Chapter 3

Aristotle

Nature of Aristotle’s writings

The most important and one of the most critical thinkers among Plato’s disciple is Aristotle of Stagira (384-322, B.C) who shared with his master the title of the greatest philosopher of antiquity. At the age of eighteen, Aristotle became the student at the Academy of Plato who was then sixty years old and stayed there until Plato died at the age of eighty. Their lives overlapped enough for Plato to have had considerable direct influence on him. After Plato’s death, 347 B.C., he left the
Academy and went to Assos in Asia Minor established a school of philosophy there.

Later in 335 BC, Aristotle returned to Athens and set up his own school the Lyceum, which was closed in A.D. 52. He discussed a great deal about every thing and very little of his writings remain extent. His students recorded everything he had disputed at Lyceum. There is no branch of knowledge that did not receive his attention; so he lectured on astronomy, physics, logic, aesthetics, music, drama, tragedy, poetry, zoology, ethics and politics. The one field in which he had not excelled was mathematics, which Plato on the other hand, was master of mathematics and geometry.

To determine what his doctrines were is one of the most difficult philosophies to understand. “He is also one of the difficult. It may help us to understand him if we first make clear to ourselves the question we want to ask about his philosophy and then look briefly at some of these reasons why people find him difficult to understand.”

There are two main reasons for this. The first is the nature of intellectual background of his time; the second is the character of his writings as they have come to us.

He composed about four hundred books. His books are much like what we call a chapter. More than three-quarter of his writings have been lost and nearly all other writing especially the metaphysics is rediscovered piece-meal. They are written against a very different intellectual background from our own. He was living in a pre-Christian and relatively primitive society, which makes it necessary for us to be wary in interpreting his texts.

Nearly, the whole of his writings seem to have been written during his last thirteen years, in his fiftieth year, and then his system was completed and developed. “What were Aristotle’s metaphysical contentions, and what is Aristotle’s Metaphysics? The latter question is the easier. The work, as we now have it, divides into fourteen books of unequal length and complexity. Book “Alpha” is introductory: it articulates the notion of a science of the first principles or causes of things, and it offers a partial history of the subject. The second book, known as “Little Alpha”, is a second introduction, largely methodological in content. Book “Beta” is a long sequence of
puzzles or a priori, possible answers which are lightly sketched, but the book is programmatic rather than definitive. Book “Gamma” appears to start on the subject itself: it characterizes something, which it calls “the science of being qua being” – and it then engages in a discussion of the principle of non-contradiction. Next, in book “Delta” Aristotle’s “philosophical lexicon” is discussed: some forty philosophical terms are explained and illustrated. Book “Epsilon” is brief: it returns to the science of being *qua* being, and also passes some remarks on truth.

Books “Zeta”, “Etta” and “Theta” hang together, and together they form the core of the *Metaphysics*. Their general topic is substance: its identification, its relation to matter and form, to actuality and to potentiality, to change and generation. The argument is tortuous in the extreme, and it is far from clear what Aristotle’s final views on the subject are – if indeed he had any final views. The following book, “Iota”, concerns itself with the notions of unity (‘Oneness’) and identity. Book “Kappa” consists of a resume of Gamma, Delta, and Epsilon and parts of the *Physics*. In book “Lambda”, we return to the study of beings and of first principles: the book contains Aristotle’s theology, his account of the ‘unmoved movers’, which are in some sense the supreme entities in his universe. Finally, Books XIII and XIV turn to the philosophy of
mathematics, discussing in particular the ontological status of numbers.”

Aristotle and Plato were opposed in many important respects. But more important are the differences not only of details, but also of methods and outlooks between them about the being, what it is. According to these differences, what will be discussed in this section is to show the change in meaning of the being from “to be” as general, universal, transcendental and real in Plato, to noun “being” or “existence” as concrete, substance, essence in nature for Aristotle; then to discuss the major differences in the characteristics of this real being in his philosophy. Finally to dispute the problems which remain unsolved in his philosophy.

What is real knowledge and it’s object in Aristotle and Plato

In the Republic Plato says that corresponding to every class of individuals there is an idea of Form. It is a universal and common nature or quality, which is grasped by reason and made it object of thought. These universal concepts, which are

opposite to objects of sense, are not empty and subjective. They are real and in them we apprehend objective essence. They are real, because universal must have reality, otherwise that could not be object of thought. Plato seems first to have concerned himself with moral and aesthetic universal as also with objects of mathematical science. For him there is a sublime aspect with ideas and he believes in degrees in their world, which in its zenith stands absolute Beauty, Goodness, and One. They are together unified one idea, the Good in itself, to include all other ideas. It is the most general and real.

Plato illustrates that true knowledge is knowledge of the universals. He believes in degrees of knowledge. Knowledge of the highest universal will be of the highest kind. Our reason understands the universal means that it understands the concept of Goodness as true and real being. This object remains stable, while the object of sense perception is individual. This latter stands in the lowest degree and is always in a state becoming, flux and change. It is object of opinion and could not be true knowledge.

Aristotle in the beginning of the first book of metaphysics considers that “all men by nature desire to know.”¹ But although all men desire to know, they are different in

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¹ *Metaphysics*, A.98. a
degrees of knowledge. At the lowest level it is seen the knowledge of sense. The second stage is the knowledge of experience that one may know a certain things without knowing the reason for this. The third stage of it is the knowledge of art, that man of art knows the reason and utilities of things. Highest of all is the knowledge of science, the pure knowledge of causes, which does not aim at producing anything, or securing some effect, but at apprehending the first principles of reality, the knowledge for its own.

It is the most comprehensive knowledge; the knowledge of what is hardest to know, since its objects being the universal, are the farthest from sense. It is the most abstract, universal, precise, self-contained knowledge. This knowledge, which is desirable for its own sake, is science of final cause of all things, the knowledge of metaphysics. It springs from wondering towards understanding the world and explaining the existing things, thus, Metaphysics is wisdom and philosopher is he who desire knowledge about the final cause and nature of reality that is desire for not something else, but for its own.

The object of this knowledge, being qua being, is the highest and hardest of science to understand, because it is highest, most abstract and universal principles of universe. All
other branches of knowledge are subordinate to this science, not only they are inferior in value, but they are lower in logical sequences as dealing with principles less universal in their scope. All other sciences deal with one or another particular sphere of being, but this knowledge studies not the nature of this or that being, but the being as such, the being as it is being, the principles which are equally, true of all being.

“Aristotle can fairly be said to be the founder of metaphysics as a separate discipline, as well as one of the most influential theorists of metaphysics. Aristotle was not the first philosopher to concern himself with metaphysical issues, but he was the first to study metaphysics systematically and to lay out a rigorous account of ontology. In the *Metaphysics* Aristotle subjects to scrutiny his own metaphysical principles. Our word ‘metaphysics’ itself derives from the expedient of early editors of Aristotle who, not knowing what to call his book on first principles, called them ‘Metaphysics’, the material after the physical enquiries. Whether the fourteenth books of the *Metaphysics* are a unity or a collection of disparate treatises is a matter of serious debate. Aristotle clearly recognizes a special study corresponding to metaphysics, which he calls variously wisdom, first philosophy, and theology. But the books of the *Metaphysics* seem to present different conception of what
metaphysics is. In Book I Aristotle identifies wisdom with knowledge of the ultimate causes and principles, which he identifies as the four causes. Book IV makes metaphysics an enquiry into the causes of being qua being, an enquiry made possible by the fact that all senses of being are related to a single central notion, the notion of substance. Book VI argues that the highest science must study the highest genus of substance, which is the divine, and hence this science must be theology. Of course, it is not surprising that metaphysics should take in studies of causation, of ontology (the study of the basic entities in the world), and what was later called special metaphysics (the study of special kinds of being, e.g. God and soul); but precisely how these enquiries were related in Aristotle’s mind remain obscure.”

Aristotle in different parts of his metaphysics discusses about “being qua being” as subject of metaphysics, but it is not very clear what exactly he has in mind when he speaks of it. In the book fourth he says this science investigates being and its attributes in virtue of its own nature. Any of the special sciences study one part of being and it’s a attributes, but Metaphysics treats being universally as first principles and highest causes.

“Now, science we are seeking the first principles and the highest causes, clearly must be something to which these belong in virtue of its own nature. If then those who sought the elements of existing things were seeking these same principles, it is necessary that the elements must be elements being not by accident, but just, because it is being. Therefore, it is of being as being that we also must grasp the first causes.”

In the book sixth of Metaphysics he describes being qua being as principle and the cause of thing that are immovable substance and science of it must be prior and first philosophy, there must, then, be three sciences: mathematics, physics and what we may call theology.

And the highest science must deal with the highest genus. Thus, while the theological science is more to be described than the other sciences, but if there is an immovable substance the science of this, must be prior and must be first philosophy and universal in this way, because it is first and it will belong to this to consider being qua being, both what it is and its attributes which belong to it qua being.

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In the book fourth of Metaphysics, he says being qua being includes all things both sensible and insensible substances and their attributes.

“So, too, there are many senses in which a thing is said to be, but all refer to one starting-point: some things are said to be because they are substances, others, because they are affections of substance, others, because they are a process towards substance or destructions or privations or qualities of substance, or productive or generative of substance, or of things which are relative to substance, or negation of one of these things.”¹

Book six, chapter² two and four having shown that being means (1) Accidental being, (2) Being as truth, (3) The categories, (4) The potential and actual, the study of separate unchangeable being is the study of being as such, proceeds to rule out certain senses of being as irrelevant, i.e. (1) Accidental or incidental being and (2) Being as truth Accidental being does not study by metaphysics, the reason shows by an example:³

A house has an indefinite number of accidental attributes; it may be found agreeable by some tenants, injure the health of

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1. Ibid,1003 b. 2
2. Ibid, XI, 1027 a,1028 a
3. Ibid, H. 1043 a
some, and benefit others. Science cannot investigate this indefinite series of attributes; the science of building of a house which shall be a house, a shelter for living things and goods and ignores its incidental attributes. Similarly, geometry studies not any and every attributes of triangle, but only those, which belong to it *qua* triangle.

“Then, Metaphysics does not study those connections of subject and attribute in which the attribute does not flow from the nature of the subject but is incidental or accidental to it.”

It is because things, which exist in the proper sense, are generated and destroyed by process. There is no science of accident also because some things are always alike and necessity in the sense that they cannot be otherwise, other like accidents are only for the most part, that which is neither always nor for the most part. That a man is pale is an accident that he is an animal is not.

The other sense of being which in it is not study by metaphysics is ‘being as truth’ this is excluded ,because it belongs not to objects but to state of mind and studied not by metaphysic but by logic.

Two main senses of being remain, the being of which the categories are a classification and the potential and actual being, which go across each categories. One of these former is studied in ZH, the latter in Θ.

“…. Obviously, then it is the work of one science to examine being qua being, and the attributes which belong to it qua being, and the same science will examine not only [15] substances but also their attributes, both those above named the concepts ‘prior’ and ‘posterior’, ‘genus’, and ‘species’, ‘whole’, and ‘part’, and the others of this sort.”\(^1\)

And, somewhere Aristotle asserts being qua being is identity with substance.

“Indeed the question which was raised and is raised now and always, and is always the subject of doubt, viz., what being is, is just the question, what is substance? For it is this that some assert to be one, other more [5] than one, and that some assert to be limited in number, others unlimited. And so we also must consider briefly and primarily and almost exclusively what that is in this sense.”\(^2\)

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\(^1\). *Metaphysics*. 1005, b

\(^2\). *Metaphysics*. Z. 1, 102- 8, b, 5.
Joseph Owen believes that for Aristotle metaphysics is a science which investigates being as being and its attributes, and this science searches substances and its attributes; therefore, “being qua being should be synonymous with entity” of things in this universe.

Warner Jaeger says that Aristotle in his early ages when he was influenced by Platonic philosophy, he has illustrated that the subject of metaphysics is immutable or unmovable.

“Since there is a science of being qua being and capable of existing apart, we must consider whether this is to be regarded as the same as physics or rather as different.

Physics deals [30] with things that have a principle of movement in themselves; mathematics is theoretical, and is a science that deals with things that are at rest, but its subject cannot exist apart. Therefore, about that which can exist apart and is unmovable there is a science different from both of these, if there is a substance of this nature (I mean separate and unmovable [35] ) as we shall try to prove there is. And if there is
such a kind of thing in the world, there must surely be the divine, and this must be the first and most dominant principle.”

Jaeger continues that Aristotle in his late ages believes that metaphysics is about general being with its causes and principles that indicates to sensible and insensible substances and their causes and principles.

“According to Werner Jaeger, the Ὄν ἡ Ὄν has two different meanings depending on whether it is considered as found in the more ancient books or in parts which would have been added to the collection of the Stagirite’s *Metaphysics* in the last-period.

In ‘the last’ stage the theory of the Ὄν ἡ Ὄν, according to Jager, would signify a sort of ‘ontological phenomenology’, that is, ‘an enumeration and description of the various meanings of being’ in which a place would be found for all the forms of being, while transcendent being will not hence forward be the center of interest. Thus understood, the Ὄν ἡ Ὄν permits Aristotle to unify the two preceeding conceptions of book Λ,Ε 1; one in which the predominant interest concerns the supersensible and transcendent substance, the other book ΖΘ, in which the interest in sensible substance and immanent entelechya
or immanent form predominates. In fact the Ὅν ἡ Ὅν comprehends both the pure energia of divine thought and the reality of the physical world, which is subject to generation and corruption in so far as both are ‘being’.

This conception of the Ὅν ἡ Ὅν, as we said, would be contained only in the last additions, insertions, and articulations, chiefly in the second, the third, and the fourth chapters of book Έ. In book Κ, where according to Jeger, the object of first philosophy is indicated in ‘a clear way and without exception’ as being the immobile and eternal realities.

By excluding the doctrine of Ὅν ἡ Ὅν from Κ, Γ, and Ε.1 as having the meaning of an ontological phenomenology, as it will, on the contrary, be present in Ε 2-4, Jaeger only explains what it signifies in that first group of writings. With respect to Book Γ he writes: ‘Here he treats being not as a sort of object separate and distinct from others, but as the common point of reference for all states, properties, and relations that are kind of general ontology, in the sense of a universal theory of being.”

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Ross believes, in contrast with Jaeger, that there are no contradictions on this subject in Aristotle. Aristotle mentions that subject of Metaphysics is the whole being and he says it is the first causes of reality and rarely he illustrates it is an independent being as certain part of reality.

“Aristotle has in the main two ways of stating the subject-matter of metaphysics. In one of the passages it is stated as, to ov h ov, the whole of being, as such. This view is expressed throughout Book G, and occasionally elsewhere, it is implied also in the description of ovσια as being occupied with the first causes and principles, CS, of reality as whole. But more frequently metaphysics is described as studying a certain part of reality, viz., that, which is described (exists independently) in E an attempt is made to reconcile the, two views. In studying the nature of pure being as a whole, both views are genuinely Aristotelian, but the narrower view of the scope of metaphysics is that which is more commonly present in his works.”

Ross continues that metaphysics deals with whole being not some part of reality and this or that being, it is including sensible and insensible substances, although this investigation starts with studying the primacy kind of being which is

independent and apart from matter, unmoving and eternal. This substance makes clear the nature of entity, so it is first and primary in studying and in degree. While agreeing with Ross we must say that although metaphysics studies the whole reality of being including sensible and insensible substances, but immaterial, substances would be the first subject to study it.

Then, as far as all other sciences (mathematics and physics) deal with this or that existence or genus, not being qua being, and then because immaterial substance is one part of being, and if being qua being is embodied just for immaterial substance, then subject of Metaphysics would not be general subject, and if it is not general subject it cannot be obvious subject, then it cannot be self-evident, and must be proved in other science which is higher than it, but there is no higher science than metaphysics.

Therefore, metaphysics is related to all beings including material and immaterial things, their causes and principles. He distinguishes between things that are “better known to us.” and things that are “better known in themselves,” and maintains that we should begin our study with things better known to us and arrive ultimately at an understanding of things better known in themselves. Metaphysics studies principles, which may seem
very general and abstract, but they are better known in themselves.

**Why Aristotle dose not accept real being of Plato**

What exactly Aristotle has in his mind when he speaks of being qua being? He like Plato is interested in ὄνσια: that which is. This reality for him can be seen and touched, a particular and actual existing thing, which is able to subsist in itself, not like redness, but the flower, which is red.

Plato believes that the Forms are real and cause of essence in things, apart from particulars. Aristotle was sufficiently influenced by Plato to agree that the only possible objects of genuine knowledge must be general or universal, but these objects cannot exist apart from the individual things or facts in which they are found in human experience.

What made Aristotle not to accept Plato’s ideas were the following reasons:

First, Ideas do not explain why the things exist, even if the existences of things are explained by ideas, their motion and becoming is not explained. Aristotle tried to enlighten the
changes and becoming in this world which Plato made no attempt to explain it, therefore, he concluded that universe of Plato would be static. To explain this, he said, there must be some principle of becoming in ideas themselves, but they are immovable.

Second, another most important point for him not to admit the real being of Plato is that Plato thought ideas are the essences out side the things. The essence of a thing must be in it and not out side. The idea as the universal can be only in particular.

Third, Plato nowhere has discussed the relation of Forms to particular. “He just uses metaphorical terms like “participation” and “imitation” to describe this relationship. These do not explain in any way how forms and things are connected.”1 O’Connor elaborates these three problems as main problems for Plato’s ideas, which made Aristotle not to accept this theory.

W.T. Stace, beside these three critiques adds four more reasons. He says: “Plato’s ideas do not explain the existence of things. To explain why the world exist, and why it is here, and

1 O’Conner, P.47
how according to an idea, objects of that idea were produced, are all main problems of philosophy, which Plato’s idea fail to explain them.”

According to Stace, Plato explains multitude of things in this world by assuming the existence of another multitude to explain them. Aristotle says Plato is like a man who is unable to count with small number, and then he supposes if he doubles the number, he will count them.

Also, Stace criticizes Plato’s ideas, because he says that the ideas are supposed to be sought to explain the world of sense, but Plato merely takes the objects of sense over again and calls them non-sensuous. There is no difference between an object and its idea; it is nothing except one hypothesis for sensible things.

Next, Stace poses the argument of the “third man”. Ideas are supposed to explain what is common to many objects. “Whenever there is a common element there must be an Idea. There is an Idea of man, because there is a common element in all men. But, there is also an element common to the individual man and the Idea of man; therefore, there must be a further

1. Ibid. PP. 262-263
Idea, “the third man”. And between this further Idea and the individual man there must be another Idea to explain what they have in common, and so on.

**Does Aristotle understand Plato from his point of view?**

What Aristotle represents of Plato’s doctrines must be said that they are discussed in the *Parmenides*, where Plato responds to the misinterpretations of his theory of Ideas. Aristotle is opposite on many important points, as he introduces different prospects and methods.

“But more important are the differences not only of detail, but of method and outlook between Plato and Aristotle, where Plato is rationalistic, dogmatic and contemptuous of the world of sense, Aristotle is empirical, cautious, and anxious to consult all relevant facts and opinions before making up his mind”\(^1\). This is a general difference between them, which here we focus on their difference in what real being is. How we know it, what result has these two different opinions? Aristotle believes that the world of sense is the world of facts and what he always wanted was to determine scientific knowledge. To

\(^1\) O’Conner, P. 47
Plato the only thing should be pursued is the knowledge of Idea, which is universal, permanent, changeless and genuine. Ideas could be the objects of science and fundamental reality. What is particular mutable and contingent might be the object of mere belief and could not be known. Individuals get their characteristics by participating in the Forms.

Aristotle becomes close to Plato by saying that Plato was correct in supposing that the only possible object of genuine science must be general or universal, but he goes far from Plato by signifying that, these objects cannot exist apart from concrete substances. For him fundamental realities are individual things, which are, required for the existence of species and generalities in various categories.

J.N. Findlay believes that Aristotle is an “instantialist”, in the sense that he maintains that primary reality is the individual is material, and materiality is understood as a contrary which stands opposed to ideality, “His matter is sensible stuff and not be a principle for thought.”

Stace believes that Aristotle in some senses is an idealist like Plato. Ultimate reality for Aristotle, he says, is the end, the principle of the form, which is desired by the things end cause.
And as the form is universal and undefined (opposite of forms in Plato which are defined), this fundamental thesis is the same as Plato’s.

“It is the one thesis of all idealism, namely, that thought, the universal, reason, is the absolute being, the foundation of the world. Where he differs from Plato is denying that Form have any existence apart from the matter in which it exhibits itself.”

“Aristotle is a dualist, which Plato is not, and he believes in the matter as some sort of real stuff on which eidetic activity is exercised, then constituting the realm of the nature.”

What Aristotle failed to understand is that for Plato it is important to establish a systematic philosophy of the One or unity, the being. The Goodness and the Beauty are One ontological states. All other beings whether material or immaterial are its own specification or instantiations. The One in Plato has “suppress” meaning rather that “esse”. Plato tries to show how there can’t be anything other than unity itself, and his solution is to deny sensible world as real.

1. Stace, P. 281
As Findlay believes “Aristotle has the opposite problem and ends up with a plurality of logical and ontological distinctions, which he can only gather together in the form of a list, since he has lost sight of unity as the ultimate principle of thought and being.”¹

In other words Aristotle inverted “Plato’s philosophy, the erection of instances into ontological appendages of Ideas rather than the other way round”. Findlay believes “Aristotle is an instentialist who is unable to conceive that for Plato instances are not really real at all. Then he treats as if Plato believed in nothing else.”²

Plato clearly distinguishes between the “apartness” of instances from each other and their idea and the ontological and logical “apartness” of Ideas from their instantiations. Aristotle has done a reverse attempt. He distinguishes between primacy and derivative senses of being in his own ontology in the form of the relation of “material individuals” to the other categories. He fails to understand that Plato attempted the same but “working in reverse, and that he was in fact attributing being in

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¹. Ibid, P. 409-410.
². Plato and Platonism, P. 209
the unqualified sense to Ideas and only derivatively to their actual or possible instantiations.”

This type of criticisms show that Aristotle evaluated Plato from his standpoint. What is important for Plato is not to explain the way particulars are. They are taken as not real being but not nothingness in his philosophy. Plurality in particulars, matter, space, time, change and becoming in them, their existence are not some principles for thought. It is because these are Plato’s negative principles which retain as a character of a separate principle, an element that stands opposite to eidetic site of one or Ideas. How these two sides are connected cannot be grasped by thought, but only imagines as sort of synthesis of hostile elements.

Being and not being are taken in Plato’s view to be the contraries which differ from Aristotelian element of matter and form, and primacy and derivative senses of being which are not contraries in any ordinary sense; but rather, have the relation of potency to actuality in the matter and form and the relation of completion in the relation of primacy and derivative senses of being.

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Matter in Aristotle’s view can only be taken separately for thinking, which is extant to its object. Plato’s matter and mostly his not being matters, plurality, many, space, time, changing or principles of indetermination, which stands opposed to one as being. Being cannot be the cause of becoming, since being simply is and is one and not many, at rest and not in changing or becoming.

Plato regards becoming as a determinate part of not-being, but has not taken not-being by itself as having an absolute determination in itself for thought. Not-being qua not-being is nothing in itself. It has no existence of its own to stand on in the relation of opposition to another.

For Plato cause of Plurality or becoming must be found somehow in not-being or matter, or space or time or indeterminacy, because once unity is allowed to be a separate principle, what is other than it must be something different from it and even opposed to it. The Plurality in eide is opposed to oneness of one or the manyness of the many to self-identity in their eides or negativity of becoming to the positive of being.

Aristotle criticizes Plato that he could not achieve the relation he sought in finite things which maybe caused by the
good as what they desire. He says Plato could not show how the
good could be present in some way in not-being. But what is
important for Plato is not not-being. He did not conceive of not-
being as both what underlies or the context within which
change occurs. Not-being is not real being.

For Aristotle what is other than Form, is at once the
privation or not-being of the Form and desire for it in matter.
What unifies matter with its Form is the end or the good. Plato
in his Phaedo sets this explanation of becoming. He says that
things must be explained in terms of the operation of
intelligence or the good and not by the introduction of
additional causes.

But, this argument didn’t satisfy Aristotle when he
speaks of reality and real being, what he has in mind is
something quite different from Plato’s Idea. To him reality is
what he sees and what he can touch: this man, this flower, and
this book. What other name it may bear, reality is always for
him a particular and actual existing thing. “A distinct
ontological unit which is able to subsist in itself and can be
defined in itself, not man in himself, but this individual man
whom we can call John or Peter.”¹ Then, problem is that, what is in any concrete existing thing, which makes it to be a reality or in his word an  

ονσια. Which character in this determination thing makes it as real being, which deserves it to be the subject of metaphysics.

**How Aristotle overcomes with problems of real being in Plato**

The most outstanding objection among all objections made Aristotle against Plato was that Ideas are general and acceptable as truly real, but they have nothing to do with the world of sense in which we live. Then, the question that was asked always by anyone, who will wonder about any thing like Aristotle, was “what is being”? “What is a thing”? “What is the thing hood of thing”? ”What makes our world a world of things”?

Like his master, Plato, Aristotle says it is: that  

ονσια which is. Only, when he speaks of it, what he has in mind is something quite different from a Platonic Idea. To him reality is what he can see or touch of this or that object. Reality for him always bears an individual and actually exist, i.e. substance

(ονσία). His detailed account of substance is very difficult to understand. He treats it from several different points of view and seems at time to say inconsistent things about it.

(1) In the *Categories*¹ he talks about substance from the point of view of language and of logic. It is neither predicable of a subject nor present in subject, for instance, the individual horse or flower..

Everything except primary substance (an individuals, this man) is either predicate of a primary substance or present in a primary substance and if it did not exist, it would be impossible for anything else to exist. Secondary substances, the species, are more truly substance than the genus, being more nearly related to primary substance. Primary substances are most properly called substances in virtue of the fact that they are the entities that underlie everything and that everything else is other predicated of them or present in them.

Substances are unique in being independent thing: the items in the other categories all depends some how on

¹. *Categories*, La 25.
substance. That is, qualities are the qualities of substances; qualities are the amount and sizes that substances come in. These various non-substances are universal and all owe their existence to substance, each of them, as Aristotle puts it, exists only ‘in’ a subject. Each non-substance “is in something, not as a part, and cannot exist separately from what it is in”. Indeed, substances are the subjects that these non-substances ontologically dependent on in.

Substances are not particulars, because such particular and isolated thing can not exist. If whiteness cannot exist apart from bodies, neither bodies exist apart from whiteness. Take away from a body what it has in common with other objects, and you will find that there is nothing left. We say gold is heavy, yellow, malleable, etc. Now the yellowness, the heaviness, and other qualities, cannot exist apart from the gold. It is equally true that the gold cannot exist apart from its qualities. (Later in chapter ‘Kant’ we see he will put substance (or noumen) as central objection in his scientific thought and denied it). Therefore, neither of them considered apart from the other.

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1.Ibid.
It is usually believed that Aristotle contradicted himself when he states, that the individual object, the compound of universal and particular, is substance, but later on allows a real, superiority to the universal or “form” and like Plato says that the universal is what alone is absolutely real, that is, the universal is substance.

It must be noticed that whenever Aristotle says that the individual, and not the universal, is substance, he thinks of Plato. What he means to deny is that the universal can exist on its own account, as Plato thought. Nevertheless he agrees with Plato that universal is the real. When he says that the universal is not substance he means, as against Plato, that it is not existent. What alone exists is the individual thing, the compound of universal and particular. When he says that universal is substance, he means that, though it is not existent, it is real.

It is a mark of substance and of differentia that, in all propositions of which they form the predicate, they are predicated univocally. Such propositions have for their subject either the individual or the species. “It is true that in as much as primary substance is not predicated of anything, it can never from the predicate of any proposition. But of secondary
substance, the species is predicated of individual, the genus both of the species and of the individual. Similarities and discrepancies are predicated of the species and of the individuals. Moreover, the definition of the species and that of the genus are applicable to the primary substance, and that of the genus to the species. For all that is predicated of the predicate will be predicated also of the subject. Similarly, the definition of the differentia will be applicable to the species and to the individuals. But it was stated above that the word ‘univocal’ was applied to those things, which had both name and definition in common. It is, therefore, established that in every proposition, of which either substance or a differentia forms the predicate, these are predicated univocally.

Another mark of substance is that it has no contrary. What could be contrary of any primary substance, such as the individual man or animal? It has none. Nor can the species or the genus have a contrary. It may be contended that ‘much’ is the contrary of ‘little’, or ‘great’ of ‘small’, but of definite quantities terms no contrary exist.

The most distinctive mark of substance appears to admit variation. It is different from Ideas of Plato that admit degree.

\[1\text{. Ibid.}\]
Aristotle one substance cannot be more or less truly substance than another. No single substance admits of varying degrees within it. For instance, one particular substance, ‘man’, cannot be more or less man either than himself at some other time or than some other man. One man cannot be more man than another, as that which is white may be more or less white than some other white object. A body, being white, is said to be whiter at one time than it was before, but substance is not said to be more or less than which it is. Substance does not admit of variation of degree.

Here we return to the other argument, which made Aristotle, present another objection against Plato. It is about the problem of change or becoming as fundamental element in the real world.

Aristotle in his objection to immovable Ideas, tried to explain that why the world and the things in it are as they are and how they come to be so? His answer to this highly general question is contained in three closely linked parts of his philosophy, his doctrine of “matter and form”, “potentially and actuality” and “causality”.

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How change is possible in real being

Change is a fact that all observe. While Plato wanted to go beyond the world of change to the unchangeable Ideas, Aristotle studied change itself. Change has a pattern that we can understand under concepts of causes, matter and form and potentiality and actuality. Aristotle in Physics divided objects to three categories (1) of which is always potential (2) of which is always actual (3) of which is complex of potentiality and actuality. “Motion is defined as a movement from potentiality to actuality.”1 Objects that are pure activity like God and pure potential cannot move, because there is no potential to change to activity in God, and pure potency like primary matter does not exist in reality except in our mind. Matter and form cannot exist separate. Therefore, motion occurs in those objects that are potential from one aspect and actual from other aspect.

Aristotle claims by means of potentiality and actuality to have solved the ancient problem of becoming. How becoming is possible? For being to pass into being is not becoming, it involves no change, and for not-being to pass into being is impossible, since something cannot come out of nothing.2 For

1. *Metaphysics*, 1045, b, 27
2. *Metaphysics*, 1046, b 29
Aristotle, the sharp line drawn between not-being and being does not exist. He substituted those absolute terms into the relative terms of potentiality and actuality. Potentiality in his philosophy takes the place of not-being in previous philosophical systems. Potency is not an absolute not-being. It is not-being in as much as actually nothing, but it is being, because it is potential being. Becoming does not involve the impossible leap from nothing to something. It involves the transition from potential to actual being. Therefore, all changes, all motions, is the passage of potentiality into actuality, of matter into form.

When we say that matter is the potentiality of what it is to become, this implies that what it is to become is already present in it ideally and potentially, though not actually.

The end is already present in the beginning. The oak is in acorn ideally; otherwise the oak could never come out of it. The end is anterior in the beginning. For the end is the cause of motion. It is an ideal attractive, a desire in things to reach to their ends. This is logically prior to its consequence. The end or the principle of form is thus the absolute first in thought and may be the last in time.
Then Aristotle asks how entire universe which is a compound of matter and form moves toward first principle? To reply this question he proves that each motion needs to the mover. The moving object is moved by another moving object. The motion of the latter demands a further cause. This further cause is itself moving, we must again ask for the cause of its motion. If this process goes on forever, then motion is unexplained, and no real cause of it has been shown. The real and ultimate cause must, therefore, be unmoved.\(^1\)

Aristotle presents another argument to establish the need of motion in this world to the unmoved mover. He explains that the world process is a continual elevation of matter into higher and higher forms, absolute form that is called God. First form is real, because that is absolute, actual and real being. Here he pose an argument that since the principle of form contains the formal, the final, and efficient causes, God is all these. As formal cause, He is the Idea. He is essentially thought, reason. As final cause, He is the absolute end. He is that to which all being strive. Each being has its own end in itself. But as the end of each thing God includes all lower ends and is the completed perfection of the thing, so absolute end and absolute

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1. *Metaphysics*, 1071, b,36
2. *Physics*, 8.6, 258 b 26-259 a a
As efficient cause God is the ultimate cause of all motion and becoming. “The process involved is not a time process, it is a logical process, and the development is a logical development. The lower always contains the higher potentially. It is necessary to remember that God in Aristotle is not creator but is the end and desired that all things in the word move toward Him.”¹ He is the first mover should be unmoved, because motion is the transition of a thing towards its end. The absolute end can have no end beyond it and therefore, cannot move likewise motion is the passage of matter into form. Absolute form cannot pass into any higher form, and therefore, is unmoved.

Aristotle believes changes occur in accidents then essence or substance of things remain constant, so all categories accept variety except essence. As far as God has no accident so there is no change in Him, because He is absolute in His essence. This is a very important subject which in Islamic Philosophy (from Mulla-sadra’s point of view) becomes completely different, i.e. Mulla-sadra believes and proves changes in essence of things in this world, but he agrees that there is no change in God, because He is absolute and His

¹. *Metaphysics*, 1072, a, 19
essence is same as His being. He explains in a new way how could be relation of absolute constant being with things that their being (including their accident) accept change or motion, or in other words how could be relation of unmoved mover to the moved thing.

**Conclusion**

Aristotle spent many years of his life as a student in the Academy and he was the most distinguished of Plato’s disciple. They belong to one era and Plato influenced Aristotle in his writings. But what is more important is the difference of method and outlook between Plato and Aristotle to the subject of being.

Generally, we do not prove that Plato is rationalist, dogmatic, and Aristotle is empirist and relativist. Although, Plato’s main defect is a dualism almost identical with that Aristotle and what has been said of the one could be applied to the other, but here some transcendental aspects of Plato’s philosophy gets highlighted, which is missed in Aristotle’s philosophy. These aspects follow in Islamic philosophy (Mulla-Sadra), which overcomes, the defects in Plato, Aristotle and
Kant. While scientific approach of Aristotle to explain every thing according to logic and other sciences render the meaning of transcendent as different from the being in Plato then it prepares some context for conceptualism in Kant.

Aristotle thinks that to explain what is being, it is enough to show “that things in the world are hallmarked by the possession of sets of essential properties and are neatly pigeonholed by nature into distinguishable species”,¹ which O’Connor calls this approach superficially plausible.

Aristotle didn’t accept the ultimate reality, the foundation of the world, the absolute being of all things, the Idea, in Plato. He was reluctant with this principle, because he supposed that with this principle we couldn’t explain the change or movement and also relation between Ideas to reality of this world. The cause of Plato’s failure was dualism in his philosophy, a big gap between sense and thought, between matter and the Ideas. It was impossible to derive the world from the Idea, because they were separated from the world. Aristotle saw it and attempted to over come it. Then he said the universal and the particular do not lie apart in the world. They are inseparable, embodied in substance in the form of matter and Form. God is absolute form. But if Aristotle wants to show that there is matter and

¹ O’Connor, P. 49
form in substance, he must establish that matter necessarily comes out from Form and is produced by it, otherwise, they are two entities equally ultimate, not derive from anything and being prima, existing side by side from all eternity.

If this world is combined of matter and form, Aristotle must show that all causes, formal, final, efficient and material causes can be identical, but he leaves material cause as potential and does not show that matter must deduce from other causes, “where does this matter come from? This is the last resort this dualism of sense and thought, of matter and Idea, of ultimate and limiting.”

Aristotle established the theory of evolution because he saw that evolution implies movement towards an end. He explained that the form of plants is nutrition; of animal, sensation; of man reason or thought. Each step in evolution is higher than the last because it approaches nearer to the end of the world-process, as the end is the realization of reason. But in this hierarchical order he ought to show that forms constitute a systematic unity that they can be deduced one from another, as Plato ought to deduce all the Ideas from one another. He doesn’t show why must be nutrition first then sensation and

1. Stace, P. 335
how it is necessary the development goes from lower level to upper and the reverse is impossible to happen. Therefore, he neither proved that the principle of form to be necessary ultimate in general, nor were the particular forms deduced from each other.

He is called materialist, because the matter in his philosophy remains as eternal substance, also his philosophy has estimated\(^1\) as idealism, because ultimate reality, that first principle, from which the entire universe, flows, the end, is the principle of absolute form. And as form is universal, the Idea same as in Plato, it is the one thesis of all idealism, namely, that thought, the universal, reason is the absolute being, the foundation of the world. While he is different from Plato in denying an independent existence apart from matter in the world, which it exhibits itself. This ultimate thesis in Plato could be explained and have definition but in Aristotle it has not.

He rejects the existence of Plato’s forms in general and the form of the good in particular. He pulls down the transendental and sublime meaning of being to the concepts of the substance and the categories, the sentences. Truth and untruth become true and false in sentences. This is because he

\(^1\) Stace, P. 281
never proposed that study of ethics needs to engage in study of the philosophy. The place and importance of Natural world, mathematics, eternal and unchanging objects in his philosophy differed from Plato, he makes ethics an autonomous field, to believe that a full understanding of what is good does not require expertise in any other field.

**Summary**

In the first part of this chapter it is explained that Aristotle’s doctrine is such an extensive philosophy in which there is no branch of knowledge that did not receive his attention, except mathematics. His philosophy is one of the most difficult to understand, because, first, the nature of the intellectual background of his time; and second, the character of his writings as they have come to us.

He composed about four hundred books. More Than three quarter of his writing have been lost and nearly rediscovered piece-meal. They are written against a very different intellectual background from us. He was living in a pre-christian and relatively primitive society, which leads us to be wary in interpreting of his texts.
Second part starts to survey real and scientific knowledge based on its object as truly being in Aristotle, to compare that subject with being in Plato. In the *Republic* Plato says true knowledge must be universal which is grasped by reason or thought. This universal knowledge is opposite to sense cognition. The object of real knowledge is Ideas which in it’s zenith stand the Good, includes all other Ideas in its beneath. He explains a hierarchy and degrees in the world of Ideas with a sublime aspect. While object of sense perception is particular, stands in the lowest degree of knowledge and entity the knowledge of Ideas stand in the highest level.

Aristotle in contrast with Plato follows another different approach and methodology. He starts with the facts of nature as he can see and touch them, and reduces them to a system. A science, for him, is a body of true statements about a particular subject, and it is enough, that statement tells us certain facts are so and also why they are so. But he cannot say why that statement must be necessarily and demonstrably true.

An important part of Aristotle’s theory of real knowledge turns out to be similar to Plato’s, i.e. the universal is indeed the absolute reality, but it is a universal which exist in the particular. Therefore, scientific knowledge for him starts with
sense perception, but not as reliable absolutely, nor as valid knowledge. Then, through a induction and help of reason he finally invokes a faculty of intuition which established a truly knowledge, and its object must be being and its principle and causes.

There are many different interpretations about what real being and its principle are in Aristotle’s point of view. It is because in many different parts of metaphysics he has mentioned it as different substances; in some other parts as material and immaterial, in other parts as immaterial.

Owen believes that being, substance and its attributes should be synonymous with entity of things in this universe. Jaeger says that for Aristotle in his early ages when he was influenced by Platonic philosophy the subject of metaphysics is immaterial, but latter in his late ages he believes that metaphysics as real knowledge is about general being with its causes and principles that indicates to sensible and insensible substances, their causes and principles.

Ross believes that there is no contrast in this subject in Aristotle’s metaphysics. Aristotle sometimes has mentioned that subject of metaphysics is the whole being and sometimes
he says it is the first causes of reality and rarely he illustrates it is as independent being as certain parts of reality.

We accept Ross’s view that metaphysics is dealing with whole being not some parts of reality, including sensible and insensible substances, although the latter is first in studying and in degree.

Third part starts with Aristotle’s argument against real being of Plato. He proposes several criticisms of, which the two most important of them are focused here. First, Plato could not explain changes and motions in the things in this world; second, relation of Idea to its objects, things in this world, are not clear and Plato explains them in a metaphorical way. These are main problems, which made him not to accept Ideas as real being, and instead of them Aristotle proposed his real being, substance in his own way completely in a different way from Plato to overcome those problems.

In part four it is shown that first, many criticisms that Aristotle renders against Plato, has been posed in Parmendies, where Plato responds to the misinterpretation of his theory, specially the theory of the Idea; second, Aristotle could not understand Plato through his whole philosophy. As Findlay
believes Aristotle is an “instantialist”, in the sense that he maintains primary reality in the individual, and it is material; then, materiality is understood as contrary to ideality, while his matter is sensible staff that could not be a principle for thought.

Stace believes that Aristotle is in some sense an idealist like Plato, because ultimate reality for him is the end that is desired by the things. This primary reality is universal and undefined opposite of form in Plato that is universal but definable.

What Aristotle failed to understand is that for Plato it is important to establish a systematic philosophy of the One or unity, the being, the Goodness and to show that there cannot be anything other than unity itself. He distinguishes the “apartness” of particulars from each other and their Idea ontologically and logically. Plurality in particulars, change and becoming in material world, are not important for Plato. What is important to Plato is not not-being but being.

In fifth part, Aristotle replies to those two most important objections against Plato; i.e., what could be a real being as a source of things in this world, which could be changeable and possible in this world. To him reality is what he can see or
touch of this man, this rose, reality always bear an individual and actual existence; i.e. secondary substances combined of matter and form. He made a list of nine types of predicate, which can be attributed truly or falsely to logical subject; this is his approach in his Categories. Forms are general, but cannot exist far from matters. Substance is not a particular but individuals; therefore, universal can exist just in individual. Then, Aristotle’s view about what is primary and secondary substance, what is their specification, what relation they have with genus and species is discussed.

Then, In part six it is explained how Aristotle poses the motion as potency and actuality in the matter to accept different forms, in other words, motion is a graduation movement from this form to that form according to the categories in the matter; not in substance. He claims how he has solved the ancient Greek philosophical problem about motion, in other words to pass the being to being is not becoming and to pass the being to not being is as well not becoming. He breaks those absolute items to relative means to potency and actuality. Then he explains these items with matter and form, and then he tries to explain the relation of unmoved mover to this universe. How much he can explain convincingly those two objections against Plato is discussed in the concluding part.
In the last part it disputes that although Plato’s main defect is a dualism, almost it is identical with that Aristotle said about matter and form and what he said about the One that could be applied to the Form. Aristotle cannot overcome to those two problems in his main objects against Plato and the result of this philosophy is that he explained real being in the sentence scientifically, but Kant rejects Aristotle’s scientific approach then he established a conceptualism. This latter result of Aristotle’s thought is follow in Kant philosophy in next part.