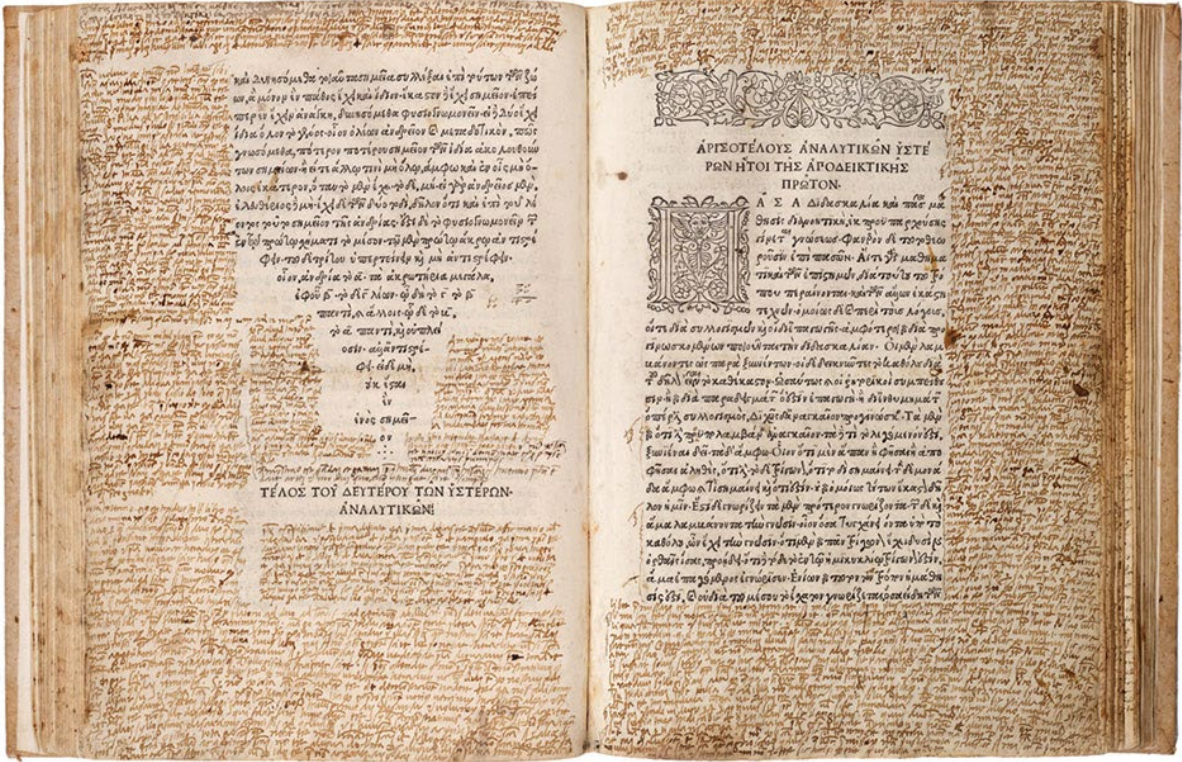


# Exhibition reveals Aristotle's ongoing legacy through rare books and manuscripts from early modern Europe



Aristotle, Opera (5 volumes, in Greek) Venice: Aldus Manutius, 1495–98. Courtesy of Martin J. Gross.

**NEW YORK, NY.-** [The New-York Historical Society](#) presents Aristotle: From Antiquity to the Modern Era, an exhibition showcasing more than 30 rare books and manuscripts—many on public view for the first time—from the collection of Martin J. Gross. On view September 10, 2021 – January 2, 2022, the display’s centerpiece is the multi-volume edition of Aristotle’s works in Greek by the noted printer and publisher Aldus Manutius of Venice, who died in 1515. Copious annotations to the books and manuscripts reveal how scholars in early modern Europe (1500-1800) wrestled with and transmitted the philosophy of Aristotle of Stagira (384-322 BCE), which had remained almost uniquely influential over the centuries as one of the great philosophers of Ancient Greece.

“This exhibition is a celebration of the importance of scholarship and learning, which is at the core of what we do at New-York Historical through our educational programs,” said Dr. Louise Mirrer, president and CEO of New-York Historical. “Aristotle contributed to countless fields, including logic, ethics, political theory, rhetoric, natural science, psychology, economics, and astronomy, among others, and the works on display demonstrate how knowledge is passed down through the centuries and built upon by each new generation.”

The lectures Aristotle gave at the Lyceum—the school he founded in Athens in 335 BCE—were captured by his students’ notes and handed down over the centuries. Aristotle: From Antiquity to the Modern Era focuses on this process of transmission: how the philosopher’s works were copied and recopied, and later printed and reprinted. Via translations, commentaries, lectures, and annotations, Aristotle’s writing played a defining role in the world’s intellectual traditions as it was shared, endorsed, and argued from Greece to the Roman Empire to the Islamic Caliphate to Western Europe. Manuscripts on display show how teachers, students, and lecturers across centuries disseminated his ideas in multiple languages, including Spanish,

Portuguese, and French.

A highlight of the exhibition is Aldus Pius Manutius's edition of the works of Aristotle. Manutius studied with Byzantine scholars who brought with them from Constantinople many Greek manuscripts previously unknown in Europe. He resolved to merge his own knowledge of the ancient authors with his desire to print books containing the classical literature of the ancient world. He proceeded to print and publish the known Greek and Roman corpus in original languages, making it widely available to the Western world for the first time. Aristotle was especially important and exceptionally difficult and expensive. The five volumes in Greek on display are a landmark in the history of printing. The volumes on exhibit are notable for the extensive commentary left by three different readers responding to Aristotle. These annotations make clear how important Aristotle was to scholars at the turn of the 16th century.

Another highlight are the annotations of Francesco Buonamici—who taught Galileo Galilei—that appear on a commentary on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytica*. Buonamici's annotations may provide a missing link between Aristotle's physics and the emerging new science of the time. They also testify to the tenacity of Aristotle in the face of the empirical discoveries made later by Galileo that seemed to upend the Aristotelian universe. Aristotle had an overarching theory of the universe; Galileo only had a few empirical observations.

*Aristotle: From Antiquity to the Modern Era* is curated by Michael Ryan, Sue Ann Weinberg Director Emeritus of the Patricia D. Klingenstein Library. A richly illustrated exhibition catalog—available from the NYHistory Store—includes an introductory essay by Princeton University scholar Benjamin Morison.