

Phil 2301 Intro to Philosophy  
Part Three: Metaphysics<sup>1</sup>

I. The First Metaphysicians

A. Thales (624-546 B.C.): water

B. The pre-Socratic materialists

1. Anaximander (610-546 B.C.): indefinite stuff

2. Anaximenes (585-528 B.C.): air

3. Heraclitus (536-470 B.C.): fire

4. Democritus (460-371 B.C.): atoms

C. Early non-physical views of reality

1. Pythagoras (571-497 B.C.): numbers

2. Parmenides (539-492 B.C.): absolute being

3. Zeno of Elea (fifth century B.C.): paradoxes

4. Heraclitus (536-470 B.C.): logos

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<sup>1</sup> Outline derived from R. Solomon, *Big Questions*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed (Fort Worth: Harcourt, 2002), chp. 4.

## II. Plato (428?-348? B.C.): forms and matter

Plato's "philosophy became the most influential strand in the history of Western thought." "Along with Aristotle, he [Plato] shaped the mind of Western man, that the moral philosophy and the scientific tradition of Western civilization are essentially the achievements of Plato's thought."

—S. E. Stumpf, *Philosophy: History and Problems*, pp. 46-7.

### A. The reality of the Forms

#### 1. Definition:

The forms or ideas which are independently real and are the archetypes, patterns, or models after which all things are derived.

#### 2. Examples:

- a. From circles to circularity
- b. From flash cards to the multiplication table
- c. From frogs to frogness
- d. From tables and chairs to tableness and chairness

#### 3. Characteristics:

- a. Objective
- b. Unavailable to the senses
- c. Universal
- d. Unchanging
- e. Understood only by rational understanding

### B. Background to the concept of the forms

#### 1. The problem of change and permanence: "My how **you** have **changed!**"

- a. You are the same.
- b. You are different.

#### 2. Heraclitus: all is change (world of becoming)

#### 3. Parmenides: all is permanent (world of being)

#### 4. Plato's metaphysical dualism

- a. World of becoming is constantly changing and cannot be known rationally
- b. World of being is eternal, unchanging and nonphysical and can only be known by reason

#### C. Relation of the world of becoming (particulars) to the world of being (forms)

1. The physical world is less real than the eternal world and is its shadow or reflection

#### 2. Examples

- a. Counterfeit \$20.00 bill
- b. Photography
- c. Reflection in a mirror

#### 3. Relation of particular things and their forms

- a. Forms are the cause of the existence of particular things
- b. Physical objects resemble their Forms (like a photo)
- c. Particular objects participate in their Forms
- d. Forms provide standards of evaluation (John to the ideal of MAN!)
- e. Forms make particulars intelligible

#### D. Allegory of the Cave and four levels of reality

1. Shadows on the cave wall (images)

2. Fire and objects producing shadows (things producing images)

3. Outside world and its objects (Lesser Forms of all things)

4. The Sun as the Form of the Good (the Source of all reality = GOD).

III. Aristotle (384-322 B. C.): *Entelechia*—Purposes of the Cosmos

A. Critique of Plato's otherworldliness and his two world thesis

B. Key metaphysical concepts in Aristotle

1. Substance

2. Potentiality and actuality

3. Teleology

C. The four causes

1. Material cause: that out of which something is made

2. Formal cause: that according to which something is made

3. Efficient cause: that by which something is made

4. Final cause: that for which something is made

D. The unmoved Mover (*Metaphysics*, Book XII, chp. 8)

1. Things do change (established by observing movement which is the most obvious form of change).

2. All change is passing from potentiality to actuality, that is, when capacity is actualized, change has occurred, acorn to a oak tree, for example.

3. No potentiality can actualize itself. For example, wood cannot make itself into a chair, though wood has the capacity to become a chair.

4. Therefore, there must be an actuality that actualizes everything that passes from potentiality to actuality, for otherwise, nothing would ever be actualized.
5. An infinite regress of actualizers is impossible, for the whole series would not be actualized unless there is a first actualizer.
6. This first actuality actualizes things by final causality, by drawing things to it the way a lover is drawn by his loved one.
7. There are either 47 (so astronomer Eudoxus) or 55 (so Callipus) of these pure actualities or unmoved movers.
8. Ultimately, however, there is only one heaven and one God or Unmoved Mover, for only material things can be numerically different, since matter is the principle of individuation.

**Conclusion:** Obviously, Plato and Aristotle have two different starting points for understanding things: there and here, and these effected Christian thought, since Augustine went with Plato, and Aquinas with Aristotle.

#### IV. Modern Metaphysics

##### A. Continental rationalists

1. Rene Descartes (1596-1650): dualism/pluralism
  - a. Matter/extended substances (*res extensa*)
  - b. Mind/unextended substances (*res cogitans*)
  - c. I think, therefore I am (cogito ergo sum)
  - d. God
  - e. World
  - f. Mind/body problem
2. Benedict/Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677): monist

"By God I mean a being absolutely infinite, a substance consisting in infinite attributes."

a. Mind

b. Body

3. Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716): pluralist

a. Monads

b. God as Super Monad

c. Mind/body problem

d. Pre-established harmony

B. Modern Idealism: Mind is everything

1. Bishop George Berkeley (1685-1753): subjective idealism

a. Empiricism

b. "To be is to be perceived"

2. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804): transcendental idealism

a. Critical philosophy

b. Copernican revolution

c. Rationalism and empiricism

d. Synthetic a priori

e. Noumena and phenomena

3. Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860): volitional idealism

- The will

4. G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831): historical idealism

- The Geist

V. Teleology and Process Philosophy

A. Charles Hartshorne (1897-2000)

B. Alfred N. Whitehead (1861-1947)