



PHIL 204

Greek Philosophy

Lecture 10



Aristotle's Universe

Metaphysics 12 (Lambda)

Chapter 1.

KINDS OF SUBSTANCE

- (A) **SENSIBLE SUBSTANCES** (Studied by natural science = physics)
 - (i) **ETERNAL:** Do not come into being or cease to exist Change only in place.
 - The planets and stars
 - (ii) **PERISHABLE:** Come into being cease to exist and change in other ways. - Plants, animals etc

(B) IMMUTABLE SUBSTANCES:

Do not change in any way.

Studied by another science (theology / metaphysics?)

Chapter 2

Kinds of Change:

- (1) Change in nature (**SUBSTANTIAL change**) = **GENERATION** and **CORRUPTION**.
eg. reproduction of human being
death of human being
- (2) Change in quality = **ALTERATION**
eg Socrates getting a suntan.
- (3) Change in quantity = **GROWTH** and **DIMINUTION**
(e.g. Socrates gets taller)

**(4) Change in place = MOVEMENT
(LOCOMOTION)**

(e.g. Socrates walks ; the planets change their position)

Change is from the

POTENTIAL

(MATTER LACKING FORM)

to the

ACTUAL

(MATTER + FORM)

Something actual comes to be from what has the
potential to be it

**The matter of eternal substances supports
only change in place.**

Chapter 3

Matter does not come in to being.

Form does not come into being.

What comes into being is a composite of matter and form.

Example:

A bronze sphere comes into being

How does this happen?

General Answer: Some thing is changed by something into something

Aristotle's claim is a bit misleading:

Matter is changed by the immediate mover into form.

What he means is:

MATTER (lacking a particular form) is changed by the immediate MOVER into (matter with the FORM)

Kinds of Generation:

(1) By ART, or SKILL:

- eg a carpenter brings a chair into being.**

(2) By NATURE:

- what is generated has the same name as what generates.**
- eg humans are brought into being by humans.**

(3) By LUCK, or GOOD FORTUNE:

- eg. going to a market and meeting someone you wanted to meet but did not expect to see there.**

(4) By SPONTANEITY, or CHANCE:

- eg. digging in the ground to plant seeds and finding treasure buried there.**

Aristotle is most interested in (2) - NATURAL generation.

He thinks that it may be explained by analogy with (1) - the generation of artefacts.

The FORM of a natural thing (a substance) is its NATURE.

The great problem:

CAN FORM EXIST WITHOUT MATTER?

Chapter 4

On the causes of things being what they are

Example	1	2	3
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Matter:	surface	air	bronze
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Privation:	black	dark	irregular shape
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Form:	white	light	shape of Achilles
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**To account for change we have to appeal also to
a MOVING CAUSE:**

Example	1	2	3
Matter:	body	bricks	menstrual blood
Privation:	disease	disorder	inanimation
Moving Cause:	medical art	building art	male (semen)
Form:	health	house	living human

Chapter 5

Substances are ONTOLOGICALLY INDEPENDENT

They don't depend for their existence on anything else.

Everything else depends for its existence on substance.

Species and genera of substance and all accidents depend for their existence on the existence of individual substances

The order of causation:

A human being consists of

MATTER + FORM.

**The PROXIMATE (nearest) MOVING CAUSE is
a particular individual human, the father.**

**The REMOTE MOVING CAUSE is the sun
and its motion.**

Chapter 6

There must be an **ULTIMATE** cause of all motion.

A PRIME MOVER

An ETERNAL, IMMUTABLE,

SUBSTANCE

Aristotle's Argument:

- (1) If every substance could cease to exist, every substance would eventually cease to exist.**
- (2) If every substance ceased to exist, then there would be no change.**
- (3) If there were no change there would be no time.**
- (4) But it is not possible that there is no time.**
- (5) Therefore change always exists.**

(6) The only kind of change which can always exist is circular motion.

(7) Therefore there must always be substances moving with circular motion.

Assumptions:

(A) Every possibility must be actualised at some time.

(B) Time always exists.

Proof: there can be no first or last instant of time since every 'now' divides time before from time after.

(C) Time is either the same as change or a property of change.

(D) The universe is finite; so motion in a straight line cannot continue eternally.

Against Plato's Forms as the ultimate causes of change:

Suppose immutable substances were capable of causing change but did not necessarily cause change.

Then there might be no change.

But it is necessary that there is change.

So Plato's Forms cannot be the ultimate causes of change.

There must be a substance actually causing change with no potentiality not to.

There must be a principle, or principles, which is/are ENTIRELY ACTUAL.

**These substances must be without matter
- since they must be eternal.**

There cannot be a prior potentiality since matter cannot set itself in motion.

Irregular motion is ultimately accounted for by regularity of the circular motion

Chapter 7:

The nature and operation of the **PRIME MOVER**

Aristotle has **PROVED** that there must be eternal circular motion.

He claims that this is also clear by **OBSERVATION**.

There is, then, something which is always moved with an unceasing motion, which is motion in a circle; and this is plain not in theory only but also in fact. Therefore the first heaven must be eternal. There is therefore also something which moves it. AND SINCE THAT WHICH MOVES AND IS MOVED IS INTERMEDIATE, THERE IS A MOVER WHICH MOVES WITHOUT BEING MOVED, BEING ETERNAL, SUBSTANCE, AND ACTUALITY. AND THE OBJECT OF DESIRE AND THE OBJECT OF THOUGHT move in this way; they move without being moved.

How the Prime Mover Moves:

That (which is ultimately) that *for-the-sake-of* *-which* is that which ultimately moves, it is immutable and produces motion by being loved.

The prime mover produces the motions of the heavens.

‘The prime mover thus exists of necessity; and in so far as it is necessary it is GOOD’.

The prime mover is an eternal and immutable substance, separate from sensible things and simple. It produces motion eternally.

The prime mover is alive - it lives the best form of life.

The best form of life is thinking.

The best form of thinking is thinking about the best kind of object.

The best kind of object of thought is thinking itself.

So the life of the prime mover is to think about thinking

The PRIME MOVER is
GOD

...there is a substance which is eternal and unmovable and separate from sensible things. ...this substance cannot have any magnitude, but is without parts and indivisible (for it produces movement through infinite time, but nothing finite has infinite power; and, while every magnitude is either infinite or finite, it cannot, for the above reason, have finite magnitude, and it cannot have infinite magnitude because there is no infinite magnitude at all). ...it is impassive and unalterable; for all the other changes are posterior to change of place.

Chapter 9, Divine Reason:

What does divine thought think - i.e. what is the highest form of thought?

Answer: Thought which contemplates the highest form of being.

So the highest form of thought eternally thinks itself.

This is possible because the object of thought is a form without matter.

Chapter 10, Goodness in the universe:

Problem: Is good something distinct from the whole or is it present in the ordering of the whole?

Answer - probably present in both ways - as in an army good lies both in the leader and in the army, but more so in the leader

The Necessity of Reproduction:

‘... for any living thing ... the most natural act is the production of another like itself, an animal producing an animal, a plant a plant, in order that, as far as its nature allows, it may partake in the eternal and divine. That is the goal towards which all things strive, that for the sake of which they do whatsoever their nature renders possible. ... Since then no living thing is able to partake in what is eternal and divine by uninterrupted continuance (for nothing perishable can for ever remain one and the same), it tries to achieve that end in the only way possible to it, and success is possible in varying degrees; so it remains not indeed as the self-same individual but continues its existence in something like itself - not numerically but specifically one. [Aristotle, *de Anima*, II.4]