

INTRODUCTION

In preparing this volume for publication, we became more than ever aware that the study of Aristotle's logical and metaphysical theories is a philosophically privileged domain. The global controversies, the tensions between analytic and continental philosophy, the struggles between establishment and alternative philosophical positions all seem remote. When a philosopher turns to the interpretation of Aristotle, other philosophical controversies seem put aside. The interpretation of Aristotle's ontology is a kind of intellectual common ground for professional philosophers; nearly everyone who discusses Aristotle, or at least this part of Aristotle's work, shares a certain attitude toward the text, a good deal of common methodology, and common goals of philosophical interpretation. Although there is controversy, that communality of purpose is evident in this volume.

If there is a sense in which Plato established philosophy as an intellectual enterprise, it also could be said that Aristotle began philosophy as a profession; at any rate, many professional philosophers continue to locate their intellectual activities in terms of an Aristotelian matrix. Many of Aristotle's logical and metaphysical theories have regained increased respect in recent years, even when the details of those theories have been subjected to critical examination. Even though nearly all who write on Aristotle seem to speak the same philosophical language, they do not always agree on the meaning of the text or on its consequences.

A good example of a typical dispute between commentators on Aristotle begins the volume: John P. Anton and Donald Morrison both examine the meaning of the word *κατηγορία* in the *Categories* and arrive at contrasting positions, while both compare and contrast their positions with that presented by Michael Frede.¹ Christos Evangeliou sheds light on the controversy by an examination of the understanding which another ancient author, Plotinus, had of these issues. Alban Urbanas takes another, quite original, tack in approaching some of the same problems dealt with by Anton, Morrison, and Evangeliou. At the same time, Herbert Granger's article explains the context within which Urbanas's argument is set and helps to clarify aspects of the dispute concerning categories.

Another set of articles which might be interpreted as taking somewhat contrasting positions are those by Michael Ferejohn, William Wians, and Robin Smith to the extent that they treat of the possible character of an Aristotelian epistemology. We note that Ferejohn's essay is the

only one in the volume which deals in any very extensive way with a relation between the philosophies of Aristotle and Plato.

The second section opens with the most explicitly critical essay in the volume, an extended attack by William Wians on Martha Nussbaum's interpretation of Aristotle's conception of *φαινόμενον*. Yet even in this essay the dispute concerns the meaning of the text; Wians and Nussbaum share similar commitments to the text and a methodology.²

Edward Halper's essay serves as a general introduction to the study of the *Metaphysics*, since it is a discussion of the problems which shape a good deal of the argument of that work from book Beta onward. Ronald Polansky takes up the fundamental problem concerning *κίνησις* and *ἐνέργεια*, and Theodore Scaltsas relates these concepts to those of *ὑποκείμενον* and *οὐσία*. Together these essays explore some of the central concepts of Aristotle's metaphysical theory.

Aristotle's theory of the soul is many-sided; part of the theory has implications for moral psychology. We find that part of the theory best represented in the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics*, which were studied in volume 4 of this series. But the *De Anima* and most other works in the Corpus dealing with the soul are concerned primarily with ontological issues and foundational issues in epistemology. The third section, gathering essays dealing with the ontological aspects of Aristotle's theory of the soul, brings together issues in psychology and ontology. Christopher Shields's discussion of ontological questions relates directly to the essays in section 2, emphasizing soul as *οὐσία* and *ὑποκείμενον*.

Michael Wedin tackles a problem which has continued to baffle many interpreters: How, according to Aristotle, do we think? And building on an earlier essay by Wedin, John Driscoll turns our attention to the textual study of a part of that question, viz., how does the mind think itself, according to the *De Anima*? He sees Aristotle's answer as a development of pre-Platonic theories of mind.

Robin Smith brings together many of the strands of Aristotle's thought discussed in the volume in his examination of Aristotle's concept of nature. He both clarifies the relationships of the concept of nature to the ideas developed in the logical and metaphysical writings and shows how the soul can be seen as a "self-perfecting nature." That road leads directly to issues in moral psychology.

The essays in this volume were selected from a much larger group of papers originally presented at meetings of the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy. Speakers at those meetings are invited to speak on whatever topic in ancient philosophy they choose; it is an indication of the liveliness and timeliness of the discussion of Aristotle's ontology that so many leading scholars in the history of ancient thought have chosen to turn their

attention to these questions. We are especially gratified that we have been able to include essays by several younger scholars, ensuring a continuity of the Aristotelian tradition.

It is the hope of the editors that, by publishing together those essays, many of them not previously published, dealing directly with ontological issues in Aristotle, they may provide the scholar with a range of interpretations; at the same time, graduate students and advanced undergraduate students of Aristotle will have access to a volume which both introduces them to some of the liveliest current theories and shows the way to technical examinations of particular points in Aristotle's text.

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Notes

1. See Michael Frede, *Essays in Ancient Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), chapters 2 and 3.
2. See Wians's last footnote and Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, chapter 8.