

**ARISTOTLE'S WORLD**  
*An Introductory Lecture*

❖ *perspective for this lecture*

**I. THE HOMERIC LEGACY**

- A. **ORDER : COSMOS/MOIRA** : structure, law ; harmony, **balance**, proportion ; the right fit ; virtue- **excellence** (*arête*) ; **disturbance** (*hubris / nemesis*) :  
**AESTHETIC VISION**
- B. **APOLLO** : *Know Thyself ; Nothing In Excess* (**balance is best**)
- C. **TRAGIC** man and **RATIONALIST** man : the **rival** offspring
- D. **PLATO's rationalist reformulation** : The World of Ideas (**Forms**)
- E. **Fundamental Unity** of Plato and Aristotle
  - **Homeric ; anti-TRAGIC ; anti-SOPHIST**
  - Aesthetic ; rationalistic ; objectivity, universality, norm-consciousness
- F. Rationalism **after** Aristotle (The Master's **warnings...**)

**II. FROM PLATO TO ARISTOTLE** (Whitehead and S.T. Coleridge)

- A. **Different mentalities** :: artist & political reformer / theoretical scientist :: mathematician / biologist :: poetry / prose :: dialogue / treatise :: mystic / intellectual :: assimilates the tragic / radical rationalist
- B. **Text - analysis** : (The new CAVE-simile) "Cave-to-Cave"
  - **Conditions** : abundance vs. slavery
  - **Transition** : natural vs. conversion
  - **Ending** : intellectual vs. moral / political **focus**

❖ **The New Allegory of the CAVE**

(Aristotle, Fragment 12 Rose; *from Cicero On the Nature of the Gods* 2.37.95)

(...) Thus Aristotle (...) remarks: "If there were men who had always lived beneath the earth in good and shining habitations, adorned with statues and pictures and supplied with all the things possessed in abundance by those who are considered happy, and if, however, they had never gone out above the earth, but had heard by rumour and report that there is a certain divine presence and power, and then if at some time the gorges of the earth were opened and they were able to escape out of those hidden places and to come forth into these regions which we inhabit, then, when they suddenly saw the earth and the seas and the sky, when they had learnt the greatness of the clouds and the power of the winds, when they had gazed on the sun and recognized his greatness and beauty and the efficacy with which he causes day by spreading his light through the whole sky, when moreover, night having darkened the lands, they perceived the whole sky laid out and adorned with stars, and the variety of the lights of the moon, now waxing now waning, and the risings and settings of them all and their courses ratified and immutable to all eternity - when they saw this - they would straight-away think that there are gods and that these are the mighty works of gods". Thus far Aristotle.

- C. **TWO WORLDS (Plato)** for the price of **ONE** : the great **COLLAPSE**
- anti-*poetic* , anti-*mystical* : **NATURALIST- SCIENTIST**
  - bottom line : **FORMS** do not explain **MOTION**
    - *neglect of study of NATURE*

### III. **ARISTOTLE'S WORLD : INTELLECTUAL LOVE OF NATURE**

- A. **Scientist-philosopher** : classification of rational activity ; theoretical- practical-productive (Logic , Physics, Metaphysics ; Ethics, Politics ; Aesthetics...)
- B. The proper study of **NATURE** : The *problem* of **MOTION**
- Parmenides, Heraclitus, Plato
- C. Theory of **KNOWLEDGE** : senses + reason ; individual , universal
- D. The **FOUR CAUSES (aspects): material, formal , active (efficient), final**
- E. **NEW APPROACH to NATURE**
1. **substance** : the really-real ; concrete individuals - *the this*
  2. **static analysis** : matter-form
  3. **dynamic analysis** : potentiality-actuality
  4. **TELEOLOGY (entelechy)** : built-in **purposiveness**
  5. **Continuity in Nature** : “*The Great Chain of Being*” (medieval)
  6. **GOD** : **ultimate principle of intelligibility**
    - Prime Mover, First Cause, Final Cause, Necessary Being
    - impossibility of infinite regression
    - **Thought Thinking Itself**
- F. **DIGNITY** : *intellectual admiration* of **DESIGN** and **PURPOSE** in *every THING*
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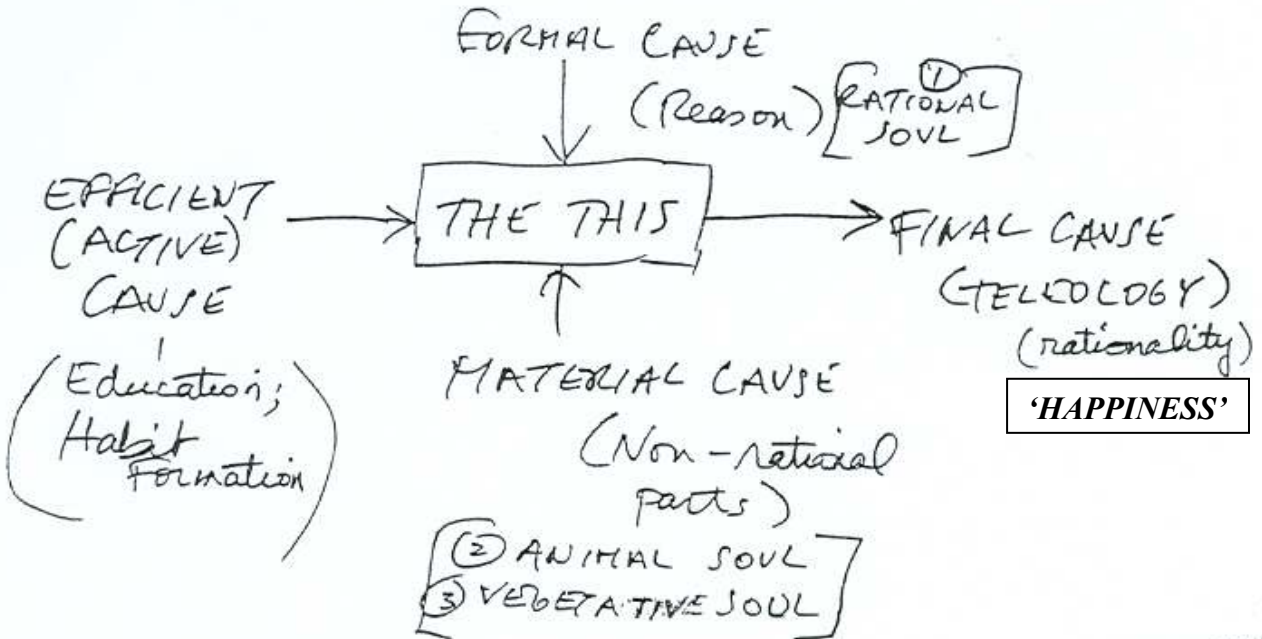
#### **Continuity in Nature**

“Nature *proceeds little by little* from things lifeless to animal life in such a way that it is impossible to determine the exact line of demarcation, nor on which side of it an intermediate form should lie . Thus, next after lifeless things comes the plant: and of plants one will differ from another as to its amount of apparent vitality; and, in a word, the whole genus of plants, whilst it is devoid of life as compared with an animal, is endowed with life as compared with other corporeal entities. Indeed, as we just remarked, there is observed in plants **a continuous scale of ascent** towards the animal. So, in the sea, there are certain objects concerning which one would be at a loss to determine whether they be **animals or vegetable.**” (*History of Animals* VIII.1, 588 b 4-13)

(Aristotle I)

(Shebay'a)

STATIC ANALYSIS (the 4 causes)



DYNAMIC ANALYSIS (continuum of Nature) → GREAT CHAIN OF BEING (medieval)

