

ARISTOTLE OF STAGIRA [384/383–322]
AN OUTLINE OF HIS PHILOSOPHY
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... if we are to accord to anyone the position of the greatest metaphysician, having regard to genius of insight, to general equipment in knowledge, and to the stimulus of his metaphysical ancestry, we must choose Aristotle [I]n his consideration of this metaphysical question [the completion of his metaphysics by the introduction of a Prime Mover—God] he was entirely dispassionate; and he is the last European metaphysician of first-rate importance for whom this claim can be made. After Aristotle, ethical and religious interests began to influence metaphysical conclusions. The Jews dispersed, first willingly and then forcibly, and the Judaic-Alexandrian school arose. Then Christianity, closely followed by Mahometanism, intervened. The Greek gods who surrounded Aristotle were subordinate metaphysical entities, well within nature. Accordingly on the subject of his Prime Mover, he would have no motive, except to follow his metaphysical train of thought whithersoever it led him. It did not lead him very far towards the production of a God available for religious purposes. It may be doubted whether any properly general metaphysics can ever, without the illicit introduction of other considerations, get much further than Aristotle. But his conclusion does represent a first step without which no evidence on a narrower experiential basis can be of much avail in shaping the conception. For nothing, within any limited type of experience, can give intelligence to shape our ideas of any entity at the base of all actual things, unless the general character of things requires that there be such an entity. [Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* [1925], Ch. XI]

1. THE THEORETICAL SCIENCES: All Things aim [by first nature] at their Fullest Individuality and “All men by [first] nature desire to know” Things in their Individuality
 - a. **First Philosophy:** The Study of Beings *qua* Individual Beings
 - i. “The Garlands of Repose” [Andrew Marvell]: Civilized Leisure and the Dispassionate Inquiry into the Nature of Things: Prospect and Retrospect
Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Bk. I,
 - ii. “There is a Science which studies Being *qua* Being” [IV, 1, 1003a17] and “The term ‘Being’ is spoken of in many ways, but with reference to [*pros hen*] one definite characteristic”: Individuality [specified later as *tode ti*] [IV, 2, 1003a33]
Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Bks. II & IV, Chs. 1–8,
 - iii. The Division of the Theoretical Sciences: (1.) The Science of Being *qua* Being contrasted with (2.) Mathematics and (3.) Physics [VI, 1, 1026a18], and the more overarching distinction between Theory and Logic
Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Bk. VI, Chs. 1–4,
 - iv. The Science we seek is of ‘Individuality’ [*tode ti*]: But “‘Being’ is spoken of in many ways”: Every actual Thing *is* (*ousia* or ‘substance’)
Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Bk. VII, Chs. 1–8; 12,
 - v. Actual Individuality: All Potential (e.g., *qua* potential or Moving) Things Point toward *their* Fullest Actuality

- Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Bk. IX,
- vi. Completely Actual Individuality: Divine Thought: The End of “The Great Chain of Being” [Alexander Pope]: That by reference to which all real things are actualities
- Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Bk. XII,
- b. **Physics:** The Study of Individual-Beings *qua* Moving (or actual *qua* potential)
- Aristotle, *Physics*, Bk. II,
- [Digression on the Generation and Destruction of Physical Individuals: The Real Difference between an Actual Individual and a Natural Kind contrasted with the ‘logical’ Difference between a ‘particular’ and a ‘universal.’ Reread *Metaphysics*, VII, 7]
- c. **Biology:** The Study of Individual-Moving-Beings *qua* Living
- Aristotle, *De Anima*, Bk. II, Chs. 1–3,
- i. *Nutrition* [or *Botany-Zoology*]: The Study of Individual-Moving-Living-Beings *qua* Selecting Food from their Ecospheres
- Aristotle, *De Anima*, Bk. II, Ch. 4,
- [Digression on the Generation and Destruction of Living Individuals: Sexual and A-sexual Begetting: The Principle of Biological Species and its ‘non-logical’ Character]
- ii. *Zoology*: The Study of Individual-Moving-Living-Beings:
- qua* Sensing Things in Quantitative-, Qualitative-, and Loco-motion
- Aristotle, *De Anima*, Bk. II, Chs. 5–12,
- qua* Moving from Place to Place (Locomotion)
- Aristotle, *De Anima*, Bk. III, Chs. 9–11
- qua* Thinking: Man: The Study of the Animal who “by nature desires to know”
- Aristotle, *De Anima*, Bk. III, Chs. 1–8,
- d. The Theoretical Insight: All Individual Things—Physical, Living, and Eternal—are, because of their Individuality, Marvellous, Beautiful, and Divine and to Think them Dispassionately in their Individuality is a Supreme Pleasure
2. THE PRACTICAL SCIENCES (ETHICS-POLITICS): “Every Action [*praxis*] Aims [by ‘Second Nature’] at some Good”
- a. The Aim of Practical Philosophy (or Politics): Not Theoretical Insight but Betterment of the Human Condition
- i. What is the Human Condition? “Man is by [second] Nature a Political Animal”: He [and She] dwells with Others in an Ethical Life
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. I,
- ii. What is Human Betterment? The Acquisition of Good Habits (*arete* or ‘virtue’) between the Generation and Destruction of an Individual Human Being: No one is Ethically Good by [first] nature
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. II,

- iii. How are Habits [good or bad] Acquired? By the Imitation [*mimesis*] of others in action and Friendship [*philia*]
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. III, Chs. 1–3, Bk. VIII,
- iv. What sustains Good Habits? The Rudders of Pleasure and Pain
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. X,
- b. The Institutions of Common Ethical Life [*koinonia*]
 - i. The Household [*oikos*]
 - ii. The City [*polis*]
Aristotle, *Politics*, Bk. I,
- c. The Audience of Instruction in Practical Philosophy: Those who are, or will be, in a position to guide the Formation of Habits [Second Nature] in Others [especially the young]: Heads of Households and Citizens
- d. Aristotle's Practical Philosophy is a Philosophy of *Education* [i.e., *Paideia*; Ethics is not principally studied for the 'self-improvement' of the student—it is too late for that]
 - i. *Paideia* as the Clue to Ethical Life in the Polis (the Greek City was, for all of its citizens, a 'College')
 - ii. Aristotle as *the* Student of Athenian *Paideia*
 - iii. Why Practical Philosophy must be *Paideia* within Aristotle's Conception of Philosophy as a Whole: The Contrast of Theoretical and Practical Philosophy
 - iv. The Oddity of Aristotle **of Stagira** as a Teacher of Athenian *Paideia* **in Athens**
 - v. Aristotle in Athens as *the* Teacher of Aristocratic *Paideia* in the Western World: The Ideal of a Liberally Educated 'Man' and its Perplexities for a non-Aristocratic (or Bourgeois, i.e., 'our') 'Culture'
 - vi. Aristotle as *our* only (so far) effective teacher of Civilized Leisure: The Need for an 'Aristotle of the Modern (i.e., our 'Bourgeois') World'
3. THE PRODUCTIVE SCIENCES [the study of *poiesis* or 'making']: Many Examples of production [*techné* or craftsmanship] are discussed throughout Aristotle's Theoretical and Practical Sciences but the only independent treatise on Producing is the *Poetics*: On Human Artifacts (and especially "Tragedies") as Beautiful
 - a. The Work of Art as an Imitation [*mimesis*] of a complete Action [*praxis*]
 - b. Plot [*mythos*] as the 'Living Individuality' [soul] of a Tragedy: Characters, Collisions, and the Institutions of Ethical Life: *Oikos* and *Polis*
 - c. In a Well Made Drama the Plot is "of a single action [*praxis*] which is whole and complete and which has a beginning, middle, and end, in order that it produce, like a single, whole animal, its appropriate pleasure" [*Poetics*, 1458b18]: We take Theoretical Pleasure in the Theater [*theatron*, the place of theorizing: seeing and knowing]
Aristotle, *Poetics*

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4. 'LOGIC': THE PRELIMINARY [propaedeutic] SCIENCES CONCERNING THE STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE [*Logos*]:
 - a. On Predication [*Categories*],
 - b. On the Structure of the Sentence [*On Interpretation*],
 - c. On Syllogistic Inference [*Prior Analytics*],
 - d. On Demonstrative ['apodictic'] Inference [*Posterior Analytics*],
 - e. On the Establishment [via 'dialectic'] of Demonstrative Premises [*Topics* and *On Sophistical Refutations*]

A CRITICAL QUESTION: What is "The Place of Logic in Aristotle's Thought" [Eric Weil, in *Articles on Aristotle*, in four volumes, Barnes *et al.*, eds., London: Duckworth, 1975, Vol. I, pp. 88–112]

- a. Aristotle as the Inventor of Logic
 - i. Aristotle's Original Insight: The Notion of a Linguistic Variable
 - ii. The Elements of Logic: Predicates [categories], Propositions, Syllogisms, Demonstrations, and Dialectics
 - iii. The Limits of Logic: Formalization and Axiomatization
- b. Aristotle was the Inventor of Logic because he saw the Difference between a Description of Formal Linguistic Structures [a theory of linguistic expressions: logical subjects & predicates (particulars & universals) and inferences] and a Theory of Individual (actual) Things *qua* Individuals
- c. The History of Philosophy since Aristotle (with the singular exception of Hegel) has been a History (often very 'productive,' as in Galilean-Newtonian Physics) of Confounding his Invention ('Logic') and what he took all men to desire to know (Theory)¹

¹ Hence the topic of the second term of this History of Western Philosophy: "Philosophy in the World of Language: From the Stoics to Kant."