I. In a brilliant paper, Hintikka succeeded, apparently for the first time, in explaining in an entirely convincing manner the (prima facie strange) doctrine which we find in both Plato and Aristotle, viz., that knowledge (in the true sense of the word, which excludes such phrases as 'apparent knowledge,' let alone 'false knowledge,' as self-contradictory) can be had only of entities belonging to the realm of the changeless.

Ultimately, Hintikka's explanation reads like this: because the Greeks were inclined to interpret knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) as a kind of vision (intuition, Anschauung, witnessing), every assertion, regardless of the subject to which it might refer, implicitly contained for them a temporal index, a 'now,' this 'now' referring to the moment of the original vision by a particular speaker. We have learned to distinguish tenseless assertions (e.g., 'two is an even number'), in which what from the viewpoint of ordinary grammar is a present tense ('is'), is actually a timeless or omnipresent or tenseless tense, so that the whole assertion is tenseless, from tensed ones (e.g., 'Socrates walks'). But the Greeks were inclined to consider even tenseless assertions as being actually tensed. Therefore, to them, no knowledge of changeable entities was possible, as they might have changed since the moment when on the basis of an intuition somebody had asserted something about them. Thus, when I say 'Socrates sits,' somebody can refute me by saying 'Socrates walks' — which obviously means that no such assertion can claim to be knowledge.

In other words, all knowledge is ultimately intuitive (though the existence of discursive or dianoetic knowledge is admitted). But the objects of intuition are of two kinds, and so are the corresponding intuitions. Either these objects belong to the realm of the sensible and therefore changeable, and they are intuited by our senses. Or they are unchangeable, and they are intuited by some other mental faculty — mostly called νοῦς, i.e., intelligence; these objects themselves are

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best called intelligibles (νοητά). Because intelligibles do not change—or as we also could say: because they are timeless—only they can be objects of knowledge; assertions about them remain true forever.

II. Let us now profit from Hintikka’s discussion, proceed one more step, and explain an aspect of Aristotle’s doctrines concerning the law of contradiction; again prima facie a strange one.

In Met. Ι4-8, Aristotle presents all kinds of arguments refuting those who deny its validity. However, for the topic at hand, only one species of arguments will be considered.2

In Γ5, 1009 a 22-26, plus 36-38, Aristotle explains that some who bona fide denied the validity of the law of contradiction did so because (1) they paid exclusive attention to the realm of the sensible, and (2) in this realm they noticed that out of one and the same entity contraries and contradictories (άντιφάσεις καὶ ἐναντία) come into existence, and that therefore that entity must have contained in itself contraries (ἐναντία). Most of the ways in which Aristotle refutes his adversaries need not detain us here. What we want to retain is only Aristotle’s reference to the realm of the sensible: for the error of the deniers of the law of contradiction he blames the fact that they paid attention exclusively to the realm of the sensible (in addition to the faulty interpretation of some of its features). Therefore, he reminds his adversaries that they should not have overlooked another realm of being (οὐσία τῶν ὑπότων), different from the realm of the sensible in that the entities of that other realm are entirely free from change (χάνοντας) and free from both perishing (φθορά) and becoming (γένεσις).

A puzzling passage. Why should somebody aware of a realm of the changeless be less inclined to deny the validity of the law of contradiction than somebody who concentrates entirely on the realm of the sensible (here obviously equated by Aristotle with the realm of the changeable)?

The second passage we find in Γ5, 1010 a 1-35. Again the deniers of the validity of the law of contradiction have, according to Aristotle, been misled by the fact that whereas they wanted to ascertain the truth concerning (all kinds of) entities (περὶ τῶν ὑπότων — sc. without any restrictions — … τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐσκέπτουν), they assumed that there was only one kind of entities, viz., sensibles. Again Aristotle reminds

2 The law is first stated in Γ3, 1005 b 19-22: τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ ἄμα (n.b.!) ὑπάρχειν τε καὶ μὴ ὑπάρχειν ἀδύνατον τῷ αὐτῷ καὶ κατὰ τὸ αὐτό. Cf. Γ6, 1011 b 13-22.