

Notes on “Aristotle”

- I. Aristotle lived 384—322 BCE
 - a. Came to study at Plato’s Academy when Plato was 61
 - b. Was, for three years, the tutor to Alexander, who would later become “Alexander the Great,” creating a large Greek empire
 - c. In 323 BCE was condemned for impiety, but fled to save his life
 - d. More interested in natural phenomena than “world of ideas”
- II. Believes observation gives rise to “ideas,” not vice-versa, as Plato
 - a. “forms” are the particular characteristics of things
 - b. sense is primary; reason is blank until filled with memories of observations; this makes Aristotle an *empiricist* where Plato is a *rationalist*
- III. Believes that everything in nature has a purpose—i.e., rain falls ultimately because plants need water
 - a. Aristotle thus has a *teleological* conception of nature—believing that nature exhibits a purpose
 - b. *teleological* literally means the study of distant or remote causes; hence television, telephone, telegraph, telnet, etc.
- IV. Distinction between form and substance
 - a. Substance is the particular; *Socrates*
 - b. Form refers to general attributes or qualities; *man*
 - c. A substance is a “this” but a universal is a “such”
 - d. Uses this distinction to create a system of classification
 - e. Ultimately believe that God is the “first mover” or first link in the chain of causality
 - f. Everything, both individuals and species, has an *essence*—that which is essential to its very nature
- V. Advocates living by “Golden Mean,” suggesting moderation and balance in all things
 - a. Suggested that human’s natural state is in society; humans are incomplete without a social existence
 - b. Aristotle’s negative view of women was largely adopted by Christianity