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"A Companion to Aristotle" Review

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scholar and student; for that reason it is essential reading for both. I anticipate that this text will, as time goes by, sit comfortably alongside such works as A.W. Price's *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle* as it comes to be recognised – as indeed it should be – as one of *the* books on Platonic friendship. N. has achieved something very important with this book, and its value should be neither overlooked nor underestimated.

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ARISTOTLE

ANAGNOSTOPOULOS (G.) (ed.) *A Companion to Aristotle.* Pp. xviii + 648. Malden, MA and Oxford: Wiley–Blackwell, 2009. Cased, £95. ISBN: 978-1-4051-2223-8.

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Jonathan Barnes once said of Aristotle that he 'bestrode antiquity like an intellectual colossus. No man before him had contributed so much to learning. No man after him could hope to rival his achievements' (J. Barnes, *Aristotle* [1982], p. 1). Yet, as Düring remarked in 1957, Aristotle was looked upon as a stranger throughout his life. Even to this day, we know disappointingly little about the man who was arguably the most prolific and polymathic philosopher of antiquity. A.'s excellent new companion to Aristotle succeeds impressively both in doing justice to the magnitude of Aristotle's contributions to philosophy and in giving us a rare and welcome insight into the man whose ideas they were.

This wonderfully diverse yet impressively cohesive collection of essays draws on leading research by both established scholars (e.g. C.D.C. Reeve, S. Broadie and J. Lennox) and relative newcomers to the field who have made significant contributions early in their careers (e.g. D. Henry, G. Richardson Lear and U. Coope). It spans a broad range of topics and can fairly claim to represent the state of the art in Aristotelian scholarship. It consists of five parts. The essays in the last three parts (3: Theoretical Knowledge; 4: Practical Knowledge; and 5: Productive Knowledge) are divided according to Aristotle's own taxonomy of the sciences (*epistêmai*, e.g. *Met*. E.1). Hence, this companion adopts the most natural, but hardly the most common, way of organising Aristotelian scholarship. One welcome result of this method is that essays on the special topics of the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* (persuasion and imitation) have been collected together and separated from the essays on Aristotle's ethics and politics, giving them a more egalitarian status in relation to other topics in the corpus and a more authentic picture of how Aristotle himself envisioned the proper organisation of philosophical questions and problems. The second part (2: Tools of Inquiry) includes five papers that explore the underlying architecture of Aristotle's system of thought and which undergird the reader's approach to the rest of the papers. Each of the forty essays has its own bibliography, though some are fuller and more directive than others. Some helpfully separate secondary from primary literature or even provide an additional list of 'Further Reading'. The collection has a general index but, unlike *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*, it does not have an *index locorum*, and not all the essays have their own sets of notes. Greek words have been transliterated, and the sources

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are all provided in English translation. Unfortunately and, one would think, avoidably, the quality of the text is tarnished by a disappointing number of typographical errors (some essays have more than one per page) but none is so egregious as to obscure the meaning.

The gem of the collection is A.'s 'Aristotle's Life and Works', which takes the few biographical data and masterfully paints a vivid picture of a man who became one of the fathers of philosophy yet who never quite attained a sense of belonging in his own life. Often a foreigner, or at least a visitor, in the places where he lived (e.g. he could only rent, and not own, the land that constituted the Lyceum), Aristotle is shown to be lonely, often homesick and painfully conscious of his status as a metic. This biographical account yields some important philosophical insights, the significance of which is appreciated in many of the essays that follow. For example, A.'s suggestion that Aristotle's birthplace satisfied his requirements for the *polis* (Stagira had its own timber, mining and fishing industries; its whole territory could be seen in one view; and its relatively small population would have made complete friendship possible) breathes life into the essays on the *polis* in Part 4. This section provides valuable information about the development of Aristotle's thought and the chronology of his works, as well as stylometric and editorial information that will be of great use to those new to the study of Aristotle.

The Preface specifies that the collection does not aim to provide a survey of the totality of Aristotle's thought. Rather, its goal is to give the reader 'a good sense of the kinds of problems that exercised Aristotle's mind and the immense and lasting contributions he made in his investigations of them' (p. xvi). The reader will much appreciate the fact that most of the essays are not mere exegeses but rigorous explorations of topics of central importance to the corpus (e.g. teleology, demonstration and action) or to a major work within it (e.g. the soul, friendship and the generation of animals). Many of the contributions make substantial connections between their special topic(s) and others in the corpus. For instance, Aristotle's views about agent causation in *Physics* 8 and *Met. Θ* factor pivotally in R. Heinaman's discussion of compulsion and voluntary action. Contributors frequently demonstrate the significance of Aristotle's contributions to contemporary philosophy (G. Matthews, 'Aristotelian Categories', shows how Gilbert Ryle's 'category mistake' criticism of mind–body dualism drew on Aristotle's original doctrine of the categories), and to mathematics, psychology, biology and aesthetics. Finally, whether by fortune or by design, the collection is, though bulky, remarkably cohesive, both within sections and between them. There is a unified, if complicated, thread that runs throughout the papers in the metaphysics section, for example, that turns on competing accounts of substance and change from the *Categories*, *Metaphysics* and *Physics*.

There are two, relatively minor, problems with the collection. First, overlap. The essays on Aristotle's politics, for example, cover much of the same material (the naturalness of the *polis*, the justification of political rule, the aim of the constitution, etc.). Fortunately, any redundancy does not distract the reader from the argument of each essay. It may also be, to a degree, unavoidable in such a large collection with so much thematic unity.

Second, there is considerable variation in the accessibility of each essay. The Blackwell Companion series claims to be an 'outstanding student reference series' which 'provide[s] the ideal basis for course use'. I would not characterise this collection as an introductory text for novices, nor do I think it would well serve the majority of students in introductory ancient philosophy courses. While there is some definition of 'introduction' which is satisfied by all essays in the collection,

it is satisfied by them in very different ways. Some provide good overviews of their subject and defend a single line of argument that could easily be followed by beginners. G. Richardson Lear's paper is a good example of this type: it explores one main theme and is well organised, and there is a great lucidity and force to her description of Aristotle's account of happiness and the human end. Most essays, however, are simply too technical, or require too much prior knowledge of either Aristotle or their particular subjects (e.g. logic), to fulfil this purpose. (Wedin's, Smith's and Keyt's papers fall into this category.) Some of the denser contributions will, however, be of interest to specialists in the field who want a survey of the most recent scholarship and/or a good introduction to some part of the corpus with which they are less familiar. Therefore, the lack of consistency in accessibility is not necessarily a serious flaw. On the contrary, it allows the volume to be multifariously useful for different readers, and it may well serve one individual at different stages of his or her exploration of Aristotle's corpus.

This companion succeeds remarkably well in two notable respects. First, it gives us new, sometimes better, ways of understanding some of Aristotle's more familiar ideas while defamiliarising this material by framing old questions in new ways, unearthing new problems to be mulled over and shining a spotlight on some underappreciated issues. Second, most of the essays are exceptionally good at working from an appreciation of the questions that energised Aristotle's mind rather than determining his value solely in relation to his contribution to the questions that engage us. In sum, A.'s ambitious and masterfully assembled collection accomplishes what it promises and leaves the reader keen to explore further.

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THE *ETHICS*

GOTTLIEB (P.) *The Virtue of Aristotle's* Ethics. *Pp.* xx + 241. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Cased, £45. ISBN 978-0-521-76176-5.

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In this book G. walks 'the fine line between a work on Aristotle's ethics and a work on Aristotelian Ethics' (p. xiii). That is to say, she hopes to determine 'what Aristotle can contribute to current debates' without moving too far away from 'a careful reading of [Aristotle's] texts' (p. 6). G. believes that contemporary virtue ethicists have been too quick to reject certain elements of Aristotle's moral philosophy. She aims to make the sort of contribution to contemporary discussion that a specialist in ancient philosophy is particularly qualified to make: correcting misunderstandings of Aristotle's thought that have come to be accepted by those whose interest in Aristotle is secondary to their concern to develop a viable contemporary virtue ethic.

In pursuing this aim G. treats most of the major areas of Aristotle's ethics. As she acknowledges, there is no one central idea that informs her treatment of these areas; rather, she puts forward a set of 'interlocking themes and theses' that are 'mutually supporting' (p. 3). G.'s method is that of addressing puzzles about Aristotle's ethical thought that have been debated in the scholarly literature, approaching them 'from a different angle from other commentators' (p. 1), though,

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