The Order of Nature in Aristotle’s Physics

In this book Helen S. Lang enters into the point of view of the ancient world to explain how they saw the world and to show what arguments were used by Aristotle to support this view. Lang demonstrates a new method for reading the texts of Aristotle by revealing a continuous line of argument running from the *Physics* to *De Caelo*. The author analyzes a group of arguments that are almost always treated in isolation from one another and reveals their elegance and coherence. She concludes by asking why these arguments remain interesting even though we now believe they are absolutely wrong and have been replaced by better ones.

The author establishes that we must rethink our approach to Aristotle’s physical science and Aristotelian texts. In so doing, her book will provide debate and stimulate new thinking among philosophers, classicists, and historians of science.

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The Order of Nature in Aristotle’s Physics

Place and the Elements

Helen S. Lang
To
Berel, Ariella, and Jessica
places in the heart
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2. Nature and Motion  
3. Place  
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Some of the material in this book has been published, albeit in a quite different form, as “Aristotle’s Physics IV, 8: A Vexed Argument in the
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History of Ideas,” in The Journal of the History of Ideas 56, 1995, pp. 353–376 and “Why the Elements Imitate the Heavens: Metaphysics IX, 8, 1050b28–34,” in Ancient Philosophy 14, 1994, pp. 335–354. Anonymous readers of both these articles offered important criticisms. And no author has ever been luckier in anonymous readers than I have been in the three readers for Cambridge University Press. Their criticisms were detailed, thoughtful, and intellectually generous in the highest degree.

Aristotle argues that in the process of development what is best comes last. Last thanks go to my husband, Berel, who has been reader, critic, moral support, and more. His enthusiasm for this project gave me the courage to go on in its darker moments. Indeed, he has suggested with some energy that I dedicate this work to Aristotle because without him it would not have been possible.
Abbreviations

Citations to several texts or translations have been abbreviated as follows:


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ABBREVIATIONS

Hardie and Gaye  

Hussey  
Aristotle’s Physics: Books III and IV. Trans. with 
notes by Edward Hussey. Oxford: Clarendon 

Moraux  
Aristote: Du Ciel. Texte établi et traduit par 

Nussbaum  
Aristotle’s De motu Animalium: Text with 
Translation, Commentary, and Interpretive 
Essays. Ed., trans., and with commentary by 
M. Nussbaum. Princeton: Princeton 

Ross  
Aristotle’s Physics. Revised text, with 
introduction and commentary by W. D. 

Stocks  
De Caelo. Trans. J. L. Stocks. Oxford: 
Clarendon Press, 1922.

Wicksteed and Cornford  
The Physics. Trans. Philip H. Wicksteed and 
Frances M. Cornford. Vol. I. The Loeb 
Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard 
University Press, 1934.