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## Preface

Aristotle is himself the best introduction to what Aristotle thought and meant. Reading and rereading is, indeed, the only introduction to the writings of a philosopher, or a poet, or a scientist, whose influence on the vision, thought, and comprehension of mankind has been long and complex. In attentive reading, each line, each argument, and each structured part serves in turn as introduction to what is read next, and each reconsideration deepens and enriches the conception and interpretation of what is successively or recurrently encountered and fitted into place. Aristotle's influence on men's thought has been variegated. There have been many interpretations of his philosophy in the past, and many are current today. This introduction to Aristotle is not an interpretation. It is a selection from the writings of Aristotle, in which Aristotle speaks for himself about philosophical problems and basic ideas, methods, and distinctions used in treating them. It is left to the reader to judge for himself whether Aristotle has made use of what he has said about methods to relate the various parts of his work to each other. The reader is given the means and the matter to form his own interpretation and the opportunity to use that interpretation as a basis for speculating and for inquiring further into philosophic problems and into Aristotle's influence on their formulation and treatment.

Nine selections are presented in their entirety, unaltered, and uncut: four complete treatises, the *Posterior Analytics*, *On the Soul*, the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and the *Poetics*; complete books from three other treatises, one book from the *Physics*, two from the *Metaphysics*, and two from the *Politics*; and selected chapters from two treatises, the first chapter of Book I of *On the Parts of Animals* and the first four chapters of Book I and Chapters 18–22 of Book II of the *Rhetoric*. The nine introductions which precede these nine selections from Aristotle's work place them in their contexts by using Aristotle's distinctions to relate the ideas treated in one work to their meanings and applications in others, to distinguish the method used on a particular subject from methods proper to other subjects, and to locate the works themselves within the structure that Aristotle forms for the arts and sciences and for experience and knowledge. The General Introduction sets forth basic ideas, methods, and distinctions which Aristotle expounds and applies in the course of his philosophic inquiry and presentation, and places Aristotle's work in his times, relates it to the work of his predecessors as Aristotle interpreted them, and sketches the shifting forms of later Aristotelianism and anti-Aristotelianism.

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