

Alexander of Aphrodisias on Universals. The Problem of the Mind-dependence of Universal Items

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Alexander of Aphrodisias is commonly considered as one of the important authors for the debate on universals in Ancient philosophy. Yet, many scholars point to serious problems in his account of universals. The main difficulty is his claim that universals are mind-dependent entities (especially *De Anima*, 90,2-11 ; but also *Questiones* 1.3 and 3.3). Many scholars have suggested that this creates an inconsistency in his account, since he also says that the existence of universals depends on their being in many things (cf. Tweedale 1984, Tweedale 1993, Sirkel 2011). This problem has been tackled by many scholars, but none of them came up with a satisfactory solution (cf. Sharples 2005a, Sorabji 2004).

In my paper I propose a solution which is based on three elements: 1) broader understanding of the term 'universal' in Alexander; most scholars assume that the defining feature of a universal in Alexander is 'being in many things' (so called universal-b, as defined by Sharples in Sharples 2005b); I suggest that this should be broadened also to include 'being capable of being in many things' (universal-a, as defined by Sharples); 2) on my account Alexander's claim about mind dependence of universals should be understood in the sense of universal-a; on my account forms come to be universal-a only when apprehended by the intellect; when they are enmattered they are not yet universal-a; thus universal-a forms exist only when apprehended by the intellect; 3) in order to explain how the form is not yet universal-a when it is enmattered and bound with matter, we need to take into account the fact that enmattered forms in Alexander are particular, i.e. they are numerically different in each particular; there is a lot of evidence in Alexander that he held this position, most notably in his commentary to the *Metaphysics*; to find evidence in Alexander's *De Anima* for this position I point to the notion of "potential intelligibility" which is found in the account of intellectual cognition in his text.

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