

History of Western Philosophy

Kookmin University

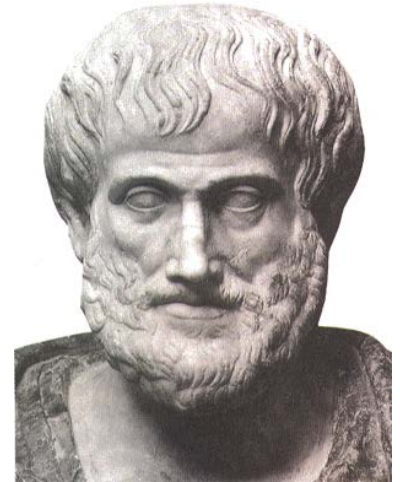
Peter Lee, Spring 2019

L06

- I. Aristotle's life | *Metaphysics, Ethics*
- II. *Politics, On the Heavens, De Anima*

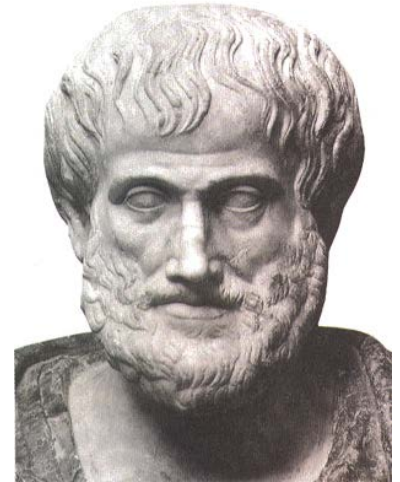
Aristotle: Life and Works

- Native of Macedonia (384-322 BC)
- Son of court physician to King Amyntas III; lost father at 10.
- To Athens at 17, Plato's Academy:
 - stayed at the Academy for 20 yrs.
 - likely left after Plato's death (347 BC) due to politics.
- Moved to Assos, western coast of Turkey:
 - married, did research, mainly **biology** [held until 17th c].
 - had to leave when city was attacked by Persians.
- Back in Macedonia under King Philip II for 7 years:
 - tutored Alexander the Great.



Aristotle: Life and Works

- After Macedon's conquest of Athens (338 BC), returned in 335 BC; **Lyceum**.
- School taught much broader subjects much like today's university:
 - many subjects, professional teachers;
 - many ideas and terms discovered and systematized: eg. energy, substance, attribute, essence, property.
- With Alexander's death in 323, had to flee Athens:
 - won't let "Athenians sin twice against philosophy."
 - died next year in 322 BC [Greek island Euboea].
 - but Lyceum endured until 86 BC.



Aristotle: Life and Works

- Enormous volume of works: history, sports, theatre, botany, zoology, psychology, logic, chemistry, cosmology, ethics, aesthetics, etc.
- About 80% of his works has been lost; still 2x size of Platonic corpus.
- Influence grew greatly over centuries
 - fused with Christianity on many topics
 - ideas preserved, also adapted/changed
 - gradually calcified, orthodox for ~2,000 yrs.
- Dante: “The master of those who know” [*Inferno*]
St. Thomas: “The Philosopher.”



Aristotle: Life and Works



- Plato and Aristotle are often contrasted (simplistically) as two polar opposites or pillars of western philosophy.



Plato	Aristotle
Forms / Ideas	<i>Doxa</i> , Nature
Idealistic	Realistic
Artistic	Scientific
Utopian	Utilitarian
Other worldly	Commonsensical
Rational	Empirical

Aristotle: Life and Works

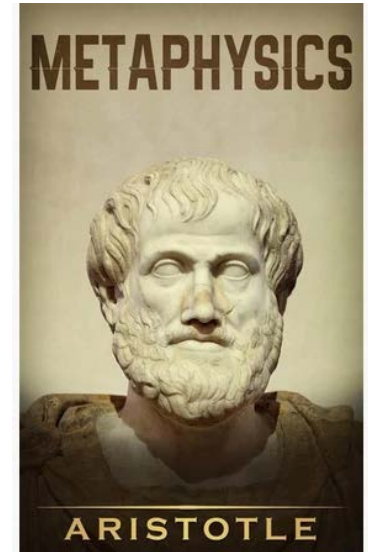
- Raphael's painting "School of Athens" contrasts Plato and Aristotle as central yet opposite figures.
- Samuel Taylor Coleridge:

"Every man is born an **Aristotelian** or a **Platonist**. I do not think it possible that anyone born an Aristotelian can become a Platonist; and I am sure that no born Platonist can ever change into an Aristotelian. They are the two classes of men, besides which it is next to impossible to conceive a third."



Aristotle: *Metaphysics*

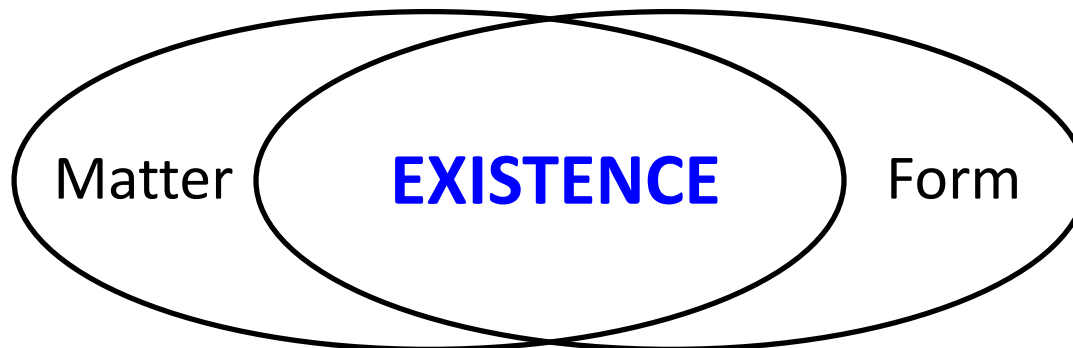
- One of Aristotle's most important works; many view it as seminal text for the topic.
- Study of **Being**: What is existence? How do things continue to exist and yet change?
 - previous thinkers from Thales to Plato.
 - Change vs. Being: Heraclitus, Parmenides.
- Plato's **Theory of Forms** a synthesis of the two ideas:
 - objects that change are in an imperfect state;
 - they must be poor reflections of their perfect forms.
 - Form are real; this world, only flickering shadows.
 - physical vs. spiritual; "Platonic" view of reality.



Aristotle: *Metaphysics*

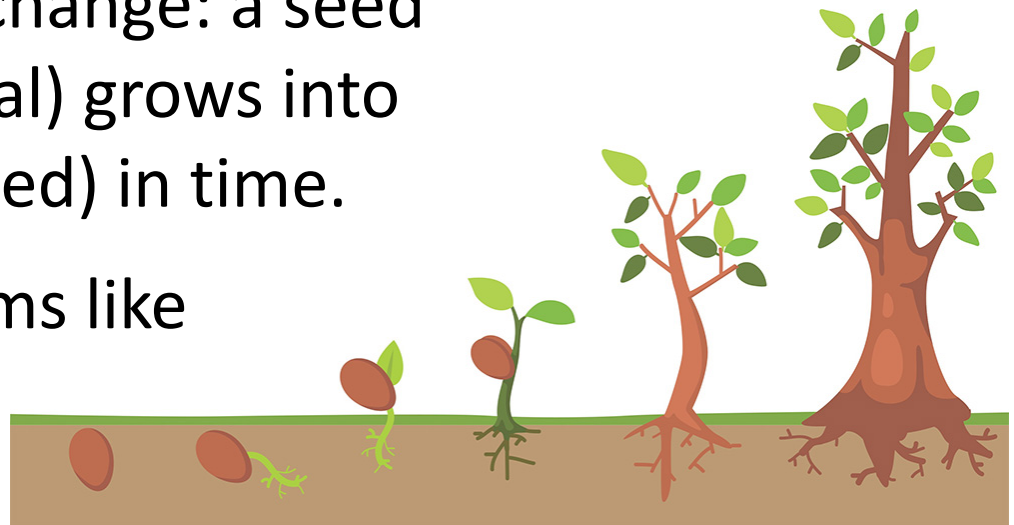
- For Aristotle, this world is all (the outstretched hand).
- No Platonic world of Forms; no physical vs. spiritual conflict; should pursue an **empirical view of reality**.
- Matter cannot exist without some shape (form).
Form cannot exist without body (material/matter).
- Aristotle: “By form I mean the **essence** of each thing ...”

matter(*hyle*) + form(*morphe*) = existence (**Hylomorphism**)



Aristotle: *Metaphysics*

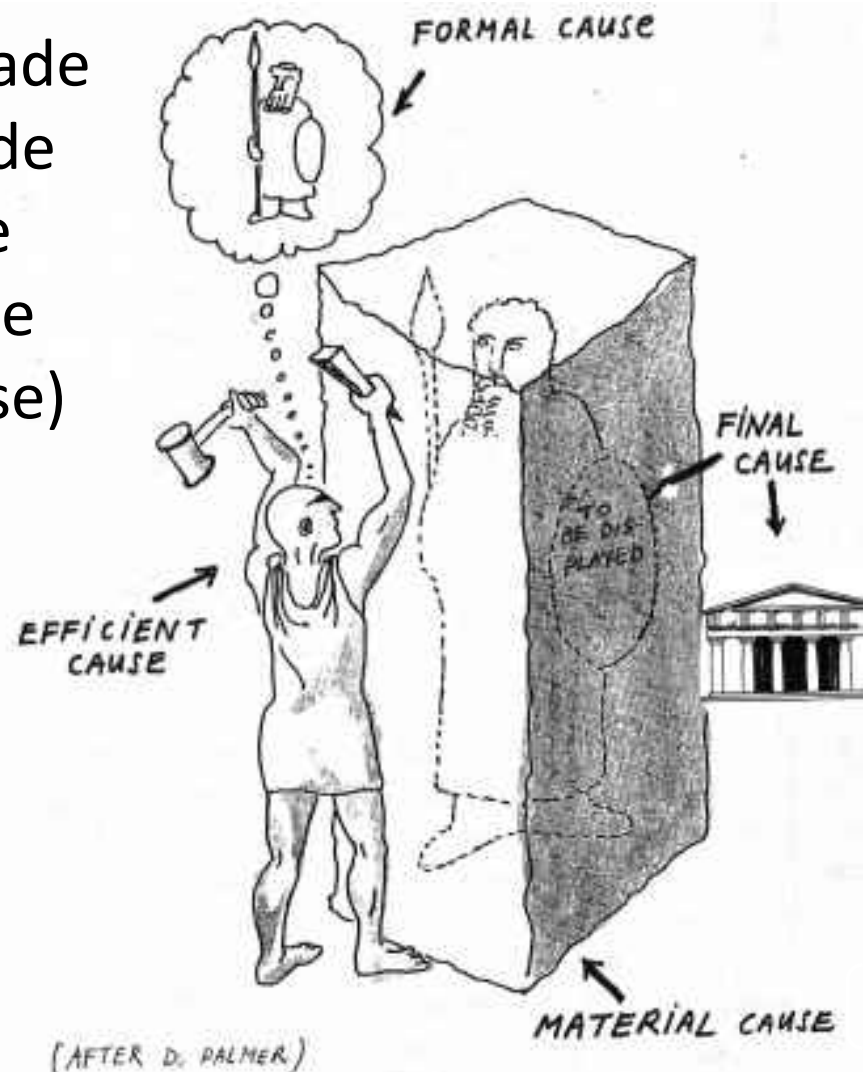
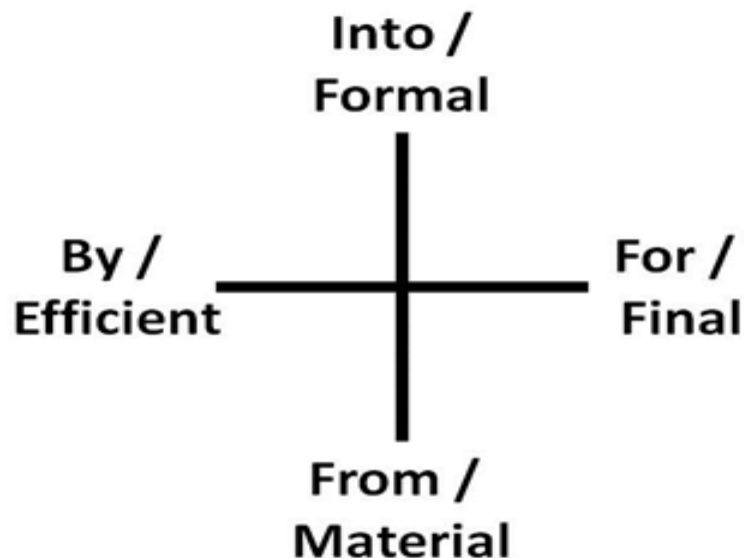
- **Change** can be viewed as the relationship between **potentiality** (matter) and **actuality** (form) through time.
- **Potentiality**: the capacity (potential) of something to change, “a principle of change”; a “before” state.
Actuality: the completed state of something with potentiality; an “after” state; realization of essence.
- Popular example of change: a seed (matter with potential) grows into a tree (form, actualized) in time.
- Science still uses terms like “potential energy.”



Aristotle: Four Causes

- What does it mean to “know” something?

1. **From** which something is made
2. **Into** which something is made
3. **By** which something is made
4. **For** which something is made
or ‘**telos**’ (the end, final cause)



Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics*



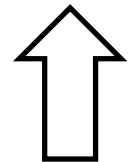
- **Ethics** (*Ethos*: custom, character)
moral principles of people, city.
 - *NE* called ***the*** Ethics of Aristotle
 - Likely editor Nicomachus (son)
- ***Eudaimonia***: – happiness,
well-being, **human** flourishing
 - **Happiness** is the supreme good
- How do we achieve happiness?
 - Being moral “is to the soul what health is to the body.”

Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics*

- **Arete**: virtue, goodness, **excellence**
- **Ergon**: activity, task, work, **function**
- Virtue, then, is **excellence** in acting or **functioning** as a human being.
- What it means to be function as human:
to act according to **reasoning** part of the soul.
 - But this isn't Plato's contemplation of Form.
 - for Aristotle, reasoning is a practical affair;
knowing how to act properly.
- Moral virtue is **state of character**, acquired through practice, and lost by disuse.



Happiness



Ergon
Arete

Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics*

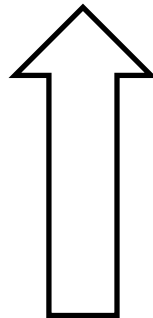
- The **Doctrine of the (Golden) Mean**:
 - the ability to choose well, and act well



Being courageous
Talking properly
Trusting properly
Drinking properly



Being reckless
Too trusting
Drinking too much

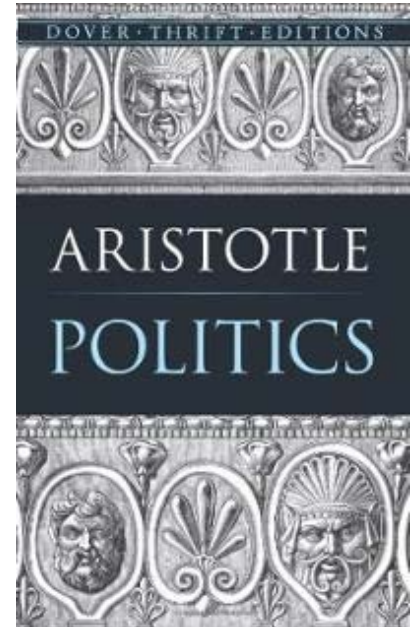


Being cowardly
Too distrusting
Being a teetotaler

The Golden Mean

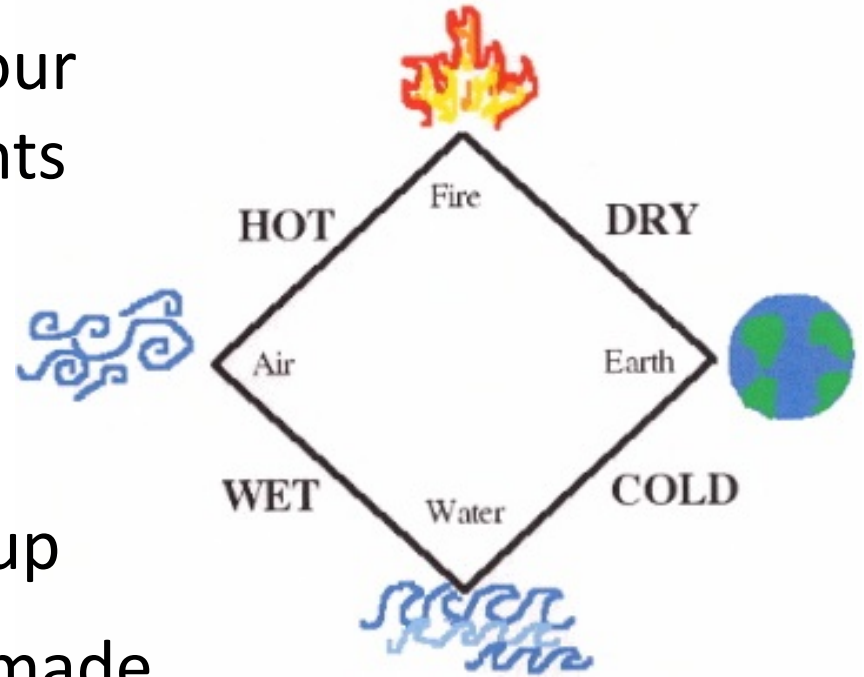
Aristotle: *Politics*

- No philosopher King
- *Doxa* over Form [Nature / Spirit]
 - should live in harmony with nature.
- Defended heterogeneity: diversity in nature; it must be good [science].
- Private property and family [natural]
- But: No equality for women [weak]
and justifies slavery: “The slave is wholly lacking the deliberative element; the female has it but it lacks authority; the child has it but it is incomplete.” (ch.12)
- Distinguished natural/unnatural slavery [by convention]
 - Why do we believe “everyone is equal”?



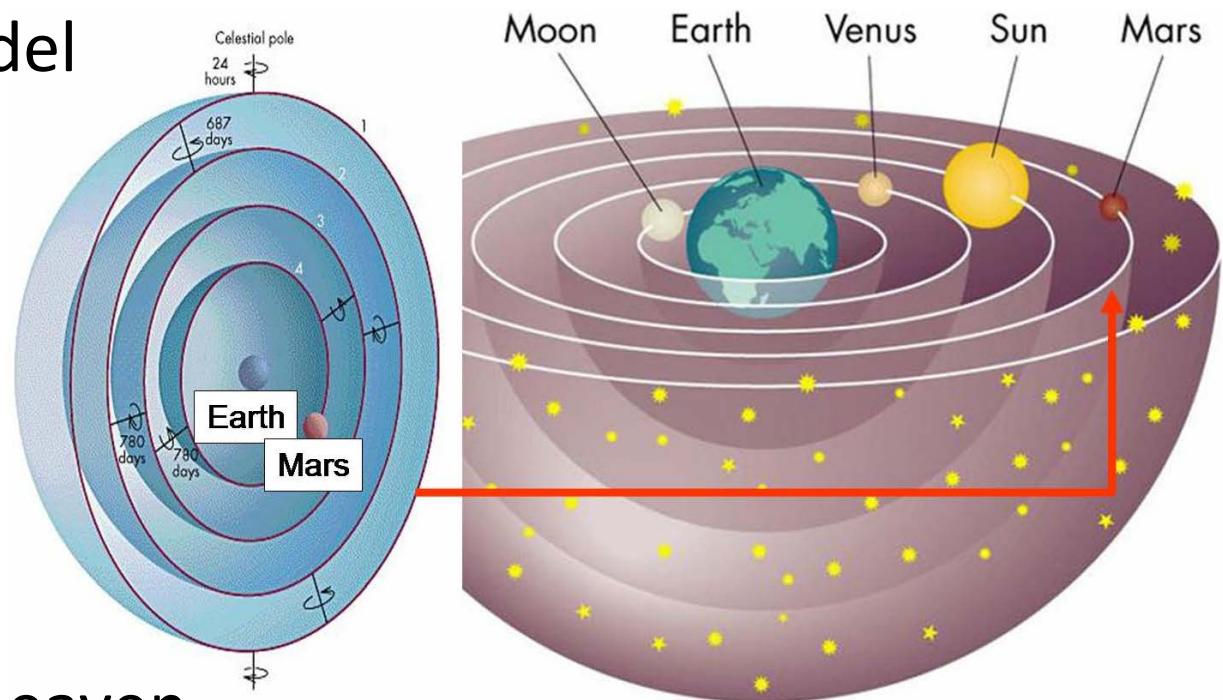
Aristotle: *On the Heavens*

- Agreed with Empedocles: our world made of four elements Earth, Water, Air, Fire.
- Each terrestrial element had its natural movement: earth falls down, fire rises up
- But heavenly bodies were made of a fifth element called **quintessence** (ether)
- This world (terra) and heaven (celestial) different:
 - Looking up at the sky, easy to believe that heaven is perfect and eternal; it's why eclipse scared people.



Aristotle: *On the Heavens*

- Aristotle's **Geocentrism** became the Ptolemaic system; view fused with Christian church; lasted until the 17th C.
- **Heliocentric** model advocated by Copernicus; Galileo; Kepler.
- In 17th C., with Isaac Newton's discovery of the laws of gravity, heaven and earth were finally united, became part of our world.



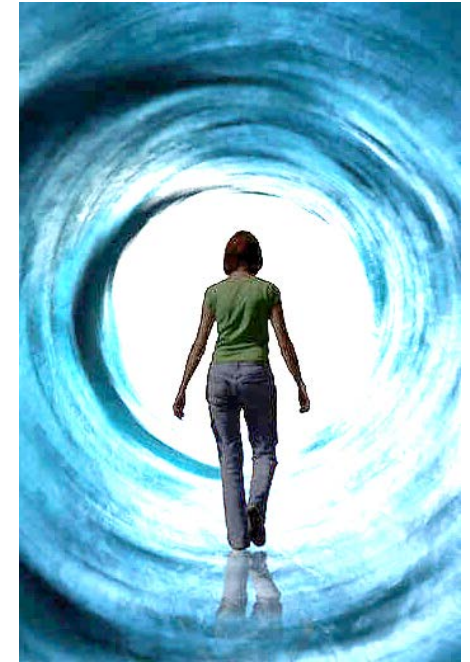
Aristotle: *De Anima (On the Soul)*



- Form + matter = existence (**Hylomorphism**)
- For living things, **Soul** is the form or essence of life:
 1. **Nutritive** Soul (Plants): all living things nourish themselves and reproduce others of the same kind.
 2. **Sensitive** Soul (Animals): animals have sense-perception, all have at least sense of touch; they also have desires.
 3. **Rational** Soul (Humans): thinking different from sense-perception; the mind is thus **immaterial** and **immortal**.

Aristotle: *De Anima* (On the Soul)

- If the human mind or rational soul is immaterial and immortal, does that mean we live on after bodily death?
- This part of *On the Soul* controversial. Most scholars think Aristotle did NOT believe that an individual's "soul" (personal identity) survived death. [Cf: [Thomistichylomorphism](#)]
- What survives is the "thinking part of the human mind," the intellect itself: the **Divine Intellect** or **Mind** (*Nous*). [More like Buddhism than Christianity.]



Aristotle: Concluding Remarks

- Aristotle a subtle, massive intellect:
- **Hylomorphism**: matter + form
- Three types of **soul**; four **causes**: material, formal, efficient, final.
- Happiness: excellence in functioning as human being: *eudaimonia*; *arete*; *ergon*
- He had profound impact on subsequent thinkers in numerous disciplines for almost **2,000 years**.
- Contrasted with Plato: two pillars (tent poles) of phil.
- Many of his ideas now outdated, were **falsifiable**.

