

*Being, Nature, and Life in Aristotle. Essays in Honor of Allan Gotthelf.* Edited by JAMES G. LENNOX – ROBERT BOLTON. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge – New York 2010. ISBN 978-0-521-76844-3. XVI, 289 pp. GBP 60, USD 99.

This collection of papers honors Allan Gotthelf's contributions to the study of ancient philosophy. Many of the papers were originally presented in a 2004 conference in Pittsburgh, where Gotthelf was working as a Visiting Professor after his retirement from the College of New Jersey. Others are invited from people who were unable to attend that conference. Five papers out of ten have been previously published elsewhere.

It is perhaps worth noting that a few years after the appearance of the collection, in 2013, Gotthelf passed away, having suffered from cancer for 17 years. Regarding this detail, I am referring to James G. Lennox, one of the editors, who has published a touching obituary on his University of Pittsburgh webpage. Nonetheless, the papers are as much worth reading today as they were when Gotthelf was still with us. They are very well argued, and address issues that are central to Aristotle's metaphysics, natural science, biology and his method of enquiry.

David Sedley claims in his contribution that Aristotle's teleology has much more in common with Plato's teleology than many scholars have been willing to admit. The most controversial section of the paper is perhaps the last one which discusses Aristotle's "global teleology". In opposition to Judson, Bodnár and Johnson, for example, he argues that Aristotle's reference to nature in *Politics* 1,8,1256b10–22 "can hardly be identified with the natures of the individual plants and animals, or, for that matter, human nature" (p. 27). It is rather, according to Sedley, that cosmic nature manifests itself in the world's inter-species ecology. He continues: "Just as the nature of an animal can be invoked to explain why it has the parts that it does, so too the nature of the world, including its goal-directed structure with man as its apex, can be invoked to explain why it contains the species, weather systems and other amenities that it does" (p. 28). In support, he proposes, "[A]ny natural collective system composed of discrete natural substances [...] has as its 'nature' its own complex functionality" (p. 29). This proposal seems to arise rather plausibly from the *Politics* passage referred to above and *Metaphysics* Λ.10, in which the world's nature is compared not to the nature of an animal, but to the hierarchical structure of an army or household. Nevertheless, it is debatable whether, and if so, how, Aristotle is able to subsume such second-order natures under his hylomorphic framework, which takes individual substances as basic. Sedley does not address this issue.

Robert Bolton explores Aristotle's considerations in *Metaphysics* Γ 1–3 and E 1, and *Posterior Analytics* 1,10, namely that each discipline has its own scope and principles. Bolton takes this as a strong claim about the autonomy of each discipline. In particular, he explores the relationship between metaphysics and biology, focusing on the definition of the human being in *Metaphysics* Z. Opposing the great majority of scholars working in these areas of study, he argues, among other things, that Aristotle does not import any key doctrines from biology (and physics), such as his hylomorphic analysis of natural objects, into his *Metaphysics*, and nor does he present and defend these doctrines there. According to Bolton, Aristotle does not make an attempt to give a *biological* definition of the human being in *Metaphysics* Z. In other words, his aim is not to explain what makes a given human being, say Socrates, or his matter a human being, but rather what makes him a substance, "a this". As a general observation, I should say that Bolton raises the issue in a somewhat polemical fashion, but he is consistent in discussing it. Yet I suspect that his opponents draw rather different implications from the autonomy claim,

or qualify it, which is why the criticism he gives is barely conclusive. In any case, this issue is of great methodological significance, and no interpreter of Aristotle is able to avoid addressing it in one way or another.

The next four papers discuss the method of definition by division. James Lennox begins by showing that this method serves an important role in the early stages of inquiry in Aristotle's biology. His major attempt is to demonstrate that although many have blamed *On the Parts of Animals* Book 1 for its lack of unity, it nevertheless constitutes a "narrative unity" (p. 61). Lennox does an admirable job, but following Aristotle's discussion in every detail is still challenging.

Alan Code and Mary Louise Gill explore Aristotle's attempt to explain how a definition, which typically consists of more than one term, manages to refer to one single thing rather than two or more different things. Both begin by pointing out that the unity of definition, in Aristotle's view, depends on the unity of the object defined. The task is thus to determine how an object constitutes a unity, not just an accidental unity such as musical Coriscus, a white man or a bronze sphere, in which case the two components are independent from each other, but an intrinsic unity, a unity *per se*. Code concentrates on *Metaphysics* Z 12, in which Aristotle's solution is to identify the "final differentia" as the form and substance that the definition expresses. This way of defining an item applies a method of division, and it thereby differs from the method suggested in *Metaphysics* H 6, which does not rely on division, and is the special focus of Gill. She gives a new interpretation of Aristotle's solution to the problem of unity in that chapter. Aristotle's suggestion is that the definition of man as a biped animal, for example, picks out one thing and not two, because one of the components is matter (i.e. animal), the other form (i.e. biped), and the matter is in potentiality and the form in actuality (1045a23–25). Gill's new argument is that Aristotle does not attempt to *justify* his suggestion, which he illustrates by defining the form of man, by showing, in what immediately follows in the text, how it applies to the defining of compounds such as the spherical bronze. What Aristotle does, according to Gill, is just to indicate that the suggestion has wider application. This requires that she replace the explanatory γάρ at 1045a25 with an inferential γ' ἄρ, a new word division, which is not objectionable.

Pierre Pellegrin, in turn, examines Aristotle's different approaches to definition in *Posterior Analytics* 2. Notwithstanding Brunschwig's opposing arguments, he concludes that there are no good reasons to postulate two theories of definition in this work (see, e.g., Chapter 2.10), one requiring causal explanation, and the other reference to principles.

The following three chapters focus on Aristotle's key distinctions between matter and form, and actuality and potentiality, and how they figure in his biology and metaphysics. Aryeh Kosman discusses the question of why one animal is male and another female. According to a popular version of Aristotle's theory of animal generation, the two sexes play a different role in the process of generation, the male providing the form, and the female the matter of the generated animal. However, Kosman shows in detail that this view misrepresents the way in which the two sexes play the active and passive roles involved in generation.

David Charles explores the way in which Aristotle uses the terms *dynamis* "capacity" and *energeia* "actuality" to clarify the unity of a composite substance such as a house in *Metaphysics* Θ 7 and 8. According to Charles, Aristotle applies these terms to explain how a composite substance constitutes a unity. This interpretation requires that matter stands to form

just as capacity stands to actuality. Thus understood, matter and form, and capacity and actuality, are more basic components in terms of which the unity of a composite can be explained. However, Charles remarks that this is controversial because Aristotle occasionally (e.g.,  $\Theta$  6, 1048b8–9) relates matter to the composite substance. This suggests that he would not necessarily take the relationship between matter and form, and capacity and actuality, as explanatory of unity (in which case unity would be taken as a primitive feature of reality). An implication of Charles's interpretation is that the unity of the composite is not accidental. He argues, "Indeed, it seems essential to this matter's being the matter it is that it is what is actualized in this way in certain conditions" (p. 193). For example, the bronze which has the capacity to be a Zeus statue is essentially different from the bronze which has the capacity to be a Hermes statue. This sounds somewhat paradoxical in cases in which the two statues require exactly the same amount of metal (as if a lump of bronze could not take on different forms), and underlines the importance of answering the question of when a given piece of matter possesses the capacity to be *F* (the main question in  $\Theta$  7) to the exclusion of having the capacity to be *G* or something else (which is ignored in  $\Theta$  7).

Sarah Broadie clarifies Aristotle's striking argument in *Metaphysics*  $\Theta$  8, 1050a4–b4 that the activity of a builder, for example, is located not in the agent, the builder, but in the patient—in this case, in the building materials. Aristotle attempts to justify this by claiming that the result of an activity is its goal, and that the activity is the result. Thus, for example, the activity of building must take place in the materials. However, as Broadie shows, this is not satisfactory in the case of transitive activities such as building, because the goal of the building activity does not strictly speaking manifest itself in the materials which are worked on, but in the completed house, which goes beyond the activity of building. She argues that Aristotle's qualification to the argument, the claim that in transitive cases the activity is more a goal than the potentiality (1050a23–8), implies several difficulties.

In the final chapter, John Cooper sets about determining why knowledge of political science is necessary for anyone who wishes to be a virtuous person, i.e. not only for those who enter into a political career, but also for those who aspire to live a happy and virtuous life as a private citizen. This knowledge, according to Cooper, is a requirement because "virtuous actions and activities, however much undertaken always by individuals, are *essentially* communal undertakings" (p. 230; Cooper's italics). Focusing on three different kinds of community, master-slave, family, and village communities, he develops a rather persuasive argument. Lacking sufficient evidence, however, he is compelled to resort to speculation at some important points, such as his proposal about communal undertakings (pp. 228ff.). In the course of the discussion, he accounts for them in different ways, applying for example set-theoretic vocabulary ("a *koinōnia* simply is at bottom a set of common activities", p. 242) and part-whole relations ("Aristotle is conceiving this common good, of which the good realized by each in their own virtuous actions is a part, as achieved by all of them acting together", p. 243). Cooper does his best to clarify this talk even further in terms of a shared commitment to the common good (see. pp. 245–6), but this does not entirely remove the obscurity of the matter. But despite this, the paper is written in a lucid and eloquent style, and I only complain about its being excessively long (52 pages), something that is typical of Cooper's writing.

Despite the minor complaints just made, each article in this collection is a significant contribution to its specific area of study. The collection in its entirety does not constitute a

thematic unity, but it is nonetheless a precious tribute to the work of Allan Gotthelf. For this purpose, the collection also includes a short biography of Gotthelf and a list of his publications, and of meetings he organized between 1976/7 and 2010.

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FIONA MACINTOSH: *Sophocles: Oedipus Tyrannus*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge – New York 2009. ISBN 978-0-521-49711-4 (hb), 978-0-521-49782-4 (pb). XVI, 203 pp, 15 b/w ill. GBP 45, USD 80 (hb), GBP 17.99, USD 29.99 (pb).

Selon une anecdote dans un fragment conservé d'Antiphane, la différence entre les comédies et les tragédies est le fait que les comédies sortent de l'imagination du poète, tandis que les tragédies bénéficient du matériel qu'offrent les mythes et les archétypes connus du public. Bien qu'il s'agisse d'une exagération d'un poète comique, le mythe d'Œdipe est la source la plus importante de l'histoire des tragédies en Occident. *L'Œdipe roi* (gr. Οἰδίπους Τύραννος) de Sophocle est probablement la tragédie la plus connue s'inspirant de cette tradition. L'œuvre de Macintosh retrace l'histoire de la tragédie antique de Sophocle à partir de sa première représentation sur scène au cinquième siècle avant notre ère jusqu'aux productions du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle.

Le mythe d'Œdipe symbolise tout d'abord le savoir de l'homme: Œdipe est capable de résoudre l'énigme posée par le Sphinx. L'énigme était la suivante: "Quel être a quatre pattes le matin, deux à midi et trois le soir?" La réponse pour cette énigme était: "l'homme", parce que comme enfant il marche à quatre pattes, comme adulte il se tient sur ses deux jambes et comme vieillard il s'appuie sur une canne. Mais le mythe d'Œdipe traite également les limites et surtout l'ignorance de l'homme: étant ignorant de ce qu'il est, Œdipe se rend coupable de parricide et d'inceste.

Dans la première partie du livre sont analysées les relations de la pièce de théâtre de Sophocle avec d'autres versions grecques du mythe d'Œdipe; la tragédie de Sophocle ne peut pas être considérée comme la "version originale" parce que le thème fut traité par plusieurs autres poètes, parmi lesquels Eschyle. Cependant, la version de Sophocle avait un statut privilégié déjà dans l'Antiquité, ce qui est montré par la place qu'Aristote lui donne parmi les tragédies. Les allusions aux autres versions basées sur le mythe d'Œdipe dans la pièce de Sophocle sont analysées dans l'œuvre (bien que toutes les pièces de théâtre traitant le mythe ne soient pas conservées). De plus, l'intertextualité est un fait important pour comprendre la pièce de Sophocle. L'Œdipe de Sophocle redéfinit la conception de héros, surtout le héros que l'on peut appeler "tragique". La version de Sophocle a également une dimension politique: le public athénien pouvait probablement y voir plusieurs allusions aux événements de l'époque (la Guerre du Péloponnèse et la fin de l'hégémonie d'Athènes). Ces allusions se voyaient également dans la mise en scène de la pièce.

La tragédie de Sophocle fut accueillie avec estime aussi à Rome. Les Romains voient dans le mythe d'Œdipe non seulement une dimension politique mais aussi une dimension psychologique. L'historien Suétone évoque des similitudes entre les relations familiales de l'empereur Néron avec celle d'Œdipe. De plus, la mise en scène de l'époque reflète la réalité politique dans la Rome néronienne (pouvoir impérial vs. citoyen). Un sous-chapitre entier est consacré aux pièces de théâtre dans lesquelles Sénèque traite le mythe d'Œdipe.