



The Activity of Being

By Aryeh Kosman

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Understanding “what something is” has long occupied philosophers, and no Western thinker has had more influence on the nature of being than Aristotle. Focusing on a reinterpretation of the concept of *energeia* as “activity,” Aryeh Kosman reexamines Aristotle’s ontology and some of our most basic assumptions about the great philosopher’s thought.

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Editorial Review

Review

In this illuminating commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, **Aryeh Kosman** argues that, far from freezing or reifying an ontology of Being or Beings, Aristotle thinks that 'to be' essentially consists of being engaged in substantial *activity*. Meticulously argued, Kosman's interpretation of Aristotle supplants those that characterize substances as either subjects of attributes or as the reality behind/underneath appearances. His Aristotle helps us understand how determinate beings--human beings, for instance--can nevertheless also be essentially engaged in further self-determining activity. (Amelie Rorty, Harvard Medical School)

The Activity of Being is a work of great philosophical depth and scholarly significance. It is at once focused--on the concept of *energeia*, or activity--and wide-ranging, taking in Aristotle's ontology, natural science, zoology, psychology, and theology. It will be studied with profit not only by scholars in the field but also by students and non-specialist philosophers. It is, in short, one of the best available introductions to and overviews of Aristotle's metaphysical thought. (David Bronstein, Georgetown University)

Aryeh Kosman's *The Activity of Being* rewards careful reflection regardless of one's philosophical specialization; it has significantly changed the way I view this difficult subject matter. This book is an original, far-reaching, and--this is quite rare--a largely correct reading of Aristotle's work, and it will help solidify the importance of activity to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. (Christopher Frey, University of Chicago)

Kosman provides readers with a careful commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, focused on the concept of substance as *energeia*. In contrast to the textbook version of Aristotle's ontology, which reads substance as either the subject of attributes or the reality beneath appearances, Kosman gives a detailed reading of substance as activity, and of being more generally as substantial activity...This is a tightly argued and intriguing commentary on the primary text that would be a valuable guide for anyone reading Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. (J. D. Sands *Choice* 2013-10-01)

About the Author

Aryeh Kosman is John Whitehead Professor of Philosophy, Emeritus, at Haverford College.

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