



COLLOQUIUM SERIES

“An Aristotelian Account of Induction”

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According to a long interpretative tradition, Aristotle holds that the job of induction is to find the essential nature common to a set of individuals and that nature is captured solely by their shared formal cause. Against this view, I argue that Aristotle understands perceptible individuals to be irreducibly composite objects whose nature is constituted by both their formal and their material cause. As a result, when investigating perceptible objects, the job of induction is to discover their composite, formal and material nature. The process by which universal claims about this composite nature are justified, I argue, is similar to what we now know as mathematical induction. In particular, such claims are grounded in a non-enumerative, but replicable process in which things are resolved into their simplest components. As a result, the observation of past uniformities has, at most, a heuristic function in scientific inquiry.

Friday, January 17th, 2014

Room: 3202 River Building

Time: 4:00 pm

All are welcome!