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## INTRODUCTION

The essays which make up this yet another collection of New has striven to be – what its title Aristotle.

It is a philosophical compa its topic in a philosophical ma divine the various influences the historical origins of his ide is it primarily concerned to s intellectual context of his ag offer a philosophical exposi criticism of the theses and a ttle's writings.

Secondly, the *Companion* u sophical parts and aspects of A those parts and aspects which philosophical. The first chap about the man and his works, is very little about Aristotle about Aristotle as a man of sc whom the book is devoted. T works from our point of view author and of his contempor which he did not acknowledge are evident dangers in such cians which were plain to A disguise his original mode of mountable, nor is the enterpr

a legitimate interest in what Aristotle represents for us, as philosophers, now.

(And it may be worth observing that the term "philosophy," so far as the *Companion* is concerned, refers to what is sometimes called the analytical tradition of philosophy. Philosophers working in other traditions have studied Aristotle – there are, for example, Thomist interpretations of Aristotle and "continental" interpretations of Aristotle. The *Companion*, for wholly unpolemical reasons, does not address itself to these things.)

In principle, a work of this sort might be expected to have comprehensive aspirations: that is to say, the *Companion* might be expected to cover the whole of Aristotle's philosophy – or at any rate, most and the most important of his ideas. In practice, such aspirations cannot be realized within the covers of a single volume: the subject is too large, and too difficult. Too large: some aspects of Aristotle's thought which some philosophers would deem to be important have not been mentioned at all; and many points which many philosophers would consider important have been only lightly touched upon. Too difficult: comprehensive surveys of tough texts degenerate into superficial and unsatisfying summaries, and the *Companion* is intended to be a philosophical guidebook rather than a flat epitome: the contributors have sometimes chosen to labour hard in this or that area rather than skim softly over their whole domain. Nonetheless, the *Companion* claims to give a reasonably serious treatment of many of the most important aspects of Aristotle's philosophy.

The treatment is elementary. The *Companion* is intended for philosophical readers who are new to Aristotle. It is not a book for scholars who are already practised Aristotelians (they are too old for companions); nor, on the other hand, is it written for that fabulous creature, the general reader. It is for students, undergraduate and graduate, who have acquired – or would like to acquire – an incipient philosophical interest in Aristotle. The students are not supposed to know Greek or to have any prior acquaintance with Greek philosophy; and although they are assumed to be philosophy students (in a generous sense of the phrase), they are not supposed to be advanced philosophers. What they are supposed to be is determined and intelligent. For although the *Companion* purports to be introductory, it does not claim to be easy. Aristotle is a

difficult author and the subject if the *Companion* made no other claim, is a poor guide to Aristotle.

The contributors to the *Companion* are not urged to write about Aristotle's philosophy as if it were ephemeral things, and on any event, it is tedious to read Aristotle's philosophy if it is not written for novelty, and it is not in the *Companion* the place for innovations a preliminary center of attention presents are, in principle, most modern scholars in the regard as initially reasonable, them ultimately defensible.

This may read like a recipe, but it lacks the spice of scholarship. If we were given no room for polemics, we would have no room for readers to assess. But the editors of the *Companion* have not been too generous. The editors naturally adopted different methods and preferred different methods a time it becomes clear that the editors of interpretation. The editor has intervened. And this not merely a virtue, if it is a virtue at all.

Blandness is the vice of authors. If an author has avoided the vice, it certainly does not claim to serve up a good dinner. Whether or not there is an account of Aristotle's philosophy, the intention of producing such a book to Aristotle's philosophy, not to Aristotle's thought. I write this not as a reviewer, but as an honest advisor. I suppose that you read a chapter of Aristotle's philosophy suggested that Aristotle believed

If you turn over the page and say to yourself, "Oh, so Aristotle believed such-and-such or argued thus-and-so," then the *Companion* will have failed, and failed wretchedly. For you are meant, as you put the book down, to converse with yourself in the following sort of way: "Oh, so Aristotle is supposed to have believed such-and-such or argued thus-and-so. What an interesting - or perplexing, or perverse - thing to have thought. Might it be true? How best can it be defended (or attacked)? Should it perhaps be modified or qualified or otherwise embellished? Come to that, *did* Aristotle really mean exactly that? Perhaps a subtler version of the interpretation is possible? Perhaps a different interpretation altogether? Let me now look more nearly at Aristotle's own words and see what he actually says."

Well, no *Companion* will evoke such thoughts in every reader all the time; but if you never find yourself thinking in this way, then either you are not made for Aristotle or else you should return the *Companion* to the publisher and claim your money back.

Aristotle has not always had a good press. At some periods and in some quarters it has been urged that his influence on philosophy was malign. (And I recently heard a Nobel laureate assert - it was an assertion based on the most perfect ignorance - that Aristotle had a malign influence on the development of science.) Nonetheless, he has always been judged an important philosopher, and he has always been judged a difficult philosopher. And these twin judgments make it unastonishing that Aristotle's writings have been subjected, ever since antiquity, to profound and continuous critical attention. Learned articles and learned books, scholarly commentaries and popular accounts, philological inquiries and philosophical investigations, the products of solitary reflection and the proceedings of conferences and colloquia and symposia - scribble, scribble, scribble, for two thousand years, and never faster than in recent decades. No waste paper basket can keep up with the stuff.

Much of this secondary literature is without intellectual merit; indeed, it is produced for reasons that have little to do with the intellect. Yet the excellent material, though small in proportion, is comfortable enough in girth: a bibliography on Aristotle which included only eminent items would run to several hundred pages.

This luxuriant growth has had its pedagogical effect. At any rate,

students in many British universities seem to adopt - and are tacitly proach to Aristotle. First, you publish "Aristotelian topic": Aristotle says. Then you are given a "topic" article and books on the topic (the more recent the better). You scholar X takes issue with scholar Y. Glancing quickly at a passage in Aristotle, whether X retorted W and whether Y ended out (of course he didn't) you do this well enough, you do not on Aristotle's Doctrine of the students will try to decide whether X ended out.

This is no doubt a calumny. I am persuaded that it is not far from the truth. Articles on Y's criticisms of Aristotle. To be sure, such things are both a cause and a symptom of modern scholarly interest in Aristotle. In place in the academic economy, to advance our understanding of Aristotle, you should have no trouble finding an Aristotle.

For you will be interested in Aristotle. You think that X thinks that W is a trifling truth. If you are proud of Aristotle, then you are starting with Aristotle. Of course, if W is someone like Aquinas, then the interest in Aristotle is not in Aristotle. More on Aristotle says by reading Aristotle about Aristotle. And this is not always the temptation to read Aristotle. W is a lot easier to read than Aristotle. . . . But a truth it is to find it horribly difficult to see Aristotle like a tourist who travels with



a problem lies, the ability to tell a promising line of inquiry from a dead end, the gift for producing relevant arguments – were surely greater than those of Descartes. Here is reason enough to read Plato. But Plato's philosophical views are mostly false, and for the most part they are evidently false; his arguments are mostly bad, and for the most part they are evidently bad. Studying Plato will indeed make you realize how difficult philosophy is, and the study has a particular fascination and a particular pleasure. But it can also be a dispiriting business: for the most part, the student of Plato is preoccupied by a peculiar question – How and why did Plato come to entertain such exotic opinions, to advance such outré arguments?

What the admen call "knocking copy" is in poor taste. And of course, these comparisons could have been more subtly done. And of course, Descartes and Plato are both First Division philosophers. Nonetheless, Aristotle is incontrovertibly their superior. And this surely is an excellent reason – not an unsurmountable reason, but still a very excellent reason – for studying Aristotle, if you are concerned to study the history of philosophy at all.

And why study the history of philosophy at all? Chemists do not, as a matter of course, study the history of chemistry, nor do physicists study the history of physics; and yet all philosophy students are supposed to spend a substantial proportion of their time on the history of philosophy. Why so?

For the last several decades it has been fashionable to recommend the study of the history of philosophy – and hence of Aristotle in particular – along the following lines. "As philosophers, we are not primarily interested in history or in interpretation: if we read Aristotle's works, we read them as works of philosophy – we read them with the same goal and in the same spirit as we read the latest productions of the Cambridge University Press. After all, Aristotle was a distinguished philosopher; and he was working on the same problems as we are working on: perhaps his insights will enable us to solve the problems ourselves; surely they will enable us to see more clearly what the problems are and how they might best be tackled. Again, Aristotle's occasional lapses may be philosophically instructive: by noting how he failed to see something, we may sharpen our own vision. Moreover, where Aristotle's philosophical interests do not after all intersect with our own, even here there may be philosophical value for us: if he wrestles with a problem which no longer seems to

concern us, or if he passes lightly over a point which concerns us, the differences between us and him may lead us to reflect in a deeper fashion on the point in question.

This line of thought offers a strong case for studying Aristotle. It is certainly true that many of the proponents can point to cases in which the study of a modern philosopher has led a modern philosopher to new insights. (Two celebrated examples are the discovery of the concept of an intensional object and the development of the valued logic both depended on the study of Frege.) But although I am content to gaze into space or doodle on philosophical inspiration, I do not feel urged to study Aristotle on the grounds of such a philosophical reward.

On the one hand, if you study Aristotle and become involved in the details of his text, you will become involved in historical issues. (If such issues interest you, you are not a student of Aristotle.) On the other hand, if you study Aristotle on your own experience – , the more seriously you study Aristotle, the more philosophical problems themselves do not seem to do. On the other hand, the details of Aristotle's text do not encourage a dispassionate study. (If you care more about what Aristotle meant than about what he said, you are not a student of Aristotle.) Much of the work which students do on Aristotle is irrelevant to your ends. A study of a text may be more fruitful if you do an accurate study. (Brentano and Heidegger are good examples.) The philosophical justification for studying Aristotle is not a justification for studying Aristotle at all: it is a reason for pretending to study Aristotle.

4 I do not say that you will do it. It has befallen more than one scholar to study philosophy. Of course, not much has been published in the journals and books of recent history – of the subject



Thus the purely philosophical reason for the study of Aristotle is not to be urged. There is the only possible motive for studying Aristotle purely historical? After all, Aristotle is an historical figure, in studying his thought you are doing history, like it or not; and historical curiosity is far from an ignoble motive.

I have heard it said that philosophers ought to feel such historical curiosity, that it would be wrong for someone to study philosophical issues and yet have no interest at all in the way in which past philosophers had addressed these issues. This asseveration – which is presumably meant to convey a moral truth – seems to me to be as plausible as the parallel claim that biologists ought to feel historical curiosity about the work of past biologists. That is to say, the asseveration seems to me to be wholly implausible. I have also heard it said that philosophers *necessarily* feel a historical interest in their subject, philosophy – unlike biology or truffle-hunting – is in an important sense inseparable from its history, so that to be a philosopher is *ipso facto* to have an interest in the history of philosophy. This metaphysical asseveration can hardly be evaluated until it has been articulated with rather more clarity and precision. But it seems fairly clear that, however articulated, the claim will turn out to be false – for it will surely have the consequence that neither Gottlob Frege nor Ludwig Wittgenstein were philosophers. (And no philosopher will hold that neither of these great men did philosophy.)

Here is another asseveration. If you are a philosopher, then it is very likely that you will have an interest in the history of philosophy, or at least in the work of some of the more eminent figures in that history. If you are fascinated by philosophical questions, then you are likely to be fascinated by the way in which others have attempted to answer – and to formulate – philosophical questions. (And more particularly: if you are a philosopher working in a given tradition, then you are likely to be interested in the earlier representatives of the tradition.) This asseveration is not platitudinous; nor is it universally true. But I take it to be a truth, a general psychological truth.

“But suppose that I’m not an intellectual necrophiliac – suppose

- 3 And it has in fact led to much third rate work: secure in the knowledge that my aim is a philosophical aim, I allow myself to get away with shoddy scholarship, assured by the thought that I am, after all, a historian, I expect to get by with sloppy philosophizing.

that I don't have a taste for Aristotle or any other dead thinkers, unrewarding or frustrating or nice people who do not like me, people who cannot abide the thought, unfortunate; but they are why they should be forced to read. I have no taste, and can develop no pity. But it is not a sin; you gritted teeth and with rage in your eyes at all.

In 1831 Immanuel Bekker edited the first complete edition of Aristotle's works. 'Bekker's Aristotle' is the most authoritative and up-to-date text of Aristotle's works. There is a later and superior edition, inasmuch as scholars of Aristotle have since then preferred Bekker. Thus I might say: "Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* at HA A 6, 491a9–14 . . . ." I might also say: "Aristotle's *History of Animals*"<sup>1</sup>; then the book number, the Greek letter alpha and refers to the first book, the Arabic numeral "9" refers to the line number, column number, line number, and the four hundredth column on the four hundredth page.

Different scholars prefer different systems of reference. The systems used in the *Companion* are based on Bekker's system. I refer to books by numbers rather than by Greek letters; I do not refer to books at all; different editions of Aristotle's works have different chapter divisions, and I refer to sections rather than chapters. But Bekker will rarely be used in the study of editions of the Greek texts prior to 1831. I refer to books and articles virtually all books and articles. The most decent translations give the page number at the head of the page.

1. Scholars customarily speak of Aristotle's works as divided into books and the books as divided into chapters. The books correspond roughly to the chapters correspond roughly to the sections. The 2.1.1 section is the 2.1.1 section of the first book.

Bekker's Aristotle contains several works which are not by Aristotle himself: written by later (and unknown) hands, they found their way – for uncertain and no doubt various reasons – into the corpus of Aristotle's writings. It is customary to stigmatize the spurious with square brackets. Thus a reference to the *Problems* will normally read “[Aristotle], *Prob.*” rather than “Aristotle, *Prob.*”

Conversely, not quite all of Aristotle's genuine works are to be found in Bekker, for his lost works (that is to say, those of his works which did not survive antiquity and were unknown to the medieval manuscript tradition) have left scattered traces here and there – a reference, a description, a paraphrase, a quotation. Most of these “fragments” are short and insubstantial; they are standardly referred to by an Arabic numeral followed by the symbol “R” (the reference designates the number of the fragment in the third edition of Valentin Rose's *Aristoteles quae inservantur librorum fragmenta*, published in Leipzig in 1886. (There are often more recent and better texts than Rose's; but it remains convenient to use Rose numbers as references.) Substantial fragments of two lost works survive – perhaps. First, there is a text, nearly complete, of the *Constitution of the Athenians* (which many scholars ascribe to the “school of Aristotle” rather than to Aristotle himself); it was discovered on an Egyptian papyrus at the end of the last century; references give the sections into which the first editor divided the text. Secondly, many scholars believe that most of the *Protrepticus* has been preserved, in paraphrase, by the philosopher Iamblichus in his own work of the same name.<sup>2</sup> Here it is convenient to key references to the fullest edition of the texts, Ingemar Düring's *Aristotle's Protrepticus*, which was published in Göteborg in 1961.

Everything in Bekker's Aristotle, together with a generous selection of the “fragments” is translated into English in *The Complete Works of Aristotle* – the revised version of the “Oxford Translation”, edited by Jonathan Barnes and published in Princeton in 1984. There are many other good translations available, for most of Aristotle's works have been translated into English several times. Every translation translates, and even the best translations contain errors. Readers who are not able to check an English version against the original Greek are not, however, entirely helpless: checking one English

version against another will often detect errors of infelicity, even if it will not reveal errors of the infelicity avoided.

In the following table the first column lists the titles of Aristotle. Spurious items are marked with an asterisk. The column indicates which Bekker edition the title refers to. The second column gives the abbreviation used in this edition.

Some scholars use Latin titles for Aristotle's works in modern language: here I have used English, with two Latin exceptions. I have used Latin, where said, prefer different abbreviations. The table is a hutchpotch, sometimes abridging, sometimes a Latin. These minor inaccuracies are, I think, pleasing; but they should not be

<i>Categories</i>	Ca.
<i>de Interpretatione</i>	Int.
<i>Prior Analytics</i>	Pr.
<i>Posterior Analytics</i>	Post.
<i>Topics</i>	To.
<i>Sophistical Refutations</i>	So.
<i>Physics</i>	Ph.
<i>On the Heavens</i>	He.
<i>On Generation and Corruption</i>	Ge.
<i>Meteorology</i>	Me.
* <i>On the Universe</i>	Un.
<i>On the Soul</i>	So.
<i>Sense and Sensibilia</i>	Se.
<i>On Memory</i>	Me.
<i>On Sleep</i>	Sl.
<i>On Dreams</i>	Dr.
<i>On Divination in Sleep</i>	Di.
<i>On Length and Shortness of Life</i>	Li.
<i>On Youth, Old Age, Life and Death</i>	Yo.
<i>On Respiration</i>	Re.
* <i>On Breath</i>	Br.
<i>History of Animals</i>	Hi.

<sup>2</sup> Iamblichus lived from about A.D. 245 to about A.D. 325.

<sup>3</sup> Book 10, and perhaps other parts.

<i>Parts of Animals</i>	639-697	PA
<i>Movement of Animals</i>	697-704	MA
<i>Progression of Animals</i>	704-714	IA
<i>Generation of Animals</i>	715-739	GA
* <i>On Colours</i>	791-799	Col
* <i>On Things Heard</i>	800-804	Aud
* <i>Physiognomonics</i>	805-814	Physiog
* <i>On Plants</i>	815-830	Plant
* <i>On Marvellous Things Heard</i>	830-847	Mirab
* <i>Mechanics</i>	847-858	Mech
* <i>Problems</i>	859-967	Prob
* <i>On Indivisible Lines</i>	966-972	Lin. Insec
* <i>The Situations and Names of Winds</i>	973	Vent
* <i>On Melissus, Xenophanes and Gorgias</i>	974-980	MXG
<i>Metaphysics</i>	980-1093	Met
<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>	1094-1181	NE
* <i>Magna Moralia</i> <sup>4</sup>	1181-1213	MM
<i>Eudemian Ethics</i>	1214-1249	EE
* <i>On Virtues and Vices</i>	1249-1251	VV
<i>Politics</i>	1252-1342	Pol
* <i>Economics</i>	1343-1353	Econ
<i>Rhetoric</i>	1354-1420	Rhet
* <i>Rhetoric to Alexander</i>	1420-1447	Rhet. ad Alex
<i>Poetics</i>	1447-1462	Poet

## ABBREVIATIONS

An	<i>On the Soul</i>
An.Post	<i>Posterior Analytics</i>
An.Pr	<i>Prior Analytics</i>
Aud	* <i>On Things Heard</i>
Coel	<i>On the Heavens</i>

<sup>4</sup> Book K - 11 probably spurious

<sup>5</sup> But some have argued for authenticity.

Cat	<i>Categories</i>
Col	* <i>On Colours</i>
Div.Somn	<i>On Divination</i>
Econ	* <i>Economics</i>
EE	<i>Eudemian Ethics</i>
GA	<i>Generation of Animals</i>
GC	<i>On Generation</i>
HA	<i>History of Animals</i>
IA	<i>Progression of Animals</i>
Insomn	<i>On Dreams</i>
Int	<i>de Interpretatione</i>
juv	<i>On Youth, Old Age</i>
Lin.Insec	* <i>On Indivisible Lines</i>
Long.Vit	<i>On Length and Shortness of Life</i>
MA	<i>Movement of Animals</i>
Mech	* <i>Mechanics</i>
Mem	<i>On Memory</i>
Meteor	<i>Meteorology</i>
Met	<i>Metaphysics</i>
Mirab	* <i>On Marvellous Things Heard</i>
MM	* <i>Magna Moralia</i>
Mund	* <i>On the Universe</i>
MXG	* <i>On Melissus, Xenophanes and Gorgias</i>
NE	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>
PA	<i>Parts of Animals</i>
Phys	<i>Physics</i>
Physiog	* <i>Physiognomonics</i>
Plant	* <i>On Plants</i>
Poet	<i>Poetics</i>
Pol	<i>Politics</i>
Prob	* <i>Problems</i>
Resp	<i>On Respiration</i>
Rhet	<i>Rhetoric</i>
Rhet.ad Alex	* <i>Rhetoric to Alexander</i>
SE	<i>Sophistical Refutations</i>
Sens	<i>Sense and Sensibilia</i>
Somn	<i>On Sleep</i>
Spizn	* <i>On Breath</i>
Top	<i>Topics</i>
Vent	* <i>The Situations and Names of Winds</i>
VV	* <i>On Virtues and Vices</i>

## 1 Life and work

## 1. ARISTOTLE'S PERSONA

Did Aristotle sport a beard? Ancient busts show a venerable figure: a long face, a deep brow, a full beard. On the other hand, an ancient biographer writes that Aristotle had small eyes; he wore fashionable clothing; he shaved.<sup>1</sup> The evidence can be read in two ways: youthful Aristotle was a flashy character, whereas the Aristotle who posed for the busts was 'old [and perhaps a trifle dull]'. But such a reading is unprincipled; for it misunderstands both the evidence and the philosophers were supposed to sport beards as part of their profession. Hence a bust of Aristotle is like a man given a fine beaver, whatever Aristotle's actual appearance. Again, ancient biographies are not always reliable; but if they are crude stews, the rare gold nuggets of reliable and bias inference and unshakable authority are few. I credit Aristotle with a beard on the basis of the busts.

The state of Aristotle's chin is not the only detail of his appearance of interest; but what goes for his beard goes for his hair. For we know very little about his body. The ancient sources offer us various pieces of information, but not much, and most of what we are

<sup>1</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers*, 5.27.

<sup>2</sup> Diogenes' *Life of Aristotle* runs to 100 chapters, more than ten are devoted to biography. The *Life of Aristotle* are even shorter. — Allan Döring, *Aristotle in the Ancient World*, 1988, p. 10.

should we be tempted to draw inferences of a personal nature from Aristotle's philosophical works. such inferences are rarely reliable, and Aristotle's writings are in any case uncommonly impersonal.

But a few personal documents do survive: a couple of poems, one of them in praise of Plato, snippets from letters, a few of which may just possibly be genuine; and Aristotle's will. The text of the will is apparently authentic, and although it is in several places difficult to follow and difficult to translate, the general drift is clear. I quote it here in full: it needs no commentary.<sup>3</sup>

All will be well; but should anything happen, Aristotle has made the following provisions:

Antipater is to be executor in all matters and in perpetuity, but until Nicanor<sup>4</sup> arrives, Aristomenes, Timarchus, Hipparchus, Droteles, and Theophrastus (if he is willing and able) are to take care of the children and of Herpyllis<sup>5</sup> and of the estate.

When my daughter comes of age, they are to marry her to Nicanor, and should anything happen to her (may it not in so, and it surely will not do so) before her marriage or after she has married but before there are any children, then Nicanor is to be responsible for administering the affairs of my son and the others in a fashion worthy both of himself and of us. Let Nicanor take care both of my daughter and of my son Nicanachus in whatever way he judges appropriate to their situation, as though he were both father and brother to them.

If anything should happen to Nicanor before this (may it not do so, either before he has taken my daughter or after he has taken her but before there are any children, then if he has made any arrangements, let these take effect. If Theophrastus wishes to live with my daughter, let the same provisions stand as with Nicanor; if he does not, then the executors are to consult with Antipater and administer the affairs both of my daughter and of my son in whatever way they think best.

The executors and Nicanor, remembering me and Herpyllis and how good she was to me, are to take care of everything – and in particular, if she wants to take a husband, they are to see to it that she is given away in a fashion not unworthy of us. In addition to what she has previously been

given, they are to give her a tale of women servants, if she wishes, and iron Pyrrha. If she wants to live in the garden, if in Stagira the far wants, the executors are to furnish and satisfactory to Herpyllis.

Nicanor is also to take care of the a fashion worthy of us to his own pings which we received. They are marriage of my daughter, five han has. They are also to give Thale, in one who was bought), a thousand from the money which has already are either to buy him a slave or to the marriage of my daughter, as are not sell any of the slaves who serve come of age, set them free as they

They are to take care too that Gryllin are completed and set up (which I intended to commission), and of Aristonestus which is already con since he died childless. They are t Demeter in Nemea or wherever see

Wherever they make my grave th too, just as she instructed.<sup>8</sup> And N prayed for on his behalf) is to set up Zeus the Saviour and Athena the Sa

#### II. ARISTOTLE'S LIFE

He was born in 384 BC, in the south of Greece. His father, Nicomachus, was sent to King Amyntas of Macedonia. Aristotle was born in his own right.

In 367 he moved to Athens, where he joined an intellectual circle which centred on Plato. He began to teach some philosophy as a boy in Stagira.

<sup>3</sup> The will is found in Digenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* V. 1–16, see also below, pp. 175–196.

<sup>4</sup> The Macedonian governor of Athens.

<sup>5</sup> Aristotle's adopted son.

<sup>6</sup> Aristotle's second wife.

<sup>7</sup> Aristotle's uncle.

<sup>8</sup> Pythias was Aristotle's first wife.

Plato's philosophical dialogues, and maybe he moved to Athens precisely in order to study philosophy with Plato. But there is no positive evidence for these easy suppositions. Nor do we know exactly what Aristotle found at Athens.

Plato was a celebrated figure – perhaps a controversial figure. His fame had attracted intellectuals from abroad, and the Platonic circle – “Plato's Academy” – included some of the most eminent philosophers and scientists of the age. The circle met, either at Plato's house or in the public gymnasium of the Academy. There were discussions. And there was teaching. For the Academy was also in some sense a school, (and there was a keen rivalry between it and the establishment which the orator Isocrates had set up for the political education of the Athenian youth). Aristotle may properly be called a student at the Academy insofar as he received teaching there, and in addition the Academy may have had some of the features of a modern club – senior and junior membership, officers, regular meetings, dinners. But we may not imagine the Academy as a University or a College: in particular, we may not think of formal syllabuses and formal lecture-courses, of examinations and degrees.

He stayed in Athens for the next twenty years, always associated with the Academy, and he surely spent much of his time in listening to philosophers and scientists, and eventually in writing and teaching himself. It is reasonable to suppose that the Academicians debated the matters which Plato discussed in his dialogues – ethics and political theory, psychology, metaphysics and epistemology and logic. In addition, we know that Plato encouraged the study of mathematics and of astronomy. And there is some reason to think that other, less abstract, sciences were not excluded.

Plato died in 347, and Aristotle left Athens. Why he left is uncertain, but political reasons have been hypothesized. Aristotle had Macedonian connexions, and the Athenians are reported (on admittedly dubious authority)<sup>11</sup> to have set up an inscription in his honour, thanking him in particular for intervening with the king of Macedonia in their interest. But in 347 the northern town of Olynthus

9 For the earliest evidence for these features refers to the period after Plato's death.

10 *An Ancient Life of Aristotle*, see Düring, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

had just fallen to the Macedonian party in Athens, led by the orator. Aristotle was not – then a situation may have been delicate.

However that may be, he went, demurely, to Atarneus, on the coast of the “Aegean” of the place, had connexion appears to have been a small town. Hermias welcomed Aristotle, and he went to the town of Assos to live in, where he met together in a courtyard “all they needed”<sup>12</sup> Aristotle was and when, in 341, Atarneus was tortured to death, Aristotle was

From Atarneus Aristotle moved to the island of Lesbos. There he met who was to become his most important pupil. It is supposed that he devoted part of his time to the study of marine biology.

After Mytilene, a brief period of exile. Philip II, King of Macedonia invited Aristotle to the court of his son, Alexander.<sup>13</sup> Thus began the most powerful mind of the age and the most excited the romantic imagination. But what Aristotle said to Alexander, we do not know. (It is in vain to look for a will find nothing – or virtually nothing – in his writings which betrays interest in the Macedonian empire.)

In 335 Aristotle returned

11 The report comes from the Epicurean philosopher Philodemus, or his sources, but may nevertheless be true.

12 Theophrastus too was invited to the court, whom Alexander later

flourishing under a new head; but Aristotle preferred to set up an establishment of his own, and while the Platonists walked and talked in the Academy, Aristotle did the same in the Lyceum.

A dozen years later Alexander the Great died, and shortly afterwards, in 322, Aristotle left Athens. He did so, he allegedly said, "in order that the Athenians might not commit a second crime against philosophy"<sup>13</sup> in order that they might not condemn him to death as they had condemned Socrates to death. It is a pretty story, and doubtless fabricated. Yet a second story, equally pretty, is perhaps true. A letter from Aristotle to Antipater, which may conceivably be genuine, contained this sentence: "As for the honour which was voted me at Delphi and on which I have now been stripped, I am neither greatly concerned nor greatly unconcerned."<sup>14</sup> We happen to know what the honour was; for an inscription, dating from about 330, has been discovered at Delphi in which Aristotle (and also Callisthenes) are "praised and crowned".<sup>15</sup> The inscription was found in fragments, at the bottom of a well. On Alexander's death, anti-Macedonian sentiment ran high and was vividly expressed. Aristotle had close and overt connexions with Macedonia. At Delphi they stripped him of his honour and chucked the honorary inscriptions down a well. And perhaps the atmosphere at Athens again encouraged Aristotle to remove.

At all events, he retired to Chalcis, on the island of Euboea, where his mother's family had estates. And there, within a twelvemonth, he died.

The Lyceum survived him, as the Academy had survived Plato. Theophrastus became the head of the school.

### III. ARISTOTLE'S WRITINGS

So much for Aristotle's external life. What of the inner man? What can be said in the way of *intellectual* biography? What, in particular, is known of his philosophical personality and his philosophical development? Let us start by asking, crudely enough, what he wrote. Three of the ancient *Lives* of Aristotle contain catalogues of his writings; and I shall reproduce the list transmitted by Diogenes

13 Aelian, *Varia Historia* III 36.

14 Fragment 628 R – Aelian, *Varia Historia* XIV 1.

15 See e.g. Dürtenberger, *Sylloge* 275.

Laertius. The original source of these lists is uncertain, but they come ultimately from the Lyceum. The exact contents of the list of the great library at Alexandria is uncertain. It is not complete, and it includes some celebrated surviving works. It certainly includes some spurious items. It includes a number of titles which the same work may be included under different names. It is self offers – and for the most part it is worth reading.

He wrote a vast number of books, and it is because of the man's excellence in writing that he is remembered.

[A] On Justice, 4 books; On Politics, 2 books; On Rhetoric, 3 books; On Sophist, 1 book; Menaxenus, 1 book; On Wealth, 1 book; Protreptics, 1 book; On Good Birth, 1 book; On Education, 1 book.

[B] Alexander, or On behalf of the King, 1 book; On Education, 1 book; On the Good, 1 book; Excerpts from the Republic, 1 book; On being attacked or on being attacked, 1 book.

[C] On the Sciences, 2 books; On the Soul, 2 books; Sophistical Disinctions, 4 books; On the Soul, 1 book; On Properties, 1 book; Propositions on Virtue, 1 book; On the Soul, 1 book; In many ways or by addition, 1 book.

[D] On Feelings or On Anger, 1 book.

[E] On Elements, 3 books; On Knowledge, 1 book.

[F] Disinctions, 16 books; Division of the Sciences, 1 book; On Motion, 2 books; On the Soul, 1 book; Syllogisms, 1 book.

[G] Analytics, 2 books; On Problems, 1 book.

[H] Meteorology, 1 book; On Ideas, 1 book.

[I] Syllogisms, 2 books; Syllogisms and

16 The text is found in Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* II 27. I have translated the titles of the Diogenes' text; but the group of titles is not uniform. It should be noted that it is not a complete list, and sometimes unclear in its printing.



and on accidents, 1 book; Pre-Topics, 1 book; Topics aimed at definitions, 3 books; Feelings, 1 book; Division, 1 book; Mathematics, 1 book; Definitions, 13 books; Arguments, 2 books; On Pleasure, 1 book; Propositions, 1 book.

[C] On the Voluntary, 1 book; On the Noble, 1 book.

[D] Theses for arguments, 23 books; Theses on love, 4 books; Theses on friendship, 2 books; Theses on the soul, 1 book.

[E] Politics, 2 books; Lectures on Politics (like those of Theophrastus), 8 books; On Just Acts, 2 books.

[F] Collection of Arts, 2 books; Art of Rhetoric, 2 books; Art, 1 book; Art (another work), 2 books; Mechanics, 1 book; Collection of the Art of Theudectes, 1 book; Treatise of the Art of Poetry, 2 books; Rhetorical Enchymemes, 1 book; On Grandeur, 1 book; Division of Enchymemes, 1 book; On Diction, 2 books; On Advice, 1 book; Collection, 2 books.

[G] On Nature, 3 books; Physics, 1 book; On the Philosophy of Anaximander, 3 books; On the Philosophy of Spinoza and Xenocrates, 1 book; Excerpts from the Timaeus and from the works of Anaximander, 1 book; On Melissus, 1 book; On Alcibiades, 1 book; Against the Pythagoreans, 1 book; On Gorgias, 1 book; On Xenophanes, 1 book; On Zeno, 1 book; On the Pythagoreans, 1 book.

[H] On Animals, 5 books; Dissections, 8 books; Selection of Dissections, 1 book; On Composite Animals, 1 book; On Mythological Animals, 1 book; On Sterility, 1 book; On Plants, 1 book; Physiognomies, 1 book; Medicine, 2 books.

[I] On Unes, 1 book; Storm Signs, 1 book; Astronomy, 1 book; Optics, 1 book; On Motion, 1 book; Memory, 1 book.

[J] Homeric Problems, 6 books; Poetics, 1 book.

[K] Physics (physically ordered), 38 books; Additional problems, 2 books; Standard problems, 2 books; Mechanics, 1 book; Problems from Democritus, 2 books; On the Magnet, 1 book; Conjunctions of Stars, 1 book; Miscellaneous, 12 books; Explanations (arranged by subject), 14 books.

[L] Claims, 1 book; Olympic Victors, 1 book; Pythian Victors in Music, 1 book; On Music, 1 book; On Pythia, 1 book; Use of Pythian Victors, 1 book; Victories at the Dionysia, 1 book; On Tragedies, 1 book; Theatrical Records, 1 book; Proverbs, 1 book; Rules for Messing, 1 book; Laws, 4 books.

[M] Categories, 1 book; On Interpretation, 1 book.

[N] Constitutions of 158 States (arranged by type: democratic, oligarchic, tyrannic, aristocratic).

[O] Letters to Philip; Letters about the Selymbrians; Letters to Alexander (2), to Antipater (3), to Mentor (2), to Aristo (2), to Olympias (2), to Heghæstron (1), to Theastagoras (1), to Philoxenus (1), to Democritus (2).

[P] Poems, beginning: "Hilly mountains . . ."; Elegies, beginning: "Dear . . .".

The bulk, as Diogenes insists, is 150 items, running in all to some 1500 items, perhaps, of about six thousand more or less. The bulk is the range.

As it survives, the catalogue has no evident ordering. The vestiges of an original ordering proposed on the text are not wholly clear, in Group [A], with what Diogenes calls "youthful works", at least some of which Group [B] has no evident homology. Group [C] has a coherent set of logical titles, but is not logical in content, logic (thus a part of the items in the list. With Group [D] we can connect the titles in Group [C] with the titles in Group [E] which Diogenes thus accounts for less than 10% of the list. Group [E] belongs either to logic or to ethics (Diogenes); and in the latter case we can connect Group [E] with Group [F], on the history of ethics. Group [G] is rhetoric and poetic. Groups [H] and [I] deal with science. In Group [J] are Aristotle's public works. Group [K] is the history of Aristotle's public works.

The surviving works, some 100 in all, are listed on modern pages.<sup>17</sup> We therefore have a list of works which the catalogue knows as Aristotle's total oeuvre inasmuch as it lists all his works as *On the Soul*, the *Parva Naturalia*, and contains only a small number of titles which contain major areas of study we know of from a few hints elsewhere. Thus Aristotle's *On the Soul* and *On the Pythian Victors* and *On the Dionysia in Athens* – representative of his search, and his 158 *Constitutions*.

<sup>17</sup> The revised Oxford translation of Aristotle's works, including the fragments, but this list is not complete.

<sup>18</sup> Nor does it contain the *Metaphysics*, which Diogenes represents individual books or parts.

were a formidable exercise in descriptive political science.<sup>20</sup> Nonetheless, our modern corpus represents most of Aristotle's main interests and all of his main philosophical interests. The amount of space which the corpus allots to different subjects may not be proportional to the space and time which Aristotle actually devoted to those subjects; but it is reasonable to believe that the corpus does not wildly misrepresent Aristotle's interests and achievements.

Whence came our corpus? There was a story current in antiquity which told a romantic tale about Aristotle's library: Theophrastus inherited it on Aristotle's death; it then passed to Theophrastus's nephew Nleus, who took it to a cove called Scepsis in Asia Minor, where he hid it away in a cave. Two centuries later the manuscripts were rediscovered, moulding and worm-eaten. They were transferred first to Athens and then to Rome, where the Peripatetic philosopher Andronicus eventually prepared an edition.

There is a modern story which carries the tale further. For two centuries after Theophrastus's death, Aristotelianism had little or no philosophical influence; for the essential documents were buried in Scepsis and not to be read. Then the edition of Andronicus returned Aristotle to the world: the sun rose, and the philosophical world was warm and light again. And the Aristotle which we read – "Bekker's Aristotle"<sup>21</sup> – derives directly from Andronicus.

The ancient story may be true, in whole or in part – it is hard to decide whether to be sceptical about Scepsis. But the modern story should be dismissed. The ancient story does not state or imply that Aristotle's works disappeared for two centuries: it says only that his books disappeared. Private individuals probably, and the Lyceum at Athens surely, preserved copies or reports of at least some of his works; and it is fanciful to believe that his thought was simply forgotten. It is true that, after Theophrastus, the Peripatetic school suffered a decline; but there is no reason to explain this by the Scepsis story – nor is it true that once Andronicus had done his work Aristotle immediately resumed his rightful position in the sky.

20 The *Constitution of the Athenians* is preserved not in the manuscript tradition, but on a papyrus which chanced to survive in an Egyptian rubbish-pit. Most scholars suppose that Aristotle did not write the *Constitutions* himself – he may have edited some general supervision, but they were surely the work of his pupils. There is little evidence for this suggestion.

21 Above, p. 202

The edition of Andronicus, also reasonable to think that of his. What did Andronicus do? edition – differ from what Aristotle roughly put, is probably thus: works which we now read.

I do not mean that Andronicus wrote many actual sentences in the sense of putting them together and of Theophrastus into appropriate subjects.<sup>22</sup> We read in eight books. The catalogue in the *Topics* (but it does contain a book), which surely answers to *Species* (1 book) may correspond to 100 v. For 100 1–2 we perhaps *Topics* (1 book) and perhaps a might derive from *Topics ante* *Questioning and Answering* (2 these items together and turned

Any specific suggestions of the tive; but it is reasonable to a speculatively illustrate. And a way in which we read Aristotle form a more or less unified picture posed by Andronicus – and was intended by Aristotle himself. the *Topics* – or any other treat Aristotelian unity.

How did Andronicus dare to of the material which he edited these questions, starting from metrics.

Several ancient authors praised it lacking in polish. There but the rest is rough. The rough

22 So Porphyry, who cited Andronicus the works of his master. Platon

love Aristotle's thought, you will come to love his style), but it is undeniable: the syntax is spare, ornamentation is rare, transitions are abrupt, and connections opaque: the language rarely seems to have been chosen with any aesthetic aim, and often enough the intellectual aim is hard to discern – reading Aristotle, as the poet Thomas Gray put it, is like eating dried hay. Did Aristotle's ancient admirers really admire this stuff? Perhaps not; for their judgments of Aristotle's style probably referred to his "exoteric" and not to his "esoteric" works.

The distinction in Aristotle's works between the esoteric and the exoteric is an ancient one. Roughly speaking, the exoteric works were supposed to have been written for a broad public: they were serious, but they were not tough and technical – and they were no doubt written with style and elegance. None of these works has survived, and of them we can form only a partial and frustrating impression from the few fragments which have by chance been preserved. By contrast, the esoteric works were technical things, made for the use of philosophers and for use within the school: they were not "written up for publication" and they were not given a literary polish – indeed, they were not literary texts at all. All Aristotle's surviving works are esoteric in this sense.

Modern scholars have offered a further gloss on the esoteric. The surviving works, it is commonly said, are lecture-notes: they are the notes which Aristotle jotted down and then lectured from (and in some cases perhaps they are notes taken down by his pupils).<sup>43</sup> This idea fits snugly with the notion of the esoteric; for Aristotle's lectures, and hence any lecture notes, will have been paradigmatically esoteric – things "within the school." The idea also explains why Aristotle's works are so abrupt and unliterary; for you do not think of your lecture notes as publishable prose. Again, it explains why there are relatively few illustrations and almost no jokes: such things get added in the lecture room – only bad lecturers write down their witticisms in advance.

Most interestingly, the idea explains the various inconsistencies and incongruities which have been discovered – or imagined – in

<sup>43</sup> Several examples of this sort of thing survive from late antiquity. Thus what we refer to as Ammonius's *Commentary on Aristotle's Prior Analytics* is in fact a record of Ammonius's lectures taken down and preserved by his pupils.

Aristotle's works. For lecture-notes their contents emended and added. By the time he died, Aristotle's lectures on ethics a dozen times betrayed the fact: there will have been the first version of the lecture have been overwritten in numerous passages will have been maintaining an entirely different been modified in more subtle ways qualified to meet objections; or additions which reinforce rather text) and so on. And there will thing, the text of the first revision. . . Moreover, Aristotle lie material as it became dated ultimately, the texts which will blets": both X and Y will be prior to supplant rather than to supplant.

The idea is seductive, but it Aristotle taught and worked in century professor of philosophy the idea with tongue.

Or perhaps we may embrace perilous supposition? Consider the Aristotelian "doublets". In sometimes a passage X is introduced which says pretty well the same Now Aristotle is normally spare himself; the tempting hypothesis versions of the same sentences the other. It is difficult to be sure are see a palpable repetition, or and intended differences which were intended to stand together find it hard not to think that some doublets.

In that case, Aristotle certainly allow that revisions took place

inescapable – to look for other evidence of revision. For doublets can hardly be the only manifestation of second or third thoughts. Sometimes, for example, a sentence will seem to have been spliced inelegantly into the text: remove the sentence and everything reads more smoothly. So perhaps Aristotle added the sentence in a later revision. Often Aristotle will support a contention not by one argument but by a sequence of considerations. Such sequences easily lend themselves to expansion; and in some cases a turn in the wording or a quirk in the argumentation raises the suspicion that this or that consideration was added to the sequence after it had first been composed.<sup>24</sup>

These facts do not support the seductive idea that Aristotle's surviving writings were lecture-notes; but they do suggest that the writings were, by and large, working drafts – and this suggestion itself has all the explanatory powers of the seductive idea.

These thoughts have an important bearing on the topic to be discussed in the next section. Here let me return to Andronicus. We may reasonably suppose that he aspired to produce a systematic edition of Aristotle's thoughts. To hand he had various manuscripts, some of them perhaps Aristotle's own autographs, and others of them later copies. The texts were evidently not literary texts, but rather working drafts; and although some of the papers may have been grouped together into a book or a treatise, many of them were short and unattached. Andronicus made a selection (on what criteria?) some of the selected papers he grouped together as successive parts of a single work; and he edited a collection of treatises. Some of the items in the collection remained very slight, others were substantial. Some were internally cohesive, others relatively loose. Andronicus will hardly have modified the content of Aristotle's views; and it is plain that he did not tamper much with the style. But no doubt he did a small amount of editorial work: he probably added some cross-references, and he may have interpolated an occasional sentence to link one essay in a treatise to its successor.

All this is fascinating enough in its own right. It also has some philosophical importance. You cannot read Aristotle in the way in which you might read Plato or Descartes or Kant, when you pick up

<sup>24</sup> The various books of the *Topics*, say, would have lent themselves to frequent revision of this sort, since for much of their length they simply assemblable different argument-forms.

the *Metaphysics* or the *Nicomachean Ethics*. You are reading a finished philosophical text, not a working draft. It is not proper to assume that you are picking up a set of working drafts. In any case, you are not reading Aristotle in the manner in which you would expect a philosopher had written for his own use. The arguments are often supplied by the missing premisses, often implicit; you must articulate them. The arguments are often supplied by the missing premisses, often implicit; you must articulate them.

It is difficult to read a text in this way. There are dangers, disciplinary interpretation – and then into a more systematic form. And there really is

#### IV. ARISTOTLE'S PHILOSOPHY

Did Aristotle view all or most of his works as systematic? Or was he a systematic thinker, a systematic philosopher, a systematic philosopher? "Aristotelianism"?

For centuries these questions were answered affirmatively – and you were the system of thought. Twentieth-century philosophers preferred what seems to be a more modest answer. It is a mere truism that Aristotle works in the same way, and that he perhaps even downright contradicts himself in the works and within the works. The question "Can you prove that Aristotle works in the same way?" is a mere truism that Aristotle works in the same way, and that he perhaps even downright contradicts himself in the works and within the works. The question "Can you prove that Aristotle works in the same way?" is a mere truism that Aristotle works in the same way, and that he perhaps even downright contradicts himself in the works and within the works.

<sup>25</sup> Rough modern parallels might be drawn with Wittgenstein.

attempted, more audaciously, to write a history of his intellectual development. Instead of a static and systematic Aristotle, we have a dynamic figure.

The modern conclusion, that Aristotle's philosophical ideas must have developed and that the surviving works represent different strata of his thought, will no doubt seem blindingly obvious – surely every philosopher's thought develops and leaves traces of its development in his writings? And as an abstract thesis – as the formal claim that Aristotle sometimes changed his mind – it can scarcely be denied. Yet it has proved surprisingly difficult to make the abstract concrete and to add matter to the form – to describe the actual development of Aristotle's ideas.

The pioneer of "developmental studies" was the German scholar Werner Jaeger. His book *Aristotle – Fundamentals of His Development*, which was first published in German in 1934, determined the course of Aristotelian scholarship for half a century. Jaeger started from two facts about Aristotle's career: first, the fact that Aristotle was Plato's pupil and spent some twenty years as an apprentice in the Academy; secondly, the fact that after Plato's death, Aristotle immersed himself in empirical studies, and notably in detailed biological research. Thus Aristotle moved from Platonism to empiricism. As a young man in the Academy, he fell under the philosophical influence of Plato – how could he not have done? And for a while he embraced Platonism, transcendent ideas and all – how else might the young man have reacted? As he matured he gradually came to find Plato's metaphysical notions less than satisfactory. Methodological reflection and the actual practice of philosophizing led him more and more in the direction of empiricism: of an empirical method, which gave observation the authority over theory, and of an empiricist epistemology, which insisted that all our concepts and all our knowledge must ultimately be based on the data of perception. This empiricism was confirmed during his scientific interlude in the eastern Aegean, where he was preoccupied by his zoological studies. When he returned to Athens and to philosophy, the empiricism stuck – and it marked the whole of his thought, most notably his political theorizing.

Holding in mind this general thesis, which postulates a move from Platonism to empiricism, Jaeger then scrutinized the surviving works. The thesis allowed him to date them (or their parts) relatively

to one another: if A is more empiricist than B, then A is more Platonist than B, then A must have been arranged in chronological order. This thesis may be enlarged into a specific thesis: the works may be arranged in chronological order in the order in which he wrote them. This is an intellectual biography in living colours.

Most scholars have taken Jaeger's thesis and have accepted not only the general thesis but also the details with which Jaeger himself supported it. Jaeger's general thesis is roughly right, but many scholars disagree over the dating of this or that work. Empiricism to be found here and there, and the dislike not only Jaeger's details but also the general thesis they nevertheless applaud his method. Aristotle was an Angry Young Man, but he was a master's metaphysics and advanced empiricism. Later mellowed and reflected and discovered that Platonism was not so bad after all. From Platonism to empiricism.

For my own part, I am mildly sceptical. It is entirely reasonable to think that Aristotle's views changed: perhaps they did, perhaps they simply changed, and it is not possible to establish with some certainty what bit of text was written before or after. If we are in a position to say more about Aristotle's intellectual biography thus far, it is not because we served to command general's

There are good reasons for scepticism about Aristotle's youthful attitude. He was profoundly influenced by his teacher, Plato, steeped in Plato's thought – Plato's writings and to Plato's ideas. Some of them implicit; there are passages in the *Republic* and the *Laws*; there are passages in which Plato's views are evident. The puzzle is that the last two

moved by Platonic notions about mathematics), and – more vaguely but more importantly – whole areas of Aristotle's philosophical interests were shaped and determined by Plato's philosophical interests. Aristotle's debt to Plato is not in doubt. But it was not merely a youthful debt – for these loans were never repaid or repudiated, nor was its currency belied – for the passages in question do not show Aristotle up as a Platonist, as an adherent of Plato's main doctrines.

What matter in the present context are Aristotle's early writings: these survive only in a few fragments, and the fragments do not contain enough to show what sort of a philosopher the young Aristotle was; in particular, they prove neither that he was a Platonist nor that he was not a Platonist. (Indeed, it is usually difficult to be sure how accurately these "fragments" report Aristotle's own words; and even when it is reasonably plain that Aristotle wrote this or that particular sentence, it is likely that the sentence will be open to two or three incompatible and equally plausible interpretations.) It is still possible that some of these early works will be recovered – on a forgotten library shelf or in the sands of Egypt. But until that splendid event, we had better remain silent about the earlier part of Aristotle's career.

A second reason for scepticism concerns the dating, whether absolute or relative, of the surviving works. There is very little to go on. None of Aristotle's works was explicitly dated by its author,<sup>26</sup> nor does any external source date any of them for us. There are no diaries or letters to tell us about Aristotle's moods and habits of composition.<sup>27</sup> There are, it is true, several references in the works to historical events, and an historical reference of this sort offers us, in principle, a *terminus post quem* – that is to say, it fixes the *earliest* date at which the work containing it could have been written. Thus if the *Posterior Analytics* casually refers to a battle which took place in a certain year, we shall be inclined to infer that the *Posterior Analytics* was written between that year and Aristotle's death. But references of this sort are in fact surprisingly rare; and in any case, inferences from them – for reasons which should already be clear – are far from reliable. Even if we made all the possible inferences and

<sup>26</sup> Aristotle could have dated his works – Epicurus dated many of his.

<sup>27</sup> Contrast the case of Cicero, whose surviving letters tell us an enormous amount about how and when he wrote his philosophical works.

treated them all as reliable, we could establish a chronology of Aristotle's works.

It might be said, with some justice, that the chronology matters from a philosophical point of view, but it is important to interpret Aristotle's philosophy. It is important to know whether the *Nicomachean Ethics* was written before or after the *Nicomachean Ethics*. It is important to know that one was written in 350 B.C. and the other in 340 B.C. It may seem as if we possess a good method for the relative dating of Aristotle's works – we refer to his own writings – and we quite often say, "I have already read Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* in such a place" or else "I shall do so in such a place." These internal cross-references are useful relative to one another: if A refers to B, B is written before A; and if A refers to C, C is written after A.

But the cross references are not always reliable. We collect and compare the references, and find them inconsistent – they imply that A is written before B, but the vast majority of them are inconsistent. They look for all the world as if they were inserted either by Aristotle himself or by some other person. The "chronology" which they suggest is not the "chronology" which Aristotle composed them. He or his editor supposed that the works were written in the order in which they are now. Most scholars now agree to date the texts in which they are found.

What other evidence might we have for the chronology? Sophisticated methods have been used to what is called "stylometry": the analysis of the average number of letters in words is not self-conscious lying. It is a method which is not self-conscious lying with linguistic facts which no linguist might consider, and which no stylometrist might consider, as being different works, or the average of many works.

<sup>28</sup> *Rhetorica* refers back more than 100 times to the *Nicomachean Ethics*. It is listed from its context without any reference to the scholar who has taken these particular passages from their composition.

a participle, or the spread of particles and prepositions and conjunctions.) Suppose, then, that the "style" of A turns out to be markedly different from the "style" of B. (A's sentences are on average considerably longer than B's; A has a decided penchant for one or two particles which are rare in B; and so on.) Then one plausible explanation of this difference will be that A and B were written at different periods. And if a third work, C, can be shown to lie between A and B in these stylistic dimensions, then it will become tempting to hypothesize that C was written between A and B.

Stylometry makes use of computer searches and it employs subtle statistical tests. For these reasons it has attracted several cranks and repelled many scholars. But there is no doubt that it is, in general, a potentially serious business. Here, the question is whether it has a serious application to Aristotle's works. And there are I think, reasons for giving the question a moderately pessimistic answer – reasons which I shall postpone for a paragraph or two.

Traditional scholars have traditionally appealed to "philosophical" rather than to "stylistic" arguments, arguments which tend to run somewhat on the following lines: Suppose that A is inconsistent with B, or that A addresses the same issue as B but in a different fashion – then A is later than B provided that A is more mature than B. Now in its most general form, this sort of argument is quite hopelessly crude. For the judgment that A is "more mature" than B is disquietingly subjective; and the assumption that as philosophers grow older they "mature" – and mature in a more or less linear fashion – needs only to be stated to be biased off the stage. There is a restricted version of the argument which seems rather more promising. Suppose that A solves a problem which B left unsolved – then A is later than B. Or rather (to avoid any indeterminacy or subjectivity of judgment): Suppose that B says, "Here is a problem which I can not solve, viz. . . ." while A says, "I have now solved the old problem, thus . . ." In such a case we may surely date A after B. No doubt – but our "philosophical" argument now has virtually no practical utility; for there are virtually no Aristotelian texts which pair off in the way the restricted version of the argument requires.

Is there no hope for a *via media* between the hopelessly crude and the uselessly impractical? There is; and in a few cases it seems to me that tolerably plausible arguments are available. But these few cases are indeed few.

There is a third general reason for being pessimistic about these hypotheses. I have already referred to the fact that Aristotle's surviving writings underwent various revisions and modifications. One might well wonder when Aristotle's morning's work? After a week's work? After a month's work? After a year's work? And we might equally wonder when his evening's work? These are real enough questions, and they cannot be answered except by speculation and conjecture. But the question of Aristotle's chronology should say the presumed fact that Aristotle's works underwent the question of Aristotelian chronology.

Suppose that work A was first written in 335, and work B was written ten years later, lightly retouched and revised. Suppose that work C was written a decade later. Suppose that work D was written fully in 335, looked at again a decade later, and revised. Well, which was written first, A or B? The question of Aristotle's chronology of Aristotle's writings is a difficult one. On grounds that the first version of A will you put B before A (on the grounds that the first version of B was later than A)? Or is the definitive version of B was later than A? Clearly, you will say neither of these things. It is absurd to talk about chronology of Aristotle's texts were subject to revision and modification. It makes no sense to ask whether A is later than B. It makes no sense to attempt to date Aristotle's writings.<sup>29</sup>

For these reasons, then, I do not want to advocate anything as definite as a chronology of Aristotle's works, and there, as I have said, we can only hope for a *via media* which have a certain plausibility. The arguments which are not without philosophical interest are that the core of the theory of Aristotle's

29. Of course, Aristotle's writings do not include neither the sentence "The physics" nor the sentence "The physics" but even one or two before Met B" and "Met B was simply too late for our tradition that it is too late even for the





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