

# **A History of Philosophy**

## **11 Aristotle's Metaphysics 2**

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Okay, back to Aristotle's metaphysics. And you recall that in discussing his metaphysics, we've talked about how he defines metaphysics as the science of all sciences, the most general principles. Therefore, his development of his own theory of forms in response to what he sees as inadequacies in Plato's, and his distinction of four kinds of causal factor that have to be appealed to in explaining what anything is and explaining any kind of change.

The four kinds of cause are efficient cause, material cause, formal cause, and final cause. You ought to know those until they just come out in your dreams and you're talking about them in your sleep. Metaphysics is the science of being.

There are particular sciences dealing with particular kinds of beings. But the science of being qua being, being in general as the most general concept, is what metaphysics is about. And so Aristotle distinguishes, you remember, between different categories of being, that is to say, different ways in which we use this general notion of being.

Substances, qualities, places, relationships, so on and so on and so forth. He actually enumerates ten different categories, and I'll come back to those subsequently. We also started talking about the laws of being.

Laws of thought, they are as well, just as the categories of being are also categories of thought. Notice there's a correlation between the way in which the mind functions, thinks, and the way in which reality is. You'll see.

If reality is rational and we are rational, then our rationality provides us with an entrée to reality. Get it? If reality is rational and we are rational, then our rationality gives us an entrée to reality. Okay? Now, the laws of being are these three.

We talked about the first one, which is the crucial one. The rest just follow from that. The law of non-contradiction states that a being cannot both be and not be something at the same time and in the same respect.

And by that same token, you cannot both affirm and deny something at the same time and in the same respect. And we symbolise that law of non-contradiction typically by simply saying that A is not non-A. A is not non-A.

It cannot both be and not be. It cannot be this and not be this at the same time and in the same respect. And, of course, with that double negative, it's tantamount to the law of identity, that A equals A. The thing is identical with itself.

I am I. You are you. Let's not get ourselves mixed up. A cat is a cat, not a catastrophe.

I had a Latin teacher in high school who, when somebody asked, is this the word from which we get our word so-and-so, would sometimes get frustrated at the imagination of young high school students and, with his Scottish accent, would say, hey, my lad, a cat is a cat and not a catastrophe. And so forth. Law of identity.

A cat is a cat, not a catastrophe. It may become a catastrophe, but that would be at a different time. OK.

A equals A. Then, also implicit in the law of non-contradiction is the law of the excluded middle. Something either is or is not. No other alternatives.

No third alternative. A or non-A. No third alternative.

This is often referred to as a two-valued logic. If A and non-A are true and false, truth and falsity, then there's no other alternative. There's no third alternative.

So the law of excluded middle gives you a two-valued logic, and some modern logics have questioned that third law. But it's the first two which are crucial in any case. There's some subtlety in the third one.

Is that what Aristotle was talking about when he was going on about how there are Zeno's paradoxes and such, how people try to compromise if there's something in the middle? Yes, exactly. White, black, and green. Yes, white, black, and green.

If you've got white... Whoops. White... I'd better learn how to write. If you've got white, black, and green... You say, does that mean...? I'd better learn how to read.

Does that mean you've got three-valued? No. Because white and black are not contradictories. You see, the contradictories would be white and not white.

And in that sense, you've got white, and then these two are not white. Or if you've got it, you've got green and not green. Or black and not black.

You see. The point is that while white and not white are contradictories, white and black are not contradictories; they're rather what Aristotle calls contraries. And if any of you are taking Intro to Logic, you've run into that difference before.

How many of you are taking or have taken Introduction to Logic? No, you won't be taking it currently, because it's the same hour as this, isn't it? Yeah. Okay. So, keep these three laws of thought in the back of your mind for recall, keeping in mind that they're also laws of being, since if all being is rational, and if our thinking is rational, then correct thinking gives you entrée to being.

Now, a couple of other items that I want to mention before we move on. The category of substance. Aristotle is forever saying now there are three senses of this and two senses of that and four of the other, and when he comes to talking about substance, he distinguishes two, sometimes he distinguishes three senses of the word substance.

In one sense, it is particulars that are substances. Particulars or parts of, or contents of particulars that are substances. So, this marker is a substance.

This desk is a substance. This hand is a substance. I'm a substance.

You know, notice the obvious point that in philosophical uses of the term substance, it does not imply materiality. So, we speak later on historically of the soul as substance. That is to say, it's an entity.

It's a being in the primary sense of a being. A primary substance. It's a particular.

It's a thing. Now, there is a secondary sense of substance in which we refer to forms of substances. Forms.

And once in a while, he alludes to a third, a tertiary sense in which matter, bare, unformed matter, is spoken of as substance. But it's the first two that he really lays emphasis on. The first is actually referred to as the primary substance.

And the second as a secondary substance. Now, you may say, well, that's an interesting piece of the dictionary. So what? Well, so what is that Plato would never have said it that way.

Plato would never say that being is primarily particulars. Would he? You see. Plato would have said particulars aren't beings, they're becomings.

Remember? In other words, in saying that particulars are primary substances, he's saying that the primary kind of being, the primary realities, are particular things. That's revolutionary for Plato. What must the old man be thinking? For Plato, after all, the particulars are just fleeting copies of.

Now, for Aristotle, they're the primary reality. Yeah, but you might respond, well, aren't the forms also realities? Not in the same sense. You see, Aristotle insists that you never find forms by themselves.

Independent entities. You find particulars by themselves, as separate entities, but not forms. You only find forms in composite, in composition with matter, as particulars, particular bodies.

You see. The particulars, you remember, are hylomorphic. That is to say, form plus matter.

So while forms are real, they're real in a contingent sense. Alright, you're anticipating what comes in a very short while. Namely, one grand exception to the rule.

That you never find forms as separate entities. And it's by virtue of that, in God, that particular forms never change. We'll see how in just a little while.

But the primary, secondary substance, then, stresses the primacy of particulars. You know, you can put that in a myriad of ways. You can say that Aristotle is more down-to-earth.

Right? He's more of a physical realist. Plato is more of an idealist. Aristotle is more of a realist.

Yeah, and that terminology is used. Some interpreters of Plato, discarding his conception of God, have said, well, Aristotle is really a philosophical naturalist. Just talking about natural things, particulars.

But as these two traditions, the Platonic and the Aristotelian, are gradually transmitted on to the Middle Ages, you'll find that the theological ramifications that flow from these two alternatives are rather significant. The Platonic tradition informs the Augustinian and Franciscan traditions, whereas the Aristotelian tradition informs Thomas Aquinas and the Dominican tradition. The Jesuits.

Very significant. And that, incidentally, is true to this day. No, I didn't say without a form.

No, because a particular is a composite of form and matter. Particulars can stand alone. And separate entities.

Forms are not separate entities. Forms are not separate entities. They only exist in composite with matter.

So they don't exist? Well, they don't exist in any independent realm. There is no world of forms separate from matter. Where does the form come from? Well, it seems as if it's drawn out of the potential of the matter itself.

Yes? You have this composite of form and matter. The matter is in a process of changing, growing, for instance. The form, which gives the particular its nature, also gives it its potential.

So, in the case, for instance, of an infant, the body is growing, the matter expanding. The form of that infant gives it potential for becoming a human adult. So the telos, then, is identified by the potential of the form.

Get it? So that the final cause is to become, well, what you might call a flourishing adult. It depends. The ideal is not to become a disembodied adult.

Yes? It is for Plato. It's not for Aristotle. The ideal is to become a full-grown, fully functioning adult.

If particulars are primary and forms are secondary, where do matters lie? Is that tertiary? Yes, matter is tertiary. But you have to be careful here. Let's say bare matter is tertiary.

He does seem to think that there is a hypothetical bare matter. Not that it ever actually existed. But a hypothetical bare matter.

You have to be careful because when this is applied, and here I'm jumping ahead a little bit in order to flesh it out in response to your questions. If you are taking, for instance, a human being as a particular, a human person, well, a human person consists of rational form plus animal body. What distinguishes the human species is that we're rational beings.

So what distinguishes humans among the whole family of animals is rationality. Rational form plus animal body. But the animal body, of course, has the animal form, or as he likes to call it, the animal soul, plus the vegetative body.

Organic material. Vegetable body, matter, has what he calls vegetative form, or vegetative soul, nothing to do with the couch potato, and elemental matter, matter composed of elements. You see, and you work down that way to the hypothetical bare matter.

The point being that vegetable life, vegetative life, has functions of nutrition and reproduction. Animal life has functions of sensation and locomotion. But in addition to that, human beings have functions of rationality, rational functions.

So humans have rational functions, plus sensation, locomotion, nutrition, and reproduction. Other animals have sensation, locomotion, nutrition, and reproduction. Vegetative things have only nutrition and reproduction.

So the final cause is defined in those ways in terms of the form. The potential for a growing thing by virtue of nutrition and reproduction. The potential for a life that includes, in addition, sensation and locomotion.

The potential for a full life involving these, but including also rationality. And in that way, he gets his definition of the good from when we get to ethics. So that the good for Aristotle is a full life, that is to say, all of this, a full life under the rule of reason.

Yes. Human flourishing in that sense. Yeah, inanimate objects obviously are down here.

So that if you're talking of a rock, you'd have to talk there of elemental matter with this particular three-spatial form that it has. Or having the form of granite or something of that sort. And the question is, what is the bottom line? And the only thing you can talk about is what I call bare matter.

The Aristotelian medieval philosophers, the scholastics, talked of prime matter, *materia prima*. That is a matter in the first place. That hypothetical first place.

Carl? The idea of form has to be with a body or entity. Yes. I wonder how Aristotle would answer Plato's concepts of justice, beauty, or something like that.

It seems that, from Plato's perspective, Aristotle is caught in a cave. Yeah, I wonder if we could hold on to that question. The question is, how would Aristotle speak of things like justice and beauty? From Plato's standpoint, it seems as if Aristotle is staying around in the cave.

And say, what is justice itself, ideally? Beauty itself, ideally. Let's hold on to that, could we, until we get to his ethics. Because I think we need, in addition to this aspect of metaphysics, to get into something further about human psychology.

Into the picture. In order to answer that ethical question. Okay.

Alright. Now let's see. All that discussion arose from talking of primary and secondary substance.

Right? One last item. The distinction between essence and accident. Distinction between essence and accident.

Now, you can pick up on this if you turn to pages 331 and 332 in Kaufman. 331 and 332. Where in chapter 7 on 331.

He says, things are said to be. First, in an accidental sense. Second, by their own nature.

So once again, essence and accident are different ways in which things are. There are accidental properties. There are essential properties.

An essential property of a human being is rationality. That capacity, at least. An accidental property that isn't essential to the nature of human beings is that I have blue eyes.

At least so I'm told. That's accidental. In the sense that it's not essential to the nature of a human being.

Yes. So that's a simple enough distinction. Essence and accident.

Now, on 332 in chapter 8. He picks up on the distinction between substance in the primary and secondary sense. You notice he first enumerates one, two, three, and four senses. And then says it follows that substance has two senses.

Well, the first time I read that, I said to myself, what on earth is this? Two is not four. So four is now made into not four. What's happened to the law of non-contradiction? You see.

But not so. Because as you read the list of the four, numbers two and three conflate into number one. You may have noticed that I said particulars, primary substances, or parts of particulars or contents of particulars.

You see, particular contents of particulars, particular parts of particulars. And numbers two and three are just the parts and the contents. So one, two, and three conflate into number one as the primary substance.

Leaving simply the forms or essences of secondary substance. Okay. Now, I'm not going to make any further comments about the remainder of what you're reading in book four, which runs on to page 338.

You'll simply find that he talks of other ways in which we talk of being in various categories. He deals, for instance, on page 335 with the notion of potency, or capacity, potentiality, and actuality. He deals on 337 with affection.

That is to say, being affected by something. Part of the cause-effect relationship. And on section 22 at the bottom of 337 with privation.

That is to say, a lack of some property. Now, all of these, you can look through them in your reading. All of these are simply ways in which we speak of beings and being and beings.

So regard the whole of book four as simply dealing with being, categories of being, laws of being, and other ways in which we can talk of being. Okay. Any questions, comments? I'm ready to move on to book 12, God.

Okay. You recall that when we were dealing with Plato, I pointed out that in order to see the integral unity of Plato's thinking, we can picture what is going on as going out from the hub along the spokes to the rim of a wheel. And that the hub which holds it together, represented by the divided line, is essentially Plato's metaphysics and his corresponding epistemology.

The theory of knowledge, how to know this, which Plato thinks is the reality, the forms. Now, you can use the same sort of way of thinking about Aristotle. What you want to get at is his metaphysics, and that's what we've been getting at.

Then in the light of that metaphysics, you can see what he has to say about God. Okay. We can see what he has to say about ethics, politics, education, art, etc.

Okay. It's the metaphysical core, foundation, that shapes everything else. Let me add a footnote.

It's these metaphysical and correlated epistemological foundations, which are the philosophical undercurrent of every one of your disciplines, no matter what they are. What is philosophy of science? Well, it's dealing with the philosophical foundations of science. That is to say, with the metaphysical assumptions or implications, and with the epistemology involved in relation to science.

What does science tell us is real, if it tells us anything is real. How can we know it scientifically? If science doesn't tell us about reality, what is scientific knowledge that doesn't tell us anything about reality? Epistemological metaphysical foundations. The same is true in the philosophy of art.

What is the kind of reality with which the artist is concerned? Well, if you think, as Plato did, of art as imitation, art as imitation, ideally imitation of forms, then the kind of knowledge you need to be a good artist is knowledge of forms, underlying epistemology. If art is not about forms, but is rather a kind of self-expression, seeking a self-understanding through self-expression, then obviously you've got a different kind of reality, and a different kind of knowing that's involved, that accounts for that kind of art. The same is true in philosophy of religion.

What is the reality with which religion is concerned? God. So then religious epistemology has to do with the kind of knowing that's involved in knowing about God or knowing God. Do you follow? End of footnote.

Get it? Metaphysical epistemological foundations. All right, and similarly then, with Aristotle, now that we're moving on with him, to talking about God. And book 12 of the Metaphysics begins on 369, and runs on from there, in, I think it is, ten chapters in book 12.

Now, as you start reading book 12, you're likely to say to yourself, this isn't about God, it's about metaphysics again. Sure. For the reason I've just indicated.

You see? If you want an argument for the existence of God, you have to argue from your knowledge of other realities. So what are the realities? And so he needs another summary statement of his metaphysics. As a starting point for his argument.

So then, in chapter one, and on page 30, the new paragraph begins a third of the way down the first column of 370. 370. He says there are three kinds of substance.

One that is sensible. Not in our sense of sensible, but in his sense of sensible, which is accessible to the senses. Capable of being known by the senses.

Okay. Three kinds of substance. One that is sensible.

Physical. Of which one subdivision is eternal, and another is perishable. The latter, recognized by all men, includes plants, animals, and so forth.

Of which we may grasp the elements, whether one or many. And another, this is the third, that is immovable. And these certain thinkers are said to be capable of existing apart, some dividing it into two, others identifying forms in the objects of mathematics, and others positing that these two are only the objects of mathematics.

So he's got something that is perishable. That's physical bodies. Sensible, but eternal, not perishable.

Oh, an everlasting material body. Everlasting, particular. Yeah.

And the third, something wholly unchangeable, immovable. And obviously, he's thinking of forms, or perhaps the form of all forms. But forms, be they one, two, or many.

Okay? Well, you say the basic two there, particulars and forms, that's simply a review. But watch for this notion of an everlasting particular. An everlasting particular.

It is not God. It's not. No.

God is not a body. In chapter two that follows, he talks about four kinds of change that can occur. Top of the second column, lines four and five, changes are of four kinds.

Either in respect of the what, or quality, or of the quantity, or of the place, and in respect of thisness, generation, or destruction. Now, a change in respect of thisness, of being this particular thing. Okay? Well, that's simply a matter of becoming.

Being generated, or being destroyed. Okay? This particular comes to be, passes out of existence. That's one kind of change.

There's a second kind of change. Change in quantity. Increase or diminution.

Change in respect of an affection or quality. Is alteration. Change of place is locomotion.

Okay? Notice at the end of that paragraph, all things that change have matter. Of eternal things, those which are not generable, but are movable in space. Oh, he's back to that eternal physical thing.

You see? That eternal thing, it's not generable, it's eternal, but it's movable in space, has matter. Okay? Not matter for generation, but for motion. Yeah.

So he's including that in his thinking. Now, let me indicate where he's going. He's back to primary substances, particulars.

Primary substances, particulars. Of two kinds. Those that are perishable, and those that are everlasting.

Okay? Now, he does some of this in book 12, but some of it in his work De Caelo on the heavens. But what he's doing is this. He's thinking of a geocentric universe.

Earth at the center. Okay? On the surface of the Earth, all sorts of things change. Around the Earth, the planets orbit.

Physical particulars. Moving. Locomotion.

Changing. Notice the key to the argument is the fourth kind of change. Locomotion.

Notice that the motion of the planets as they orbit is an endless locomotion. They don't stop. You see, linear locomotion, along a straight line from A to B, stops at the end of the line.

Rectilinear locomotion, from A back to A, by going the four sides of a square or a rectangle, stops momentarily at the corners. Yeah. He talks about different kinds of locomotion.

But there is a third kind of locomotion which does not stop. Circular locomotion. Don't have to stop at corners.

No stop signs. Endless locomotion. And he's located endless locomotion in the orbiting planets.

In fact, it's the orbiting planets that produce changes in the Earth's atmosphere, which produce the changes on the surface of the Earth, don't you know? Oh yeah, that's what lay behind the astrology and the so forth of those days. But that doesn't complete his cosmos. Because on the outer perimeter of the universe are fixed stars, 50-odd of them as he counts them, though there was some contention among the ancients as to whether that's the exact number or more.

These fixed stars are not rotating around the Earth, but are spinning on their own axes. Spinning in everlasting circular locomotion. They are everlasting physical bodies, everlastingly moving by their own nature and locomotion.

And it's their motion that maintains the motion of the planets by affecting the ether, which is what fills the space in between the fixed stars and the planets. Now, the \$64,000 question. How do you explain that everlasting locomotion of the fixed stars? That's all there is to the cosmos.

All right. Everlasting locomotion must have an unchanging cause. You couldn't get everlasting locomotion unless there were a cause that is unchanging in every regard.

So, out beyond the perimeter of the universe, he thinks of another being that is an unmoved mover, and, again, eternal. The fixed stars may be moved eternal movers, but there must be an unmoved, totally unchanging mover. An unmoved mover.

Ah! But you say, how can the unmoved mover move the fixed stars except by exerting force, power, like an efficient cause, which is a process of change, in the unmoved mover? The unmoved mover is not an efficient cause. Does not exert power. Does not exert a thing.

Just is. Being. Pure.

Fully actualized. No unactualized potential capacity at all. It is the good.

And the souls of the stars are moved by wonder to be like the unmoved mover. That is to say, the unmoved mover is not an efficient cause; it's the final cause of the whole works. That for the sake of which everything else goes on.

The stars moved in wonderment, amazement, and to want to be like. Says Aristotle in another place, philosophy begins with wonder. That's what moves us to inquire philosophically.

Because we are moved by wonder at truth, goodness, beauty. And philosophy culminates in wonder, as we'll see, the idea of the good. But the whole cosmos is moved by wonder to try to be like the unmoved mover.

Everlasting locomotion. Well, you know, when he says the fixed stars, their souls are moved; what does he mean? You know, this is what incited some of the medievals to talk of angels riding the stars. Doesn't he have a mind-body problem in the stars? That sort of thing.

All right, well, maybe this has a mythological cast, the way it's said. But what he's trying to say is that God has to be the final cause. You see, final cause.

In a sense, he doesn't need an efficient cause because if form and matter are both eternal, none of the Greeks had a creation ex nihilo. All they needed was a means whereby the thing could be maintained. It's as if there is a cosmic magnetism going on and an upward gravitation.