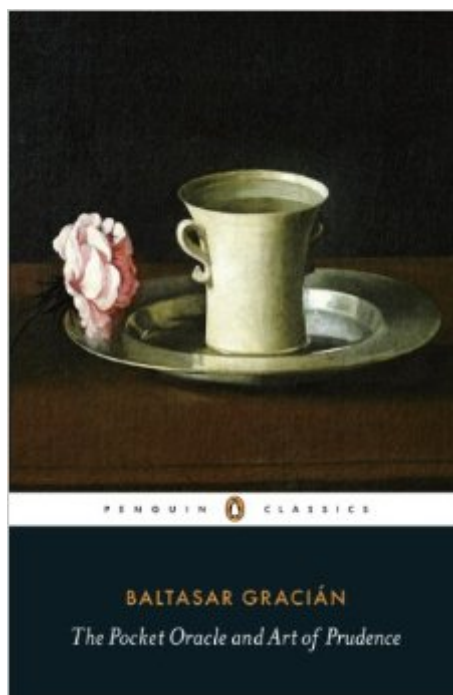


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The Pocket Oracle And Art Of Prudence (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

A unique collection of advice for life and perhaps the first 'self-help' book ever written. Written over 350 years ago, *The Pocket Oracle and Art of Prudence* is a subtle collection of 300 witty and thought-provoking aphorisms. From the art of being lucky to the healthy use of caution, these elegant maxims were created as a guide to life, with further suggestions given on cultivating good taste, knowing how to refuse, the foolishness of complaining and the wisdom of controlling one's passions. Baltasar Gracian intended these ingenious, pragmatic aphorisms to challenge the mind, and recognised that few would be capable of applying them. In Jeremy Robbins's introduction to his penetrating new translation, he examines Gracian's place in Spanish literature and his previous works. Robbins also looks at the themes, contexts and contradictions of *The Pocket Oracle*, as well as the brevity and subtlety of Gracian's cool-headed aphorisms. This edition also contains a chronology, suggested further reading and notes. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

In the famous book *THE POCKET ORACLE AND ART OF PRUDENCE*, here fluently translated, perceptively introduced, and astutely annotated by Jeremy Robbins of the University of Edinburgh (Penguin Classics, 2011; orig. ed., 1647), the seventeenth-century Spanish Jesuit moralist and stylist Baltasar Gracian (1601-1658) astutely sets forth 300 maxims accompanied by brief explanations/ commentaries. As I will explain momentarily, Robbins does a far better job in his introduction and endnotes of contextualizing Gracian's thought in its cultural context than Christopher Maurer does in his introduction to his 1992 translation of Gracian's book as *THE ART OF WORLDLY WISDOM: A POCKET ORACLE*. As Robbins indicates, the spirit of Gracian's advice in this book has been informed and enriched by his familiarity as a Jesuit with the life and example of St. Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556), the founder of the Jesuit religious order in the Roman Catholic Church that is known by the informal name as the Jesuit order (also known by the formal name as the Society of Jesus). St. Ignatius Loyola was himself a mystic. In his spiritual journey, he had had profound mystical experiences. He served as the spiritual director of the earliest Jesuits. He also composed the famous book of instructions known as the *SPIRITUAL EXERCISES* -- ably translated, introduced, and annotated by George E. Ganss, S.J., as *THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF SAINT IGNATIUS* (1992). Not long after the Jesuit order was founded, the comparatively well-educated Jesuits were being characterized pejoratively as being "Jesuitical" by certain detractors. Historically, the Jesuits adopted the approach known as moral Probabilism in their practice of being confessors for the faithful.

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