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Aristotelian Terms in the New Testament.

THE purpose of the present article is to begin an examination of the Aristotelian terms used in the New Testament, of which there are a considerable number, logical, psychological, ethical and metaphysical; to try to find out how far their Aristotelian meaning is maintained; and to suggest a theory.

Students of the papyri, or of Moulton & Milligan's Vocabulary, which is based on the papyri, may feel that the question is already answered, and that the investigation is therefore unnecessary. But it is none the less valuable to approach the subject from Aristotle's end; to discover and to "freeze" the meanings of the terms he used; and then to apply the results so obtained to the New Testament. The extent to which the old meaning in each case suits its New Testament context will suggest an answer to the problem.

It is much too large a subject to be fully discussed within the limits of one article, as it would run into many thousands of words. It seems best, therefore, to examine a typical instance and to place on record the theory which it seems to imply, though it should be remembered that the investigation of many other words may lead to a modification of the theory. We proceed, then, to a study of the world συνίστημι (or in English *sunistemi*) in the writings of Aristotle.

In speaking of the respective parts played by the male and the female in the procreation of offspring, Aristotle asserts in the Generation of Animals 729a 10- that the male provides the form, and the principle of the movement, i.e. the Formal Cause, and the Efficient Cause, which is sentient Soul, and the female supplies the body, the *hule*: the *sperma* of the male gives *eidos* and *kinesis* to the matter supplied by the female. To illustrate the point he refers to the coagulation (*pexis*) of milk. The milk is the matter and the fig-juice or rennet is *to ten archen echon ten sunistasan.* The rennet gives to the milk, which is just a liquid, a firmness, a consistency, which it had not before. The junket, as we term it, may compare unfavourably with, say, a blancmange or a custard, in consistency; but from the same standpoint it is superior to milk or any other liguid as such. It has a consistency and that is the significant fact. A liquid has no form of its own and accepts that of the container; in the absence of a container it takes the path of least resistance and spreads anywhere and everywhere. It is significant that *pexis* means a "freezing", (compare 743a 5- *sunistatai gar kai pegnutai ta men psuchroi, ta*

de thermoi.) and formless water if frozen can be picked up by the hand in lumps. It is a solid now, and needs no container as it is no longer formless. It is not argued that the coagulated milk can be so picked up in solid lumps; all the same it is no longer a liquid, but a solid. The rennet has imposed a form on it and *has given it a unity* which it did not possess as a liquid, and which it retains. It may be a poor sort of unity, but it is a real unity, especially when compared with the original liquid. *Sunistemi* thus means "to give a unity to", or "establish as a unity".

A passage in the Generation of Animals supporting this is 739b 21-: "When the secretion in the *hustera* of the female *sustei* (is established as a unity—the Greek verb is intransitive) under the influence of the *sperma* of the male, the *sperma* acting very much as the rennet does on milk—for the rennet is milk containing vital heat, *he to homoion eis hen agei kai sunistesi....*" Literally this is, "which brings the homogeneous matter into one and makes it to stand together." The present contention is that *eis hen agei* and *sunistesi* are synonymous, or at the least that the latter is impossible without the former and includes it. Aristotle says that *ta zoia sunistatai kai lambanei ten oikeian morphen* (733b 21-2). If the animals acquire their own *morphe*, that *morphe* is surely one, a unity. If it is theirs, there must be something which is theirs. If their *morphe* is a number of things, either it is not a *morphe* at all, or else it is a complex unity; complex, but still a unity. A *morphe* cannot be other than a unity. And as *morphe* cannot be separated from its subject or *hupokeimenon*, and in any case is not mere appearance but is conditioned by its subject, the latter must share its unity—here *ta zoia ha sunistatai*. It should further be noticed that Aristotle speaks of a *morion tes sustases morphes* (737a 14), thus showing that *morphe*—a unity—is the object of the action indicated by the verb *sunistemi*. It may indeed be objected that *sunistatai* (pass.) is one thing and *sustases* (act. intrans.) another, and that the point is not proved. But Aristotle used both voices of the same subject: 731a 16 *heos an sustesei* (1st aor. subj. act. - trans.) *to kuema* "until (the male) has 'set' the fetation." (Peck); 776a 12 *hotan sustei* (2nd. aor. subj. act. - intrans.) *to kuema* "when the fetation has been set." (Peck); 749a 35 *sunistatai* (pres. indic. pass.) *men oun kuemata*. Thus the objection is overruled.

If, to revert to the illustration of the rennet, it is objected that the original milk must have its *morphe*, the answer is either that qua liquid its *morphe* consists in its being amorphous; or if its colour, weight, etc., are considered part of its *morphe*, it may be countered by saying that its *morphe* lacks what the junket has (i.e. consistency), and that therefore the junket has a superior *morphe* and a greater unity.

It should be observed that in the above three examples *kuema* is the object of the action in question, which Aristotle defines as *to proton migma theleos kai arrenos,* (728b 34) though he uses it to cover "all stages of the living creature's development from the time when the matter is first informed to the time when the creature is born or hatched. Hence we find *kuema* applied to the embryo or fetus of Vivipara; to the 'perfect' eggs of birds. . . ." Now the *kuema* is an organism. In the embryonic stage, it is true, it is part of a larger organism, the mother; but in so far as it can mean a bird's egg it implies an organism with a relatively independent existence. An organism, then, is given its unity (*sunistemi*) and indeed an organism is the highest type of unity, involving as it does a subject in which every part is related to every other part, and to the whole of which it is a part; and related vitally, not mechanically. Thus *sunistemi* can imply the imposing of an *organic* unity; but it does not necessarily imply this. For, 772b 19- in assigning the reason for the redundance of parts and the production of twins, Aristotle states that if the fetation has been split, several parts come to be formed, *kathaper en tois potamois hai dinia; kai gar en toutois to pheromenon hugron kai kinesin echon an (tini) antikrousei, duo ex henos ginontai sustaseis, echousai ten auten kinesin; ton auton de tropon kai epi ton kuematon sumbainei.* The picture is a little obscure because *dine* normally suggests a rotatory motion, but it need not be pressed here to mean more than rapid motion, because it is the water in the river that is rushing along (*pheromenon*) and Aristotle has just spoken of the fetation's being split (*schisthentos*), which he is now illustrating. The water, then, strikes a rock or some such obstacle at speed (speed must be implied by *-krouo,* or the action becomes a mere slow pushing movement) and is divided into two rushing streams. which Aristotle calls *sustaseis.* They each have their unity *while in motion.* If the water were stagnant it would be level both sides of the obstacle and one quiescent mass; as it is, there are two separate streams, which Peck calls "self-contained eddies." Each moving stream, qua moving, is a unity, though not an organic one.

It is legitimate to argue from the noun *sustasis,* because Aristotle uses it quite clearly as a noun corresponding to *sunistemi*: e.g. 776b 5 *eis de ton ano topon kai tous mastous sullegetai dia ten ex arches taxin tes sustaseos*; and 731b 13 (*ta ostrakoderma*) *sunistatai kai gennatai ek tinos sustaseos geoeidous kai hugras.*

Peck makes the interesting suggestion that *sunistemi* might almost be regarded as the active voice of *gignomai,* though it tends rather to refer to the beginning of the process, the first impact of Form upon Matter. "Give a unity to" covers both require-

ments. An active of *gignomai* would mean "make (a thing) become (something)"—according to the present submission, a unity; and any emphasis on the beginning of the process is safeguarded by saying "*give* a unity to."

A further point, for what it is worth, is the fact that the present writer had gained the distinct impression that *sunistemi* meant "give a unity to" before reading the passage already quoted 739b 24.

Further strong confirmation is found in the Poetics, a treatise on aesthetic philosophy. In discussing unity of plot (*muthos d'estin heis*.....145la 15-) Aristotle asserts that Homer did not include all the adventures of Odysseus in the Odyssey, incidents between which there was no necessary or probable connexion, but *peri mian praxin hoian legomen ten Odusseian sunestesen* which Butcher renders, "he made the Odyssey . . . to centre round an action that in our sense of the word is one." Aristotle continues: "as therefore in the other imitative arts, *he mia mimesis henos estin houto (chre) kai ton muthon, epei praxeos mimesis esti, mias te einai kai tautes holes kai ta mere sunestanai ton pragmaton houtos hoste metatithemenou TINOS MEROUS E APHAIROUMENOU DIAPHERESTHAI KAI KINEISTHAI TO HOLON.*" The plot, then, must be the imitation of one action, and that a whole; and, in addition, the parts must be a unity: for where the alteration of position, or the removal, of a part, disjoints and disturbs the whole, the whole must be a unity. It should be clearly observed that whereas Aristotle actually used the word for "one" in the former requirement (*mias te einai*), in the latter he relies on the word *sunestanai* to express his thought. Literary elegance might suggest that it be translated "cohere", but the above considerations, together with the fact that the verb is in the perfect tense, imply "the parts should be in a state of having been given a unity."

A striking commentary on this is the later statement (1453a 12-) *anagke ara ton kalos echonta muthon HAPLOUN einai . . . he men oun kata ten technen kalliste tragoidia ek tautes tes sustaseos esti.*

The idea of unity is also associated with *sunistemi* in Met. 990a 22 *para ton arithmon touton ex hou sunesteken ho kosmos. kosmos* in itself suggests unity; and if we translate, with Tredennick, "of which the universe is composed", we really imply the same idea. Whatever is "composed" of X is one thing which has X as it constituents.

The Aristotelian meaning of *sunistemi* then is "give a unity to." Is this its New Testament meaning?

An interesting use is found in Romans v. 8 *sunistesin de ten*

heautou agapen eis hemas ho Theos. . . . Following Aristotle we may translate " God gives a unity to His love toward us . . . ", and draw out the implications. In the Cross we see God's love shaped and formed, as it were; it is not vague but has a definite form, because anything which is a unity has a form. It is initiating love (" while we were yet sinners ") and sacrificing love (" Christ died for us "). We see God's love unified in the sense that there are not several different " loves of God." He does indeed reveal that aspect of His love to His people that is appropriate to their condition, stern, sympathetic, encouraging, as the case may be. But it is one love. An analogy may be drawn here between the conception of character and that of love. People with no character at all (not people of bad character, but people without a character) show themselves in a different light in different circumstances; their moral life has no pattern, no unity, and it is impossible to predict how they will act. The truly formed character is a unity; the subject indeed will show an aspect of himself when playing cricket which is different from that shown when he is, say, pleading a case in the High Court; but it is one character. Similarly the love of God, seen in the Cross, is one. The separate, broken messages about it, the different aspects of it, are all in the Cross framed together into one whole message. God has " set " His love in the Cross, much in the way in which we say that cement has " set ", or an amateur photographer speaks of " fixing " his prints. The love of God, seen in the Cross, does not change with every change of our spiritual temperature. The Cross is God's final word about His love to us.

On some such lines as these we can also interpret the passage in Romans iii. 5.

But it may well be argued that the above, though no doubt edifying, is forced and artificial. And we might confidently affirm that the Aristotelian meaning has entirely disappeared, if it were not for two other passages in the New Testament.

2 Peter iii. 5. *lanthanei gar autous touto thelontas hoti ouranoi esan ekpalai kai ge ex hudatos kai di' hudatos sunestosa . . .* has an Aristotelian ring. Bigg (I.C.C.) renders " that from of old was heaven, and an earth subsisting out of water and by means of water." " . . . combined as it is here with *sunestosa*, the preposition (ex) seems rather to express the material out of which the earth was made." This is in line with the quotation already made from the Metaphysics, *ex hou sunesteken ho kosmos.*

In Col. i. 17 we read . . . *kai ta panta en autoi sunesteken,* which is literally " And all things are-in-a-state-of-having-been-given-a-unity in Him." The rendering is pedestrian and dull, but it serves to show how perfectly Aristotle's meaning is maintained, and forms the starting point for a new exegesis. Reference

has already been made to Aristotle's words in the Poetics, *ta mere (chre) sunestanai,* and the use of the same word by St. Paul suggests that Col. i. 17 may be interpreted in the light of Greek drama. If the scientists assert that the world is God's great thought, why should it not be God's great plot (muthos) or drama?

> All the world's a stage,
> And all the men and women merely players:
> They have their exits and their entrances,
> And one man in his time plays many parts,
> His acts being seven ages. . . .

We can then draw from the world drama (this does not mean the Great War, I or II, but the whole universe in time and space) some inspiring inferences. 1. The world is not the chaos and confusion it appears to be. The scuffle on the stage in any given scene is of small moment compared with the stately progress of the plot to its climax. 2. The world is not a tragedy, as Christ is its Author. It looks it indeed; even if it is, the actors seem out of control and the play ruined—a double tragedy, a sordid murderous realism superimposed on a noble tale. But the Author can send new actors on to the stage to do His will and pick up the threads of the original plot, and weave into them the sorry tale of the rebellious actors as a new expression of the plot. In one significant part of the play the Author Himself appeared upon the stage. . . . 3. Each individual life can be a "part" of the whole cosmic drama. Each Christian can say, "I have a place in God's drama." (There is room for a new exposition of the doctrine of election on these lines.)

There are a few other instances of *sunistemi* in the New Testament (Luke ix. 32, Romans xvi. 1, 2 Corinthians vii. 11, x. 18; and xii. 11), but it is hard to interpret them in the Aristotelian spirit. It is obvious, therefore, that the meaning of the word has been modified. On the other hand, enough has been said to show that the original meaning has not entirely been lost. If *sunistemi* is really typical of all the Aristotelian words in the New Testament, the theory suggested is that they partly retain their former meaning, but only partly. They would be like some pieces of an old jig-saw puzzle, which can still be used in the older game but have been chipped and cut and worn and erased, so that they fit another and newer puzzle. But is is only a theory, and it demands considerable research and detailed proof.

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