

History 101

Aristotle



Aristotle [384–322 BC][2] was an ancient Greek philosopher and scientist born in the city of Stagira, on the northern periphery of Classical Greece. His father, Nicomachus, died when Aristotle was a child, whereafter Proxenus of Atarneus became his guardian. At seventeen or eighteen years of age, he joined Plato's Academy in Athens and remained there until the age of thirty-seven (c. 347 BC).

His writings cover many subjects – including physics, biology, zoology, metaphysics, logic, ethics, aesthetics, poetry, theater, music, rhetoric, linguistics, politics and government – and constitute the first comprehensive system of Western philosophy. Shortly after Plato died, Aristotle left Athens and, at the request of Philip II of Macedon, tutored Alexander the Great beginning in 343 BC.

Teaching Alexander the Great gave Aristotle many opportunities and an abundance of supplies. He established a library in the Lyceum which aided in the production of many of his hundreds of books. The fact that Aristotle was a pupil of Plato contributed to his former views of Platonism, but, following Plato's death, Aristotle immersed himself in empirical studies and shifted from Platonism to empiricism. He believed all peoples' concepts and all of their knowledge was ultimately based on perception. Aristotle's views on natural sciences represent the groundwork underlying many of his works.

Aristotle's views on physical science profoundly shaped medieval scholarship. Their influence extended from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages into the Renaissance, and were not replaced systematically until the Enlightenment and theories such as classical mechanics. Some of Aristotle's zoological observations, such as on the reproductive arm of the octopus, were not confirmed or refuted until the 19th century. His works contain the earliest known formal study of logic, which was incorporated in the late 19th century into modern formal logic.

In metaphysics, Aristotelianism profoundly influenced Judeo-Islamic philosophical and theological thought during the Middle Ages and continues to influence Christian theology, especially the Neoplatonism of the Early Church and the scholastic tradition of the Roman Catholic Church. Aristotle was well known among medieval Muslim intellectuals and revered as "The First Teacher."

He died in Euboea of natural causes later that same year, having named his student Antipater as his chief executor and leaving a will in which he asked to be buried next to his wife. Charles Walston argues that the tomb of Aristotle is located on the sacred way between Chalcis and Eretria and to have contained two styluses, a pen, a signet-ring and some terracottas as well as what is supposed to be the earthly remains of Aristotle in the form of some skull fragments. [<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotle>]

