

# A note on Aristotle's *Physics* I 7, 190a31-34.

## Abstract

In this note I will defend the correct understanding of a passage (*Physics* I 7, 190a31-34) that has been largely misunderstood by many modern commentators. The reason for the misleading translations and interpretations can be found in the presence of the problematic expression τóδε τι. In what follows, I will argue that there is no mention in this text of the expression τóδε τι, at least in its technical sense, that can be traced in Aristotle's philosophy. At the beginning I will give my translation of the passage in question and some information about the context of *Physics* I 7. Secondly, I will give an account of the language categories of "coming to be" and I will show that *Physics* I 7, 190a31-34 continues in all respects this linguistic analysis. Finally, I will discuss the work of ancient commentators, which can be read according to my interpretation.

Keywords: *Aristotle's Physics*, *coming-to-be*, τóδε τι

## The translation and the context of *Ph. I 7*

Aristotle begins to develop his own theory of coming to be in *Physics* I, especially in chapters 7-9, with a very general linguistic analysis of the different meanings of 'to come to be'<sup>1</sup>. Significantly, Aristotle investigates along these lines that there is always something that underlies every change and that the principles of change are essentially three: matter, form and privation<sup>2</sup>. At a certain point, he introduces the account of substances in the analysis. Here we have the problematic passage in 190a31-34, that I am quoting first from some erroneous translations:

πολλαχῶς δὲ λεγομένου τοῦ γίνεσθαι, καὶ τῶν μὲν οὐ γίνεσθαι ἀλλὰ τóδε τι γίνεσθαι, ἀπλῶς δὲ γίνεσθαι τῶν οὐσιῶν μόνον, κατὰ μὲν τᾶλλα φανερόν ὅτι ἀνάγκη ὑποκεῖσθαι τι τὸ γιγνόμενον.

Things, though, are said to come to be in many ways, and some things are said not to come to be but to come to be a *this something*, whereas only substances are said to come to be unconditionally. In the other cases, by contrast, it is evident that there must be some underlying subject that comes to be [something].<sup>3</sup>

certaines choses sont dites non pas advenir mais devenir une chose déterminée.<sup>4</sup>

von Vielem kann man nicht einfach sagen „es wird“, sondern immer nur „es wird etwas Bestimmtes“.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on a presentation in a recent seminar. I am grateful to all participants for their comments and suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> See (BODNÁR, 2018; CHARLES, 2018; LORENZ, 2019; MORISON, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> (REEVE, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> (COULOUBARITSIS; STEVENS, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> (ZEKL, 1987).

così da un lato v'è “essere divenuto” non in senso generico, ma “essere divenuto questa cosa determinata”.<sup>6</sup>

Aristotle points in this passage to a fundamental distinction in modalities of physical coming to be. On the one hand, there is the unqualified or simple generation (ἀπλῶς γίγνεσθαι), which refers to substances and beings that have an independent existence; on the other hand, there is a form of becoming determined and particular that concerns specific aspects of the substance without affecting the substance itself. Aristotle thus establishes a radical difference between the coming to be of the substance and that of other categories, but so far, he cannot prove it.<sup>7</sup>

However, we should now go through the first part of this text. The translations quoted above, like many others,<sup>8</sup> interpret the first sentence in such a way: on the one hand, there are things that are not said to come to be *tout court* but become a particular thing (τόδε τι); on the other hand there are substances that are said to come to be without qualification (ἀπλῶς). The problem is the following: why should τόδε τι be associated with a particular type of change and especially opposed to the generation of substances? As sufficiently demonstrated by scholars,<sup>9</sup> τόδε τι is normally related to substances and substance generation. But the translators above mentioned, implicitly or explicitly, said that coming to be without qualification is opposed to coming to be a “this something”, namely a substance.<sup>10</sup> To solve this difficulty, I propose following a different understanding which, as I will show, fits better even with the previous analysis of the linguistic categories of “coming to be”. This interpretation of the text was first proposed by Barrington Jones in a paper on the Aristotelian matter published in 1974.<sup>11</sup> I now give my translation of the passage and in a later section of this article I will try to justify and defend this understanding:

But ‘coming to be’ is said in many ways and, on the one hand, some things are not said to ‘come to be’ but ‘this comes to be something’, on the other hand only substances are said to ‘come to be without qualification’, regarding the other things it is clear that there must be something underlying, namely that which becomes.<sup>12</sup>

In this passage, therefore, there will be no reference to the τόδε τι in its technical sense, and not even generically to a particular object, but the formula τόδε τι γίγνεσθαι should be construed as τόδε γίγνεσθαί τι, linguistic expression already introduced by Aristotle

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<sup>6</sup> (RUGGIU, 1995).

<sup>7</sup> This will be the aim of Arist. *GCI* 1-4.

<sup>8</sup> (CARTERON, 1926): «il y a, à côté de ce qui est engendré absolument, ce qui devient par génération cette chose-ci»; (RUSSO, 1983): «divenire non qualsivoglia cosa, ma un qualcosa di particolare»; (RADICE; PALPACELLI, 2011): «da un lato può significare non il venire alla luce, ma divenire questa data cosa»; (ZANATTA, 1999): «di alcune cose non essendo proprio <parlare di> divenire, bensì di divenire alcunché di determinato».

<sup>9</sup> (AUBENQUE, 2000; CORKUM, 2019; SHARPLES, 1999; SMITH, 1921; YU, 2003, p. 113–154).

<sup>10</sup> See (REEVE, 2018), p. 215 (n.113): «In very many cases, as in the present one, being a *tode ti* is a distinctive mark of *ousia*».

<sup>11</sup> (JONES, 1974) 479.

<sup>12</sup> A similar and correct translation is given by (MORISON, 2019) 251: « Since coming to be is spoken of in many ways, and in some of them it's not that this comes to be, but rather this comes to be something, whereas coming to be unqualifiedly applies only to substances». Although (WIELAND, 1992) 120 translates τόδε τι γίγνεσθαι with «etwas wird *etwas*», he seems to take τόδε τι as a single expression (see n. 7 *ad loc.*).

few lines above in the same chapter of *Physics* (190a21-22).<sup>13</sup> This translation has furthermore the advantage to offer a way to get the grammar right. In fact, there are other translations that, although substantially correct, do not correspond very well with the Greek text. These do not express the subject, which is τόδε, but translate as if the Greek words were just γίνεσθαι τι. Two examples of such translations are The Revised Oxford Translation<sup>14</sup> (ROT) of R.P. Hardie and R.K. Gaye: «in some cases we do not use the expression ‘come to be’, but ‘come to be so-and-so’» and that of W. Charlton «some things are said, not to come to be, but to come to be something».<sup>15</sup>

Finally, we can find another possible translation in the literature but again it lacks the accuracy and precision of the correct one. Translators have searched in this case to express the indeterminacy of the coming to be. Examples of this are D. Charles’ and H. Wagner’s translations: «some things are said not to come to be but to come to be something or other»; « es gibt dies, daß man nicht einfach sagen kann: „es wird“, sondern sagen muß: „es wird zu dem oder dem“».<sup>16</sup>

We must now turn to the argumentative development of *Physics* I 7 to understand how the construction ‘this comes to be something’ for τόδε τι γίνεσθαι is preferable not only for the accuracy of the translation but also for preserving the sense of Aristotle’s linguistic analysis. Before introducing substance generation into the discussion, Aristotle provides several distinctions between the ways in which we talk about the becoming.

φαιμὲν γὰρ γίνεσθαι ἐξ ἄλλου ἄλλο καὶ ἐξ ἐτέρου ἕτερον ἢ τὰ ἀπλᾶ λέγοντες ἢ τὰ συγκείμενα. λέγω δὲ τοῦτο ὡδί. ἔστι γὰρ γίνεσθαι ἄνθρωπον μουσικόν, ἔστι δὲ τὸ μὴ μουσικὸν γίνεσθαι μουσικόν ἢ τὸν μὴ μουσικὸν ἄνθρωπον ἄνθρωπον μουσικόν. ἀπλοῦν μὲν οὖν λέγω τὸ γιγνόμενον τὸν ἄνθρωπον καὶ τὸ μὴ μουσικόν, καὶ ὃ γίγνεται ἀπλοῦν, τὸ μουσικόν· συγκείμενον δὲ καὶ ὃ γίγνεται καὶ τὸ γιγνόμενον, ὅταν τὸν μὴ μουσικὸν ἄνθρωπον φῶμεν γίνεσθαι μουσικὸν ἄνθρωπον.

We say that ‘one thing comes to be from another thing’, and ‘something from something different’, in the case both of simple and of complex things. I mean the following. We can say the man becomes musical, or what is not-musical becomes musical, or the not-musical man becomes a musical man. Now what becomes in the first two cases – man and not-musical – I call simple, and what each becomes – musical – simple also. But when we say the not-musical man becomes a musical man, both what becomes and what it becomes are complex (*Ph.* I 7, 189b32-190a5. ROT).

<sup>13</sup> A different choice in the sentence construction was proposed by (BOSTOCK, 1982) 184-185: «Now coming to be is predicated in many ways. Some things cannot be said to come to be – rather, something is said to come to be *them* – but of substances and of them alone it may be said that they come to be without qualification». In a footnote, Bostock says that we must take ‘τι’ as subject to ‘γίνεσθαι’ and ‘τοδε’ as complement, although he admits that this is not the most natural way of construing the Greek. The Arabic translation seems to construct the sentence in the same way, (BADAWI, 1964) 60-61: لكن "يكون" تؤخذ بعدة: 60-61: معان فإلى جانب ما يكون على الإطلاق، يصير بالكون هذا الشيء.

<sup>14</sup> (BARNES, 1985).

<sup>15</sup> (CHARLTON, 1970). See also (PELLEGRIN, 2000): «certaines choses ne sont pas dites advenir mais devenir ceci»; (STEVENS, 2012): «certaines choses sont dites non pas venir à l’être mais devenir ceci»; (HORSTSCHÄFER, 1998): «weil man von den einen nicht sagen kann „es wird“, sondern „es wird ein solches“»; (FRANCO REPELLINI, 1996): «mentre delle une si dice che non *vengono ad essere*, ma che *vengono ad essere questa certa cosa*».

<sup>16</sup> Charles in (QUARANTOTTO, 2018); (WAGNER, 1983). See also (CORNFORD; WICKSTEED, 1929): «for the same word (gignesthai) is employed either of a thing ‘coming to be’ in the absolute sense of ‘coming into existence’, or in the sense of ‘coming to be this or that’»; (BOERI, 1993): «de ciertas cosas no decimos ‘llegar a ser’ sino ,llegar a ser tal o cual cosa».

Here Aristotle explains the distinction between the becoming of simple things and that of complex things, having affirmed at the beginning a very general statement that applies to both: all forms of becoming go from something to something different.<sup>17</sup> Examples of simple things include ‘a man’ or ‘musical’; whereas examples of complex things include ‘a musical man’ or ‘a non-musical man’. We thus have a criterion of simplicity/complexity that is given in the first place by the language used to refer to these objects. After these preliminary remarks, Aristotle begins an inquiry about the different ways in which a simple or complex thing could come to be.

### Linguistic expressions of coming to be

The text of *Physics* I 7 continues as follow:

τούτων δὲ τὸ μὲν οὐ μόνον λέγεται τόδε τι<sup>18</sup> γίνεσθαι ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐκ τοῦδε, οἷον ἐκ μὴ μουσικοῦ μουσικός, τὸ δ' οὐ λέγεται ἐπὶ πάντων· οὐ γὰρ ἐξ ἀνθρώπου ἐγένετο μουσικός, ἀλλ' ἄνθρωπος ἐγένετο μουσικός. τῶν δὲ γιγνομένων ὡς τὰ ἀπλᾶ λέγομεν γίνεσθαι, τὸ μὲν ὑπομένον γίγνεται τὸ δ' οὐχ ὑπομένον· ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἄνθρωπος ὑπομένει μουσικὸς γιγνόμενος ἄνθρωπος καὶ ἔστι, τὸ δὲ μὴ μουσικὸν καὶ τὸ ἄμουσον οὔτε ἀπλῶς οὔτε συντεθειμένον ὑπομένει. διωρισμένων δὲ τούτων, ἐξ ἀπάντων τῶν γιγνομένων τοῦτο ἔστι λαβεῖν, ἐάν τις ἐπιβλέψῃ ὥσπερ λέγομεν, ὅτι δεῖ τι αἰεὶ ὑποκεῖσθαι τὸ γιγνόμενον, καὶ τοῦτο εἰ καὶ ἀριθμῶ ἔστιν ἓν, ἀλλ' εἶδει γε οὐχ ἓν· τὸ γὰρ εἶδει λέγω καὶ λόγῳ ταυτὸν· οὐ γὰρ ταυτὸν τὸ ἀνθρώπῳ καὶ τὸ ἀμούσῳ εἶναι. καὶ τὸ μὲν ὑπομένει, τὸ δ' οὐχ ὑπομένει· τὸ μὲν μὴ ἀντικείμενον ὑπομένει (ὁ γὰρ ἄνθρωπος ὑπομένει), τὸ μὴ μουσικὸν δὲ καὶ τὸ ἄμουσον οὐχ ὑπομένει, οὐδὲ τὸ ἐξ ἀμοῦσιν συγκείμενον, οἷον ὁ ἄμουσος ἄνθρωπος.

In some cases, we say not only ‘this becomes something’, but also ‘from being this it comes to be that’ (e.g.: from being not-musical he comes to be musical); but we do not say this in all cases, as we do not say from being a man he came to be musical but only the man became musical. These distinctions drawn, one can gather from surveying the various cases of becoming in the way we are describing that there must always be an underlying something, namely that which becomes, and that this, though always one numerically, in form at least is not one. (By ‘in form’ I mean the same as ‘in account’.) For to be a man is not the same as to be unmusical. One part survives, the other does not: what is not an opposite survives (for the man survives), but not-musical or unmusical does not survive, nor does the compound of the two, namely the unmusical man (*Ph.* I 7, 190a5-21. ROT modified).

We now approach one of the distinctions that will be fundamental to the purpose of this paper, namely the difference between ‘this becomes something’ (τόδε γίνεσθαί τι) and ‘becoming something from this’ (ἐκ τοῦδε γίνεσθαί τι). Aristotle informs us that there are cases of becoming where we can use both expressions. In fact, we could say both that ‘not-musical comes to be musical’ and that ‘from being not-musical he comes to be musical’. In other cases, however, it is preferable to use only one of the two expressions. I will soon discuss the criterion besides these peculiarities. There is also a textual problem at 190a6, with some manuscripts that have τόδε τι γίνεσθαι instead of τόδε γίνεσθαι. My argument is independent from the linguistic choice we face here, but it is remarkable that in a part of the manuscript tradition we already find in this passage the problematic expression (τόδε τι γίνεσθαι) that is present in 190a32. In any case, some translators think that there is an undefined pronoun (τι) that functions as object complement for the

<sup>17</sup> For the differentiation between ἕτερον and ἄλλο see (MORISON, 2019) 233-234.

<sup>18</sup> Mss. E<sup>1</sup>VPS<sup>P</sup>T have τόδε, whereas E<sup>2</sup>AS<sup>c</sup> have τόδε τι.

verb ‘to come to be’ in the manuscript<sup>19</sup>. If we want to translate the lesson *τόδε γίνεσθαι* literally, as Charlton does, we would use “this comes to be”, but in this way we run the risk of interpreting this form as identical to the simple generation that is exclusive to the substances and will be introduced only some lines below by Aristotle. I therefore think that the lesson *τόδε τι γίνεσθαι* should be taken seriously into account and that it may also be preferable to the text accepted in Ross’ edition of *Physics*.

In any case, having stated this distinction, Aristotle makes some important considerations about the need for an underlying subject in any kind of becoming. This *ὑποκείμενον* is identified with the thing which comes to be (*τὸ γιγνόμενον*), and that is not “one” in form or account, though always “one” numerically<sup>20</sup>. Regarding the different elements of the expression “to come to be”, there are therefore things that can be an underlying subject and others, the opposites (*τὰ ἀντικείμενα*), which do not remain. Aristotle indicates ‘man’ as an example of underlying subject, while ‘musical’ and ‘not-musical’, besides all compounds, are cases that do not survive becoming. With all these differences in mind we can approach the last section before the problematic passage of 190a31-34.

τὸ δ' ἔκ τινος γίνεσθαι τι, καὶ μὴ τόδε γίνεσθαι τι<sup>21</sup>, μᾶλλον μὲν λέγεται ἐπὶ τῶν μὴ ὑπομενόντων, οἷον ἐξ ἀμούσου μουσικὸν γίνεσθαι, ἐξ ἀνθρώπου δὲ οὐ· οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ὑπομενόντων ἐνίοτε λέγεται ὡσαύτως· ἐκ γὰρ χαλκοῦ ἀνδριάντα γίνεσθαι φάμεν, οὐ τὸν χαλκὸν ἀνδριάντα. τὸ μέντοι ἐκ τοῦ ἀντικειμένου καὶ μὴ ὑπομένουτος ἀμφοτέρως λέγεται, καὶ ἐκ τοῦδε τόδε καὶ τόδε τόδε· καὶ γὰρ ἐξ ἀμούσου καὶ ὁ ἄμουσος γίγνεται μουσικός· διὸ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ συγκειμένου ὡσαύτως· καὶ γὰρ ἐξ ἀμούσου ἀνθρώπου καὶ ὁ ἄμουσος ἄνθρωπος γίνεσθαι λέγεται μουσικός.

We speak of ‘becoming something from this’ instead of ‘this becoming something’ more in the case of what does not survive the change—‘becoming musical from unmusical’, not ‘from man’—but we sometimes use the latter form of expression even of what survives; we speak of a statue coming to be from bronze, not of the bronze becoming a statue. The change, however, from an opposite which does not survive is described in both ways, ‘becoming something from this’ or ‘this becoming something’. We say both that the unmusical becomes musical, and that from unmusical he becomes musical. And so both forms are used of the complex, ‘becoming a musical from an unmusical man’, and ‘an unmusical man becoming musical’ (*Ph. I 7, 190a21-31. ROT*).

We are now able to propose an exhaustive classification of linguistic expression according to the different ways in which something can come to be.<sup>22</sup> There are essentially three expressions that can be used to speak about coming to be.<sup>23</sup>

**(I)** *ἔκ τινος γίνεσθαι τι* (becoming B from A). This expression is used especially for things that do not remain (*ἐξ ἀμούσου <γίνεσθαι> μουσικόν, 190a23*). It is used also for all compounds (*ἐξ ἀμούσου ἀνθρώπου γίνεσθαι μουσικός, 190a30-31*) and for

<sup>19</sup> For example, in ROT.

<sup>20</sup> See (MORISON, 2019) for a claim about the dual nature of *ὑποκείμενον* (one part of which persists, i.e. matter, and the other does not, i.e. privation).

<sup>21</sup> Mss. E<sup>1</sup>J<sup>2</sup>VP have *τόδε γίνεσθαι*, whereas the others have *τόδε γίνεσθαι τι*.

<sup>22</sup> See also (CERAMI, 2015) 78-85.

<sup>23</sup> The classification I propose is not entirely explicit in Aristotle’s text. His main interest is to establish the distinction (remaining/non-remaining things) about the items that are the starting point of the change in question.

substances (καὶ αἱ οὐσίαι καὶ ὅσα [ἄλλα] ἀπλῶς ὄντα ἐξ ὑποκειμένου τινὸς γίγνεται, 190b1-3). However, this expression cannot be used in *all* cases. In fact, we may suppose that there are three subcategories depending on whether the terms considered are both things which remain/do not remain or if one of them is an underlying subject which remains:<sup>24</sup>

1a. *From A (which does not remain) comes to be B (which does not remain)*, e. g. ἐξ ἀμούσου <γίγνεσθαι> μουσικὸν (190a23).

1b. *From A (which remains) comes to be B (which remains)*, e. g. ἐκ χαλκοῦ <γίγνεσθαι> ἀνδριάντα (190a25); ἐκ ξύλων <γίγνεσθαι> τὴν ναῦν (Themistius, *In Ph.* 25.2-3).

1c. *From A (which remains) comes to be B (which does not remain)*, e. g. ἐξ ἀνθρώπου ἐγένετο μουσικός (190a8-9 and 190a23).

The last form (1c) is incorrect for Aristotle, because it is not true that from the simple ‘man’ we would have the coming to be of ‘musical’. For such expression of becoming to be correct we should have compounds, such as ‘the musical man’. In that way the wording would work, since the expression ‘becoming B from A’ always works for compounds: ‘becoming a musical from an unmusical man’, and ‘an unmusical man becoming musical’ (190a29-31).

(2) τόδε γίγνεσθαί τι (A comes to be B). This expression is used for things which do not remain (ἄνθρωπος ἐγένετο μουσικός 190a8, ὁ ἄμουσος γίγνεται μουσικός, 190a28-29) and for all compounds (ὁ ἄμουσος ἄνθρωπος γίγνεσθαι μουσικός, 190a30-31). It is preferable not to use this expression for substance generation (οὐ τὸν χαλκὸν ἀνδριάντα, 190a25-26). As with the previous case, we can draw up three subcategories from this expression:

2a. *A (which does not remain) comes to be B (which does not remain)*, e. g. ὁ ἄμουσος γίγνεται μουσικός (190a28-29).

2b. *A (which remains) comes to be B (which remains)*, e. g. τὸν χαλκὸν <γίγνεσθαι> ἀνδριάντα (190a25-26); τὰ ξύλα γίγνεσθαι ναῦν (Themistius, *In Ph.* 25.3).

2c. *A (which remains) comes to be B (which does not remain)*, e. g. ἄνθρωπος ἐγένετο μουσικός (190a8); ἄνθρωπος γέγονεν λευκὸς ἢ μουσικὸς (Philoponus, *In Ph.* 158.15).

The second form (2b), although it might turn out to be permissible, is not the expression we prefer to use in case of becoming between things which remains. For this reason, while “becoming B from A” could currently be used for substantial generation, “A comes to be B” hardly meant a change according to the substance, even if it is possible.<sup>25</sup>

(3) γίγνεσθαι ἀπλῶς (A comes to be). This expression is used only for substance becoming (ἀπλῶς δὲ γίγνεσθαι τῶν οὐσιῶν μόνον, 190a32-33). We cannot say, for example, that ‘musical’ or ‘unmusical’ come to be without qualification.

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<sup>24</sup> Aristotle does not take into account the case of becoming a thing which remains from a thing which does not remain.

<sup>25</sup> See (CODE, 1976), 360-361; (CHARLES, 2018), 183; (MORISON, 2019), 249-250.

We can now go back to the problematic passage (190a31-34) and see how this fits perfectly into the discourse on the different expressions to speak about the becoming.

But ‘coming to be’ is said in many senses and, on the one hand, some things are not said to ‘come to be’ but ‘this becomes something’, on the other hand only substances are said to ‘come to be absolutely’, regarding the other things it is clear that there must be something underlying, namely that which becomes.

Introducing the third form, that of coming to be without qualification (which belongs only to substances), Aristotle still refers to the distinctions made previously. Consistently therefore, Aristotle opposes the type of substance becoming to that of the second type. On the one hand we have the γίνεσθαι ἀπλῶς (A comes to be), on the other hand, we have the τόδε γίνεσθαι τι (A comes to be B), that hardly applies to substance generation. There is therefore no need to introduce at this point a new form of becoming, such as that is affirmed, more or less explicitly, by some translators. In addition, there is no example in any part of the text of what should be ‘come to be a particular thing’ (γίνεσθαι τόδε τι). The most straightforward option is therefore to interpret the τόδε τι γίνεσθαι of 190a32 as τόδε γίνεσθαι τι (A comes to be B), and so to identify this expression with the second form of becoming. The fact that Aristotle does not introduce here any other distinction besides that of substantial generation, is also confirmed by the next lines, where the form (1) returns to play a considerable role.

κατὰ μὲν ἄλλα φανερόν ὅτι ἀνάγκη ὑποκεῖσθαι τι τὸ γιγνόμενον (καὶ γὰρ ποσὸν καὶ ποιὸν καὶ πρὸς ἕτερον καὶ ποτὲ καὶ πού γίγνεται ὑποκειμένου τινὸς διὰ τὸ μόνην τὴν οὐσίαν μηθενὸς κατ' ἄλλου λέγεσθαι ὑποκειμένου, τὰ δ' ἄλλα πάντα κατὰ τῆς οὐσίας)· ὅτι δὲ καὶ αἱ οὐσίαι καὶ ὅσα [ἄλλα] ἀπλῶς ὄντα ἐξ ὑποκειμένου τινὸς γίγνεται, ἐπισκοποῦντι γένοιτο ἂν φανερόν. αἰεὶ γὰρ ἔστι ὃ ὑπόκειται, ἐξ οὗ τὸ γιγνόμενον, οἷον τὰ φυτὰ καὶ τὰ ζῷα ἐκ σπέρματος.

Now in all cases other than substance it is plain that there must be something underlying, namely, that which becomes. For when a thing comes to be of such a quantity or quality or in such a relation, time, or place, a subject is always presupposed, since substance alone is not predicated of another subject, but everything else of substance. But that substances too, and anything that can be said to be without qualification, come to be from some underlying thing, will appear on examination. For we find in every case something that underlies from which proceeds that which comes to be; for instance, animals and plants from seed (*Ph.* I 7, 190a33-b5. ROT).

Substances make no exception regarding the need for an underlying subject. In this context, the first type of expression describing (becoming B from A) shows accurately that both substances and things which do not remain are said to come to be by something else. Therefore, when we talk about substance coming to be, we prefer to use expression (1) or (3). In the first case, the presence of an underlying subject is made explicit, because the particle ἐκ makes manifest what the substance comes from (the seed for animals and plants). Instead, in the case of coming to be without qualification, only the new substance generated is expressed, even if in any case there must be an underlying subject. So, I think I have sufficiently justified how the problematic passage of 190a31-34 – because of the τόδε τι expression – is finally fully intelligible in the construction that I propose.

Otherwise, the text of *Physics* I 7 would pose a serious problem, because we would have τόδε τι in opposition to the becoming of substances. But normally τόδε τι is associated with the substance and its kind of becoming. *Physics* I 7 is not an exception in

this regard, because in this chapter we have three other occurrences of τόδε τι and, in each of them, the relation with substance generation is manifest.<sup>26</sup> It is difficult therefore to think that τόδε τι was opposed to the unqualified generation in 190a31-34 and then, after only a few of Bekker's lines, it is described as its result. I am convinced that this fact further confirms to eliminate the reference of τόδε τι in the τόδε τι γίνεσθαι of 190a32 and to interpret the expression as τόδε γίνεσθαι τι.

A final confirmation can be found in *On generation and corruption* I 3. Here, Aristotle faces the question concerning the cause of the unbroken continuity of coming to be.

Διὰ τί δέ ποτε τὰ μὲν ἀπλῶς γίνεσθαι λέγεται καὶ φθείρεσθαι τὰ δ' οὐχ ἀπλῶς, πάλιν σκεπτέον, εἴπερ τὸ αὐτό ἐστὶ γένεσις μὲν τοῦδὶ φθορὰ δὲ τοῦδί, καὶ φθορὰ μὲν τοῦδὶ γένεσις δὲ τοῦδί· ζητεῖ γὰρ τίνα τοῦτο λόγον. Λέγομεν γὰρ ὅτι φθείρεται νῦν ἀπλῶς, καὶ οὐ μόνον τοδί· καὶ αὕτη μὲν γένεσις ἀπλῶς, αὕτη δὲ φθορὰ. Τοδί δὲ γίνεται μὲν τι, γίνεται δ' ἀπλῶς οὐ· φαμέν γὰρ τὸν μανθάνοντα γίνεσθαι μὲν ἐπιστήμονα, γίνεσθαι δ' ἀπλῶς οὐ.

Yet, if the same process is a coming-to-be of this but a passing-away of that, and a passing-away of this but a coming-to-be of that, why are some things said to come-to-be and pass-away without qualification, but others only with a qualification? This question must be investigated once more, for it demands some explanation. For we say 'it is now passing-away' without qualification, and not merely 'this is passing-away'; and we call this change coming-to-be, and that passing-away, without qualification. And 'this comes-to-be something' but does not come-to-be without qualification; for we say that the student comes-to-be learned, not comes-to-be without qualification (*GC* I 3, 318a27-35. Text ed. M. Rashed. ROT modified).

This separation between coming to be without qualification (γίνεται ἀπλῶς) and coming to be something (γίνεται τι) has a pivotal role in the argumentation of the first book of *GC*. In fact, Aristotle seeks to show that the two forms of becoming are not equivalent, otherwise one would fall back into the confusion of the early physicists, who on the one hand identified generation and alteration, and on the other hand interpreted the generation as a form of association. For this reason, Aristotle presents many arguments in order to properly separate the two forms of becoming. The possibility of this differentiation lies in the fact that one can separate the results of the two types of becoming. From γένεσις ἀπλῆ we have a unitary being, a whole (ὅλον) as the product, while from γένεσις τις we have an accidental compound or something partial and relative that ultimately refers to a substance. What comes to be without qualification is, on the contrary, something positive and determined, i.e. a τόδε τι.<sup>27</sup> Socrates' generation is

<sup>26</sup> Arist. *Ph.* I 7, 190b23-27: «now the subject is one numerically, though it is two in form. (For there is the man, the gold—in general, the countable matter; for it is more of the nature of a 'this' (τόδε τι), and what comes to be does not come from it accidentally; the privation, on the other hand, and the contrariety are accidental)» ROT; 191a7-14: «the underlying nature can be known by analogy. For as the bronze is to the statue, the wood to the bed, or the matter and the formless before receiving form to anything which has form, so is the underlying nature to substance, i.e. the 'this' (τόδε τι) or existent. This then is one principle (though not one or existent in the same sense as the 'this' (τόδε τι)); one is the form or definition; then further there is its contrary, the privation» ROT.

<sup>27</sup> This is also confirmed by Alexander of Aphrodisias' commentary of *Metaphysics*. See for example *In metaph.* 153.15-154.4: «But there is a coming-to-be that is change from what does not yet exist to existing as this particular thing (εἰς τὸ εἶναι τόδε τι), as air is said to come to be from water» (tr. by W. E. Dooley and A. Madigan). See also *In metaph.* 541, 12-13 and 546, 23-29.

therefore a case of substantial generation, while Socrates becoming cultivated is an example of a coming to be something partial.<sup>28</sup>

As said before, this text supports this interpretation further. The reason is the following: in the last lines of the text we find the same opposition that was at the centre of the *Physics* passage. Aristotle says that «‘this comes to be something’ (Τὸδὲ γίνεταί τι) but does not ‘come to be without qualification’ (γίνεταί ἀπλῶς)». The syntactic structure of the sentence fits perfectly with that of *Physics* I 7, 190a31-34, where we read: «some things are not said to ‘come to be’ but ‘this comes to be something’ (τόδε τι γίνεσθαι), on the other hand only substances are said to ‘come to be without qualification’ (ἀπλῶς γίνεσθαι)». This coincidence confirms that the proposed division between the different forms of becoming and the opposition between (2) and (3), is so important for Aristotle that it is also taken up in *GC*. Therefore, if we take seriously the meaning of τόδε τι in generative contexts (always in connection with the substance) and the analysis of the different ways of speaking about the becoming, then I think that the understanding of *Physics* I 7, 190a31-34 I defend is the only acceptable.

### Ancient commentators

I will now consider the commentaries of Philoponus, Themistius and Simplicius concerning the problematic passage of *Physics* I 7. Firstly, Philoponus comments as follow:

εἴρηται πολλάκις ὅτι ἀπλῆν μὲν γένεσιν τὴν τῶν οὐσιῶν καλεῖ, τινὰ δὲ τὴν τῶν συμβεβηκότων, διότι ἐπὶ μὲν τῶν κατ' οὐσίαν γινομένων ἀπλῶς φαμεν ὅτι γέγονεν ἄνθρωπος, ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς γενέσεως οὐχ ἀπλῶς γεγονέναι φαμέν, ἀλλὰ τὶ γεγονέναι· λευκὸς γὰρ γέγονεν ἢ μουσικὸς ἄνθρωπος.

It has often been said that Aristotle uses the term ‘come to be’ by itself for the development of substances, and ‘<becoming> something’ for the development of attributes, because in the case of things that develop in respect of substance we say simply that ‘a human being was born’ but in the case of development in respect of attribute we do not say simply that it came to be, but that it became something. The person became pale, or musical.<sup>29</sup>

As you can see, Philoponus eliminates the reference to τόδε τι and talks about ‘becoming something’ (τὶ γεγονέναι) as opposed to ‘come to be without qualifications’. His commentary therefore seems to go in the direction I propose, even if following his exegesis, we lose continuity with the linguistic and grammatical analysis previously made by Aristotle. In this way, in fact, it seems that we drop the reference, which in my opinion is present, to the second form of becoming (A comes to be B). But in the end, we see that this form of becoming is exactly the one in question, because the two examples given by Philoponus represent perfectly the formula: «the person (A) became pale (B), or musical (B)».

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<sup>28</sup> See Arist. *GC* I 3, 317b35, where coming to be without qualification is opposed to partial (κατὰ μέρος) coming to be.

<sup>29</sup> Philoponus, *In Ph.* 16.158.9-15. (tr. by C. Osborne). Note that these lines are from the *lexis* part of the commentary (the *theōria* section starts at 155.11); Philoponus’ intention is therefore to elucidate what Aristotle’s actual wording expresses.

In the commentaries of Themistius and Simplicius, on the contrary, the reference to *τόδε τι* is maintained. Here the interpretation provided by Themistius:

πολλαχῶς τοῖνον τοῦ γίνεσθαι λεγομένου καὶ τῶν μὲν οὐ γίνεσθαι ἀπλῶς λεγομένων ἀλλὰ τόδε τι γίνεσθαι, ἀπλῶς δὲ γίνεσθαι λεγομένων τῶν οὐσιῶν (τὸ μὲν γὰρ λευκὸν οὐχ ἀπλῶς γίνεσθαι ἀλλὰ τόδε τι πάντως· σῶμα γὰρ γίνεταί λευκὸν καὶ διπηχυαῖον [γίνεταί] οὐχ ἀπλῶς ἀλλὰ τουτὶ τὸ δένδρον· φυτὸν μέντοι γίνεταί ἀπλῶς καὶ ἄνθρωπος γίνεταί ἀπλῶς).

Now ‘to come to be’ is said in many ways. Some things are not said to ‘come to be without qualification’ but ‘this comes to be something’, only substances are said to ‘come to be without qualification’. White is not said ‘to come to be without qualification’ but invariably ‘this [comes to be] something’, since a body becomes white and two cubit long does not come to simply, but this very tree [comes to be two cubit long]. A plant, however, comes to be simply and a human being comes to be simply.<sup>30</sup>

Compared to the Aristotelian text, Themistius immediately identifies simple becoming with coming to be without qualification (*ἀπλῶς*). Later he gives some examples to explain the two types of becoming. Unfortunately, the examples concerning the *τόδε τι γίνεσθαι* are not so intelligible. Also, it is difficult to understand how we must read the sentence «τὸ μὲν γὰρ λευκὸν οὐχ ἀπλῶς γίνεσθαι ἀλλὰ τόδε τι πάντως· σῶμα γὰρ γίνεταί λευκὸν καὶ διπηχυαῖον [γίνεταί]<sup>31</sup> οὐχ ἀπλῶς ἀλλὰ τουτὶ τὸ δένδρον». R. B. Todd’s translation «white is not said simply to come to be but invariably as a given thing» is slightly obscure, because it is difficult to figure out what it means for white to become a particular or a given thing. If the example he had in mind was something like «white comes to be this white human», I think that the interpretation is questionable, since Aristotle never uses this formula to talk about the coming to be of things which do not remain. In addition, the following sentence, which should explain the meaning of the first statement, is equally problematic. Even taking the lesson of the manuscript W (Venetus S. Marci 205), where the second *γίνεταί* does not appear, interpretative problems remain. It seems that Themistius meant something like this: a body come to be white and two cubits long does not come to be without qualification. In fact, only a this something (e.i. *τουτὶ τὸ δένδρον*) can become two cubits long and this is not a form of becoming without qualification. Conversely, we can say unambiguously that the human being and the plant come to be without qualification.

Finally, we have Simplicius’ commentary:

καὶ πρῶτον μὲν ἐπισημαίνεται, ὅτι <πολλαχῶς λεγομένου τοῦ γίνεσθαι> καὶ τοσαυταχῶς ὅσα ἐστὶ τὰ γινόμενα, ἐπὶ μὲν τῶν ἐννέα κατηγοριῶν οὐ γίνεσθαι ἀπλῶς λέγομεν, <ἀλλὰ τόδε τι γίνεσθαι>. τὴν γὰρ ὑποκειμένην οὐσίαν οὐ γίνεσθαι ἀπλῶς, ἀλλὰ λευκὸν γίνεσθαι ἢ τρίπηχυ ἢ δεξιὸν λέγομεν, ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς οὐσίας οἷον τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ὅτι γίνεταί ἄνθρωπος λέγομεν, ἀλλ’ οὐ τόδε τι γίνεταί. τούτου δὲ αἴτιον τὸ τὴν οὐσίαν μὲν αὐτὴν καθ’ αὐτὴν ὑφ’ ἐστῶσαν καθ’ ἑαυτὴν γίνεσθαι, τῶν δὲ ἄλλων ἐν τῇ οὐσίᾳ τὸ εἶναι ἐχόντων ἢ οὐσία καθ’ αὐτὰ λέγεται γίνεσθαι, ἀλλ’ οὐχ ἀπλῶς οὐδὲ καθ’ ἑαυτὴν.

And first he indicates that ‘coming to be is spoken of in several ways’ and in as many ways as there are kinds of things which come to be. In the case of the nine categories

<sup>30</sup> Themistius, *In Ph.* 5, 2.27.13-18. (tr. by R. B. Todd modified). Here the (wrong) translation made by Todd: «some things are said not simply to come to be but to come to be this given thing».

<sup>31</sup> This *γίνεταί* is missing in the lesson of W. Spengel proposed to eliminate the *ἀλλὰ* that follows.

[other than substance], we do not say that something ‘comes to be without qualification’, but that ‘this come to be something’. For [in the case of these categories] we do not say that the underlying substance comes to be without qualification, but that it comes to be white or three feet long or to the right. But in the case of a substance such as human we say human comes to be, not that ‘this come to be something’. The reason for this is that because substance exists on its own it comes to be on its own, but, since other things have their being in substance, substance is said to come to be with respect to them, but not in the sense of coming to be without qualification or on its own.<sup>32</sup>

Simplicius makes explicit reference to the theory in the *Categories* to explain the difference between the two forms of becoming: only for the category of substance we can say to come to be without qualification, for the other nine categories, on the other hand, we can only say «τόδε τι γίνεσθαι». I modified the translation of I. Mueller («it comes to be some particular thing») to see if this interpretation could agree to Simplicius’ text. In fact, I think that it can, especially if we look at the examples that the commentator proposes. For categories other than substance we say that something, or better the underlying substance (ὑποκειμένην οὐσίαν) comes to be «white or three feet long or to the right». The structure of the second form of becoming (A comes to be B) is clearly represented. For substances, on the contrary, we say only that «human comes to be», because οὐσία exist on its own and does not need to have another term in the structure of becoming. Nevertheless, substance also appears in the other forms of becoming, because non-substantial attributes (the other nine categories) must refer to a substance in order to exist and to come to be. Finally, we can say that Simplicius closely follows Aristotle’s linguistic analysis of becoming proposed in *Physics* I 7 and integrates this survey with the *Categories* theory, separating the way of being of substances from that of the other nine categories.<sup>33</sup>

## Conclusion

In this paper, I hope to have shown how the proposed understanding of *Physics* I 7, 190a31-34 is preferable in many ways to other translations and interpretations.

But ‘coming to be’ is said in many senses and, on the one hand, some things are not said to ‘come to be’ but ‘this comes to be something’, on the other hand only substances are said to ‘come to be without qualification’, regarding the other things it is clear that there must be something underlying, namely that which becomes.

On this interpretation, the continuation of Aristotelian analysis on the different ways of saying the becoming is made explicit. In particular, the opposition is between the form (2) of becoming and form (3), which is used only for substances. At the same time, there can be no confusion in this passage regarding the technical notion of τόδε τι. Furthermore, the strong parallel with *On generation and corruption* I 3, 318a27-35 has highlighted that the formula ‘A comes to be B’ is opposed to γίνεσθαι ἀπλῶς not only in the *Physics*.

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<sup>32</sup> Simplicius, *In Ph.* 9.212.25-31. (tr. by I. Mueller modified). Here the (wrong) translation made by Muller: «we do not say that something comes to be without qualification, but that it comes to be some particular thing».

<sup>33</sup> A different interpretation is still possible: one can argue that Simplicius’ move is to ascribes the coming to be of attributes to the coming to be of substances with respect to these non-substance items, its attributes. As substance is a τόδε τι, one can say that the coming to be of each attribute is a coming to be of a τόδε τι with respect to that attribute. Although it is possible to interpret Simplicius’ text in this way, I think that my proposal is the easiest option.

Finally, ancient commentators can be understood according to my interpretation and do not say anything in the opposite direction.

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