The Green Lion’s Preface  

to Joe Sachs Translation of Aristotle’s  

*Metaphysics*

The Green Lion Press is delighted and honored to be presenting Joe Sachs’s translation of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. This book follows up the success of Sachs’s translation of Aristotle’s Physics, published by Rutgers University Press, and addresses the demand which that translation has generated for Sachs translations of more of Aristotle’s central works.

Sachs’s translations bring distinguished new light onto Aristotle’s works. Joe Sachs translates Aristotle with an authenticity that was lost when Aristotle was translated into Latin and abstract Latin words came to stand for concepts Aristotle expressed with phrases in everyday Greek language. When the works began being translated into English, those abstract Latin words or their cognates were used, thus suggesting a level of jargon and abstraction — and in some cases misleading interpretation — that was not Aristotle’s language or style.

Joe Sachs’s introduction to this book tells the history of the translation of Aristotle in general and *Metaphysics* in particular. It offers insight into and clarity about this work called *Metaphysics*, perhaps more properly titled *First Philosophy* — this crown of Aristotle’s thinking. Sachs shows how by the use of dialectic Aristotle is able to ignite our imaginations to bring us to a greater understanding of cause and being than would be possible by following a dry syllogistic line. In his introduction Sachs traces Aristotle’s development of his project through the whole of *Metaphysics* showing us the integrity and wholeness of this work, which more superficial and less sensitive thinkers have sometimes accused of being fragmented and inconsistent. As additional aids to grasping the unfolding of the argument, Sachs offers his own titles for each Book and provides a separate annotated outline of the whole argument. These introductory essays are not only greatly helpful to the reader but make an important contribution to Aristotelian scholarship.

In addition to offering a groundbreaking new translation and these introductory materials, we have designed this book to be easy to read, study, teach with, and use as a basis for discussion. Having ourselves read, studied, taught, and discussed this text with students and colleagues over many years, we know what we as users needed and wanted in presentation and layout, and we have taken pains to provide those things.

As readers we wanted a sewn binding so that pages would not fall out even on repeated readings. We wanted high quality paper and generous margins for making notes. We wanted a sturdy cover that would not curl or fray when the book was carted around. We wanted a glossary that thoroughly explained translation choices. We wanted footnotes, not end notes, so that we could see at a glance what the note said and easily either read it or defer attending to it without breaking the flow of our reading of Aristotle. We wanted the footnote number in the text to be large or bold enough that it could be found if later we came back to a footnote and wanted to find the place in the text where the footnote was invoked. We wanted Bekker page number and line number ranges, when cited, to be specified in full so as not to be ambiguous or misleading. We wanted a typeface and choice of leading (spacing between the lines) that made the reading easy so that the hard thinking could be directed to what Aristotle was inviting us to address, not to the reading
process. We wanted an index that was thoughtfully prepared by someone who had thought deeply about the text and the issues it raised.

We wanted footnotes citing other primary source texts to make it possible for the reader to find the quotation or reference in an edition he or she might have in hand or be able to find in the bookstore or college library. One might appear to have met the responsibility of citation by a reference to page numbers in an edition out of print and no longer available, or in an obscure old edition perhaps venerable and of antiquarian interest and charm but now difficult or impossible to locate. But in fact such a reference may not serve the reader or allow an independent check on the interpretation being made by the author. We wanted citations to the relevant book, chapter, section, paragraph or line numbers within the primary source text, so that the quotation or text being paraphrased could found in whatever edition or translation we owned or could conveniently consult.

As scholars, we wanted all those features and other things as well. We wanted the Bekker numbers and the Book and Chapter numbers easy to find and follow. We wanted a glossary of the Greek terms, in Greek alphabetical order, as well as a glossary of the English terms. We wanted to have both the Roman numeral book numbers and the Greek letter Book numbers on the Book titles and running heads since the Books are sometimes referred to by one and sometimes by the other nomenclature, and the two Books entitled alpha (large alpha and small alpha) make conversion confusing even for those who remember the Greek alphabet.

As teachers and participants in discussions of the text, engaged with others using other translations, we wanted all that and in addition anything and everything to let us quickly and accurately find the place in the text to which someone was referring. We wanted to be able to use the book in a seminar or lecture question period and be able to find a place mentioned easily enough that we didn’t have to take our attention away from the discussion and put it into the hunt.

For the occasions when an interlocutor made reference to a bit of text by Bekker page and line numbers, we wanted those numbers in the margins, not embedded so discreetly in the text that repeated scanning of the page failed to find them. We wanted every one of those marginal references spelled out in full, repeating the citation of the page number with every line number, so that we didn’t have to turn pages back or ahead to find out on what page the orphan line numbers we were looking at appeared.

For the occasions when an interlocutor made reference to a bit of text by Book and Chapter numbers, we wanted both in the running heads on every page (with both Roman numeral and Greek letter book numbers) so that it could be turned to easily without having to do as we have done and take each new translation or edition of Aristotle and go through writing those things in by hand on every page.

All these things are provided in this edition. We have made the book we always wished we had when we read and used Aristotle, and we hope that these design features will please you and serve you as well as they will us and that they will make your engagement with Aristotle direct and without external impediments.

Dana Densmore and William H. Donahue
for the Green Lion Press