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Aristotle: *Metaphysics Z*

PHI501, Fall/Spring 2018/2019

Aims of the course

In this class, we aim to go through systematically the 17 chapters of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, book Z (sometimes called book VII), and chapter 1 of book H of the *Metaphysics* (the one immediately following Z), since we hold, as do many other scholars, that it is best read as a continuation of book Z.

The goal is to understand Aristotle's famous theory of 'substance' as presented in book Z. Substances are the central items in Aristotle's ontology, and there are a cluster of other notions in the vicinity of 'substance' which we will also be trying to clarify: 'being', 'account', 'form', 'this', 'subject', 'matter', 'essence' or 'being what it is', etc.

We also want to assess what kind of treatise *Metaphysics Z* is: its train of thought is notoriously hard to follow, with apparent digressions, or even insertions, so it might not even have been considered a unified treatise by Aristotle. There is also the question of its relation to the science of metaphysics: is it a preliminary contribution to it, or an actual exposition of (a fragment of) it? Is there even a science of metaphysics (in the sense of 'science' defined in the *Posterior Analytics*) to which it could be related?

Brief list of some themes of *Metaphysics Z*

Fall:

Z1: Being is said in many ways; the central one is being as substance; so the question 'what is being' is the question 'what is substance?';

Z2: Catalogue of some items which philosophers have thought count as substances;

Z3: Four candidates for an elucidation of what a substance is: (1) 'essence', (2) 'universal', (3) 'genus', (4) 'subject'; problems with regarding substances to be (4) subjects;

Z4: what (1) essence is; definitions, accounts, and essence; *per se* predication;

Z5: complexity in definitions;

Z6: things that are identical with their essences, and things which are not;

Z7: coming to be;

Z8: which things come to be;

Z9: under what conditions do things come to be;

Spring:

Z10: substances and their parts; accounts and their parts; forms;

Z11: forms and their parts; summary of what has gone before;

Z12: definition, division, and *differentia*;

Z13: return to the four candidates of Z3: (2) universal;

Z14: Platonic Forms – which are genera (3)? – are not substances;

Z15: individuals don't have definitions;

Z16: neither the parts of substances nor the basic elements are substances;

Z17: New Beginning: forms/essences as substances;

H1: reminder of results from Z; attempted completion of the project of specifying what the substance of a perceptible object is.

Bibliography (items with a * are available on Blackboard)

Greek Texts

M. Frede, G. Patzig, *Aristoteles 'Metaphysik Z': Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar*, 2 vols (Munich, 1988)

W. Jaeger, *Aristoteles Metaphysica*, Oxford Classical Texts (Oxford, 1957)

*O. Primavesi, M. Rashed, *Metaphysik Z* (unpublished)

W. D. Ross, *Aristotle Metaphysics: A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1924)

English Translations

*M. Furth, *Aristotle Metaphysics Books Eta, Theta, Iota (VII-X)* (Indianapolis, 1985)

W. D. Ross, in vol. 2 of *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, 2 vols (Princeton, 1985)

Commentaries

See Frede/Patzig above

See Ross above (under 'Greek Texts')

Selected additional secondary literature

M. Burnyeat, *A Map of Metaphysics Zeta* (Pittsburgh, 2001)

M. Frede, 'Individuals in Aristotle', in his *Essays in Ancient Philosophy* (Oxford, 1987), 49-71, esp. 63-71

——— 'Substance in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*', in his *Essays in Ancient Philosophy* (Oxford 1987), 72-80

*——— 'The Definition of Sensible Substances in Met. Z', in D. Devereux and P. Pellegrin (eds.), *Biologie et Métaphysique chez Aristote* (Paris, 1990), 113-29

J. Lear, ch. 6 of *Aristotle; The Desire to Understand* (Cambridge, 1988), esp. pp. 273-93

C. Witt, *Substance and Essence in Aristotle: An Interpretation of Metaphysics VII-IX* (Ithaca, 1989)