

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

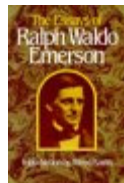
THE PEOPLE OF A WEEK:

ARISTOTELES OF STAGEIROS



"[Aristotle](#) and [Plato](#) are reckoned the respective heads of two schools. A wise man will see that Aristotle Platonizes."

— [Waldo Emerson](#), "Circles"
in ESSAYS: 1ST SERIES, 1841



**“NARRATIVE HISTORY” AMOUNTS TO FABULATION,
THE REAL STUFF BEING MERE CHRONOLOGY**



THE PEOPLE OF A WEEK:

ARISTOTELES OF STAGEIROS

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

A WEEK: As in geology, so in social institutions, we may discover the causes of all past change in the present invariable order of society. The greatest appreciable physical revolutions are the work of the light-footed air, the stealthy-paced water, and the subterranean fire. Aristotle said, "As time never fails, and the universe is eternal, neither the Tanais nor the Nile can have flowed forever." We are independent of the change we detect. The longer the lever the less perceptible its motion. It is the slowest pulsation which is the most vital. The hero then will know how to wait, as well as to make haste. All good abides with him who waiteth **wisely**; we shall sooner overtake the dawn by remaining here than by hurrying over the hills of the west. Be assured that every man's success is in proportion to his **average** ability. The meadow flowers spring and bloom where the waters annually deposit their slime, not where they reach in some freshet only. A man is not his hope, nor his despair, nor yet his past deed. We know not yet what we have done, still less what we are doing. Wait till evening, and other parts of our day's work will shine than we had thought at noon, and we shall discover the real purport of our toil. As when the farmer has reached the end of the furrow and looks back, he can tell best where the pressed earth shines most.

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THOMAS STANLEY
ARISTOTLE

A WEEK: The eye which can appreciate the naked and absolute beauty of a scientific truth is far more rare than that which is attracted by a moral one. Few detect the morality in the former, or the science in the latter. Aristotle defined art to be Λόγος τοῦ ἔργου ἄνευ ὕλης, **The principle of the work without the wood**; but most men prefer to have some of the wood along with the principle; they demand that the truth be clothed in flesh and blood and the warm colors of life. They prefer the partial statement because it fits and measures them and their commodities best. But science still exists everywhere as the sealer of weights and measures at least.

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ARISTOTLE



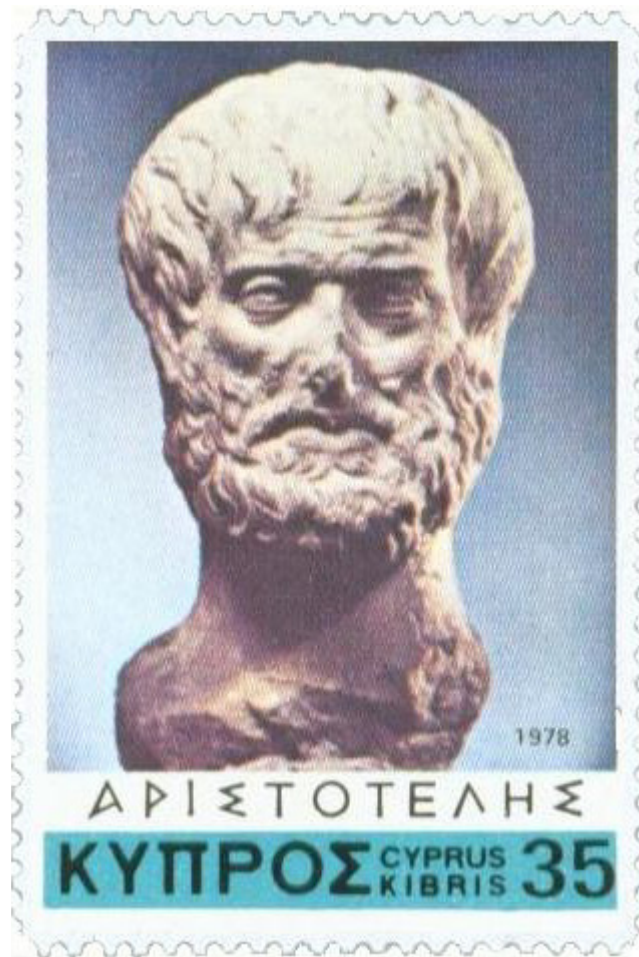
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384 BCE

Aristotle (Aristoteles) was born in the city of Stageiros (Stagira) in Macedonia, son of Nichomachus, the personal physician to the King Amyntas of Macedon who would become the grandfather of Alexander the Great.



NOBODY COULD GUESS WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT





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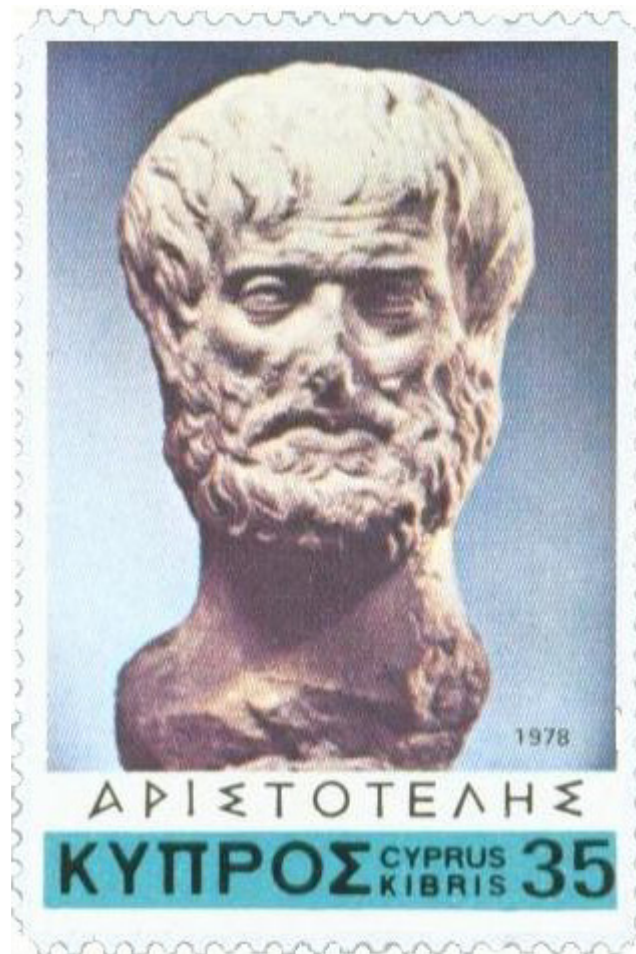
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373 BCE

Meng-tzu or, in Latinized form, [Mencius](#), was born.

During this year, or the following year, or the year following that, a great Kreutz sungrazing [comet](#) made its appearance. This comet may have been one of the two largest pieces of the hypothetical body referred to as the “parent of the sungrazers,” later disintegrated, which may still have been in one large chunk during a visit to the inner solar system sometime between 18,000 BCE and 8,000 BCE. This 373 BCE sungrazer is also the comet which we suppose may later have split further, to produce the major 1843 comet and possibly also the major comet of the year 1580.

Observers in Greece noted that it was seen in the west during about the period in which a great earthquake and tidal wave were occurring at Achaea. [Aristoteles](#) of Stageiros later recorded that the [comet](#) had first been observed in the west near the sun, and that at that point its tail was extending a third of the way across the earth’s sky, which would be about 60 degrees (if ἈΡΙΣΤΟΤΕΛΗΣ himself made this observation, he was at the time twelve years of age).





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It is possible that this is the same [comet](#) which [Seneca the Younger](#) alleged that Ephorus had described as splitting into two pieces (Seneca regarded the idea that a comet could fall apart as ridiculous).

ASTRONOMY

LIFE IS LIVED FORWARD BUT UNDERSTOOD BACKWARD?
— NO, THAT’S GIVING TOO MUCH TO THE HISTORIAN’S STORIES.
LIFE ISN’T TO BE UNDERSTOOD EITHER FORWARD OR BACKWARD.

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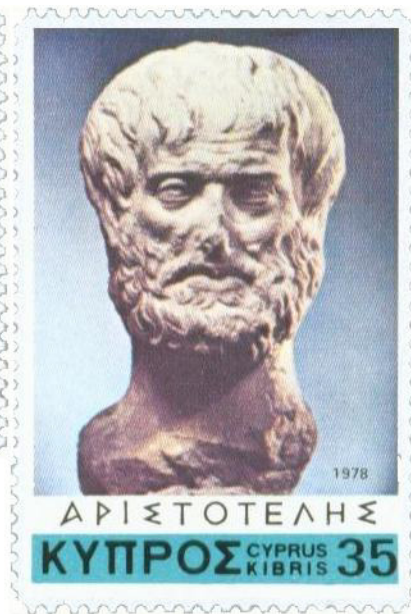
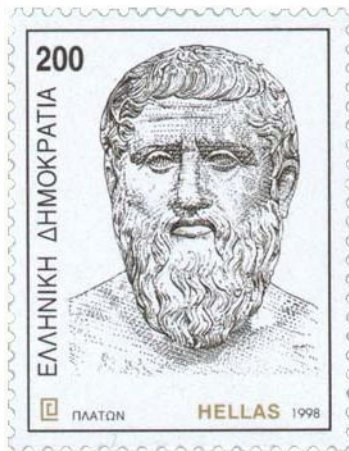
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367 BCE

[Aristoteles](#) left Stageiros at the age of 17 to attend the Academy founded by Aristokles of Athens, a rich man known under his wrestling nickname “Platon” who was at this point pursuing an opportunity to combine philosophy and practical politics in Syracuse, a city-state on the island of Sicily, as the tutor the new ruler Dionysius the Younger. Plato returned to Syracuse with Xenocrates. Dionysius would eventually expel Plato’s local friend Dion on suspicions that he was plotting against him, and Plato out of loyalty would petition that his friend be recalled. Dionysius would never, however, permit Dion to return to Sicily, and so Dion would wind up enrolled as a more or less permanent pupil at the Academy. Aristotle would continue some two decades at the Academy, until at the death of the founder, in 347, [Plato](#)’s nephew and heir Speusippus would be selected to head the Academy.





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In THE REPUBLIC, in dialogs by Cratylus and by Charmides, in allegories on temperance and on the cave, and in quoting Socrates, [Plato](#) made frequent use of the expression “By the dog of Egypt!” This was a reference the [Egyptian](#) jackal-headed deity Anubis that sniffed the dead to ensure that they were fit for the afterlife. In THE BOOK OF THE DEAD, this deity was a figure of judgment and discernment. To swear by the dog of Egypt was thus a dramatic way to affirm that one’s declaration would withstand the most discerning scrutiny.



THE FUTURE IS MOST READILY PREDICTED IN RETROSPECT



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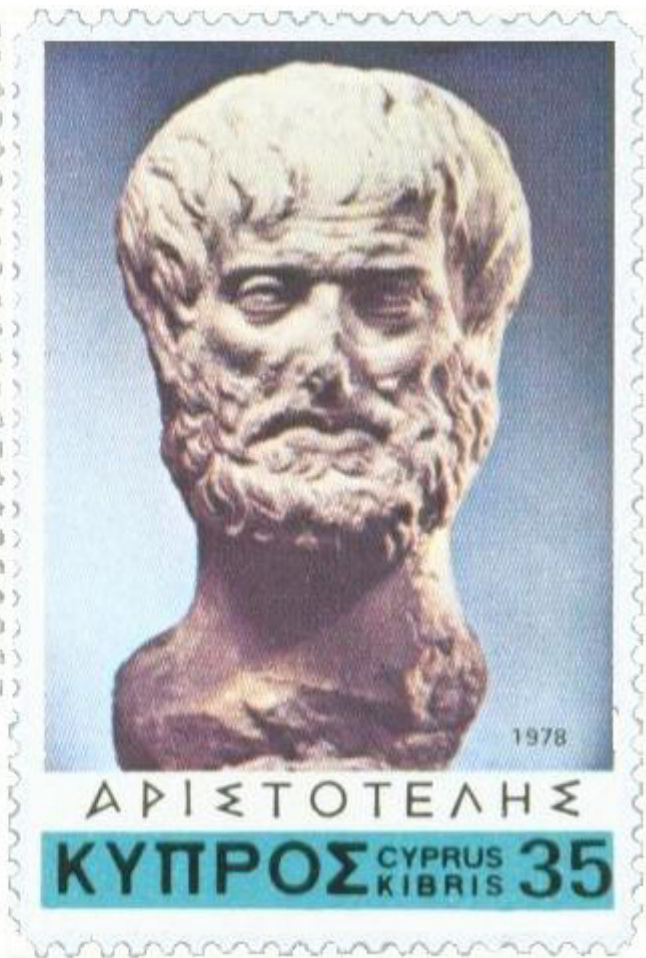
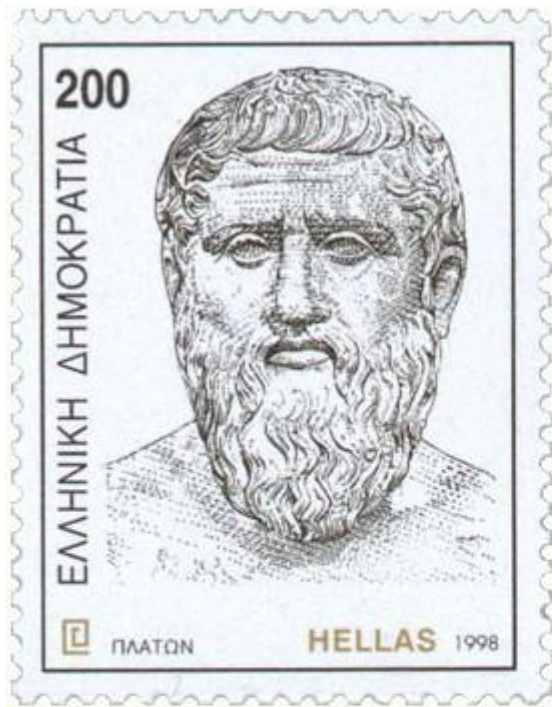
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363 BCE

[Aristotle](#) studied under [Plato](#).





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A WEEK: The eye which can appreciate the naked and absolute beauty of a scientific truth is far more rare than that which is attracted by a moral one. Few detect the morality in the former, or the science in the latter. Aristotle defined art to be Λόγος τοῦ ἔργου ἄνευ ὕλης. **The principle of the work without the wood**; but most men prefer to have some of the wood along with the principle; they demand that the truth be clothed in flesh and blood and the warm colors of life. They prefer the partial statement because it fits and measures them and their commodities best. But science still exists everywhere as the sealer of weights and measures at least.

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ARISTOTLE

THE FUTURE CAN BE EASILY PREDICTED IN RETROSPECT





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350 BCE

It was in about this year that [Aristotle](#) wrote of two islands *Ierne* ([Ireland](#)) and *Albion* (Great Britain) which lay beyond the land of the Celts. He recorded that it was said that after people had begun to mock [Thales of Miletos](#) for his poverty, he had on the basis of his knowledge of the heavenly bodies forecasted a large olive crop and had bought up all the available olive presses for the going rate during the preceding winter, then reselling these presses at a considerable markup as this huge crop of olives began to ripen.

WHAT I'M WRITING IS TRUE BUT NEVER MIND
YOU CAN ALWAYS LIE TO YOURSELF



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347 BCE

[Aristotle](#) travelled in the Greek islands and in Asia Minor to avoid Athenian accusations that he was pro-Macedonian. For several years his home-away-from-home would be Assos, which was under the rule of the pro-Macedonian leader Hermias. It was during this period on Assos that Aristotle met Pythias, whom he would marry after Hermias (apparently her relative) was killed by the Persians in about 341 BCE. It was during this period that Aristotle would make many of the observations of fauna and flora which figure in his biological writings. (Eventually, [Alexander the Great](#)'s entire army would be forwarding him specimens. When [Henry Thoreau](#) would consult these biological writings and marvel at how much Aristotle already knew about fishes, this would lead in Concord to a wild derogation, by [Ellery Channing](#): that his friend was supposed that he "had discovered Aristotle.")

DO I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION? GOOD.

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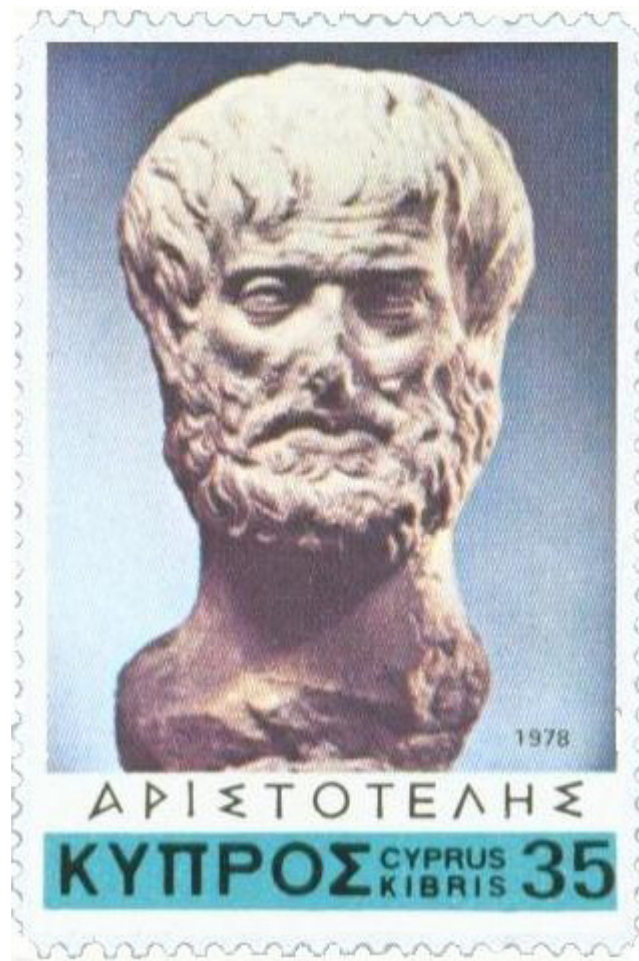
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345 BCE

[Aristotle](#) moved on from Athens to spend several years at Mytilene on the island of Lesbos, where he would meet [Theophrastus](#) (his scientific collaborator and later successor at the Lyceum which eventually he would found in Athens).





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Here is the island of Lesbos, as seen from the shore of Asia Minor:



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343 BCE

[Aristotle](#) accepted the invitation of King Phillip of Macedon to tutor his son [Alexander \(the Great\)](#), who had newly turned teenager.



CHANGE IS ETERNITY, STASIS A FIGMENT

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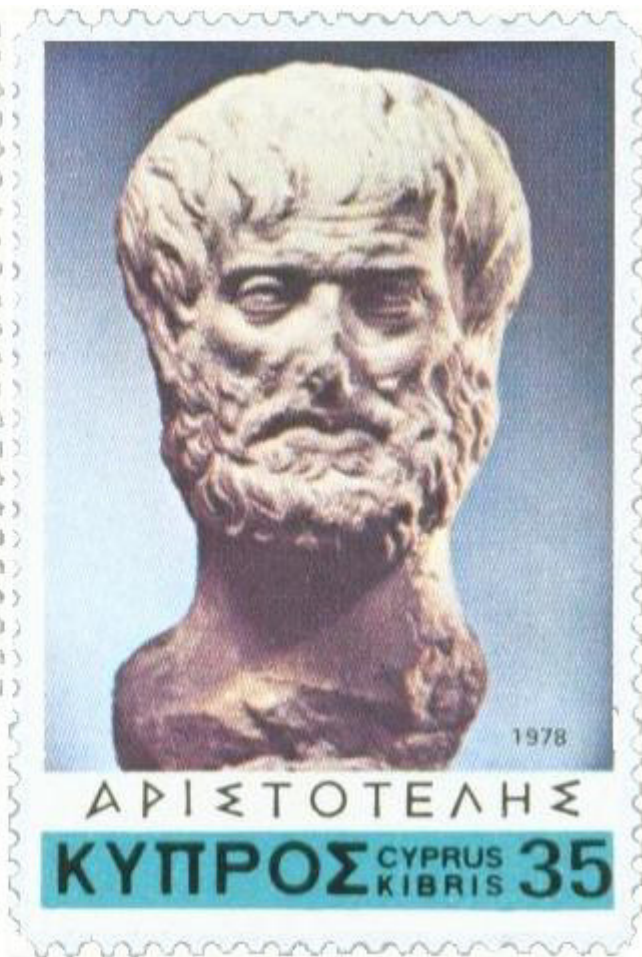
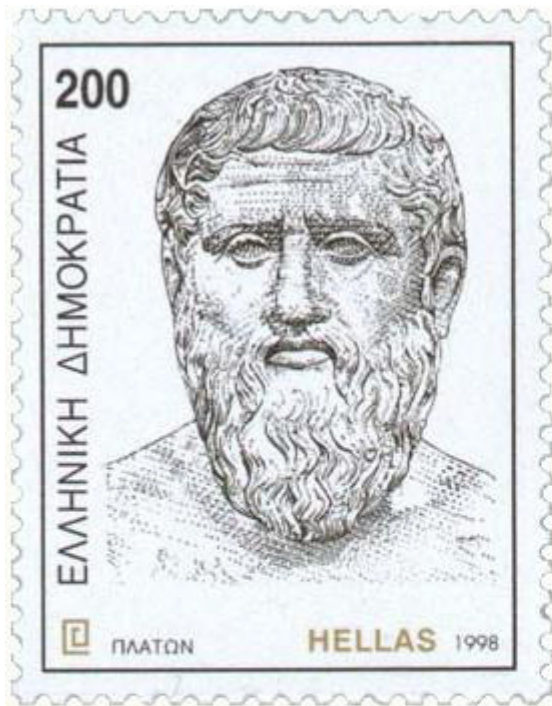
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342 BCE

[Aristotle](#), pupil of [Plato](#), arrived in Macedon, where his father was physician to King Philip, to take a position as tutor to Philip's son [Alexander \(the Great\)](#).



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340 BCE

Resumption of war between Athens and Philip. At this point [Aristotle](#) most probably returned to his home town of Stagira in Macedonia, his services as tutor of [Alexander the Great](#) no longer much required.



Fresh attempts were made by the Carthaginians upon Syracuse. Timoleon defeated them with great slaughter.

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336 BCE

Upon the assassination of King Philip of Macedon, his son [Alexander the Great](#) succeeded to the throne. He gained several victories over the northern barbarians who had attacked Macedonia, and destroyed Thebes, which, in conjunction with Athens, had taken up arms against the Macedonians.



[Zeno of Citium](#) (Ζήνων ὁ Κιτιεύς), who would found Greek Stoic philosophy, was born.



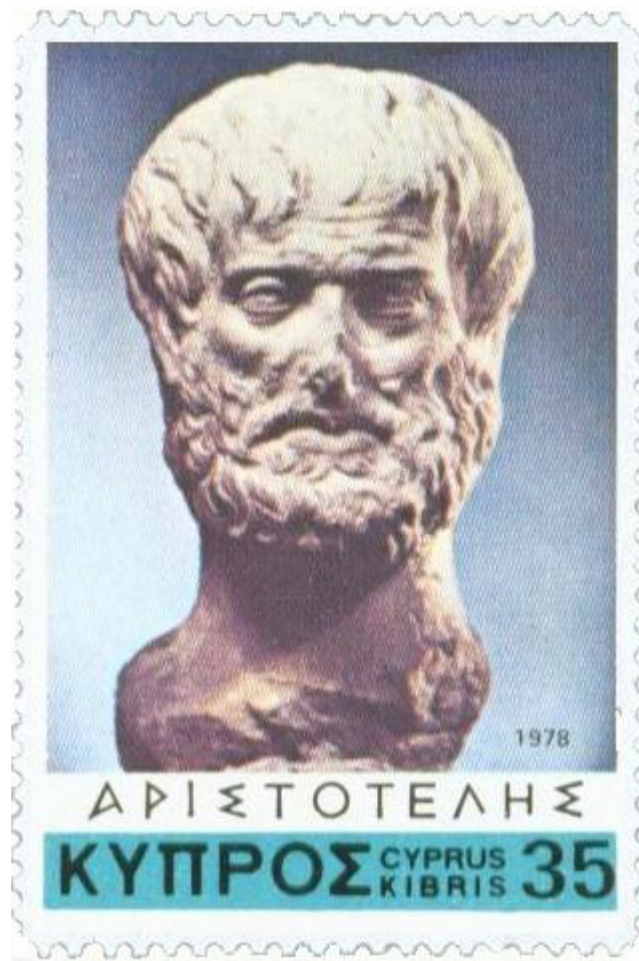
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335 BCE

[Aristotle](#) returned to Athens and began to lecture in a gymnasium (place of physical and intellectual culture) known as the Lyceum. He lectured while walking about in one of its covered walkways, earning him the nickname “Peripatetic” (from the Greek for “walking about”).



THE ATHENIAN CONSTITUTION



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323 BCE

June 13: [Alexander the Great](#) of Macedon died mysteriously at age 32 in Babylon.

559 Cyrus the first king of Persia.
538 The kingdom of Babylon finished; that city being taken by Cyrus, who in 536, issues an edict for the return of the Jews.
534 The first tragedy was acted at Athens, on a waggon, by Thespis.
526 Learning is greatly encouraged at Athens, and a public library first founded.
515 The second Temple at Jerusalem is finished under Darius.
509 Tarquin the seventh and last king of the Romans is expelled, and Rome is governed by two consuls, and other republican magistrates, till the battle of Pharsalia, being a space of 461 years.
504 Sardis taken and burnt by the Athenians, which gave occasion to the Persian invasion of Greece.
486 Æschylus, the Greek poet, first gains the prize of tragedy.
481 Xerxes the Great, king of Persia, begins his expedition against Greece.
458 Ezra is sent from Babylon to Jerusalem, with the captive Jews, and the vessels of gold and silver, &c. being seventy weeks of years, or 490 years before the crucifixion of our Saviour.
454 The Romans send to Athens for Solon's laws.
451 The Decemvirs created at Rome, and the laws of the twelve tables compiled and ratified.
430 The history of the Old Testament finishes about this time.
Malachi the last of the prophets.
400 Socrates the founder of moral philosophy among the Greeks, believes the immortality of the soul, and a state of rewards and punishments, for which, and other sublime doctrines, he is put to death by the Athenians, who soon after repent, and erect to his memory a statue of brass.
331 Alexander the Great, king of Macedon, conquers Darius king of Persia, and other nations of Asia. 323, Dies at Babylon, and his empire is divided by his generals into four kingdoms.
285 Dionysius of Alexandria, began his astronomical æra, on Monday, June 26, being the first who found the exact solar year to consist of 365 days, 5 hours, and 49 minutes.
284 Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, employs seventy-two interpreters to translate the Old Testament into the Greek language, which is called the Septuagint.

On his death becoming known throughout Greece, the Assembly of Athens declared war against his successor Antipon and attempted to free the southern Greek city states from Macedonian rule. The return of some of Alexander's veterans from Asia would enable Antipater to prevail over them. [Aristotle](#) was again perceived as anti-Athenian, pro-Macedonian. A charge of "impiety" (disbelief in the established gods) was leveled against him, the same charge that had been used against [Socrates](#) in 399 BCE, and he is said to have declared that he would not let the Athenians "sin twice against philosophy." He abandoned Athens to voluntary exile in the city of Chalcis, accompanied by his companion Herpyllis, probably his slave, the woman who was likely the

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mother of his son Nicomachus and with whom he had lived after the death of his wife.



During this year [Diogenes of Sinope](#), the cynic who lived in a tub in Athens, also died. Some say he died on the same day as Alexander.

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The master of the world was 33 and the master of himself 90. (At one point, asked about the evil of death, he had responded sensibly by asking as a counter-question — in what sense might something be said to be harmful to us, if in its very presence we are necessarily oblivious to it?)





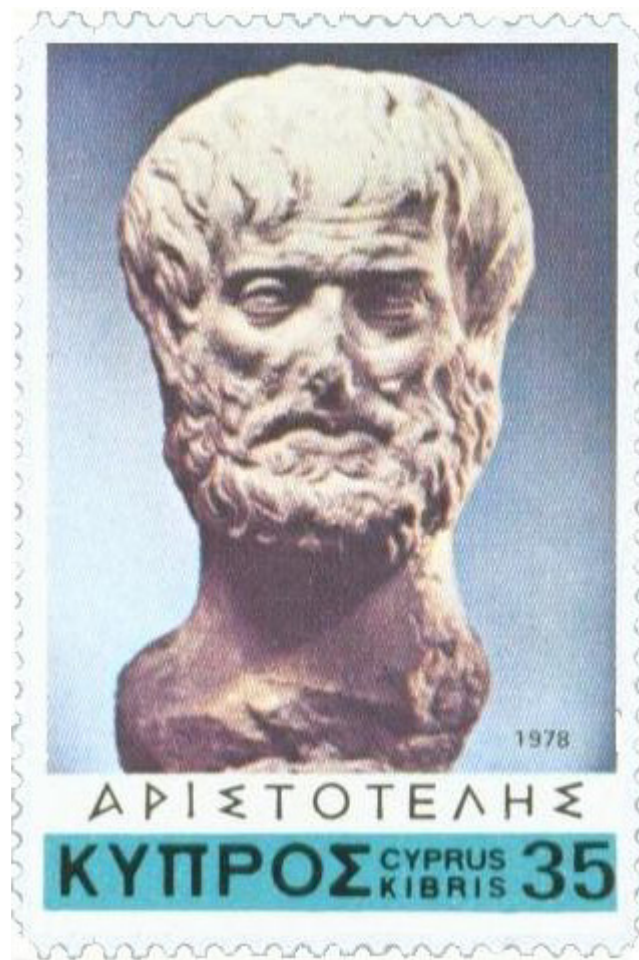
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322 BCE

March 7: [Aristotle](#) died of a digestive ailment at the age of 63 (on this day or on October 2d).





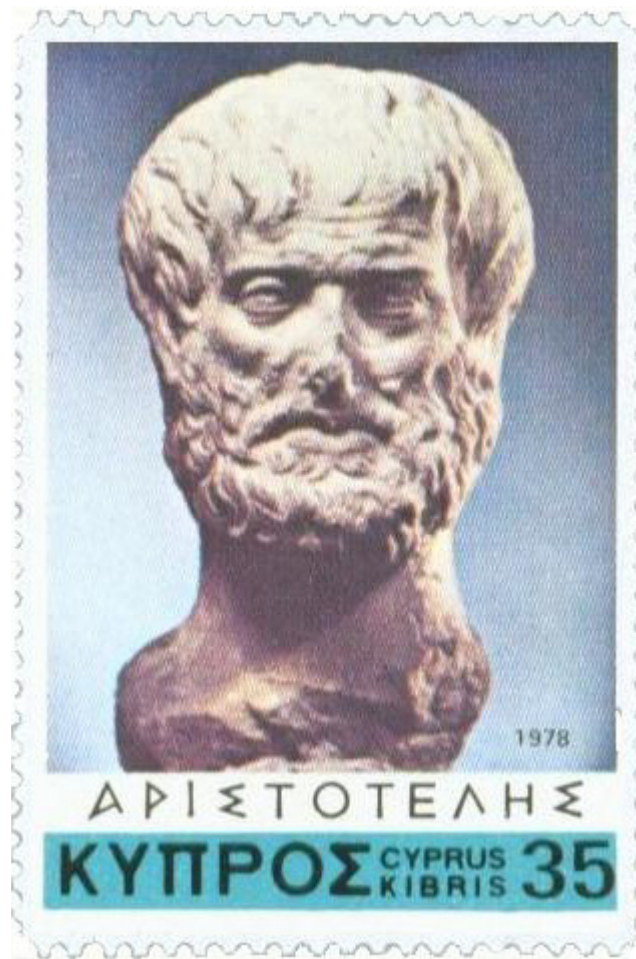
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1169

The Muslim philosopher Ibn Rushd, commonly known as Averroës, translated [Aristotle](#)'s works from Greek to Arabic, then to Latin. He worked for 26 years on his translations and accompanying commentary, producing documents that would reawaken the medieval Western world to classical ideas.





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1200

The most disastrous flood of the Nile River valley occurred at this point and was probably correlated with the “Chimu flood” of coastal Peru in a general “El Niño / Southern Oscillation” of the world’s climate. The heaviest rainfall in the Blue Nile’s and the Atbara River’s catchment basin in the Ethiopian highlands tends to occur in late July and early August and begins to reach the upper Nile in [Egypt](#) about the middle of August. The summer monsoon as a whole extends from June through September and the elevation of the Nile occurs July through October, about a month of lag in transit of the silt-laden waters of life. According to [Nilometer](#) records, other disastrous floods in Egypt occurred in the years 1230, 1450, 1553, 1641, 1650, 1694, 1715 and the following year 1716, 1783, and then not until 1877, 1899, and 1913, and then not until 1972.

At about this point the planet was entering a little Ice Age, the Northern Hemisphere beginning to experience colder winters and wetter summers. According to some modern climatologists this would render Central Asia more inhospitable, incentivizing subsequent Mongol invasions of China, Eastern Europe, and Iraq (these climatologists were presuming, it would appear, that a bloke like Genghis Khan would need to have some good reason for world conquest, rather than it being merely a project that arose in his mind one quiet afternoon).

THE MOST RECENT GLACIATION

(During this century, elsewhere on the planet, the game “Jeu de Mail” was being played on ice.)

SKATING

A Woodland Indian people living near Cahokia, Illinois built what the white intrusives would refer to as “Monks Mound,” an earthen structure over 650,000 yards in volume and 15 acres in extent. This was part of a city complex housing as many as 40,000 natives (early white settlers, not imagining that the ancestors of the natives could have built it, attributed it depending on their religious and political prejudices to Welshmen, Vikings, and the Lost Tribe of Israel).

At about this point the writings of [Aristotle](#), preserved largely in Arabic by Muslim scholars, became available to Europeans. The writings would be partly or totally banned by the papacy over the following five decades, but finally would be made mandatory material for university lectures.

According to tradition, a text called *Malla Purana* (“Old Story of the Caste of Wrestlers from Modhera”) appeared in India. While the exact date is uncertain –the oldest surviving copy of the text dates merely to 1674/1675– the *Malla Purana* is clearly one of the oldest surviving Indian wrestling manuals. It describes in detail how the Jains and Krishnaivites of Gujarat selected and trained their professional wrestlers, and prepared their dirt pits.

Besides practice in wrestling, the Gujarati training program included calisthenics, strengthening exercises (including thousands of squats and dipping push-ups, or *dandas*), swimming, walking, massage, and



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discussing, planning, and thinking about wrestling. The Gujarati gurus recognized that wrestling was not for everyone, and people who had nasal problems, persistent coughs, head or eye diseases, or sexual problems were discouraged from participating. The Gujarati gurus also recognized that not everyone could be a champion. Therefore they included recreational training programs, too. And for those who wanted to gain reputation through wrestling, their number one recommendation was that the falling drops of perspiration should drench the ground on which the wrestler stood.

The game of checkers, or draughts, originates along the Franco-Spanish border, probably as the result of backgammon pieces being put onto a chessboard and moved after the fashion of an earlier board game known as *alquerque*.



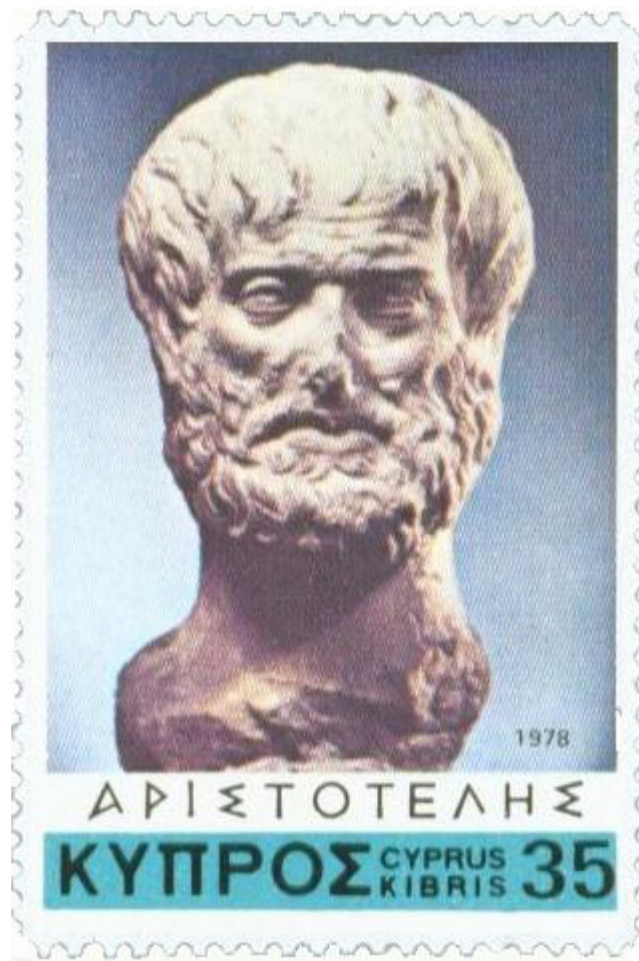
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1265

Father Thomas Aquinas was at Rome and was beginning his work on his *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE* which included the five proofs of the existence of God. His writings attempted to reconcile [Aristotle](#)'s scientific rationalism with Christian doctrines of faith and revelation.





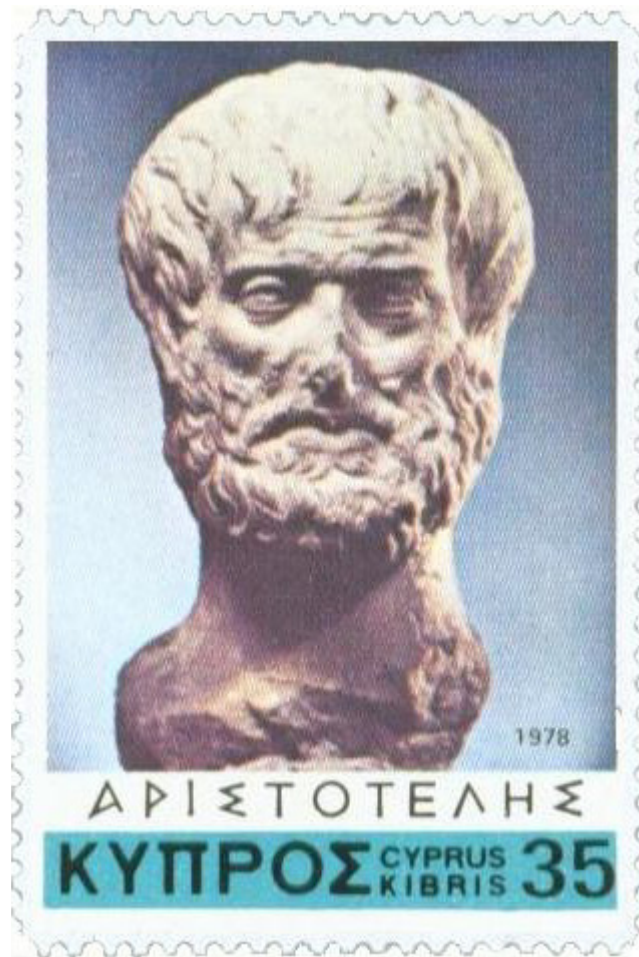
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1495

Aldus Manutius began publication of a series of printed editions of the Greek classics called the Aldines. The first 5-volume folio to be released would be a compilation of the works of [Aristotle](#).





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1508

Winter: At the new Wittenberg University, Father [Martin Luder](#) taught the NICOMACHEAN ETHICS (he detested [Aristotle](#)).

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1513

Hans Baldung Grien's drawing "[Aristotle](#) and Phyllis":



This is per the *LAI D'ARISTOTE*, created during the 13th Century by Henri d'Andeli. In the narrative, Aristotle reproved his pupil Alexander for the manner in which sexuality was causing his teenage attention to wander from his studies. Alexander promised to pay less attention to his sex partner, Phyllis, but then she, in reaction to this, "came on" to Aristotle and, getting him to respond, led him into a trap. She would satisfy his lust if first he would give her a ride on his back, like a horse. While riding she sang loudly that "Master Silly carries me. / 'Love leads on, and so he goes, / by Love's authority'." We see Alexander peeking down from the rooftop, and the tutor being discredited.

In England, a woman available for fun and games would come to be denominated "a Phyllis."



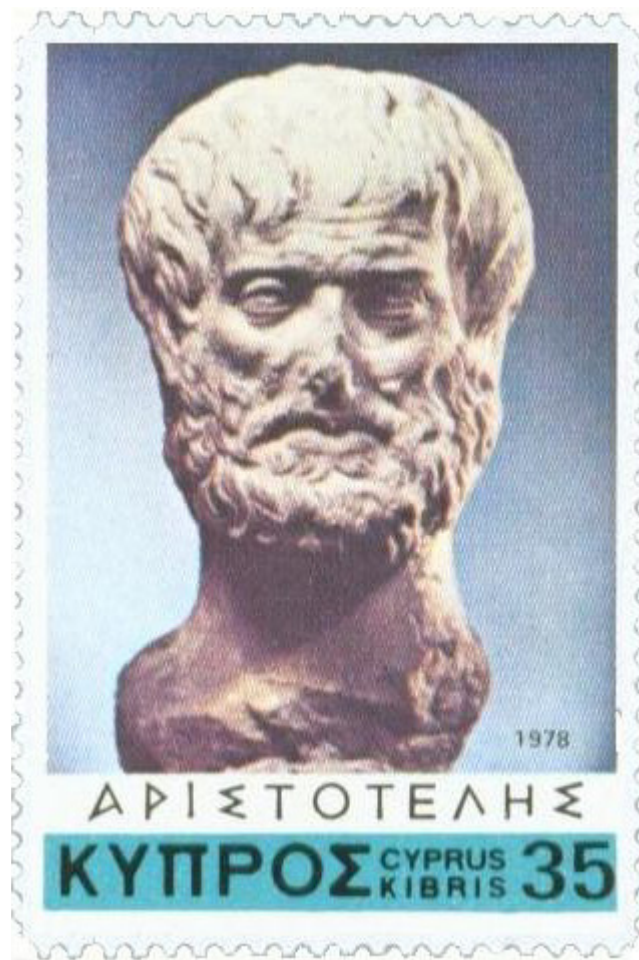
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1531

The first complete edition of the works of [Aristotle](#) was compiled by [Desiderius Erasmus](#) and published.





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1655

The initial volume of [Thomas Stanley](#)'s THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY: CONTAINING THE LIVES, OPINIONS, ACTIONS AND DISCOURSES OF THE PHILOSOPHERS OF EVERY SECT (London: Humphrey Moseley and Thomas Dring). The 3d volume of this would appear in 1661.



(The images offered are woodcuts purporting to represent THALES, SOLON, CHILON, PITTACVS, BIAS, CLEOBVLE, PERIANDER, SOCRATES, XENOPHON, ARISTIPPVS, PLATO, SPVSIPPVS, CARNEADES, [ARISTOTELES](#), ANTISTHENES, and ZENON.)

HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHERS

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1684

ARISTOTLE'S MASTERPIECE, THE SECRETS OF NATURE DISPLAYED, an anonymous manual of sex and reproduction, appeared at about this point: <http://www.exclassics.com/arist/ariscont.htm>. There would of course be many, many editions. The purpose of the frontispiece of the hairy woman and the black child was to warn of influences during pregnancy. The hairy woman had during her pregnancy seen a picture of John the Baptist, dressed in animal skins. There had been a picture of a Negro in the bedroom in which the black child had been engendered.





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1701

[Thomas Stanley](#)'s THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY (London: W. Battersby). A copy of this would be in [Bronson Alcott](#)'s library available to [Henry Thoreau](#), and a quotation from [Aristotle](#)'s *METEOROLOGICA* obtained from this source would appear in [A WEEK](#).

[A WEEK](#): As in geology, so in social institutions, we may discover the causes of all past change in the present invariable order of society. The greatest appreciable physical revolutions are the work of the light-footed air, the stealthy-paced water, and the subterranean fire. Aristotle said, "As time never fails, and the universe is eternal, neither the Tanais nor the Nile can have flowed forever." We are independent of the change we detect. The longer the lever the less perceptible its motion. It is the slowest pulsation which is the most vital. The hero then will know how to wait, as well as to make haste. All good abides with him who waiteth **wisely**; we shall sooner overtake the dawn by remaining here than by hurrying over the hills of the west. Be assured that every man's success is in proportion to his **average** ability. The meadow flowers spring and bloom where the waters annually deposit their slime, not where they reach in some freshet only. A man is not his hope, nor his despair, nor yet his past deed. We know not yet what we have done, still less what we are doing. Wait till evening, and other parts of our day's work will shine than we had thought at noon, and we shall discover the real purport of our toil. As when the farmer has reached the end of the furrow and looks back, he can tell best where the pressed earth shines most.

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THOMAS STANLEY
ARISTOTLE

HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY



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1781

Having received an elementary education in the Bengali language in the local *patshala* and having studied the language of the court, Persian, under the village *moulvi* or religious scholar, Rammohan Roy was sent to Patna at the age of nine to study [Euclid](#), [Aristotle](#), and the *QUR'AN* in Arabic.



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1799

Christian Garve's *DIE POLITIK DES* ARISTOTELES (Breslau).



THE PEOPLE OF A WEEK:

ARISTOTELES OF STAGEIROS

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

1804



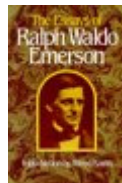
TRANSLATIONS FROM THE GREEK, VIZ., [ARISTOTLE](#)'S SYNOPSIS OF THE VIRTUES AND VICES. THE SIMILITUDES OF DEMOPHILUS. THE GOLDEN SENTENCES OF DEMOCRATES. AND THE PYTHAGORIC SYMBOLS, WITH THE EXPLANATIONS OF JAMBlichus. BY [WILLIAM BRIDGMAN](#), F.L.S. TO WHICH ARE ADDED THE PYTHAGORIC SENTENCES OF DEMOPHILUS, BY [MR. THOMAS TAYLOR](#) (London: Printed for W. Bridgman, by R. Wilks, Chancery-Lane, and sold by J. White, Fleet-Street. 1804). This volume would be available to [Henry Thoreau](#) in [Waldo Emerson](#)'s library. He would copy extracts into his Literary Notebook in about 1841.

WILLIAM BRIDGMAN



"[Aristotle](#) and [Plato](#) are reckoned the respective heads of two schools. A wise man will see that Aristotle Platonizes."

— [Waldo Emerson](#), "Circles"
in ESSAYS: 1ST SERIES, 1841





THE PEOPLE OF A WEEK:

ARISTOTELES OF STAGEIROS

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

1806



What would [Emerson](#) and [Thoreau](#) be reading that had been attributed to the ancient [Zoroaster](#)? –Perhaps it would be this year’s THE CHALDÆAN ORACLES by Thomas Taylor in [The Monthly Magazine](#), and published independently, 1806. [Thomas “the Platonist” Taylor, born on May 15, 1758, lived in London to his death on November 1, 1835. After attending St. Paul’s school, he relocated to Sheerness and spent several years with a relative who worked on the docks. He studied for the dissenting ministry until an imprudent marriage and its financial obligations closed this path to him. He became a schoolmaster, then a clerk in Lubbock’s banking-house, and from 1798 to 1806 functioned as assistant secretary to a society for the encouragement of arts, manufactures, and commerce, until finally, with the patronage of the duke of Norfolk and of a Mr. Meredith (a retired tradesman of literary tastes), he was able to devote himself to the study of Neoplatonism. He made translations in whole or part of the writings of [Plato](#), [Aristotle](#), Plotinus, Proclus, Pausanias, Porphyry, Ocellus Lucanus, and the Orphic hymns, which were uniformly received unfavorably –almost contemptuously– by his audience, for their defects in scholarship and for the translator’s industry so much in excess of his critical

HDT

WHAT?

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faculty.]



CHALDEAN ORACLES



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A WEEK: It is remarkable that Homer and a few Hebrews are the most Oriental names which modern Europe, whose literature has taken its rise since the decline of the Persian, has admitted into her list of Worthies, and perhaps the **worthiest** of mankind, and the fathers of modern thinking, – for the contemplations of those Indian sages have influenced, and still influence, the intellectual development of mankind, – whose works even yet survive in wonderful completeness, are, for the most part, not recognized as ever having existed. If the lions had been the painters it would have been otherwise. In every one's youthful dreams philosophy is still vaguely but inseparably, and with singular truth, associated with the East, nor do after years discover its local habitation in the Western world. In comparison with the philosophers of the East, we may say that modern Europe has yet given birth to none. Beside the vast and cosmogonical philosophy of the Bhagvat-Geeta, even our Shakespeare seems sometimes youthfully green and practical merely. Some of these sublime sentences, as the Chaldaean oracles of Zoroaster, still surviving after a thousand revolutions and translations, alone make us doubt if the poetic form and dress are not transitory, and not essential to the most effective and enduring expression of thought. *Ex oriente lux* may still be the motto of scholars, for the Western world has not yet derived from the East all the light which it is destined to receive thence.

It would be worthy of the age to print together the collected Scriptures or Sacred Writings of the several nations, the Chinese, the Hindoos, the Persians, the Hebrews, and others, as the Scripture of mankind. The New Testament is still, perhaps, too much on the lips and in the hearts of men to be called a Scripture in this sense. Such a juxtaposition and comparison might help to liberalize the faith of men. This is a work which Time will surely edit, reserved to crown the labors of the printing-press. This would be the Bible, or Book of Books, which let the missionaries carry to the uttermost parts of the earth.

ÆSOP

XENOPHANES

A WEEK: The life of a wise man is most of all extemporaneous, for he lives out of an eternity which includes all time. The cunning mind travels further back than Zoroaster each instant, and comes quite down to the present with its revelation. The utmost thrift and industry of thinking give no man any stock in life; his credit with the inner world is no better, his capital no larger. He must try his fortune again to-day as yesterday. All questions rely on the present for their solution. Time measures nothing but itself. The word that is written may be postponed, but not that on the lip. If this is what the occasion says, let the occasion say it. All the world is forward to prompt him who gets up to live without his creed in his pocket.

ZOROASTER



THE PEOPLE OF A WEEK:

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1822



Publication of the 2d edition of [Baron Joseph-Marie de Gérando](#)'s *HISTOIRE COMPARÉE DES SYSTÈMES DE PHILOSOPHIE, CONSIDÉRÉS RELATIVEMENT AUX PRINCIPES DES CONNAISSANCES HUMAINES*, a 4-volume work that would be available in the library of [Waldo Emerson](#) to be studied by [Henry Thoreau](#) during September 1840. Thoreau would take note of a passage: "[Plato](#) gives science sublime counsels, directs her toward the regions of the ideal; [Aristotle](#) gives her positive and severe laws, and directs her toward a practical end."



SYSTÈMES DE PHILOSOPHIE I

SYSTÈMES DE PHILOSOPHIE II

SYSTÈMES DE PHILOSOPHIE III

SYSTÈMES DE PHILOSOPHIE IV

The [Baron de Gérando](#) had in 1819 opened at the law-school of Paris a class of public and administrative law. In this year his class was suppressed by the French government (but in 1828 under the Martignac ministry it would be allowed to resume).



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1834



June: [William MacGillivray](#)'s LIVES OF EMINENT ZOOLOGISTS, FROM ARISTOTLE TO LINNÆUS: WITH INTRODUCTORY REMARKS ON THE STUDY OF NATURAL HISTORY, AND OCCASIONAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE PROGRESS OF ZOOLOGY.

FROM ARISTOTLE TO LINNÆUS

The zoologists considered were [Aristotle](#), [Pliny the Elder](#), Conrad Gesner, Pierre Belon, Hippolito Salviani, Guillaume Rondelet, Ulysses Aldrovandi, John Jonson, John Goedard, Francis Redi, John Swammerdam, the Reverend [John Ray](#), René Antoine Ferchault de Reaumur, and [Charles Linné](#) or [Carolus Linnæus](#).



THE PEOPLE OF A WEEK:


ARISTOTELES OF STAGEIROS

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

1840

July 27, Monday:



July 27: By the last breath of the May air I inhale I am reminded that the ages never got so far down as this before. The wood thrush [**Wood Thrush**  *Catharus mustelina*] is a more modern philosopher than Plato and Aristotle. They are now a dogma, but he preaches the doctrine of this hour.



TIME AND ETERNITY

ARISTOTLE

PLATO

September 21, Monday: Evidently in this timeframe [Henry Thoreau](#) was studying not only in Professor [Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat](#)'s 1817 translation from Confucius, *L'INVARIABLE MILIEU*, but also in a book from [Waldo Emerson](#)'s library, the 2d edition of [Baron Joseph-Marie de Gérando](#)'s *HISTOIRE COMPARÉE DES SYSTÈMES DE PHILOSOPHIE, CONSIDÉRÉS RELATIVEMENT AUX PRINCIPES DES CONNAISSANCES HUMAINES*. For instance, "[Plato](#) gives science sublime counsels, directs her toward the regions of the ideal; [Aristotle](#) gives her positive and severe laws, and directs her toward a practical end." Degerando."



SYSTÈMES DE PHILOSOPHIE I

SYSTÈMES DE PHILOSOPHIE II

SYSTÈMES DE PHILOSOPHIE III

SYSTÈMES DE PHILOSOPHIE IV



September 21: In the old Chinese book which the French call "L'Invariable Milieu" occurs this sentence — "L'ordre établie par le ciel s'appelle *nature*; ce qui est conforme à la nature s'appelle *loi*; l'établissement de la loi s'appelle *instruction*."

God's order is nature — man's order is law — and the establishment of law is the subject of instruction.

Some of these old distinctions imply a certain grandeur and completeness in the view, far better than any modern acuteness and accuracy.— They are a thought which darted through the universe and solved all its problems.



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The French call writing a dead speech –une parole morte– and articulate language a living speech — une parole vive.

To [Thales](#) is attributed the saying– “It is hard, but good, to know oneself; virtue consists in leading a life conformable to nature.”



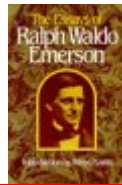
THE PEOPLE OF A WEEK:

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PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

1841

March 20, Saturday: [Waldo Emerson](#)'s [ESSAYS: 1ST SERIES](#).



ESSAYS, 1ST SERIES

It will be instructive to consider in what manner Robert Richardson went wrong, in smoothly ascribing to Emerson the attitude I found admirable in Thoreau. He simply had no idea what it was that I was talking about. The words I were using were the same words he deployed, and clearly these words meant something entirely different to him than they meant to me. I will elaborate here a bit on what these words mean to me, so that others will not commit such an egregious and tendentious blunder:

All sins are an attempt to escape from time.

— Simone Weil, *FIRST AND LAST NOTEBOOKS*, p. 102
[She also says that the root of evil is
an exercise of the imagination as an
escape from reality.]

We think that time has a beginning and an end. We think of it as arising from and returning to an unchanging eternity. This makes eternity into a kind of time “before” the beginning of time, and a kind of time “after” the end of time. The time “before” and “after” time, the time “when” time is not, is thought as a time without change. But all the change of which we know is change that is relative to something unchanged which serves as a point of reference: there is always more change or less change, there is never all change and there is never no change. Our experience of eternity is direct, and immediate, and our experience of change in no way invalidates this experience or calls it into question. Nothing about this style of thought, in which time is immersed in metatime, can withstand the most superficial examination, yet the fact that this is a ridiculous way to think does not seem to prevent us from thinking this way, does not force us to acknowledge that there cannot be a time “before” time or a time “after” time, a time “when” time is not – it does not induce us to recognize that time, the frame with which we think about things that begin and end, cannot itself be a thing which begins and ends within a 2d-order time. This would be an infinite regress, and infinite regresses are non-explanatory even for those of us who suppose that that famous image “Save your breath, Sonny, it’s turtles all the way down” is not philosophy but the punchline of a forgotten old joke. The only way anyone has ever figured out, to avoid an endless “But then, **who** made **God**?” regress in our thinking, is to acknowledge that it makes no linguistic sense to think of the past as having had any sort of real beginning, and that likewise it makes no linguistic sense to think of the future as having any sort of real end. To think this way, to think realistically rather than fantastically, is not to collapse eternity into time, for if time were real it really would have to have a beginning and an end, but to collapse time into eternity, to recognize that since time really cannot have a beginning or an end, reality cannot be anything other than a changeful eternity. We do not live in time (that is only a superficial impression caused by our difficulty in comprehending how something that is eternal can be eternally changeful), we live in eternity. This, that you see and hear and feel right now: this is eternity.



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Nevertheless, there is nothing about the changefulness of the instant of eternity that involves any sense of vanishing into nonexistence, or any sense of loss:



In this instant there is nothing which comes to be. In this instant there is nothing which ceases to be. Thus there is no birth-and-death to be brought to an end. Wherefore the absolute tranquility is this present instant. Though it is at this instant, there is no limit to this instant, and herein is eternal delight.

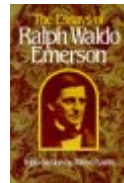
As Nietzsche knew, to recognize the reality of change is to “impose upon becoming the character of being.”¹ As Yehoshua, the greatest believer, and Nietzsche, the greatest disbeliever, tried to show us, we must shatter the chains of an intolerable bondage to time, the “tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow” that takes us, foolish victims, “the way to dusty death.” Our thought of time is a tale told by an idiot — and our idiot needs finally to become wise.

I regard nothing I have said in the above paragraphs as in any way mysterious or mystical or even fine-tuned. To me these ruminations seem the plainest and the commonest of plain common sense, most plainly expressed. If you are encountering them as something other than the plainest and the commonest of plain common sense, then there’s something seriously wrong either with your background or with mine.



“[Aristotle](#) and [Plato](#) are reckoned the respective heads of two schools. A wise man will see that Aristotle Platonizes.”

— [Waldo Emerson](#), “Circles”
in ESSAYS: 1ST SERIES, 1841



In regard to the publication of [Waldo Emerson](#)’s essay “History” on March 20, 1841: After the “Thoreau Quiz” part of the celebrations in Concord in 1992, Robert Richardson, Jr., the self-styled “intellectual biographer of Henry David Thoreau,” approached me in the basement of the First Parish Church to engage in a bit of casual conversation. He wanted to enquire why I was engaged in this “Stack of the Artist of Kouroo” project, what was motivating me to do all this work and put up with all the grief I was getting from old-style scholars who had no time for people who dealt with computers. So I told him it was because I was intrigued by [Henry Thoreau](#)’s attitude toward time and eternity and wanted to ascertain when and where and how he had created this attitude. Did Thoreau create this attitude out of whole cloth, or was he receiving inspiration from some source that has been neglected in current historical and cultural accounts of the period? What was the context in which such an attitude as his had originated? Was this something he learned from his experience of dealing with the loss of his brother John? Etc. Richardson had a ready answer, typical of him: “He got it from Emerson. It’s all in Emerson’s essay ‘History.’” Well, Richardson had offered advice to me before, and it had always proven to be a waste of my time to check out the leads he had supplied, but this topic was just too important.

1. Musarion-Ausgabe edition, Volume XIX, 330; THE WILL TO POWER, 617.



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Even if Richardson had his head up his ass yet again — he might have his head up his ass in some important way. So I have included, at this point, the various remarks that Emerson made in that essay “History,” that had to do with eternity and with Emerson’s sophomoric [Platonism](#) in regard to “eternity,” so callow and so totally at variance with anything that Thoreau ever said or did. And I think it is indeed significant, that when a researcher says that the topic is Thoreau’s attitude toward time and eternity, this is the sort of thing that would be suggested by an Emerson scholar. There is a curious lack of comprehension, a “flattening” I would want to call it, which occurs when the Emerson scholars confront such a topic, and it would be a mistake for anyone to suppose that I have any grasp of what it is that is going wrong in their minds when they get into such a mode. At any rate, here are the relevant passages from Emerson’s essay “History” that was published on March 20, 1841.

Page 7: “What is history,” said Napoleon, “but a fable agreed upon?” This life of ours is stuck round with Egypt, Greece, Gaul, England, War, Colonization, Church, Court, and Commerce, as with so many flowers and wild ornaments grave and gay. I will not make more account of them. I believe in Eternity. I can find Greece, Asia, Italy, Spain, and the Islands, — the genius and creative principle of each and of all eras in my own mind.

Page 10: Why should we make account of time, or of magnitude, or of figure? The soul knows them not; and genius, obeying its law, knows how to play with them as a young child plays with graybeards and in churches. Genius studies the casual thought, and, far back in the womb of things, sees ... through all the kingdoms of organized life, the eternal unity. Nature is a mutable cloud, which is always and never the same. She casts the same thought into troops of forms, as a poet makes twenty fables with one moral. Through the bruteness and toughness of matter, a subtle spirit bends all things to its own will.... In man we still trace the remains or hints of all that we esteem badges of servitude in the lower races....

Page 12: Nature is an endless combination and repetition of a very few laws. She hums the old well-known air through innumerable variations.

Pages 18-19: Our admiration of the antique is not admiration of the old, but of the natural.... [The Greeks] combine the energy of manhood with the engaging unconsciousness of childhood.... A person of childlike genius and inborn energy is still a Greek ... In reading [the Philoctetes] ... I feel time passing away as an ebbing sea. I feel the eternity of man, the identity of his thought.... Then the vaunted distinction between Greek and English, between Classic and Romantic schools, seems superficial and pedantic. When a thought of [Plato](#) becomes a thought to me, when a truth that fired the soul of [Pindar](#) fires mine, time is no more....





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1842

July: [Henry Thoreau](#) contributed poems and [NATURAL HISTORY OF MASSACHUSETTS](#) to [THE DIAL](#). [Nathaniel Hawthorne](#) liked this review of the nature literature — but [Waldo Emerson](#) disliked it.

**Cruickshank
commentary**

Professor of [Geology](#) Robert M. Thorson of the University of Connecticut has indicated on pages 34-5 of his [WALDEN'S SHORE: HENRY DAVID THOREAU AND NINETEENTH-CENTURY SCIENCE](#) why it is that the dust jacket of that history-of-science text published by Harvard University Press happens to be decorated with a photograph of a granite pebble containing a sparkling vein of quartz. The granite is intended to represent the Andover Granite bedrock far underneath the glacial detritus within which the waters of [Walden Pond](#) are situated. The pebble's quartz vein presents the "frost-work of a longer night" of which Thoreau wrote in his essay for [THE DIAL](#) "[NATURAL HISTORY OF MASSACHUSETTS](#)" — it is an emblem of Thoreau's affiliation with Vulcan rather than Neptune, [Plutonism](#) rather than [Neptunism](#) in the history of the development of scientific understanding — and the regular ovoid shape of the specimen would be indicative of its subsequent tumbling down a streambed of time. The one thing of which we are not informed in this text is whether or no this particular photographed pebble is one of those Henry **himself** picked out for the mineral collection he kept in his attic room in the Concord boardinghouse, a mineral collection that is now in storage at the Fruitlands Museum in Harvard, Massachusetts (and perhaps this would be something that matters only to me):



Being a big fan of Vulcan made Thoreau an easy mark for the plutonist school of thought, despite his formal education during the neptunian era. He sensed beneath Concord the presence of a great "subterranean fire," one responsible for creating gemlike crystals of quartz within the veins of the Andover Granite. These, he collected for his specimen cabinet. These he interpreted as the "frost-work of a longer night." This six-word snippet of prose-poetry densely abstracts three Huttonian verities. Crystals of water-ice and silica-ice were indeed both hexagonal "frosts" originating from fluids, whether vapor or liquid. Freezing quartz requires a "longer night" than freezing water. And these respective nights have different causes. In Playfair's words, the "revolutions within the earth are independent of revolutions within the celestial spheres."



Thoreau correctly envisioned planet Earth emerging from an initially molten state under darkened skies. "Mornings of creation, I call them ... A morning which carries us back beyond the Mosaic creation, where crystallizations are fresh and unmelted. It is the poet's hour." This passage was inspired by a Promethean scene coming from a Concord field on a moonless night. From a distance, Henry saw a burning "heap of stumps half covered with earth," a "phosphorescence ... a strange, Titanic thing this Fire, this Vulcan.... within are fiery caverns, incrustated with fire as a cave with saltpetre ... the glass men are nearer the truth than the men of science." This last clause offered playful support for the plutonists who, as "glass men," invoked a molten origin for local rock. Conversely, it was a dig at the neptunist thrall for their aqueous version of creation.



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"Entomology extends the limits of being in a new direction, so that I walk in nature with a sense of greater space and freedom. It suggests besides, that the universe is not rough-hewn, but perfect in its details. Nature will bear the closest inspection; she invites us to lay our eye level with the smallest leaf, and take an insect view of its plain. She has no interstices; every part is full of life. I explore, too, with pleasure, the sources of the myriad sounds which crowd the summer noon, and which seem the very grain and stuff of which eternity is made. Who does not remember the shrill roll-call of the harvest fly? There were ears for these sounds in Greece long ago, as Anacreon's ode will show"



ANACREON

– [Henry David Thoreau](#)
"Natural History of Massachusetts"
July 1842 issue of The Dial²

2. Franklin Benjamin Sanborn reported that "one of Harvard College's natural historians" (we may presume this to have been Dr. Thaddeus William Harris, Thoreau's teacher in natural science in his senior year) had remarked to Bronson Alcott that "if Emerson had not spoiled him, Thoreau would have made a good entomologist."



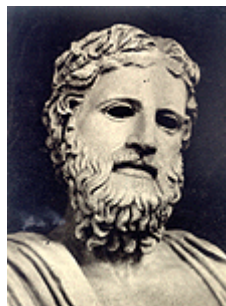
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PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

Anacreon's Ode to the Cicada

We pronounce thee happy, cicada,
For on the tops of the trees,
Sipping a little dew
Like any king thou singest.
For thine are they all,
Whatever thou seest in the fields,
And whatever the woods bear.
Thou art the friend of the husbandmen.
In no respect injuring any one;
And thou art honored among men,
Sweet prophet of summer.
The muses love thee,
And Phoebus himself loves thee,
And has given thee a shrill song;
Age does not wrack thee,
Thou skilful – earth-born – song-loving,
Unsuffering – bloodless one;
Almost thou art like the gods.



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[NUTTALL](#)[ARISTOTLE](#)

I have by me one of a pair of ospreys, which have for some years fished in this vicinity, shot by a neighboring pond, measuring more than two feet in length, and six in the stretch of its wings. Nuttall mentions that "The ancients, particularly Aristotle, pretended that the ospreys taught their young to gaze at the sun, and those who were unable to do so were destroyed. Linnæus even believed, on ancient authority, that one of the feet of this bird had all the toes divided, while the other was partly webbed, so that it could swim with one foot, and grasp a fish with the other." But that educated eye is now dim, and those talons are nerveless. Its shrill scream seems yet to linger in its throat, and the roar of the sea in its wings. There is the tyranny of Jove in its claws, and his wrath in the erectile feathers of the head and neck. It reminds me of the Argonautic expedition, and would inspire the dullest to take flight over Parnassus.

[NUTTALL](#)

The booming of the bittern, described by Goldsmith and Nuttall, is frequently heard in our fens, in the morning and evening, sounding like a pump, or the chopping of wood in a frosty morning in some distant farm-yard. The manner in which this sound is produced I have not seen anywhere described. On one occasion, the bird has been seen by one of my neighbors to thrust its bill into the water, and suck up as much as it could hold, then raising its head, it pumped it out again with four or five heaves of the neck, throwing it two or three feet, and making the sound each time.

In this issue of [THE DIAL](#), appeared [Thoreau](#)'s translation of one of [Anacreon](#)'s odes in *CARMINUM POETARUM NOUEM*, under the title "Return of Spring": "the works of men shine," etc.

In this issue of [THE DIAL](#), in the context of an article "Prayers" by [Waldo](#), a poem appeared in quotation without any attribution and without title. We suspect this sarcastic comment in the form of a prayer to have been contributed by [Thoreau](#):





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Great God, I ask thee for no meaner pelf
Than that I may not disappoint myself,
That in my action I may soar as high
As I can now discern with this clear eye.

And next in value, which thy kindness lends,
That I may greatly disappoint my friends,
Howe'er they think or hope that it may be,
They may not dream how thou'st
distinguished me.

That my weak hand may equal my firm faith,
And my life practice what my tongue saith;
That my low conduct may not show,
Nor my relenting lines,
That I thy purpose did not know,
Or overrated thy designs.

This issue of THE DIAL also contained portions selected by Waldo out of Sir William Jones's and Charles Wilkins's translations of the *THE HEETOPADES OF VEESHNOO-SARMA*, IN A SERIES OF CONNECTED FABLES, INTERSPERSED WITH MORAL, PRUDENTIAL, AND POLITICAL MAXIMS.³

A WEEK: It is always singular, but encouraging, to meet with common sense in very old books, as the Heetopades of Veeshnoo Sarma; a playful wisdom which has eyes behind as well as before, and oversees itself.

HITOPADESA

WALDEN: Why do precisely these objects which we behold make a world? Why has man just these species of animals for his neighbors; as if nothing but a mouse could have filled this crevice? I suspect that Pilpay & Co. have put animals to their best use, for they are all beasts of burden, in a sense, made to carry some portion of our thoughts.

HITOPADESA

ÆSOP

XENOPHANES

PEOPLE OF
WALDEN

THE DIAL, JULY 1842

We commence in the present number the printing of a series of selections from the oldest ethical and religious writings of men, exclusive of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. Each nation has its bible more or less pure; none has yet been willing or able in a wise and devout spirit to collate its own with those of other nations, and sinking the civil-historical and the ritual portions to bring together the grand expressions of the moral sentiment in different ages and races, the rules for the guidance of life, the bursts of piety and of abandonment to the

3. The *HITOPADESA* or "Salutary Instructions" is a very ancient collection and is also familiarly known to us as "THE FABLES OF *PILPAY*." Many of these tales are condensations of material to be found in the *PANCHATANTRA*, which consists of five apologues recited by a Brahmin teacher name of *Vishnu Sarma* for the instruction of his class of Indian princes in the principles of their princship. Since this collection emphasizes worldly-wiseness, it has been exceedingly popular, indeed even more popular than Machiavelli's *THE PRINCE*: we presently know of over 200 different editions in at least 50 languages around the world.



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PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

Invisible and Eternal; – a work inevitable sooner or later, and which we hope is to be done by religion and not by literature. The following sentences are taken from Charles Wilkins's translation of the Heetopades or Amicable Instructions of Veeshnoo Sarma, according to Sir William Jones, the most beautiful, if not the most ancient collection of apologues in the world, and the original source of the book, which passes in the modern languages of Europe and America, under the false name of Pilpay.

EXTRACTS FROM THE HEETOPADES OF VEESHNOO SARMA.

Whatsoever cometh to pass, either good or evil, is the consequence of a man's own actions, and descendeth from the power of the Supreme Ruler.

Our lives are for the purposes of religion, labor, love, and salvation. If these are destroyed, what is not lost? If these are preserved, what is not preserves?

A wise man should relinquish both his wealth and his life for another. All is to be surrendered for a just man when he is reduced to the brink of destruction.

Why dost thou hesitate over this perishable body composed of flesh, bones, and excrements? O my friend, [my body,] support my reputation!

If constancy is to be obtained by inconstancy, purity by impurity, reputation by the body, then what is there which may not be obtained?

The difference between the body and the qualities is infinite; the body is a thing to be destroyed in a moment, whilst the qualities endure to the end of the creation.

Is this one of us, or is he a stranger is the enumeration of the ungenerous; but to those by whom liberality is practised, the whole world is but as one family.

Fortune attendeth that lion amongst men who exerteth himself. They are weak men who declare Fate the sole cause.

It is said, Fate is nothing but the deeds committed in a former state of existence; wherefore it behoveth a man vigilantly to exert the powers he is possessed of.

The stranger, who turneth away from a house with disappointed hopes, leaveth there his own offences and departeth, taking with him all the good actions of the owner.

Hospitality is to be exercised even towards an enemy when he cometh to thine house. The tree does not withdraw its shade even from the wood-cutter.

Of all men thy guest is the superior.

The mind of a good man does not alter when he is in distress; the waters of the ocean are not to be heated by a torch of straw. Nor bathing with cool water, nor a necklace of pearls, nor anointing with sanders, yieldeth such comfort to the body oppressed with heat, as the language of a good man cheerfully uttered doth to the mind.

Good men extend their pity even unto the most despicable animals. The moon doth not withhold the light, even from the



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cottage of a Chandala.

Those who have forsaken the killing of all; those who are helpmates to all; those who are a sanctuary to all; those men are in the way of heaven.

Behold the difference between the one who eateth flesh, and him to whom it belonged. The first hath a momentary enjoyment, whilst the latter is deprived of existence.

Who would commit so great a crime against a poor animal, who is fed only by the herbs which grow wild in the woods, and whose belly is burnt up with hunger?

Every book of knowledge, which is known to Oosana or to Vreehaspatee, is by nature planted in the understanding of women.

The beauty of the Kokeela is his voice; the beauty of a wife is constancy to her husband; the beauty of the ill-favored is science; the beauty of the penitent is patience.

What is too great a load for those who have strength? What is distance to the indefatigable? What is a foreign country to those who have science? Who is a stranger to those who have the habit of speaking kindly?

Time drinketh up the essence of every great and noble action, which ought to be performed and is delayed in the execution.

When Nature is forsaken by her lord, be she ever so great, she doth not survive.

Suppose thyself a river, and a holy pilgrimage in the land of Bharata, of which truth is the water, good actions the banks, and compassion the current; and then, O son of Pandoo, wash thyself therein, for the inward soul is not to be purified by common water.

As frogs to the pool, as birds to a lake full of water, so doth every species of wealth flow to the hands of him who exerteth himself.

If we are rich with the riches which we neither give nor enjoy, we are rich with the riches which are buried in the caverns of the earth.

He whose mind is at ease is possessed of all riches. is it not the same to one whose foot is enclosed in a shoe, as if the whole surface of the earth were covered with leather?

Where have they, who are running here and there in search of riches, such happiness as those placid spirits enjoy who are gratified at the immortal fountain of happiness?

All hath been read, all hath been heard, and all hath been followed by him who, having put hope behind him, dependeth not upon expectation.

What is religion? Compassion for all things which have life. What is happiness? To animals in this world, health. What is kindness? A principle in the goode. What is philosophy? An entire separation from the world.

To a hero of sound mind, what is his own, and what a foreign country? Wherever he halteth, that place is acquired by the splendor of his arms.

When pleasure is arrived, it is worthy of attention; when trouble presenteth itself, the same; pains and pleasures have



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their revolutions like a wheel.

One, although not possessed of a mine of gold, may find the offspring of his own nature, that noble ardor which hath for its object the accomplishment of the whole assemblage of virtues.

Man should not be over-anxious for a subsistence, for it is provided by the Creator. The infant no sooner droppeth from the womb, than the breasts of the mother begin to stream.

He, by whom geese were made white, parrots are stained green, and peacocks painted of various hues, – even he will provide for their support.

He, whose inclination turneth away from an object, may be said to have obtained it.

[Wilkins, Sir Charles.

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[Horace Hayman Wilson.](#)

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SANSKRIT-ENGLISH DICTIONARY. Calcutta, 1819; 2nd edn., 1832.

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1851

February 9, Sunday: [Henry Thoreau](#) wrote something in his journal on this day that Dr. Alfred I. Tauber would consider relevant to an understanding of his attitude toward time and eternity: “My desire for knowledge is intermittent but my desire to commune with the spirit of the universe –to be intoxicated even with the fumes, call it, of that divine nectar –to bear my head through atmospheres and over heights unknown to my feet –is perennial & constant.”



February 9, Sunday: The last half of January was warm & thawy. The swift streams were open & the muskrats were seen swimming & diving & bringing up clams leaving their shells on the ice. We had now forgotten summer & autumn, but had already begun to anticipate spring. Fishermen improved the warmer weather to fish for pickerel through the ice– Before it was only the Autumn landscape with a thin layer of snow upon it we saw the withered flowers through it –but now we do not think of autumn when we look on this snow That earth is effectually buried– It is mid winter. Within a few days the cold has set in stronger than ever though the days are much longer now. Now I travel across the fields on the crust which has frozen since the Jan. thaw –& I can cross the river in most places. It is easier to get about the country than at any other season– Easier than in summer because the rivers & meadows are frozen –& there is no high grass or other crops to be avoided –easier than in Dec. before the crust was frozen

Sir John Mandeville says –“In fro what partie of the earth that men dwell, outhere aboven or benethen, it seemeth always to hem that dwellen there, that they gon more right than any other folk.”

Again –“And yee shulle undirstonde, that of all theise contrees, and of all theise yles, and of all the dyverse folk, that I have spoken of before, and of dyverse laws and of dyverse beleeves that thei have, yit is there non of hem alle, but that thei have sum resoun within hem and understandinge, but gif it be the fewere.”

I have heard that there is a Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge– It is said that Knowledge is power and the like–

Methinks there is equal need of a society for the diffusion of useful Ignorance –for what is most of our boasted so called knowledge but a conceit that we know something which robs us of the advantages of our actual ignorance–

In What consists the superiority of that

{*One leaf missing*}

auctoritatis. Habemus enim hujusmodi senatûs-consultum, veruntamen inclusum in tabulis, tanquam gladium in vaginâ reconditum; quo ex senatûs-consulto, confestim interfectum te esse, O Business, convenit. Vivis; et vivis, non ad deponendam, sed ad confirmandam, audaciam. Cupio, Patres Conscripti, me esse clementem: cupio in tantis rei-privatae periculis, me non dissolutum videri: sed jam me ipse inertiae nequitiaeque condemno.

Castra sunt in Italiâ, contra rem-privatam, in Etruriae faucibus collocata: crescit in dies singulos hostium numerus: eorum autem imperatorem castrorum, ducemque hostium, intra moenia, atque adeò in senatu, videmus, intestinam aliquam quotidie perniciem rei-privatae molientem.”

For a man’s ignorance sometimes is not only useful but beautiful while his knowledge is oftentimes worse than useless beside being ugly.

In reference to important things whose knowledge amounts to more than a consciousness of his ignorance Yet what more refreshing & inspiring knowledge than this?

How often are we wise as serpents without being harmless as doves.

Donne says “Who are a little wise the best fools be

Cudworth says “we have all of us by nature **μαντευμά τι** (as both Plato & Aristotle call it) a certain divination, presage and parturient vaticination in our minds, of some higher good & perfection than either power or knowledge.” – – Aristotle himself declares, that there is **λόγου τι κρείττον**, which is **ἰσλόγου ἀρχή**, something better than reason & knowledge, which is the principle and original of all.”

Lavater says “Who finds the clearest not clear, thinks the darkest not obscure”

My desire for knowledge is intermittent but my desire to commune with the spirit of the universe –to be intoxicated even with the fumes, call it, of that divine nectar –to bear my head through atmospheres and over heights unknown to my feet –is perennial & constant.

It is remarkable how few events or crises there are in our minds’ histories– How little *exercised* we have been

RALPH CUDWORTH



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in our mind –how few experiences we have had I would fain be assured that I am growing apace & rankly – though

{*Two leaves missing*}

society –to that culture –that interaction of man on man which is a sort of breeding in & in and produces a merely English nobility a puny & effoete nobility, a civilization which has a speedy limit.

The story of Romulus & Remus being suckled by a wolf is not a mere fable; the founders of every state which has risen to eminence have drawn their nourishment and vigor from a similar source. It is because the children of the empire were not suckled by wolves that they were conquered & displaced by the children of the northern forests who were.

America is the she wolf to day and the children of exhausted Europe exposed on her uninhabited & savage shores are the Romulus & Remus who having derived new life & vigor from her breast have founded a new Rome in the west.

It is remarkable how few passages comparatively speaking there are in the best literature of the day which betray any intimacy with nature.

It is apparent enough to me that only one or two of my townsmen or acquaintances (not more than one in many thousand men in deed –) feel or at least obey any strong attraction drawing them toward the forest or to nature, but all almost without exception gravitate exclusively toward men or society. The young men of Concord and in other towns do not walk in the woods but congregate in shops & offices– They suck one another– Their strongest attraction is toward the mill dam.

A thousand assemble about the fountain in the public square –the town pump –be it full or dry clear or turbid, every morning but not –one in a thousand is in the meanwhile drinking at that fountain's head.

It is hard for the young aye & the old man in the outhouses to keep away from the Mill dam a whole day –but he will find some excuse as an ounce of cloves that might be wanted or a new England Farmer still in the office –to tackle up the horse –or even go afoot but he will go at some rate– This is not bad comparatively this is because he cannot do better. In spite of his hoeing & chopping he is unexpressed & undeveloped.

I do not know where to find in any literature whether ancient or modern –any adequate account of that Nature with which I am acquainted. Mythology comes nearest to it of any.

The actual life of men is not without a dramatic interest at least to the thinker. It is not altogether prosaic. 70,000 pilgrims proceed annually to Mecca from the various nations of Islâm. But this is not so significant as the far simpler & more unpretending pilgrimage to the shrines of some obscure individual which yet makes no bustle in the world

I believe that adam in paradise was not so favorably situated on the whole as is the backwoodsman in America–

You all know how miserably the former turned out –or was turned out –but there is some consolation at least in the fact that it yet remains to be seen how the western Adam Adam in the wilderness will turn out –

In Adams fall
We sinned all.
In the new Adam's rise
We shall all reach the skies.

Infusion of hemlock in our tea, if we must drink tea –not the poison hemlock –but the hemlock spruce I mean –or perchance the Arbor Vitae –the tree of life is what we want.

ARISTOTLE

DIFFERENT
DRUMMER

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Pilgrim Costumes



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1853

March 5, Saturday: The Saint Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Company, a predecessor to The Travelers [insurance](#) company, was founded in St. Paul, Minnesota, serving local customers who were having a difficult time getting claim payments in a timely manner from insurance companies on the east coast of the United States.

[Henry Thoreau](#) mentioned in his journal that he had received a circular letter early in March or shortly before from a scientist he had met, [Spencer Fullerton Baird](#), the secretary of [Louis Agassiz](#)'s American Association



for the Advancement of Science, advising him and, he suspected, "thousand of others," that he had been proposed for membership in the Association. The letter asked him "to fill in the blank against certain questions, among which the most important one was what branch of science [he] was specially interested in." Thoreau did not respond, apparently assuming the group would take no action.



AUDUBON

March 5, 1853: F. Brown showed me to-day some lesser redpolls which he shot yesterday. They turn out to be my falsely-called chestnut-frontleted bird of the winter. "*Linaria minor*, Ray. Lesser Redpoll Linnet. From Pennsylvania and New Jersey to Maine, in winter; inland to Kentucky. Breeds in Maine, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Labrador, and the Fur Countries." –[Audubon's Synopsis](#). They have a sharp bill, black legs and claws, and a bright-crimson crown or frontlet, in the male reaching to the base of the bill, with, in his case, a delicate rose or carmine on the breast and rump. Though this is described by Nuttall as an occasional visitor in the winter, it has been the prevailing bird here this winter.

Yesterday I got my grape cuttings. The day before went to the Corner Spring to look at the tufts of green grass. (got some of the very common leptogium (? ?). Is it one of the *Collemacæ*? Was pleased with the sight of the yellow osiers of the golden willow, and the red of the cornel, now colors are so rare,. Saw the green fine-threaded conferva in a ditch, commonly called frog-spittle. Brought it home in my pocket, and it expanded again in a tumbler. It appeared quite a fresh growth, with what looked like filmy air-bubbles, as big as large shot, in its midst.

The secretary of the Association...The secretary for the Association for the Advancement of Science requests me, as he probably has thousands of others, by a printed circular letter from Washington the other day, to fill the blank against certain questions, among which the most important one was what branch of science I was specially interested in, using the term science in the most comprehensive sense possible. Now, though I could state to a select few that department of human inquiry which engages me, and should be rejoiced at an



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opportunity to do so, I felt that it would be to make myself the laughing-stock of the scientific community to describe or attempt to describe to them that branch of science which specially interests me, inasmuch as they do not believe in a science which deals with the higher law. So I was obliged to speak to their condition and describe to them that poor part of me which alone they can understand. The fact is I am a mystic, a transcendentalist, and a natural philosopher to boot. Now I think of it, I should have told them at once that I was a transcendentalist. That would have been the shortest way of telling them that they would not understand my explanations.

How absurd that, though I probably stand as near to nature as any of them, and am by constitution as good an observer as most, yet a true account of my relation to nature should excite their ridicule only! If it had been the secretary of an association of which Plato or Aristotle was the president, I should not have hesitated to describe my studies at once and particularly.

ARISTOTLE



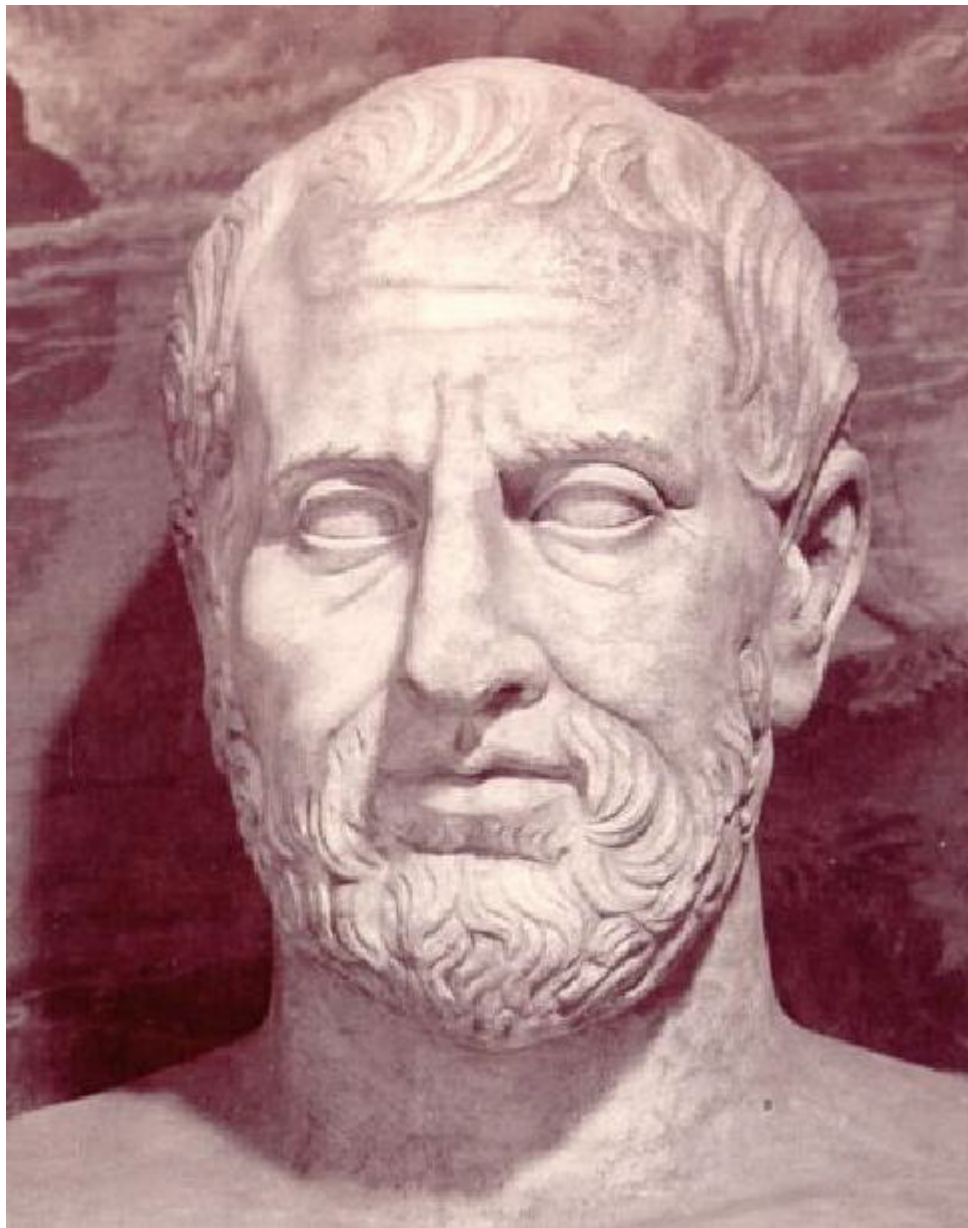
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1859

December 16, Friday: [Henry Thoreau](#) checked out, from [Harvard Library](#), the 2d volume of a 5-volume set prepared 1818-1821 (*THEOPHRASTI ERESII QUAE SUPERSUNT OPERA: ET EXCERPTA LIBRORUM* by [Theophrastus of Eresus](#) (circa 372-circa 287BCE), JOHANN GOTTLOB SCHNEIDER, HEINRICH FRIEDRICH LINK. Lipsiae: Sumtibus Frid. Christ. Guil. Vogelii) of ΤΗΟΠΗΡΑΣΤΥΣ ΕΡΕΣΙΩΝ ΤΑ ΣΟΟΛΟΜΕΝΑ.



THEOPHRASTUS

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He also checked out the two volumes of [Aristotle](#)'s *HISTOIRE DES ANIMAUX D'ARISTOTE* in Greek and in the French translation by M. Camus (Paris: Chez la veuve Desaint, 1783).



HISTOIRE DES ANIMAUX I

HISTOIRE DES ANIMAUX II

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While at the [Harvard Library](#), [Thoreau](#) read from but did not check out [John Gerard](#)'s 1597 [botanical](#) resource, THE HERBALL OR GENERAL HISTORIE OF PLANTES:

GREAT HERBALL OF 1597



INTERNET COMMENTARY



December 16, 1859: A.M.—To Cambridge, where I read in [Gerard](#)'s Herbal. [Vide extracts from preface made in October 1859.] His admirable though quaint descriptions are, to my mind, greatly superior to the modern more scientific ones. He describes not according to rule but to his natural delight in the plants. He brings them vividly before you, as one who has seen and delighted in them. It is almost as good as to see the plants themselves. It suggests that we cannot too often get rid of the barren assumption that is in our science. His leaves are leaves; his flowers, flowers; his fruit, fruit. They are green and colored and fragrant. It is a man's knowledge added to a child's delight. Modern botanical descriptions approach ever nearer to the dryness of an algebraic formula, as if $c + y$ were = to a love-letter. It is the keen joy and discrimination of the child who has just seen a flower for the first time and comes running in with it to its friends. How much better to describe your object in fresh English words rather than in these conventional Latinisms! He has really seen, and smelt, and tasted, and reports his sensations.

Bought a book at Little & Brown's, paying a nine-pence more on a volume than it was offered me for elsewhere. The customer thus pays for the more elegant style of the store.



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The Select Committee on the Invasion of Harpers Ferry created by Democratic Senator James Mason of Virginia held its first meeting in regard to the John Brown affair and its Secret “Six” conspiracy. The committee would be in existence for six months before delivering its final report and would summon, in all, 32 witnesses.

[Edwin Coppoc](#) and John E. Cook were [hanged](#) in Charlestown, Virginia.⁴ Edwin’s body would be buried in Winona after a funeral attended by the entire town. Later his body would be reburied in Salem, Ohio.



(Edwin had written from the prison to his adoptive mother, of a nonresistant-abolitionist [Quaker](#) farm family, that he was

“sorry to say that I was ever induced to raise a gun.”

4. I have been advised that according to THE QUAKERS OF IOWA by Louis Thomas Jones, a scholarly work published under the auspices of the State Historical Iowa at Iowa City, Iowa in 1914 (I haven’t myself actually seen this book), prior to their deaths the Coppoc brothers were disowned by the Red Cedar Monthly Meeting of Friends in the West Branch/Springdale area.



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Edwin's brother [Barclay Coppoc](#) was still eluding capture.)

John E. Cook had made a full confession of his activities with the raiders and at the last moment had sought to save his neck by representing that he had been deceived through false promises, but this had not saved him, nor had the fact that his brother-in-law A.P. Willard was Governor of Indiana.

When it came the turn of [John Anderson Copeland, Jr.](#) to be [hanged](#), too short a drop was used. He strangled slowly.



Just before being taken from his cell to the execution field that morning, he had completed a last letter to his family:

*Charlestown Jail, Va.,
Dec. 16, '59*

*Dear Father, Mother, Brothers Henry, William and Freddy, and
Sisters Sarah and Mary:*

*The last Sabbath with me on earth has passed away. The last
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday that I shall ever see
on this earth have now passed by God's glorious sun, which he
has placed in the heavens to illuminate this earth- whose
refulgent beams are watched for by this poor invalid, to enter
& make as it were in heaven of the room in which he is confined-
I have seen declining behind the western mountains for the last
time. Last night for the last time, I beheld the soft bright
moon as it rose, casting its mellow light into my felons cell,
dissipating the darkness and filling it with that soft pleasant
light which causes such thrills of joy to all those in like
circumstance with myself. This morning for the last time, I
beheld the glorious sun of yesterday rising in the far-off East,
away off in the country where our Lord Jesus Christ first
proclaimed salvation to man, and now as he rises higher and his
bright light takes the place of the pale, soft moonlight, I will
take my pen, for the last time, to write you who are bound to*



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me by those strong ties (yea, the strongest that God ever instituted,) the ties of blood and relationship. I am well, both in body and in mind. And now, dear ones, if it were not that I know your hearts will be filled with sorrow at my fate, I could pass from this earth without a regret. Why should you sorrow? Why should your hearts be racked with grief? Have I not everything to gain and nothing to lose by the change? I fully believe that not only myself but also all three of my poor comrades who are to ascend the same scaffold- (a scaffold already made sacred to the cause of freedom, by the death of that great champion of human freedom, Capt. JOHN BROWN) are prepared to meet our God. I am only leaving a world filled with sorrow and woe to enter one in which there is but one lasting day of happiness and bliss. I feel that God in his mercy has spoken peace to my soul, and that all my numerous sins are now forgiven me. Dear parents, brothers and sisters, it is true that I am now in a few hours to start on a journey from which no traveler returns. Yes, long before this reaches you, I shall as I sincerely hope, have met our brother and sister who have for years been worshiping God around his throne - singing praises to him, and thanking him that he gave his Son to die that they might have eternal life. I pray daily and hourly that I may be fitted to have my home with them, and that you, one and all, may prepare your souls to meet your God, that so, in the end, though we meet no more on earth, we shall meet in Heaven, where we shall not be parted by the demands of the cruel and unjust monster Slavery. But think not that I am complaining, for I feel reconciled to meet my fate. I pray God that his will be done; not mine. Let me tell you that it is not the mere act of having to meet death, which I should regret, (if I should express regret I mean,) but that such an unjust institution should exist as the one which demands my life; and not my life only, but the lives of those to whom my life bears but the relative value of zero to the infinite. I beg of you one and all that you will not grieve about me, but that you will thank God that he spared me time to make my peace with Him. And now, dear ones, attach no blame to anyone for my coming here for not any person but myself is to blame. I have no antipathy against anyone, I have freed my mind of all hard feelings against every living being, and I ask all who have any thing against me to do the same. And now dear parents, Brothers and sisters, I must bid you to serve your God and meet me in heaven. I must with a few words, close my correspondence with those who are the most near and dear to me: but I hope, in the end, we may again commune, never to cease. Dear ones, he who writes this will, in a few hours, be in this world no longer. Yes, these fingers which hold the pen with which this is written will, before to-day's sun has reached his meridian have laid it aside forever, and this poor soul have taken its flight to meet its God. And now dear ones I must bid you that last, long, sad farewell. Good-day, Father, Mother, Henry, William, and Freddy, Sarah and Mary, serve your God and meet me in heaven.

Your Son and Brother to eternity,

John A. Copeland.



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Is it that [Aaron D. Stevens](#), and ten of Captain Brown's black supporters, having been duly found guilty of treason and murder by a jury of their white male peers, were [hanged](#) on this date?



Or is it that the other surrendered survivors of the raid on Harpers Ferry, John [Anderson Copeland, Jr.](#), Shields Green, and [Aaron D. Stevens](#), having been duly found guilty of treason and murder by a jury of their white male peers, were [hanged](#) on this date?⁵

A monument would be erected by the citizens of Oberlin, Ohio in honor of their three free citizens of color who had died in the raid or been [hanged](#), Shields Green, [John Anderson Copeland, Jr.](#), and Lewis Sheridan Leary (the 8-foot marble monument would be moved to Vine Street Park in 1971).



December 26. P. M.— Skate to Lee's Bridge and there measure back, by pacing, the breadth of the river.

5. In *THE CAPTURE AND EXECUTION OF JOHN BROWN: A TALE OF MARTYRDOM*, BY ELIJAH AVEY, EYE WITNESS, WITH THIRTY ILLUSTRATIONS, dated 1906, we have on page 45 an assertion that the white men John E. Cook and [Edwin Coppoc](#), and then the black men [John Anderson Copeland, Jr.](#) and Shields Green, were [hanged](#) on December 16th, 1859. The reference says that, the gallows being not large enough, the two black men Copeland and Green were forced to stand and watch the two white men Cook and Coppoc being hanged before themselves ascending the scaffold. But I have from another reference this assertion that it was one surrendered surviving white man, [Aaron D. Stevens](#), who was hanged on the 16th along with ten black supporters of Captain John Brown, and that Cook actually would be among the last hanged. Which account would be correct — and why is there such a glaring discrepancy between the various accounts?

The book *SECRET SIX* treats each retreating admission of each of the co-conspirators in treason as if it were holy writ. No attempt is made to discern, behind this haze of post-facto explanations and justifications, what the brags of these participants might have been had their plot been successful in initiating the race war they contemplated and had this race war been completed, as it would certainly have been completed, by a historic genocide against black Americans. (Joel Silbey has contended, in "The Civil War Synthesis in American History," that postbellum American historians have been misconstruing antebellum American politics by viewing them in conjunction with our knowledge of the bloodbath that followed. It is only after the fact that we can "know" that the US Civil War amounted to a sectional dispute, North versus South. We avoid learning that before the fact, it was undecided whether this conflict was going to shape up as a race conflict, a class conflict, or a sectional conflict. We avoid knowing that the raid on Harpers Ferry might have resulted in a race war, in which peoples of color would be exterminated in order to create an all-white America, or might have resulted in a class war, in which the laboring classes might have first destroyed the plantation owners' equity by killing his slaves, and then gone on to purge the nation of the white plantation owners themselves, with their privileged-class endowments.) Also, according to the endmatter, the *SECRET SIX* study had obtained its material on Frederick Douglass basically from McFeely's *FREDERICK DOUGLASS* of 1991, and its material on [Thoreau](#) from Sanborn's *Henry David Thoreau* of 1917, neither of which were the last word on the subject when the book was prepared. In addition, this work provides no reference whatever for the Emerson life: evidently he was simply presumed not to be of even marginal pertinence. There is no consideration to be found anywhere in this volume of the comparison event, the other American struggle for freedom, the one which had taken place in Haiti under General Toussaint Louverture.

For these reasons, the study is, fundamentally, incompetent. It is as if O.J. Simpson and his dream team had been allowed to control what would appear in our social history texts. Or, as if the White House staff had been allowed to define once and for all the extent of President Richard Milhouse Nixon's involvement in the Watergate break-in, with, after their initial defensive testimony, after their establishment of the official consensus "truth," all explanations accepted at their putative face value — and no further questioning tolerated.

THE PEOPLE OF A WEEK:

ARISTOTELES OF STAGEIROS

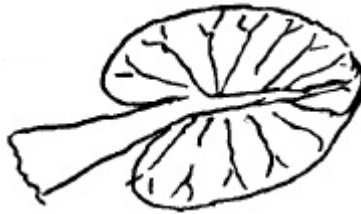
PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

After being uniformly overcast all the forenoon, still and moderate weather, it begins to snow very gradually, at first imperceptibly, this afternoon, –at first I thought I imagined it,– and at length begins to snow in earnest about 6 P.M., but lasts only a few minutes.

I see a brute with a gun in his hand, standing motionless over a musquash-house which he has destroyed. I find that he has visited every one in the neighborhood of Fair Haven Pond, above and below, and broken them all down, laying open the interior to the water, and then stood watchful, close by, for the poor creature to show its head there for a breath of air. There lies the red carcass of one whose pelt he has taken on the spot, flat on the bloody ice. And for his afternoon's cruelty that fellow will be rewarded with a ninepence, perchance. When I consider what are the opportunities of the civilized man for getting ninepences and getting light, this seems to me more savage than savages are. Depend on it that whoever thus treats the musquash's house, his refuge when the water is frozen thick, he and his family will not come to a good end. So many of these houses being broken open, –twenty or thirty I see,– I look into the open hole, and find in it, in almost every instance, many pieces of the white root with the little leaf-bud curled up which I take to be the yellow lily root, – the leaf-bud unrolled has the same scent with the yellow lily. There will be half a dozen of these pointed buds, more or less green, coming to a point at the end of the root:



Also I see a little coarser, what I take to be green leaf-stalk of the pontederia, for I see a little of the stipule sheathing the stalk from within it? The first unrolls to something like:



[Of course it is yellow lily.] In one hole there was a large quantity of this root, and these buds attached or bitten off, the root generally five or six eighths inch in diameter and one to four inches long. I think, therefore, that this root must be their principal food at this time. If you open twenty cabins you will find it in at least three quarters of them, and nothing else, unless a very little pontederia leaf-stem. I see no fresh clamshells in them, and scarcely any on the ice anywhere on the edge of open places, nor are they probably deposited in a heap under the ice. It may be, however, that the shells are opened in this hole and then dropped in the water near by!! By eating or killing at least so many lily buds they must thin out that plant considerably. Twice this winter I have noticed a musquash floating in a placid open place in the river when it was frozen for a mile each side, looking at first like a bit of stump or frozen meadow, but showing its whole upper outline from nose to end of tail; perfectly still till he observed me, then suddenly diving and steering under the ice toward some cabin's entrance or other retreat half a dozen or more rods off.

As some of the tales of our childhood, the invention of some Mother Goose, will haunt us when we are grown up, so the race itself still believes in some of the fables with which its infancy was amused and imposed on, e. g. the fable of the cranes and pygmies, which learned men endeavored to believe or explain in the last century. Aristotle, being almost if not quite the first to write systematically on animals, gives them, of course, only popular names, such as the hunters, fowlers, fishers, and farmers of his day used. He used no scientific terms. But he, having the priority and having, as it were, created science and given it its laws, those popular Greek names, even when the animal to which they were applied cannot be identified, have been in great part preserved and make those learned far-fetched and commonly unintelligible names of genera to-day, e. g. *δολοθύριον*], etc., etc. His History of Animals has thus become a very storehouse of scientific nomenclature.



THE PEOPLE OF A WEEK:

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PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK

1860

January 5, Thursday: Per the diary of Mary Chipman Lawrence, aboard the *Addison* out of New Bedford: “It has been a very nice day and a strong breeze. Have been 140 miles the last 24 hours. We shall get to New Zealand, we think, in about a week. We do not see any Whales yet.”



Jan. 5. P. M.—Via Turnpike to Smith’s and back by Great Road.

How much the snow reveals! I see where the downy woodpecker has worked lately by the chips of bark and rotten wood scattered over the snow, though I rarely see him in the winter. Once to-day, however, I hear his sharp voice, even like a woodchuck’s. Also I have occasionally seen where (probably) a flock of goldfinches in the morning had settled on a hemlock’s top, by the snow strewn with scales, literally blackened or darkened with them for a rod. And now, about the hill in front of Smith’s, I see where the quails have run along the roadside, and can count the number of the bevy better than if I saw them. Are they not peculiar in this, as compared with partridges,—that they run in company, while at this season I see but [one] or two partridges together?

A man receives only what he is ready to receive, whether physically or intellectually or morally, as animals conceive at certain seasons their kind only. We hear and apprehend only what we already half know. If there is something which does not concern me, which is out of my line, which by experience or by genius my attention is not drawn to, however novel and remarkable it may be, if it is spoken, we hear it not, if it is written, we read it not, or if we read it, it does not detain us. Every man thus tracks himself through life, in all his hearing and reading and observation and travelling. His observations make a chain. The phenomenon or fact that cannot in any wise be linked with the rest which he has observed, he does not observe. By and by we may be ready to receive what we cannot receive now. I find, for example, in Aristotle something about the spawning, etc., of the pout and perch, because I know something about it already and have my attention aroused; but I do not discover till very late that he has made other equally important observations on the spawning of other fishes, because I am not interested in those fishes.

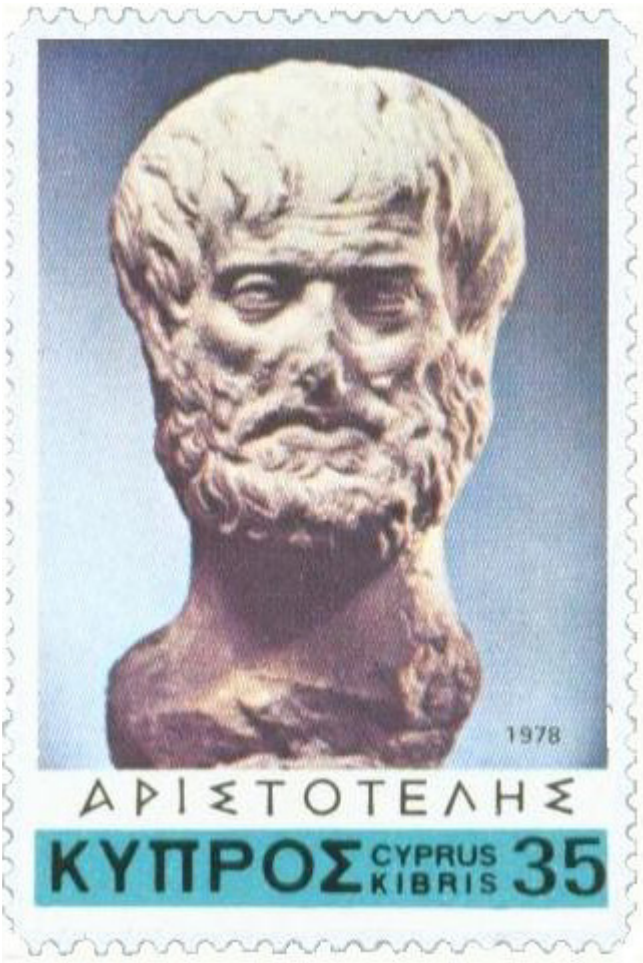
I see the dead stems of the water horehound just rising above the snow and curving outward over the bank of the Assabet, near the stone-heaps, with its brown clusters of dry seeds, etc., every inch or two. These, stripped off or rubbed between the fingers, look somewhat like ground coffee and are agreeably aromatic. They have the

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fragrance of lemon-peel.⁶

ARISTOTLE



June 15, Friday: [Ellery Channing](#) wrote Mrs. Benjamin Marston Watson (Mary Russell Watson) about [Henry Thoreau](#), condescendingly echoing a typical [Emerson](#) condescension (With friends like this had Thoreau any need of enemies?):

[H.T.](#) has been reading [Aristotle](#) and found that it is good, a fact which [Mr. E](#) says, has been the property of every schoolboy for

6.The poet W.H. Auden has in 1962 brought forward a snippet from this day’s entry as:

**THE VIKING BOOK OF APHORISMS, A PERSONAL SELECTION
BY W.H. AUDEN...**

Pg	Topic	Aphorism Selected by Auden out of Thoreau
352	Reason and Thought	We hear and apprehend only what we already half know.



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two thousand years. – Henry you know thought he had discovered Aristotle, the good creature (I mean H.).



"What a gump!...On the whole, he is but little better than an idiot. He should have been whipt often and soundly in his boyhood; and as he escaped such wholesome discipline then, it might be well to bestow it now."

– Nathaniel Hawthorne, about Ellery Channing





THE PEOPLE OF A WEEK:

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1981

In regard to epistemology at least, Claude Gayet insists on page 15 of his Uppsala doctoral dissertation THE INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF HENRY DAVID THOREAU, “Thoreau came to bear much the same relation to Emerson as Aristotle bore to Plato.”⁷



Emerson Thoreau

ARISTOTLE	HENRY THOREAU
PLATO	WALDO EMERSON

Plato : Aristotle :: Emerson : Thoreau

The Thoreauvian concept of “wildness” causes me to flash back to my grad-student days at Harvard. In Professor Rogers Albritton’s class on Aristotle in 1861, my term paper was on the term ousia as deployed by Plato versus that same term as deployed by Aristotle. The classic Greek concept “ousia” normally gets translated as “substance” both in English versions of Plato’s dialogues and in English versions of Aristotle’s treatments, such as the “Metaphysics.” However, Aristokles of Athens and Aristoteles of Stageira used the term “ousia” in such different ways, I proposed to Professor Albritton, that it should be being transliterated into English differently in the case of Aristotle.

For Platon, substance was this-worldly and utterly inert, whereas energy and perfection are higher, indeed other-worldly. However, somehow it was filled with an urge, an “urgos,” that was separate from its lumpish inertness, and this urge caused it to attempt to mold itself into the Forms of the Ideal. Thus a lump of rock becomes, over the ages, a perfectly shaped seashell but made out of rock rather than of calcium, because the form of the seashell has attracted the urgors buried inside the inert substance, and has caused it to aspire to achieve an instance of the Ideal Form of seashell. Which is to say, fossils were never alive, but everything aspires to the forms of life.

For Aristotle, however, the urge that drove the universe, and the forms into which the universe flowed, were all here already here below, all this-worldly. Nothing was ever inert, nothing was ever merely acted upon. For Aristotle, there was no inert ousia of the Platonic variety. The ousia of Aristotle was driven, from within, to achieve forms which, also, were specified from within.

Thus I proposed that the ousia of Platon should remain translated as “sub-stance” or “sub-strate,” but that the ousia of Aristoteles should be translated instead as “active agency.”

I would now like to add to these 1961 thoughts with some later thoughts about Thoreau. we notice that Claude

7. Claude Gayet. THE INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF HENRY DAVID THOREAU. Doctoral Dissertation, Uppsala, Sweden: Textgruppen i Uppsala AB, 1981



THE PEOPLE OF A WEEK:

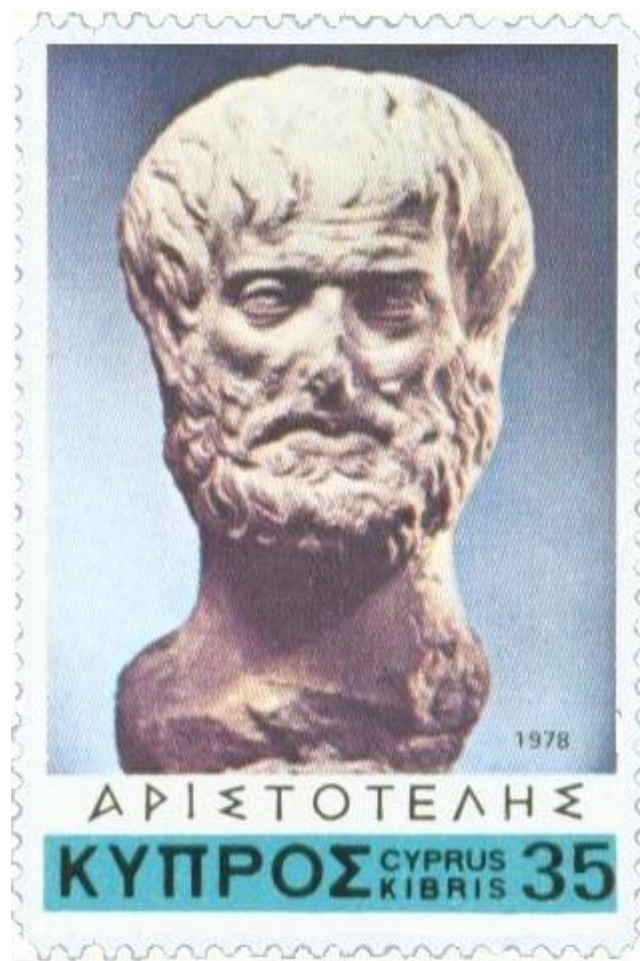
ARISTOTELES OF STAGEIROS

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Gayet has here commented that the pairing “Plato/Aristotle” has been matched in “Emerson/Thoreau,” with Emerson being the idealist like Plato and Thoreau being the biologist like Aristotle. That’s simplistic, of course, but there is a kernel of important truth in it. Thoreau really did progress from being a Platonist to being an Aristotelian, and the mark of this progress came with his use of his term “wildness.”

Thoreau came to recognize that what caused us to excel was not something different from what it was that caused us merely to exist. The urges that caused us to behave, it was commonly presumed, if present in excess, would cause us to misbehave. Not so, Thoreau learned. It is possessing in excess the urges that cause us to behave at all, that causes us to behave extraordinarily well. Thoreau was not namby-pamby: the person who has more life has more virtue.

Thoreau came to be a believer in Aristotle’s version of ousia, “active agency.”



“MAGISTERIAL HISTORY” IS FABULATION, HISTORY IS CHRONOLOGY

“Stack of the Artist of Kouroo” Project: People of A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers



THE PEOPLE OF A WEEK:

ARISTOTELES OF STAGEIROS

PEOPLE MENTIONED IN A WEEK



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"It's all now you see. Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago."

- Remark by character "Garin Stevens"
in William Faulkner's INTRUDER IN THE DUST



Prepared: August 6, 2014



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ARRGH AUTOMATED RESEARCH REPORT

GENERATION HOTLINE



This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, someone has requested that we pull it out of the hat of a pirate who has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (as above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture (this is data mining). To respond to such a request for information we merely push a button.



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Commonly, the first output of the algorithm has obvious deficiencies and we need to go back into the modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and recompile the chronology – but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

First come first serve. There is no charge.

Place requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>. Arrgh.