

Western Understanding of Metaphysics up to Aquinas: A Survey of Literature

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Abstract: In this essay an attempt is made to bring out the importance of the understanding of metaphysics. The origin of the term is discussed and the implication in the ancient Greek philosophy and medieval period in the West are given some consideration. The Ancient Greek philosophers were metaphysicians with a scientific mind. Their search is to find out the one ‘stuff’ out of which the universe is made. Whereas the Pre-Socratics considered the ‘stuff’ as one or the other of the elements Socrates and Plato takes Ethics as one thing that is responsible for the universe. Aristotle names it as ‘the philosophy’ which is the ‘wisdom’ that inquires the first cause. It has implications on modern science.

Keywords: Philosophy, Metaphysics, Western understanding, Ancient Greek, Aristotle, Medieval period.

1. INTRODUCTORY: CLARIFICATION OF THE TERM ‘METAPHYSICS’

Adapting from ancient Greek ‘*meta*’, which means ‘after’, it began to be used as a prefix from 20th century onwards to mean ‘to go beyond’ as in ‘meta-language’ and ‘meta-philosophy.’ This usage encourages the impression that ‘metaphysics’ is the study of something which ‘goes beyond’ physics. It also gives an impression that somehow the concern of the metaphysics is not ‘science’ which is engaged in the physics or matter. Let us see the origins of the term metaphysics and its implications from the history. The title is given to the fourteen books of Aristotle which are named (collectively) as *Metaphysics*. How the term came into vogue is explained below:

Aristotle himself did not know the word. (He had four names for the branch of philosophy that is the subject-matter of Metaphysics: ‘first philosophy’, ‘first science’, ‘wisdom’, and ‘theology’.) At least one hundred years after Aristotle's death, an editor of his works (in all probability, Andronicus of Rhodes) titled those fourteen books “*Ta meta ta phusika*”—“the after the physicals” or “the ones after the physical ones”—the “physical ones” being the books contained in what we now call Aristotle's Physics (“Metaphysics.”)

Aristotle's other works which deal with nature or natural world is named as *Physics*. From this the name ‘Metaphysics’ can be said as that which comes after physics or a sign for the students to study it after studying the *Physics*. The things in the physical world (natural world) are subject to change and this is clearly explained in the *Physics*. When a student understands things of natural world ‘then’ s/he can study the *Metaphysics*, which deals with the things that do not change. The subject-matter of the ‘first philosophy’ (i.e. metaphysics) according to Aristotle, is ‘being as such’ in some places and ‘first causes’ in some other places. There seems to be a breach between these two definitions. The difference is only in the way we study the being and not the Being *qua* being: “When Aristotle says that first philosophy studies the whole of Being, he is assigning to it the field it is to explain; when he says that it is the science of the divine, he is assigning to it its ultimate principles of explanation. Thus Aristotle's first philosophy is both the science of Being *qua* being, and also theology” (Kenny, Vol. I: 227-8).

From the definitions of Aristotle we can come to some conclusions with regard to the subject-matter as ‘being as such,’ ‘first causes’ and ‘that which does not change.’ These conclusions, as we shall see, are followed up to the 17th century (up to Spinoza and Leibniz). However the term *meta* began to acquire a new meaning in the medieval and modern period, “In medieval and modern philosophy “metaphysics” has also been taken to mean the study of things transcending nature—

that is, existing separately from nature and having more intrinsic reality and value than the things of nature—giving *meta* a philosophical meaning it did not have in classical Greek” (Borchert, 183). For our concern the metaphysics of St. Thomas Aquinas does not go beyond 12th century (i.e. medieval period). Therefore, we can safely keep to these conclusions as the subject-matter of metaphysics. The development of philosophy up to Aristotle reflects, though in an obscure way, this very subject-matter. An overview of the ancient Greek philosophy is given as it is the basis for Western metaphysics and for St. Thomas Aquinas.

For an understanding of the Western metaphysics we need to look into the history of the western philosophy. The history will be, in this section, with an emphasis on metaphysics. Metaphysics was ‘the philosophy’ from the ancient Greek philosophy which is the ground for Western philosophy. The understanding of St. Thomas Aquinas is from this perspective. Here an attempt is made to summarize the metaphysics in the Western view

We start the history of Western philosophy from the ancient Greek. The term ‘ancient’ in philosophy is taken to refer to the period of history of Western philosophy belonging to the Greek philosophy from ‘Pre-Socratics’ up to Neo-Platonism (approximately from 6th century BCE to 3rd century CE). After its first beginnings in Asia Minor, Greek philosophy pursued its course of development until it flowered in the two great philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, and later, through Neo-Platonism, exercised a great influence on the formation of Christian thought. The Greek philosophy is still relevant for us because we find answers suggested with value though we may think that they are rather *naïve* in their approach compared to our standards.

Among the Ancient philosophers Parmenides is considered to be the ‘founder’ of metaphysics. Considering ontology as the central topic Kenny gives the etymology for the word ontology as used by Parmenides. The Greek root word is ‘*on*’ which means ‘being’ and with the definite article ‘*to*’ (the) it indicate ‘all that is’ (like ‘the living’ – all those who are living). The individual being is written with small ‘b’ and the totality of the individual beings as ‘Being’ with a capital ‘B’ (Kenny, 199). The same way the word ‘be’ is as a verb, ‘I am’ (in sense of ‘I exist’) and as an auxiliary verb, ‘he is intelligent.’ In the first instance ‘be’ indicates the existence, and in the second the ‘mode’ of existence. Parmenides used it in the former sense, i.e. being as existence. It is not only applied to existents but also the qualities like being hot or being cold. Interpreted this way Being is a realm and It is more than the totality of existents. It is important to clarify the terms because the ancient Greek philosophy depends on this understanding.

2. ANCIENT GREEK PHILOSOPHY

Ancient Greek philosophy is divided into two kinds of thought, Pre-Socratic and Post-Socratic. That thought which differed from Socrates is Pre-Socratic; it is not necessarily before Socrates chronologically. Whereas the concern of Socrates is ethics of human person, the Pre-Socratics attempted to find universal principles that would explain the whole of nature, from the origin and ultimate constituents of the universe to the place of man within it.

3. PRE-SOCRATICS

With Socrates a new epoch has begun in the history of philosophy. The thinkers who differed from his way of thinking are called ‘Pre-Socratics’ because of different approach to the philosophy; they “attempted to find universal principles that would explain the whole of nature, from the origin and ultimate constituents of the universe to the place of man within it” (Guthrie, 758). Their time is given as 6th to 5th BCE. Their concern is the inquiry into the world and the place of human beings in it. The term ‘Pre-Socratics’ does not so much indicate to the chronology as to a philosophical outlook. The concern of Socrates, as we shall see later in this chapter, is different from his predecessors. Whereas his predecessors inquired about the world, its causes etc. Socrates was inquiring into the ethics of human beings.

The pre-Socratics are encountered with the question ‘what is the stuff out of which the world is made?’ they call it ‘*archē*’ (a Greek term meaning, the primordial stuff). Secondly they had questions with regard to the reality whether it is becoming (change, many) or being (permanence, one). Out of this questioning arose different kinds of responses.

3.1. The Milesian School:

Miletus is the place from where the Milesian philosophical thought emerged. It gave importance to the becoming rather than being. There are three philosophers to be considered, Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes.

3.1.1. Thales (585 BC Thales predicts an eclipse):

Thales is considered as the first Greek philosopher. For him the *arche* (the primary stuff) is water. The things in the world were made up of water was his conclusion. He also believed that the things have soul from the magnet attracting the iron. According to him 'all things are God.' It does not mean that he conceived a world soul as the modern philosophy understands. "The only certain and the only really important point about Thales' doctrine is that he conceived 'things' as varying forms of primary and ultimate element" (Copleston, Vol. I: 23).

He is considered to be the first philosopher because he has seen unity in difference. The philosophical mind is that which tries to understand the nature and existence of plurality that we experience in day-to-day life and to understand uniting principle that is prior to the world of plurality.

3.1.2. Anaximander (547 Anaximander dies):

Anaximander was younger contemporary of Thales. He too had the idea that all that exists is corporeal. But he did not approve of any 'one' or the other element as the basis of the world. He thought of the opposites like cold and hot, wet and dry; the perceptible consists of these opposites. From this thinking he came to the conclusion, "Prior to all perceptible body there must be an indefinite something with none of the incompatible qualities implied by perceptibility" (Guthrie, 760). The indefinite is the cause for all that exists. He was the first one to use 'material cause' that has taken full-fledged form in Aristotle. He called it *apeiron* (□□□□□□□□ which has been translated as 'indefinite,' 'indeterminate' and 'limitless.' The meaning seems to be obscure and we shall see the explanations to have an idea of the word. The experience of the opposites (like cold and hot) is general and these opposites generate from and merge with the *apeiron*. A sense of 'limitless' or 'boundary-less' in space is suggested by it: "The Greek term *Apeiron*, meaning originally "boundless" rather than "infinite," was used by Anaximander for the ultimate source of his universe. He probably meant by it something spatially unbounded, but since out of it arose the primary opposite substances (such as the hot and the cold, the dry and the wet) it may have been regarded also as qualitatively indeterminate" (Kerferd, 225). We can see that there is already transition from the 'seen' to the 'unseen' cause of the existing world.

3.1.3. Anaximenes (525 Anaximenes dies):

Anaximenes is the last thinker belonging to the Milesian School. He proposed air as the underlying principle of the world. Anaximander's opposites, hot and cold, are answered by Anaximenes by his theory called condensation and rarefaction. "This (theory) was condensation and rarefaction, the former of which he associated with cold and the latter with heat. Air as it rarefies becomes fire; condensed, it turns first to wind, then to cloud, water, earth, and stones" (Guthrie, 760). The theory of *apeiron* is that the world 'gets off' (is separated) from it (the *apeiron*) which suggests some mythological connection of that time (Hesiod's *Theogony* for e.g.). The theory of Anaximenes breaks this connection, "Throughout the process of cosmic change, the Hot and the Cold are dominant states of physical activity, but in no way are they forces distinct from air. They never come out of air by 'separating off' (*ekkrisis*); rather, they are 'attributes' of air when it condenses through 'felting' or is rarefied through 'loosening up'" (Diamandopoulos, 186).

The ancient belief that life was identical with breath finds fulfilment in the theory of Anaximenes. The soul according to him, is air that integrates us. The same way the whole cosmos is integrated by the air that surrounds it. The first is micro and the second, macro cosmos. This way he moved out of the mythology yet kept up the connection with the belief.

3.2. Pythagorean Society (530 Pythagoras migrates to Italy):

Pythagorean Society is a mixture of superstition and science. It believed a kind of kinship and sympathy with the world. According to Pythagoras not only the animate beings in our sense but also the cosmos itself is a living creature. He was the first one to use '*cosmos*' meaning 'order.' It is an order of unity where man is a part. Man is mortal but his essential part, the soul, is not. It (the soul) is a fragment of divine, universal soul that was cut off and imprisoned in a mortal body. For freeing this soul and to get reunited with the universal soul moral code is needed. That's why the moral code is proposed by Pythagoras. Transmigration of the soul was proposed and eating meat and beans is forbidden.

Aristotle declares that the Pythagoreans held that the elements of number are the even and the odd, and of these the former is unlimited and the latter limited. How 'limited' and 'unlimited' came into the picture? For the Pythagoreans the limited cosmos or world is surrounded by the unlimited or boundless cosmos (air) which it inhales. This way the objects of the limited cosmos (the sensual world) are not pure limitation, but have an admixture of the unlimited. The metaphysics has taken a mysterious and superstitious turn in the hands of the followers of Pythagoras.

3.3. Heraclitus (500 Heraclitus in mid-life):

Heraclitus is known for his dictum 'all is in flux.' "Plato remarks that 'Heraclitus says somewhere that all things pass and naught abides; and comparing things to the current of a river, he says you cannot step twice into the same stream'" (Copleston, Vol. I: 40). Life is not harmonious numbers as Pythagoras puts it but 'strife and tension.' It looks like the 'opposites' of Anaximander. The opposite tensions keeps the things integrated like bow and lyre. The flux of change and the constant movement is for the individuals and there is constancy in the structure of the universe. For the principle of constancy or permanence he uses the word *Logos*. "This law of individual flux within a permanent universal framework was guaranteed by the Logos, an intelligent governing principle materially embodied as fire, the most subtle element and identified with soul or life" (Guthrie, 761).

We come to an end of one way of thinking here that is matter and form. For the first Greek thinkers (Milesians) the reality consists of one material substance. For Pythagoras and Heraclitus it is form; for the former it is integral principle of structures as numbers and for the latter the Logos as an intelligent governing principle. The next part or another way of looking at the reality started with Eleatic School, namely, deductive reasoning instead of depending on sense experience.

3.4. The Eleatics:

We come to the 'reason' from the 'senses' in the Eleatic School. The Eleatics used deductive reasoning, instead of depending on sense experience, for the principle of unity.

3.4.1. Parmenides (450 Parmenides and Zeno visit Athens):

We come to the 'reason' from the 'senses' in the Eleatic School. Parmenides used the deductive reasoning, instead of sense experience, to come to the conclusion of the unity of reality:

He concluded that if there is any reality at all (in the language of his time, if "it is"), it must be (1) one only (for if more than one, its units could be separated only by "what is not"); (2) eternal and unchanging (for to speak of change or perishing is to say that reality at some time "is not" what it was, but to say of "what is" "it is not" is contradictory and impossible); (3) immovable (this follows from his statement that "all is full of what is"; since it cannot admit discontinuity or lack of homogeneity and since "what is not is not," the spatial requirements of locomotion cannot be provided) (Guthrie, 761).

Parmenides' doctrine is concerned with 'Being;' in brief, that 'Being Is One' ('unity of existence') and it always exists (it is), and that Becoming or change is illusion.

3.4.2. Zeno and Melissus:

The two followers of Parmenides contributed to further his idea of one reality (Being) and the illusion of plurality (becoming). Zeno is famous for his dialectical analogy of an arrow to show that motion is impossible. It is in defense of the proposition, "reality is one and immovable by the dialectical method of showing up absurdities in the contrary view. His famous paradoxes are aimed at demonstrating the impossibility of plurality and movement" (Guthrie, 762). In conclusion, "Zeno produced paradoxes showing that plurality is impossible: if things are many, contradictions follow; there were also purported proofs that place is impossible and that things cannot have parts" (Curd).

Melissus brought significant change in Parmenides' idea of being is one saying that it is 'infinite.' His denial of empty space (which Parmenides hinted at) and the characteristics of the 'one' to many objects supports the idea of 'atomism' which said that atoms are endowed with the characteristics of reality. For Melissus the real is completely unlike the world that we experience (with our senses). So there is a split between appearance and reality.

Now we come to the conclusion of Eleatic philosophy that poses the question 'what is real?' posed by Parmenides. The answer to this question can only be in two ways: 1. To admit the plurality that we experience as real thus abandoning monism; 2. To admit the one reality and negate the reality of the world of experience. Here we come to two definite thought processes, one of Heraclitean flux and the other Parmenidean one reality. Plato attempted a synthesis of these two. The objects of sense perception cannot be the objects of true knowledge because of their instability that was put forth as Heraclitean flux. Only the stable and eternal can be the objects of true knowledge. Parmenides' Being suits the purpose but the stable and eternal are not material. They are ideal, subsistent and immaterial Forms. These Forms are arranged hierarchically and culminate in the Good. Plato is more lenient to Parmenides than Heraclitus. For his 'Forms' Parmenidean metaphysics of one reality becomes a background.

Aristotle also worked on the synthesis and his synthesis gives clarity to both Parmenides' Being and Plato's Forms:

Being, in the sense of ultimate and immaterial Reality, God, is changeless, subsistent Thought, *noesis noeseos*. As to material being, Aristotle agrees with Heraclitus that it is subject to change, and rejects the position of Parmenides, but Aristotle accounts better than Heraclitus did for the relative stability in things by making Plato's Forms or Ideas concrete, formal principles in the objects of this world (Copleston, Vol. I: 52).

Aristotle also solves the dilemma of Parmenides, i.e. dilemma between the reason (One Reality) and the sense (many objects). He brings actuality and potentiality to do this. A being is actually one thing (the objects of the world are this actuality) and potentially another. This is elaborated in the section on Aristotle.

The foundation for the metaphysics in the Western Philosophy was laid in the Ancient (Classical) Greek philosophy. There is a long way to go before coming to conclusion of it with Aristotle.

3.5. Empedocles (469 – Empedocles in mid-life):

Empedocles was a poet philosopher, who stepped into the Western tradition which is a combination of rationalism and mystical religion; it is different from the purely scientific approach of Ionians. "His proposal was the first clear enunciation of the four-element theory. Fire, air, water, and earth are the ultimate roots of all things, themselves un-generated and indestructible. Everything in nature comes into being and perishes by the mixture and separation of these substances. The first premise is no longer 'It is' but 'They are'" (Guthrie, 761).

The four elements are not self-moving; they are moved by the other forces. This is the point for mysticism in the Western tradition. The forces are the motive causes which are Love and Strife. Love brings the elements together thus bringing them into being and Strife separates them and beings perish. The world process is circular, in the sense that there are periodic world-cycle. At the commencement of a cycle the elements are all mixed up together. Then Strife (Hate) penetrates within the sphere the process of separation, the disuniting of the particles begins. The process continues, without beginning and without end.

Empedocles adopted the position of Parmenides, i.e., that Being is, and that being is material, that being cannot arise from not-being (nothingness) or pass away (into not-being), for being cannot arise from not-being, nor can being pass into not-being. So the matter is without beginning and without end.

3.6. Anaxagoras (c. 500-428 BCE):

Anaxagoras continued the tradition that being is and change is an illusion. It is the theory of Parmenides that Being neither comes into being nor passes away but is unchangeable. "The Hellenes do not understand rightly coming into being and passing away, for nothing comes into being or passes away, but there is a mingling and a separation of things which are (i.e. persist.)" (Quoted in Copleston, Vol. I: 67). He appears to have written, as did Anaximander, a single comprehensive prose treatise *On Nature*, a traditional title referred to by the later writers like Simplicius.. We can summarize his philosophy under two theories: 1. The nature of the physical world and 2. The nature and cosmic role of mind.

While Anaxagoras proposed theories on a variety of subjects, he is most noted for two theories. First, he speculated that in the physical world everything contains a portion of everything else. His observation of how nutrition works in animals led him to conclude that in order for the food an animal eats to turn into bone, hair, flesh, and so forth, it must already contain all of those constituents within it. The second theory of significance is Anaxagoras' postulation of Mind (*Nous*) as the initiating and governing principle of the cosmos (Patzia).

The physical theory 'everything contains a portion of everything else' needs to be seen from Empedocles' perspective. For Empedocles there are ultimate elements but for Anaxagoras even these elements are admixture of particles. Another point in this regard is that there are no indivisible particles all are mingled together. In other words for Anaxagoras there are no indivisible atoms.

Up to now Anaxagoras does differ from Empedocles. Empedocles proposes the mixture of the four elements as the cause of the world and Anaxagoras the mixture of everything with everything else. The difference comes when the question as to 'how' is involved, like 'how does it happen?' Empedocles puts forward two physical forces, Love and Strife, by which the beings of the world are caused. Anaxagoras originality comes here. He proposes something new which no philosopher

prior to him has proposed and it is *Nous* or Mind. He introduces it as a principle instead of physical force. "With Anaxagoras a light, if still a weak one, begins to dawn, because the understanding is now recognized as the principle" (Haldane, 319).

The Mind is different from everything. Anaxagoras gives an account of how the cosmos came into being, "Initially, all things (kinds of matter, presumably) were mixed together to such an extent that nothing was differentiated. But Mind (Nous) caused a whirling motion to start, which caused different materials to separate out, as in a centrifuge, leading to the articulation of the cosmos" (Borchert, 181). The conception of Mind interests people as to know whether it is material substance or the spiritual principle. Many, if not all, would like to see it as the spiritual principle which governs the cosmos. But Anaxagoras describes it as a material principle occupying space, "On the strength of this Burnet declares that Anaxagoras never rose above the conception of a corporeal principle. He made *Nous* purer than other material things, but never reached the idea of an immaterial or incorporeal thing" (Copleston, Vol. I: 70)

Since Anaxagoras introduces, for the first time, a principle of Mind in the history of Greek philosophy it would be good for us to examine the full implications from his own writings. The summary of his writings can be put under two divisions, nature mind and activity mind:

Nature Mind is:

(a) unlimited, (b) self-directing, (c) separate from everything else, (d) the finest and purest of all things, (e) all alike, the greater and the less

Activity Mind:

(f) takes thought for everything and has the greatest power, (g) controls everything which has a soul (h) directed the entire cosmic rotation, initiating it and continuing it, (i) knew all the mixtures and separations of everything, (j) organized whatever was, is and will be (Taylor, 200).

From the above description we can conclude that it is both individual (nature) and cosmic (activity) mind. However it is not the creating factor. It sets the rotatory movement and the force of the first movement causes the subsequent motion. Thus Anaxagoras explained the universe in a mechanical way making the *Nous* (mind) also as part of the mechanism.

3.7. Atomists (470 Democritus born):

Atomism became a central theme for modern science. Even though the 'atom' is divided into smaller particles like proton, electron and neutron the concept remains that there are 'ultimate' units (that which cannot be further divided) of mass. These are considered as the building blocks of the universe by the modern science. Modern science seems to be anticipated in the Pre-Socratic period and two names are associated with atomism, namely, Leucippus and Democritus. Though they are named together we do not know much of Leucippus. It is because of Aristotle we know him as the founder of atomism:

Atomism was the creation of two thinkers, Leucippus and Democritus. The former, attested by Aristotle, our primary source, as the founder of the theory, was a shadowy figure even in antiquity, being over-shadowed by his more celebrated successor Democritus to such an extent that the theory came to be generally regarded as the work of the latter, while Epicurus, who developed and popularized atomism in the third century BC, went so far as to deny that Leucippus ever existed (Kerferd, 'Sophists,' 226).

Our knowledge of the theory is dependent on the surviving fragments from Democritus. According to the theory there are an infinite number of indivisible units, which are called atoms. They are too small to be perceived by our eyes. They differ in size and shape, infinite in number and move in vacuum (space). In their constant movement they bang into each other making the objects of the world. Atoms and void are only two realities according to Democritus. The objects of the world are only conglomeration of atoms in the void.

Though the Atomists do not differ from their predecessors yet they are noteworthy for having carried previous tendencies to their logical conclusion, producing a purely mechanical account and explanation of reality. This way the reality is described as a large mechanism.

In conclusion with regard to the above discussion we can ask a question whether the Pre-Socratics can be called as philosophers. The question arises because their thinking is restricted to the material world. Though they were concerned with the world around them they do philosophize as they come to the conclusion as the reason behind this world. It is because of this underlying reasoning that they were recognized in antiquity as the first philosophers and scientists of the Western tradition.

The notion of One and Many started from the Pre-Socratics. But the unity behind the change was the logical conclusion arrived at the earliest stages of Greek philosophy. Taking one principle they explained the diversity of the beings in the world. Thales concludes that the water is the common principle, Anaximenes air, and Heraclitus fire. Though they chose different principles yet all the three believe in one ultimate principle. This is the metaphysical doctrine that Everything is One or there is One reality causing many. This way we can call them as metaphysicians.

The vision of the cosmic unity is faced with the diversity of reality. That is why the Greek philosophy is often said to be centered round the problem of the One and the Many. They have to account for the world (many beings) as we know it. Let us look at the Presocratic philosophy at a glance with this notion of the One and Many:

While Anaximenes, for example, had recourse to the principle of condensation and rarefaction, Parmenides, in the grip of his great theory that Being is one and changeless, roundly denied the facts of change and motion and multiplicity as illusions of the senses. Empedocles postulated four ultimate elements, out of which all things are built up under the action of Love and Strife, and Anaxagoras maintained the ultimate character of the atomic theory and the quantitative explanation of qualitative difference, thus doing justice to plurality, to the many, while tending to relinquish the earlier vision of unity, in spite of the fact that each atom represents the Parmenidean One (Copleston, Vol. I: 77).

It looks like they have not solved the problem of the One and the Many. The later Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle took up this line and with their outstanding talent and genius came up with the conclusions that have long affected the world philosophy and science. We also see that the Presocratics were concerned with only the objective world and not the subjective spirit or the knowing man. We remember that man as knowing subject is taken up as the sense experience and reason. They did not deal with the subjective spirit and cosmic or universal spirit.

Presocratic philosophy is the foundation for all the later philosophy. Thus we can see the foundation for idealism in Parmenides (One), for theism in Anaxagoras (Nous), for materialistic and mechanistic philosophies in Leucippus and Democritus. Thus the contribution of the Presocratics is great in the history of Western philosophy.

4. SOCRATICS/SOPHISTS: TRANSITIONAL PHASE

The earlier Greek philosophers were interested mainly in the Object; they were trying to determine the ultimate principles of all things. Their hypotheses of attaining certain knowledge concerning the nature of the cosmos led to a certain skepticism. Besides the doctrines of Heraclitus and Parmenides results in a skeptical attitude with regard to the validity of sense-perception. If all is in a flux and there is no real principle of stability, or on the other hand if being is static, our sense-perception is untrustworthy.

Secondly, they proposed mutually excluding theories. The synthesis has not been yet made. The transition from Object to Subject, which was proposed by Sophists, was a possible advance towards the facts of change and stability. Sophism is not the end in itself but only a transitory phase to the synthesis of mutability and stability.

The advance of various civilizations, cultures and religions coming to know each other is also a factor to the skepticism. Which one of these are sacred, having divine ordinance and which one are man-made, was the question sophists faced. So the focus of attention is microcosm (individual) rather than macrocosm (cosmos). Man and related issues like culture, politics, religious beliefs etc. became the centre for philosophizing.

The transition also is with regard to the method. The earlier philosophers used deductive method from general principle to the particulars. During this phase philosophers used the inductive method amassing the particular facts and arriving at the general principles. In this way Sophism served as the transitional phase between the early Greek philosophers and Plato-Aristotelian achievement.

The thoughts of a few well known Sophists would be appropriate here to determine the transition:

4.1. Protagoras (444 Protagoras writes a constitution):

“Man is the measure of all things, of those that are that they are, of those that are not that they are not” (Quoted in Copleston, Vol. I: 87).

4.2. Prodicus:

Prodicus is known for his theory on the origin of religion:

He (Prodicus) held that in the beginning men worshipped as gods the sun, moon, rivers, lakes, fruits, etc. — in other words, the things which were useful to them and gave them food. And he gives as an example the cult of the Nile in Egypt. This primitive stage was followed by another, in which the inventors of various arts— agriculture, viniculture, metal work, and so on— were worshipped as the gods Demeter, Dionysus, Hephaestus, etc. (Copleston, Vol. I: 92).

The transition from general to particular and from particular to general is clearly seen in his theory.

4.3. Gorgias:

He maintained the very opposite of what Eleatic dialecticians held. “Gorgias’ work entitled *On What is Not* contained arguments for three sceptical conclusions: first, that there is nothing; secondly, that if there is anything it cannot be known; thirdly, that if anything can be known it cannot be communicated by one person to another” (Kenny, Vol. I: 31). Another aspect of Sophism as speculative and skeptical is seen in Gorgias.

Sophists gained ill reputation because of their tendency to deny the absolute and objective character of truth and try to convince anyone to their way of thinking. There was positive attitude towards them because of their scholarly knowledge but the very knowledge is the cause of the ill reputation. Copleston says, “...the relativism of the Sophists, their encouragement of Eristic, their lack of stable norms, their acceptance of payment, and the hair-splitting tendencies of certain later Sophists, justify to a great extent the disparaging signification of the term” (Copleston, 85).

We can say there is decline for the metaphysical outlook because of the sophists.

Socrates was known as the greatest of Sophists with all the signification of the term on the one side and as a paradigm of philosopher on the other. Since he did not write anything he comes across to us through Plato his disciple. Let us get a picture of him concerning the metaphysics.

4.4. Socrates (469 Socrates was born):

Socrates had not written anything and we do not know his thought and ideas for certain. What we have is the picture of Socrates by Xenophon and Plato. They wrote with a particular purpose in mind. Xenophon wants to show Socrates as a just man who taught people how to be good citizens but did not have the concern for the problems of logic and metaphysics. Plato, on the other hand, gives a picture of Socrates as the metaphysician of the highest order. Now we are faced with the problem, which one is correct? We shall try to see what the scholars had found out and put the arguments to suit our concern, namely, metaphysical ideas of Socrates.

Plato has written dialogues making Socrates as the one involved in discussion to bring out the point. His dialogues (we can say writings because all his writings are in dialogue form) are classified by scholars as early, middle and late. In the early dialogues Socrates occupies a prominent place and in the middle and later dialogue his prominence gets diminished (Kenny, Vol. I: 37-41). So we can conclude that the earlier dialogues were the views of Socrates and later Plato was putting his own ideas into Socrates’ mouth.

We look at Aristotle, the synthesizer, to see the philosophy of Socrates. “Aristotle declares that there are two improvements in science which we might justly ascribe to Socrates— his employment of ‘inductive arguments and universal definitions’” (Copleston, Vol. I: 104). The universal definition are in direct opposition to the relativism of Sophists. The relativism rejects the necessarily and universally valid. The fact is that the universal concept remains the same. Take for e.g. ‘man is rational animal.’ Individual men may differ because of the deficiency of reasoning (mentally challenged). But the universal concept ‘if man, then rational or if rational, then man’ remains the same in spite of individual variances. This point is a unique contribution of Socrates that there is a contrast between the imperfect and changeable objects our everyday experience (imperfect) and the universal concept (perfect).

The method Socrates followed to arrive at the universal concept or universal definition is inductive method. He did not use the observance of particulars in order to come to the universals. Instead he used dialectics or the dialogue forms in order to elicit the universal definitions. This method is different from the 'Pre-Socratic' philosophers who used deductive method, from universal to particular.

Socrates sees the purpose of the things in the world. The purpose of the parts of the body, the distance between the earth and the sun, etc. The purpose cannot be from matter which does not have mind. So he suggests a universal Mind of the world. This notion has resulted in teleology, developed by others. Finally, his concern was not that of cosmology, nor the theology but human conduct.

5. PLATO (427 PLATO BORN)

Plato, the disciple of Socrates, wrote his works in dialogues. The principal character in the dialogues is Socrates. He uses the dialectical method to obtain truth. Now the question is whether the thought that was expressed in the dialogues belong to Socrates or to Plato. Scholars are of the opinion that his works can be divided into three parts and the thought developed gradually from Socrates to Plato (see above on Socrates). Now we shall try to understand his views on metaphysics.

In Plato epistemology and ontology are treated on the same level. We can have knowledge of the true objects. The point here is that without the true objects knowledge is not possible (Copleston, Vol. I: 142-43). From this we may conclude that through senses we get knowledge as Protagoras thought. Plato corrects this thought saying that senses give knowledge of the sense-objects and they are changing phenomena. Therefore the sense-objects are not true (*qua*) beings the knowledge thus obtained is not the true knowledge. "The object of true knowledge must be stable and abiding, fixed, capable of being grasped in clear and scientific definition, which is of the *universal*, as Socrates saw" (Copleston, Vol. I: 150). The true being that is worthy of definition is the *universal* and here begins Plato's metaphysics of Ideas or Forms.

The Ideas or Forms are not abstract; to each true universal concept (Idea/Form) there corresponds an objective reality. Plato divides reality as visible and intelligible in the *Republic, Book VI* by the example of 'line.' The line is divided into four parts, the first two parts belonging to visible reality, i.e. shadows and the objects, and the second two parts belonging to intelligible reality, i.e. corresponding Ideas or Forms. It is not a separate existence but a higher order of realities. It means that universal concepts have objective reference. We can say that there is an ascent of the mind from 'lower' (the sensible objects) to 'higher' (the Universals). The idea that ascent of the mind is not automatic but needs effort is shown in Book VII by the allegory of the Cave.

The above discussion concerns mostly with epistemology. Plato, entering into metaphysics, asks, what is the object of true knowledge? For Plato the object of true knowledge must have two qualifications, they are: 1. It must be stable and abiding, 2. It is to be the object of intelligence and not of senses. These requirements are fulfilled by the universal, as far as the highest cognitive state, that of *nōsis* (from *nous*, the mind) is concerned. Now we come to the universal: "In the *Republic* it is assumed that whenever a plurality of individuals have a common name, they have also a corresponding idea or form. This is the universal, the common nature or quality which is grasped in the concept, e.g. beauty" (Copleston, Vol. I: 164). One may identify (conceive in the mind) Absolute Beauty or Absolute Goodness but what about the natural (concrete, generic) beings like man, horse etc.? It would be ridiculous to identify the objective essence of man with the objective essence of a horse. "But some principle of unity had to be found, if the essences were not to be left in isolation one from another, and Plato came to devote attention to this principle of unity, so that all the specific essences might be unified under or subordinated to one supreme generic essence. Plato tackles this problem from the logical viewpoint, it is true, inquiring into the problem of logical classification" (Copleston, Vol. I: 164), to the above mentioned objective essences Plato gave the name Idea or Form.

What does Plato mean by 'objective essences'? Do they exist separately from particular things? If they do what is their relationship to one another and to the concrete particular objects of the phenomenal world? These are the questions that are raised when we think of the metaphysical unity. It looks like multiplication of the particular sense objects of the world in another world of Ideas/Forms. If we suppose that there exists another world of Ideas with objective essences then the question of relationship between God and these essences comes into picture.

From Plato's language we conclude that there exists a world of essences which is transcendent or apart from the sensual world. Here we need to remember that the language is used to indicate to the objects of the sense experience and it is inadequate to explain the profound metaphysical truths. Let us take the phrase 'God foreseeing' for example; the term indicates that God is in time. The eternity of God cannot be adequately expressed in our language. It is because we do not have the experience of eternity and our language is not designed for such things which are not under our experience. From the above explanation it is clear to us that we should not attach too much importance on the phrases and words Plato used in dealing with metaphysical truths (Copleston, Vol. I: 164).

Now we come to what exactly is the metaphysics of Plato. To understand Plato we need to look back at the previous two most influential philosophers, namely, Parmenides and Heraclitus, who are opposed to each other in their metaphysical stand. Plato tries to reconcile or disarm both of them. In *Sophist* one of the characters says that the true philosopher rejects both the doctrines; that the doctrine that all reality is changeless (Parmenides) and the doctrine that reality is everywhere changing. "Like a child who wants to have his cake and eat it he must say that Being, the sum of all, is both at once—all that is unchangeable, and all that is in change" (quoted in Kenny, Vol. I: 205).

Plato's philosophy can be divided into three phases. In the first phase he presents the theory of Ideas in the *Symposium*, *Phaedo*, and *Republic*. The realm of philosophy in this phase is divided into two, realm of Ideas as the philosophy of Parmenides and the world of sense experience as belonging the Heraclitean thought. The second phase consists of the criticism and unacceptable consequences of the theory of Ideas. The third phase is the conclusion. In the *Sophist* an unnamed person from Elea disowns all the three, i.e. Parmenides, Heraclitus and Plato's theory of Ideas and gives us an elaborate solution that supersedes the three (Kenny, Vol. I: 205).

Finally we come to the conclusion with the metaphysical unity in relation with the Good. "But while the realm of the Ideas is unchanging, it is not uniform or homogeneous like Parmenides' Being. Being is undifferentiated and single, whereas there are many different Ideas in some kind of relation to each other. They appear to be hierarchically ordered, under the Idea of Good, which appears to trump any notion of Being (Rep. 6. 509b)" (Kenny, Vol. I: 207).

Things that really are, are the essences of the things (objects of senses). The essences remain always the same, but the objects of senses do not. There is a certain abstract Goodness (and Beauty, and Magnitude); a particular object is good because it partakes of that abstract Goodness. The real knowledge is the knowledge of the essences which participate in the Good (Beauty and Magnitude). Thus we come to the inseparability of epistemology and metaphysics, and the metaphysical unity in Plato.

6. ARISTOTLE (384 ARISTOTLE BORN)

Aristotle is a disciple of Plato and his critique too. A look at the works of Aristotle shows his differences with Plato. Aristotle was drawn towards the empirical and scientific spirit and the objects of this world are not semi illusory or unworthy of true knowledge as Plato would like to think. When we look at the history of Western philosophy Aristotelianism is not the opposite of Platonism but its development. Aristotle corrects the one-sided theories of Plato and gives the firm foundation in physical fact. In doing so he omits something valuable and it should not make us think that they are diametrically opposed systems but as complementary philosophical spirits and bodies of doctrine (Copleston, Vol. I: 275). We shall see the attempts made to synthesize both of them in the later philosophy like Neo-Platonism and Medieval philosophy.

Since Aristotle is concerned with empirical facts we should not think that he lacks systematic power or renounced his metaphysical interest. The culmination of both of them is metaphysics. Talking about these two as heavenly (concerned with the ultimate Good, Truth and Beauty), and earthly (occupied with physical composition of the world and the beings and gradually soaring towards heaven) Goethe says, "He (Aristotle) therefore rises like a regular pyramid, whereas Plato ascends rapidly heavenward like an obelisk or a sharp tongue of flame" (Maritain, Part. I: 55, fn. 1). We can say that the conclusion of Plato and Aristotle is metaphysics and the ways they travel are different.

Aristotle describes metaphysics as the Wisdom par excellence and the philosopher is the lover of this Wisdom. He desires the knowledge of the ultimate cause and nature of Reality, and desires knowledge for its own sake. Wisdom deals with the first principles and causes of things; therefore it is universal knowledge in highest degree and so it is farthest removed from the senses. Since it is abstract knowledge it is the most exact science and the most knowable since it deals with the

first principles of all things. Regarding our knowledge we need to start with the things of sense and it requires a considerable effort of rational abstraction to proceed from what is directly known to us, sense-objects, to their ultimate principles (Copleston, Vol. I: 288).

To reach the Wisdom through reason Aristotle proposes four causes in the first book of *Metaphysics*. They are: 1. Substance (*ousia*) or quiddity (*to ti en einai*), 2. Matter (*Hule*) or substrate/subject (*hupokeimenon*), 3. Guiding principle or efficient cause and 4. The purpose (*telos*) or the final cause. In this work Aristotle surveys the philosophers previous to him as none of them has covered the four causes. He gives the critique his teacher Plato saying that Plato proposed the formal and material causes of Ideas and the efficient and final causes must be added to them.

In the second book of *Metaphysics* Aristotle gives the principles of physics and through it reaches to the philosophy, the theoretical science of truth. The conclusion he arrives at is that the infinite number of causes and species is an impossibility. Therefore there must be a first principle of the generation that cannot itself be destroyed. Book III elucidates the problems of philosophy in the backdrop of the science with 14 paradoxes and their answers.

The subject matter of metaphysics as 'Being as being' (or being as such, 'being *qua* being') is proposed in the Book IV. The particular sciences deal with a particular sphere of being and consider the attributes (accidents) in that sphere; the consideration of metaphysics is not the particulars but the being itself. When we say 'being is' it is to say that 'being is one' meaning the unity is the essential attribute of being. As being is found in all the categories so unity is found in all of the categories. Goodness too is applicable to all the categories; so unity and goodness are the transcendental attributes of being.

'Being' is not predicated to all things in the same manner. The predicates are qualities which are the affections of substance; the substance possesses being unlike the affecting qualities. Metaphysics is concerned with substance as the category of being which is primary (Copleston, Vol. I: 290-1). There are many substances (or it seems so to us) with which kind does metaphysics deal? Aristotle says that if there is an unchangeable substance (being *qua* being) then metaphysics studies it. Because the true nature of being (being *qua* being) is shown in that which is unchangeable and self-existent. There is at least one such unchangeable, self-existent substance which cause the motion (of the world) without itself being moved. Metaphysics is concerned with such substance. This 'unmoved mover' (the self-existent substance) is derived logically through the impossibility of an infinite series (*ad infinitum*) of existent sources of movement. It comprises the full nature of being and will have the character of the divine and so the first philosophy (metaphysics) is rightly called theology.

Mathematics deals with motionless objects but these objects do not exist separately from the matter; physics deals with both inseparables and subject to motion: it is metaphysics that deals with that which both exists in separation from matter and is motionless. In conclusion metaphysics is concerned with being and it studies being primarily in the category of substance.

We arrive at the supposition that Aristotle's theory is a development on Plato's theory of Ideas/Forms because of the following reasons:

1. Aristotle's criticism is against Plato and not his followers called Platonists.
2. He was aware of the published works of Plato and knew that some of his questions were answered in the *Parmenides*.
3. There is no real reason for supposing that the Platonic theory as taught in the Academy involved a retraction or rejection of the theory developed in the published works of Plato.

Plato did not satisfactorily solve the metaphysical problem '*chorismos*' (separation from '*choristos*' to separate). Aristotle tries with a different stand-point, i.e. from Ideal to Sensual to solve the problem.

7. PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

The two philosophers Plato and Aristotle laid the foundation for the Western metaphysics. The latter developments are based on this foundation. So it is important to see through the agreement and disagreement in these two philosophers.

It may be over generalization to say that Plato is for 'Being' and Aristotle for 'Becoming.' Though entirely not right, there are some reasons for this generalization, especially from their standpoint. Let us examine Plato's standpoint:

Plato, like Socrates, takes up the moral (ethical) values; they are ideal in the sense that they are not concrete like sheep and dogs. Since they are objective and universally valid they must possess some objective foundation. The objects of sense experience change and perish whereas the ethical values do not.

He (Plato) concluded, therefore, that moral values are ideal, yet objective, essences, apprehended intuitively at the end of a process of dialectic. These moral values, however, have a common share in goodness or perfection, so that they are rightly said to participate in, to derive their goodness or perfection from, the supreme ideal essence, absolute goodness or perfection, the Idea of the Good, the "sun" of the ideal world (Copleston, Vol. I: 373).

He began to apply the above dialectic to the common concept in general; just as good things participate in the Supreme Good so also the individual substances participate in the specific essence (Idea). It leads to the relationship between the Ideas themselves and between sensible objects and their Ideas. As a result there is dichotomy between the original (Idea, 'Being') and the copy (the world of sense experience, 'Becoming'). Plato's emphasis on 'Being' rather than 'Becoming' is obvious. The specific essence of man as an example, is ideal and the individual man achieves the ideal through gradual approximation. Thought apprehends Being and thought is concerned with the universal. So universal is Being and not the particular. The universal is unchanging whereas the particular changes and perishes. As a philosopher Plato is primarily concerned with essential and unchanging Being.

Aristotle defines the 'first philosophy' (metaphysics) as the study of being as being. It looks like he too is interested in Being and not in the Becoming. What is the difference? In Plato there is a chasm between Ideal and the material; there is no internal essential principle but dualism of pure universal and pure particular. This way of philosophizing results in depriving the sensible world of most of its reality and meaning. Aristotle supplies the essential principle as imminent essential form of the sensible object which, together with its matter, constitutes the object and which is the intelligible principle in the object. "All nature is conceived as a hierarchy of species, in each of which the essence tends towards its full actualization in a series of phenomena, drawn, in some rather mysterious way, by the ultimate final causality of the supreme Unmoved Mover, which is itself complete actuality, pure immaterial Being or Thought, self-subsistent and self-contained" (Copleston, 375). In this way nature is a dynamic process towards self-perfection. Aristotle emphasized on 'Becoming' but the goal of becoming is to actualize the 'Being.' The difference between Plato and Aristotle is that of essential principle (universal form); for Plato it is transcendent (outside the sensible world) whereas for Aristotle it is immanent (inside each of the sensible beings).

Neither of them gives truth satisfactorily; the synthesis of these two can be seen in Neo-Platonism.

8. POST ARISTOTELIAN PHILOSOPHY

After Aristotle the metaphysical outlook has changed because of increased scientific knowledge with regard to physics. Let us look into a few of the schools that influenced the thought of Western philosophy.

8.1. Stoics/Stoa (263 Cleanthes becomes head of the Stoa):

The thinkers are called Stoics and their School is known as Stoa. They proposed two principles which are materialistic. Because of this reason the School cannot be called as 'dualism' but materialist monism. The principles are 'passive' and 'active.' The passive principle is matter devoid of qualities and the active principle is the Reason (Consciousness) which also is material. The Reason is called 'God' but it is not the spiritual term. Natural beauty points to the existence of a principle of thought in the universe. Since the whole cannot be less perfect than the part, the whole universe has consciousness as humans possess the consciousness. This universal consciousness is God. "Nevertheless God, like the substrate on which He works, is material" (Copleston, Vol. I: 388). So whenever Stoics refer to the term God we need to understand it as the material active principle.

The Stoics propose fire as the stuff of all things. God is that fire. The crasser elements (unintelligent/unconscious elements) come forth from the Fire in the manifest form and goes back to It. Fire (God) is also material but finer stuff. The Active Principle (God) is given the term as *Ho Logos* (the Logos). It contains the active forms (*logoi spermatikoi*) which are 'seeds' and through their activity the individual things come into being. This idea of 'seeds' is made use by St. Augustine and Neo-Platonism under the name *rationes seminales* (literally 'seeds of reason').

Creation and dissolution is a new contribution by Stoics, which was not the idea of Heraclitus; God (Fire) forms the world and takes it back into Himself (Itself) through a universal conflagration. From this idea comes the 'fate' theory. In monistic system, by principle, there is no scope for personal devotion to a Divine Principle; but in actuality we observe this phenomenon of personal devotion: (hymn to Zeus by Cleanthes) (Copleston, Vol. I: 393-4).

8.2. Epicureanism (306 Epicurus founds the Garden):

The system of School of philosophy called Epicureanism is based on the teachings of Epicurus. It is an interdependent system; the interdependency among the following subjects: the goal of human life is happiness that results from the absence of physical pain and mental disturbance; an empiricist theory of knowledge, i.e. we get knowledge from the senses together with the perception of pleasure and pain; the world is made up of atoms and dissolves into atoms so there is no afterlife of a soul and so no punishment in the afterlife. This is to relieve humanity from the unnecessary fear of death which brings anxiety and irrational desires. To erase the age old mental habits the system proposes the knowledge of various subjects like unconcerned gods, politics, marriage and cosmology, and the importance of friendship in pursuing happiness (Konstan, plato.stanford.edu).

From the above cumulative description of Epicureanism we gather that the criteria of truth is based on senses, perceptions and passions. Perception takes place when the images (*eidōla*) of objects penetrate sense organs. 'Concept' is memory image (by having the image of the same object repeatedly we have the concept of that particular object); 'Feelings' (*pathē*) is with regard to the conduct. The feeling of pleasure is what we should choose and pain to be avoided. Epicurus has taken the materialist atomism from the School of Leucippus and Democritus just as Stoa borrowed from Heraclitus.

8.3. Neo-Pythagoreanism:

It is the last manifestation of Pythagoreanism which influenced Neo-Platonism that was prominent in the Middle Ages of the West. It is not a unified school of thought but rather a tendency, stretching over many centuries, to view Pythagoras, with no historical justification, as the central and original figure in the whole Greek philosophical tradition. Pythagoras of Neo-Pythagoreanism is thought to have received the philosophy as a divine revelation from which philosophical speculations of Plato and Aristotle have been derived.

It portrays Pythagoras as the master metaphysician, who originated the one and indefinite dyad, which are the principles of Plato's later metaphysics. It is explained by Sextus Empiricus that everything is derived from the monad or point (*ex enos semeiou* from one sign/point). The whole of universe (creation) is derived from this point. As the point in its flow generates the line, surfaces are generated from the lines and from surfaces the three-dimensional bodies are generated. The notion of 'emanation,' which is central to Neo-Platonism is present in this thought. Nicomachus of Gerasa (in Arabia, c. 140 AD), proposed that the Ideas are in the mind of God as different from transcendental existence. It passed over to Neo-Platonists and to the Christian tradition (Copleston, Vol. I: 447).

8.4. Plotinian Neo-Platonism (205 Plotinus born):

Neo-Pythagoreanism prepared the ground for Neo-Platonism with its close relation to the religious interest. Whereas the former system is purely materialist in its philosophy the latter is revival of the Idealism of Plato. Here is a review of the system which is found in the *Enneads*. The teachings of Plotinus were put together by his disciple Porphyry in six volumes containing nine chapters (parts) each. The name 'Ennead' meaning nine is derived from this.

'The One' occupies dominant place in Plotinus' system and we are referred back to Parmenides and Plato who described Oneness as the property of Being. The name *Logos* is given to this One in the *Enneads*. In *Enneads* 5.4.1 we have the description of the One as beyond all thought and all being, ineffable and incomprehensible. Neither essence nor being nor life can be predicated of the One, not of course that it is less than any of these things but because it is more (*Enneads* 3.8.9). The sum total of all the individual beings cannot be identical with the One because It is all the individual beings and the source of them. It is the Necessary Being (the source of Itself) whereas the individual beings are contingent beings (not source of themselves). Thus by adding up the contingent beings we cannot arrive at the Necessary Being.

How can Plotinus account for the multiplicity of finite beings on this view of the One as the ultimate Principle? The One cannot limit Itself to the finite things as though they are part of It; finite beings cannot be the creation of the One because creation is an activity and activity indicates changeability. So Plotinus uses the metaphor called 'emanation' to account

for the multiplicity of the beings. By the notion of emanation the One will not become less in any way; It remains untouched, undiminished and unmoved. Plotinus also uses the metaphors *perilampsis* – ‘flowing forth, emanation,’ and *ellampsis* ‘shining forth’, comparing the One with the sun, which illuminates, itself undiminished. He also employs the comparison of the mirror, since the object which is mirrored is reduplicated, yet without itself undergoing any change or any loss.

It seems easy to categorize emanation as pantheistic in character because the world proceeds from the One and there is no *creation ex nihilo* (creation out of nothingness). At the same time it is to be remembered that the One (prior Principle) remains ‘in its own place’ without diminishing and always transcending the subordinate being. Free creation, i.e. creation out of nothing, involved change in the One, and the idea that there is no deity (the One) in the individual, rejects pantheism. Thus Plotinus tries a middle path between these two ways of thought. The world (beings in the world) are called neither monistic pantheism nor theistic creation. The emanation is a course between these two oft trodden paths.

The first emanation from the One is *Nous* (it is translated as mind and thought but ‘intelligence’ is better meaning of the term). It is intuition or immediate apprehension that has twofold object, the One and *Nous* itself. The Ideas of classes and of individuals exist in *Nous* (*Enneads* 5.7.1ff). From *Nous* proceeds Soul, which corresponds to the World-Soul of the *Timaeus* (by Plato). It is incorporeal and indivisible, and is connecting-link between the Ideal world and the sensual world. It looks both upwards to the *Nous* and downwards to the world of nature. Plato proposes only one World-Soul but Plotinus envisioned two World-Souls as higher and lower. The higher one stands nearer to *Nous* and does not have the immediate contact with material world. The lower is the real soul of the phenomenal world and Plotinus calls it *phusis* (nature) (*Ennead* 3.8.3). With this we have the doctrine of ‘trinity’ which is different from Christian Trinity. Whereas the Trinity of Christianity is of the same substance (*homo ousia*) the Plotinus trinity is a gradation from higher to lower, the lower ones being emanated by the higher ones, i.e. *Nous* from the One, and Soul from *Nous*.

The Ideas are in *Nous* and the phenomenal world owes the reality it possesses to its participation in the Ideas. But the Ideas do not operate in the sensible world and they do not have the direct connection with it. The reflections of the Ideas are in the World-Soul which are called *logoi spermatikoi* meaning that they are comprised within the *Logos* and this is an adaptation of Stoic doctrine.

9. METAPHYSICS IN MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY

Aristotle defines metaphysics (the first philosophy) in two ways: 1. The Science of Divine Substance and 2. The Science that theorizes about ‘being *qua* being.’ In the medieval philosophy we find the metaphysics being mixed up with the divine nature. The two of the above definitions of Aristotle coincide with each other. So we can justify when medieval philosophers talk about the divine nature they are talking about metaphysics.

9.1. Avicenna (being, essence and existence):

Avicenna accepts metaphysics as the study of being *qua* being, but rejects that the object of metaphysics is God. His argument is that no science can demonstrate the existence of its own subject matter. But metaphysics demonstrates the existence of God. Therefore, God cannot be the subject matter of metaphysics. We are now faced with the question, ‘what is the subject matter of metaphysics?’ The object of metaphysics is ‘being’. Its existence does not have to be proved because metaphysics studies being as such and not particular types of being. The study area (the scope) of metaphysics covers Aristotelian categories, i.e. species of being, the one and the many, potentiality and actuality, universal and particular, the possible and the necessary, and the topics that transcend the boundaries between natural, mathematical, and ethical disciplines. It is called divine science because it deals with the things that are separate from the matter in their definition and being.

Quiddity of a being is because of the first ideas in the soul. The first ideas that are impressed on the soul are thing, being and necessary. Everything has its own reality which makes it what it is; this can be called its being, but more appropriate technical term is ‘its quiddity.’ The Arabic term is derived from the interrogative ‘What?’ the Latin translators formed a corresponding word, ‘quiddity’, to indicate that which answers the question ‘What (quid) is an X?’ One could form an English term ‘whatness’, but ‘quiddity’ has become sufficiently Anglicized over the centuries.) This is a better word because ‘being’ also has the other sense of ‘existence’ (Kenny, Vol. II: 190).

Avicenna divides the beings as necessary and possible beings (there are no impossible beings). It is necessary to be for the necessary being and it is not necessary to be for the possible being. What is necessary of itself has no cause; what is possible of itself has a cause. To define or distinguish between necessary and possible is being depends on the principle of cause. A being that had a cause would be no longer necessary because it is an abstraction from that cause; therefore it is a possible being. Whatever is possible has a cause both of its being and its not being. When it has being, it has acquired a being distinct from non-being. But when it has ceased to be, it has a non-being distinct from being (*Metaphysics 1.38*). From this argument Avicenna shows the existence of a first cause that is necessary of itself. He lists attributes of such necessary being as uncaused, incomparable, unique, etc. (Kenny, Vol. II: 189-90).

Avicenna goes on explaining the different possible beings or rather the concepts like the universe, a species, an individual as part of the possible beings. For our purpose it is sufficient to see difference between possible beings (many) and necessary being (one) defined from the cause. The attributes of the necessary being are, as we notice, fit to describe God. Metaphysics as theology (God-science) is accomplished. Based on the philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Avicenna etc. we have St. Thomas Aquinas building his metaphysics that can be called as theology.

9.2. St. Thomas Aquinas:

For Aquinas metaphysics is the study of being *qua* being, i.e. a study of the most fundamental aspects of being that constitute a being and without which it could not be. A thing cannot be unless it possesses an act of being; the thing that possesses an act of being is thereby rendered an essence-existence composite. The essence itself is the definition of a thing; and essence-existence composites are material substances. For Aquinas all substances are not material, for example God (substance but not material). A material substance (a cat or a tree) is a composite of matter and form. It is this composite of matter and form that is primarily said to exist. All other things are said of it.

We engage particular intellectual endeavor in ascertaining a particular subject matter. There are two distinctions in this endeavor, speculative and practical. Speculative intellect is engaged in speculative sciences which contemplate truth whereas practical intellect is engaged in practical sciences which apply truth for some practical purpose. The sciences are then further distinguished through differentiating their various subject-matters. The subject matter of speculative sciences is speculative objects which are separated from matter and motion to a certain degree. For example when we speculate the nature of a tree we speculate not the particular tree but that what makes it to be a tree.

There are three classes of speculative objects, 1. Those that are dependent on matter and motion both for their being and for their being understood, for instance human beings who cannot be understood without the matter of flesh and bones; 2. Those that depend on matter and motion for their being, but not for their being understood, for instance, we can understand lines, numbers, and points without thereby understanding the matter in which they are found, yet such things cannot be without matter; 3. Those that depend on matter and motion neither for their being nor for their being understood.

The classes of the speculative objects are considered by three different sciences; 1. Physical science considers those things that depend on matter and motion both for their being and for their being understood; 2. Mathematics considers those things that depend on matter and motion for their being but not for their being understood; 3. Metaphysics or theology deals with those things that depend on matter and motion neither for their being nor for their being understood.

Metaphysics and theology is not the same for Aquinas. For the proper clarification he divides metaphysics and theology into two; the positively immaterial (God and angels which are in themselves complete immaterial substances) and neutrally immaterial (which are neutral with respect to being found in matter and motion, e.g. being, substance, potency, form, act, one and many). Now the question is, what is the proper subject matter of metaphysics, positively immaterial or neutrally immaterial? We know the positively immaterial through revelation with the aid of human intellect. So it cannot be the subject matter of metaphysics and we are left with the neutrally immaterial. As it is a purely rational science, not dependent on or presupposing the truths of revelation, metaphysics will be a study of the neutrally immaterial aspects of things, that is, a study of those modes of being that apply to all beings, whether they are material or immaterial. Thus we come to the Aristotelian being *qua* being, a study of those modes of being that apply to all beings, whether they are material or immaterial as the subject matter of metaphysics. But Aquinas gives his own term *ens commune* (common being). Through an investigation of *ens commune*, an investigation into the aspects of being common to all beings, the metaphysician may indeed come to a knowledge of the causes of being and might thereby be led to the affirmation of divine being, but this is only at the end of the metaphysical inquiry, not at the beginning (Kerr, iep.utm.edu).

10. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The metaphysical science in the West has grown gradually from Pre-Socratic or Ancient Greek philosophy. Aristotle was the first one to make it a science and it acquired many names as ‘ontology,’ ‘first philosophy,’ ‘wisdom’, and ‘theology’. It is a philosophical science which studies being as being. The study of the being can only be done in existence; hence, primitively it is the study of the things of physical nature that exist and, as the science developed, its primary concern has become nonmaterial nature, the existence itself. It is because of this reason that metaphysics is called first philosophy or theology. This is the unity of metaphysics that all beings of the sense experience have existence and so they are related to one another. So there is interrelated unity among all beings. The interrelatedness is through reason which is called speculative science leading us to the term wisdom. Metaphysics is concerned with that speculative science.

The history of ancient Greek philosophy grapples with the idea of coming to the unity of the beings of the world. So we had the first philosophers as the scientists who were trying to find out the ‘one’ reality out of which everything is made of and they called it *archē* (the primordial stuff). This line of thought gets maturity in Plato and Aristotle who had seen the beings with attributes and one reality as Good (Plato) or First Cause (Aristotle).

The unity behind the multiplicity of beings brings us to the transcendental properties, the properties that go beyond (transcend means to go beyond) the particulars; in other words the properties that are applied to any or all beings are called transcendental properties. They include unity, truth, goodness and beauty. In short the transcendental properties are: the indivisibility of a being within itself is unity; being in its identity is able to be present in the intellect, so it is true; it (being) is able to be related to the will, and so it is good. These transcendental properties are elaborated in the third chapter.

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