



# Answers for Aristotle: How Science and Philosophy Can Lead Us to A More Meaningful Life

By Massimo Pigliucci



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How should we live? According to philosopher and biologist Massimo Pigliucci, the greatest guidance to this essential question lies in combining the wisdom of 24 centuries of philosophy with the latest research from 21st century science. In *Answers for Aristotle*, Pigliucci argues that the combination of science and philosophy first pioneered by Aristotle offers us the best possible tool for understanding the world and ourselves. As Aristotle knew, each mode of thought has the power to clarify the other: science provides facts, and philosophy helps us reflect on the values with which to assess them. But over the centuries, the two have become uncoupled, leaving us with questions—about morality, love, friendship, justice, and politics—that neither field could fully answer on its own. Pigliucci argues that only by rejoining each other can modern science and philosophy reach their full potential, while we harness them to help us reach ours. Pigliucci discusses such essential issues as how to tell right from wrong, the nature of love and friendship, and whether we can really ever know ourselves—all in service of helping us find our path to the best possible life. Combining the two most powerful intellectual traditions in history, *Answers for Aristotle* is a remarkable guide to discovering what really matters and why.



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### Editorial Review

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Pigliucci is a singular bridge-builder, one who connects science as the investigation of what is with philosophy as reflection on what should be. Pigliucci acknowledges that Aristotle constructed such bridges long ago, but he laments that many modern thinkers, irrationally suspicious of science, have now abandoned half of Aristotle's enterprise. Bravely renewing the entire Aristotelian project, Pigliucci surveys the latest scientific research in primatology, psychology, and neurobiology, always integrating the researchers' empirical findings into a meaningful philosophical perspective. This scientific-philosophical (or "sci-phi") perspective opens onto particularly provocative interpretations of human morality, clarifying, for instance, how an understanding of the neuromechanics of moral judgment exposes the weaknesses of popular ethical theories. Remarkably versatile, sci-phi reasoning also illuminates the real potential of social-networking friendships and exposes the dangerous oversimplifications in media portrayals of political conflict. Still, some readers may wonder about Pigliucci's sci-phi attack on religion as a senseless delusion. Apparently, Pigliucci's bridge from science to philosophy doesn't reach as far as Pascal or Kierkegaard. A book sure to spark debate. --Bryce Christensen

Review

#### ***Booklist Online***

"Bravely renewing the entire Aristotelian project, Pigliucci surveys the latest scientific research in primatology, psychology, and neurobiology, always integrating the researchers' empirical findings into a meaningful philosophical perspective. This scientific-philosophical (or "sci-phi") perspective opens onto particularly provocative interpretations of human morality.... Remarkably versatile.... A book sure to spark debate."

#### ***Kirkus Reviews***

"A useful introduction to sources on both sides of the science-philosophy divide."

#### **Dario Maestripietri, Professor of Comparative Human Development, The University of Chicago, and author of *Games Primates Play***

"Massimo Pigliucci's beautiful mind and encyclopedic knowledge are on full display in *Answers for Aristotle*. He is as comfortable discussing quantum physics and cognitive psychology as he is explaining the complexities of evolutionary biology and moral philosophy. *Answers for Aristotle* is a stimulating, entertaining book that demonstrates that we need both science and philosophy to make sense of who we are and how we live our lives."

#### ***Philosophy Now***

"*Answers for Aristotle* is a lively, impressively-argued foray into topics ranging from Kepler's improvement of Copernicus's heliocentric theory, to the discovery of Neptune, to Stanley Milgram's obedience experiment, to Kantian duty ethics.... *Answers for Aristotle* is a veritable Cook's Tour of science, philosophy, and the curious meeting ground of the two. The best approach, as the author intended, is to sit back in a quiet hour or two and take it all in, then look back afterward to behold the vast terrain you have covered."

#### ***The Philosopher's Magazine***

"Wide-ranging and very readable.... [Pigliucci provides] fascinating and well-thought-out examples...he

shows us that philosophy and science can together become greater than the sum of their parts.”

### ***Choice***

“Pigliucci is proof positive that the reports of philosophy's death have been greatly exaggerated.... This book is a refreshing, sympathetic look at how philosophy can enlist the help of science to answer enduring questions.... [A] highly enjoyable book.”

### ***San Francisco/Sacramento Book Review***

“[A] very important book.... It is a fascinating book and great reading.... [Pigliucci's] knowledge is astounding.”

### ***Brain Pickings***

“*Answers for Aristotle* explores diverse yet uniformly fascinating and essential subjects we've previously explored and will continue to explore for the foreseeable lifetime—love, morality, what it means to be human, the meaning of life, the limits of science, and much more.”

### ***Skeptical Inquirer***

“[Pigliucci] is that rare academic...who is both an evolutionary biologist and philosopher (he has doctorates in both fields), and so he knows, better than most, that both science and philosophy are essential to understanding ourselves and our world.... [A] lively discussion.”

### ***New Scientist***

“[*Answers for Aristotle*] will make you reflect on both the meaning of science...and of your own life.”

### ***Publishers Weekly***

“[A] careful examination of the surprising connections between science and philosophy.... [*Answers for Aristotle*] is a witty and insightful look at the relevance of philosophy today.”

### **About the Author**

**Massimo Pigliucci** is a professor in the philosophy program at the City University of New York's Graduate Center and was formerly a biology professor at Stony Brook University. He is the author or editor of eight previous books, most recently *Nonsense on Stilts: How to Tell Science from Bunk*. He lives in New York City.

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