ARISTOTLE ON GOD

From: *On the Heavens* Bk. 1 270b32-270a33

4 · That there is no other form of motion contrary to the circular may be proved in various ways. In the first place, there is an obvious tendency to oppose the straight line to the circular. For concave and convex are not only regarded as opposed to one another, but they are also coupled together and treated as a unity in opposition to the straight. And so, if there is a contrary to circular motion, motion in a straight line must be recognized as having the best claim to that name. But the two forms of rectilinear motion are opposed to one another by reason of their places; for up and down is a difference and a contrary opposition in place. Secondly, it may be thought that the same reasoning which holds good of the rectilinear path applies also to the circular, movement from A to B being opposed as contrary to movement from B to A. But what is meant is still rectilinear motion. For that is limited, while the circular paths which pass through the same points are infinite in number. Even if we are confined to the single semicircle and the opposition is between movement from C to D and from D to C along that semicircle, the case is no better. For the motion is the same as that along the diameter, since we invariably regard the distance between two points as the length of the straight line which joins them. It is no more satisfactory to construct a circle and treat motion along one semicircle as contrary to motion along the other. For example, taking a whole circle, motion from E to F on the semicircle G may be opposed to motion from F to E on the semicircle H. But even supposing these are contraries, it in no way follows that the motions on the whole circle are contraries. Nor again can motion along the circle from A to B be regarded as the contrary of motion from A to C; for the motion goes from the same point towards the same point, and contrary motion was distinguished as motion from a contrary to its contrary. And even if one circular motion is the contrary of another, one of the two would be pointless; for that which moves in a circle, at whatever point it begins, must necessarily pass through all the contrary places alike. (By contrarieties of place I mean up and down, back and front, and right and left.) But contrarieties of movements correspond to those of places. For if the two motions were equal, there would be no movement, and if one of the two were preponderant, the other would not occur. So that if both bodies were there, one of them, inasmuch as it would not be moving with its own movement, would be pointless, in the sense in which a shoe is pointless when it is not worn. But God and nature create nothing that is pointless.

From: *On the Heavens* Bk. 2 286a3-286b9

3 · Since circular motion is not the contrary of the reverse circular motion, we must consider why there is more than one motion, though we have to pursue our inquiries at a distance--a distance created not so much by our spatial position as by the fact that our senses enable us to perceive very few of the attributes of the heavenly bodies. But let not that deter us. The reason must be sought in the following facts. Everything which has a function exists for its function. The activity of God is immortality, i.e. eternal life. Therefore the movement of God must be eternal.

From: *On Generation and Corruption* Bk. 2 336b25-336b34

Coming-to-be and passing-away will, as we have said, always be continuous, and will never fail owing to the cause we stated. And this continuity has a sufficient reason. For in all things, as we affirm, nature always strikes after the better. Now being (we have explained
elsewhere the variety of meanings we recognize in this term) is better than not-being; but not all things can possess being, since they are too far removed from the principle. God therefore adopted the remaining alternative, and fulfilled the perfection of the universe by making coming-to-be uninterrupted; for the greatest possible coherence would thus be secured to existence, because that coming-to-be should itself come-to-be perpetually is the closest approximation to eternal being.

From: On the Universe 391b9-392a4

2 · The Universe then is a system made up of heaven and earth and the natural things which are contained in them. But the word is also used in another sense of the ordering and arrangement of all things, preserved by and through God.

From: On the Universe 397b10-399b28

6 · There still remains for us to treat briefly, as we have discussed the other subjects, of the cause which holds all things together. For in dealing with the universe, not perhaps in exact detail, yet at any rate so as to give a general idea of the subject, it would be wrong to omit that which is the most important thing in the universe. The old explanation which we have all inherited from our fathers, is that all things are from God and were framed by God, and that no natural thing is of itself sufficient for itself, deprived of the permanence which it derives from him. Therefore some of the ancients went so far as to say that all those things are full of gods which are presented to us through the eyes and the hearing and all the other senses, thus propounding a theory which, though it accords with the divine power, does not accord with the divine nature. For God is in very truth the preserver and creator of all that is in any way being brought to perfection in this universe; yet he endures not all the weariness of a being that administers and labours, but exerts a power which never wearies; whereby he prevails even other things which seem far distant from him. He has himself obtained the first and highest place and is therefore called Supreme, dwelling, in the words of the poet,†4 'on the topmost crest' of the whole heaven; and the body which is nearest to him most enjoys his power, and afterwards the next nearest, and so on successively until the regions wherein we dwell are reached. That is why the earth and the things upon the earth, being farthest removed from the benefit which proceeds from God, seem feeble and incoherent and full of much confusion; nevertheless, inasmuch as it is the nature of the divine to penetrate to all things, the things also of our earth receive their share of it in the same way as the things above us, according to their nearness to or distance from God receiving more or less of divine benefit. It is therefore better, even as it is more seemly and befitting God, to suppose that the power which is established in the heavens is the cause of permanence even in those things which are furthest removed from it, as we might say, and indeed in everything, rather than to hold that it passes forth and travels to and fro to places which becomes and befit it not, and personally administers the affairs of this earth. For indeed, to superintend any and every operation does not become even the rulers among mankind--the chief, for example, of an army or a city, or the head of a household, if it were necessary to bind up a sack of bedding or perform any other somewhat menial task, such as could be performed by any ordinary slave--but rather they should act as it is recorded was done in the time of the Great King. For the pomp of Cambyses and Xerxes and Darius was magnificently ordered with the utmost state and splendour. The king himself, so the story goes established himself at Susa or Ecbatana, invisible to all, dwelling in a wondrous palace within a fence gleaming with gold and amber and ivory. And it had many gateways one after another, and porches many furlongs apart...
from one another, secured by bronze doors and mighty walls. Outside these the chief and most
distinguished men had their appointed place, some being the king's bodyguard and attendants,
others the guardians of each of the enclosing walls, the so-called janitors and 'listeners', that the
king himself, who was called their master and deity, might thus see and hear all things. Besides
these, others were appointed as stewards of his revenues and leaders in war and hunting, and
receivers of gifts, and others charged with all the other necessary functions. All the Empire of
Asia, bounded on the west by the Hellespont and on the east by the Indus, was apportioned
according to races among generals and satraps and Kings, slaves of the Great King; and there
were couriers and watchmen and messengers and superintendents of signal-fires. So effective
was the organization, in particular the system of signal-fires, which formed a chain of beacons
from the furthest bounds of the empire to Susa and Ecbatana, that the king received the same day
the news of all that the happening in Asia. Now we must suppose that the majesty of the Great
King falls as far short of that of the God who possesses the universe, as that of the feeblest and
weakest creature is inferior to that of the king of Persia. Thus, if it was beneath the dignity of
Xerxes to appear himself to administer all things and to carry out his own wishes and superintend
the government of his kingdom, such functions would be still less becoming for a god. It is more
worthy of his dignity and more befitting that he should be enthroned in the highest region, and
that his power, extending through the whole universe, should move the sun and moon and make
the whole heaven revolve and be the cause of permanence to all that is on this earth. For he needs
no contrivance or the service of others, as our earthly rulers, owing to their feebleness, need
many hands to do their work; but it is most characteristic of the divine to be able to accomplish
diverse kinds of work with ease and by simple movement, even as machine-operators by one turn
on a machine accomplish many different operations. And just as puppet-showmen by pulling a
single string make the neck and hand and shoulder and eye and sometimes all the parts of the
figure move with a certain harmony; so too the divine nature, by simple movement of that which
is nearest to it, imparts its power to that which next succeeds, and thence further and further until
it extends over all things. For one thing, moved by another, itself in due order moves something
else, each acting according to its own constitution, and not all following the same course but
different and various and sometimes even contrary courses; although the first prelude, as it were,
to the movement is single. It is just as though one should cast from one vessel at the same time a
sphere, a cube, a cone, and a cylinder; each of them will move according to its particular shape.
Or if one should hold in the folds of a garment a water-animal, a land-animal, and a bird, and let
them go; clearly the animal that swims will leap into its own element and swim away, the land-
animal will creep away to its own haunts and pastures, the bird of the air will raise itself aloft
from the earth and fly away, though one original cause gave each its aptitude for movement. So
is it with the universe; by a single revolution of the whole within the bounds of day and night, the
different orbits of all the heavenly bodies are produced, though all are enclosed in a single
sphere, some moving more quickly, others more slowly, according to the distances between them
and the individual composition of each. For the moon accomplishes her circuit in a month,
waxing and waning and disappearing; the sun and the heavenly bodies whose course is of equal
length, namely those called the 'Lightbearer' and Mercury, perform their revolution in a year; the
Fiery star in double that period; the star of Jupiter in six years; and lastly the so-called star of
Saturn in a period two and a half times as long as the heavenly body next below it. The single
harmony produced by all the heavenly bodies singing and dancing together springs from one
source and ends by achieving one purpose, and has rightly bestowed the name not of 'disordered'
but of 'ordered universe' upon the whole. And just as in a chorus, when the leader gives the
signal to begin, the whole chorus of men, or it may be of women, joins in the song, mingling a single studied harmony among different voices, some high and some low; so too is it with the God that rules the whole world. For at the signal given from on high by him who may well be called their chorus-leader, the stars and the whole heaven always move, and the sun that illumines all things travels forth on its double course, whereby it both divides day and night by its rising and setting, and also brings the four seasons of the year, as it moves forwards towards the north and backwards towards the south. And in their own due season the rain, the winds, and the dews, and all the other phenomena which occur in the region which surrounds the Earth, are produced by the first, primaevae cause. These are followed by the flowing of rivers, the swelling of the sea, the growth of trees, the ripening of fruits, the birth of animals, the nurturing and the prime and decay of all things, to which, as I have said, their individual composition also contributes. When, therefore, the ruler and parent of all, invisible save to the power of reason, gives the word to all nature that moves between heaven and earth, the whole revolves unceasingly in its own circuits and within its own bounds, sometimes unseen and sometimes appearing, revealing and again hiding diverse manners of things, from one and the same cause. Very like is it to that which happens in times of war, when the trumpet sounds to the army; then each soldier hears its note, and one takes up his shield, another dons his breast-plate; another puts on his greaves or his helmet or his swordbelt; one puts the bit in his horse's mouth, another mounts his chariot, another passes along the watchword; the captain betakes himself straightway to his company, the commander to his division, the horseman to his squadron, the light-armed warrior hastens to his appointed place, all is hurry and movement in obedience to one word of command, to carry out the orders of the leader who is supreme over all. Even so must we suppose concerning the universe; by one impelling force, unseen and hidden from our eyes, all things are stirred and perform their individual functions. That this force is unseen stands in the way neither of its action nor of our belief in it. For the soul whereby we live and dwell in houses and communities, though invisible, is yet seen in its operations; for by it the whole ordering of life has been discovered and organized and is held together--the ploughing and planting of the earth, the discovery of the arts, the use of law, the ordering of constitutions, the administration of home affairs and war outside our borders and peace. Thus, too, must we think of God, who in might is most powerful, in beauty most fair, in life immortal, in virtue supreme; for, though he is invisible to all mortal nature, yet is he seen in his very works. For all that happens in the air, on the earth, and in the water, may truly be said to be the work of God, who possesses the universe; from whom, in the words of Empedocles, the natural philosopher,

*Whatsoever hath been and is now and shall be hereafter,  
All alike hath its birth--men, women, trees of the forest,  
Beasts of the field and fowls of the air and fish in the water.*

From: *On the Universe* 399b29-400a14

To use a somewhat humble illustration, we might with truth compare it to the so-called 'key-stones' in arches, which, placed at the junction of the two sides, ensure the balance and arrangement of the whole structure of the arch and give it stability. Moreover, they say that the sculptor Phidias, when he was setting up the Athena on the Acropolis, represented his own features in the centre of her shield, and so attached it to the statue by a hidden contrivance, that any one who tried to cut it out, thereby necessarily shattered and overthrew the whole statue. The position of God in the universe is analogous to this, for he preserves the harmony and
permanence of all things; save only that he has his seat not in the midst, where the earth and this our troubled world is situated, but himself pure he has gone up into a pure region, to which we rightly give the name of heaven, for it is the furthest boundary of the upper world, and the name of Olympus, because it is all-bright and free from all gloom and disordered motion, such as is caused on our earth by storms and the violence of the wind. Even thus speaks the poet Homer:

Unto Olympus' height, where men say that the gods have their dwelling,
Alway safe and secure; no wind ever shaketh its stillness,
Nor is it wet with the rain; no snow draweth nigh; but unclouded,
Even the air is outspread, and a white sheen floateth about it.

From: *On the Universe* 400a15-400b5

This, too, is borne out by the general habit of mankind, which assigns the regions above to God; for we all stretch up our hands to heaven when we offer prayers. Hence too these words of the poet are not spoken amiss,

Heaven belongeth to Zeus, wide spread mid the clouds and the ether.

Therefore also the objects of sense which are held in the highest esteem occupy the same region, to wit the stars and the sun and the moon. For this cause the heavenly bodies alone are so arranged that they ever preserve the same order, and never alter or move from their course, while the things of earth, being mutable, admit of many changes and conditions. For before now mighty earthquakes have rent the earth in diverse places, and violent rains have burst forth and flooded it, and the inroads and withdrawals of waves have often turned the dry land into sea and sea into dry land, and the might of winds and hurricanes has sometimes overthrown whole cities, and fires and flames have consumed the earth, either coming forth from heaven in former times, even as men say that in the days of Phaethon they burnt up the eastern regions of the earth, or else gushing forth and erupting from the earth in the west, as when the craters of Etna burst and flowed like a torrent over the earth. (There also the favour of heaven bestowed especial honour upon the generation of the pious; for when they were overtaken by the fiery stream, because they were carrying their aged parents upon their shoulders and seeking to save them, when the river of fire drew near to them, it was parted asunder and turned part of its flame this way and part that way, and preserved the young men and their parents unscathed.)

From: *On the Universe* 400b6-401a11

To sum up the matter, as is the steersman in the ship, the charioteer in the chariot, the leader in the chorus, the lawgiver in the city, the general in the army, even so is God in the Universe; save that to them their rule is full of weariness and disturbance and care, while to him it is without toil or labour and free from all bodily weakness. For, enthroned amid the immutable, he moves and revolves all things where and how he will, in different forms and natures; just as the law of a city, immutable in the souls of those who are under it, orders all the life of the state. For in obedience to it, it is plain, the magistrates go forth to their duties, the judges to their several courts of justice, the councillors and members of the assembly to their appointed places of meeting, and one man proceeds to his meals in the prytaneum, another to make his defence before the jury, and another to die in prison. So too the customary public feasts and yearly festivals take place, and sacrifices to the gods and worship of heroes and libations in honour of
the dead. The various activities of the citizens in obedience to one ordinance or lawful authority are well expressed in the words of the poet,

And all the town is full of incense smoke,  
And full of cries for aid and loud laments.

So must we suppose to be the case with that greater city, the universe. For God is to us a law, impartial, admitting not of correction or change, and better, I think, and surer than those which are engraved upon tablets. Under his motionless and harmonious rule the whole ordering of heaven and earth is administered, extending over all natural things through the seeds of life in each both to plants and to animals, according to genera and species. For vines and date-palms and peach-trees and 'sweet fig-trees and olives', as the poet says, and trees which, though they bear no fruits, have other uses, plane-trees and pines and box-trees,

Alder and poplar-tree and cypress breathing sweet odours,

and trees which produce autumn crops pleasant but also difficult to store,

Pear-trees and pomegranate-trees and apple-trees glorious-fruited,

and animals, both wild and tame, feeding in the air or on the earth or in the water, all are born and come to their prime and decay in obedience to the ordinances of God; for, in the words of Heraclitus, 'every creeping thing grazes at the blow of God's goad'.

From: On the Universe 401a12-401b6

7 · God being one yet has many names, being called after all the various conditions which he himself inaugurates. We call him Zen and Zeus, using the two names in the same sense, as though we should say him through whom we live. He is called the son of Kronos and of Time, for he endures from eternal age to age. He is God of Lightning and Thunder, God of the Clear Sky and of Ether, God of the Thunderbolt and of Rain, so called after the rain and the thunderbolts and other physical phenomena. Moreover, after the fruits he is called the Fruitful God, after cities the City-God; he is God of the Family, God of the Household, God of Kindred and God of our Fathers from his participation in such things. He is God of Comradeship and Friendship and Hospitality, God of Armies and of Trophies, God of Purification and of Vengeance and of Supplication and of Propitiation, as the poets name him, and in very truth the Saviour and God of Freedom, and to complete the tale of his titles, God of Heaven and of the World Below, deriving his names from all natural phenomena and conditions, inasmuch as he is himself the cause of all things. Thus it is well said in the Orphic Hymns,

Zeus of the flashing bolt was the first to be born and the latest,  
Zeus is the head and the middle; of Zeus were all things created;  
Zeus is the stay of the earth and the stay of the star-spangled heaven;  
Zeus is male and female of sex, the bride everlasting;  
Zeus is the breath of all and the rush of unwearying fire;  
Zeus is the root of the sea, and the sun and the moon in the heavens;  
Zeus of the flashing bolt is the king and the ruler of all men,
Hiding them all away, and again to the glad light of heaven
Bringing them back at his will, performing terrible marvels.

From: *On the Universe* 401b7-401b29

I think also that God and nothing else is meant when we speak of Necessity, since he is an invincible cause; and Fate, because his action is continuous and he cannot be stayed in his course; and Destiny, because all things have their bounds, and nothing which exists is infinite; and Lot, from the fact that all things are allotted; and Nemesis, from the apportionment which is made to every individual; and Adrasteia, which is a cause ordained by nature which cannot be escaped; and Dispensation, so called because it exists for ever. What is said of the Fates and their spindle tends to the same conclusion; for they are three, appointed over different periods of time, and the thread on the spindle is part of it already spent, part reserved for the future, and part in the course of being spun. One of the Fates is appointed to deal with the past, namely, Atropos, for nothing that is gone by can be changed; Lachesis is concerned with the future, for cessation in the course of nature awaits all things; Clotho presides over the present, accomplishing and spinning for each his own particular destiny. This fable is well and duly composed. All these things are nought else but God, even as worthy Plato tells us:

'God, then, as the old story has it, holding the beginning and the end and the middle of all things that exist, proceeding by a straight path in the course of nature brings them to accomplishment; and with him ever follows Justice, the avenger of all that falls short of the Divine Law--let every man who is to become blessed and happy partake in this from the very first'.

From: *On the Soul* Bk. 1 407b7-407b13

Further, the cause of the revolution of the heavens is left obscure. It is not the essence of soul which is the cause of this circular movement--that movement is only incidental to soul--nor is the body its cause. Again, it is not even asserted that it is better that soul should be so moved; and yet the reason for which God caused the soul to move in a circle can only have been that movement was better for it than rest, and movement of this kind better than any other. But since this sort of consideration is more appropriate to another field of speculation, let us dismiss it for the present.

From: *Parts of Animals* Bk. 4 686a25-686b20

Continuous with the head and neck is the trunk with the anterior limbs. In man the forelegs and forefeet are replaced by arms and by what we call hands. For of all animals man alone stands erect, in accordance with his god-like nature and substance. For it is the function of the god-like to think and to be wise…

From: *Metaphysics* Bk. 1 982b29-983a12

Hence the possession of it might be justly regarded as beyond human power; for in many ways human nature is in bondage, so that according to Simonides 'God alone can have this privilege', and it is unfitting that man should not be content to seek the knowledge that is suited to him. If, then, there is something in what the poets say, and jealousy is natural to the divine power, it would probably occur in this case above all, and all who excelled in this knowledge would be unfortunate. But the divine power cannot be jealous (indeed, according to the proverb,
'bards tell many a lie'), nor should any science be thought more honourable than one of this sort. For the most divine science is also most honourable; and this science alone is, in two ways, most
divine. For the science which it would be most meet for God to have is a divine science, and so is any science that deals with divine objects; and this science alone has both these qualities; for God is thought to be among the causes of all things and to be a first principle, and such a science
either God alone can have, or God above all others. All the sciences, indeed, are more necessary
than this, but none is better.

From: *Metaphysics* Bk. 1 986b9-987a1

From these facts we may sufficiently perceive the meaning of the ancients who said the
elements of nature were more than one; but there are some who spoke of the universe as if it were one entity, though they were not all alike either in the excellence of their statement or in regard to the nature of the entity. The discussion of them is in no way appropriate to our present investigation of causes, for they do not, like some of the natural philosophers, assume what exists to be one and yet generate it out of the one as out of matter, but they speak in another way; those others add change, since they generate the universe, but these thinkers say the universe is unchangeable. Yet this much is appropriate to the present inquiry: Parmenides seems to fasten on
that which is one in formula, Melissus on that which is one in matter, for which reason the former says that it is limited, the latter that it is unlimited; while Xenophanes, the first of this school of monists (for Parmenides is said to have been his pupil), gave no clear statement, nor does he seem to have grasped either of these two kinds of unity, but he contemplates the whole heaven and says the One is God. Now these thinkers, as we said, must be neglected for the purposes of the present inquiry--two of them entirely, as being a little too naïve, viz. Xenophanes and Melissus; but Parmenides seems to speak with somewhat more insight. For, claiming that, besides the existent, nothing non-existent exists, he thinks that the existent is of necessity one and that nothing else exists (on this we have spoken more clearly in our work on nature), but being forced to follow the phenomena, and supposing that what is is one in formula but many according to perception, he now posits two causes and two principles, calling them hot and cold, i.e. fire and earth; and of these he ranges the hot with the existent, and the other with the non-existent.

From: *Metaphysics* Bk. 12 1072b14-1072b31

On such a principle, then, depend the heavens and the world of nature. And its life is such as the best which we enjoy, and enjoy for but a short time. For it is ever in this state (which we cannot be), since its actuality is also pleasure. (And therefore waking, perception, and thinking are most pleasant, and hopes and memories are so because of their reference to these.) And thought in itself deals with that which is best in itself, and that which is thought in the fullest sense with that which is best in the fullest sense. And thought thinks itself because it shares the nature of the object of thought; for it becomes an object of thought in coming into contact with and thinking its objects, so that thought and object of thought are the same. For that which is capable of receiving the object of thought, i.e. the substance, is thought. And it is active when it possesses this object. Therefore the latter rather than the former is the divine element which thought seems to contain, and the act of contemplation is what is most pleasant and best. If, then, God is always in that good state in which we sometimes are, this compels our wonder; and if in a better this compels it yet more. And God is in a better state. And life also belongs to God; for the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality; and God's essential actuality is life most
good and eternal. We say therefore that God is a living being, eternal, most good, so that life and 
duration continuous and eternal belong to God; for this is God.

From: *Nicomachean Ethics* Bk. 1 1099b9-1099b17

9 · For this reason also the question is asked, whether happiness is to be acquired by 
learning or by habituation or some other sort of training, or comes in virtue of some divine 
providence or again by chance. Now if there is any gift of the gods to men, it is reasonable that 
happiness should be god-given, and most surely god-given of all human things inasmuch as it is 
the best. But this question would perhaps be more appropriate to another inquiry; happiness 
seems, however, even if it is not god-sent but comes as a result of excellence and some process 
of learning or training, to be among the most godlike things; for that which is the prize and end 
of excellence seems to be the best thing and something godlike and blessed.

From: *Nicomachean Ethics* Bk. 7 1154b21-1154b31

There is no one thing that is always pleasant, because our nature is not simple but there is 
another element in us as well, inasmuch as we are perishable creatures, so that if the one element 
does something, this is unnatural to the other nature, and when the two elements are evenly 
balanced, what is done seems neither painful nor pleasant; for if the nature of anything were 
simple, the same action would always be most pleasant to it. This is why God always enjoys a 
single and simple pleasure; for there is not only an activity of movement but an activity of 
immobility, and pleasure is found more in rest than in movement. But 'change in all things is 
sweet', as the poet says, because of some vice; for as it is the vicious man that is changeable, so 
the nature that needs change is vicious; for it is not simple nor good.

From: *Nicomachean Ethics* Bk. 9 1166a10-1166a29

Now each of these is true of the good man's relation to himself (and of all other men in so 
far as they think themselves good; excellence and the good man seem, as has been said, to be the 
measure of every class of things). For his opinions are harmonious, and he desires the same 
things with all his soul; and therefore he wishes for himself what is good and what seems so, and 
does it (for it is characteristic of the good man to exert himself for the good), and does so for his 
own sake (for he does it for the sake of the intellectual element in him, which is thought to be the 
man himself); and he wishes himself to live and be preserved, and especially the element by 
virtue of which he thinks. For existence is good to the good man, and each man wishes himself 
what is good, while no one chooses to possess the whole world if he has first to become some 
one else (for that matter, even now God possesses the good).

From: *Nicomachean Ethics* Bk. 10 1178b8-1178b23

But that complete happiness is a contemplative activity will appear from the following 
consideration as well. We assume the gods to be above all other beings blessed and happy; but 
what sort of actions must we assign to them? Acts of justice? Will not the gods seem absurd if 
they make contracts and return deposits, and so on? Acts of a brave man, then, confronting 
dangers and running risks because it is noble to do so? Or liberal acts? To whom will they give? 
It will be strange if they are really to have money or anything of the kind. And what would their 
temperate acts be? Is not such praise tasteless, since they have no bad appetites? If we were to 
run through them all, the circumstances of action would be found trivial and unworthy of gods. 
Still, every one supposes that they live and therefore that they are active; we cannot suppose
them to sleep like Endymion. Now if you take away from a living being action, and still more production, what is left but contemplation? Therefore the activity of God, which surpasses all others in blessedness, must be contemplative; and of human activities, therefore, that which is most akin to this must be most of the nature of happiness.

From: *Magna Moralia* Bk. 2 1200b9-1200b19

5 · Brutality is a kind of excessive vice. For when we see some one utterly degraded, we say that he is not even a man but a brute, implying that there is a vice of brutality. Now the excellence opposed to this is without a name, but this sort of thing is above man, a kind of heroic and divine excellence. But this excellence is without a name, because excellence does not belong to god. For god is superior to excellence and it is not in the way of excellence that his goodness lies. For, if it were, excellence would be better than god. For this reason the excellence which is opposed to the vice of brutality is without a name. But the usual antithesis to this kind of vice is divine and superhuman excellence. For as the vice of brutality transcends man, so also does the excellence opposed to it.

From: *Magna Moralia* Bk. 2 1207a12-1207a17

And yet outside of these there is no other position which one can assign to fortune, so that it is plain that it must be one of these. Now mind and reason and knowledge seem to be a thing utterly foreign to it. And yet neither would the care and providence of god seem to be good fortune, owing to its being found also in the bad, though it is not likely that god would have a care of the bad.

From: *Magna Moralia* Bk. 2 1212b29-1213a26

Whence also the difficulty arises, whether he who has all the goods and is self-sufficing will need a friend too? Or is it then that he will need him most? For to whom will he do good? Or with whom will he live? For surely he will not live alone. If, then, he will need these things, and these are not possible without friendship, the self-sufficing man will need friendship too. Now the analogy that is generally derived from god in discussions is not right there, nor will it be useful here. For if god is self-sufficing and has need of none, it does not follow that we shall need no one. For we hear this kind of thing said about god. Seeing that god, so it is said, possesses all goods and is self-sufficing, what will he do? We can hardly suppose that he will sleep. It follows, we are told, that he will contemplate something; for this is the noblest and the most appropriate employment. What, then, will he contemplate? For if he is to contemplate anything else, it must be something better than himself that he will contemplate. But this is absurd, that there should be anything better than god. Therefore he will contemplate himself. But this also is absurd. For if a human being surveys himself, we censure him as stupid. It will be absurd therefore, it is said, for god to contemplate himself. As to what god is to contemplate, then, we may let that pass. But the self-sufficingness about which we are conducting our inquiry is not that of god but of man, the question being whether the self-sufficing man will require friendship or not. If, then, when one looked upon a friend one could see the nature and attributes of the friend, . . . such as to be a second self, at least if you make a very great friend, as the saying has it, 'Here is another Heracles, a dear other self'. Since then it is both a most difficult thing, as some of the sages have said, to attain a knowledge of oneself, and also a most pleasant (for to know oneself is pleasant)--now we are not able to see what we are from ourselves (and that we cannot do so is plain from the way in which we blame others without being aware that
we do the same things ourselves; and this is the effect of favour or passion, and there are many of us who are blinded by these things so that we judge not aright); as then when we wish to see our own face, we do so by looking into the mirror, in the same way when we wish to know ourselves we can obtain that knowledge by looking at our friend. For the friend is, as we assert, a second self. If, then, it is pleasant to know oneself, and it is not possible to know this without having some one else for a friend, the self-sufficing man will require friendship in order to know himself.

From: *Eudemian Ethics* Bk. 1 1217a18-1217a29

7 · After these further preliminary remarks let us start on our discourse from what we have called the first confused judgements, and then seek to discover a clear judgement about the nature of happiness. Now this is admitted to be the greatest and best of human goods--we say human, for there might perhaps be a happiness peculiar to some superior being, e.g. a god; for of the other animals, which are inferior in their nature to men, none have a right to the epithet 'happy'; for no horse, bird, or fish is happy, nor anything the name of which does not imply some share of a divine element in its nature; but in virtue of some other sort of participation in good things some have a better existence, some a worse.

From: *Eudemian Ethics* Bk. 7 1244b1-1245a26

12 · We must also consider about independence and friendship, and the relations they have to one another. For one might doubt whether, if a man be in all respects independent, he will have a friend, if one seeks a friend from want and the good man is perfectly independent. If the possessor of excellence is happy, why should he need a friend? For the independent man neither needs useful people nor people to cheer him, nor society; his own society is enough for him. This is most plain in the case of a god; for it is clear that, needing nothing, he will not need a friend, nor have one, supposing that he does not need one. So that the happiest man will least need a friend, and only as far as it is impossible for him to be independent.

From: *Eudemian Ethics* Bk. 7 1247b40-1248b7

But in the other cases how can the good luck be due to a natural goodness in desire and appetite? But surely the good fortune and chance spoken of here and in the other case are the same, or else there is more than one sort of good fortune, and chance is of two kinds. But since we see some men lucky contrary to all knowledge and right reasonings, it is clear that the cause of luck must be something different from these. But is it luck or not by which a man desires what and when he ought, though for him human reasoning could not lead to this? For that is not altogether unreasonable, nor is the desire natural, though it is misled by something. The man, then, is thought to have good luck, because luck is the cause of things contrary to reason, and this is contrary to reason (for it is contrary to knowledge and the universal). But probably it does not spring from chance, but seems so for the above reason. So that this argument shows not that good luck is due to nature, but that not all who seem to be lucky are successful owing to chance, but rather owing to nature; nor does it show that fortune is not the cause of anything, but only not of all that it seems to be the cause of. This, however, one might question: whether fortune is the cause of just this, viz. desiring what and when one ought. But will it not in this case be the cause of everything, even of thought and deliberation? For one does not deliberate after previous deliberation which itself presupposed deliberation, but there is some starting-point; nor does one think after thinking previously to thinking, and so ad infinitum. Thought, then, is not the starting-
point of thinking nor deliberation of deliberation. What, then, can be the starting-point except chance? Thus everything would come from chance. Perhaps there is a starting-point with none other outside it, and this can act in this sort of way by being such as it is. The object of our search is this--what is the commencement of movement in the soul? The answer is clear: as in the universe, so in the soul, it is god. For in a sense the divine element in us moves everything. The starting-point of reasoning is not reasoning, but something greater. What, then, could be greater even than knowledge and intellect but god? For excellence is an instrument of the intellect. And for this reason, as I said a while ago, those are called fortunate who, whatever they start on, succeed in it without being good at reasoning. And deliberation is of no advantage to them, for they have in them a principle that is better than intellect and deliberation, while the others have not this but have intellect; they have inspiration, but they cannot deliberate. For, though lacking reason, they succeed, and like the prudent and wise, their divination is speedy; and we must mark off as included in it all but the judgement that comes from reasoning; in some cases it is due to experience, in others to habituation in the use of reflection; and both experience and habituation use god. This quality sees well the future and the present, and these are the men in whom the reasoning-power is relaxed. Hence we have the melancholic men, the dreamers of what is true. For the moving principle seems to become stronger when the reasoning-power is relaxed. So the blind remember better, being freed from concern with the visible, since their memory is stronger. It is clear, then, that there are two kinds of good luck, the one divine--and so the lucky seem to succeed owing to god--, the other natural. Men of this sort seem to succeed in following their impulse, the others to succeed contrary to their impulse; both are irrational, but the one is persistent good luck, the other not.

From: Eudemian Ethics Bk. 7 1249a21-1249b23

But since the doctor has a standard by reference to which he distinguishes what is healthy for the body from what is not, and with reference to which each thing up to a certain point ought to be done and is healthy, while if less or more is done health is the result no longer, so in regard to actions and choice of what is naturally good but not praiseworthy, the good man should have a standard both of disposition and of choice and avoidance with regard to excess or deficiency of wealth and good fortune, the standard being--as above said--as reason directs; this corresponds to saying in regard to diet that the standard should be as medical science and its reason direct. But this, though true, is not illuminating. One must, then, here as elsewhere, live with reference to the ruling principle and with reference to the formed habit and the activity of the ruling principle, as the slave must live with reference to that of the master, and each of us by the rule proper to him. But since man is by nature composed of a ruling and a subject part, each of us should live according to the governing element within himself--but this is ambiguous, for medical science governs in one sense, health in another, the former existing for the latter. And so it is with the theoretic faculty; for god is not an imperative ruler, but is the end with a view to which wisdom issues its commands (the word 'end' is ambiguous, and has been distinguished elsewhere), for god needs nothing. What choice, then, or possession of the natural goods--whether bodily goods, wealth, friends, or other things--will most produce the contemplation of god, that choice or possession is best; this is the noblest standard, but any that through deficiency or excess hinders one from the contemplation and service of god is bad; this a man possesses in his soul, and this is the best standard for the soul--to perceive the irrational part of the soul, as such, as little as possible.
PRIME MOVER:

From: On the Heavens Bk. 3 300b9-300b3

Hence Leucippus and Democritus, who say that the primary bodies are in perpetual movement in the void or infinite, may be asked to explain the manner of their motion and the kind of movement which is natural to them. For if the various elements are constrained by one another to move as they do, each must still have a natural movement which the constrained contravenes, and the prime mover must cause motion not by constraint but naturally. If there is no ultimate natural cause of movement and each preceding term in the series is always moved by constraint, we shall have an infinite process. The same difficulty is involved even if it is supposed, as we read in the Timaeus, that before the world was made the elements moved without order. Their movement must have been due either to constraint or to their nature. And if their movement was natural, careful consideration shows that there was already a world. For the prime mover must cause motion in virtue of its own natural movement, and the other bodies, moving without constraint, as they came to rest in their proper places, would fall into the order in which they now stand, the heavy bodies moving towards the centre and the light bodies away from it. But that is the order of their distribution in our world. There is a further question, too, which might be asked. Is it not possible that bodies in unordered movement should combine in some cases into combinations like those of which bodies of nature's composing are composed, such, I mean, as bones and flesh? This is what Empedocles asserts to have occurred under Love. 'Many a head', he says 'came to birth without a neck'.

From: Movements of Animals 698a10-698b6

Now we have already determined (when we were discussing whether eternal motion exists or not, and what it is, if it does exist) that the origin of other motions is that which moves itself, and that the origin of this is the immovable, and that the prime mover must of necessity be immovable. And we must grasp this not only generally in theory, but also by reference to individuals in the world of sense; for with these in view we seek general theories, and with these we believe that general theories ought to harmonize. Now in the world of sense too it is plainly impossible for movement to be initiated if there is nothing at rest, and before all else in our present subject--animal life. For if one of the parts of an animal be moved, another must be at rest, and this is the purpose of their joints; animals use joints like a centre, and the whole member, in which the joint is, becomes both one and two, both straight and bent, changing potentially and actually by reason of the joint. And when it is bending and being moved one of the points in the joint is moved and one is at rest, just as if on a diameter AD were at rest, and B were moved, and AC were generated. However, in the geometrical illustration, the centre is held to be altogether indivisible (for in mathematics the motion they speak of is a fiction, no mathematical entity being really moved), whereas in the case of joints the centres become potentially and actually now one, now divided. But still the origin of movement, qua origin, always remains at rest when the lower part of a limb is moved; for example, the elbow joint, when the forearm is moved, and the shoulder, when the whole arm; the knee when the tibia is moved, and the hip when the whole leg. Accordingly it is plain that each animal as a whole must have within itself a point at rest, whence will be the origin of that which is moved, and supporting itself upon which it will be moved both as a complete whole and in its members.
Now whether the soul is moved or not, and how it is moved if it be moved, has been stated before in our treatise concerning it. And since all inanimate things are moved by some other thing--and the manner of the movement of the first and eternally moved, and how the first mover moves it, has been determined before in our work on first philosophy, it remains to inquire how the soul moves the body, and what is the origin of movement in a living creature. For, if we except the movement of the universe, things with life are the causes of the movement of all else, that is of all that are not moved by one another by mutual impact. And so all their motions have a limit, inasmuch as the movements of things with life have such. For all living things both move and are moved for the sake of something, so that this is the limit of all their movement--that for the sake of which. Now we see that the living creature is moved by intellect, imagination, purpose, wish, and appetite. And all these are reducible to thought and desire. For both imagination and sensation are on common ground with thought, since all three are faculties of discrimination though differing according to distinctions stated elsewhere. Wish, however, impulse, and appetite, are all three forms of desire, while purpose belongs both to intellect and to desire. Therefore the object of desire or of intellect first initiates movement--not every object of intellect, but only the end in the domain of conduct. Accordingly it is goods of this sort that initiate movement, not everything fine. For it initiates movement only so far as something else is for its sake, or so far as it is the end of that which is for the sake of something else. And we must suppose that a seeming good may take the room of actual good, and so may the pleasant, which is itself a seeming good. From these considerations it is clear that in one regard that which is eternally moved by the eternal mover is moved in the same way as every living creature, in another regard differently, and so while it is moved eternally, the movement of living creatures has a limit. Now the eternally fine, and the truly and primarily good (which is not at one time good, at another time not good), is too divine and precious to be relative to anything else. The prime mover then moves, itself being unmoved, whereas desire and its faculty are moved and so move. But it is not necessary for the last in the chain of things moved to move something else; wherefore it is plainly reasonable that motion in place should be the last of the movements in things that come into being; for the living creature is moved and goes forward by reason of desire or purpose, when some alteration has been set going on the occasion of sensation or imagination.

We call things prior and posterior (1) in some cases (on the assumption that there is a first, i.e. a beginning, in each class) because they are nearer some beginning determined either absolutely and by nature, or by reference to something or in some place or by certain people, e.g. things are prior in place because they are nearer either to some place determined by nature, e.g. the middle or the last place, or to some chance object; and that which is further is posterior.--Other things are prior in time; some by being further from the present, i.e. in the case of past events (for the Trojan war is prior to the Persian, because it is further from the present), others by being nearer the present, i.e. in the case of future events (for the Nemean games are prior to the Pythian, if we treat the present as beginning and first point, because they are nearer the present).- Other things are prior in movement; for the things that are nearer the first mover are prior (e.g. the boy is prior to the man); and the prime mover also is a beginning absolutely.--Others are prior in power; for that which exceeds in power, i.e. the more powerful, is prior; and such is that according to whose choice the other--i.e. the posterior--must follow, so that if the prior does not
set it in motion the other does not move, and if it sets it in motion it does move; and here choice is a beginning. --Others are prior in arrangement; these are the things that are placed at certain intervals in reference to some one definite thing according to some rule, e.g. the second member of the chorus is prior to the third, and the second-lowest string is prior to the lowest; for in the one case the leader and in the other the middle string is the beginning.

From: *Metaphysics* Bk. 9 1050b2-1050b6

Obviously, therefore, the substance or form is actuality. From this argument it is obvious that actuality is prior in substance to potentiality; and as we have said, one actuality always precedes another in time right back to the actuality of the eternal prime mover.

From: *Metaphysics* Bk. 12 1073a23-1073b1

We however must discuss the subject, starting from the presuppositions and distinctions we have mentioned. The first principle or primary being is not movable either in itself or accidentally, but produces the primary eternal and single movement. And since that which is moved must be moved by something, and the first mover must be in itself unmovable, and eternal movement must be produced by something eternal and a single movement by a single thing, and since we see that besides the simple spatial movement of the universe, which we say the first and unmovable substance produces, there are other spatial movements--those of the planets--which are eternal (for the body which moves in a circle is eternal and unresting; we have proved these points in the Physics†3), each of these movements also must be caused by a substance unmovable in itself and eternal. For the nature of the stars is eternal, being a kind of substance, and the mover is eternal and prior to the moved, and that which is prior to a substance must be a substance. Evidently, then, there must be substances which are of the same number as the movements of the stars, and in their nature eternal, and in themselves unmovable, and without magnitude, for the reason before mentioned.

**BEST BEING?**

From: *Metaphysics* Bk. 12 1075a5-1075a10

A further question is left--whether the object of the thought is composite; for if it were, thought would change in passing from part to part of the whole. We answer that everything which has not matter is indivisible. As human thought, or rather the thought of composite objects, is in a certain period of time (for it does not possess the good at this moment or at that, but its best, being something different from it, is attained only in a whole period of time), so throughout eternity is the thought which has itself for its object.

**HIGHEST GOOD:**

From: *Metaphysics* Bk. 12 1075a11-1075a24

10 · We must consider also in which of two ways the nature of the universe contains the good or the highest good, whether as something separate and by itself, or as the order of the parts. Probably in both ways, as an army does. For the good is found both in the order and in the leader, and more in the latter; for he does not depend on the order but it depends on him. And all things are ordered together somehow, but not all alike,--both fishes and fowls and plants; and the world is not such that one thing has nothing to do with another, but they are connected. For all
are ordered together to one end. (But it is as in a house, where the freemen are least at liberty to act as they will, but all things or most things are already ordained for them, while the slaves and the beasts do little for the common good, and for the most part live at random; for this is the sort of principle that constitutes the nature of each.) I mean, for instance, that all must at least come to be dissolved into their elements, and there are other functions similarly in which all share for the good of the whole.

From: *Politics* Bk. 7 1328a24-1328b6

8 · As in other natural compounds the conditions of a composite whole are not necessarily organic parts of it, so in a state or in any other combination forming a unity not everything is a part which is a necessary condition. The members of an association have necessarily some one thing the same and common to all, in which they share equally or unequally: for example, food or land or any other thing. But where there are two things of which one exists for the sake of the other, they have nothing in common except that the one receives what the other produces. Such, for example, is the relation in which workmen and tools stand to their work; the house and the builder have nothing in common, but the art of the builder is for the sake of the house. And so states require property, but property, even though living beings are included in it, is no part of a state; for a state is a community of equals, aiming at the best life possible. Now, whereas **happiness is the highest good**, being a realization and perfect practice of excellence, which some can attain, while others have little or none of it, the various qualities of men are clearly the reason why there are various kinds of states and many forms of government; for different men seek after happiness in different ways and by different means, and so make for themselves different modes of life and forms of government. We must see also how many things are indispensable to the existence of a state, for what we call the parts of a state will be found among the indispensable things. Let us then enumerate the functions of a state, and we shall easily elicit what we want.

**THEOLOGY & THE HIGHEST OF EXISTING THINGS**

From: *Metaphysics* Bk. 11 1064a29-1064b5

Since there is a science of being qua being and capable of existing apart, we must consider whether this is to be regarded as the same as natural science or rather as different. Natural science deals with the things that have a principle of movement in themselves; mathematics is theoretical, and is a science that deals with things that are at rest, but its subjects cannot exist apart. Therefore about that which can exist apart and is unmovable there is a science different from both of these, if there is a substance of this nature (I mean separable and unmovable), as we shall try to prove there is. And if there is such a kind of thing in the world, here must surely be the divine, and this must be the first and most important principle. Evidently, then, there are three kinds of theoretical sciences--natural science, mathematics, **theology**. The class of theoretical sciences is the best, and of these themselves the last named is best; for it deals with the highest of existing things, and each science is called better or worse in virtue of its proper object.