



# **The Meaning of philosophy as metaphysics**

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Philosophy arises in human culture as a special metaphysical effort of a person's thought, striving to look into the depths of being and himself, realizing the power of his own mind as the ability to know without going beyond his consciousness. This does not mean denying the world that surrounds man, but, on the contrary, emphasizes his peculiarity as a thinking being, claiming, along with the sensual, a supersensible understanding of being. The nature in which a person exists is ordered by his inner consciousness and appears as he thinks of it, and not only sees it. Therefore, it is not by chance that Karl Jaspers attributes the emergence of philosophy to such an event in human culture, which gives rise to a human understanding of being, it appears together with a reasonable person.

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Philosophy appears in antiquity as the first realized power of Reason, not yet embodied in scientific and technological clothing, emanating from Reason as such. Despite a certain randomness of origin, the concept of metaphysics reflected the course of thought of the philosophers of that period, which was based on the idea that, in addition to the world around us and cognizable with the help of feelings, which is later formalized in science as objective cognition, there is suprasubject, supersensible knowledge, which is a prerequisite for the objective sphere of being. Metaphysics, in its ontological research, directs thought to cognition of what exists, and not just what is revealed to us in this world, acting therefore as knowledge about the ultimate, fundamental structures of being. The nascent philosophy of antiquity, and indeed the whole philosophy as a whole, must always justify itself, because it claims to be a type of cognition, the criteria of truth of which cannot be reduced only to reality. Therefore, the resulting picture of the world is created, although taking into account natural science or other ways of comprehending being (for example, art or religion), but is basically the result of purely rational-reflective or, in other words, metaphysical reflection. "Therefore, the decisive question for the self-foundation of philosophy was whether thought, regardless of experience, could discover an objective universally valid truth" (Dobrokhotov, 1986).

## **The points of "intersection" of being and thinking in the philosophy of Antiquity**

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Philosophers' search for the essence of truth as such, goodness as such, inevitably encountered the problem of identifying the original, which acts as a criterion of truth, morality, etc. The reliability of the knowledge obtained by thinking could not be justified from itself, an external, independent criterion was needed. And this criterion could only be existence itself, i.e. what actually exists, in contrast to illusory phenomena and things. But here the main question arose before ontological thought: what, in fact, is to be understood by being, what meaning should we put into this most abstract and universal among all concepts? In turn, attempts to answer this question raised two more big problematic layers. The first is connected with the search for stable structures of being and is identical, as Aristotle noted, to the search for the essence (substance, in Latin terminology<sup>1</sup>) of things. The second question is related to the fundamental relationship: "thing" - "the thought of a thing" or the relationship of "being" and "thinking". What precedes what: physical fire or the thought of fire? How, finally, to think of the existence of fire (no matter in this case - physical or mental) without referring to the category of non-existence, because fire is not air, earth, firewood and even individual flames?

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These two global issues had to be solved by ancient thought in a metaphysical way, i.e. in conditions of the fundamental impossibility of empirical substantiation, and it was this socio-cultural insufficiency that gave rise to the formation of philosophy in a culture with its own range of problems, from which the latter could not and is unlikely to be able to free itself. The answer to the first question, in essence, acts as a question of what real beginning underlies the world, and there is no need to repeat the steps of its solution. It is only important to note that the oft-repeated statement that this is what gave the materialistic solution to this problem is not very accurate, and maybe even completely inaccurate. Indeed, outwardly the concept of substance is reduced to a material substrate or a group of substrates, which gave rise to talk about the materialistic tradition. In fact, it was much more complicated. Outwardly conspicuous materiality represented a special kind of philosophical "speculation" in which concrete material elements only give a semantic impulse to further metaphysical reasoning, often very far removed from the real nature. Water, fire or other elements that were considered as the originals, of course, were not physical elements as such, but only special philosophical images.

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The water of Thales is not at all the water that we can drink, and the fire of Heraclitus is not at all the fire that burns in our fireplace. These are artistic and metaphysical images that refer us to the root causes of things in such a historical situation when their rational-metaphysical, categorical-semantic analysis is still completely impossible. Philosophy is still poetic and mythological through and through. And it was precisely this mythological metaphoricality that allowed the ancient Greeks to create concepts that holistically explain the structure of the universe, without which metaphysics as such would not have been possible later. A developed and consistent ontology (and, accordingly, metaphysics) necessarily includes the philosophy of nature (or cosmology in the broadest sense) - this is an instructive theoretical lesson of early Greek natural philosophy, which modern, anthropocentric ontological thought could extract for itself, sometimes defiantly neglecting cosmological problems. It is impossible to talk about human existence in general, abstracting from the laws of being of nature, because at least with his body, a person unconditionally belongs to the natural world and depends on it. Therefore, for example, the Cosmos as a sensually concrete formation was reinterpreted by the thought of a person who reflexively built intuitive models, often far from reality. The "water" of Thales is an image of some primordial principle, which is permeated by divine power. It is she who sets water in motion, it is the divine energy that is primary in relation to passive matter.

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Matter constrained metaphysical thought, gave it too concrete forms, as which only objects of nature could act. This gave rise to a more abstract type of explanation, not directly related to sensory perception (the "apeiron" of Anaximander or the "homeomerism" of Anaxagoras). This ultimately led to the formation of the atomistic concept of Democritus, which can only be called strictly materialistic only very conditionally, putting later interpretations into the understanding of the atom. Recognizing the material principles (atoms) as the basis of everything, Democritus' atomism departs from the possibility of describing them on the basis of sensually concrete representations. This is what made it possible to interpret the categories of being and non-being, unlike the Eleatics, not just as ideal constructions, but to give them a physical (at that level of physics) interpretation. An atom (literally, "indivisible") is understood as the smallest, impenetrable, dense particle that does not contain emptiness. Accordingly, being is interpreted as a collection of an infinite number of atoms, and the existence of non-existence as a physical void, empty space is allowed. Emptiness, in turn, is a kind of condition of all processes, a kind of container that does not affect the

The Latin word "substance" ("substare" - literally "subject") very accurately captures the cornerstone ontological problem associated with the search for the first principles of being or the kind of being that underlies all other kinds of being.

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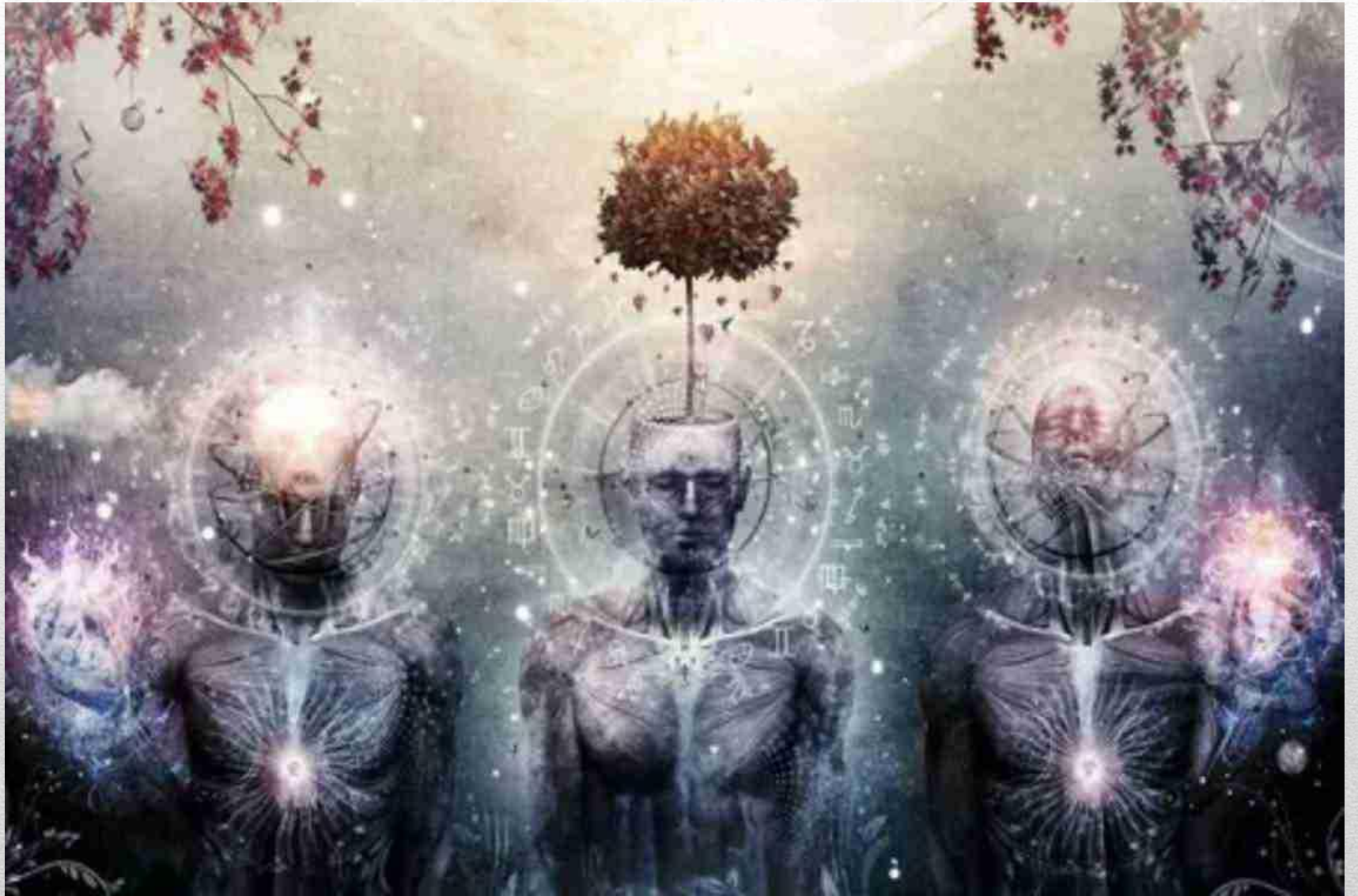


"The elemental moisture is permeated by the divine force that sets water in motion," therefore, the world of Thales is animated and full of divine energies. Being and the atoms representing it. It is this part of Democritus' atomistics that will receive its purely materialistic interpretation in Newton's physics much later. Another line of early Greek philosophy is connected not with the natural philosophical search for the material foundations of being, but with reflection on the relationship of being and thinking. There were quite a lot of variants of the points of "intersection" of being and thinking, as well as views denying this relationship, <sup>3</sup> but the most significant of them was the doctrine of being by Parmenides. The philosophy of Parmenides is a fundamental transition from the physicality of reasoning, even if it takes them into its concept from nature, to the construction of pure metaphysics that explains the world from itself. Here, for the first time, thought makes itself the subject of systematic research with the introduction of appropriate metaphysical tools.

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Parmenides introduces the very category of "being" into philosophical usage, transferring metaphysical reasoning from the plane of considering the physical essence of things to the plane of exploring their ideal essence. Thus philosophy is given the character of ultimate knowledge, which can only be self-knowledge and self-justification of the human mind. Thanks to its universal categories, among which, as Hegel brilliantly showed, the category of being is historically and logically the starting point, metaphysical reason is able to know in things and in itself what is inaccessible to any sensory experience and no system of scientific abstractions. Being is precisely the point of intersection of "two disjoint series - a series of things and a series of thoughts, the point of coincidence of thinking and being" (Gubin, 1998). Being is always there, always exists, it is indivisible and immobile, it is complete. This is not God or matter, and certainly not any specific physical substrate. This is something that becomes accessible to our thinking only as a result of mental efforts, as a result of philosophizing itself. It is from this moment that philosophy begins its countdown as speculatively cognizing metaphysical thinking.

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Thus, in Parmenides, the very fact of the existence of the world, which is at the same time a truly existing knowledge, is connected with being. We are faced with the first solution to one of the cardinal problems of all subsequent ontology - the relationship of being and thinking, and hence the cognizability of the world. At the same time, Parmenides argues very subtly, as if rejecting the arguments of his subsequent critics, who attributed to the philosopher a simplified interpretation of cognition as a simple coincidence of being and thinking, when cognition can be interpreted as a mirror copy of the objects of being. He distinguishes between the simple identity of true knowledge and being, and "identity with difference" when there is no complete coincidence between them. And this, in turn, means that knowledge also carries the properties of the cognizing subject, reflecting the specifics of the latter's thinking. The conclusion of Parmenides about the immobility of being, which so irritated thinkers who stand on the position of the universality of the development of being, the world, etc., is also not simple. The immobility of being is a consequence of logical reasoning, in which there should be no place for contradictory statements. That is, the recognition of being and the fact of its existence prohibits the existence of non-existence. In turn, any change and division is associated with the disappearance of the existing one. If being is capable of change, then it must disappear in some respect. And disappear into something, i.e. into oblivion, as well as to appear initially from oblivion. However, then this contradicts the statements about the non-existence of non-existence. Consequently, being is one and immobile, there is no inner distinctness in it, including the distinctness of the past and the future.

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And this conclusion does not at all indicate the anti-dialectical position of Parmenides. Arguing with Heraclitus, who absolutized the universality of motion in his doctrine of the eternal variability of the Cosmos, Parmenides separates the really existing, given primarily in the flow of sensory sensations, and the idea of existence as such, i.e. of being. The cosmos as something real was, is, but in the future it can either be or disappear. The concept of true being is inseparable from true and evidence-based thinking, therefore it is incompatible with ideas about the past or the future. The true content of thought does not depend on subjective acts of thinking unfolding in time. Socrates brilliantly develops the thesis about the coincidence of being and thinking (Dobrokhotov, 1986). He translates the problem into the plane of the study of the essence of morality, believing that philosophers should not be engaged in the study of nature. He believes that truth and goodness should coincide. Therefore, if we know something and as a result get true knowledge about it, then it is necessary to change and Pythagoras saw such a coincidence in the number, Heraclitus - in the word, etc.

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In contrast to the philistine meaning of this term, "speculative" in the philosophical sense denotes the gift of creative and systematic operation of ultimate semantic categorical structures and goes back to the primary Latin word "<sup>^</sup>Requiyu" - literally "looking out", "tracking".our human qualities. That is, a person becomes qualitatively different in relation to himself. If we know the truth about goodness, goodness, justice, then we ourselves become good and decent. The objections that were put forward against this thesis were related to the fact that there are many examples when the information received about goodness does not make a person kind. Socrates rejected these counterarguments, proving that in this case, the information received was unreliable, and therefore did not acquire the character of true life knowledge for the individual.

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Thus, good can be realized only on a conscious basis, i.e. when we know the relevant truths and can use them to distinguish, for example, good from evil. Of course, we can carry out good deeds without their true knowledge, but in this case they will be random, unconscious, and therefore have no true moral meaning. Thus, Socrates translates all moral problems, which people always tend to attribute to internal and psychological problems, into the sphere of ontology. Ethical principles are embedded in the very structure of being. Realizing the true moral meanings, we are obliged to follow them in our moral behavior. Otherwise, our human existence will be doubly vicious, as if deontologized. Thinking, therefore, is not opposed to being, but coincides with it even when interpreting externally subjective moral problems.

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There is an ontological coincidence of truth and goodness. And from this, in turn, follows the pedagogical position that the skills of rational thinking can be brought into people's minds from the outside, making them not only smarter, but also kinder. Philosophy, relying on true, i.e., knowledge corresponding to the structure of being, is precisely designed to perform this function. Thus, Socrates lays here an anthropological vector for the development of ontological issues, focusing on human being.<sup>5</sup> Plato takes the biggest step in the development of metaphysics. According to Plato, being appears to us as two different, but in a certain way interconnected worlds. The first world is the world of individual objects that are known through the senses. However, all the wealth of existence is not reduced to it. There is also a second world - the world of genuine, true being, which is a collection of ideas, i.e. intelligible forms or entities, the reflection of which is the whole diversity of the material world. Thus, the world is knowable, albeit relatively. The process of cognition, according to Plato, is the process of intellectual ascent to the truly existing types of being, coinciding with the ideas of various levels.

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Platonic ideas are not just substantialized and immobile generic concepts opposed to fluid sensory reality. The idea of a thing is its peculiar ideal principle of structure, as if invisible to the bodily eye, a kind of "information framework", knowing which, we can construct the thing itself. Plato's true being, like that of Parmenides, coincides with true knowledge, but unlike the latter, it is a process of continuous construction of the world. The idea of a thing is a kind of semantic model that should form the basis of a material-material construction. But the idea itself has at the same time a certain energy, a kind of material formalizing force. It is not for nothing that in the *Timaeus* Plato will develop the thesis that the all-living Soul of the Cosmos is a "mixture of the identical and the other." In the acts of individual cognition, we are just as much attached to the world of eternal ideas and their constructive and formative potential, as to the invisible physical eye of a special "smart matter", outside of which the realization of this ideal potential is impossible. This motif will be developed with special force later by Neoplatonists (Plotin, 1995).

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Thus, the opposition of matter and idea in ancient culture is very conditional. As stated by A.F. Losev (1979), describing Plato's idealism: "Plato is an objective idealist, but with very noticeable materialistic tendencies." At the center of Plato's system (if we do not understand his idealism formally, based on our current intuitions) lies, paradoxically, a kind of monodualism, to use the term of N.Ya. Groth, S. L. Frank and S.N. Bulgakov. In the same "Timaeus", in addition to the theme of the World Soul, Plato develops his famous teaching about the Nurse-matter, which he has initially and independently of the Demiurge and the world of ideas and actually coincides with physical space - a kind of meonal-bearing "bosom" of the Cosmos, perceiving the ordering effect of ideal eidos and physically giving birth to all sensory things (Plato, 1971). This view is characteristic of all antiquity.

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His anthropocentric and educational pathos largely predicts the future key attitude of the entire New European philosophy, and especially of the twentieth century. It is no coincidence that the image of Socrates (along with Cartesian "cogito") is one of the favorite objects of philosophical reflection in anthropological ontological models of the twentieth century, starting with M. Heidegger and ending with J. Deleuze. The dialectic of the material and the ideal, which we will later discover in Aristotle, the Neoplatonists and the Stoics, allowed us to avoid absolutization of one of the sides of the processes and phenomena under study. Plato has another important idea. He justifies the necessity of metaphysics as a non-presupposed knowledge. Analyzing the peculiarities of mathematics, the philosopher comes to the idea of the insufficiency of the method of deduction, on which it relies even within itself. It turns out that the starting points of mathematics, from which the rationale then deductively unfolds, are themselves insufficiently substantiated or cannot be justified at all. That is, there are no well-founded principles at the heart of accurate knowledge, which means that these are largely just hypotheses that may turn out to be unreliable. There must be a special discipline, Plato argues further, which can establish the truth of premises based on knowledge that is beyond deductive reasoning methods, in a broader modern sense - beyond the sciences. Various cognitive abilities according to Plato correspond to this. Mathematics is based on the ability to reason - reason (dianoia), and metaphysics is based on dialectical reason (nous or noesis), as a gift of comprehension of the originals.

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Consequently, philosophy as a discipline and dialectics as a method act as a foundation that precedes any knowledge. Dialectics is the pinnacle of knowledge, because, unlike any other sciences, it does not rely on sensory and purely rational methods of cognition. It proceeds from intelligible ideas that can exist as truths, and to which philosophy can lead through reflection. Consequently, only it is able to substantiate the prerequisites of any knowledge, having previously examined the prerequisites of knowledge as such. The substantiation of metaphysics itself (which can be called metaphilosophy) had to be carried out through the famous Platonic anemnesis (recollection) of what the soul once directly saw and heard in the intelligible world of true essences. Here we are faced with an irrational type of justification, entirely "tied" to personal experience, inaccessible to someone else's consciousness.

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As for the structures of dialectical reason and its speculative reasoning, Plato's dialectics itself had not yet been substantiated in any way, and in fact represented only a call to argumentation. Perhaps the only way to rationalize metaphysical propositions is the very form of Platonic philosophizing, which is a dialogue in which true knowledge is not just proclaimed, but intensely, even dramatically, unfolded and concretized through a clash of opposing positions and views. Even if only one side dominates here, inside the dialogue, and only Socrates is active, but there is undoubtedly already what can be called a dialectical-dramatic introduction to metaphysics. The dialectical self-foundation of reason and the attempt to explicate its immanent categorical-semantic structure for the first time are presented by Plato in two of his famous dialogues - "The Sophist" and "Parmenides". This, in fact, is the beginning of European dialectical metaphysics in the proper sense.

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Aristotle, arguing with his teacher Plato, says that dialectics cannot be the pinnacle of knowledge, since it does not give answers to questions, but only questions. But on what basis is such a question based? And Aristotle comes to the conclusion that there can only be an absolute premise, an absolute truth, at the basis of an unsubstantiated knowledge of the universal and essence, otherwise any philosophizing may turn out to be false. Dialectics should also take its place here, acting as a rational means of clearing a place for knowledge. It is dialectics, reflecting the relativity of knowledge about specific things, together with the deductive method that guarantee the truth of the statements deduced on the basis of the absolute.

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According to Aristotle, being acts as the original metaphysical absolute. Being is a special concept that is not generic. This means that it cannot be summed up under a more general one in the same way as all other concepts. Therefore, accepting the thesis of Parmenides, who identifies being and the thought of being, he clarifies this position, saying that being in itself is only an abstraction, a potential, conceivable being, and there is always the existence of something, i.e. the existence of concrete objects. Consequently, the relation of being and thinking is the relation of a concrete object and thought about a given object. The world represents the real existence of separate material and spiritual objects and phenomena, while being is an abstraction that underlies the solution of general questions about the world. Being is the fundamental principle of explanation. It is imperishable, just as nature itself is imperishable, and the existence of things and objects in the world is transitory. Being simply is, exists. The universality of being is manifested through the singular existence of concrete objects. This, according to Aristotle, is the basic law of being, or "the beginning of all axioms".

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The formal reason for the existence of a thing is its primordial nature or form ("morphe"). Matter is a sensually perceived reality, but only potentially. It can become something only by taking some form. The form is the minimum common thing that can give things an independent existence. Logically, the form is between the concrete (separate) and generic. Forms are something that does not break down further into types. They are eternal, unchangeable and are the subject of the study of metaphysics. They can be brought into matter, thereby creating a thing. Thus, a thing consists of an active form and a passive matter. Matter itself is passive, but just like form, it is eternal. It is necessary for the appearance of a specific thing, but as a potential container. And besides, it gives things personality. The real essence, therefore, is "bsho^", i.e. literally "substantiality", which unites the material and formal principles. Thus, Aristotle also has no gap between the ideal and the material, form and substrate, thought and object, there is no metaphysical split between the beginnings of being, which will later give rise to one-sided European idealism of the theistic kind, as well as militant atheistic materialism. The same false ontological split will provoke in the twentieth century a false shame before studying metaphysics in the classical sense of the word, which has not yet outlived to this day.

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So, the essence, according to Aristotle, can be distinguished by at least three genera. These are the entities to which concrete sensory things are reduced. Entities to which the abstractions of mathematics are reducible. And finally, entities that exist outside of sensuality and abstraction. These are the essences of divine being or supersensible substance. Philosophy should investigate all these entities. Thus, absolute knowledge is, according to Aristotle, the origin or system of originals, which is the first philosophy, or metaphysics. Beginnings cannot be proved or deduced from anything, that's why they are beginnings. In this sense, indeed, metaphysics is a kind of meta-science that justifies the beginnings not of individual sciences, but of scientific knowledge as a whole, not individual knowledge, but knowledge as such, not the truth of physics or mathematics, but the truth in general.

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# Literatures

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**Thank you for attention!**

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