

Aristotle on Modality and Causation

PHILGA87, PHILGo82

Mondays, 10-12AM
19 Gordon Square, room 102

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Office hours: Tuesday, 4-5:30, or by appointment.

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Course Description

In this course, we will look at how Aristotle connects modality and causation, especially efficient causation. Along the way, we'll consider how his views relate to the views of some contemporary authors.

Readings will be drawn from Aristotle's *Categories*, *De Interpretatione*, *Posterior Analytics*, *Prior Analytics*, *Physics* and *Metaphysics*.

Topics to be covered include Aristotle's semantics, his views about truth-makers, his notion of scientific demonstration and *per se* predication, efficient causation, the necessitation thesis of causation, and potentialities.

On March 3-4, there will be a *Workshop on Modality, Potentiality and Causation in Antiquity*. You are all warmly invited! (Details soon.)

If you didn't get a chance to study Aristotle before, I recommend you also attend my PHIL2053 (Topics in Aristotle), on Mondays 5-6 (Malet St, Birbeck, B29). It sets up the background one needs for this seminar.

Requirements

Summative essay (4500 words).

You will set your own question and check it with me. In case you need inspiration, I have suggested some possible essay questions on Moodle.

Each paper should defend a definite interpretative and/or philosophical thesis concerning the material covered in the course, and demonstrate familiarity with the secondary literature.

Readings

Recommended translations and commentaries

Ackrill, J.L. (1963). *Aristotle's Categories and De Interpretatione*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Charlton, W. (1970). *Aristotle, Physics, Books i and ii*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Smith, R. (1989), *Aristotle: Prior Analytics*, Indianapolis, Cambridge: Hackett.

Barnes, J. (1994), *Aristotle's Posterior Analytics* (2nd edition), Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Some useful commentaries and monographs

Berti, E. (ed.) (1981). *Aristotle on Science: The Posterior Analytics*. Proceedings of the Eighth Symposium Aristotelicum. Padua: Antenore.

Ferejohn, Michael (1991). *The Origins of Aristotelian Science*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Ferejohn, M. T. (2013). *Formal Causes: Definition, Explanation, and Primacy in Socratic and Aristotelian Thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Leunissen, M. (2015). (ed.) *Aristotle's Physics: A Critical Guide*. Cambridge University Press.

McKirahan, Richard (1992). *Principles and Proofs: Aristotle's Theory of Demonstrative Science*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Philoponus (2008). *On Aristotle Posterior Analytics 1.1-8*, transl. by R. McKirahan, London: Duckworth.

Ross, D. W. (1925). *Aristotle's Metaphysics*. A Revised text with Introduction and Commentary. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Ross, D. W. (1936). *Aristotle's Physics*. A revised text with introduction and commentary. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Ross, D. W. (1949). *Aristotle's Prior and Posterior Analytics: A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Sorabji, R. (1980). *Necessity, Cause and Blame*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Waterlow (Broadie), S. (1982). *Nature, Change and Agency in Aristotle's Physics*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Whitaker, C. W. (2002). *Aristotle's De Interpretatione: Contradiction and Dialectic*. Oxford University Press.

Additional readings (feel free to ask about further readings on specific topics)

Barnes, J. (1981). 'Proof and the Syllogism', in E. Berti (ed.), *Aristotle on Science: The Posterior Analytics*, Padova: Antenore, pp. 17–59.

Code, A. (1986). 'Aristotle's Investigation of a Basic Logical Principle: Which Science Investigates the Principle of Non-Contradiction?', in *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, pp. 341–357.

Denyer, N. (1991). *Language, Truth and Falsehood in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, Routledge: Netherlands.

Mendell, H. (1998). 'Making Sense of Aristotelian Demonstration', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 16, pp. 161–225.

Course Outline

The readings for each meeting are indicated and made available via Moodle.

Class 1: The Barebones of Aristotle's Philosophy of Language

Set Readings

- (1) *De Interpretatione* I, 5-6. 8.
- (2) *Metaphysics Epsilon* 4, 1027b18-27.

Secondary Readings

- (1) Charles D. (2000). *Aristotle on Meaning and Essence*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Appendix 2.
- (2) Crivelli, P. (2004). *Aristotle on Truth*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, selections.

Further Useful Readings

- (1) Ackrill's commentary (the commentary is at the end, after the translation of *De Interpretatione*).
- (2) The bits of Whitaker's book (see the folder Useful Texts) which discuss the passages set as main readings for this week.
- (3) Charles, D. & Peramatzis, M. (2016). 'Aristotle on Truth-Bearers', in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*.

Class 2: Aristotle's Modal Claims

Set Readings

- (1) *De Interpretatione*, 12-13
- (2) *Prior Analytics* I.13

Secondary Readings

- (1) Malink, M. (forthcoming). 'Aristotle on One-sided Possibility'.

Further Useful Readings

- (1) Ackrill's commentary (the commentary is at the end, after the translation of *De Interpretatione*).
- (2) The bits of Whitaker's book (see the folder 'Useful Texts') which discuss the passages set as main readings for this week.

Class 3-4: Demonstrations and *Per se* Predications

[NB. this is the week we'll have 2 classes]

Set Readings

- On Demonstrations: *Post. An.* I.2-3 [for meeting 1].
- On Demonstrations and *per se* predication: *Post. An.* I.4 & 1.6 [for meeting 2].

Secondary Readings

- On Demonstrations:
 - o Barnes, J. (1969). 'Aristotle's Theory of Demonstration', in *Phronesis*.
 - o Burnyeat, M.F. (1981), 'Aristotle on Understanding Knowledge', in Berti, E. (ed.) *Aristotle on Science: The Posterior Analytics*. Proceedings of the Eighth Symposium Aristotelicum. Padua: Antenore, pp. 97-139.
- On Demonstrations and *per se* predication
 - o Barnes' and Ross' commentaries.
 - o McKirahan, R. (1992), *Principles and Proofs: Aristotle's Theory of Demonstrative Science*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, chapters 7 and 13, pp. 80-102 and 164-7.

- Ferejohn, M. T. (2013). *Formal Causes*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, sections 3.3, 3.7-8.
- See also further readings in the Dropbox folder for this week (and future weeks).

Class 5: Causation in Demonstrations

Set Readings

- *Post. An.* II.1-2, II.7-8.

Secondary Readings

- McKirahan, R. (1992), *Principles and Proofs: Aristotle's Theory of Demonstrative Science*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. [The parts on the relevant passages.]
- Ferejohn, M. T. (2013). *Formal Causes*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, sections 3.2, 4.2-7, 5.1.

Class 6: Efficient Causes Necessitate Effects (Part 1)

Set Readings

- *Post. An.* II.11, *Physics* II.3, *Physics* II.7 (we'll focus on selections thereof).

Secondary Readings

- Commentaries (Ross & Barnes; commentaries are always important, but this week especially so).
- Schofield, M. (1991). 'Explanatory Projects in *Physics* 2.3 and 7', in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* (Supplementary Volume) 9: pp. 29-40.
- Ferejohn, M. T. (2013). *Formal Causes*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, sections 4.1-3, and ch. 5.
- Charles, D. (2000). *Meaning and Essence in Aristotle*, ch.8 (esp. 8.2).

Class 7: Efficient Causes Necessitate Their Effects (Part 2)

Set Readings

- *Post. An.* II.11 (and II.12, if you get a chance), *Physics* II.3, *Post. An.* I.8.

Secondary Readings

- Stein, N. (2012). 'Causal Necessity in Aristotle', in *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 20(5): 855-879.
- Stein, N. (2011). 'Aristotle's Causal Pluralism', in *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 93, pp. 121-147.

Class 8: Potentialities and Efficient Causes

Set Readings

- *Metaphysics Theta* 1, and 8.
- Selections from *Met. Z & Physics I.2*.

Secondary Readings

- Beere, J. *Doing & Being*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, the chapter on Theta 1.
- Makin's commentary on Theta 1.

Class 9: One-way vs Two-ways Potentialities

Set Readings

- *Metaphysics Theta* 2.

Secondary Readings

- Beere, J. *Doing & Being*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, the chapter on Theta 2.
- Makin's Commentary on Theta 2.

Class 10: Causation and Necessity in *Metaphysics Theta* 5

Set Readings

- *Metaphysics Theta* 5.

Secondary Readings

- Beere, J. *Doing & Being*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, the chapter on Theta 5.
- Makin's Commentary on Theta 5.