

EXCERPTS FROM ARISTOTLE'S
POSTERIOR ANALYTICS
BOOK II

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CHAPTER 1 89b

The things we seek are equal in number to the things we know_e. We seek four things: the *that*, the *why*, *if it is*, and *what it is*. 25

For, on the one hand, when we seek whether this or that is so, putting it in a number of words (e.g., whether the sun is eclipsed or not), we seek the *that*. A sign of this is that we stop when we discover that it's eclipsed; and if we know_o from the beginning that it's eclipsed, we do not see whether it is. On the other hand, when we know_o the *that*, we seek the *why*. E.g. knowing_o that it's eclipsed and that the earth moves, we seek the *why* it's eclipsed or *why* it moves. 30

Ok then, these are the things we seek in this way, but we seek some things in another manner. E.g. "whether there is there or is not a centaur or god"—I mean, if it is or not *simpliciter*, rather than if it is white or not. And when we know_g that it is, we seek what it is—e.g., "Then what is a god?" or "What is man?" 35

CHAPTER 2

These and this many are the things we seek and that, once we've found, we know_o. When we seek the *that* or *if it is simpliciter*, we are seeking whether there's a middle term for it or not. By contrast, when we know_g either the *that* or *if it is* (either in part or *simpliciter*), then we seek the *why* or the *what it is*, at which point we're seeking what the middle is. Here's what I mean by "the *that* in part" or "*simpliciter*": first, "in part" is "Is the moon eclipsed or waxing?" (for we ask if it is or is not something); second, "*simpliciter*" is if the moon or night is or is not. 90a1 5

Therefore it follows that in all searches one seeks either whether there is a middle or what the middle is. For, the middle is the cause, and in all cases this is what's sought. "Is it eclipsed?" "Is there some cause or not?" After knowing_g that there is one, we seek what this is. For the cause of a thing's existence—not of its being this or that, but rather of it's being *simpliciter*, or else of it's being not *simpliciter* but being one of the things it is in its own right or incidentally—is the middle. By "*simpliciter*" I mean the subject (e.g., the moon, the earth, the sun, or a triangle), and by "one of..." I mean, e.g., an eclipse, equality, inequality, or whether it's in the middle or not. 10

For in all of these cases, it is evident that the *what it is* and *why it is* are the same. 15

“What is an eclipse?” “Privation of light from the moon by the earth’s obstructing.”
“Why is there an eclipse?” or “Why is the moon eclipsed?” “Because the light is
absent, since the earth is obstructing.” “What is a harmony?” “A numerical proportion
between sharp and flat.” “Why do the sharp and flat harmonize?” “Because the sharp 20
and flat have a numerical proportion.” “Do the sharp and flat harmonize?” “Is their
proportion in numbers?” Assuming that it is, “What is the proportion?”

It’s clear that the search is for the middle whenever the middle is perceptible. For , if
we haven’t perceived it, we search—e.g. {we seek} whether there’s a middle for the 25
eclipse or not. But, if we were on the moon, we would not seek either whether it’s
going on or why; rather these two would be clear simultaneously. For we would come
to know_o the universal from perceiving. For perception would perceive that the earth
is now obstructing (for it’s clear that the moon is now eclipsed); and from this the
universal would arise. 30

So, as we say, knowing_o the *what it is* and *why it is* are the same—but this is
either *simpliciter* (and not one of the things that belongs to it) or it’s one of the things
that belongs to it (e.g., that it has two rights or that it’s greater or less).

CHAPTER 8 (PARTIAL)

But let’s discuss the manner in which definitions do admit of 93a15
demonstration, stating the issue again from the beginning.

For just as we seek the *why* when we have the *that* (sometimes they
become clear simultaneously, but it is not possible to get to know_g the
why prior to the *that*), it’s likewise clear that it’s not possible to get to
know_g what it is for something to be without knowing that it is; for it’s
impossible to know_o what something is if one is ignorant_g as to whether it
exists. But as to *if it is*, sometimes we have it incidentally and other times 20
when we have something of the object itself—e.g., thunder, that there’s a
certain noise in the clouds, and eclipse that there’s a certain privation of
light, and man that there’s a certain animal, and soul, that it moves itself.

In the case of anything about which we know_o incidentally *that it is*,
we necessarily have nothing relative to the *what it is*; for we don’t know_o 25
that it is; and to seek *what it is*, not having *that it is*, is to seek nothing.
But in the case of anything of which we have something, it is easier.
Hence, as we have *that it is*, so we have also something relative to the
what it is.

When we have something of the *what it is*, first let it be like this: eclipse

in the A position, moon in the C position, and the earth's interception in the B position.¹ So then, so to ask whether it's eclipsed or not is to seek the B—does it exist or not? This doesn't differ *simpliciter* from inquiring whether there is an account of it; and, if there is, we claim it's eclipsed. 30

Or: we ask of which part of the contradiction is the account—of having two rights or of not having them. When we discover it, we simultaneously know_o the *that* and the *why*, if we proceed through middles; but if not, we know the *that* but not the *why*. Moon is C, eclipse A, and in the B position is the full moon's not being able to produce a shadow, although nothing visible is between it and us. Accordingly, if B (not being able to produce a shadow, though nothing is between it and us) belongs to C, and A (being eclipsed) belongs to this, then, while it's clear *that* it's eclipsed, not clear *why*, and, while we know_o *that there is* an eclipse, we do not know *what it is*. 35 93b1

When it's clear that A belongs to C, to seek why is to seek what B is—whether it's interception or rotation of the moon or extinction. And this is the account of the other extreme—e.g., in this case of A; for the eclipse is the earth's interception. 5

What is thunder? Fire's extinction in a cloud. Why is there thunder? Because the fire in the cloud is extinguished. Cloud is C, thunder A, and the B is fire's extinction. B belongs to C, the cloud, (for the fire is extinguished in it), and A, a noise, belongs to this; and indeed B is the account of A, the first extreme. If there is, in turn, another middle for this, it will be from the remaining accounts.. 10

It has been stated how the *what it is* is taken and becomes known_g: there are neither deductions nor demonstration of the *what it is*, however it is clear that it is taken and comes to be known though deduction and demonstration; without demonstration, one cannot know_g the *what it is* of something whose cause is something else; there is no demonstration of this [...]. 93b15 20

CHAPTER 9

While the cause of some things is something different, the cause of

¹ In speaking of the A, B, and C position's, Aristotle is envisioning a syllogism where A is the major, B the middle and C the minor term—i.e., A belongs to B, and B belongs to C; therefore, A belongs to C—or, “Eclipsed belongs to what's intercepted by the earth; intercepted by the earth belongs to the moon; therefore, eclipsed belongs to the moon.”

others is not. So, it's clear that some cases of *what it is* are immediate and principles, for which both being and *what it is* must be supposed or made evident in some other manner (just as the arithmetician makes his principles evident; for he supposes both what the unit is and that it is). But for things that have a middle (i.e., for things for which there is some different cause of substance), there is, as we stated, revealing though demonstration, though the *what it is* is not demonstrable. 25

CHAPTER 10

Since a definition is said to be an account of what something is, it's evident that one sort will be an account of what a name (or some other name-like account) signifies—e.g. what “triangle” signifies. 30

When we have that it is, we seek why it is; but it is difficult to grasp in this way something of which we don't know, that it is. The cause of the difficulty was stated earlier, that we don't know, whether it is or not, or rather know this only incidentally. (An account is one in either of two ways: either by contact as the *Iliad* is, or by revealing one thing non-incidentally.) While the afore stated will be one definition of definition, another definition will be an account revealing why something is. 35

While the afore stated will be one definition of definition, another definition will be an account revealing why something is. So, while the prior type signifies but does not prove, it's evident that the latter type will be like a demonstration of *what it is*, despite differing from a demonstration in how it's put. For stating why it thunders and what thunder is differ; for in the one case you say “because the fire is being extinguished in the clouds”. But what is thunder? The sound of fire being extinguished in clouds. So the same account is said in different manners, and the former way it's continuous demonstration, while the latter it's a definition. (Again, a definition of thunder is noise in the clouds; and this is a conclusion of a demonstration of what it is.) 94a

The definition of an immediate is an indemonstrable posit of what it is. 10

Therefore, one definition is an indemonstrable account of *what it is*, one is a deduction of *what it is* differing in arrangement from a demonstration, and a third is a conclusion of a demonstration of *what it is*.

It is evident from what's been stated both how there is demonstration of *what it is* and how there is not, and of what sorts there is demonstration 15 and of what sorts not, and further in how many ways definition is said and how it proves the *what it is* and how it does not, and of what sorts there is proof and of what sorts not, and further how they relate to demonstrations and how they admit of being the same as demonstrations and how they do not.