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Sketches Of The History Of Man

In Two Volumes

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Chap. I. Of the First Three Treatises.

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A Brief Account of ARISTOTLE'S LOGIC.
With REMARKS.

C H A P. I.

Of the First Three Treatises.

SECT. I. *Of the Author.*

Aristotle had very uncommon advantages: born in an age when the philosophical spirit in Greece had long flourished, and was in its greatest vigour; brought up in the court of Macedonia, where his father was the King's physician; twenty years a favourite scholar of Plato, and tutor to Alexander the Great; who both honoured him with his friendship, and supplied him with every thing necessary for the prosecution of his enquiries.

These advantages he improved by indefatigable study, and immense reading. He was the first we know, says Strabo, who composed a library. And in this the Egyptian and Pergamian kings, copied his example. As to his genius, it would be disrespectful to mankind, not to allow an uncommon share to a man who governed the opinions of the most enlightened part of the species near two thousand years.

If his talents had been laid out solely for the discovery of truth, and the good of mankind, his laurels would have remained for ever fresh: but he seems to have had a greater passion for fame than

than for truth, and to have wanted rather to be admired as the prince of philosophers, than to be useful: so that it is dubious whether there be in his character most of the philosopher, or of the sophist. The opinion of Lord Bacon is not without probability, That his ambition was as boundless as that of his royal pupil, the one aspiring at universal monarchy over the bodies and fortunes of men, the other over their opinions. If this was the case, it cannot be said, that the philosopher pursued his aim with less industry, less ability, or less success, than the hero.

His writings carry too evident marks of that philosophical pride, vanity, and envy, which have often sullied the character of the learned. He determines boldly things above all human knowledge; and enters upon the most difficult questions, as his pupil entered on a battle, with full assurance of success. He delivers his decisions oracularly, and without any fear of mistake. Rather than confess his ignorance, he hides it under hard words and ambiguous expressions, of which his interpreters can make what pleases them. There is even reason to suspect, that he wrote often with affected obscurity, either that the air of mystery might procure greater veneration, or that his books might be understood only by the adepts who had been initiated in his philosophy.

His conduct towards the writers that went before him has been much censured. After the manner of the Ottoman princes, says Lord Verulam, he thought his throne could not be secure unless he killed all his brethren. Ludovicus Vives charges him with detracting from all philosophers, that he might derive that glory to himself, of which he robbed them. He rarely quotes an author but with a view to censure, and is not very fair in representing the opinions which he censures.

The faults we have mentioned are such as might be expected in a man, who had the daring ambition to be transmitted to all future ages, as the prince of philosophers, as one who had carried



every branch of human knowledge to its utmost limit; and who was not very scrupulous about the means he took to obtain his end.

We ought, however, to do him the justice to observe, that although the pride and vanity of the sophist appear too much in his writings in abstract philosophy, yet in natural history the fidelity of his narrations seems to be equal to his industry; and he always distinguishes between what he knew and what he had by report. And even in abstract philosophy, it would be unfair to impute to Aristotle all the faults, all the obscurities, and all the contradictions that are to be found in his writings. The greatest part, and perhaps the best part, of his writings is lost. There is reason to doubt whether some of those we ascribe to him be really his; and whether what are his be not much vitiated and interpolated. These suspicions are justified by the fate of Aristotle's writings, which is judiciously related, from the best authorities, in Bayle's dictionary, under the article *Tyrannion*, to which I refer.

His books in logic which remain, are, 1. One book of the Categories. 2. One of Interpretation. 3. First Analytics, two books. 4. Last Analytics, two books. 5. Topics, eight books. 6. Of Sophisms, one book. Diogenes Laertius mentions many others that are lost. Those I have mentioned have commonly been published together, under the name of *Aristotle's Organon*, or *his Logic*; and for many ages, Porphyry's Introduction to the Categories has been prefixed to them.

SECT. 2. *Of Porphyry's Introduction.*

In this Introduction, which is addressed to Chrysoarius, the author observes, That in order to understand Aristotle's doctrine concerning the categories, it is necessary to know what a *genus* is,

is, what a *species*, what a *specific difference*, what a *property*, and what an *accident*; that the knowledge of these is also very useful in definition, in division, and even in demonstration: therefore he proposes, in this little tract, to deliver shortly and simply the doctrine of the ancients, and chiefly of the Peripatetics, concerning these five *predicables*; avoiding the more intricate questions concerning them; such as, Whether *genera* and *species* do really exist in nature? or, Whether they are only conceptions of the human mind? If they exist in nature, Whether they are corporeal or incorporeal? and, Whether they are inherent in the objects of sense, or disjoined from them? These, he says, are very difficult questions, and require accurate discussion; but that he is not to meddle with them.

After this preface, he explains very minutely each of the five words above mentioned, divides and subdivides each of them, and then pursues all the agreements and differences between one and another through sixteen chapters.

SECT. 3. *Of the Categories.*

The book begins with an explication of what is meant by univocal words, what by equivocal, and what by denominative. Then it is observed, that what we say is either simple, without composition or structure, as *man*, *horse*; or, it has composition and structure, as, *a man fights*, *the horse runs*. Next comes a distinction between a subject of predication; that is, a subject of which any thing is affirmed or denied, and a subject of inherence. These things are said to be inherent in a subject, which although they are not a part of the subject, cannot possibly exist without it, as figure in the thing figured. Of things that are, says Aristotle, some may be predicated of a subject, but are in no subject; as,



man may be predicated of James or John, but is not in any subject. Some again are in a subject, but can be predicated of no subject. Thus, my knowledge in grammar is in me as its subject, but it can be predicated of no subject; because it is an individual thing. Some are both in a subject, and may be predicated of a subject, as science; which is in the mind as its subject, and may be predicated of geometry. Lastly, Some things can neither be in a subject, nor be predicated of any subject. Such are all individual substances, which cannot be predicated, because they are individuals; and cannot be in a subject, because they are substances. After some other subtilties about predicates and subjects, we come to the categories themselves; the things above mentioned being called by the schoolmen the *antepredicamenta*. It may be observed, however, that notwithstanding the distinction now explained, the *being in a subject*, and the *being predicated truly of a subject*, are in the Analytics used as synonymous phrases; and this variation of style has led some persons to think that the Categories were not wrote by Aristotle.

Things which may be expressed without composition or structure, are, says the author, reducible to the following heads. They are either *substance*, or *quantity*, or *quality*, or *relatives*, or *place*, or *time*, or *having*, or *doing*, or *suffering*. These are the predicaments or categories. The first four are largely treated of in four chapters; the others are slightly passed over, as sufficiently clear of themselves. As a specimen, I shall give a summary of what he says on the category of substance.

Substances are either primary, to wit, individual substances, or secondary, to wit, the genera and species of substances. Primary substances neither are in a subject, nor can be predicated of a subject; but all other things that exist, either are in primary substances, or may be predicated of them. For whatever can be predicated of that which is in a subject, may also be predicated of the
subject

subject itself. Primary substances are more substances than the secondary; and of the secondary, the species is more a substance than the genus. If there were no primary, there could be no secondary substances.

The properties of substance are these: 1. No substance is capable of intension or remission. 2. No substance can be in any other thing as its subject of inherence. 3. No substance has a contrary; for one substance cannot be contrary to another; nor can there be contrariety between a substance and that which is no substance. 4. The most remarkable property of substance, is, that one and the same substance may, by some change in itself, become the subject of things that are contrary. Thus, the same body may be at one time hot, at another cold.

Let this serve as a specimen of Aristotle's manner of treating the categories. After them, we have some chapters, which the schoolmen call *postpredicamenta*; wherein, first, the four kinds of opposition of terms are explained; to wit, *relative*, *privative*, of *contrariety*, and of *contradiction*. This is repeated in all systems of logic. Last of all we have distinctions of the four Greek words which answer to the Latin ones, *prius*, *simul*, *motus*, and *habere*.

SECT. 4. *Of the book concerning Interpretation.*

We are to consider, says Aristotle, what a noun is, what a verb, what affirmation, what negation, what speech. Words are the signs of what passeth in the mind; writing is the sign of words. The signs both of writing and of words are different in different nations, but the operations of mind signified by them are the same. There are some operations of thought which are neither true nor false. These are expressed by nouns or verbs singly, and without composition.

A



A noun is a sound which by compact signifies something without respect to time, and of which no part has signification by itself. The cries of beasts may have a natural signification, but they are not nouns. We give that name only to sounds which have their signification by compact. The cases of a noun, as the genitive, dative, are not nouns. *Non homo* is not a noun, but, for distinction's sake, may be called a *nomen infinitum*.

A verb signifies something by compact with relation to time. Thus, *valet* is a verb; but *valetudo* is a noun, because its signification has no relation to time. It is only the present tense of the indicative that is properly called a verb; the other tenses and moods are variations of the verb. *Non valet* may be called a *verbum infinitum*.

Speech is sound significant by compact, of which some part is also significant. And it is either enunciative, or not enunciative. Enunciative speech is that which affirms or denies. As to speech which is not enunciative, such as a prayer or wish, the consideration of it belongs to oratory, or poetry. Every enunciative speech must have a verb, or some variation of a verb. Affirmation is the enunciation of one thing concerning another. Negation is the enunciation of one thing from another. Contradiction is an affirmation and negation that are opposite. This is a summary of the first six chapters.

The seventh and eighth treat of the various kinds of enunciations or propositions, universal, particular, indefinite, and singular; and of the various kinds of opposition in propositions, and the axioms concerning them. These things are repeated in every system of logic. In the ninth chapter he endeavours to prove, by a long metaphysical reasoning, that propositions respecting future contingencies are not, determinately, either true or false; and that if they were, it would follow, that all things happen necessarily,