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**A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE NATURE OF  
METAPHYSICS**

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Aristotle's early philosophy, known as "metaphysics," was not introduced into philosophical literature by Aristotle, but by Andronicus around 50 B.C. Aristotle intended to categorize his writings under "metaphysics," but Andronicus compiled and published a complete edition of all of his known works under this rubric. This order was established by separating "physics" from "metaphysics." It is possible that Aristotle's prior and posterior analytics contain significant thought strata linked to his initial philosophy, which is referred to as "metaphysics." The term "metaphysics" may have no particular meaning, as Aristotle was an encyclopedic writer focusing on examining concrete details within an existential and empirical order. His later discussions may have been named for a deeper theoretical purpose, as the Aristotelian science of being-as-such professes to be the most general study of reality or the true order.

The truth is that while the methodology for this science of being-as-such has never been explicitly declared or defined, his metaphysics offers a philosophy grounded in critical or analytical thought. The technique used was the kind of conjecture or logical reasoning present in the early Hylozoists and all the way up to Plato's philosophical thought. Greek philosophy in all of its schools distinguished clearly between thought and sense experience as means of knowing, holding that only thought could provide knowledge of reality as such, while sense experience could only provide knowledge of appearance. In this context, "thought" referred to as speculative reasoning, was employed by philosophers all the way down to Aristotle to develop their philosophical concepts. The one obvious distinction between Aristotle's use of the speculative method in metaphysics and that of some of his predecessors—particularly Socrates and Plato—is that the latter used the method in a dialectic or conversational mode of presentation, whereas Aristotle did not. He did not refer to his initial philosophy as "dialectics" either. Regarding the subjects covered by Aristotle in his metaphysics, we can list the main points as follows: First, the Aristotelian theory of the fourfold cause is used to criticize earlier philosophical systems. Secondly, the principle of contradiction is stated as the foundation for all scientific reasoning.

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Third, definitions are provided. Fourth, the concepts of substance and logical essence—that is, matter and forms and the composite things that are formed by the organic union of both—are discussed. Fifth, the concepts of potentiality and actuality, and sixth, the concept of the unmoved mover are discussed. In addition to all of this, his metaphysics repeats the different categories or predicaments, which are the foundation of his logic. Additionally, Aristotle's metaphysics includes his spirited debates on Plato's theory of ideas, which highlight both his unique perspective on reality and the peculiarities of his own metaphysics. This then suggests that Aristotle's first philosophy, or metaphysics, was meant to be a practical theory, just like his second philosophy, or physics, but wider and more thorough than the first. The very term "first philosophy" attached to it suggests that it was also regarded as more basic and essential.

However, this does not imply that Aristotle also proposed the idea that metaphysics serve as the foundation for the many disciplines, as is the case with our more contemporary conception. Metaphysics was, in a sense, a kind of super-science. Aristotle speculated about a rational ontology or the science of existence as such. It is undeniable that it included elements of the general scientific methodology and the principles of meaningful discourses, especially in the topics covered in the *Organon* or *Logic*, but it would be overstating things to say that Aristotle's metaphysics laid the foundation for all sciences and that it was the first philosophy in the peculiar modern sense. The most significant point to note in the discussion is that in this conception of metaphysics as first philosophy, as it has already been stated, the expression first philosophy does not mean the presupposition or the ground plan of all sciences and of all knowledge. The first philosophy is a distinctive kind of knowledge by itself and in itself and is conceived to be a super-science in the sense of a reasoned knowledge of widest possible generality. It is equivalent to what the ancient meant by 'philosophy' - that is, wisdom or knowledge in its greatest comprehension.

The unique quality of Aristotle's thinking is that, rather than restricting the term "philosophy" to his metaphysics—his philosophy of basic principles—he expanded its meaning to encompass second philosophies, or weaker comprehensions, like his notion of the several scientific sciences. We have knowledge about the nature of things in both the first and second philosophies (natural sciences or physics), but the first philosophy's subject matter is broader and more universal than the second's. Aristotle makes no attempt to minimize the scientific sciences or to claim that metaphysics is the exclusive source of authentic knowledge. He acknowledges the coexistence of

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metaphysics and these special disciplines as the more general knowledge and the less general knowledge. This sets Aristotle's viewpoint far from that of modern logical positivists, who reject metaphysics entirely and confine knowledge and understandable discourse to the fields of the natural sciences. This sets him apart from the views of the absolute idealists and the rationalist metaphysicians, who saw metaphysics as the model of necessary truths and either reduced the natural sciences to the realm of "make-believe" or tried to reconstruct the natural sciences based on their metaphysics.

Aristotle's first philosophy does not supplant his second, nor does it attempt to reinterpret them in terms of itself; rather, it permits them to coexist as a branch of real knowledge alongside one another. Aristotle had a deep affection for concrete. However, his conception's concrete reality displays traits or shapes with varying degrees of generality. Any research that helps us identify and understand these forms or laws is philosophical understanding of his theory. However, metaphysics is the first philosophy or philosophy of first grade insofar as it brings into light forms, features, or laws that characterize "being-as-such," that is, the entire realm of realities, whereas physics or natural sciences are second-grade philosophies because they deal with forms or principles of lesser generality. There appear to be three different schools of thought in the history of philosophy: (1) there is a single first philosophy, such as metaphysics, which is the only branch of philosophy that can be considered true knowledge; (2) there is no such first philosophy and any such idea is a prejudice; what exists instead are the natural sciences, or "second philosophies," of earlier conception; and (3) there are both first and second philosophy, though they may differ greatly in their approaches, subjects covered, and levels of comprehension. However, in the sense of authentic and recognized knowledge, both are scientific. This third viewpoint is what Aristotle holds.

In the history of philosophy, both to its proponents and opponents, metaphysics has meant or stood for this first philosophy, whether possible or impossible. But in concrete formulation, the specific nature of this first philosophy has undergone revision and has varied widely. The medieval theologians also formulated metaphysics or the first philosophy which is an admixture of revealed dogma and strains of philosophical thoughts found in Aristotle and Plato. They regarded this as the only true knowledge and rejected whatever views came into conflict with it as wrong. The first philosophers who emphasize on a particular technique of philosophy were

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those of the so-called modern age. It is well known that Bacon was the first to advocate for the scientific method. However, his *Novam Organum* was intended to be an inductive and empirical approach. Though they believed that mathematics alone could produce a system of necessary

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truths, modern rationalists like Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibnitz planned their first philosophy in a different way by adhering to the model of what they understood to be the mathematical and deductive method.

By using their synthetic deductive method, the modern rationalists aimed to arrive at certain fundamental ideas concerning undeniable certainty. From these ideas, they attempted to develop metaphysical systems in the same way that the mathematical sciences, especially geometry, develop a whole system of propositions from a set of axioms and postulates. Descartes' dualistic metaphysics, Spinoza's monistic metaphysics, and Leibnitz's pluralistic metaphysics are systems of apriori truths that flow synthetically and deductively from a collection of basic concepts like substance, qualities, modes, and so on. In this regard, it is noteworthy that these rationalists sought to update and reinterpret all other types of knowledge in light of the fundamental ideas of their metaphysics, in addition to accepting that metaphysics, or first philosophy, is the only authentic knowledge. Thus, metaphysics evolved with them to become the first philosophy and the essential basis for all other knowledge. Since the fundamental ideas of rationalistic metaphysics could not be discovered through empirical research, they considered their metaphysics to be trans-empirical and transcendental by definition. Rationalistic metaphysics has been defined as the knowledge of reality as such. The basic tenet of this kind of first-philosophy metaphysics was eventually refuted by Kant's criticism, which concluded that metaphysics as a corpus of objective, scientific knowledge was impractical. Hegel sought to revive metaphysics as an ulterior and transcendental science by offering a fresh approach and foundation for it. This was Hegel's famous dialectical method, where logic and metaphysics united, the gap between thought and reality was sealed, and an entire system of ideas connected by dialectical relationship came to symbolize both the structure of the objective reality, such as the Hegelian Absolute, and a system of subjective notions.

This was a new *apriori* formulation of metaphysics, a metaphysics that asserted to be all-encompassing truth and all-encompassing knowledge. The field of science that predominated at the time made no attempt to garner support for this metaphysics. It is a reality that Newtonian physics and the naturalistic and mechanistic philosophical fads that dominated scientific research at the time prevented significant progress from being achieved in the direction of scientific understanding. However, a school of metaphysics known as the Hegelian school either

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disregarded this advancement in science or attempted to interpret the fundamental scientific categories in terms of its own theories or tenets.

While metaphysics or philosophy was credited with what was seen to be a complete picture of reality, science was at best seen as a lower sort of knowledge dealing with the partial segmental. Despite not adopting Hegel's dialectical technique as the foundation for their metaphysics, the non-Hegelians all adhered to the same viewpoint. Bradley argues that only in this kind of context does his statement, "we may agree, perhaps, to understand by metaphysics an attempt to know reality as against mere appearance, or the study of first principles or ultimate truths, or again the effort to comprehend the universe, not simply piecemeal or by fragments, but somehow as a whole," seem relevant. Even the anti-intellectualist Henry Bergson, who rejected the absolutists' logical method and upheld intuition as the method of metaphysics or philosophy while devaluing intellect as the method of science, acknowledged the essentially same distinction between metaphysical and philosophical knowledge on the one hand and science on the other. He claimed that although metaphysics is the study of true reality, science just provides a skewed image of the world. Therefore, the direction in which we were to search for reality had to be the furthest from that of science, common sense, and everyday experience.

Some philosophers of the later era found the idea of reality as a transcendental and non-empirical concept that was far distant from the realm of existence established by science and common sense to be too unnatural and hot to stomach. Realists and empirical types publicly rejected the idealistic view of reality as a system. A broad backlash against absolutistic metaphysics was observed. Certain philosophers found it more and more difficult to overlook the advancements occurring in the natural sciences. Some introduced "synthetic philosophy" to bridge the gap between science and metaphysics. According to this theory, philosophy or metaphysics should not be seen as fully independent of the special sciences, but rather as their sum-total, providing a synthetic or synoptic view, while the special sciences provided sectional or departmental views of the same order. Some, like Russell, promoted the "Scientific method" as a means of revising philosophy, including metaphysics. A.N. Whitehead and Professor Samuel Alexande, two philosophers who were also scientists, advanced scientific metaphysics to the point where it was

in line with the most recent scientific understanding due to the influence of Einstein's Theory of

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Relativity.

An empirical or experimental study of the non-empirical or *apriori* is what Alexander refers to as metaphysics. Alexander wanted for the *apriori*, or non-empirical, to refer to a thing's pervasive feature. According to him, the only distinction between the sciences and metaphysics is one of subject matter. Without a question, metaphysics remained the original philosophy, but in light of the discoveries made by the emerging sciences, its validity had to be proven. Unlike transcendental metaphysics, which was at odds with science, this new metaphysics was grounded in reality and empirical evidence. A kind of trade emerged between metaphysics and science, with science being updated in the context of metaphysical theory as in Arthur Eddington and philosophy or metaphysics being updated in light of concepts from the sphere of cutting-edge. However, it cannot be claimed that philosophy or metaphysics has finally emerged from its isolation and remoteness in light of new philosophical ideas in such modern movements as Phenomenology and Existentialism appeared to assign philosophy or metaphysics a domain that was relatively isolated from everyday life and science. However, in response to modern conceptual analysts' and linguists' critique of conventional metaphysics, an effort has been made to give metaphysics a domain and structure that are significantly apart from those of natural science. This relates to the emerging idea of metaphysics as a meta-linguistic conceptual device or conceptual framework that somehow informs the languages of science and common sense. One example of this is the descriptive metaphysics of contemporary philosophers like P.F. Strawson. This is an approximate estimation of how the term "metaphysics" has evolved historically through the writings of its proponents from Aristotle's time till the present.

Now, we may highlight the distinctive qualities of the various ways that the idea of metaphysics has been expressed over time. First of all, metaphysics has always been considered a metaphysical concept, a founding philosophy, and a subject that underlies all historical accounts. Second, the proponents of this founding or first philosophy have considered it to be necessary, as in an essential field of study. Metaphysics has neither been totally destroyed by historical critique from its detractors, nor has the metaphysical treatise been put to death as Hume once suggested. However, it overcame its demise by evolving into a new entity and recreating itself using new vocabulary. It modified or reworked its methodology as well. Although this approach

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was hypothetical, Aristotle saw it as realistic as the concepts and categories it employed represented the broadest general aspects of both the objective and subjective world, rather than only being subjective ideas. The world it addressed was the same as the world of special sciences, but it was that world in its broadest sense. It just attempted to complement the findings of the natural sciences, his second philosophy, with a more comprehensive and basic investigation of the objective characteristics of objects thought to be the characteristics of being as such or of being in general. It made no attempt to refute or reject the conclusions of the natural sciences.

Medieval metaphysics was a dogmatic form of theology that contradicted science and research. Modern philosophers transformed it into *apriori* sciences, preserving its distance from empirical facts and scientific knowledge. British imperialists, Locke and Hume, challenged this metaphysics. Kant's disproof of rationalistic metaphysics and Hegel's revitalization of dialectical philosophy led to its decline. Scientific metaphysics emerged, generalizing knowledge about science and the nature of existential order. Metaphysical inclinations like phenomenology and existentialism sought to separate from science and seek identity in a different realm of experience. Modern conceptualistic and descriptive metaphysics restate the nature and methodology of metaphysics. Therefore, the only thing that these many forms of metaphysics had in common is their formal nature as a first philosophy of some sort; however, the nature and methodology of this first philosophy, which made up its true essence, differed greatly and occasionally in the opposite direction.

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