

POLITICAL THINKERS no. 7
General Editor: GERAINT PARRY

ARISTOTLE

John B. Morrall

GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN

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John B. Morrall

*Senior Lecturer in Political Science
London School of Economics and Political Science*

London
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POLITICAL THINKERS

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by D. D. Raphael

To
my wife Yvonne,
our sons Philip, Mark, Paul,
David and Andrew
and to my mother and brother

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Dr Morrall's concise study is the only account published in English during this century to be *exclusively* devoted to an interpretation of Aristotle's political thought (as distinct from commentaries, translations and works on Aristotelean philosophy in general). Its aim is to place Aristotle in his background of the Greek political experience – the first historical attempt to base politics on rational participation by the citizen body. The problems inherent in this attempt and Aristotle's proposed answers to them are, it is suggested, relevant to the perplexities of modern democratic society.

A special feature of the book is an extensive annotated bibliography which will be particularly useful to those wishing to pursue further specialised study of the subject.

John Morrall is Senior Lecturer in Political Science at the London School of Economics. He has taught and written on the history of political thought for over twenty-five years and is a specialist on the ancient and medieval sections of his subject. He is the author of numerous articles, and several important books, including *Church and State Through the Centuries*, *Political Thought in Medieval Times*, *The Medieval Imprint* and *Gerson and the Great Schism*.

Aristotle should be particularly suitable for the university student in Politics, History or Classics, as well as for the general reader who wishes to obtain a picture of the social and political thought of one of the intellectual giants of Western civilisation.

POLITICAL THINKERS
edited by Professor Geraint Parry
University of Manchester

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PREFACE

This version of the usual apology for the appearance of a new work on a familiar author might perhaps justifiably point to the relative absence of works in English during this century which aim at presenting the university student as well as the general reader with an overall conspectus of Aristotle's political thought. Compared with the case of Plato, the paucity of such general guidance is striking, and has frequently impressed itself upon the present writer in the course of a number of years of teaching the topic at university level. The last attempt at such a book (and indeed the only English attempt in this century) was made by Ernest Barker in 1908 and a lot of critical and scholarly water has flowed under many academic bridges since then. Even books purporting to provide general surveys of Aristotle's philosophy as a whole tend to give very short measure on his political theory. It would be presumptuous to hope that the present impressionistic sketch can be the magisterial work that is so badly needed in this field, but at least it can try to direct the attention of its presumed readers to what it conceives to be the main points of interest in Aristotle's approach to politics and to venture some evaluation of its contribution to human reflection on life in society.

Some may object to the overlong character of the two background chapters before Aristotle even appears on the scene. The procedure may be mistaken, but it is deliberate and is based on the opinion that Aristotle makes more political sense if his statements are read in the light of some knowledge of how the Greek tradition as a whole viewed political life and the problems arising from it. In particular the author makes no apology for devoting as much space as he could get away with to that great imaginative political thinker, Aeschylus, in the 2500th anniversary celebration of his birth.

The author owes many debts – to his family, his friends, colleagues and pupils, the whole process illustrating the charmed circle of reciprocity and friendship which for Aristotle formed the ideal basis for social life. He wishes to express his gratitude for the forbearance of the editor of the series in which the book appears, Professor Geraint Parry of Glasgow University, and of its publisher, Mr Charles Furth, from both of whom he received constant courtesy and consideration during the rather lengthy gestation of the book. He would wish to thank Dr Fred Rosen of the London School of Economics, and Mr Dale Hall of University College, Swansea, for stimulating help and suggestions which made for enlightenment, while he would also like to pay tribute to the helpfulness which his friend, Mr Geoffrey

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Thomas, showed in directing his attention to little-known literature on the subject which might otherwise have been missed, and in many cases making his burden easier by providing him with Xerox copies of it. He would not like either to forget what he has learnt from discussing the subject with pupils at University College, Dublin, and at the London School of Economics. He has learnt much from all.

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