

The Categories of Aristotle

by

W. J. Stein*

ONLY A FRAGMENT of the works of Aristotle has been handed down to us. This powerful master of the art of human thinking transmitted his philosophy by word of mouth to his disciples. When reading these works one realises at once by their abrupt style, that they are copies by the students of the Master's dictation. The essence of his teaching had thereby been preserved for posterity, but one regrets the loss of a wealth of detail in the transmission. Through Plutarch who was still in a position to consult Alexander the Great's Diaries, we learn that Aristotle initiated a small circle of students into esoteric secrets, which were not intended for the public.

In Plutarch's biography we find a letter written by Alexander reproaching the master for giving away esoteric teaching. Aristotle replies that a published secret remains a secret, until the initiation of true discipleship can divine it. In the following exposition, this will be seen to apply also to Aristotle's teaching of the Ten Categories. Only through recognition of their esoteric meaning can the true secret be unveiled.

When Alexander who was to become "The Great" was born, Aristotle was on the island of Samothrace. It was one of the Mystery Centres with which Aristotle was closely associated. This sanctuary played a great part in the destinies of the Royal Macedonian family. It was here that Olympias Alexander's mother, met Philip for the first time.

It was an old custom that boys and girls, having reached the age of puberty, should proceed to the island in a procession of garlanded boats to receive the "initiation of youth." This was a ritual in which they dedicated themselves to the eternal formative forces which have created the world and which, on a higher level, recreate in man an inner world. With profound knowledge, Goethe, in his *Faust* mentions these mysterious gods of form, associated with the cult of the Cabiri.

It was at this ceremony that Philip met Olympias. The child of their marriage was Alexander. Aristotle was closely connected with the Macedonian family, as is proved by a letter from Philip asking the philosopher to become his son's tutor.

At this sacred sanctuary, on the mountainous island, Aristotle awaited news of the birth of this eagerly awaited child. It happened on February the Sixth, 356 B.C., and that night the sky was illuminated by a double flare. At the Temple of Samothrace on its lofty height, Aristotle was making sacrifice to the Gods, when from the mountain tops on the coast blazed

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forth the fire signals which announced the birth of a royal son. On the opposite coast of Asia Minor another fire coloured the sea to the far horizon. The Temple and Library of Ephesus were in conflagration. The Temple, which was a Mystery Temple, and the Library which contained all the sacred wisdom and tradition of the East collected during long periods of time, was burnt to ashes to that nothing remained.

Herostratus, the incendiary, had committed this crime with the ambitious intent that his name should be famous down the ages. Through crazy personal ambition the sacred traditions of the East were to be completely destroyed.

Aristotle as he beheld the two fires, understood that an old world had been consumed in flames and a new world was announced in the birth of this child.

It was during this fateful night that Aristotle decided that all the oriental mythology which had just been destroyed over in Asia Minor must be preserved. The LOGOS could no longer be transmitted as a picture, as divine imagination, but in a new form—as HUMAN THOUGHT. And this Renaissance would happen in the boy's soul, in the soul of the newborn son of a King.

Later, when the priests of the Eleusinian Mysteries learnt about this experience of Aristotle, they explained its significance to their pupils as a world-historic moment.

It was not simply as a conquering general that Alexander was destined to travel from Mystery Temple to Mystery School in Asia, but as a disciple of wisdom, greeted by the Hierophants as son of god. That is, as a soul conscious of its relationship to the Eternal.

Plato was the last philosopher of the grand mythological epoch; Aristotle stood between the old and the new. Alexander was the first pupil of the new epoch.

Rudolf Steiner once explained to his pupils, how during the fiery night which marked the birth of Alexander, Aristotle formulated within his own mind the transmutation of the Ancient Gods into Ten Categories representing THOUGHT.

Whereas antiquity spoke of CHRONOS, of ZEUS, of the TITANS, Aristotle substituted Time, Space, and Substance. Chronos became Time, and Zeus Space. To-day we still use the word "chronology" to indicate the order of time. Just as Chronos while an entity, is seen devouring its own children, and as Time devouring every minute, so Zeus belongs to space. Homer calls him "Gatherer of Clouds" because he collects them, of every form out of space. The rainbow is also attributable to his organisation. He manifests in the dawn and sunset, in thunder and lightning. Zeus is the organising entity of the forces of space.

The death of these gods was due to the fading of the imagination which had once visualised them. It was through Aristotle that they were transformed and preserved to posterity. This he did by implanting them in Alexander's consciousness as concepts of space and time.

With this mental wealth the Conqueror set out, not to found an Empire, but to re-create the world-conception of Hellenism.

Hellenism is a world-conception in which clairvoyance has given way to intellectual understanding of the world's secrets. Ideas and ideals have replaced the gods, and preserve the secrets of their divine world to a later epoch when the gods will reawake.

Alexander the Great's purpose was to collect and preserve these divine secrets, through the dark ages. For this reason Alexander went from Temple to Temple, collecting the last relics of the fading clairvoyant wisdom, transforming them into the Aristotelian philosophy. This he could do, without any disloyalty to his Master's teaching.

Plato did not discriminate in his teaching public and esoteric lectures, but like an artist, gave away the secrets in symbolic form. An instance of this method is illustrated in the Symposium where he does not say openly that Socrates is the god Silenus or that Plato himself is the human guise of Dionysos. He infers this and many other things, not only in the Symposium but in all his Dialogues.

Aristotle impressed upon Alexander that History is not only made by human beings, but by the Higher Forces acting through the human being. As an example of this he made a special edition for him of Homer's Iliad, explaining how the gods let the events leading to the Trojan War. Paris abducted Helen who was not merely a beautiful woman but also a priestess of the moon-goddess (Selene).

The Trojan War belongs to a time in which clairvoyance still existed. The civic consciousness was centered in the Temple of the Moon-Goddess. Helen was called after this goddess, for Helen and Selene are the same word. Therefore the carrying off of Helen resulted in her Greek City being deprived of guidance, for the statue of the goddess, the Priesthood, the tradition, and the wisdom were removed at the same moment.

The object of the Trojan War was to bring back this clairvoyant knowledge to Greece. But during the ten years of war clairvoyance had been replaced by a gradually increasing force of intellect. This Intellectual Force was to evolve during the following centuries, and reached its height in Aristotle's philosophy. The dawn of this intellectual culture is represented by Agamemnon, Menelaus, and the shrewd Odysseus. For the loss of Helen forced them to develop their own human intelligence.

The story of Troy tells us how the gods refused wind to the Greek fleet. . . . Why? Because the destruction of Troy meant the destruction of clairvoyance which knew that he stood on the spot where once Paris had stood. This figure of Paris was familiar to him through the special interpretation by Aristotle of Homer's Iliad. He knew that it was owing to Paris that clairvoyance had departed from Greece, leaving the field clear for the growth of Intelligence. At this moment he recognised his own identity with that of Paris for which the teaching of

Aristotle had prepared him.

With his inner knowledge, it was natural that he should turn away from the tomb of Paris, when it was pointed out to him as a suitable place of sacrifice. Instead, he went straightaway to the grave of the enemy of Paris, and laid his wreath upon the tomb of Achilles. Plutarch tells us how he annointed the pillar upon the tomb with oil, and "ran around it with his friends, naked, according to the custom that obtains; after which he put a crown upon it. . . ." Asked whether he would like to see Paris' lyre, he answered: "I set but little value upon the lyre of Paris; but it would give me pleasure to see that of Achilles, to which he sang the glorious actions of the brave."

This is an allusion to the ninth book of the Iliad, in which Homer described how:

"The godlike man they found,
Pleased with the solemn harps' harmonious sound;
With these he soothes his angry soul, and sings
Th'immortal deeds of heroes and of Kings."

How different is Homer's world from that of Aristotle:

In Homer's description of the Trojan War, gods intermingle with human beings. In the time of Aristotle the gods have withdrawn into the sanctuaries, they live only in the esoteric lessons. They are preserved in the Aristotelian Categories, transmuted into thoughts.

The Divine WORD has created a world anew. Clairvoyance has been relegated to vision. The Cosmological Visions have disappeared because the LOGOS has left the Cosmos, and come down to Earth to be embodied in Human guise. The coming of Christ is foretold, He comes down to the earth in the steps of the ten categories.

