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tyAristotle: A Comprehensive View on Nature and SocietyIn order to fully understand Aristotles views on a natural system, it is necessary to first explain some general principles of his philosophy. It is in his work the Categories that Aristotle presents the concept of substance, a concept that will serve as the foundation for much of his philosophical system. Substance, for Aristotle, is not a universal, but rather, it is the particular; substance is not a such, but a this. Thus, substance is neither in nor is it said of a subject (as are qualities).

Rather it is that which makes the subject numerically one; it is that which makes the subject the individual. Substance is an individual man and or an individual horse. Aristotle still classifies universals as substances, for they define what constitutes the substance, and without these universals, a substance would not be what is. There are four characteristics of substances: a substance is a this, not a qualification or a such (which stresses individuality); a substance has no contraries to it (there are no opposites of a substance); a substance does not admit more or less (there are not degrees of a substance); and a substance can admit contraries while remaining numerically one. In the Physics, Aristotle addresses that which constitutes Natural Objects as substances. He states that all Natural Substances consist of both form and matter. Matter is that out of which the substance arises and form is that into which the matter develops.

In building a table, the wood, nails, etc., are the matters, and the idea of a table, what the end result will be, is the form, according to Aristotle. Matter and form are inseparable from each other; there is no form apart from concrete things. Aristotle explains that all substances contain within

themselves the origin of their change and movement. He continues by stating that the change, which can occur, is due to four possible natural causes: formal cause, material cause, efficient cause, and final cause. Formal and material causes are self explanatory, in that it is the form or the matter of the substance that is responsible for the change within the substance. Efficient and final cause, however, will become clearer once we investigate Aristotles ideas of actuality and potentiality. We should begin the explanation of actuality and potentially by saying that form can be seen as the actuality of the substance while matter is the potential for that form to exist.

The best way to illustrate this is through the analogy of the building of a house. The materials, bricks and wood, should be seen as the matter, the potentially to become a house. The end-result, the house, is the form, it is the potential made actual. The building of the house itself, the movement, is analogous to the four types of causes Aristotle says exist in substances.

In the case of this analogy the builder would be the efficient cause in that it is he/she who initiates the change. One could also say that there is a final or teleological cause taking place as well, that the motive is to build a house which serves the purpose of house-ness, namely that the house is one in which people can live. Through this analogy one can begin to see the nature of each of the causes which can exist within a given substance. Once we see how Aristotles ideas of actuality and potentially relate to his ideas of form and matter (matter is potentiality, form is its actuality), which necessarily relate to substance, we can almost begin the analysis of his philosophy on an ethical system. First, however, an introduction to the idea of the Unmoved

Mover is necessary. In accordance with Aristotles teleological view of the natural world, the Unmoved Mover is a purely actual thing which motivates all things toward the good. All things try to achieve completeness, full actuality, or perfection; this implies that there must exist an object or state towards which this striving or desire is directed.

This object or state is the Unmoved Mover. This state of perfection must be one of pure actuality since it can have no potential, being perfect; it must be non-natural since all natural things have potential. Thus, it is not moving, yet moves other things to attempt to achieve perfection; this thing is the final cause of the universe. Knowing, now, that which moves all natural things towards the goods, we can begin the analysis on Aristotles ethical system. In investigating Aristotles Nichomachean Ethics, it is important to remember that just like the Physics, it is a teleological view, not on the natural world, but on human nature, the end (telos) of which is the good. Everything that humans do is aimed at some end; this end is can either have intrinsic or extrinsic worth.

This is to say that the acts of humans can either be done for themselves (intrinsic) or can be done as a means to something else (extrinsic). The underlying goal of all our action, Aristotle calls the good, but along with the good, comes happiness. For Aristotle, then, all human are just trying to be happy. The good life, then, is a life of happiness; Aristotle says such a life can be achieved by excellence (arete) in two areas of virtue: intellectual and moral. First, we will have to analyze moral virtue in order to understand fully the notion of intellectual virtue. More or less, for Aristotle, the life of moral virtue, not being an exact science, is a life of moderation. This is a common

theme with most all the ancient philosophers and authors (especially the playwrights).

It is practical wisdom which is not a priori, but rather it is a learned trade which varies from situation to situation; it can not be taught, it must be learned from experience. What, then, exactly is moral virtue? It is acting in accordance with our nature and our striving towards the good, by means of moderate actions is everyday life. Knowing this practical type of reason, we can now examine the theoretical type of reason, intellectual virtue.

Happiness is an activity, it is not a passive state for Aristotle.

It is our potential which allows us to be motivated by the concept of the Unmoved Mover, towards a state of perfection or perfect happiness. In order to achieve this state, a human, according to Aristotle, must partake in an activity which is both sought for intrinsic purposes and is in itself perfect. Intellectual virtue is this activity. It is a theoretical principle which each person knows a priori; it is the act of doing what is most natural for all humans to do, to reason. It is our nature according to Aristotle, to reason, and it follows that if we achieve the perfectness or excellence (arete) in our nature, we achieve perfect happiness.

Specifically, for Aristotle, the best way to come close to achieving the perfect good is to act as a seeker of truth. The philosopher is the way to go according to Aristotle; Philosophical thought is the way to consummate perfect happiness, but it doesnt pay well. Bibliography: