

# The One-Over-Many Argument and Common Things

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**Abstract:** In *On Ideas*, Aristotle presents and criticizes an argument for ideas referred to as “the One-over-Many”. On the basis of an uncontroversial fact concerning a group (for instance, the fact that each of the many men is a man), the One-over-Many infers that there is something predicated of each of the members of the group (for instance, that there is something predicated of each of the many men). It then tries to show that the thing predicated in common is an idea. Aristotle criticises this argument by claiming that if it were sound it would show that there are ideas of negations, a result which the Platonists should reject. Since Aristotle himself refuses the existence of “common things”, i.e., Aristotelian universals, of negations, he is committed to the view that the One-over-Many fails to prove the existence not only of ideas, but also of “common things”.

**Keywords:** Aristotle, Plato, One-over-Many argument, negations, common things

In his treatise *On Ideas* (περὶ ἰδεῶν), Aristotle examines several arguments for ideas. The treatise is lost, but the contents of a part of it is known to us thanks to the *Commentary on Aristotle’s Metaphysics* of Alexander of Aphrodisias. This part of the treatise displays a recurrent pattern: after presenting an argument for ideas, Aristotle puts forward considerations that allegedly show it to be unsound.

The second of the arguments for ideas examined by Aristotle is referred to as “the One-over-Many” (“τὸ ἓν ἐπὶ πολλῶν”). The examination follows the usual pattern, namely a presentation of the argument followed by considerations that allegedly show it to be unsound. These considerations turn on the claim that if it were sound, the One-over-Many would show that there are ideas of negations, a result which—Aristotle argues—the Platonists should reject because it is absurd in its own right and clashes with assumptions they explicitly endorse. This study examines the One-over-Many as it is presented by Aristotle by reconstructing and assessing his criticism of it.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Drafts of this study were presented in Rome, Lille, and Pisa. I am grateful to the audiences for many useful questions and comments, especially to Lesley Brown, Michel Crubellier, Leone Gazziero, Walter Leszl, and Chris Shields. The responsibility for the remaining deficiencies is only mine.

## 1. Aristotle's Presentation of the One-over-Many

*Text and translation of Aristotle's presentation of the One-over-Many.* Lines 80, 8–81, 22 of Alexander's *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* are probably a paraphrase of the portion of Aristotle's *On Ideas* that deals with the One-over-Many.<sup>2</sup> Alexander's *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* has been handed down in two versions, customarily referred to as “*recensio vulgata*” and “*recensio altera*”. The *recensio vulgata* is usually regarded as more authoritative than the *altera*, which differs from it at several points.<sup>3</sup> Asclepius of Tralles wrote a commentary on the first seven books of the *Metaphysics* that has also been handed down to us. As far as the first four books are concerned, Asclepius combined his notes of the oral presentation of his teacher Ammonius son of Hermias with passages from Alexander's commentary that he copied and added to his notes.<sup>4</sup> Lines 74, 13–20 of Asclepius's commentary are such an extract: they correspond to lines 80, 8–15 of Alexander's commentary. I reproduce and translate (as passages T1 and T2) lines 80, 8–81, 22 of the *recensio vulgata* of Alexander's *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*.

The argument for the existence of ideas, or Platonic forms,<sup>5</sup> known as the One-over-Many is presented as follows:<sup>6</sup>

T1	<p>χρῶνται καὶ τοιοῦτῳ λόγῳ εἰς κατασκευὴν τῶν ιδεῶν. εἰ ἕκαστος  τῶν πολλῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀνθρωπός ἐστι καὶ τῶν ζῴων ζῶον καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν  ἄλλων ὁμοίως, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐφ' ἑκάστου αὐτῶν αὐτὸ αὐτοῦ τι κατηγο-  ρούμενον, ἀλλ' ἔστι τι ὁ κατὰ<sup>7</sup> πάντων αὐτῶν κατηγορεῖται οὐδενὶ αὐτῶν  ταῦτῶν ὄν, εἴη ἄν τι τούτων<sup>8</sup> παρὰ τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα ὄντα<sup>9</sup> ὄν κεχωρισμένον  αὐτῶν αἰδίων· ἀεὶ γὰρ ὁμοίως κατηγορεῖται πάντων τῶν κατ' ἀριθμὸν ἄλ-  λασσομένων. ὁ δὲ ἔν ἐστιν ἐπὶ πολλοῖς κεχωρισμένον τε αὐτῶν καὶ αἰδίων,  τοῦτ' ἔστιν ιδέα· εἰσὶν ἄρα ιδέαι.</p>	<p>80, 8  10      80, 15</p>
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<sup>2</sup> Philippson (1936, 123–24), claims that Aristotle's treatment of the One-over-Many does not come from his *On Ideas*. However, Philippson bases this claim on the questionable assumption that Aristotle wrote *On Ideas* at a very early stage of his discipleship at the Academy.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Hayduck (1891, viii–ix); Leszl (1975, 17). Golitsis (2014, 201–14) argues that the *recensio altera* is a commentary different from though dependent on Alexander's and was produced at the very end of antiquity in an ambience of Christian Platonists coming from Alexandria. Fazzo (forthcoming) develops considerations in support of the view that the *recensio vulgata* and the *recensio altera* should be regarded as two different and (in general) equally trustworthy developments of Alexander's original commentary.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Luna (2001, 108).

<sup>5</sup> I adopt “idea” as a translation of “ιδέα”, the noun most often employed by Aristotle in *On Ideas* to refer to Platonic forms. I use “form,” “kind,” and “species” as renderings of “εἶδος”.

<sup>6</sup> I reproduce the text as it is edited by Golitsis (2022), which differs in some details from that of Harlfinger (1975). The numbering and distribution of the lines follows Hayduck (1891). Passages T1 and T2 are included in fragment 3 of Ross (1955) and in fragment 118, 3 of Gigon (1987) (378<sup>a</sup>11–379<sup>a</sup>3). T1 and only the first sentence of T2 are included in fragment 182 of Rose (1870) (1509<sup>a</sup>26–37) and in fragment 187 of Rose (1886).

<sup>7</sup> The reading “κατὰ” is attested by Asclepius at the corresponding point of his commentary (*in Metaph.* 74, 16). The MSS of Alexander have “καὶ”. Brandis (1836), Bonitz (1847), Hayduck (1891), and Golitsis (forthcoming) print “καὶ”. Harlfinger (1975) reads “κατὰ” (which Bonitz [1847] had suggested as a possibility in his apparatus).

<sup>8</sup> Instead of “τι τούτων”, Asclepius at the corresponding point of his commentary (*in Metaph.* 74, 17) has “τοῦτο”. Asclepius's reading is adopted by Fine (1993, 14, 242–43).

<sup>9</sup> Asclepius (*in Metaph.* 74, 17) omits “ὄντα”.

In order to establish ideas, they use also the following argument. If each of the many men is a man and of the animals an animal, and similarly with the others, and with each of them it is not the case that something is predicated of itself, but there is something that is predicated of all of them while being identical with none of them, then there is something pertaining to these things<sup>10</sup> which is apart from the things that are individuals, separate from them, and eternal: for it is always equally predicated of all things that are numerically exchanged. But what is a one over many and separate from them and eternal is an idea. Therefore, there are ideas. (Alex. Aphr. in *Metaph.* 80, 8–15)

Aristotle adopts a textbook-style presentation of the One-over-Many: he states first its premisses, then its intermediate steps, and finally its conclusion, which he introduces with a “therefore”. In Plato’s dialogues arguments are not usually put forward in such a scholastic format, which must be Aristotle’s own doing (indeed, such a scholastic format is rare even in Aristotle’s own treatises). The scholastic format is useful when one wishes to evaluate an argument with respect to validity and soundness.

“*To be predicated of*” and “*to be true of*”. An important expression in Aristotle’s discussion of the One-over-Many is “to be predicated of” (“κατηγορεῖσθαι”): it occurs three times in the argument’s presentation (“κατηγορεῖσθαι” construed with the genitive)<sup>11</sup> and six times in its criticism (“κατηγορεῖσθαι” construed with the genitive or with “κατά” followed by the genitive).<sup>12</sup> At two points of his criticism of the argument (80, 18 and 80, 21) Aristotle uses “to be true of” (“ἀληθεύσθαι” construed with “κατά” followed by the genitive) within contexts within which at two other points (80, 20 and 80, 13) he uses “to be predicated of” (“κατηγορεῖσθαι” construed either with “κατά” followed by the genitive or with the genitive). This makes it plausible to assume that in Aristotle’s discussion of the One-over-Many, in some contexts “to be predicated of” (“κατηγορεῖσθαι” construed with the genitive or with “κατά” followed by the genitive) is equivalent to “to be true of” (“ἀληθεύσθαι” construed with “κατά” followed by the genitive). This, in turn, suggests that in his discussion of the One-over-Many, Aristotle adopts a “factive” use of “to be predicated of”, according to which the expression is equivalent to “to be truly predicated of”.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> “Something pertaining to these things” renders the phrase “τι τούτων” at 80, 12 (cf. Giannantoni [1973, 246]; Penner [1987, 248]; Movia [2007, 151]; Jaulin et al. [2014, 2874]). Alternatively, one might understand “κατηγορούμενον” after “τι τούτων” at 80, 12 and translate by “something predicated of these things” (cf. Segalerba [2005, 67]; Zanatta [2010, 271]; Segalerba [2013, 418–19]). Less likely is the rendering of “τι τούτων” by “something among these things” (cf. Graeser [1998, 129]): “these things” can only refer to the members of a group of each member of which something is predicated, and nothing guarantees that the thing predicated of them should be among them. Were one to read “τοῦτο” instead of “τι τούτων” with Asclepius (cf. above, n. 8), the sentence at 80, 12–13 should be rendered by “. . . then this thing, being apart from the things that are individuals, is separate from them and eternal.”

<sup>11</sup> At 80, 10–11; 80, 11; 80, 13.

<sup>12</sup> At 80, 17; 80, 18; 80, 20; 81, 9; 81, 10; 81, 11.

<sup>13</sup> “To be truly predicated of” occurs both elsewhere in *On Ideas* (cf. Alex. Aphr. in *Metaph.* 84, 22–3; 84, 26) and in other works of Aristotle (cf. *APr.* I.27, 43<sup>a</sup>26; *Top.* IV.5, 127<sup>a</sup>12).

Outside *On Ideas*, Aristotle does not use “to be predicated of” exclusively for linguistic expressions:<sup>14</sup> he uses it to express the relation of a predicable<sup>15</sup> to what it is true of,<sup>16</sup> that of a universal to what falls under it,<sup>17</sup> and that of an idea to what partakes of it.<sup>18</sup> I follow this Aristotelian extended use of “to be predicated of”.

*The first step of the One-over-Many.* The One-over-Many begins by reporting some facts: “each of the many men is a man and of the animals an animal, and similarly with the others” (80, 8–10). Although it uses predicative expressions (“is a man,” “is an animal”), the argument here does not mention predicative expressions, general terms, or their meanings: it does not say that the predicative expression “is a man” is predicated of each of the many men, nor that the general term “man” is predicated of each of the many men, nor that the meaning of the predicative expression “is a man”, or of the general term “man,” is predicated of each of the many men. The argument here simply reports some non-linguistic and non-semantic facts of the world, namely the fact that each of the many men is a man, the fact that each of the many animals is an animal, etc. These facts are completely uncontroversial: it is undeniable that each of the many men is a man, etc.

From these facts, the One-over-Many infers<sup>19</sup> that “there is something that is predicated of all of them” (80, 11), i.e., that there is something that is predicated of each of the many men, there is something that is predicated of each of the many animals, etc. One wonders how this result to the effect that there is something predicated of each of the members of a certain group is reached. In explaining how this result is reached, one should avoid appealing to predicative expressions, general terms, or their meanings, entities which are not mentioned in the argument. Also observe that the One-over-Many intends to identify the item predicated of each of the many men with an idea. Since ideas are not linguistic expressions, and since predicative expressions and general terms are linguistic expressions, the One-over-Many cannot be plausibly taken to be asserting that a predicative expression or a general term is predicated of each of the many men.

The most plausible reconstruction of how the One-over-Many passes from the claim that each of the many men is a man to the claim that there is something that is predicated of each of the many men appeals to inferences like the following:

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Fine (1980, 202); Fine (1993, 106, 301).

<sup>15</sup> Predicables are linguistic expressions that can be predicatively attributed to (one or more) objects and are true or false of (one or more) objects. There are two main kinds of predicables: predicative expressions and general terms: a predicative expression is a predicable which by being added to a proper noun forms a complex whose utterance is a statement; general terms include participial phrases, adjectival phrases, and count-noun phrases.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Cat.* 5, 2<sup>a</sup>19–31; 3<sup>a</sup>15–18; *Top.* V.5, 134<sup>b</sup>34–5.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Cat.* 3, 1<sup>b</sup>10–15; *Int.* 7, 17<sup>a</sup>39–40; *APr.* I.27, 43<sup>a</sup>25–32; *Metaph.* V26, 1023<sup>b</sup>30–1.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Metaph.* VII 15, 1040<sup>a</sup>22–5.

<sup>19</sup> To what I describe as an inference corresponds in Aristotle’s text a “but” (the elided “ἀλλά” of 80, 11), or perhaps an “and” (the “καί” of 80, 10). Nevertheless, it seems clear that the claim that “there is something that is predicated of all of them” (80, 11) is derived from the claim that “each of the many men is a man and of the animals an animal, and similarly with the others” (80, 8–10).

- [1] Since each of the many men is a man, there is something that each of the many men is.

Inferences like [1] are perfectly natural and valid. For instance, a brief inspection of linguistic uses witnessed on the web has given the following two results:

- [2] There is one thing we all are and that is Americans!
- [3] African-American, Mexican-American, Caucasian, democrat or republican, but there is one thing we all are: citizen of this great country.

Note that examples [2] and [3] do not belong to philosophical contexts: they do not occur in discussions of ontology or philosophy of logic. Rather, they belong to rather emphatic pieces of political rhetoric.

The conclusion of inference [1], namely the sentence “There is something that each of the many men is”, contains an existential quantifier in predicate position. There are at least two readings of existential quantifiers in predicate position: the “referential” and the “generalizing” reading. On the “referential” reading, an assertion made by uttering the sentence “There is something that each of the many men is” commits its speaker to the claim that there exists a thing that each of the many men is. A speaker committed to this claim can hardly avoid being committed to the claim that there exists a thing predicated of each of the many men. On the “generalizing” reading, an assertion made by uttering the sentence “There is something that each of the many men is” commits its speaker to the open-ended disjunctive claim that either each of the many men is a man, or each of the many men is a cat, or each of the many men is tall, or . . . . A speaker committed to this open-ended disjunctive claim is not thereby committed to the claim that there exists a thing predicated of each of the many men.<sup>20</sup>

I suspect that the proponents of the One-over-Many adopt something like the “referential” reading of the existential quantifier in predicate position in the conclusion of inference [1] and in those of similar inferences. If this is right, the proponents of the One-over-Many develop their argument roughly as follows: they first make an assertion by uttering the premiss of inference [1], namely the sentence “Each of the many men is a man”; they then make an assertion by uttering its conclusion, namely the sentence “There is something that each of the many men is”; they under-

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<sup>20</sup> The readings of quantifiers that I call “generalizing” and “referential” may be associated with the “objectual” and the “substitutional” reading of quantifiers of modern logic. But there is a difference. For, the modern distinction between the “objectual” and the “substitutional” reading of quantifiers concerns ways of developing a theory of truth: in modern discussions of the “objectual” and the “substitutional” reading of quantifiers, one will typically find statements to the effect that on the objectual reading, the sentence “There is something that Socrates and Plato both are” is true just if there is at least one entity (usually a set) to which the individuals referred to by “Socrates” and “Plato” are appropriately related (usually by elementhood), whereas, on the substitutional reading, the sentence “There is something that Socrates and Plato both are” is true just if there is at least one general term whose substitution for “F” in “Socrates and Plato are both F” yields a true sentence.

stand the existential quantifier in predicate position within this sentence according to its “referential” reading, which induces them to accept that there exists a thing that each of the many men is; having accepted this, they accept that there exists a thing predicated of each of the many men; they finally assert what they have just accepted by uttering the sentence “There exists a thing predicated of each of the many men”. By following a similar line of argument in other cases, the proponents of the One-over-Many assert also that there exists a thing predicated of each of the many animals, and they do this by uttering the sentence “There exists a thing predicated of each of the many animals”, etc.

At least two objections might be raised against my reconstruction of the One-over-Many’s first step. The first has to do with its philosophical plausibility. Specifically, my reconstruction turns on the assumption that according to the “referential” reading of existential quantifiers in predicate position, an assertion made by uttering the sentence “There is something that each of the many men is” commits the speaker to the claim that there exists a thing that each of the many men is. The first objection alleges that the “referential” reading of existential quantifiers in predicate position is unreasonable. My reaction to this objection is a flat denial: the “referential” reading of existential quantifiers in predicate position is far from unreasonable and has been adopted by influential philosophers. For instance, Quine seems to uphold it. For, he thinks that an assertion made by uttering a sentence like “There is something that each of the many men is” does commit the speaker to the claim that there exists a thing that each of the many men is. On this basis, he bans the use of quantifiers in predicate position, which he chastises as “a popular and misleading manner of speaking”.<sup>21</sup>

The second objection charges that my reconstruction of the first step of the One-over-Many is not faithful to the text. For, according to my reconstruction, the proponents of the One-over-Many make an assertion by uttering the sentence “There is something that each of the many men is” (or another analogous sentence concerning animals or entities of other types). However, such an assertion is not explicitly mentioned in passage T1. Isn’t this a case of gratuitous over-interpretation? This objection surely identifies a weak point of my reconstruction. In my view, however, the fact that my reconstruction credits the proponents of the One-over-Many with a reasonable inference that motivates an assertion which passage T1 explicitly attributes to them outweighs the strength of the objection.

So, the proponents of the One-over-Many have a reasonable route to the assertion that there exists a thing predicated of each of the many men, that there exists a thing predicated of each of the many animals, etc. The question still remains of specifying the nature of the members of the groups concerned and of the things predicated of these members.

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Quine (1948, 10). Quine’s example is not the inference from “Each of the many men is a man” to “There is something that each of the many men is,” but that from “There are red houses, red roses, red sunsets” to “These houses, roses, and sunsets have something in common”, which is a mere variant of “There is something that these houses, roses, and sunsets all are” (cf. Rayo and Yablo [2001, 79]).

*Many individuals.* The “many” over which the One-over-Many postulates a “one” are probably individuals.<sup>22</sup> Textual as well as philosophical considerations support this inference.

First, on the textual side, in his presentation of the One-over-Many Aristotle describes its “one” over the “many” as being “apart from the things that are individuals” (80, 12) and “always equally predicated of all things that are numerically exchanged” (80, 13–14) (probably an allusion to the fact that some of the “many” go out of existence and are replaced by new members that have come into existence in the mean time). Moreover, in his criticism of the One-over-Many, Aristotle alleges that the argument “wishes to prove that what is predicated in common is other than the individuals of which it is predicated” (81, 8–10), and he maintains that the argument relies on the assumption that “there is something other apart from what is among perceptible things” (81, 18–19). These facts strongly suggest that the “many” are individuals.

Secondly, on the philosophical side, the One-over-Many is trying to establish the existence of ideas. It would be awkward for it to start from an assumption that includes the existence of ideas; and, in a Platonic context, the only entities that come into question apart from ideas are individuals.

*Separation.* The argument in passage T1 develops considerations in support of the claim that the thing that is predicated of each member of a given group is not identical with any member of that group. This step of the argument has been interpreted in various ways. On its most straightforward reconstruction, it relies on the assumption that no member of the group of each member of which something is predicated is predicated of itself: if  $x$  is predicated of  $y$  and  $y$  is not predicated of itself, then  $x$  is not identical with  $y$  (for, if  $x$  were identical with  $y$  then  $y$  would after all be predicated of itself).<sup>23</sup> Not being identical with any of the members of the given group, the thing predicated of each of them is apart from them and separate from them.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Cohen (1971, 473); Fine (1980, 200, 203); Fine (1982, 159–60); Schmitz (1985, 403); Chiesa (1990, 355–6); Fine (1993, 104).

<sup>23</sup> At least five other interpretations of this stage of the argument have been, or could be, offered. According to the first alternative exegesis (favoured by Fine [1980, p. 204]), the argument here appeals to the claim that the members of the given group of individuals cannot be predicated of one another: if the thing predicated of every member of the given group of many individuals were identical with any of them, then this individual member would be predicated of the other individual members, which is impossible because no individual can be predicated of anything. This reconstruction, close to the one presented in the main text above, differs from it because it fails to attribute a role to the claim that “with each of them it is not the case that something is predicated of itself” (80, 10–11). According to the second alternative exegesis (favoured by Segalerba [2005, 68]), the present stage of the One-over-Many appeals to the homogeneity of predication: if the thing predicated of every member of the given group of many individuals were identical with one of them, then it would be identical also with the others (because the thing predicated in common is predicated in the same way of all members), so the many individuals would not be many but one (cf. Pl. *Sph.* 243D8–244A3). The weakness of this reconstruction is the same as that of the first: the claim that “with each of them it is not the case that something is predicated of itself” (80, 10–11) remains idle. According to the third alternative exegesis (favoured by González Varela [2010, 219–20]), the One-over-Many here relies on the assumption that what explains why anything is so-and-so must be different from that thing. This reconstruction faces a difficulty similar to that of its

One might wonder why no member of the group of each member of which something is predicated is predicated of itself. The most plausible answer is that the members of the group are individuals<sup>24</sup> and that the present step of the argument is relying on the principle that no individual is predicated of anything, a principle that Aristotle seems to endorse.<sup>25</sup>

How should one understand the occurrence of “them” (“αὐτῶν” at 80, 10) within the sentence “With each of them it is not the case that something is predicated of itself” (80, 10–11)? One possibility is to rely on the parallel between “with each of them” (“ἐφ’ ἐκάστου αὐτῶν”, 80, 10) and the shortly preceding “with the others” (“ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων”, 80, 9–10). According to this first exegesis, the sentence “With each of them it is not the case that something is predicated of itself” (80, 10–11) could be paraphrased by something like “With men, animals, etc. it is not the case that something is predicated of itself”. An alternative possibility is to rely on the parallel between the occurrence of “them” (“αὐτῶν” at 80, 10) within the sentence “With each of them it is not the case that something is predicated of itself” (80, 10–11) and the two occurrences of “them” (“αὐτῶν” at 80, 11) within the immediately following sentence “There is something that is predicated of all of them while being identical with none of them” (80, 11–12). Since the latter two occurrences of “them” refer to the members of the group of individuals of each of which something is predicated, the second exegesis requires that the first occurrence also refer to those members. Thus, according to the second exegesis, the sentence “With each of them it is not the case that something is predicated of itself” (80, 10–11) could be paraphrased by something like “None of the many men, animals, etc. is predicated of itself”.<sup>26</sup> I have a slight preference for the second exegesis because it credits the argument with an explicit statement of the assumption which it needs in order to make prog-

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predecessors: it is not clear what role it attributes to the claim that “with each of them it is not the case that something is predicated of itself” (80, 10–11). According to the fourth alternative exegesis (favoured by Fine [1993, 104], the present stage of the argument relies on the assumption that no individual enjoys any characteristic in virtue of itself: taken any member of the group of individuals of which some single thing is predicated, the predicated thing will be different from it (because no individual enjoys any characteristic in virtue of itself), so if the predicated thing were identical with it then some other individual member of the group would have something different predicated of itself, whence it would no longer be a single thing that is predicated of the many individual members of the group. This exegesis yields an argument with a superfluous step: the desired result is already reached once it is admitted that the predicated thing is different from any member of the group of individuals of which it is predicated. According to the fifth alternative exegesis (favoured by Chiesa [1990, 356]), the One-over-Many here relies on the assumption that what is predicated of every member of the given group of many individuals is not predicated of itself: but, if it were identical with any of these individual members, it would after all be predicated of itself. The drawback of this exegesis is that the assumption on which it takes the argument to rely, namely that what is predicated of every member of the given group of many individuals is not predicated of itself, is very dubious: it is far from clear that either Aristotle himself or the Platonists would accept it.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. the last subsection.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Cat.* 2, 1<sup>b</sup>6–7; *APr.* I.27, 43<sup>a</sup>25–36. On the question whether Aristotle endorses the principle that no individual is predicated of anything, cf. Crivelli (2015, 30–310).

<sup>26</sup> If the argument in the corresponding passage of the *recensio altera* is parallel to the argument of the *recensio vulgata*, then the second exegesis is correct.



ress, namely the assumption that no member of the group of each member of which something is predicated is predicated of itself.

There are reasons for thinking that the stage of the argument presently under consideration is tailored to avoid the Third Man Regress. To see this, consider a group of individual men  $m_0, m_1, m_2, \dots$ . The One-over-Many requires that there exists a thing  $k_0$  predicated in common of  $m_0, m_1, m_2, \dots$ . Being an individual, each of  $m_0, m_1, m_2, \dots$  is not predicated of itself, and this entails that  $k_0$  is not identical with any of  $m_0, m_1, m_2, \dots$  (I reviewed the argument for this result in the last paragraph.) But there is no requirement that  $k_0$  should also be an individual, so there is no requirement that  $k_0$  should not be predicated of itself. So, even if  $k_0, m_0, m_1, m_2, \dots$  are all men, and even if the One-over-Many then requires the existence of a thing  $k_1$  predicated in common of  $k_0, m_0, m_1, m_2, \dots$ , there is no requirement that  $k_1$  should not be identical with any of  $k_0, m_0, m_1, m_2, \dots$  because one member of this group, namely  $k_0$ , is not required to be an individual and is therefore allowed to be predicated of itself and be identical with  $k_1$ . It is therefore tempting to formulate the hypothesis that the stage of the One-over-Many presently under consideration was intended to avoid the Third Man Regress.<sup>27</sup> This hypothesis is corroborated by external evidence. Outside *On Ideas*, there are just two Aristotelian passages that provide some information on the Third Man Regress: they are in the *Sophistical Refutations* (22, 178<sup>b</sup>36–179<sup>a</sup>10) and the *Metaphysics* (VII 13, 1038<sup>b</sup>34–1039<sup>a</sup>3).<sup>28</sup> On both occasions, Aristotle says that the cause of the Third Man Regress is the erroneous assumption that the thing predicated in common of a given group of individuals is a “this something” (a “τὸδε τι”, 178<sup>b</sup>38, 179<sup>a</sup>8, 1039<sup>a</sup>1), namely an individual substance.<sup>29</sup> The One-over-Many argument recorded in *On Ideas* partly explains why Aristotle says this: if one assumes that the thing predicated in common of a given group of individuals is an individual, the resources are available to get the regress going (because the thing predicated in common of the original individuals and of the individual predicated of them will be different from all of them).<sup>30</sup>

*Eternity.* The thing that is predicated of all the members of the given group of individuals is also deemed to be eternal because not only is it predicated now of many individuals that exist now, but it also keeps being predicated of individuals

<sup>27</sup> Fine (1982, 168–9) plausibly argues that the One-over-Many’s failure to generate the Third Man Regress is intended and that the argument that does generate the Third Man Regress is different, though germane, to the One-over-Many.

<sup>28</sup> The brief allusions to the Third Man Regress at *Metaph.* I 9, 990<sup>b</sup>17 and XIII 4, 1079<sup>a</sup>13 provide no information about its nature.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Gazziero (2012, 16–17); Mariani (2013, p. 198). I follow the analysis of Aristotle’s technical expression “τὸδε τι” offered by Smith (1921): the demonstrative “τὸδε” indicates individuality, the “τι” indicates the category of substance (which Aristotle occasionally introduces by the label “τί ἐστι”, cf. Bonitz [1870, 764<sup>a</sup>34–41], or even “τί”, cf. Bonitz [1870, 764<sup>a</sup>41–43]). For the connection between the expression “τὸδε τι” and individuality, cf. *Cat.* 5, 3<sup>b</sup>10–18.

<sup>30</sup> Note however that the reason why the thing predicated in common of a group of individuals is different from each of them is that individuals are not predicated of anything. Thus, the assumption that the thing predicated in common of the original individuals is an individual generates immediately a contradiction.

that take one another's place in the course of time.<sup>31</sup> For instance, man, namely the thing that is predicated of all individual men, is predicated now of every individual man presently living, but was also predicated of Abraham, and will be predicated of every individual man who will ever exist. On the assumption that the thing that is predicated of all the members of the given group of individuals must exist at any time when any member of the group exists, and on the further assumption that there always exists at least one member of the group, it is concluded that the thing that is predicated of all the members of the given group is eternal. For instance, on the assumption that man exists at any time when there exists at least one individual man, and on the further assumption that there exist, there have always existed, and there will always exist individual men, it is concluded that man is eternal.<sup>32</sup>

The stage of the argument we are presently considering probably appeals to the view that natural species are always populated, a view that Aristotle endorses.<sup>33</sup> If this is correct, the One-over-Many proves the existence of ideas for those groups of individuals that constitute natural species and in general for groups of individuals of which at every time there exists at least one member. If it is not the case that earthquakes are always going on, the One-over-Many does not guarantee the existence of an idea of earthquake.

*The conclusion that there are ideas.* On the basis of the stipulation that “what is a one over many and separate from them and eternal is an idea” (80, 14–15), the conclusion is reached that ideas exist. The stipulation is equivalent *at least* to a universally quantified *conditional*, namely “If something is a one over many and separate from them and eternal *then* it is an idea.” Such a universally quantified conditional suffices to carry the argument through.

It is not clear whether the stipulation is equivalent *even* to a universally quantified *biconditional*, namely “Something is a one over many and separate from them and eternal *just if* it is an idea”. If it is equivalent to a universally quantified biconditional, then the stipulation implies that every idea is “a one over many and separate from them and eternal”, which probably implies that every idea is predicated of at least two individuals (provided that the “many” mentioned in the stipulation are individuals<sup>34</sup> and that “many” implies “at least two”). This, in turn, has three consequences: first, no idea always fails to be predicated of any individual (e.g., there is no idea of goatstag);<sup>35</sup> secondly, no idea is such that there is exactly

<sup>31</sup> The argument presupposes that “eternal” means (not “outside of time”, but) “everlasting”: cf. Fine (1980, 204–205).

<sup>32</sup> Some commentators (e.g., Leszl [1975, 141, 142]; González Varela [2010, 21–2]) assume that the stage of the One-over-Many presently under consideration appeals to synonymy in order to establish that what explains the fact that the many Fs are F is a single thing (they translate “ὁμοίως” at 80, 13 by “in a similar way” and take it to introduce synonymy). This is unlikely because the purpose of the stage of the argument under consideration is to establish that the thing predicated in common of individuals is eternal (cf. the “γάρ” at 80, 15). Synonymy has no role to play.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Arist. *GC* II 11, 338<sup>b</sup>5–19; *De an.* 2.4, 415<sup>a</sup>22–415<sup>b</sup>7; *GA* II 1, 731<sup>b</sup>35–732<sup>a</sup>1; 3.10, 760<sup>a</sup>35–760<sup>b</sup>1.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. above, subsection to n. 22.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Wedberg (1955, 33).

one perishable individual of which it is predicated for some time (e.g., there is no idea of Socrates); thirdly, no idea is such that there is exactly one everlasting individual of which it is always predicated (e.g., there is no idea of universe). The first consequence creates no difficulty because the second objection that Aristotle in *On Ideas* levels against the Object of Thought Argument (82, 5–7) presupposes that the Platonists actually endorse the view that no idea always fails to be predicated of any individual.<sup>36</sup> Something similar can be said with regard to the second consequence: Aristotle’s first objection to the Object of Thought Argument (82, 1–5) presupposes that the Platonists believe that no idea is such that there is exactly one perishable individual of which it is predicated for some time. Matters are less clear with the third consequence: it cannot be excluded that some Platonists would balk at the claim that no idea is such that there is exactly one everlasting individual of which it is always predicated.

*Ideas and separation.* The claim that man is “separate” from all individual men seems to be inferred from the claim that man is “apart from” all individual men (cf. 80, 12–13), which in turn seems to be inferred from the claim that man is not identical with any of the individual men (cf. 80, 11–12). For this inference to be valid, it looks as if “separate” must be used in such a way as to signify non-identity, in which case the expression introduces only a “metaphysically weak” separation. However, such a “metaphysically weak” separation seems inadequate to the relationship of an idea to the individuals that ever partake of it.<sup>37</sup>

I cannot properly address here the difficult question of what a “metaphysically robust” separation suitable to the relationship of an idea to the individuals that ever partake of it amounts to. I only sketch a line of thought that relies on the widespread view that the suitable “metaphysically robust” separation amounts to existential independence. The existential independence of a single entity from a single entity may be defined as follows:

[4] *a* is existentially independent of *b* just if there can be a time when<sup>38</sup> *b* does not exist and *a* exists.

There are two types of existential independence of a single entity from one or more entities: distributive and collective existential independence. They may be defined as follows:

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Fine (1984, 44).

<sup>37</sup> Some commentators, however, believe that the “metaphysically weak” separation that amounts to non-identity is suitable to ideas: cf. Ross (1924, I–XLII). At one point of his discussion of the Third Man Regress in *On Ideas* (84, 24–27), Aristotle attributes to the Platonists the view that all that is needed for an idea is something predicated of many individuals and distinct from them.

<sup>38</sup> Read “there can be a time when” as equivalent to “there is a time in some possible world when”. Alternative definitions may be obtained by replacing “there can be a time when” with “there is a time when” or “there is a possible world in which”, The points made in the remainder of this subsection may be adapted to the alternative definitions.

[5]  $a$  is distributively existentially independent of every  $B$  just if  $a$  is existentially independent of each  $B$ , i.e., just if for every  $B$  there can be a time when it does not exist and  $a$  exists.

[6]  $a$  is collectively existentially independent of every  $B$  just if there can be a time when every  $B$  does not exist and  $a$  exists.<sup>39</sup>

Given that man is eternal but none of the individual men of which man is ever predicated is eternal, it follows that for every individual man of which man is ever predicated, there can be (because there actually is) a time when he does not exist whereas man exists. Hence, man is distributively existentially independent of every individual man of which it is ever predicated. However, there cannot be a time when every individual man of which man is ever predicated does not exist whereas man exists (note that at 80, 13–14 the justification for the eternity of what is predicated of many individuals is that “it is always equally predicated of all things that are numerically exchanged”: this suggests that if there were a time when none of the many individuals existed, what is predicated of them would not exist then). Hence, man is not collectively existentially independent of every individual man of which it is ever predicated.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> The evidence for crediting Aristotle with the view that the separation of an idea from the individuals that ever partake of it amounts to something like existential independence defined as above is examined by de Strycker (1955, 120–22, 125) and Fine (1984, 34–45). One piece of such evidence is perhaps contained in a fragment of *On Ideas*:

Moreover, [if ideas were mixed with the things that partake of them, then] they would be destroyed together with the things they are in when these are destroyed. Nor [ἀλλ’ οὐδέ] would they be separate in themselves, but they would be in the things that partake of them. (98, 19–20)

If “nor” (“ἀλλ’ οὐδέ”, 98, 19–20) introduces a reformulation of what immediately precedes, then the passage probably presupposes that the separation of an idea from the individuals that ever partake of it amounts to its being existentially independent of them by being capable to exist when they do not exist (in which case “in” in the last sentence, at 98, 20, must indicate existential dependence). It cannot however be excluded that “nor” introduces (not a reformulation, but) a new point (cf. Morrison [1985, p. 138]). For the distinction between distributive and collective existential independence, cf. Fine (1980, 205–6); Fine (1982, 160–1); Fine (1984, pp. 31–2, 83); Corkum (2008, 72).

<sup>40</sup> There is a way of treating time and modality whereby collective existential independence implies distributive existential independence. For, consider the following formula of first-order logic:

[\*]  $\exists x (P(x) \wedge \forall y (Q(y) \rightarrow \neg R(y, x)) \wedge R(a, x)) \rightarrow \forall y (Q(y) \rightarrow \exists x (P(x) \wedge \neg R(y, x) \wedge R(a, x)))$

[\*] is a logical truth whereas its converse is not. Read any instance of any schema in the following left-hand side column as an abbreviation of the corresponding instance of the schema on the same line of the following right-hand side column:

$P(\alpha)$	$\alpha$ is a possible situation
$Q(\alpha)$	$\alpha$ is a $B$
$R(\alpha, \beta)$	$\alpha$ exists in $\beta$

On this reading, [\*] says that if there is an  $x$  such that  $x$  is a possible situation and every  $y$  that is a  $B$  does not exist in  $x$  and  $a$  exists in  $x$ , then for every  $y$  that is a  $B$  there is an  $x$  such that  $x$  is a possible situation and  $y$  does not exist in  $x$  and  $a$  exists in  $x$ . In other words, if there is a possible situation in which every  $B$  does not exist and  $a$  exists, then for every  $B$  there is a possible situation in which it does not exist and  $a$  exists. Now treat possible situations as possible worlds at times. Then [\*] implies that if there can be a time when every  $B$  does not exist and  $a$  exists, then for every  $B$  there can be a time when it does

Now, if one follows the line of thought according to which the “metaphysically robust” separation suitable to the relationship of an idea to the individuals that ever partake of it amounts to existential independence, one wonders whether this “metaphysically robust” separation is distributive or collective existential independence. But distributive existential independence may be plausibly ruled out. For, a “thing predicated in common”, or “common thing”,<sup>41</sup> typically enjoys distributive existential independence from every individual of which it is ever predicated: typically, for each of the individuals of which a “common thing” is ever predicated, there can be a time when it does not exist whereas the “common thing” exists.<sup>42</sup> So, if the “metaphysically robust” separation suitable to the relationship of an idea to the individuals that ever partake of it were distributive existential independence, then “common things” would typically enjoy this “metaphysically robust” separation from the individuals of which they are ever predicated, so this “metaphysically robust” separation would not perform the role of distinguishing “common things” from ideas. But just such a role is ascribed to separation in some well-known passages of the *Metaphysics*.<sup>43</sup> Once distributive existential independence is ruled out, the remaining option is that the “metaphysically robust” separation suitable to the relationship of an idea to the individuals that ever partake of it is collective existential independence. It is worth pointing out that collective existential independence does not have the characteristic that brought to the exclusion of its competitor. For, a “common thing” typically fails to enjoy collective existential independence from every individual of which it is ever predicated: typically, it is not the case that there can be a time when every individual of which a “common thing” is ever predicated does not exist whereas the “common thing” itself exists.<sup>44</sup> Thus, according to the line of thought that the “metaphysically robust” separation suitable to the relationship of an idea to the individuals that ever partake of it amounts to existential independence, every idea enjoys “metaphysically robust” separation from the individuals that ever partake of it in that it is collectively existentially independent of every such individual, i.e., in that there can be a time when it exists and every individual that ever partakes of it

not exist and *a* exists. In other words, if *a* is collectively existentially independent of every *B*, then *a* is distributively existentially independent of every *B*.

<sup>41</sup> In *On Ideas*, Aristotle uses interchangeably “common thing” (“κοινόν”) (cf. 79, 19; 83, 19; 84, 15; 85, 21) and “thing predicated in common” (“κοινῶς κατηγορούμενον”) (cf. 81, 9; 81, 10–11; 83, 34–5; 84, 3; 87, 4–5; 87, 5–6). The *recensio vulgata* contains no occurrence of “universal” (“καθόλου”), though there are occurrences of the noun in the *recensio altera* (cf. the passages of the *recensio altera* corresponding to 79, 19; 82, 7; 83, 19–21). Some commentators maintain that the entities which in *On Ideas* Aristotle calls “common things” coincide with those which in other works he calls “universals”: cf. Cooper (1973, 339–42); Fine (1980, 210–11); Fine (1993, 23–4, 25, 246).

<sup>42</sup> “Typically”: I am ignoring complications arising from “common things” predicated of individuals that necessarily exist always.

<sup>43</sup> XIII 4, 1078b30–2; 9, 1086b2–11.

<sup>44</sup> “Typically”: I am ignoring complications arising from “common things” that can be predicated at a time *t* of what no longer exists at *t* (for instance, the “common thing” poet is predicated now of Homer although Homer no longer exists, cf. *Int.* 11, 21a25–8). A “common thing” of this sort could perhaps exist at a time when none of the individuals of which it is ever predicated exists (because what is required for the existence of a “common thing” at a time *t* is perhaps its being predicated at *t* of something that exists at some time or other).

does not exist,<sup>45</sup> whereas “common things” fall short of being ideas because they are not collectively existentially independent of every individual of which they are ever predicated and they therefore do not enjoy the suitable “metaphysically robust” separation from such individuals.

*The invalidity of the One-over-Many.* In *On Ideas*, Aristotle claims that the One-over-Many “does not deduce that there are ideas” (81, 8). Aristotle is probably denying the validity of the One-over-Many and is not attacking the truth of its premisses (for, according to Aristotle, all deductions are valid<sup>46</sup> but some have false premisses).<sup>47</sup> But why does Aristotle take the One-over-Many to be invalid? Which feature of the argument renders it invalid in his eyes?

One explanation is that Aristotle takes the One-over-Many to trade on the semantic ambiguity of “apart from” (“παρά” construed with accusative). For, Aristotle could have in mind something like the following plausible analysis of the One-over-Many’s progress: the argument’s first step is to infer that there is a “common thing” that is not identical with any of the individuals of which it is ever predicated (cf. 80, 10–11; 17–18; 20–1; 81, 18–19); the second step is to infer that this “common thing” is apart from each of the individuals of which it is ever predicated (cf. 80, 12), and at this stage “apart from” is employed as the usual complement of expressions signifying non-identity;<sup>48</sup> the third step is to infer that the “common thing” in question is separate from each of the individuals of which it is ever predicated in the way suitable to the relationship of an idea to the individuals that ever partake of it (cf. 80, 12–13), and this passage presupposes that “apart from” in the second step was used (not as the complement of expressions signifying non-identity, but) to indicate the separation that is suitable to the relationship of an idea to the individuals that ever partake of it; the fourth step is to add a brief sub-argument to show that the “common thing” in question is eternal (cf. 80, 13–14); the fifth step is to infer that this “common thing” is an idea (cf. 80, 15). Two facts speak for this explanation. First, Aristotle himself displays in various passages the two uses of “apart from”: in his works one finds not only the innocuous use of the expression whereby it operates as the complement of expressions signifying non-identity, but also its loaded use to indicate the separation that is suitable to the relationship of an idea to the individuals that ever partake of it.<sup>49</sup> Secondly, immediately after claiming that the One-over-Many “does not deduce that there are ideas” (81, 8), Aristotle remarks that it “wishes to prove that what is predicated in common is other than the

<sup>45</sup> An idea that exists at a time when no individual falling under it exists is mentioned perhaps at *R.* 9, 592a10–b4, but the case is controversial: cf. Vlastos (1969, p. 86); Rohr (1981, p. 22–8).

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *APr.* I 1, 24<sup>b</sup>18–20; 32, 47<sup>a</sup>22–40; II 2, 53<sup>b</sup>7–8; *Top.* I 1, 100<sup>a</sup>25–7; *SE* 1, 164<sup>b</sup>27–165<sup>a</sup>2; *Rh.* I 2, 1356<sup>b</sup>15–17.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *APr.* II 2, 53<sup>b</sup>4–10.

<sup>48</sup> For “ἕτερος” with “παρά” + acc., cf. *GC* II 7, 334a23; *Metaph.* IV 2, 1003<sup>b</sup>31–2; 6, 1010<sup>b</sup>36. For “ἄλλος” with “παρά” + acc., cf. *APr.* I 1, 24<sup>b</sup>23; 25, 42a14; etc. In *On Ideas* itself, “ἄλλος” with “παρά” + acc. occurs at 79, 21–2; 81, 18–19; 84, 4; 84, 12; 84, 23.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. *APo.* I 11, 77a5–8; *Metaph.* III 3, 999<sup>a</sup>17–21; VII 8, 1033<sup>b</sup>27; 16, 1040<sup>b</sup>26–7; Cherniss (1944, p. 77); White (1971, p. 165); Mignucci (1975, p. 216); Fine (1980, p. 201); Fine (1984, p. 59).

individuals of which it is predicated” (81, 8–10). The reference to otherness here might be a hint that the culprit for the argument’s invalidity is the shift from the use of “apart from” whereby the expression operates as the complement of expressions signifying non-identity, i.e., otherness, to the use whereby it indicates the separation that is suitable to the relationship of an idea to the individuals that ever partake of it.

An alternative explanation of why Aristotle thinks that the One-over-Many is invalid is that he takes the One-over-Many to trade on the syntactic ambiguity of “separate” when the adjective expresses the existential independence of a single entity from one or more entities. For, Aristotle could plausibly maintain that a tacit step of the argument is the shift from the claim that a “common thing” is distributively existentially independent of every individual of which it is ever predicated to the claim that the “common thing” is collectively existentially independent of every such individual (distributive existential independence is not suitable to the relation of ideas to the individuals that ever partake of them because ideas call for collective existential independence).<sup>50</sup> This alternative explanation is less plausible because (unlike the first) it lacks textual support. It cannot however be excluded that Aristotle regards the the One-over-Many as invalid on both counts, i.e., both because of the lexical ambiguity of “apart from” and because of the syntactic ambiguity of “separate.”

Whatever Aristotle’s reasons for regarding the One-over-Many as invalid are, it remains to be seen whether in his view the One-over-Many does prove the existence of anything. In particular, does Aristotle think that the One-over-Many proves the existence of “common things”?

## 2. Aristotle’s Criticism of the One-over-Many

*Text, translation, and structure of Aristotle’s criticism of the OneoverMany.* In order to establish whether in Aristotle’s view the One-over-Many proves the existence of “common things,” we need to consider Aristotle’s criticism of it:

T2	<p style="text-align: right;">τοῦτόν φησι τὸν λόγον κατασκευάζειν</p> <p>ιδέας καὶ τῶν ἀποφάσεων καὶ τῶν μὴ ὄντων. καὶ γὰρ ἡ ἀπόφασις κατὰ πολλῶν κατηγορεῖται μία καὶ ἡ αὐτὴ καὶ κατὰ μὴ ὄντων, καὶ οὐδενὶ τῶν καθ’ ὧν ἀληθεύεται ἔστιν ἡ αὐτή. τὸ γὰρ οὐκ ἀνθρώπος κατηγορεῖται μὲν καὶ καθ’ ἵππου καὶ κυνὸς καὶ πάντων τῶν παρὰ τὸν ἀνθρώπον, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἔστιν ἐν ἐπὶ πολλῶν καὶ οὐδενὶ τῶν καθ’ ὧν κατηγορεῖται ταῦτόν ἔστιν. ἔτι αἰεὶ μένει κατὰ τῶν ὁμοίων ὁμοίως ἀληθεύομενον· τὸ γὰρ οὐ μουσικὸν κατὰ πολλῶν ἀληθεύεται (πάντων γὰρ τῶν μὴ μουσικῶν) ὁμοίως, καὶ τῶν οὐκ ἀνθρώπων τὸ οὐκ ἀνθρώπος· ὥστε εἰσὶ καὶ τῶν ἀποφάσεων ιδέαι. ὅπερ ἔστιν ἄτοπον· πῶς γὰρ ἂν εἶη τοῦ μὴ εἶναι ιδέα; εἰ γὰρ τοῦτο τις παραδέξεται, τῶν γε ἀνομογενῶν καὶ πάντη διαφερόντων ἔσται μία ιδέα, γραμμῆς, ἂν οὕτω τύχη, καὶ ἀνθρώπου· οὐχ ἵππου γὰρ ταῦτα πάντα. ἔτι ἔσται καὶ τῶν ἀορίστων τε<sup>51</sup> καὶ τῶν ἀπειρῶν μία ιδέα.</p> <p>ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῦ πρώτου</p> <p>καὶ τοῦ δευτέρου· οὐ ξύλον γὰρ ὃ τε ἀνθρώπος καὶ τὸ ζῶον, ὃν τὸ μὲν</p>	<p>80, 15</p> <p>20</p> <p>81, 1</p> <p>5</p>
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<sup>50</sup> Cf. above, paragraph to n. 42.

<sup>51</sup> Bonitz (1847) and Hayduck (1891) omit the words “καὶ τῶν ἀορίστων τε”.

πρῶτον τὸ δὲ δευτέρον, ὧν οὔτε γένη οὔτε ιδέας ἐβούλοντο εἶναι. δῆλον  
 δὲ ὅτι οὐδὲ οὗτος ὁ λόγος ιδέας εἶναι συλλογίζεται, ἀλλὰ δεικνύναι βου-  
 λεται καὶ αὐτὸς ἄλλο εἶναι τὸ κοινῶς κατηγορούμενον τῶν καθ' ἕκαστα  
 ὧν κατηγορεῖται. ἔτι αὐτοὶ οἱ βουλόμενοι δεικνύναι ὅτι ἐν τι τὸ κοινῶς  
 κατηγορούμενόν ἐστι πλειόνων καὶ τοῦτό ἐστιν ιδέα, ἀπὸ τῶν ἀποφάσεων  
 αὐτὸ κατασκευάζουσιν. εἰ γὰρ ὁ πλειόνων τι ἀποφάσκων πρὸς ἐν τι ἐπα-  
 ναφέρων ἀποφάσκει (ὁ γὰρ λέγων ἄνθρωπος οὐκ ἔστι λευκός, ἵππος οὐκ  
 ἔστιν, οὐ καθ' ἕκαστον αὐτῶν ἴδιόν τι ἀποφάσκει, ἀλλὰ πρὸς ἐν τι τὴν  
 ἀναφορὰν ποιούμενος τὸ λευκὸν ἀποφάσκει τὸ αὐτὸ πάντων), καὶ ὁ κατα-  
 φάσκων ἂν πλειόνων τὸ αὐτὸ οὐ καθ' ἕκαστον ἄλλο, ἀλλὰ ἐν τι ἂν εἴη  
 ὁ καταφάσκει, οἷον τὸν ἄνθρωπον κατὰ τὴν πρὸς ἐν τι καὶ ταῦτὸν ἀνα-  
 φορὰν· ὁμοίως γὰρ ἡ ἀπόφασις καὶ ἡ κατάφασις. ἔστιν ἄρα τι ὃν ἄλλο  
 παρὰ τὸ ἐν τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς, ὃ αἰτιὸν ἐστι τῆς ἀληθοῦς ἐπὶ πλειόνων τε καὶ  
 τῆς κοινῆς καταφάσεως, καὶ τοῦτό ἐστιν ἡ ιδέα. τοῦτον δὴ τὸν λόγον  
 φησὶν οὐ μόνον τῶν καταφασκομένων ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν ἀποφασκομένων ιδέας  
 ποιεῖν· ὁμοίως γὰρ ἐν ἀμφοτέροις τὸ ἐν.

He says that this argument establishes ideas also of negations and of things that are not. For a negation is also predicated, one and the same, of many things and of things that are not, and it is not identical with any of the things of which it is true. For the not-man is predicated of horse, of dog, and of all things apart from man, and for this reason it is one over many and it is not identical with any of the things of which it is predicated. Moreover, it remains always true in a similar way of similar things: for the not-musical is true in a similar way of many things (for it is true of all not-musical things), and the not-man of not-men. So, there are ideas also of negations.

But this is absurd: for how could there be an idea of not-being? For, if one will accept this, there will be a single idea of things of different kinds and completely unlike,<sup>52</sup> a line, if it so happen, and a man: for all these things are not-horses. Moreover, there will be a single idea also of indefinite and indeterminate things. But also of what comes first and what comes second: for both man and animal are not-logs,<sup>53</sup> one of which is first while the other is second, things of which they wanted there to be neither genera nor ideas. But it is clear that this argument also does not deduce that there are ideas, but it too<sup>54</sup> wishes to prove that what is predicated in common is other than the individuals of which it is predicated.

Moreover, the very ones who want to prove that what is predicated in common is a single thing and this is an idea, establish it on the basis of negations. For if he who negates something of many things carries out the negation by referring to some single thing (for he who says that man is not white and horse is not, does not negate of them something peculiar in each case, but negates the same white of all by making reference to some single thing), he who affirms the same thing of many things also will not affirm in each case a different thing, but what he affirms will be some single thing, for instance man, by reference to some single and identical thing:

<sup>52</sup> I render “διαφερόντων” (81, 3) by “unlike” rather than “different” in order to avoid the assonance with the immediately preceding “of different kinds.”

<sup>53</sup> For the translation of “ξύλον” by “log,” see LSJ s.v. “ξύλον” ii 1.

<sup>54</sup> “Too”: like the Argument from Science (cf. 79, 15–19).



for affirmation and negation function in the same way. So there is something other apart from what is among perceptible things, which is the cause of the affirmation that is true of many things and is common, and this is the idea. He then says that this argument generates ideas not only of what is affirmed but also of what is negated: for the one is equally present in both. (Alex. Aphr. in *Metaph.* 80, 15–81, 22)

Passage T2 presents a clear structure, with three parts that correspond to the three paragraphs into which I divided its translation.

In the first part Aristotle argues that if the One-over-Many were sound, it would prove that there are “ideas of negations”. The argument goes through versions of the One-over-Many that stage by stage reach conclusions which state the existence of what are in fact ideas of negations.

In the second part of passage T2, Aristotle offers three arguments against a result that would allegedly follow if the One-over-Many were sound, namely against ideas of negations. Two of these arguments attempt to establish that the existence of ideas of negations is absurd, while the third tries to show that it is unacceptable to the Platonists.

In the third part of passage T2, Aristotle brings up an argument to the effect that the idea corresponding to a negative predicative expression is not one that matches the whole negative predicative expression, but one that matches the general term negated within the negative predicative expression. This argument he ascribes to “the very ones who want to prove that what is predicated in common is a single thing and this is an idea” (81, 10–11), namely the Platonists.

*Negations and ideas thereof.* In his criticism of the One-over-Many, Aristotle “says that this argument establishes ideas [. . .] of negations” (80, 15–16). The reason is that “a negation is also predicated, one and the same, of many things” (80, 16–17) and displays the other characteristics on the basis of which the One-over-Many infers that it is an idea.

When he says that the One-over-Many “establishes ideas [. . .] of negations” (80, 15–16), Aristotle is probably using “establishes” to mean not “proves”, but something like “provides reasons for accepting” (with no commitment as to whether the reasons provided yield a sound argument): he could hardly be claiming that the One-over-Many actually proves the existence of ideas of negations! Such a use of “to establish” (“κατασκευάζειν”) is attested in the *Topics*. For instance, in one passage of this work (II 3, 110<sup>a</sup>23–32) Aristotle says that you may “establish” that a certain predicate is true of a certain thing when this predicate has more than one use and you have proved that it is true of that thing on one of its uses, provided that your interlocutor has failed to realize that it has many uses.

Thus, according to Aristotle, the One-over-Many provides reasons for accepting ideas of negations. What are ideas of negations? This question is hard to answer. First, it is not clear whether it may be assumed that ideas of negations coincide with

ideas that correspond to negative predicables<sup>55</sup> (in some sense of “to correspond” to be specified). For, some philosophers caution against assuming that negative properties coincide with properties that correspond to negative predicables. For instance, there are reasons for doubting that a property corresponding to the negative predicable “not unpolite” should be ranked as a negative property.<sup>56</sup> The difficulty of adopting such a linguistic criterion to negative properties transfers naturally to ideas of negations. Moreover, even if one were to identify ideas of negations as those ideas that correspond to negative predicables, the problem of the precise nature of this correspondence would arise. This problem is that of the relationship between an idea and the linguistic expression it corresponds to (in the case at hand, a negative predicable). To realize what is at stake, consider that if ideas are the meanings of linguistic expressions, then there must be ideas of negations because negative predicables are meaningful expressions.<sup>57</sup> I shall not attempt to answer the question of what ideas of negations are, nor to solve the associated problem of the relationship between ideas and linguistic expressions. I shall instead operate on the minimal but safe assumption that every idea of a negation matches a negative predicable in that it is necessary that the idea is predicated of all and only the individuals of which the negative predicable is predicated.<sup>58</sup>

Part of Aristotle’s justification for saying that the One-over-Many provides reasons for accepting ideas of negations is that “a negation is also predicated, one and the same, of many things” (80, 16–17). Now, according to the One-over-Many, what is predicated of many things is not a linguistic expression: for, according to the One-over-Many, the item that is predicated of many things is an idea, and ideas are not linguistic expressions. So, when Aristotle says that according to the One-over-Many “a negation is also predicated, one and the same, of many things” (80, 16–17), he cannot mean that according to the One-over-Many a linguistic expression of a negative form (e.g., a negative predicable) is predicated of many things. Rather, Aristotle is probably reasoning on the assumption (which he intends to reject) that the One-over-Many is a sound argument. On the basis of this assumption, it is correct to say that there is something that is predicated of each of the many individuals denoted<sup>59</sup> by a negative predicable, and then to infer that there exists a thing that is predicated of each of those individuals. This thing that is allegedly predicated of each of the individuals denoted by a negative predicable Aristotle here calls a “negation”.

Such a use of “negation” is uncommon for Aristotle. For, Aristotle normally uses “negation” for negative statements or negative predicables. To be more precise, there are at least two Aristotelian uses of “negation”, a narrow and a generic one. On its narrow Aristotelian use, “negation” denotes only negative statements and does

<sup>55</sup> A negative predicable is a predicable obtained from another predicable by prefixing the negative particle “not” and, in some cases, by carrying out some further modifications.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Zangwill (2011, 531).

<sup>57</sup> Cf. *Int.* 10, 19b8–9.

<sup>58</sup> I define the binary relation of matching by stipulating that for every  $x$ , for every  $y$ ,  $x$  matches  $y$  just if it is necessary that for every individual  $z$ ,  $x$  is predicated of  $z$  just if  $y$  is predicated of  $z$ .

<sup>59</sup> Following Quine (1950, 65), I use “to denote” as a stylistic variant of “to be true of”. For instance, the general term “building” denotes the Empire State Building and the Taj Mahal but not the dog Fido.

not denote negative predicables. It is when he adopts this narrow use of “negation” that Aristotle claims with regard to what are in fact negative general terms that they are not negations because only negative statements are negations and they are not statements.<sup>60</sup> But, alongside this narrow Aristotelian use of “negation”, there is a generic one, whereby the noun denotes not only negative statements but also negative predicables, including negative general terms. The generic use of “negation” is attested in Aristotle’s early logical works. For instance, in *Topics* II (8, 113b15–26) Aristotle discusses issues pertaining to contradictory pairs by means of affirmative and negative general terms (recall that for Aristotle a contradictory pair consists of an affirmation and a negation).<sup>61</sup> Moreover, in *Sophistical Refutations* 6 Aristotle addresses arguments “that depend upon whether something is said in a certain respect only or said without qualification” (168b11). He points out that

T3 . . .	τοῦ . . . πῆ λευκοῦ τὸ πῆ οὐ λευκόν, τοῦ δ’ ἀπλῶς λευκοῦ τὸ ἀπλῶς οὐ λευκὸν ἀπόφα- σις . . .	168b12  168b14
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. . . the negation of “white” said<sup>62</sup> in a certain respect is “not white” said in a certain respect, while the negation of “white” said without qualification is “not white” said without qualification . . . (Arist. *SE* 6, 168b12–14)

Again, in the *Categories* Aristotle holds that in the case of some contraries

T4	. . . ὄνοματι μὲν οὐκ εὖπορον τὸ ἀνὰ μέσον ἀποδοῦναι, τῆ δὲ ἐκατέρου τῶν ἄκρων ἀποφάσει τὸ ἀνὰ μέσον ὀρίζεται, οἷον τὸ οὔτε ἀγαθὸν οὔτε κακὸν καὶ οὔτε δίκαιον οὔτε ἄδικον.	12a22  12a25
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. . . it is not easy to render the intermediate by a name, but the intermediate is marked off by the negation of both extremes, e.g., “neither good nor bad” and “neither just nor unjust.” (Arist. *Cat.* 10, 12a22–5)<sup>63</sup>

Thus, Aristotle normally uses “negation” for negative statements or negative predicables. But negative statements and negative predicables are linguistic expressions, so Aristotle normally uses “negation” for linguistic expressions. Hence, the usage of “negation” in *On Ideas*, whereby the noun does not stand for a linguistic expression, is somewhat exceptional for Aristotle. Aristotle seems to be allowing himself to use the description of a linguistic expression for what that linguistic expressions allegedly stands for. For instance, properly speaking it is the negative general term “not man” that can be called a “negation”, but Aristotle is allowing himself to use “negation”, a description of the negative general term “not man,” for what this

<sup>60</sup> Cf. *Int.* 2, 16a30–1; 10, 20a31–6.

<sup>61</sup> *Int.* 6, 17a33–7; *APo.* I 2, 72a12–14. Cf. *Metaph.* X 3, 1054b18–22.

<sup>62</sup> “Said” is supplied on the basis of “εἰρημένον” at 168b14.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. also *Top.* IV 4, 124b7–9; V 6, 136a14–28; *Metaph.* X 5, 1056a22–7; D. Frede (2012, 274); Leszl (2014, 34–5).

negative general term allegedly stands for, namely for the thing predicated of each of the many not-men.

*The One-over-Many and “common things”*. Aristotle thinks that the One-over-Many is an invalid argument for the existence of ideas.<sup>64</sup> Since every invalid argument is unsound, he is committed to regarding the One-over-Many as an unsound argument for the existence of ideas. Does he think that the One-over-Many is sound when it is treated as an argument for the existence (not of ideas, but) of “common things”? Or does he think that it is unsound also when it is treated as an argument for the existence of “common things”?<sup>65</sup>

Suppose that Aristotle thinks that the One-over-Many is sound when it is treated as an argument for the existence of “common things”. The remarks in the first paragraph of passage T2 then probably commit Aristotle to the existence of “common things” that match negative predicables. But Aristotle cannot coherently allow himself such a commitment.<sup>66</sup> For, the first of Aristotle’s criticisms in the second paragraph of passage T2 requires that if there were “common things” that match negative predicables, they would be predicated “of things of different kinds and completely unlike, a line, if it so happen, and a man” (81, 3). Thus, if Aristotle regards the One-over-Many as a sound argument for the existence of “common things”, then he is committed to the existence of “common things” that are shared by individuals that are “of different kinds and completely unlike”. Aristotle thinks that individuals “of different kinds and completely unlike” could not fall under the same idea. But it is hard to see how he could coherently maintain this while not accepting that individuals “of different kinds and completely unlike” could not fall under the same “common thing”. Moreover, outside *On Ideas* there is direct evidence indicating that for Aristotle there are no “common things” that match negative predicables. For, in the *Sophistical Refutations* Aristotle writes:

T5	. . . ἐστὶ πολλὰ μὲν ταῦτα καὶ κατὰ πάντων, οὐ τοιαῦτα δ' ὅστε φύσιν τινὰ εἶναι καὶ γέ- νος ἄλλ' οἷα αἱ ἀποφάσεις, τὰ δ' οὐ τοιαῦτα ἀλλὰ ἴδια . . .	172a36  172a38
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. . . many are the same and hold of all things, though not in such a way that there be a nature and a kind, but like negations, while others are not of this type but peculiar . . . (Arist. *SE* 11, 172a36–8)

<sup>64</sup> Cf. above, paragraph to n. 46.

<sup>65</sup> Commentators hold different positions about Aristotle’s assessment of the One-over-Many when it is treated as an argument for the existence (not of ideas, but) of “common things”: many (e.g., Leszl (1975, p. 109); Fine (1980, 209–10, 212); Fine (1982, 155, 161, 166); Chiesa (1990, 356); Zanatta (2010, p. 234) claim that Aristotle regards it as sound; Fine (1993, pp. 26–7, 106, 252, 279, 316–17) maintains that Aristotle regards it as unsound but valid; González Varela (2010, 212, 222–5, 226, 231–2) holds that Aristotle regards it as invalid (and therefore, a fortiori, unsound).

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Fine (1993, 279); González Varela (2010, 226–9); Mariani (2013, 198).

In passage T5 Aristotle discusses the principles that an interlocutor of a dialectical debate may use as starting points of an argument. He contrasts universal principles with peculiar ones. An instance of a universal principle is the Principle of Excluded Middle; one of a peculiar principle is the definition of unit. Universal principles “hold of all things, though not in such a way there be a nature and a kind” (172<sup>a</sup>37–8). Consider, for instance, the Principle of Excluded Middle. It is a general sentence like “Everything either satisfies any given condition or does not satisfy it”.<sup>67</sup> For this principle to hold “of all things” is for it to be the case that its predicate-expression, namely the phrase “either satisfies any given condition or does not satisfy it”, is true of all things. But, according to Aristotle, it is not the case that there are “a nature and a kind” that correspond to this predicate-expression: it is not the case that there are “a nature and a kind” that consist in either satisfying any given condition or not satisfying it. In this respect, universal principles are “like negations” (172<sup>a</sup>38), i.e., negative predicate-expressions: it is not in general the case that there are “a nature and a kind” that hold of all and only the things of which a negative predicate-expression is true.<sup>68</sup> Hence, according to Aristotle, it is not simply the case that negative predicables do not have a matching idea; rather, negative predicables also fail to have a matching “common thing”.<sup>69</sup> And, if for a moment we step back from the analysis of specific texts and reflect on the general characteristics of Aristotle’s philosophy, we realize that this thesis fits well with one of the main traits of Aristotle’s ontology, namely the claim that there are no kinds or genera that hold of all things. Thus, Aristotle is probably committed to the view that the One-over-Many is unsound (not only when it is treated as an argument for the existence of ideas, but also) when it is treated as an argument for the existence of “common things”.

There are perhaps some indications that Aristotle believes that the One-over-Many is unsound when it is treated as an argument for the existence of “common things”. At the end of his criticism of the One-over-Many, in the second paragraph of T2, Aristotle says that the One-over-Many “does not deduce that there are ideas” but “wishes to prove that what is predicated in common is other than the individuals of which it is predicated” (81, 8–10). Aristotle’s use of the phrase “wishes to prove” (81, 8–9) suggests that in his view the One-over-Many tries to prove that “what is predicated in common is other than the individuals of which it is predicated” (81, 9–10) but does not succeed: for, had Aristotle thought that the argument succeeds in proving this result about “what is predicated in common”, i.e., “common things”, he would probably not have used the expression “wishes to prove”, but “proves”. Note that in a passage of the *Magna Moralia* (I 9, 1187<sup>a</sup>23–9), the author uses the phrase “to wish to prove” (“βούλεσθαι δεικνύναι”, 1187a24) to describe people who offer an argument which he immediately goes on to describe as relying on a

<sup>67</sup> Cf. *Ph.* V 5, 235<sup>b</sup>15–16: “Everything must either be or not be”, i.e., “Everything must either be so and so or not be so and so” (predicative-elliptical use of “to be”).

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Lewis (1976, 112–13).

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Fine (1980, 212).

false premiss.<sup>70</sup> In a similar vein, at a later stage of *On Ideas*, in his discussion of the Argument from Relatives, Aristotle<sup>71</sup> says: “Nor does this argument seem to prove [δοκεῖ δεικνύναι], like those before it, that there is simply a common thing apart from the individuals, but that there is a model of the things down here that is strictly” (83, 19–21). Aristotle contrasts the Argument from Relatives with the arguments that come before it, among which ranks the One-over-Many: while the earlier arguments “seem to prove” (83, 20) that there are “common things”, the Argument from Relatives does not seem to prove this but that there are models that qualify for being ideas.<sup>72</sup>

*The invalidity of the One-over-Many as an argument for “common things”.* But where could Aristotle pin the unsoundness of the One-over-Many when it is treated as an argument for the existence of “common things”? One possible solution relies on the assumption that in Aristotle’s view the “common things” are fewer than the entities whose existence can be putatively inferred on the basis of formulations like [1]–[3]. Some support for this assumption comes perhaps from the discussion of the Argument from Science, where Aristotle remarks:

T6	ἔστι . . . παρὰ τὰ καθ’ ἕκαστα	79, 18
	τὰ κοινά, ὧν φαμεν καὶ τὰς ἐπιστήμας εἶναι.	79, 19

The common things, of which we say the sciences are, are apart from the individuals. (Alex. Aphr. in *Metaph.* 79, 18–19)<sup>73</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Aristotle says that the One-over-Many “too wishes to prove that what is predicated in common is other than the individuals of which it is predicated” (81, 8–10). The word “too” seems to draw a parallel with the Argument from Science (cf. above, n. 54), which Aristotle takes to succeed in proving the existence of “common things”. The analogy between the One-over-Many and the Argument from the Sciences may, however, be limited to the fact that they have the same conclusion, namely the existence of “common things”, while differing in that the second only is sound.

<sup>71</sup> I agree with Fine (1993, 326–27) and Segalerba (2013, 350–51) that the passage 83, 17–22 is probably a paraphrase of Aristotle’s words in *On Ideas*. By contrast, Wilpert (1940, 383) and Cherniss (1944, 275–77) take the passage to be an addition by Alexander. The main reason adduced by Wilpert is that the passage in question contains three occurrences of “to seem” (“δοκεῖν”, at lines 18, 20, and 22). But at least the second of these occurrences is required from a philosophical point of view. The main reason adduced by Cherniss is that the passage in question tries to explain why the Argument from Relatives is described as “more accurate” (“ἀκριβέστερος”, cf. Arist. *Metaph.* I 9, 990<sup>b</sup>15; XIII 4, 1079<sup>a</sup>11; Alex. Aphr. in *Metaph.* 83, 18) by appealing to the fact that it provides reasons for believing in entities that are not merely “common things”, but individuals that play the role of paradigms: but the argument that generates the Third Man Regress is also described as “more precise”, and in fact coincides with the One-over-Many, which provides reasons for believing merely in “common things”. Cherniss’s criticism misfires because the argument that generates the Third Man Regress is different, though germane, to the One-over-Many (cf. above, n. 27). In fact, as I argued earlier (cf. above, paragraph to n. 27), the One-over-Many avoids generating the Third Man Regress precisely because it does not require that the thing predicated in common of a given group of individuals should also be an individual.

<sup>72</sup> I give the initial “nor” (“οὐδέ” at 83, 19) wide scope with respect to “seems to prove” (“δοκεῖ δεικνύναι” at 83, 19–20).

<sup>73</sup> Cf. *APo.* I 7, 77<sup>a</sup>5–9; *Metaph.* III 3, 998<sup>b</sup>3–8; 4, 999<sup>a</sup>26–9.

Passage T6 might induce one to think that in Aristotle's view all "common things" are proper objects of scientific investigation.<sup>74</sup> Now, the proper objects of scientific investigation are probably fewer than the entities putatively introduced by formulations like [1]–[3]: for, the proper objects of scientific investigation are probably included among the entities putatively introduced by formulations like [1]–[3], but not all the entities putatively introduced by formulations like [1]–[3] are likely to be proper objects of scientific investigation (because the proper objects of scientific investigation are bound to play explanatory roles which some of the entities putatively introduced by formulations like [1]–[3] cannot play). If Aristotle believes all of this, he is likely to maintain that the "common things" are fewer than the entities whose existence can be putatively inferred on the basis of formulations like [1]–[3], and he is therefore in a position to accept that the One-over-Many correctly deduces the existence of entities such as those putatively introduced by formulations like [1]–[3], but to insist that it performs an unwarranted step when it concludes that there are "common things".

However, such a solution is problematic, for two reasons. First, it involves crediting Aristotle with a two-level ontology of universals: the "common things", on the one hand, and the entities putatively introduced by formulations like [1]–[3], on the other (universals of the first group forming a subgroup of those of the second). But there is no independent evidence for crediting Aristotle with such a two-level ontology of universals. Secondly, the expressions "common things" and "things predicated in common"<sup>75</sup> are particularly apt to describe the entities putatively introduced by formulations like [1]–[3], but they are not particularly apt to describe entities that constitute a subgroup of these, namely entities that are the proper objects of scientific investigation. As for passage T6, the evidence it provides is slim. Aristotle's words are: "The common things, of which we say the sciences are, are apart from the individuals". According to a first reading, these words are paraphrased by: "The common things, all of which we say are proper objects of scientific investigation, are apart from the individuals". On a second reading, they are paraphrased by: "The common things, some of which we say are the proper objects of scientific investigation, are apart from the individuals". Only the first reading supports the assumption that in Aristotle's view the "common things" are fewer than the entities whose existence can be putatively inferred on the basis of formulations like [1]–[3].

There is an alternative solution for the problem of where Aristotle could pin the unsoundness of the One-over-Many when it is treated as an argument for the existence of "common things". Earlier<sup>76</sup> I emphasized that the conclusion of inference [1], namely the sentence "There is something that each of the many men is", contains an existential quantifier in predicate position, and I distinguished two ways of understanding this quantifier, namely the "referential" and the "generalizing" reading of it. I also pointed out that the first reading, the "referential" one, brings

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Fine (1980, 210).

<sup>75</sup> Cf. above, n. 41.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. above, paragraph to n. 20.

it about that an assertion made by uttering the sentence commits its speaker to the claim that there exists a thing that each of the many men is, which in turn can hardly avoid generating the commitment to the claim that there exists a thing predicated of all men. This last claim, namely the claim that there exists a thing predicated of all men, is tantamount to the claim that there exists a “thing predicated in common” of all men, i.e., a “common thing” predicated of all men. But Aristotle could well reject the first reading of the existential quantifier in predicate position within the conclusion of [1]. He could adopt the second reading of it, the “generalizing” one. On this reading, an assertion made by uttering the sentence does not commit its speaker to the claim that there exists a thing that each of the many men is, so the inference to the conclusion that there exists a “thing predicated in common” of all men, i.e., a “common thing” predicated of all men, is blocked.

This alternative solution for the problem of where Aristotle could pin the unsoundness of the One-over-Many when it is treated as an argument for the existence of “common things” is more plausible than the other one, for two reasons. First, the alternative solution avoids crediting Aristotle with a two-level ontology of universals. Secondly, suppose that one were to adopt the “referential” reading of the existential quantifiers in predicate position within the conclusions of [1] and of similar inferences. Consider the following inference:

[7] Since each of the many not-men is a not-man, there is something that each of the many not-men is.

If the existential quantifier in predicate position within the conclusion of inference [7], i.e., within the sentence “There is something that each of the many not-men is”, is understood according to its “referential” reading, an assertion made by uttering this sentence will commit its speaker to the claim that there exists a thing that each of the many not-men is. A speaker committed to this claim will hardly avoid being committed to the claim that there exists a thing predicated of each of the many not-men, which is tantamount to the claim that there exists a “thing predicated in common” of all not-men, i.e., a “common thing” predicated of all not-men. Aristotle, however, does not want a “common thing” of this sort.<sup>77</sup> Thus, unless he blocks the One-over-Many already at the early stage of the way of understanding the existential quantifier in predicate position within the conclusion of [7], Aristotle remains saddled with a “common thing” that he does not want. The best way for Aristotle to achieve such a result is to adopt the “generalizing” reading of the quantifier in question. And if he adopts the “generalizing” reading of the existential quantifier in predicate position within the conclusion of [7], Aristotle will probably adopt the “generalizing” reading of the existential quantifiers in predicate position within the conclusions of [1] and of similar inferences—as the alternative solution suggests.

In the light of these results, I submit that Aristotle will treat different groups of individuals differently. With respect to the group that comprises all individual men, Aristotle will grant that there exists a “thing predicated in common” of all and

<sup>77</sup> Cf. above, paragraph to n. 66.



only the members of the group, i.e., a “common thing” predicated of all and only the members of the group. But he will grant this for reasons independent of those allegedly provided by the One-over-Many. One such reason could be that man is a proper object of scientific investigation: several passages in the Aristotelian corpus indicate that according to Aristotle there must be universals corresponding to the various scientific disciplines.<sup>78</sup> By contrast, with respect to the group that comprises all individual notmen, Aristotle will deny that there exists a “thing predicated in common” of all and only the members of the group, i.e., a “common thing” predicated of all and only the members of the group.

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<sup>78</sup> Cf. *APo.* I 11, 77<sup>a</sup>5–9; *De an.* 2.5, 417<sup>b</sup>22–3; *Metaph.* III 6, 1003<sup>a</sup>13–15; XIII 9, 1086<sup>b</sup>5–7; 10, 1086<sup>b</sup>32–3; Segalerba (2005), 54–5.

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