

Third Man Arguments

EUDEMUS' VERSION (83.34-84. 7)

The argument introducing the third man is the following (*toιoutos*):

They say that the things that are predicated in common of (*F*) substances are fully (*kuriόs*) (*F*) and are ideas. Further, things that are similar to one another are similar to one another by sharing in some same thing, which is fully this (i.e. fully *F*); and this is the idea. But if this is so, and if what is predicated in common of things (*tinόn*), if it is not the same as any of those things of which it is predicated, is something else besides it (for this is why man-itself is a genus, because it is predicated of the particulars but is not the same as any of them), then there will be a third man besides the particular (such as Socrates or (*kai*) Plato) and besides the idea, which is also one in number.

ARISTOTLE'S VERSION (84.21-85. 3)

The third man is also proved in this way:

If what is predicated truly of some plurality of things (*pleionόn*) is also (some) other thing (*allo*) besides (*para*) the things of which it is predicated, being separated (*kechόrismenon*) from them (for this is what those who posit the ideas think they prove; for this is why, according to them, there is such a thing as man-itself, because the man is predicated truly of the particular (*kath' hekasta*) men, these being a plurality, and it is other (*allo*) than the particular men)-but if this is so, there will be a third man. For if the (man) being predicated is other than the things of which it is predicated and subsists on its own (*kat' idian huphestόs*), and (if) the man is predicated both of the particulars and of the idea, then there will be a third man besides the particular and the idea. In the same way, there will also be a fourth (man) predicated of this (third man), of the idea, and of the particulars, and similarly also a fifth, and so on to infinity.

Alexander adds (85. 4-13):

This argument is the same as the first one. For this results for them because they took similar things to be similar by sharing in some same thing. For men and the ideas (of men) are similar. Now he refuted both of the arguments that seemed more accurate, the one on the ground that it established ideas even of relatives, and the other on the ground that it introduces a third man and then multiplies men to infinity. And a similar multiplication will be suffered by each of the other things of which they say there are ideas. While various people used the first exposition of the third man-including Eudemus, who clearly used it in the first book of *On Diction*-the last was used by (Aristotle) himself in the first book of *On Ideas* and a little later in this work.

Transl. by Gail Fine (Aristotle, *On Ideas*: Aristotle's criticism of Plato's theory of forms; Oxford University Press 1993)