

SCHOOLS OF ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

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Schools of ancient philosophy by Various

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PHILOSOPHY**

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
Introduction—Ionian philosophy and its divisions— Dynamical physics, or pure physiology—Mathematical branch, or mechanical physics	5
CHAPTER II.	
History of the Pythagorean School	34
CHAPTER III.	
Of the Eleate	43
CHAPTER IV.	
The Sophists—Conclusion of the pre-Socratic period	60
CHAPTER V.	
Socrates	73
CHAPTER VI.	
Aristippus and the Cyrenaics—Antisthenes and the Cynics—The Megarian under Euclid—The Elean and Eretrian Schools	93
CHAPTER VII.	
The old Academy—Plato and his immediate successors	113
CHAPTER VIII.	
Aristotle and the Peripatetics	139
CHAPTER IX.	
The Sceptics—Pyrrho—The philosophy of Epicurus	169
CHAPTER X.	
Zeno and the Stoics—The later Academy—Arcesilaus and his successors—Conclusion	174

CHRONOLOGICAL INDEX.

- B.C. 591—Age of Thales.
B.C. 559—Age of Anaximenes and Anaximander.
B.C. 539—Age of Pythagoras and Xenophanes.
B.C. 504—Heraclitus and Parmenides flourished.
B.C. 480—Anaxagoras.
B.C. 445—Empedocles.
B.C. 431—Democritus. Hippocrates.
B.C. 404—Protagoras. Lipsias.
B.C. 400—Death of Socrates.
B.C. 396—Aristippus. Archytas.
B.C. 390—Plato. Iphicrates.
B.C. 377—Diogenes.
B.C. 343—Speusippus. Protogenes. Aristotle.
B.C. 301—Zeno. Pyrrho. Philemon. Crantor.
B.C. 291—Epicurus.
B.C. 251—Aratus. Manetho.
B.C. 224—Chrysippus. Archimedes.
B.C. 168—Carneges.
B.C. 60—Cicero.

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INTRODUCTION.

REFLECTION, the characteristic of humanity, which distinguishes it from the instinctive impulses of the animal, has led men, in all ages, to investigate their own nature, and the external and internal influences by which it is affected. Philosophy, or the love of wisdom, which originates in this spirit of inquiry, claims for its legitimate object the elevation of the intellectual and moral powers; since the subjects of thought with which it is conversant have an ennobling tendency. They consist in the contemplation of the highest spiritual essence, God; the soul of man; and matter, which comprehends the relations of the body.

It is evidently necessary to an instructive perusal of the following pages, to possess a clear

notion of the terms distinctive of philosophy according to its several topics. When, therefore, it is applied abstractedly to the Divine nature, it is styled theology; when to worldly existences, it assumes the form of physics and metaphysics; and when reasoning of man, ethics and logic; but as in its full extent it comprehends all these, so in many respects it is indivisible. What a monument of human inability to arrive at truth by the unenlightened reason alone, is exhibited in the vague fallacies and contradictory perplexities of even the loftiest intellects! How imbecile and futile the endeavour to establish fixed principles whence a practical result might be derived, the "perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord!" The presumptuous disclaimer of the necessity of a Divine revelation will, it is hoped, derive a salutary lesson of humility, and heartily thank God "for his unspeakable Gift," when he has investigated the erratic failures of men who, placed on what has been termed the very "Ida of the intellect," were yet incompetent to discover "our being's end and aim"—"were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in