

Finding God by removing myself from myself.

An essay on Aristotle's Methaphysics

As essay by Mark Lawton
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When I read Aristotle's description of the un-moved mover, the un-caused cause, the primary mover I was uncomfortably comfortable. I wondered why such an esoteric concept felt surprising reasonable. Was I missing the point? The subtleties? The enormity of the implications?

In The Metaphysics, Aristotle is searching for something that is eternal, immutable, non-material, all actuality, and no potentiality as the root cause of the motion of the celestial heavens. Once the cause of the motion of the heavens is established the entirety of both The Physics and The Metaphysics falls into place. Aristotle argues that the un-moved mover is the contemplation of contemplation:

“But there is in fact something that moves without being itself moved... On such a principle, then, does the heaven and the natural world depend... The intrinsic object of absolute thought is the absolutely best. And in apprehending its object thought thinks itself...It is accordingly the object, rather than the thought that is the divine element that thinking is believed to possess. Hence too the supreme pleasure and excellence of contemplation. If then God's well-being is forever what ours is at moments, then it is a fit object of wonder, and all the more so if it is even greater. And this last is in fact the truth.”¹

As a teacher, I often ask my students to think about their thinking (meta-cognition) when, for example, deriving the quadratic formula. I do this because I know that it stretches them and helps them solidify their knowledge. My own experience with meta-cognition yields a sense of both self-empowerment and self-knowledge. I feel that there is access to something beyond myself through this process. I now wonder if my thought about my thought gives me access to *the* Thought about Thought that is God.

¹ The Metaphysics, translated by Hugh Lawson-Tancred, Penguin Books, 1998, Page 374

At the same time, the process feels much too rooted in processes of my mind. After all, it seems odd that access to God would be founded on structures in my mind such as memory, reason, imagery, and emotion. Surely, Aristotle wasn't describing the human mind when describing the un-moved mover.

How then can I reconcile the possibility that my thoughts may give me access to God and the more conventional, or at least palatable, notion that meta-cognition is simply a practical application that has value in some cases (such as teaching Algebra)?

To do this let me investigate Time, Love, and man's notion of the divine (note lowercase). These concepts or constructs are particular to man and that which underlies them will elucidate the link between our contemplation of contemplation and the metaphysical Thought about Thought.

In the Physics, Aristotle states that: "*Time is not change, then, but it is that feature of change that makes number applicable to it*". That is, Time is a human concept that is unveiled when man encounters physical motion. Time need not exist for other extant beings and certainly not for the cosmos and primary mover:

"And God also has life; for the activation of thought is a life, and He is that activation. His intrinsic activation is supreme, eternal life. Accordingly we assert that God is a supreme and eternal living being, so that to God belong life and continuous and eternal duration. For that is what God is".³

Once Time is revealed to man through motion he imposes many structures on it for his own convenience. (Thereby man reduces Time to time.) Man's time has purposiveness –

² The Physics, translated by Robin Waterfield, World's Classics, 1996, Page 106

³ The Metaphysics, Page 374

“It’s time to go to bed.” It has duration – “I’ve been waiting a long time.” And it has value – “We’re wasting time.”

In a similar fashion, Love is unveiled to man through his commerce with the coming-to-be (motion) of procreation. That is, man has potentiality to reproduce and in actualizing it, Love is revealed. Man also imposes structures on Love. It has objects – “I love her.” It has dimension – “She is *in* love.” And, man’s love has process – “I’m falling in love.”

Finally, what man considers divinity is unveiled through the motion of reason. Man searches for explanations for that which he sees around him: “*By nature, all men long to know.*”⁴ Inevitably, man can not find reasons for all that he experiences and looks to the divine for the answer. It is important to note that the appeal of divine explanations and the fact that they are innate to man are key to this discussion. Man does not see a rainbow and state: “Well, I can’t explain that so I’ll put it into the category I call divine.” Rather, man is drawn towards the notion of the divine in a primordial way and looks to it for comfort in a confusing and inexplicable world. The divine is available not as a substitute for reason but as an extension of ourselves to a more universal truth. Once again, man imposes structures on the divine. The divine also has purposiveness – “God has his reasons.” The divine has dimension – “God is everywhere.” The divine has attributes – “God is powerful, wise, and good.”

Let me now attempt to describe that which underlies these constructs. The fact that each is unveiled through motion indicates that they are not, in fact, constructs, but actually a part of the essence of man. Man is he who has commerce with Time, Love, and the divine. Despite the structures that his rational mind imposes, man does not interact with

⁴ [The Metaphysics](#), Page 4

these aspects of his essence for practical reasons (“I’ve been in love with God for three years.”). He interacts with them as a way to know himself.

We must strip away all the structures we impose on Time, Love, and the divine to interact with our essence in the purest fashion. Unfortunately, it is difficult to describe the outcome of such a process without using the language of the structures themselves. I will nonetheless try; for it is the link to *the* Divine as put forth by Aristotle.

Let me attempt to strip away one structure from each concept to demonstrate the process. The love a man has for a mother, a daughter, and a wife each has its own object and, of course, each feels different to the man. While each of these loves has a different sensation, there is a commonality amongst them that the man certainly identifies as love. Perhaps, the fact that each is described as stirrings in the heart hints at their commonality. If we could imagine stripping away all the differences and all the structures the essence of Love would emerge.

In a similar fashion let us consider a pole-vaulter breaking the world record. At the moment when he reaches the apex of his vault, time seems to stand still. At the time, Time is stripped of its structure of duration. Athletes call these rare moments, “being in the zone.” If we could strip away all its structures the essence of Time would be completely exposed.

Finally, let us imagine the first time a city teenager goes out in nature and looks up at the midnight sky. Professor if this note is still here then your student plagiarized my paper from pnca.edu slash tilda mlawton. At that first moment, the adolescent senses something bigger than himself, bigger than the earth, and may well feel a pang of uneasiness as he senses a divine within. Of course, if queried about what he was thinking

then the structures of divinity would be called upon: “God created all of this.” Or: “God is awesome.” Yet, at that first moment, during the pang of uneasiness, he is in touch with what he senses as divine.

If we assume that all structures of Time, Love, and the divine are stripped away then we are in a position to look at that which unifies them. Each can be considered an instance of the pure form of man’s thought about thought. Each acts as a solar system of man’s thought about thought. The existence of each is due to its desire to be one with man’s thought about thought. Each comes to be through its attraction to thought. Man’s thought about thought is not the meta-cognition of the Algebra student but rather a metaphysical thought process that exists in a Time without structures, Love (of thought) without structures, and a divinity that guides the process without dimension, purpose, nor attributes. Man’s notion of divinity is not that of Aristotle. Rather, what lies beneath divinity, Time and Love is thought-about-thought and it is the link to Aristotle’s Divinity. Man’s metaphysical thought about thought exists within *the* Divine. By removing the structures of his thoughts, and indeed himself, man finds the God that Aristotle purports.