Chapter 3

Aristotle

Next to Plato, Aristotle is considered one of the greatest thinkers in Western history. Without the revolution in thinking which Aristotle ushers in, we would not enjoy the level of thought or science which we take for granted today. In terms of theology, Aristotle brings clarity, logic, and specific definitions to the table, as well as a sense of the world which Plato down played.

Aristotle The Man

Considering the time in which he lived we know a quite a bit about Aristotle’s life (384-322 BC)[[1]](#footnote-1). In the interest of space, the highlights[[2]](#footnote-2) are that his father was a physician to the king of Macedonia but he is orphaned early. Around 17 he winds up at Plato’s *Academy*. Plato was impressed with the lad, so impressed that he called him “the mind of the school”, which probably sounds much more poetic in Greek. He was eventually summoned to educate the young son of a certain Macedonian ruler named Phillip. This young man, Alexander (356-323 BC) by name, eventually became known as ‘the Great’ (which sounds pretty good even in English) and also went on to have some influence on the thinking patterns of a large number of people, at least the ones he left alive.

However, with the death of Alexander, Aristotle, like his protégé, fell out of favor and in due course died of natural causes in self-imposed exile about a year later.

Son Of Plato

While he was like the mind of the school to Plato, as with all children there comes a time when they must break out and make it on their own. So it was for Aristotle, who left the Academy and philosophically spread his wings to branch out and explore his differing take on things. One of the first things he rejects is Plato’s dual nature idea of a flawed material world and the perfect world of the Forms on which it was based. It is not that there is no duality, it is merely that for Aristotle, the world was enough. The things around us were sufficient in themselves to exist and allow us to understand them. We no longer had to seek out immaterial “Forms” through our minds in order to know something; instead we can use our senses and our power of observation to do the same. It is not that our senses are flawed, just that we simply are not using them correctly.

Ergo this also affected the way he saw knowledge. Plato really had no use for what we might call the ‘hard sciences’. Because what we came to know were the perfect things, to him knowledge only had one purpose: to help us to understand ‘right action’ and in fact the two were the same thing. For Aristotle, *observation* leads to knowledge. The world then is knowable and everything in it can be categorized and placed in a hierarchical structure. If, per Whitehead, all of Western philosophy is a footnote to Plato, all Western science is a footnote to Aristotle. He canonizes the analytical/deductive method, observing with the senses to understand and know something, creating the movement from *a posteriori, deductive* thinkingto *a priori****,*** *inductive* thinking. He divided the ‘sciences’ (think of the word as meaning “understanding/knowledge” not necessarily how we use it today) into three categories: the *theoretical*, the *practical* and the *productive*. Science gives us information, but still, like Plato, that information has corresponding ultimate ends: *knowledge*, *right conduct*, and the *making of ‘beautiful’ objects*.

Yet Aristotle breaks ranks again with his mentor and separates out ‘knowledge’ and ‘right (moral) actions’, teaching that life is larger than just our moral actions. This means that along with the contemplation of more esoteric things the quantification and qualification of the world about us also requires a portion of our thought. There is still a segment of knowing that involves right action but knowing has other purposes as well. It *guides* and *informs*. That is to say, in the end, all three types of knowledge are bound together. We might be able to do ingenious things but just because we can do something does not mean we should if it is not ethical.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Knowledge has a dual purpose; not just knowledge for knowledge’s sake as Plato might say but knowledge for use. With his emphasis on definition, which the thing-in-itself can give, Aristotle sees the world as being able to explain itself and give us sufficient reasons for and against actions. Plato is concerned with knowledge which comes from *re-calling*, not so much the formation of the words or their particular meaning. For Plato, words have no real meaning as we define them only as the concept of the Form defines them; their truth or falsity relies on the Forms, not on any use of the language. Not so for Aristotle. Word meaning and definition is important, and so the final deviation we look at is the use of language. Words have to be understood. The words we use for communicating ideas must be understood. Word forms and their definition such as nouns, verbs and the like are what he is concerned with. Truth and falsity are derived here by combining words together, which like thoughts have neither validity nor non-validity in and of themselves, they just are. Only in context of an ‘argument’ (their ‘predication’), do they acquire some truth or falsity.

Logic

Which brings us to Aristotle’s rules of definition, what we call ‘logic’[[4]](#footnote-4). Where Plato is concentrating on big-picture ideas as defining truth and showing ignorance as error, Aristotle saw that not being exact led to errors in his (and everyone else’s) thinking, so he set out to formalize thought and thinking. To help in the defining the rules of the game, Aristotle introduces the word *categories*. The Greek word is probably best transliterated as ‘predicate’ as in *subject* and *predicate*. So, at their simplest, categories are those things which can be the predicate or subject in a statement or an argument or that one thing is predictable of or predicated on another, as in “this sentence is predicated in the idea that I know what I’m talking about.”

As a diversion from that point, let us now look at the discipline in terms of the man. Aristotle never formally assigned a work to the science of Logic, nor did he actually ever use the word. It comes to us later, probably from Cicero. Aristotle’s word would be more correctly translated ‘analytics’, hence the idea of “logic” being the persuasion by rational argument. He saw logic not so much as a science but a function of every human being and society. That is to say, it is an *instrument* of science and the necessary basis of science and therefore all rational human interaction. He took it for granted that it had to be understood and practiced in order to do any of the sciences.

Still we brazenly assign the moniker ‘Aristotelian Logic’ to it because he did wax at length on the subject because it was so fundamental to his system. He introduces the *syllogism*, meaning “conclusion” or “inference”, as the basis for all reasoning. For Aristotle the reasoning for anything in the sciences was based in true-false statements in structured relationship to one another. The form of the syllogism, based on ‘truths’, is chiefly statements predicated about a subject, or more succinctly what are called *propositions*. Aristotle believed that the flaw in so many explanations was the lack of logic. The formal idea and imperative nature of logic meant that consistency is assured and that ‘foundational truths’ or *demonstration* can be established. As with the categories, this just means that you do not have to go back a re-prove everything in order to proceed in an argument. You also avoid confusing yourself and others by committing an identifiable logical fallacy (some sort of error against the rules introduced into an argument).

Without going deeply into it here, this is where his concepts about communication come into play. By reducing language down to these simple ideas, Aristotle makes it easier to create the categories, which help to limit and define the argument. Keeping the rules in mind helps us to know when we *actually* *know*. If you desire a more full discussion, then consult the first work in this series (or any other book on the subject for that matter). For us here and now just be assured that it is important.

Metaphysics

Logic leads to definition; definition leads to objective knowledge. Objective truth which exists within and without and object is important. While there are no ‘perfect forms’ and ‘imperfect material’, Aristotle does not dismiss intangible knowledge while seeking to prove the truth of the material world. There are things which “all men desire to know” (*Metaphysics*) but even this fundamental function within humans requires of us much thought – if it were straightforwardly accessible then everyone would know it. Obviously the physical things around us are easily open to definition, but what about those things which are intangible yet still affect us. If Nature is the physical world around us, what is the nature of what is beyond Nature which, though intangible, we still perceive? What knowledge is best characterized as ‘Wisdom’, and how do we acquire it? While he takes a slightly different approach than Plato, the subject remains similar.

Aristotle has two works which describe his two aspects of reality: *Physics* and *Metaphysics*. Physics describes the things which are of the material world and Metaphysics discusses the things which are ‘beyond’ (*meta*) the physical world. Whereas Plato would segment the world, this partitioning into two subjects is not a case of there being one material world and another non-material world but is merely a distinction in order to allow for definition, which if you recall for Aristotle is the foundation of knowledge. It is important to keep in mind (because it has been often forgotten) that Aristotle did not pigeon-hole things into separate boxes where nary the twain shall meet; he merely separates the parts out to be examined and understood. They remain parts of a *whole*. Consequently things, whether physical or metaphysical, still impact and inform one another. Aristotle begins with a very physical, practical kind of philosophy and once he feels he has a handle on that, he tackles the speculative side of reality.

Substance And Accidents

All of this has bearing in the differentiation of what “being” means and that is our ultimate goal here. *Physical* things (nature) are the things that have *form* (*substance, matter*) but do not have within themselves *causes* (*action*), that is, they are acted upon externally not internally. In the study of physical things, the first level of knowledge/study is that of *matter* and *form*. For example, define “star”. Stars have attributes which make them stars (their substance) like hydrogen and fusion as well as attributes which are particular to individual stars (their accidents) like color, or size. If you take away accidents it does not stop the thing from being the thing-in-itself; if you take away substance then it ceases to be that thing. A star that shines red is still a star; a star without fusion is a planet or to put it another way, a dog with three legs is still a dog; a dog that meows is a cat.

But that begs several questions. What about a child and an adult? When a child grows up is that adult still that child? Aristotle takes on the idea of change by talking about cause. Causality then, is the next aspect of physical things, and it has two primary aspects. First the idea of ‘movement’ (what we might call “change”) itself and finally the *cause* of movement (what is the source of the change/movement). Knowledge comes from spending time studying what we would usually think of as the physical attributes of a thing but in order to fully understand it we must also understand the forces which work upon it. Let us go back again to the illustration of stars. Simply put, along with hydrogen and fusion, the motion of heavenly bodies is part of who they are. If we merely look at the substance and accidents of stars but do not look at planetary motion and the relationship of that to the star itself our knowledge is incomplete. Further, if we do not understand the causes of planetary motion we still do not understand stars and their significance. *N’est-il pas*?

Motion And Change

Do not worry, not only will there be limited French phrases, we have not left that question of the child/adult. As far back as we can reckon the Greek notion of *motion* is tied up with *being* in the age old idea of *something* or *nothing*. But if motion implies *something* and if motion stops, then the thing stops being *something*, right? But that is not the behavior of life that we observe, is it? Accordingly, according to Aristotle, *motion* is basically the *same thing* as *change*, but not just presto-chango change, as one thing into another. He postulates four types of motion: *substantive* (of the thing as the name implies, particularly at a thing’s beginning and its ending), *qualitative* (changing qualities), *quantitative* (increasing and decreasing it), and *locomotive* (changing its place). Add to that the notions of *potentiality* (non-actualized substance contained within a thing) and *actuality* (substance instantiated) thrown in to round out the idea. By doing so Aristotle more closely defines all motion and change with ‘being’ but goes one step more and trumps motion *with* being: any activity (potential, actual, or any other quality) can be thought of as something just being itself. So if you broaden out the meaning of motion, then just ‘be-ing’ can be thought of as being in an ‘active’ state. *Couch Potato Alert*: you are what you are (aside from just being a slug) even at rest, because rest itself does not stop you from being what you are. In that way being is greater than motion, and the something or nothing argument is no longer driven by whether something is observable merely as active.

All this makes sense when one asks a question or better, makes a statement like Bono does in *Mysterious Ways*, that we should “*see the boy inside the man*”: is the man the same as the boy was or has the boy disappeared and stopped being and been replaced by the man? We can see that the *ideas* and *words* used are intricately linked. Change/Motion/Activity then is more than just a movement from here to there, i.e. of position (bat to ball) but also of state (child to adult, egg to chicken) or quality (brown hair to gray hair) or even quantity (chubby to skinny, short to tall). This idea of remaining the same even in change relies on the thing’s *substance* category not any other category. The man lies potentially within the boy, gray hair lies within the brown, regardless of the present state of the person.

But what about ‘unchanging’ things like genes[[5]](#footnote-5) – technically, aside from things like cancer and such, they do not change. Static states rely upon and are the result of some activity of the thing as well. We must see the potential as well as the active within the thing. Substance then, that property/group of properties which makes something what it is, has within itself the ability to flux *as part of that substance*. Growing up is part of what makes us human, so to speak. He distinguishes these attributes of substance (not *accidents*) with the designators *primary* and *secondary*. Primary substance defines the thing and secondary substance(s), which might be static, rise from that. Think of it as: human is primary and male and female are secondary.

Soul Man

Being then, is an action – *potential* or *active*. Hence our words for life are active (e.g. *animated* from Greek for spirit). But could you argue though that someone sleeping is not truly alive? Do the things which define and explain a thing all have to be present *and* active in order for the thing to be the thing? This is where the singular view of Aristotle must be kept in mind. Nothing can be pigeon-holed, except that the pigeon-hole is part of a cote. Though we categorize, we categorize to separate for understanding, not for isolation.

That said, let us pull the last few sections together. We derive such terms as kinetic energy from the Greek word Aristotle uses to define ‘*cause within the thing*’ – kinêsis. Cause within the thing is probably best re-worded as the ability within the thing to change. We even tend to think of it that way. For instance a yo-yo has potential or kinetic energy stored within it and we attribute its return up the string to that internal force not to some external force working upon it. Of course, we also use the other word he uses for ‘actuality’ – energeia. Using some word-play we could use the term ‘kinetic energy’ to describe the whole of Aristotle’s thought on the subject.

Actuality is to potentiality, Aristotle tells us, as “*someone waking is to someone sleeping, as someone seeing is to a sighted person with his eyes closed, as that which has been shaped out of some matter is to the matter from which it has been shaped*”. (*Metaphysics*) As with reading Plato we are driven to ask “what the heck does that mean?” Ultimately and for our purposes, it means that the thing remains itself regardless of the state in which it finds itself. This is true of the ineffable as much as it is of the observed: what is true of the physical world must also be true of metaphysical things.

How is this different from Plato? Aristotle is not going to go outside of the thing in order to understand it. In terms of *substance*, what is true for one thing of a class must be true for all things in that class. For humans the physical and the metaphysical must be seen as part and parcel of the whole. Following from that, just as you can study the body you can study the soul. For Aristotle the study of the soul is *Psychology* (think *Psyche* not *brain*); therefore the end of Psychology is to study and reach an understanding “*first of* [the soul’s] *essential nature and secondly its properties*” (*De Anima*). As he presents it, the study of how and why we understand is the greatest of all the sciences. In this way he still reflects Plato: what is the end of knowledge except that we should live better?

As said, he tells us that while metaphysics is the *first science*, the study of the soul is the *primary* first science. This is because he sees the soul as the reason for the body. Substance and essence are closely identified with each other in Aristotle’s thought. In terms of primary and secondary substance, being, and the animating force which powers it, is still called substance but is more like *be-ing*. What this is really saying is that in the category of substance, regardless of the study (physics or metaphysics), *the thing* *is what the thing is* (*being qua being*). The Soul defines the Body and asking if they are separate is as, Aristotle says, like asking “*whether the wax and the shape given it by the stamp are one…*” (*De Anima*) The soul then must be understood.

As the shaper of the body, the soul in a way transcends the body. Like Plato, Aristotle believes that the soul does survive the body, at least *parts of it* do. In the interest of time and space, let us just say that the soul has several parts, and those parts are cumulative. “*The soul in living creatures is distinguished by two functions, the judging capacity which is a function of the intellect and of sensation combined, and the capacity for exciting movement in space.*” (*ibid*) Suffice it to say, everything alive has a soul arranged in a hierarchy from lowest type of soul to highest. Plants, animals, humans – it is just humans though who have what is called a *rational* soul in addition to lower, “appetites”. The lower level appetites have no need to continue on after death.

As to how and where, well there is some discussion on that. This author falls into the camp that this is in relationship to the Prime Mover. The Prime Mover is something from which we are separate (not of the same substance else we would be that thing) and yet we participate within it via our soul, our mind, and wisdom.

Will, But Not Grace

This connection brings up the next tidbit of interest to us. When talking about the soul, a specific aspect is “the will.” This is not so much the will as we think of it, or perhaps the better way to look at it is as the basis of the way we think about it, as the motivator, the mover, the impetus for action. It is not just confined to the soul, but is anything which ‘moves’ the person. “*These two things then, appetite and mind, are clearly capable of causing movement…Both of these, then, mind and appetite are productive of movement in space. But the mind in question is that which makes its calculations with an end in view, that is, the practical mind: it differs from the speculative mind in the end that it pursues. And every appetite is directed towards an end; for the thing at which appetite aims is the starting point of the practical mind, and the last step of the practical mind is the beginning of the action. So these two, appetite and practical thought, seem reasonably considered as the producers of movement; for the object of appetite produces movement, and therefore thought produces movement, because the object of appetite is its beginning. Imagination* [a kind of thinking] *too, when it starts movement, never does so without appetite. That which moves, then, is a single faculty, that of appetite. If there were two movers, mind as well as appetite, they would produce movement in virtue of a common characteristic. But, as things are, mind is never seen to produce movement without appetite (for will is a form of appetite, and when movement accords with calculation, it accords also with choice), but appetite produces movement contrary to calculation; for desire is a form of appetite.*” (*De Anima*)

Okay, a long quote but it gives a sense of that ‘wholeness’ thinking of Aristotle’s as well as how ‘motion’ fits into this. The will is about actions. Appetite is desire which motivates us; the will is a motivator *but it has the elements of rationality and choice*. Still, we must understand that the will, as an appetite, can motivate us various ways, not all of which are rational or optional. In his work *Ethics*, Aristotle divided actions into three categories:

* **Involuntary** or ‘un-willing’ acts, which are best understood more as actions in which the person is not accountable, something we would neither praise nor blame them for. There is no choice in such things, like getting blown about in the wind or blinking your eyes or even misunderstanding something. There is no choosing of the right or the wrong thing. This is not the same thing making a bad choice out of habit, i.e. ignorance in that sense. This is action without the will being involved. ["Acting on account of ignorance seems different from acting while being ignorant".]
* **Voluntary** or ‘willing’ acts which are ‘good’ acts based in rational choice. This kind speaks for itself, but bears an explanation – thinking back to our earlier discussion, like Plato, if one is rational, knowing, then one chooses the right thing. This is the true rational soul at work.
* **Non-voluntary** or ‘non-willing’ actions which are ‘bad’ acts done by choice, but can also include the idea of choosing the ‘lesser of two evils.’ It can be seen in the light of the idea that one would not go out of ones way to ‘choose’ bad things, so if one choses something ‘bad’ then one is not really ‘willing.’

Actions then are in a sense quantifiable, and that the same action taken at different times can be the result of or result in different things. We are the vehicle of the outcome of ‘voluntary’ actions which can in a sense be categorized, measured like everything else such that good and bad are understandable within a scale. Moral virtues (distinguished from intellectual virtue, a kind of wisdom acquired by teaching) are actions which fall down the center between extremes, not too much and not too little. Moral virtue has to do with feeling, choosing, and acting well, meaning that the ideas of virtue and vice are dependent not on external forces but are dependent on us. Vice is too much or too little of something. This does not include the involuntary actions and when we remove them from the equation, we can say with some confidence that no one goes out of their way to be unhappy, that is to say that our decisions are aimed at making us happy.

That does not mean that every decision makes us happy. Why do we do things which we know will not really bring us happiness, in its fullest sense: not just momentary pleasure but actions which will bring us long term happiness? Or, why do we believe that decisions which lead to detrimental short term actions are the means to happiness? This is where the all the ideas comes into play. Vice, like Virtue, involves actions which were decided upon *willingly*. Vice (which is not a judgment of happiness or unhappiness) is the development of habitual bad actions and intentional direction of the will to bad things. One is never deliberately aiming to be unhappy. Just the same, we cannot blame unhappiness on ‘just being human’.

Let us examine that. Ethics is the conscious, rational decision to live well. Like Plato he is somewhat confident that people naturally gravitate toward the good behavior because that understanding is an innate objective understanding present in every person. When one makes a bad decision one would naturally avoid that decision later on. He asserts that you would have to be unconscious (even being locked in a box would be insufficient) to not realize the effect that bad actions have in your life. This understanding leads to what he terms ‘self-mastery’ or the difference between what you decide to do, and what you actually do. It is a discipline of sorts, training toward ‘good’ habits rather than ‘bad’ ones. But it is not just an instinctive learned response. All of this takes within the rational soul, and at that level very few things are blamable upon ‘instinct’. Instinct is involuntary, part of the ‘animal soul’, but humans have the ability to be rational meaning that a decision is made *to not restrain oneself*, turning oneself over to one’s base appetites. This is not to say that self-mastery is a given or that every decision is acted upon or correct, but that when someone behaves in a purely animal-soul-like way, then for better or worse they have in a sense ‘chosen’ to relinquished rational control and are no longer acting upon any conscious choice.

Good To Be Here

So let us turn it around. Everything by its nature is aimed toward the good, so it must be that the good is that toward which everything is aimed. I wished I had said that and people would be quoting me instead of the first line of his *Ethics*. That aside, what this means is that “the good” is part of the definition of the thing. While keeping with Plato’s idea of the soul, this pulls away from his completely objective, re-learned notion of the good and places it more within the being of each thing, while at the same time keeping that sense of objective measurements of good. This also lends itself to placing the good into specific (hierarchical) instances where some goods are ‘subservient’ to other goods (this is strictly a non-relativistic notion which pits goods against goods, not goods against appetites).

If everything is focused toward the good (and that good is not necessarily completely outside of the individual thing), as are our non-relativistic rational decisions, then it begs the question, “*what is the Good toward which all is oriented?*” Virtue, as Plato saw it, involved the whole of the person, thought and action, working toward the Good. Aristotle, never content to let the discussion of whole things be whole, dissects virtue back into those two parts: the *intellectual* (thoughts) and the *moral* (actions).

Ethics for Aristotle, is tied to his understanding of human nature/substance (our being). Everyone, by that very nature, is intent upon the good (which we might call happiness, but only carefully), and that which is good is good in and of itself. The soul, and specifically the human (rational) soul, has one end. To that end, the activity of the rational soul guided by virtue is (hierarchically) the *supreme* good (“happiness”).

How do we know when we have reached that goal? That is to say, how and when do we gauge happiness? Remember that for Aristotle, as for Plato, some part of the soul survives death. So we can examine happiness or goodness of both the living and the dead but when talking about happiness, we have to consider a person's life as a whole, not just the highlights reel. Does this mean that a person can then only be considered to have been happy after they have died, that is, once we can examine the person's life as a whole? We know from Plato that a good person will always live virtuously manner. Aristotle feels the same way, but carries it even further: even when faced with great misfortune, a good person will bear themselves well and will not descend into bad choices, especially in relation to others. At these times what we might call the “human spirit” displays itself and we call it virtuous. Therefore the term happiness must be able to be applied to a person during life. But what about *after* death?

Yes we can say that someone is happy after death, but it probably will be based on your life, that is to say it is not based in any *new* happiness but the happiness you had from how you lived because once you are dead the accolades or ridicules placed upon you (or the actions of your children who are a reflection of you) can only have minimum effect on your ‘present’ post-death happiness.

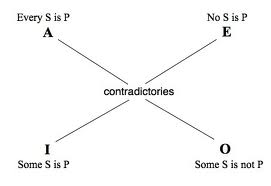
All that is just further proof of the case for happiness. So the argument goes something like this: we know that Plato saw knowledge as virtue, and knowing oneself as probably the greatest of virtues. Aristotle, as we have seen, likes to remove the idea of the Forms of Plato by tying them to the reality of everyday life, thereby placing virtue all around us. We know that all things have an end, both the idea of a goal and a final ceasing to be. Happiness comes from living virtuously because that is the goal of the human soul. We accomplish that by defining those virtuous actions and aiming for it. Logically then, virtues are really the middle ground between positive and negative traits. If we use Aristotelian logic and set up a contraries square of opposition, we always find that what lies in the crossroads is a virtue. Let us take for example, *Courage*. Courage is a virtue placed between *Rashness* and *Cowardice*. Rashness can be defined as too much confidence and not enough fear; Cowardice as too much fear and not enough confidence. Where the contraries cross, there you have Courage. It is the right balance of fear and confidence.

Figure 6: A contraries square of opposition

Ethics, the teachings about living virtuously and finding happiness, simplistically stated consists of grasping the middle ground in a situation. This does not mean the path of least resistance or even compromise. Middle ground does not mean giving up but seeking the equilibrium, finding the truth, the balance: the virtue. Think about it this way: we only recognize and call certain actions courage. We do so because we know those actions to be courageous; other actions we recognize as not courageous or almost courageous but not *as courageous* (by their substance…right?).

The Wider World

Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) takes the ideas instilled in him by his teacher and introduces them to the world. At the same time the world introduces itself to Alexander. There begins a period of cultural exchange which outlives the short-lived Alexander and through his generals begins the period of ‘Hellenization’ we have discussed already. Greek thought enters the Near East. The immensity of this period on the thinking of the Western World is not within the scope of this work, so suffice it to say that it was…big – mainly within the two foundations of religious thought in the West: Judaism and Christianity, and within the secular foundations of the coming Roman Empire.

Putting It Together

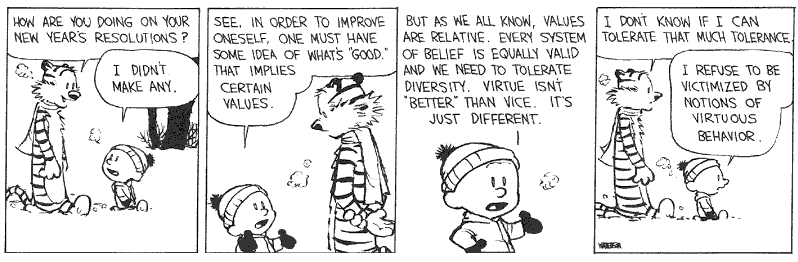
With Aristotle we gain that final major piece of philosophical linguistic foundations of Western (including Islamic) theology. Not that there are no innovative thinkers to come, merely that the language is consistently based in both Plato and Aristotle. Thinking about the nature of Nature as Aristotle did, not as a deficient material world and a better someplace else, but within Nature, the thing-in-itself, will not have the initial influence that Platonism has. There is perhaps a need early on for more esoteric definitions and discussions, and Plato’s thought lends itself to a more living oriented thought, more in line with the early Church’s discussion of ‘The Way’. At the same time that is not to say that while Aristotle discusses physical things that he is not being completely speculative about them. The understanding of Metaphysics is developed by Aristotle, and while it has twisted and turned (and been thrown out) over the years, it is the one which informs Christian theology.

We can also hear the echoes of Creation as good, the nature of the judgment of the soul, and other Jewish understandings about life and sin. What we can say in retrospect is that Plato tends to give us a sense of God and Aristotle a sense of humanity’s relationship to God and to one another.

We will see this ‘perfected’ in Thomas Aquinas.

*“Bernard of Chartres used to say that we are like dwarfs sitting on the shoulders of giants. We see more, and things that are more distant than they did, not because we have keener vision or greater height than they, but because we are lifted up and borne aloft by their great stature.”*

**John of Salisbury,** *Metalogicon, III*



1. We even have his will. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “*Let me ‘splain. No, there is too much. Let me sum up*.” Inigo Montoya, *The Princess Bride* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. What we must constantly keep in mind is that while he categorizes for understanding, he does not separate form or function. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Notice that it has the same root as *Logos*…discuss…. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Do not forget that no such idea was available to Aristotle, but it shows how his thinking prefigures understandings like ‘genes’; if that is too great a jump then think about it in terms of fingers and toes. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)