The best way to lead off the discussion of Prof. Loux’s admirable paper is, I think, to give a brief précis, following the paper’s seven sections.

Section I provides an outline and an initial characterisation of Aristotle’s analysis of the Parmenidean dilemma against the possibility of coming-to-be.

Section II argues that the argument as presented in A.8 is not to be characterized in terms of incomplete expressions with blanks for variables, that Aristotle does not invoke either his own analysis of the semantics of the verb “to be” or his own analysis of change against the Parmenidean dilemma, and that he has a good reason for not doing so, namely, his desire not only to refute the dilemma but also to show what was plausible and influential in it.

Section III is an extended analysis of the text from 191a 34 to 191b 19. As Aristotle sees it, the sentences expressing the horns of the Parmenidean dilemma—(a) “That which is comes to be from that which is” and (b) “That which is comes to be from that which is not”—are ambiguous. While (a) and (b) do indeed have problematic readings, viz., the readings (a’) and (b’) including the reduplicative qua-phrases, still (a) and (b) without the qua-phrases are in themselves unproblematic.

Section IV begins by noting two objections: how can we be sure that the supposedly innocuous versions of (a) and (b) do
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not in fact permit of expansion into the problematic (a’) and (b’) by the addition of qua-phrases? does not the admittedly problematic character of (a’) and (b’) suggest that sentences that express the occurrence of change suffer from a basic unintelligibility? The move in response is a distinction between predication in the strict sense or ἀπλῶς and predication in an accidental sense or κατὰ συμβεβηκός.

Section V addresses an objection to the proposed interpretation: if the inference from (b) to (b’) is ruled out on the ground that (b) is expressing only a change κατὰ συμβεβηκός, what about the inference from (a) to (a’)? Aristotle wants to say that (a) expresses only a change κατὰ συμβεβηκός; but Prof. Loux’s interpretation seems, as he says, to require that (a) express change in the strict sense or ἀπλῶς. Prof. Loux’s response is that while (a) is indeed a generalization from sentences that can bear the reduplicative qua-phrase, (a) itself cannot be expanded by the qua-phrase, precisely because it is a generalization.

Section VI points out that Aristotle’s application of κατὰ συμβεβηκός terminology to (a), the first horn of the Parmenidean dilemma, is somewhat peculiar. Prof. Loux rejects the attempt to explain the issue by reference to Metaphysics E.2 or to De Generatione et Corruptione A.3. His explanation is that Aristotle was concentrating on (b), the second horn of the Parmenidean dilemma, that he did not take (a), the first horn of the Parmenidean dilemma, all that seriously, that he just transferred the terminology applicable to (b) to the rather different case of (a), at the cost of an anomalous but not really problematic use of κατὰ συμβεβηκός.

Section VII contends that in Physics A.8 Aristotle has been correct in diagnosing the ambiguity in the two horns of the Parmenidean dilemma, and basically successful in showing both how the Parmenidean dilemma was mistaken and in showing how it was plausible and influential.

Prof. Loux’s paper is admirable in concept and in execution, and I am not about to pick away at the detail of it. I would like,