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Book Announcements

P. Golitsis – K. Ierodiakonou (eds.), *Aristotle and His Commentators. Studies in Memory of Paraskevi Kotzia*, De Gruyter, Berlin – Boston 2019 (*CAGB*, 7), XIV+235 pp.

The volume collects twelve essays on the philosophy of Aristotle and the Aristotelian tradition in Antiquity and Late Antiquity, and is arranged in two main sections: Part I deals with some foundational hypotheses in twentieth-century Aristotelian scholarship about (i) methods of interpreting Aristotle's writings, and (ii) his political philosophy; Part II addresses several aspects of the history of the Aristotelian tradition in Late Antiquity and the Byzantine era.

The essays were presented at the international conference celebrating the late lamented Paraskevi Kotzia (1951-2013). The meeting was held at the Department of Classics and Philosophy of the "Aristotle University" of Thessaloniki (Greece), on 25-27 September 2014 under the direction of Evanthia Tsitsibakou-Vassalos, Maria Mike, Stephanos Matthaios, Georgios Zografidis, Katerina Ierodiakonou, and Pantelis Golitsis. Three studies by Sten Ebbesen, Stavros Kouloumentas and Christof Rapp have been added to the papers of the conference. As P. Golitsis and K. Ierodiakonou point out in their Preface (pp. VII-VIII), Paraskevi Kotzia "introduced the study of the Aristotelian commentators and the Neoplatonic exegetical tradition to the academic life of Greece" (p. VII); the list of her publications is included (pp. IX-XI). The volume is not coinceived as a companion to the study of Aristotle and Aristotelianism, and indeed only some late antique commentators are taken into account. Preference is given, rather, to authors and themes which were at the core of Kotzia's own research, an editorial decision that explains the absence of key figures of the ancient reception of Aristotle like Porphyry or Themistius.

Part I, devoted to "Aristotle" (pp. 3-67), is the first chapter of the volume and contains four essays. Christof Rapp, "The Explanatory Value of Developmental Hypotheses as Exemplified by the Interpretation of Aristotle" (pp. 3-18) is the English translation of the article "Der Erklärungswert von Entwicklungshypothesen. Das Beispiel der Aristoteles-Interpretation" originally published in M. Ackeren – J. Müller (eds.), *Antike Philosophie Verstehen*, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 2006, pp. 178-95. Rapp offers a critical review of some prominent developmental hypotheses about Aristotle's works, from Jaeger to the present scholarship. Should inconsistencies arise in Aristotle's treatises, Rapp claims that "(a) it is possible to avoid resorting to a developmental hypothesis in many cases, and (b) even when two treatises were written at different periods, the aspect of development has no additional explanatory value" (p. 16).

The two essays that follow deal with Aristotle's political philosophy. The difference between political thought of Plato and Aristotle has long been debated. Francisco L. Lisi, "About the Specificity of the Aristotelian Politics" (pp. 19-32) approaches this topic by determining first what he considers to be "the most essential feature of Plato's political thought" in order to find out what "Aristotle considered the most substantial difference between his thought and his teacher's doctrine" (p. 19). Lisi's idea is that "Aristotle's refusal of Plato's theory is based on the distinction of the different forms of rule and of the different meanings of *archê*" which means "what Aristotle considered the most crucial point that distinguished his political approach from the Platonic one" (p. 30).

Even if scholars from Jaeger onwards disagree about their authorship, the 158 *Politeiai* attributed to Aristotle have often attracted attention mostly because of their "empirical" approach. Chloe Balla, in "The Debt of Aristotle's Collection of *Politeiai* to the Sophistic Tradition" (pp. 33-48), highlights "the significance of certain aspects of this tradition with respect to the development of Aristotle's interest in the study of constitutions" (p. 33), pointing to (i) the accumulation of empirical evidence, (ii) the commitment to the value of empirical evidence; and (iii) the aporetic character of sophistic argumentative practice (pp. 34-40). "Aristotle's project was developed alongside his commitment to the idea of the best constitution", and she surmises that "such commitment is a mark of Aristotle's debt to his own teacher Plato" (p. 41). Balla concludes that "a big distance separates their [the sophists'] general interest in case studies from the comprehensive project that Aristotle set out to pursue. The criticism that he possibily addresses to Isocrates, and his explicit characterization of the relevant educational camp as 'sophistic' supports the idea of a continous line of (...) commitment to the value of empirical knowledge, that (...) can be traced back to the early sophistic" (p. 48).

Using Aristotelian texts to tell the story of the figures associated with early Greek philosophy generally means accepting to work piecemeal: broad interrogations must consequently be sought in extended treatment of indirect, fragmentary evidence on individual philosophers. Stavros Kouloumentas, "Aristotle on Alcmaeon in relation to Pythagoras: an addendum in *Metaphysics Alpha*?", pp. 49-68, analyses the case of Alcmaeon of Croton through a re-reading of the testimony offered by Aristotle in *Metaph*. A 5, 985 b23ff. Kouloumentas focuses on Alcmaeon's dates posing "a set of questions concerning its inclusion in the Aristotelian text, its exact meaning, and its credibility" (p. 50). He endeavors to show that "instead of assuming that a Neoplythagorean author inserted the pertinent sentence in the *Metaphysics*, it can be argued that some biographers of the Hellenistic era and Late Antiquity misinterpreted Aristotle's actual words by presenting Alcmaeon as a youth pupil of Phythagoras" (p. 67).

Part II, "Commentators" (pp. 69-206), contains eight studies devoted to aspects of the reception of Aristotle's thought at the end of antiquity. That late antiquity is a key concept in historiography has been established since the seminal works of A. Momigliano, S. Mazzarino, and H.-I. Marrou; however, the chronological boundaries and even the nature of this epoch have been challenged in recent times by A. Giardina, G.W. Bowersock, R. Pfeilschifter and others. Cultural history has been taken into account, in particular by P. Brown and G. Fowden, even though usually from the viewpoint of the religious changes, rather from that of the intellectual life of the cultivated elites. In his "Late Antiquity: 'Whether we like it or not'. An Essay" (pp. 71-81), Christian Wildberg explores innovative ways of studying late antiquity, on the grounds that "of all the historical periods into which antiquity is traditionally divided (...) it is the last period – late antiquity – that was in fact the most formative and influential in the subsequent course of the history of Western culture, not only for the middle ages but in certain respects also for modernity, indeed for us now" (p. 73).

The first point raised by Paul Kalligas in his article "Plotinus' Criticism of Aristotle's Doctrine of Primary Substance and its Background", pp. 83-94, is the interpretation of Aristotle's *Categories* as a general introduction to the whole *Organon* which can be traced back to Andronicus of Rhodes. "Andronicus' approach brought into light the fundamental differences separating the Aristotelian analysis of the basic components in a propositional structure from the Stoic one" (p. 86). At variance with the Stoics, who credited only propositions (and not terms) as the subject-matter of logic, Andronicus laid emphasis on simple terms as the basic elements and on the *Categories* as the foundation of the classification of kinds of being through the classification of kinds of terms, a move which paved the way for the criticism of Aristotle's categories by the Platonists. Against this background, the objections to the Aristotelian categories raised by Plotinus are, in Kalligas' analysis,

much more radical: "The strength of Plotinus' criticism is enhanced by the fact that Aristotle himself seems to be at pains to explain that, even among secondary substances, one may establish an order between those that are 'more substances', namely the species, and those that are less so, namely the genera, and giving as an explanation for this the fact that the former 'are nearer to the primary substance' and more informative of its being what it is" (p. 91).

The Neoplatonic approaches to linguistics are discussed by Maria Chriti, "The Neoplatonic commentators of Aristotle on the origins of language: a new 'Tower of Babel'?" (pp. 95-106). This article deals with the treatment by Ammonius, Simplicius, and Philoponus of the origins of language in relation to "(a) the 'fall' of the soul from the One and (b) the soul's innate knowledge after its fall, that is, during its habitation in the body" (p. 95). In other words, it belongs "to soul's corporeal state and to its effort to 'recollect' its lost unification with the One by activating its remaining innate knowledge" (p. 98). Chriti claims that "the homogeneity of what does not need to be uttered, i.e. Neoplatonic 'metaphysical' non-linguistic communication in the upper world, in contrast to the diversity of its 'earthy' signifier, reminds us of the Bible's divine monolingual communication: in both cases, there was originally a 'paradise', an ideal situation where communication was easy and without obstacles; but some kind of 'sin' caused a 'fall' and the loss of paradise. (...) So for the Neoplatonists, language does not just stand as evidence of the soul's fall; it also constitutes a second 'Tower of Babel'" (p. 106). A note of caution is in order here: I assume that this is a conceptual comparison, not a claim of literary dependence.

With the article by Dimitrios Z. Nikitas, "The Early Literary Construct of Boethius: *In Isagogen Porphyrii commenta*, *editio prima*" (pp. 107-30), we travel West. Nikitas outlines some features of Boethius' commentary on the Latin translation of Porphyry's *Eisagoge* carried out by Marius Victorinus and discusses the interaction with Boethius' second commentary, the *Dialogi in Porphyrium*. The "common division among contemporary Greek Alexandrian Aristotelians of Aristotle's works into discursive or exoteric on the one hand and personal or auditory in the other" is the backdrop of Boethius' "pedagogic educational intentions" (p. 111). According to Nikitas, "in this 'scholastic' treatise [Boethius] achieves the connection of specialized contemplation with literature, beauty and sweetness of word with the depth and preciseness of thought. Alexandrian Neoplatonism here embraces the Roman language and literary tradition while at the same time the *Aristoteles Latinus* (...) is formed" (p. 130).

In their article "The title of Aristotle's *Prior Analytics*", pp. 131-49, Katerina Ierodiakonou and Nikos Agiotis open a "side window to some little explored developments in the history of the reception of Aristotle's logic" (p. 149). They focus on "the explanations given by the ancient as well as Byzantine commentators regarding the title of the *Prior Analytics*" (p. 131). After a useful survey of the comments on the title *Prior Analytics* proposed by the commentators, in particular by Alexander of Aphrodisias, three points are discussed: (i) the distinction between the titles *Prior Analytics* and *Posterior Analytics* in relationship to Alexander's reference to the priority of genus over species (cf. *In An Pr*., p. 6.32-7.1); (ii) Ammonius' account of the term "analysis" (cf. *In An Pr.*, pp. 6.30-7.6), and his claim that "the method of analyis is more valuable that the method of synthesis" (p. 144); (iii) the alternative title *On the Three Figures* used by the Byzantine commentators (p. 146).

The different attitude of Philoponus as a commentator of Aristotle and as a Christian polemist has increasingly attracted the attention of contemporary scholarship (see the bibliography discussed by C. D'Ancona in *SGA* 9 [2019], pp. 203-6, in part. fn. 13-15). Discussions of this point also entail an examination of the chronology of Philoponus' works, as well as of his relationship with the doctrines of Ammonius son of Hermeias. Along this line, Ioannis Papachristou, "Ammonius Hermeiou on the Appearances of Ghosts" (pp. 151-65) analysises the prologue of the commentary on the *De Anima* with the purpose of unravelling "Ammonius' philosophical assumptions" when he attempts to "explain

the appearences of ghosts (...) namely of the pneumatic vehicle of the soul, showing to what degree Ammonius' view diverged from that of his teacher Proclus" (p. 152). According to Papachristou, "the theory of the soul found in the preface of Philoponus' commentary on the *De Anima* reflects Ammonius' doctrines and teachings" (p. 164) and she claims that "however, there is no evidence to support the view that Philoponus has his own disagreements with respect to the theory he reports on the nature of the pneumatic body or that he even had an account of his own" (p. 165).

Pantelis Golitsis, "Μετά τινων ἰδίων ἐπιστάσεων. John Philoponus as an Editor of Ammonius' Lectures", pp. 167-93, provides an analysis of Philoponus' editorial work on Ammonius' lectures with the aim to "shed new light on Philoponus' development as a commentator and the dating of his commentaries" (p. 169). The titles of the commentaries are telling: Golitsis analyses in particular the term *epistasis* and claims that "when Philoponus wrote the titles of the commentaries that he published, he meant to indicate to his readers that Ammonius' exegesis would be occasionally interrupted by Philoponus reservations and divergent interpretation (...) his 'critical observations'" (p. 169). An interesting epistemological implication is that "given Philoponus' evolution and his gradual liberation from the Neoplatonic authorities, which found its peak in the publication of his autonomous treatise against Proclus and against Aristotle, published around 529 and 532 respectively, the number and content of his criticisms may serve as a criterion for dating his commentaries" (p. 178). The second part of Golitsis' article is devoted to the dating of Philoponus' commentaries (pp. 178-93) and constists in a revised "Chronology of Philoponus' Philosophical Works" (p. 193).

The last article of the collection is by Sten Ebbesen, "The Un-Byzantine Byzantine on Two Sophisms" (pp. 195-206). It provides the edition with an English translation and a commentary of "a little text, unfortunately mutilated at the end, that discusses two completely untraditional sophisms: Ὁ δύνασαι λέγειν ἀγαθὸν ἀγαθόν ἐστι and Ἔστι φαγεῖν τινα τῶν ἀνθρώπων σήμερον (p. 196)". A line by line exegesis of these sophisms follows. On the one hand, they "have no background in Aristotelian exegesis" (p. 195); on the other, there is "nothing even remotely like in the whole of the Byzantine material" (*ibid.*).

A Bibliography (pp. 204-18) completes the volume which also includes an Index of names and of passages by François Nollé (pp. 219-34). The volume is stimulating and its editors deserve our gratitude.

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S.A. Adams (ed.), *Scholastic Culture in the Hellenistic and Roman Eras. Greek, Latin, and Jewish*, De Gruyter (Transmissions. Studies on Conditions, Processes and Dynamics of Textual Transmission, 2), VII + 230 pp.

The university of Glasgow hosted in 2017 a colloquium on *Ancient Scholarship: Scholastic Culture in the Hellenistic and Roman Eras* and the convenor Sean A. Adams collects the papers in the present volume. He is the author both of the general introduction, "Themes in Ancient Scholarship", and of an interesting chapter on Latin and Jewish translations (see below). The aim of the colloquium was "to investigate scholastic culture in the Hellenistic and Roman eras, with a particular focus on ancient book and material culture as well as scholarship beyond Greek authors and the Greek language" (p. 1).

G. Coqueugniot, "Scholastic Research in the Archive. Hellenistic Historians and Ancient Archival Records" (pp. 7-30) surveys the works of "historians from Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Levant" and highlights their importance for the transmission of information to later ages: "These historians were often members of the local, traditional elite of the temples (...). They all seem to have had access to old archival records and used them to write a historical chronicle of their land. (...)