

Aristotle & The *corpus aristotelicum*

Socrates 469-399 B.C.; Plato 427-347

Aristotle: 384-322 B.C.

Earliest known biography of Aristotle was written by Hermippus of Smyrna, an Alexandrian grammarian and librarian, in the early 200's B.C., i.e., the end of the 3rd century B.C. This biography is not extant, but was partially preserved in the biography by Diogenes Laertius, writing in the 2nd century A.D.

- 384 Born in Stagira, Chalcidice; his father, Nicomachus, was a physician at the Macedonian royal household.
- 367 At the age of 17, he arrives in Athens to study at Plato's Academy, Plato then being 60 years old.
- 347 Plato's death; Aristotle leaves Athens.
- 343 Invited to the court of King Philip of Macedon to tutor his son, Alexander the Great.
- 340 Alexander becomes regent to his father, who was engaged in military operations in Byzantium; end of Aristotle's tutorship. Alexander is thought later to have helped Aristotle's researches in natural history by sending him specimens from the different parts of his empire.
- 335 Returns to Athens; establishes the Lyceum.
- 323 Death of Alexander; anti-Macedonian feelings in Athens cause him to return to Chalcis. Leadership of the Lyceum was taken over by his student Theophrastus.
- 322 Dies in Chalcis.

- 225 End of Lyceum (by contrast, Plato's Academy lasted, with some interruptions, until 529 A.D., when it was closed by the Emperor Justinian.)

Corpus aristotelicum

It contains heterogeneous material, such as a lexicon, discussion notes and lecture notes, both polished and unpolished. Still, there is a systematic coherence and uniform style to them. Two paths of transmission of the original or copied writings: 1) from Lyceum to libraries of Pergamum or Alexandria, which might be the 146 titles listed by Diogenes Laertius; 2) upon Theophrastus' death in 287 to his student Neleus, to Apellicon of Teos (150-87), to the Roman general Sulla in 87 B.C., which was then arranged into the current 46 titles by Andronicus of Rhodes circa 40-20 B.C., leaving out the popular works, e.g., dialogues. Andronicus produced the traditional order of the writings according to principles of division derived from the Stoics, i.e., logic, physics and ethics. The *Metaphysics* (literally, 'after the physics') comes after the writings on natural science, and the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* remain for the end. The view that the logical writings, the "Organon", beginning with the *Categories*, were to be read first, influenced the medieval interpretation of Aristotle.