

For Plato, countering the arguments of the Sophists was virtually a *raison d'être*. He might have felt at the core of his being that the Sophists' Relativism was wrong. However, it could have been because he watched his friend and mentor, Socrates, sentenced to death because of Sophist arguments. Whatever his actual motivation might have been, Plato strove to create a system that was an effective counter to the Sophist's assertion that all arguments are equally valid.

Plato created the theory of *Forms* in which everything that is an object of knowledge is a *Form*. For example, the idea of a square or a triangle can be considered a Form, and that Form is eternal and *stays put*. Plato's Forms are epistemologically like Parmenides' *One* because they're eternal, unchanging, and indestructible. The idea of a square would be considered an *intelligible* because it's something derived from reason, as compared to things that are perceived by the senses, which Plato called *sensibles*. The sensibles are considered to be less accurate because of the inherent fallibility of the senses.

Unlike Parmenides *One*, there isn't just one Form, but many. From a metaphysical standpoint, the characteristics of objects, such as their roundness, can be a Form: "Any plurality of things which *have a single name* constitutes a specific type of [Form]." (Republic 596a)

Plato felt that he refuted Democritus' Atomism by saying that the Forms actually exist. As such, they cannot be made up of tiny individual atoms because the Forms are shared by all things. In addition, Atomism provides that everything happens because of the interaction of the atoms, which Democritus said was random because the atoms *swerve* at times. Plato believes that there is a Form of the Good, which would mean that the universe has an intelligent and pious order, and what happens is for the best. Plato denies Democritus' vision of a random, uncaring, and disinterested universe in favor what could be pejoratively called a Panglossian world view. For Plato, Atomism failed because concepts like good and beauty cannot be merely composed of atoms. In addition, Plato believed that there is a soul that is separate from and temporarily imprisoned by the body. He believed it can exist independently of the body, and therefore there must be more to man than just atoms.

Next, Plato used the Forms to defeat Skepticism. He said that the Forms give us actual knowledge. Therefore, the Skeptics' concept that nature is indeterminable cannot be valid. Plato also argued that Relativism was wrong because the knowledge derived from the Forms is not dependent upon what any culture feels or thinks. This gave Plato his cherished victory over the Sophists.

Comment [DP1]: Plato is ambivalent about this. In some places he says that all forms are forms of the Good, so comes close to Parmenides One in this.

Comment [DP2]: This was introduced by Democritus to solve the problem of causal determinism that makes free will and choice impossible. His attempt failed, of course, as Plato was aware.

Comment [DP3]: This might be a legitimate criticism of Plato, but you need to argue for it. Why was Plato naively optimistic? If you do not intend to aim this at Plato, you need to rewrite the sentence.

Comment [DP4]: From Pythagorus

In challenging previous ideas, Plato gave the Forms an existence which he said was more real than anything we can see or touch. He takes his concept a step further by saying that the Forms also have the properties or essence of what they represent. Consequently, the Form for largeness must also be very large. In addition, a Form is created whenever there is a commonality between things.

Comment [DP5]: This constitutes a recursive problem for Plato. Need to clarify.

In giving these two attributes to Forms, Plato created a trap for himself. For example, if two large objects give rise to the Form of largeness, that Form will, in turn, have the quality or essence of being large. At that point, there will be three things in existence that share the quality of largeness, i.e., the two original things that were large and the Form that is also large. Therefore, another Form will be created because of the commonality of the three large things, one of which was the recently created Form of largeness. This will go on ad infinitum. Another example would be the Form of a man which would be created by the commonalities between two men. However, that Form would, in essence, be a third man because Plato said that the Forms actually exist. Now there would be three men, and another Form would be created based upon the commonalities of the three men. This infinite regress is called the *Third Man Problem*.

Comment [DP6]: Form is not created thus, but is reflected in the intelligibility of sensible things that can be brought under unifying concepts. Such concepts are reflections in language and thought of eternal Forms that make ANY intelligibility possible at all. Atomism cannot account for intelligibility and thus despite the problems of "participation" offers a better theory of everything than the much more narrow materialistic atomic theory.

Comment [DP7]: OK. This clarifies the recursive problem

Aristotle rejected Plato's Forms calling them *empty phrases* and *poetic metaphors*. He said that being a man is not related to the Form of a man, but it's derived from the individual man himself in his own right. He also objected to Forms being able to account for change because they are supposed to be eternal and unchanging. For Aristotle, fundamental things must be individual and exist independently of other things. They cannot be attached or affected by imaginary Forms.

Comment [DP8]: This is also called the problem of participation where in order to show how some sensible thing shares in a form, which is utterly and essentially different from sensibles, one would need some third thing in terms of which they can interact, some third thing that has both the essence of sensible and intelligible. But that now requires a fourth thing that would allow the third to interact with the first two ad infinitum.

Aristotle tried to solve the problems with Plato's theory by saying that there is a *Primary Substance*. For Aristotle, this Primary Substance is what one would use as the subject of a sentence rather than the predicate, and he said it is the most *basic* way a thing can be. He said that there are also *Secondary Substances* using the example of [a particular] man being a Primary Substance, but another category that man might fall into, like animal, being a Secondary Substance.

Comment [DP9]: Yet introduces the idea of pure forms that have no materiality and are fully realized, ultimately the Unmoved Mover. A very Platonic underpinning of his otherwise very empirical and non otherworldly scientific/philosophical theory.

Comment [DP10]: The individual thing is a primary substance that has an essence apart from its accidental conditions at a given time.

Like Plato, Aristotle disagreed with the Sophists' Relativistic views. For him, the truth is saying what is, is. He concedes that there are other theories of what truth is, so he calls his description the *Correspondence Theory of Truth* because a statement is deemed true when it corresponds to reality.

Comment [DP11]: A particular man, Socrates, is a primary substance. The natural kind or category "Man" or "Animal" are secondary substances. Both primary and secondary substances can be predicated of, but not attributes such as color or other variable properties.

Comment [DP12]: But he rejects them. Truth is ONLY correspondence of statements to reality. That correspondence view dominated western thought for 2000 years until Kant at the turn of the 19th century.

For Aristotle, the truth of a thing is derived from what the thing is used for, which he calls its *teleology*. Teleology comes from *Telos*, which means the end or goal. For Aristotle, all things are filled with *Telos*, including the egg whose goal is to grow into a creature. All earlier forms of a

Comment [DP13]: Might be better to say "function" or "purpose" in keeping with his biologism.

substance already hold within them what they can potentially become. It is interesting to compare this idea to the Calvinist belief that all men have a *calling* in life.

Like Socrates, Aristotle believed that knowledge came from *Induction*, which happens through perceptions and analysis. Induction is reasoning from particular cases to general or universal knowledge. For example, one might perceive that there are animals and from there realize that there are different species or that they have certain attributes, like consciousness. The examination of these differences and similarities leads to universal first principles.

Comment [DP14]: A critical feature of Aristotle and at the heart of his empirically based theoretical understanding. Use the term “Nous” to try to name the source of this ability that humans have to arrive at knowledge through induction from the particular to the more abstract and general.

Like Plato, Aristotle believed that there are souls, and he divided them into *Nutritive*, *Sensitive*, and *Rational*. Firstly, there is the Nutritive soul, which has the ability to take in nourishment and convert it into life. This type of soul belongs even to plants. The next type is the Sensitive soul, which gives a creature the ability to have sensations and desires. This is what animals have. Lastly, there is the Rational soul that gives the ability to reason, and Aristotle said that it belongs only to man. Without a soul, a man is merely a body incapable of action, and a soul is “a formal substance. That means it is the essence of a body. . . .”

Comment [DP15]: Basically OK, but need to start with a particular thing, not a class such as “animal” which is an abstraction one arrives at built on induction from individual particular things and observation of what they can do or how they change in orderly ways.

Comment [DP16]: He used the notion of soul in a radically different way. Perhaps start the sentence with that, instead of the word “like” that would seem to indicate their views shared something in common.

Aristotle’s concept of man having a soul that is superior to that possessed by other animals was incorporated into many future religions. It is a fundamental tenet of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It was also incorporated into the writings of many philosophers, including Descartes, Leibniz, and Kant.

Comment [DP17]: Right. Soul is the “aliveness” of a body.

Aristotle also speculated that God is the *unmoved mover* who lives a life of perfect thought. He says the course of such perfect thinking is, “whatever is the most divine and most valuable, and plainly it does not change; for change would be for the worse.” However, if God’s thoughts are already perfect, what is left for God to think about? Aristotle says that God will eternally contemplate his own existence. Still, the question arises, if God is omnipotent and omniscient, what is there about his own existence that he hasn’t already thought about?

Comment [DP18]: Judaism is not nearly so much influenced by Aristotle as Christianity and Islam which come long after Aristotle as opposed to Judaism that comes considerably before Aristotle. That is not to say there was no influence, rather Judaism looks to Greek philosophy to support what it already has, whereas Christianity is in large part built from Greek thought, first Plotinus, Plato, and Stoicism, then later Aristotle via Thomas Aquinas.

Perhaps Aristotle was trying to say that the thoughts of God are unlike anything in the realm of human experience, where our thoughts are so often focused on abstractions and schemes to satisfy our desires. Wagner said it beautifully:

*I am convinced that there are universal currents of Divine Thought
vibrating the aether everywhere and that any who can feel these vibrations is inspired.*

Good overview. A few things needed more clarity or correction. See the specific comments.

GRADE: A-