On Aristotle's Physics 3 (Ancient Commentators on Aristotle) by Simplicius

What Is The Meaning Of Being?

My Personal Review:
read this book for a graduate seminar on Aristotle.

PHYSICS--Aristotle addresses the "why" questions. Aetia= causes, there are 4 causes. Only 1 cause actually sounds what like we call a cause today. A better translation is "explanation." 4 ways to explanations. Arche= origins/principles, something that is 1st, or rule, or, commanding, or beginning. Thus 1st thought that leads us to understand something and how we proceed. Begin how we think and rule or govern how we think. Phusis= "nature," like physics. He understands nature differently than we do today. For Aristotle the planets orbits never change so not part of nature. Everything below the moon, "lunar," is nature. Thus everything below lunar is not perfect and goes through change. Phusis root= to grow or bloom. Thus, emerging like birth. This term has to do with movement and change. Also connected to "coming to light." Also, connected to "being."

Physics (nature) is an arche (rule) of motion and change. Concept of physics (nature) has to do with motion and change. Paramedes denies change. Aristotle takes umbrage with this. Plato says change is a deficient condition; Aristotle is against both men"s notion of change. IMPORTANT--Aristotle talks about how we talk about how we talk about change all the time. Aristotle says no such things as "being" itself. For Aristotle there is change we always talk about it.

Potentiality and actuality - 2 terms that dominate Aristotle"s thinking. Change is potentiality to actuality. Potentiality is a "not yet." He criticizes premises of philosophers for denying or denigrating change. His physics is his thought to explain change. Ousia can"t mean something unchanging, it is always a changing phenomena. For Aristotle and the Greeks the "world" has no beginning or end it is always here. No God or creator. Big and small are opposites, but are only conceptual. Small things become big Aristotle sees this. Our language is the guide here. The fact that there is change doesn"t mean it is chaotic, you plant a seed, and it grows from small to big, this is normal change.
3 senses Aristotle uses phusis or nature. IMPORTANT- 1. "Always or for the most part." 2. Telos-end, purposes. 3. Movement is self-generated toward something. When a seed falls to the ground it grows and moves towards growing. Contrast Phusis with techne="produce something by humans." Both have to do with change and movement. 1 is self-moving, 1 is moved by us. Trees are not brought into being by themselves; beds out of trees are made by us. What is a bed? For Aristotle it has no nature or physics, it can have an essence. Everything other than Techne "things of production" are physics, nature. It is natural that humans have productive capacity and skills. Techne and physics are distinguished to understand change. Aristotle is important in philosophy and science because he uses language of science. He sees that change is internal within phusis in their own nature, not from myth or storytelling.

His phenomenology says our primary access to things is the "whole" like a dog, once we analyze them we can break them down. This is different from the premises of philosophers who believed in "inarticulate wholes." This is a dramatic difference from Platonists and atomists ideas. Atomist says all things made up of individual stuff like atoms. Aristotle is against atomist doesn"t accept describing atoms as real. Like atomist the "whole" or dog is real for him. He isn"t a Darwinist because the earth is always the way it was, is and will be. He talks about elements earth, fire, water, air.

IMPORTANT- For Aristotle, "being" of a thing comes 1st, knowledge 2nd. He says knowledge comes to rest in the soul. The soul is calmed by knowledge. When the soul or the mind comes to rest this is out of a natural turbulence of the mind. When he says "by nature" it is intrinsic in us we are by nature turbulent like children, this is part of us. Knowledge achieves calming it emerges out of the turbulence like "wonder."

Techne and physics are not opposites they are distinct different ways to explain movement. Both parts of our world can illuminate each other. He doesn"t have idea of a creator God but understands if their were nature it would come by way of god. He says nature is self-manifesting. Techne completes nature (physics) Art doesn"t quite imitate nature but talking about shapes like a bed or cave like a house. More like impersonates nature. Craft or Techne our natural capacity to make things, we are elated by being able to craft we do have to be taught to produce things. When we build houses, we are completing something nature can"t do. Today, modern science rejects idea "nature" has a purpose. Thus, Aristotle doesn"t see physics, nature and techne craft as that different.

Aitia=Causes better definition is "explanation."

1. Material Cause, answers question "out of what"
2. Formal Cause, answers question "into what"
3. Efficient Cause, answers question "from what"
4. Final Cause, answers question "for what, or toward what"
Qua= Latin for "as." We understand something by questions we ask. He uses ordinary language. This arms us with information to look at whatever phenomena by deduction. Fill in the 4 causes and categories and then you have knowledge.

IMPORTANT- Most important is 2 the Formal cause. Efficient and Final cause fall under it. Usually he uses artifacts crafted by man to explain this. Example of a house:

1. Material Cause, answers question "out of what" Wood
2. Formal Cause, answers question "into what" A certain shape of house
3. Efficient Cause, answers question "from what" the builder
4. Final Cause, answers question "for what, or toward what" to provide shelter

Things of phusis can be explained by 4 causes a little tricky. Form isn"t just shape for Aristotle.

He uses different works for form, like logos = ordering, or pattern, or structure, in this case, organization in living things it is richer our bodies are our being cause. A corpse is no longer organized for a functioning body. Same with material cause. Aristotle distinguishes between wood or real matter and less tangible, he uses idea of material cause thus doesn"t just mean stuff like matter. Thus, in his book Politics, what is the material of the polis? The citizens. Material is just a way to explain it. The word matter works like "What subject matter are you taking"? Thus, Aristotle uses matter in the rich and varied linguistic way. Thus, he provides guides and 4 categories and causes to gain knowledge. He thinks his approach is an improvement over Plato and pre-Socratics like materialists.

IMPORTANT- Everything is what it is in combination of matter and form in the world except God. There is a difference between dogs and beds, thus he is against the atomists. If you don"t know what a cake is ahead of time you don"t ever get to the molecular structure to get you there. To talk about matter without form is to miss something. Any 4 causes alone doesn"t work, all together give an apt account of how things are. Modern science breaks with him on 4 the Final cause; scientists say this doesn"t exist in nature.

For Aristotle, if it is evident and real in nature it must be real. The Telos shouldn"t be understood as "push pull." Understanding can shift based on different issues and topics so Aristotle is a "pluralist." Never think of telos, or end, or purpose as "design." Not all forms of telos are "conscious design" for Aristotle. There is no intelligent design of nature for Aristotle. (No God). He rejects it, no beginning, or end of nature. However, he believes nature has purposeful elements to

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