My reply to Professor Gottlieb’s paper will be in two parts. First, I shall comment on her strategy to view Aristotle’s defense of the principle of non-contradiction (PNC) in the light of Plato’s refutation of the Protagorean doctrine in the *Theaetetus*. Second, I would like to offer an alternative to her view that Aristotle, in *Met.* Γ 4, is essentially defending a single version of PNC. As I see it, a case can be made to argue that Aristotle implicitly defends three different versions of PNC, although all three versions revolve around the same fundamental idea that our thinking must necessarily always be of something determinate, if an assertion is to be established at all. Furthermore, since for Aristotle an assertion always implies an ontological commitment, his defense of the PNC is a defense of the principle of determinacy of thought as well as being.

Let me begin with a side issue. In her introduction, Professor Gottlieb points out that Aristotle undertakes to prove the PNC despite the fact that the PNC is clearly one of the first principles of all demonstration. Following Aristotle’s argument in *An. post.* I 1-4, however, no proof of the principle of demonstration can be given, because this would contradict the very notion of a first principle. Why then does Aristotle offer some kind of proof of PNC in *Met.* Γ 4 nevertheless? To clarify this point, let me remind you that Aristotle discusses this issue himself in Γ 4. He characterizes the method of proof employed in *Met.* Γ 4 at 1006a15 and identifies the procedure as constituting a form of ἀποδείξις ἐλεγκτικῶς, i.e., proof by refutation. This is the
method of proof appropriate, and the only one available, whenever first principles are at stake. Any straightforward proof of a first principle would either have to rely implicitly on the first principle and thus constitute a *petitio*, or else we would have to face an infinite regress and thus to give up hope of ever reaching a first principle. The problem is, however, that to accept a first principle *ad hoc* seems equally unsatisfactory, because that would indicate a lack of rationality. There needs to be *some* justification for assigning a principle the privileged status of a first principle.

In this situation, the least and most that can be done is to refute all those who would call into question the validity of the principle by showing that their alternative is either inconsistent or self-contradictory. An elenctic proof constitutes such a refutation of alternatives. It demonstrates that the principle has not been successfully challenged. The most elegant *elenchus* is the one which is able to demonstrate that the opponent of the proposed first principle needs to presuppose it even in the very act of trying to refute it. It seems that Aristotle employs this strategy when he defends PNC.

So a refutation of the opponents of the PNC is all we should ask for, and this is perfectly in keeping with general Aristotelian doctrine. Even with a successful proof by refutation, however, there is still something unsatisfactory about this "try as you may, you cannot beat it" method. For if there is no demonstration of the *necessity* to accept the principle, its certainty will be merely intuitive. There will be no way of showing why the principle is a first principle. Aristotle has something to say on this count as well. For in the course of his argumentation in both *Met.* Γ 3 and 4, he directly and indirectly also proposes a more positive reason for why the acceptance of the PNC as a first principle is unavoidable. If this is so, then, curiously enough, *Met.* Γ 4 tries to do more than Aristotle thought could be done, when he wrote *An. post.* I 1-4. I will return to this point after the discussion of Professor Gottlieb's argument.

I believe Professor Gottlieb is entirely justified in detecting a