ABSTRACT
Aristotle argues often and at length against Plato’s paradigms, the transcendent forms. This paper argues that Aristotle endorses his own, somewhat different paradigms and that they are central to his philosophy. Aristotle’s paradigm is one or more species in a genus that serve as standards through which the genus’ other species are known. Characteristically, the differentiae of other species in the genus are composed of the differentia of the paradigm species and its privation. Aristotle develops the theory in *Metaphysics* I. In the context of the *Metaphysics*, paradigmatism takes a back seat to the *pros hen* priority of primary substance; however, this paper argues that paradigmatism is central in Aristotle’s other scientific works. The first part of the paper argues that *Metaphysics* I advances the doctrine of paradigmatism, and it disables objections that might arise from other parts of the *Metaphysics*. The second part of the paper shows the significance of paradigmatism by exploring four example from the biological works. They become readily intelligible through paradigmatism and would be difficult or impossible to understand without it. The paper’s third part shows that the doctrine plays important, but slightly different roles in Aristotle’s productive and practical science. Specifically, it argues that paradigmatism explains the relation of epic to tragedy in the *Poetics* and the relation of the polity to both the best states and the lesser states in the *Politics*.

Everyone knows that Plato’s forms are paradigms and that he thinks particulars partake of them in different degrees, and everyone also knows that Aristotle rejects Plato’s separation of forms insisting, instead, that forms exist together with matter in sensible composites. However, these comfortable and overly simple truths too often lull us into a confident blindness to connections that are as rich and important as these for our understanding of the relation between these thinkers. In particular, my contention here is that, like Plato, Aristotle practices a kind of paradigmatism, that it involves, at least sometimes, models that cannot be attained practically as well as a mixing of forms, and that it plays an important role in the nuts and bolts of his philosophy. This is all so important and so fundamental to his philosophy that it should be well known. Yet, it has not been appreciated, even by the best scholars. There are at least three reasons for

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1 This paper is dedicated to the memory of my teacher, Father Joseph Owens, who passed away shortly before it was delivered. Father Owens was himself the paradigm of an Aristotelian scholar. I owe more to his guidance and his example than I can express.
this. First, the text where Aristotle sets out the conceptual basis of his paradigmatism, *Metaphysics* I, is the least discussed portion of the *Metaphysics* and among the least discussed portions of the entire corpus. Second, many texts where he puts paradigmatism into practice are buried deep in his *Politics* and biological works and have, consequently, been neglected for portions of the corpus that set out the paradigms. The mistake has been either to try to understand Aristotle’s paradigm by itself without recognizing its positive role in explaining derivative cases or, conversely, to consider the derivative cases without appreciating why they must be grasped through a paradigm. Those who focus exclusively on the paradigm tend to think that Aristotle’s moral virtues are relatively widespread and his ideal state readily attainable; whereas exclusive attention to the derivative cases is, I think, a reason that some scholars decry the specicism that allows Aristotle to recognize that, for example, man is the paradigmatic animal and, thus, to regard other animals as deformed or defective instances of humanity. Third, since the birth of developmental interpretations by Werner Jaeger, scholars have tended to separate the more theoretical and idealistic portions of the corpus from the more empirical books; for example, *Politics* I-III, VII-VIII from *Politics* IV-VI. Most people today are skeptical about the path of development Jaeger advanced, as well as the multiple alternatives others have proposed; but the legacy of developmentalism lingers in a reluctance to consider theoretical and empirical portions of the corpus together because there is no definitive way to prove that they do not spring from different periods of Aristotle’s development and, thereby, manifest different philosophies. One of the advantages of considering Aristotle’s paradigmatism is that it provides a way to link Aristotle’s practical discussions with his theoretical treatments and to show them to be part of a rich perspective grounded in the *Metaphysics*. Of course, understanding paradigmatism is no panacea: even explaining

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