

# Ancient Philosophy

## Aristotle's Metaphysics

### The Word "Metaphysics"

- Aristotle never uses the term "metaphysics"
  - Aristotle's names were
    - wisdom (see Book A/I)
    - theology (See his division of the sciences in Book E/VI)
    - first philosophy
- The source of the term
  - Probably Andronicus of Rhodes (fl. c. 60 BC), 11th scholar of the Peripatetics & organizer of Aristotle's writings
  - These are possibly the books that he placed after Aristotle's *Physics* as he put Aristotle's books into some kind of order.
- The term makes some sense
  - This is the subject that one studies after completing the study of physics.

### What is the Subject of Metaphysics?

1. the science we are searching for is "a science that investigates the first principles and causes" — A/I.2
2. "to examine being qua being, and the attributes which belong to it qua being, and [to] examine not only substances but also their attributes." — Γ/III.2
3. "the first science deals with things which both exist separately and are immovable," i.e. divinities — E/VI.1
4. "the question which was raised of old and is raised now and always, and is always the subject of doubt, viz. what being is, is just the question, what is substance?" — Z/VII.1

### The *Metaphysics*

- The unity of the *Metaphysics* has always been a matter of controversy.
  - Even many commentators who defend the unity of the book maintain that some books seem to interrupt the organization of the work.

Central Books			Peripheral Books	
1st Set	I, III–IV = ABΓ	Introduction (the four causes) The ἀρχαί from which Metaphysics begins The subject of Metaphysics	II =α	A 2d introduction
			V =Δ	Philosophical lexicon
			VI =E	
2nd Set	VII–IX = ZHΘ	Being		
			X =I	Unity (substances are one thing)
			XI =K	Summary of BΓE + some books from <i>Physics</i>
3rd Set	XII = Λ	Separated Substance		
4th Set	XIII–XIV = MN	Plato's Theory of Forms Philosophy of Mathematics		

### Book III/B—Ἀπορία

- The subject of metaphysics
  - Can one science treat all four causes?
  - ... both substance & primary axioms (laws of logic)?
  - ... all kinds of substance?
  - ... both substances & their attributes?
- Metaphysical Questions
  - Are there non-sensible substances?
    - Are the first principles of things genera or parts?
    - If genera, the most general or the most specific?
  - Are there things other than individuals?

### Characterization #1:

the science we are searching for is “a science that investigates the first principles and causes”—A/I.2

### Book I/A—The Nature of Wisdom (σοφία)

- Man & Animals (other than man)
  - animals
    - have sensation & memory
    - live by appearances (φαντασία) & memory
      - but not by experience
  - Man
    - lives also by art (τέχνη) & reasoning (λογισμός)
- Art & Experience
  - memories are formed into experience
  - from experience comes art
    - experience = judgments about many individual similar cases
    - art = one universal judgment about a class of objects
  - art is superior to experience
    - because it gives
      - “theory” (κατὰ τὸν λόγον)
      - knowledge of causes
- From Art to Wisdom
  - branches of knowledge are aimed at
    - necessities, pleasure, knowledge of the first causes
  - wisdom is knowledge of principles & causes

### Book I/A—The Four Causes

- Different earlier authors recognize different particular causes
- Critique
  - None recognizes all four
  - None recognizes any other than the four

### Characterization #2:

“to examine being qua being, and the attributes which belong to it qua being, and [to] examine not only substances but also their attributes.”—Γ/III.2

### The study of Being as Being

- That’s not the study of a particular kind of being
- It’s the study of being in a particular way
  - Contrast the Physics’ study of being as changeable, mathematics’ study of being as countable or measurable

### Focal & Derivative Meanings

- The word being “can be said in many ways”
  - But it’s not quite ambiguous—various beings are not homonyms (things that just happen to share the same name)
  - This is a matter of πρὸς ἣν predication; the term has a *focal meaning*.
    - Compare the term healthy, which has various meanings, but all are related to one central meaning. (Cf. Γ/IV.2)

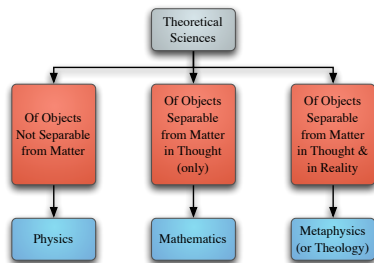
### Being & its Attributes

- Unity
- Truth
- Goodness
- [Beauty]

### Characterization #3:

“the first science deals with things which both exist separately and are immovable,” i.e. divinities—E/VI.1

### Aristotle’s Division of the Theoretical Sciences



### Characterization #4:

“the question which was raised of old and is raised now and always, and is always the subject of doubt, viz. what being is, is just the question, what is substance?”—Z/VII.1

### The study of substance

- The third approach to substance
  - The first—the *Categories*’ attempt to get at substance as subject of predication through language
    - Some things (substances) are more fundamental than others because they are never present in others.
    - Some substances (individual things) are more fundamental than others (species & genera) because they are never even said of others.
  - The second—the *Physics*’ attempt to get at substance as subject of change
    - Some things (substances) persist through change.
    - Others (accidents) do not.
  - The third—the *Metaphysics*
    - The earlier approaches attempted to identify certain things as substances. Note, however, that the *Categories* offers a negative criterion.
    - Here the attempt is to say what makes a particular thing a substance