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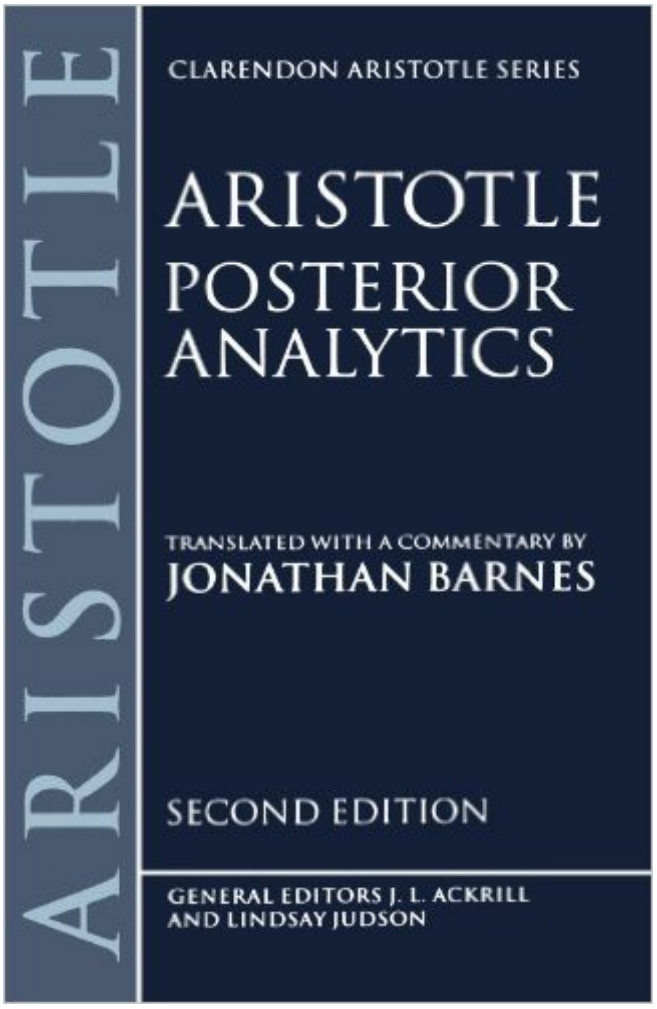
Posterior Analytics (Clarendon Aristotle Series)



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Synopsis

The Posterior Analytics contains some of Aristotle’s most influential thoughts in logic, epistemology, metaphysics, and the philosophy of science. The first book expounds and develops the notions of a demonstrative argument and of a formal, axiomatized science; the second discusses a cluster of problems raised by the axioms or principles of such a science, and investigates in particular the theory of definition. This volume is intended to serve the needs of readers of Aristotle without a knowledge of Greek; for this second edition the translation has been completely rewritten, with the aims of greater elegance and greater fidelity to the Greek. The commentary elucidates and assesses Aristotle’s arguments from a philosophical point of view; it has been extensively revised to take account of the scholarship of the last twenty years.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Posterior Analytics is a rather dull and uninspired work even by Aristotelian standards. Aristotle’s trademarked method of pointless classification is here running at high gear at its pointless best. Although the relation between Aristotle and mathematicians such as Euclid is never made explicit in the historical record, it seems clear to me that the mathematicians owe nothing to Aristotle, and that the Posterior Analytics is an awkward attempt at saying something about the geometrical method by an outsider who is not really attuned to it. To understand the essence of the geometrical method one will be better off reading philosophers with a natural affinity with mathematics, such as Plato and Descartes. Aristotle puts it well when he says that "you should not

argue about geometry among non-geometers---for those who argue poorly will escape detection" (77b). Unfortunately, generations of geometrically ignorant readers have ignored this sound advice and ended up greatly overestimating this rather trifling treatise.Be that as it may, the essence Aristotle's view of the axiomatic-deductive method is summed up in the following sentence: "Demonstrative understanding ... must proceed from items which are true and primitive and immediate and more familiar than and prior to and explanatory of the conclusions." (71b)Three notable consequences of this thesis are:The axiomatic-deductive method is much more than mere logic. "There can be a deduction even if these conditions are not met, but there cannot be a demonstration---for it will not bring about understanding." (71b)There is a fundamental distinction between "demonstrations which are said to demonstrate and those which lead to the impossible" (85a), i.e.

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