

# Life

- Aristotle was born in Stageira, Chalcidice, in 384 BC, about 55 km (34 mi) east of modern-day Thessaloniki. His father Nicanor was the personal physician to King Amyntas of Macedon. Aristotle was trained and educated as a member of the aristocracy. At about the age of eighteen, he went to Athens to continue his education at Plato's Academy.

- Aristotle remained at the academy for nearly twenty years before quitting Athens in 348/47 BC. The traditional story about his departure reports that he was disappointed with the direction the academy took after control passed to Plato's nephew [Speusippus](#) upon his death, although it is possible that he feared anti-Macedonian sentiments and left before Plato had died.

- Aristotle married Hermias's adoptive daughter (or niece) Pythias. She bore him a daughter, whom they named Pythias. Soon after Hermias' death, Aristotle was invited by Philip II of Macedon to be the tutor to his son Alexander the Great in 343 BC. Aristotle was appointed as the head of the royal academy of Macedon. During that time he gave lessons not only to Alexander, but also to two other future kings: Ptolemy and Cassander.

- Aristotle encouraged Alexander toward eastern conquest, and his attitude towards Persia was unabashedly ethnocentric. In one famous example, he counsels Alexander to be 'a leader to the Greeks and a despot to the barbarians, to look after the former as after friends and relatives, and to deal with the latter as with beasts or plants'

- By 335 BC he had returned to Athens, establishing his own school there known as the Lyceum. Aristotle conducted courses at the school for the next twelve years. While in Athens, his wife Pythias died and Aristotle became involved with Herpyllis of Stageira, who bore him a son whom he named after his father, Nichomachus. According to the Suda, he also had an eromenos, Palaephatus of Abydus.

- Aristotle not only studied almost every subject possible at the time, but made significant contributions to most of them. In physical science, Aristotle studied anatomy, astronomy, [embryology](#), geography, geology, meteorology, physics and zoology. In philosophy, he wrote on aesthetics, ethics, government, metaphysics, politics, economics, psychology, rhetoric and theology.

- He also studied education, foreign customs, literature and poetry. His combined works constitute a virtual encyclopedia of Greek knowledge. It has been suggested that Aristotle was probably the last person to know everything there was to be known in his own time.

- Near the end of Alexander's life, Alexander began to suspect plots against himself, and threatened Aristotle in letters. Aristotle had made no secret of his contempt for Alexander's pretense of divinity, and the king had executed Aristotle's grandnephew as a traitor. A widespread tradition in antiquity suspected Aristotle of playing a role in Alexander's death, but there is little evidence for this.



# Difference with Plato

- Plato argued that there are some universal forms that are not a part of particular things. For example, it is possible that there is no particular good in existence, but "good" is still a proper universal form.
- Aristotle disagreed with Plato on this point, arguing that all universals are instantiated. Aristotle argued that there are no universals that are unattached to existing things.

# Universals

- According to Aristotle, if a universal exists, either as a particular or a relation, then there must have been, must be currently, or must be in the future, something on which the universal can be predicated. Consequently, according to Aristotle, if it is not the case that some universal can be predicated to an object that exists at some period of time, then it does not exist.

- In addition, Aristotle disagreed with Plato about the location of universals. As Plato spoke of the world of the forms, a location where all universal forms subsist, Aristotle maintained that universals exist within each thing on which each universal is predicated. So, according to Aristotle, the form of apple exists within each apple, rather than in the world of the forms.

# Aristotelian ethics

- Ethics as a subject begins with the works of Aristotle. In its original form, this subject is concerned with the question of virtue of character , or in other words having excellent and well-chosen habits. The acquisition of an excellent character is in turn aimed at living well and eudaimonia, a Greek word often translated as well-being or happiness.

# Ethics

- In other words, ethics is a systematic study of how individuals should best live. This study was originally coupled with the closely related study of politics, including law-making. Politics has an effect on how people are brought up, which therefore addresses the same question of how people should live, from the standpoint of the community. The original Aristotelian and Socratic answer to the question of how best to live was to live the life of [philosophy](#) and contemplation.

- Aristotle's ethics, or study of character, is built around the premise that people should achieve an excellent character (a virtuous character) as a pre-condition for attaining happiness or well-being. Like Plato and Socrates he emphasized the importance of reason for human happiness, and that there were logical and natural reasons for humans to behave virtuously, and try to be virtuous.

- Aristotle asserted that popular accounts about what life would be happy divide into three most common types: a life dedicated to vulgar pleasure; a life dedicated to fame and honor; or a life dedicated to contemplation. To judge these, Aristotle uses his method of trying to define the natural function of a human in action.

- A human's function must include the ability to use reason or *logos*, because this is an essential attribute of being human. A person that does this is the happiest because he is fulfilling his purpose or nature as found in the rational soul.



- For example, courageous (or literally manly) action is a mean between the painful activities of fear and rash overconfidence. Too much fear or too little confidence leads to cowardice, and too little fear or too much confidence can lead to rash, foolish choices. But courage is also described as an ability to rationally choose the beautiful, which in some cases can be a beautiful death.

- Aristotle's described how people be virtuous by performing virtuous actions, which they might not have chosen themselves when young. They must develop proper habits during childhood and this usually requires help from teachers, parents, and law-makers. A good community is normally required for the development of good people.

- Virtue in the highest sense, in an adult who has been brought up well, will not just involve good personal habits such as courage and temperance, but also friendship and justice and intellectual virtue.

- He also famously stated that "man is by nature a political animal." Aristotle conceived of politics as being like an organism rather than like a machine, and as a collection of parts none of which can exist without the others. Aristotle's conception of the city is organic, and he is considered one of the first to conceive of the city in this manner.

- Aristotle considered the city to be a natural community. Moreover, he considered the city to be prior in importance to the family which in turn is prior to the individual, "for the whole must of necessity be prior to the part".

- The aim of the city is not just to avoid injustice or for economic stability, but rather to allow at least some citizens the possibility to live a good life, and to perform beautiful acts: "The political partnership must be regarded, therefore, as being for the sake of noble actions, not for the sake of living together."

# Five Elements

- Aristotle followed prior Greek philosophy with an adapted theory of elements. He proposed a fifth element, aether, in addition to the more common four proposed earlier by [Empedocles](#).
- [Fire](#), which is hot and dry; [Earth](#), which is cold and dry; [Air](#), which is hot and wet; [Water](#), which is cold and wet; [Aether](#), which is the divine substance that makes up the [heavenly spheres](#) and heavenly bodies (stars and planets).

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