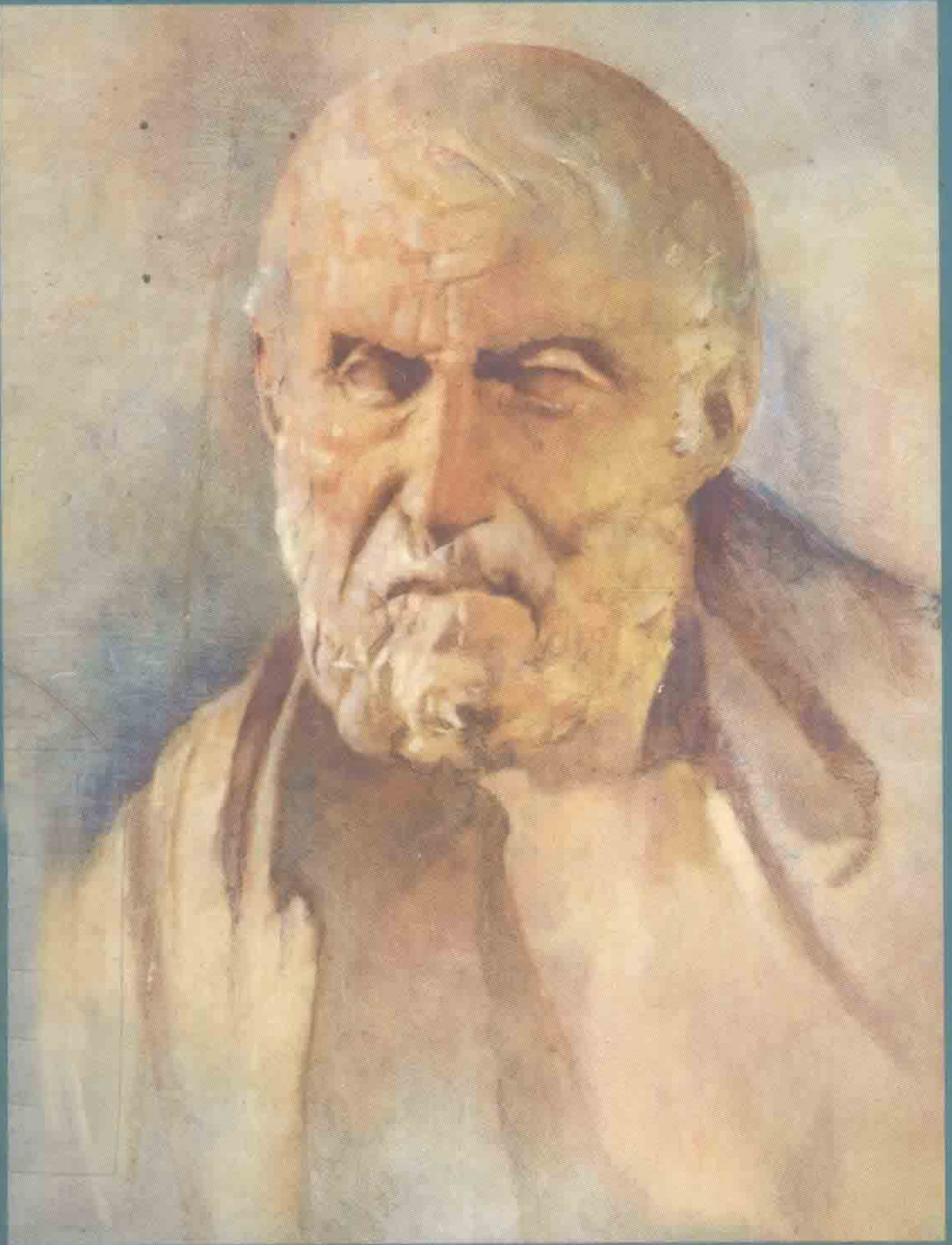


ARISTOTLE

The Pocket Aristotle.



ENRICHED CLASSIC

The Pocket Aristotle

Edited and with an Introduction
and Prefatory Notes by
Justin D. Kaplan

Translated under the Editorship of
W. D. Ross

Selections from
Psychology, Physics, Politics,
Nicomachean Ethics, Metaphysics
and *Poetics*

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New York London Toronto Sydney Singapore

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1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020

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ISBN: 0-671-46377-2

First Pocket Books printing October 1958

32 31 30 29 28 27 26 25 24

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Printed in the U.S.A.

INTRODUCTION

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In Athens, nearly 2,500 years ago, one man set out to be the master of all reality. Aristotle surveyed what the men of his time had thought and questioned; he invented new instruments and modes of inquiry; and he devoted his life to codifying and rationalizing what was then the sum of human knowledge.

He worked within the severest limitations. He was an astronomer without a telescope, a biologist without a laboratory, a physiologist and psychologist without apparatus. He was a natural historian who had to rely for his data partly on hearsay and tradition, partly on the miscellaneous specimens and prodigies that reached him from the itinerant agents of Alexander the Great. In an age when written records were few, he devoted himself to placing phenomena in historical and causal perspective.

Aristotle was also among the first to study comparative government and to analyze the life history of institutions. In his attempt to relate the individual to the state, and education to law, he became an ethical theorist of prime importance. He was a literary and dramatic critic of rare insight and extraordinary influence. And underlying all these achievements was this: he was a logician of subtlety and strength, and a

searcher after the knowledge that transcends and exists independent of all other knowledge. He called this knowledge "first philosophy" or "wisdom," and it has since become known as metaphysics and often as theology.

Many of the questions Aristotle asked—about the nature of man and society, science and knowledge and art—are very much alive today. But it cannot be denied that some of the answers he gave are no longer valid. His aristocratic bias and his relative insularity now seem to vitiate some of his conclusions about ethical, social, and political goals, while his particular scientific conclusions have since been denied by fact and experience. The keystone of Aristotle's logic, the syllogism—which seemed to promise a steplike progression from the certain to the ascertainable—now has little real function, even though for centuries it was regarded as one of the more potent instruments of human inquiry. Similarly, Aristotle's doctrine of causes, which he considered his chief and distinctive contribution to philosophy, has lost its usefulness, even though its schematic and semantic beauty is still appealing.

Like Francis Bacon, who led the reaction against him, Aristotle could have proclaimed that he took all knowledge for his province. He left behind a true *summa*, a majestic structure which has aesthetic wholeness, the element of drama, and—in an age of specialized and fragmented knowledge—a certain emotional appeal. It is a body of knowledge and theory which for centuries dominated and shaped Western thought, which entered into the main intellectual tradition of Christianity, and which lies at the heart of some of the great expressions of Western genius. For Dante, Aristotle was "the Master of those that know"; for St. Thomas Aquinas, he was simply, and to the exclusion of all others, "The Philosopher."

Although his name is associated with Athens, Aristotle was a foreigner, a native of Stagira in Thrace, where he was born in 384 B.C. His father, Nicomachus, who died while Aristotle was young, was physician at the Macedonian court, and the

son's fortunes were always to be closely tied to those of the Macedonian rulers.

In 368/7 B.C., when he was about seventeen, Aristotle came to Athens to study with Plato at the Academy. He stayed there for twenty years. Unfortunately, little is known about the personal relationship between the two greatest thinkers of their time, the one bringing to a close a long, productive career, the other in his formative years. Aristotle is supposed to have had a sharp and bitter tongue, and this, together with his later criticisms of Plato, suggested to classical writers that he had broken with Plato and was ready to leave the Academy before the latter's death in 348/7.

That same year Philip of Macedon attacked Stagira. Nearly forty, his master dead and his ancestral home destroyed, Aristotle left Athens and the Academy. He was away for thirteen years. He probably taught for three years at Assos in Asia Minor, where he lived under the protection of the ruler Hermias, a former member of the Academy. There also he married Hermias' niece, Pythias, who bore him a daughter; by another woman, a native of Stagira, he was later to have a son, Nicomachus, for whom he named the *Nicomachean Ethics*. For another three years he lived at Mytilene, on the island of Lesbos, and then, at the invitation of King Philip, Aristotle came to the Macedonian court as tutor to the thirteen-year-old heir to the throne, the future Alexander the Great. From this association, which lasted about eight years, Aristotle gained not only firsthand experience of politics but also the friendship and protection of the man who was to be the most powerful ruler of his time.

After Alexander ascended to the throne in 336, Aristotle returned to Athens to enter upon the most productive phase of his career. He already had a considerable reputation as the brilliant protégé of Plato and the intimate of Alexander, and when he founded his own school in Athens it took precedence over the Academy. Situated in, and named after, a grove sacred to Apollo Lyceus and the Muses, Aristotle's Lyceum (like Plato's "Academy," the word "Lyceum" was to become a generic term for schools that would come after) consisted



of a Temple of the Muses, an altar, several lecture rooms, and a library and map room. These were surrounded by a large garden in which the masters and students walked while discoursing (hence members of the school are known as Peripatetics, from the Greek word *peripatein*, meaning "to walk about"). In the mornings, according to tradition, Aristotle lectured to the students; in the afternoons, the public was admitted to lectures on relatively easy subjects, such as rhetoric. Apparently more highly organized and comprehensive in its curriculum than the Academy, the Lyceum was close to being a university in the modern sense. Aristotle used it not only as a forum for the development and exposition of his philosophy but as a training ground for students who would carry on his program and methods of research.

Now a radical change in the political climate upset all his plans. To the rising nationalist party in Athens, Aristotle had always been suspect for his Macedonian connections, and his position became dangerous when Alexander the Great died in 323. A charge of impiety was brought against him, and remembering the fate of Socrates, Aristotle left Athens lest, as he is supposed to have said, the Athenians "sin twice against philosophy." He fled to Chalcis, where he died the following year at the age of about 62, supposedly of a stomach ailment aggravated by overwork.

It was chiefly through his students at the Lyceum rather than through his written work that Aristotle's thought remained alive and influential in the centuries immediately after his death. The more or less popular works—dialogues and treatises—which were circulated during his lifetime were lost, as were many of the collections he had made of material on history and natural science; these two categories of lost work we know of through lists and allusions in classical authors.

According to one traditional account, the works that survive today consist of manuscripts which were carefully guarded by Aristotle's friend and successor as head of the Lyceum, Theophrastus. Fearing that the anti-Macedonian

party in Athens might try to destroy the manuscripts, Theophrastus is supposed to have sent them off to Asia Minor where they remained hidden for 150 years.

In the first century B.C., a Greek edition was compiled by Andronicus of Rhodes, and this edition represents substantially the form and order in which we have Aristotle's writings today. But even with an accepted edition, the Western world—in which the knowledge of Greek became increasingly rare—continued to have little direct contact with Aristotle's writings, for it was not until the thirteenth century that they became generally available in Latin translations, and these Latin translations were often not from the Greek originals but from versions in Arabic.

Quite aside from the complexity of thought, Aristotle's writings present textual problems. Often fragmentary, repetitious, digressive, they are obviously not finished work, and since most of them probably date from the Lyceum period it has been conjectured that they represent Aristotle's notes for lectures or perhaps notes taken down by his listeners. It is fairly generally agreed now that the writings probably represent Aristotle's memoranda of lectures already given. Hence the alternation of eloquent and rough passages, the occasional self-contradiction, as Aristotle, trying to set down and systematize his teaching, continued to explore, reconsider, and revise.

After centuries of commentary and criticism, adulation, and even repudiation, it is difficult to read Aristotle freshly, or on his own terms. His medieval and scholastic commentators, for example, were almost exclusively concerned with the abstract and theoretical side of his program; and later, with the first stirrings of the modern scientific spirit, it was inevitable that there should be a bitter reaction against him. He was regarded as the enemy of the specific and concrete, a tyrant over thought, the embodiment of pointless speculation. "He did not consult experience as he should have done," Francis Bacon wrote in 1620; "but, having first determined the ques-



tion according to his will, he then resorted to experience and led her about like a captive in a procession.”

Yet if we go back to Aristotle himself, bypassing the commentators, we find that few philosophers have been as dedicated to the particular and the concrete, to empirical observation (although not, it is true, to applications). He made a detailed, lifelong study of animal and plant forms; his analysis of 158 Greek constitutions was the first compilation of its kind; he studied local records, including those of dramatic performances and even athletic competitions. In his hands, empirical investigation and the study of the individual form and function became goals in themselves, and this was a revolutionary innovation for his time.

Other schools of interpretation and criticism have tried to reconcile him with Plato, to emphasize the break with Plato, to reconcile him with Christianity—in short, to do everything with him but read him within the framework of his central purpose: to organize the knowledge and thought of his time into a significant unity, to relate all material phenomena, all motion and change, to a concept of order and unswerving purpose.

To do this he established broad working categories. Under the heading of the theoretic sciences he grouped metaphysics, mathematics, and physics. The goal of these sciences is knowledge for its own sake, for they deal with things we can only observe, that exist independent of human will. The special province of metaphysics, the science of first principles, was to examine the otherwise unquestioned bases of all knowledge.

Under the heading of the practical sciences—the purpose of which is not merely to know but to act in the light of knowledge—Aristotle grouped politics and ethics; these can be modified by human behavior. A third category, although Aristotle did not make explicit provision for it, can be called the productive sciences: poetry and rhetoric, for example. Here the purpose is not merely to know but to produce in the light of knowledge.

Of course this basic terminology has to be reconciled with

modern usage. The word "science" is used in its broadest sense of systematized knowledge, and we have to remember that we are likely to transpose Aristotle's classifications and think of physics as a practical science and ethics as a purely theoretic one. But once we have accepted Aristotle's broad divisions of knowledge, we can see the relationship in his work between the particular and the general, the observed phenomenon and the immutable principle. Then his universality and basic wholeness become apparent, the psychological marvel of this sweep and ambition within the mind of a single man.

The influence of both Plato and Aristotle has been so pervasive, their differences so heightened by commentators, that they have come to stand not only for divergent systems of thought but for polarities of temperament. We can be skeptical of the dictum that every man is born either a Platonist or an Aristotelian, but there is a very real tension between the two philosophies; and as the antitheses are popularly formulated, Aristotle—and the Aristotelian approach—seems to come off second best.

To many, Plato represents the lyrical, soaring imagination, while Aristotle represents investigation, prosaic and earth-bound. Plato seems inspired and inspiring, while Aristotle seems tied to an inflexible system and an unrelenting logic. One is a reformer, a prophet, and an artist, the other a compiler, an observer, and an organizer. Plato seems to represent the highest nobility of thought and aspiration; Aristotle seems content to accept and work within the day-to-day limitations of human behavior. Where Plato is mythic, plastic, sensuous, Aristotle is scientific, conceptual, analytic.

These conventional contrasts hardly do justice to Aristotle. For the modern reader he may be more difficult to approach than Plato because his text is not essentially literary and dramatic and because of the abstruseness of his first principles. Yet he offers his own unique and lasting rewards: directness of thought and expression; astounding nimbleness of analysis and reasoning; a dedication to tracing things from

their beginnings; a system which embraced, and attempted to unify, both science and philosophy. He impresses us not only by his pioneering ambition and scope, by his quest for unity, but also by the role he played in shaping Western thought. How far he succeeded in creating a philosophical system which has not only aesthetic and intellectual excitement but also pertinence to contemporary thought we can judge only by remembering his aims while we read his work.

—JUSTIN D. KAPLAN

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# PHYSICS



*Translated by R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye*



Together with mathematics and metaphysics, physics falls into Aristotle's category of the theoretic sciences, the goal of which is knowledge rather than action. Physics deals specifically with things which are both material and capable of motion and change. Such things come under the heading of Nature, which Aristotle defines in Book II.

In the *PHYSICS*, Aristotle presents the basic definitions and principles which, in other works (on meteorology and astronomy, biology and psychology), he applies to specific categories of natural bodies, both organic and inorganic. Although he acknowledges the role of chance and the spontaneous, his basic purpose is to rationalize motion and change, to relate them to a concept of an ordered universe.

Aristotle's prime instrument in reconciling particular phenomena and transcendent order is his doctrine of causes, which he considered his distinctive contribution to philosophy. All motion or change, he reasons, can be explained by one or more of the following four "causes": the *material* cause ("that out of which a thing comes to be and which persists, e. g., the bronze of the statue, the silver of the bowl"); the *formal* cause (the pattern or formula of the thing in question); the *efficient* cause

(the primary source of the change or coming to rest—the immediate stimulus or agent); and the *final* cause (the ultimate goal, “that for the sake of which a thing is done”). It should be remembered that only two of these, the efficient and the final, correspond to the normal way in which we now use the word “cause.”

# PHYSICS



## BOOK I

1. [*The scope and method of this book.*] When the objects of an inquiry, in any department, have principles, conditions, or elements, it is through acquaintance with these that knowledge, that is to say scientific knowledge, is attained. For we do not think that we know a thing until we are acquainted with its primary conditions or first principles, and have carried our analysis as far as its simplest elements. Plainly therefore in the science of Nature, as in other branches of study, our first task will be to try to determine what relates to its principles.

The natural way of doing this is to start from the things which are more knowable and obvious to us and proceed towards those which are clearer and more knowable by nature; for the same things are not “knowable relatively to us” and “knowable” without qualification. So in the present inquiry we must follow this method and advance from what is more obscure by nature, but clearer to us, towards what is more clear and more knowable by nature.

Now what is to us plain and obvious at first is rather confused masses, the elements and principles of which become known to us later by analysis. Thus we must advance from generalities to particulars; for it is a whole that is best known to sense perception, and a generality is a kind of whole, comprehending many things within it, like parts. Much the same