



Metaphysics

Aristotle , Joe Sachs (Translator)

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Metaphysics (Greek: τ? μετ? τ? φυσικ?) is one of the principal works of Aristotle & the first major work of the branch of philosophy with the same name. The principal subject is "being qua being", or being understood as being. It examines what can be asserted about anything that exists just because of its existence & not because of any special qualities it has. Also covered are different kinds of causation, form & matter, the existence of mathematical objects, & a prime-mover God.

Metaphysics Details

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Riku Sayuj says

The Plan

I had been able to bring together my notes/thoughts for the earlier parts of this reading. Those can be found here:

Book 1: A Preliminary Outline of Philosophy

Book 2: An Introduction to Philosophical Problems

Book 3: The Basic Instruments Of Philosophy

From Book 4 onwards, it becomes slightly harder to talk about the books in isolation. Also, A became easier to follow - so I stopped using so many supplementary resources. I will try to put up a review here incorporating my reading notes, additional thoughts, criticisms, doubts, ideas and a few unwarranted digs at Aristotle as soon as I can. Meanwhile, I am planning to now move into The Organon and Physics next.

The original plan was to progress in an orderly fashion through the great philosophical works before reading the modern ones (all first-hand) but Sartre has thrown a spanner into that plan by being so irresistible. So now the new plan is to read in parallel the moderns and the ancients - and to meet somewhere in the middle, some day...

AC says

An awful text -- use Ross' Greek text.

The story goes thus: Jaeger was working on a text of the Metaphysics, when W.D. Ross published (with Oxford) his magnificent two-volume text with commentary in 1924. Of course, Jaeger, who had already done a lot of work, had to scrap his project. He did, however, then publish two long articles (in German) on the text and manuscripts of the Metaphysics, discussing various textual crux' in a series of lemmata. These are reprinted in his Scripta Minora. They are an utter embarrassment. Illogical, confused, they show that Jaeger had no grasp at all of technical philosophy, and (what is worse!) no grasp of Aristotle. And even less sense of what textual criticism is all about.

By the time the OCT decided to put out a Metaphysics in the 1950's, someone there decided to give old Jaeger (who was now living in the U.S. -- having conveniently 'forgotten' his Dritte Humanismus of the 1930's...) a chance to salvage some of his old work. So Jaeger -- and I have this on good authority -- took out Ross text, pulled out his old notes, and a red pen, and started making changes. Of course, this is not how a scientific text is put together -- one doesn't just add or subtract words based on mood or on 'how it strikes you' -- it has to be done in a thoroughly scientific manner based on the rules of textual criticism (which is based on stemmatics, etc.) -- conjecture being only the move of last resort.

Well..., Jaeger was not daunted by scruples of this sort, and produced a text that is an absolute mess -- unrecognizable in nearly every sentence. He turns Ross' elegant Aristotle into gibberish -- adding clauses,

deleting clauses, rearranging not just words, but clauses and sections -- all based on... his (Jaeger's) own surmises..., surmises that are themselves based on a very poor understanding of what Aristotle was all about.

Anyway -- avoid.

(BTW -- even Jaeger's "developmental" interpretation of Aristotle was not original, but was based on the obscure work of a man named Case from an article in the famous 11th edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.)

Roy Lotz says

I have very mixed feelings about Aristotle.

On the one hand, he's so tedious and uninspiring. This is only partially his fault: everything we have of his are lecture notes, and so it is no surprise that they are stylistically wanting. Many scholars think that *Metaphysics* contains many sections written at different times and for different purposes, which Aristotle never intended to be read together. There is even one section which may not have been written by him at all. This makes his work (particularly this book) often difficult and confusing.

That being said, his ideas are not poetic either. His *Ethics* contains ingredients to live a well-balanced life, but a life curiously devoid of great passion or excitement. His *Rhetoric* reads like a handbook for lawyers. His interest in biology pervades his thinking: he loves to catalog, to systematize masses of details. He was the original stamp collector.

On top of this, Aristotle's ideas often take the form of common sense pedantically expressed (to paraphrase Bertrand Russell). His temper was the opposite of Plato's, who seemed to deliberately try to draw counter-intuitive conclusions. One often gets the feeling that Aristotle found Plato a bit excitable, and longed to make philosophy into a more respectable, hard-headed enterprise. When engaging with his mentor's ideas, Aristotle is either (1) opposing them, or (2) trying to reconcile them with common sense. The result of the latter is a strange admixture of the mundane and the mystic.

But his positive qualities are equally compelling. Compare Aristotle's careful claims, his scrupulous definitions, and systematic procedure to Plato's more artistic style. Plato was the master of the straw man. Compelling as the dialogue form is, it allowed Plato to caricature his opponents' positions and get away with some pretty sloppy thinking. Aristotle will have none of this. Plato sought to banish all poets from his *Republic*, and maybe he himself would have been barred entry. Aristotle would have waltzed right in.

It is hard to evaluate the argument of this book, if only because it is so disorganized and wordy. Aristotle *does* do a good job in pointing out the logical absurdities of Plato's theory of Ideas. However, his own theory of Form and Substance is curiously similar, and is liable to some of the same criticisms. To me, this shows just how much Aristotle was under the influence of his old teacher—even though he tried to wrest himself free, he gets sucked back in.

[An Afterthought: Plato and Aristotle are perfect antidotes for different places and times. When emotion, superstition, fanaticism, and sophism reign, Aristotle is where it's at. But, for me, our world is sometimes too systematic, too commonsensical, and too averse to abstract argument. Plato is like a glass of cool water.]

Thomas says

"The word *metaphysics*, when heard by most people, is apt to raise a smile of the sort reserved for innocent souls who are harmlessly deluded." So begins Joe Sachs, by way of introduction to his translation. Aristotle is not for "most people," it's true, but Sachs' translation makes it a little easier for the remainder to rest confidently in harmless delusion.

Many years ago I struggled through Hippocrates Apostle's translations of Aristotle and the frustration I experienced can be exemplified in one word: substance. *Ousia*, traditionally translated "substance," is an independent thing that has attributes, but which is not an attribute of anything. It's sort of like the fundamental placeholder for a way of being that is prior to a thing's size or quantity or relation to other things. It is how a thing is before it is anything in particular. This is almost the opposite of the term "substance" which usually indicates something that has determinate qualities. To avoid this implication, Sachs employs the wonky term "thinghood." Sachs does a similar thing with the term "actuality" (*entelechia*, a "three-ring circus of a word" coined by Aristotle himself), which he translates as "being-at-work-staying-itself." The glossary provides a full explanation of this and other troublesome terms. Sachs does the reader a huge service by turning these princes of medieval scholasticism -- substance, actuality, essence -- back into the humble frogs of classical philosophy. It doesn't make the *Metaphysics* an easy book to understand or interpret, but it opens the door a bit wider to understanding.

The Green Lion Press edition is also worthy of note -- large type, wide margins, and a sturdy binding that has so far withstood a considerable beating in my book bag.

Gary says

First, I want to thank LibriVox for making this book freely available in an audio edition.

This is the only 3 star book where I would recommend it to everyone. My start of reading primary philosophy started with Heidegger, that led me to Hegel and then Kant. There's no doubt I should have suffered through this book first, because those authors rely on Aristotle in many ways and not just to tear him apart but to add to how Aristotle approached the topic of metaphysics.

I've learned to no longer trust commentaries of the great works of philosophy. The summaries just seem to get it wrong. One must go to the primary source to understand what was really said. Most of the time people comment on the *Metaphysics* they emphasis the four causes (form, matter, efficiency, and final cause). While they are right they are in the book, they are missing the heart of the matter.

Metaphysics is really defined by this book. Ontology, the science of being, the what is there, or the what is the furniture that makes up the room and what is that furniture really made up of are discussed in this book. Also, the foundation, the primary structure, the first causes of the world is looked at. Aristotle values both the empirical and the rational, the world of the physical and the abstract. Also, the nature of science is analyzed.

Aristotle speaks logic. He beats into the reader the meaning of mutually exclusive (something has to either

be or not be at the same time and place) and contradiction (something can't be and not be at the same time and place). At his best, Aristotle puts reality back in to the dialectics. From Heraclitus' a person can't cross the river because they and the river are always changing, or Parmenides change is impossible because there is no such thing as the void (don't completely dismiss that because Einstein's block universe leads to that too). Aristotle uses his logic to demolish those beliefs.

I've tried reading it before but never got out of Book 1. I now know why. Aristotle is verbose in his prose. The substance of the universe are not numbers. It only took me one one sentence to dismiss that notion. It takes Aristotle all of book 13 to say that with multiple chapters and what seems like run on sentences before he lays out his excruciating arguments.

I hate recommending this book because it is painfully written, but it has real insights which are painfully and slowly drawn out, and it's clear that this book has influenced many later day philosophers who I have recently read. (Kant systematically destroys most of Aristotle's conclusion, Heidegger obviously worshiped the occurrentness (a Dreyfus neologism) of Aristotle, and Hegel follows Aristotle's soul, identity, and essence (to me, the most dangerous concept in science!).

Bilgehan says

Aristoteles, metafizi?i "varlık olmas? bak?m?ndan varlık bilimi" olarak tan?mlar. Metafizik 14 kitaptan olu?uyor ve her kitapta farklı konular ele al?n?yor. Birinci kitap önsöz niteli?indedir. Platon ve öncesindeki filozoflar?n görüşlerine kısaca yer verilir. İkinci kitapta felsefe üzerine genel düşünceler vardır. Üçüncü kitapta metafizi?in 14 ana problemi sıralan?r. Dördüncü kitapta metafizi?in tan?m? yap?lı?r ve amaç? açıklan?r. Protogoras?n görelilik görüşü ele?tirilir. Be?inci kitapta Aristoteles'in terminolojisindeki temel kavramlar?n tan?m? yap?lı?r. Altınc? kitapta ilineksel anlamda varlık ve do?ru anlamda varlık açıklan?r. Yedinci ve sekizinci kitapta töz hakk?ndaki farklı kuramlar, olu?un analizi, madde, form ve bileşik varlık kavramlar? anlat?lı?r. Dokuzuncu kitap Aristoteles metafizi?inin temelidir; kuvve-fiil ayr?m?, kuvvenin fiile geçi?i, fiilin kuvveye üstünlü?ü açıklan?r. Onuncu kitapta birlik ve çoklu?un, tür bak?m?ndan ve cins bak?m?ndan ba?kalı?n, olu?a ve yokolu?a tabi olan ve olmayan varlıklar?n ayr?m? yap?lı?r. Onbirinci kitapta hareketin, de?işmenin ve sonsuzun analizi yap?lı?r. On ikinci kitapta ilk hareket ettiricinin zorunlulu?u gösterilir ve do?as? açıklan?r. On üçüncü ve ondördüncü kitapta say?lar?n analizi yap?lı?r. ?dealar kuram?, idea-say?lar kuram? ve di?er filozoflar?n say?lar hakk?ndaki görüşleri ele?tirilir.

Bu, kolay kolay herkese önerebilece?im bir kitap de?il. Bu, felsefe literatüründeki en a??r kitaplardan biri. Ahmet Arslan bu kitab? üç farklı dildeki çeviriden ve pek çok ?erhçinin yorumlar?ndan faydalanarak büyük bir titizlikle on be? y?lda çevirmi?. Sonuç çok iyi, çevirinin dili yal?n ve anlaşıl?lı?r. Ama zor olan Aristoteles'in ak?l yürütmelerini takip etmek. Bu kitab? okumay? göze ald?ysanız ayn? paragraf? on defa okumay? ve en iyimser tahminle 3-6 ay?n?z? harcamay? göze al?n. Bu kitaptan en iyi verimi alabilmeniz için tavsiyem önce Platon'un varlık felsefesiyle ilgili kitaplar?n?, sonra Aristoteles'in Organon(mantık) serisini ve Fizik kitab?n?, son olarak Metafizik'i okuman?z.

Bu kadar u?ra?a de?er mi dersiniz, kesinlikle de?er. Aristoteles bir tohumun a?aca dönüşmesinden evrenin i?leyi? prensibine kadar varlık?n arkas?nda yatan s?rra bir açıklama getiriyor. Okuyan ki?inin ufkunu da bir kat daha geni?letiyor. Aristoteles'in kendi sözüyle: "Sab?r ac?d?r fakat meyvesi tatlıd?r."

Tyler says

This was fascinating. I summarized the whole thing after I finished, as I am wont to do with books of this nature. I just don't feel like reproducing the summary. There is so much to go over, it is ridiculously intense. Getting a glimpse inside Aristotle's mind is fascinating. Everything is a cycle. And everything is explained/touched upon. I look forward to reading Ptolemy's additions to his cosmology and Proclus' comments on this book in his Commentary on Euclid. Five stars, because although there were some contradictions here and there, overall I thought it was a solid piece of literature that expanded my view of the universe and mathematics.

Nina Misson says

"When he to whom one speaks does not understand, and he who speaks himself does not understand, that is metaphysics."
-Voltaire

Faris says

Aristotle's "first act of divine motion" in his Physics is a set of logical implications and applying his scientific method-rightfully so given he invented it. He justifies what he calls the "first mover" or "Divinity" by continuing the Aristotelian narrative of placing the mind or intellect as the ultimate objective; surpassing the soul.

This would be an example of Aristotelian privilege. Here Aristotle doesn't need to explain his divine inception into what God is, he asserts it, and by asserting it he had made the mistake of being corrected-ironically from himself.

Duality and as well as sub having different functions. An example of having duality in thoughts is when a person is drinking coffee with a friend, he's simultaneously enjoying the coffee and the conversation. Moreover, he uses a multiplicity to try to escape the idea of dual thinking and initiates only a first

To elaborate, Aristotle's Divine mover or God in his physics is unchanging, yet influences change in substances. The problem here is his assertion on a beginning. Here he arrives at multiple paradoxes; if his divine is in a state of self-contemplation, how did we access it, and find it? Why should his first mover be unique and exempt from anything?

Yann says

J'étais très curieux de lire ce petit livre, sur lesquels se penchèrent des commentateurs célèbres, comme Maïmonides, Averroes, ou encore Thomas d'Aquin. J'ai vite compris pourquoi des hommes prétendant trouver leur chemin dans le labyrinthe de la Métaphysique ont pu en imposer à leur semblables, tant le brouillard qui enveloppe les idées exposées dans l'ouvrage est épais. Cette épaisseur tranche d'ailleurs avec la clarté d'autres ouvrages d'Aristote, comme la Poétique ou la Rhétorique. On pourrait peut-être expliquer une partie de cette obscurité par une certaine lourdeur de la traduction, due au fait qu'il est difficile de rendre en français les tours serrés que permettent la richesse grammaticale du grec. Ensuite, la paternité du texte est

douteuse, comme l'expose la préface : a-t-il été constitué par l'assemblage de fragments épars, comme le suggère les répétitions, ou l'histoire du manuscrit? On trouvera une critique de la théorie des Idées de Platon, et la quête d'une science des "principes", une science qui gouverne toutes les autres, et en particulier ces satanées mathématiques qui jouissent d'une insupportable autorité. Les raisonnements et spéculations sur lesquelles le lecteur se casse la tête font disparaître la distinction entre la finesse et les finesses, et l'on est bien heureux d'en voir la fin, pour oublier le dépit d'avoir été payé de sa peine par beaucoup plus d'ennui que d'instruction.

Jesse says

What is the being of that thing which underlies any phenomenon? The central question of metaphysics is an intriguing one, and it must be said for the benefit of all the atheists on here who might think that this is a religious question, it is a perfectly scientific query, for it is in fact the question of, how can we say a person is the same person even though all of her organs have been shed and renewed, or, in the case of an artefact, how is a house the same house after it has been renovated? Now Aristotle's foray into the fog beyond the flux is one of the most fascinating of intellectual mountains to climb - however, you must bring an oxygen pack (that is, you must take many mulling walks, or, my preference, many sips of coffee). Substance is that thing which is the unqualified subject of the categories (quantity, quality, relation, place, time, position, state, activity, passivity) but it is also the bearer of form - in fact, species-form. So substance must be the essence, or the what-it-was-to-be-that-thing (the literal translation from the Greek of essence); but substance isn't a universal (atheists applaud) for it is possessed of thisness (this-thing-here in Greek), and so it is ontologically separate and independent; yet, it must not just carry form and matter, it must actually be form, specifically of a species. An outstanding ambiguity of this account is, is the form that is the soul for a person an individual, in which case there are as many forms as there are particulars, or is the form something intermediate between universal and particular? Nussbaum thinks the former; Lear thinks the latter. Now Aristotle explicitly says, "Substance isn't a universal", so there are no substantial universals (by the way, Russell, who was an atheist, believed in substantial universals, so will you please stop thinking about God! We will get to God, but it is not yet) but if thisness, which is a quality of substance, means particular, as Nussbaum thinks, then Aristotle is open to the charge that, if no two things have the same form, which follows on this account, then form cannot be identified with the "what-it-was-to-be-that-thing" - but form is to be identified with essence, because matter is just potential, it can potentially have form, but in itself, matter is nothing. So there is that problem. Another problem is, Aristotle says that only the universal can be cognized - if so, then we can't know the essence, because if the essence is substance, and substance isn't universal, then it is unintelligible. These problems are left unsolved in the text. Species-form is obviously a variety of universals, yet one can argue that universals are dependent upon particulars, but species-form informs both as an ontologically independent reality; this seems more compelling than the particularists, but it entails believing in the same thing that Plato believed in - that there are separate forms informing particulars. So either Aristotle just restated what Plato said in new terminology, sprinkled with "common-sense prejudices pedantically expressed" as Russell so aptly put it, or he falls into contradictions everywhere. Good God!

Well, I guess that's why Aristotle believes in God. Every effect has a distinct cause in nature, so to stop the infinite regress, there must be a God. But God is pure form, unchangeable. Yet, it was stated in the Physics that to change is to be changed - not so for God! How? Well, God inspires love. OH! Yeah, so every form in matter is striving to actualize itself further in a teleological process of development of the whole of nature, and so each part, and God as pure form just makes everyone go nuts, like he's doing some heavy metal solo and every metalhead with form is just banging their heads away - that's like the universe. And how do we know that God is totally shredding, inspiring everyone and everything with respect to form/actuality? Well, you will admit that change is everywhere. Yes. So, like, don't you think change has always been? I mean, hold on, let me take a drag, mmmm.... so, wow.

So, man, there's been change for eternity.

Wow.

And if change then time... time's eternal too man.

But like, the world's always been here.

Aw man... but that's like impossible if change is for eternity cause then the world would be just like, not... it'd be like, changed, you know?

Yeah. But think of it this way. Change and time are just a part of the universe, and if there is at least one eternal thing as a part of the universe, then there must be an eternal thing that is the whole universe.

Therefore, God exists. QED maaan. Cool. But God doesn't love you.

What?

God can't love you, because he is perfect and thinking about himself, cause when you're perfect, who ya gonna think about? Something less perfect? That would be funny. No man, God's thinking about God for eternity.

So we have to love God in order to actualize our form which is our essence - how do we do that?

By doing what God does - contemplating form (himself).

How do we contemplate form man?

By studying Aristotle (Aristotle was apparently the world's first master of academic self-promotion).

Dean the Phantasy Guru says

Considered by many academics to be the most challenging work throughout all of literature, Aristotle's "Metaphysics" is more than just fancy words and non-sensical theorems. It deals with the most important theme possible: being/existence - both generally and specifically. For the Greek philosopher, nothing takes precedence over being because without being, there would be nothing. In other words, Aristotle deals with First Principles of knowledge by determining what composes the fabrics of our very existence. Ultimately, he concludes that substance, essence, form and matter and the unity established between them is - out of necessity - the so-called fabrics of not just being but nearly everything, with a few exceptions. The most difficult challenge in reading a work of this intellectual magnitude is understanding the difference between substance, essence, form and matter and how they apply differently to becoming (a potentiality, therefore a non-actualized state of being) and being (the state after becoming is actualized - like ourselves). Moreover, Aristotle's treatise on being is not devoid of faith for he will demonstrate in the final books that the so-called "Unmoved Mover" (i.e. God) is responsible for setting all actions into motion which allows everything that is in a potential state to be actualized (being). Without sparking controversy, many scholars claim that Aristotle's interpretation of God as the Unmoved Mover - being the first philosophy to conceive of a single, omnipotent God - greatly influenced "The Holy Bible" and the way God is portrayed throughout its holy pages. On a final note, I fear that this read would be too difficult for most readers which is why I highly recommend taking a course (like I did) or read additional guides to aid you in your endeavour in conquering this intimidating book. Read it for its genius, read it for its impact on Western culture but most of all, read it for a personal challenge and feel proud that Aristotle was indeed mortal and human like ourselves, even though his timeless wisdom suggests otherwise.

Sara says

Don't even think you can understand this by reading it on your own. Perhaps the greatest work in philosophy of all-time.

Erick says

Aristotle is painfully pedantic. It was very hard to keep my mind focused on the endless digressions he took in order to refute other philosophers in mind numbing detail. He spent very little time actually laying out his own system in much needed detail. Specifics on his own system were lacking in this work. One element that was noticeably absent was his approach to time. If time is uncreated, then his first mover is in a dualistic relationship with time; if it is created, then he faces the consequence that time itself is an ideal form; and all of his digressions in order to point out the contradictions of idealist philosophers become moot at that point. Time must be eternal, if the contradictions of ideal forms in regards to time, be valid. If time is eternal, there are many problems Aristotle has to address that are just as contradictory as those he points out in the idealist philosophers. This work didn't cover any of that. Maybe his other works do.

I will have to read more of him later, but it won't be anytime soon. I admit I tried to read through this quickly. I will read his Physics next, whenever I get around to it. There are too many questions I have that this book didn't address. It more or less was a refutation of other Greek philosophers and little else.

I am not a fan of Aristotle. Reading this work hasn't changed that. I do think there is some good exercises in logic in this book, but I see very little value in anything else here. His system is flawed I believe. I still remain more of a Platonist.

Alan Johnson says

This translation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* by Hippocrates G. Apostle is apparently now out of print. When I read it in 1969, I was impressed with the accuracy of the translation as well as with Hippocrates Apostle's Glossary and editorial commentary. Equally serviceable translations are doubtlessly available today, though I have not consulted them.

The term "metaphysics" should not mislead the twenty-first-century reader. Unlike Plato, Aristotle exhibited no trace of mysticism in his surviving works, including this one. In this treatise Aristotle explored the fundamentals of being and of the logic of being. He approached these questions from a philosophical rather than from what we would now call a scientific perspective. Aristotle addressed scientific matters in many other treatises, including his *Physics* (which is properly translated as "physical nature" rather than that branch of science that is now called "physics"). *Metaphysics*, for Aristotle, was the study of first principles, of being qua being. Although modern science makes Aristotle's concepts unfamiliar to us, this work sets forth some of the architectonic principles of scientific thinking, including Aristotle's famous principle of contradiction (or noncontradiction): A thing cannot both be and not be at the same time and in the same respect.

7/5/2018 Note: I have now concluded that the following is a more accurate translation: *Aristotle's "Metaphysics"*, trans. and ed. Joe Sachs (Santa Fe, NM: Green Lion Press, 2002).
