

²³ This is the first of three progressively deeper definitions of truth in the *Metaphysics*. The others are in Bk. VI, Ch. 4 and Bk. IX, Ch. 10.

1012a former way, in this way too there would be something that now is not seen: some turning into white that was not from something not-white. Again, our thinking either affirms or denies everything that it thinks about—and this is clear from its definition—whenever it thinks truly or falsely; whenever it puts together an assertion or denial this way, it is true, but that way, it is false. Further, there would have to be in-between things alongside all contradictories, if one is not just arguing for the sake of arguing, and therefore there will be something that is neither true nor not-true, and something besides being and not-being, as that there would be a kind of change that is not becoming or passing away. Again, in all those cases of things in which the negation of something implies its contrary, there will be in-between things even among these, as among numbers, a number that is neither odd or not-odd, which is impossible, as is obvious from the definition. Further, this will go on to infinity, and beings will not only be half again as many but more. For it will be possible in turn to negate both the affirmation and the denial of this in-between thing, and this will be something, for its thinghood will be something other than the previous one. And further, whenever one who is asked if a thing is white says that it is not, he has negated nothing other than its being so, while the not being so is the negation.

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1012a 20 Now this opinion has come about for some people in the same way that other paradoxes have; for whenever one is not able to refute a debater's arguments, by giving in to the argument, he concedes the thing on which the reasoning was based to be true. Some people, then, say this for some such reason, but others because of seeking an argument for everything. But the starting point for all of these comes from definition. And the definition arises from the necessity that they mean something, since the articulation of which the word is a sign will be a definition. But while the Heracleitean account, saying that everything is and is not, seemed to make all things be true, that of Anaxagoras, that there is something between contradictories, seems to make all things false, for when things are mixed, the mixture is neither good nor not-good, so that there is nothing true to say.

1012a 30 **Chapter 8** Now that these things have been distinguished, it is clear the statements that go only one way about all things cannot be accepted in the way some people say them, some of them saying that nothing is true (for they say that nothing prevents everything from being just like