

the ongoing stereotyping of these nations as different from and behind western Europe. It is a powerful volume not because it shines a light on those countries in particular, but because it should invite all of us to take a good look at ourselves and the frameworks with and within which we work.

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### *Philosophy*

This year, Aristotle readers could purchase something old and something new for their libraries. The old thing is Diana Quarantotto's edited volume on Aristotle's *Physics* I, published in 2018 but now finally available in paperback at an affordable price.<sup>1</sup> People will remember that this book includes excellent commentaries on each chapter of *Physics*, like those by Andrea Falcon, Timothy Clarke, Laura M. Castelli, Lindsay Judson, David Charles, and Isván Bodnár, to name a few. The volume also contains a preface, an illuminating methodological introduction, and a collaborative translation of Aristotle's text. The main takeaway is a balanced appraisal of the importance of *Physics* I and its introductory role within Aristotle's physical project.

For something new and somehow related, we have Nathanael Stein's *Causality and Causal Explanation in Aristotle* (sadly, the author makes no reference to Quarantotto's volume, which would have helped his argument).<sup>2</sup> This is a monograph on one of Aristotle's signature contributions to philosophy that somehow manages to be audacious in its aim, carefully argued, and thought-provoking, even though one might not agree with some of Stein's interpretations. The book starts with the observation that for all the influence Aristotelian causes have had, it is 'surprisingly difficult to say what the theory is, or whether it is even a theory at all' (1). What he means is that, unlike other influential philosophers, Aristotle is unclear about the basis and justification for his pluralism about causes: we lack explicit discussion about second-order questions on Aristotle's treatment of causality, and the canonical chapters that present the four causes in *Physics* II seem to do it without a preamble or obvious philosophical motivation.

Stein's solution is to reconstruct an Aristotelian theory of causality, allegedly following the text closely. This is where the book's project is risky, since, as Stein recognizes, 'There are, then, good textual and philosophical explanations for the fact that it is difficult to discern a clear and unified theory of causality in Aristotle's general remarks about

<sup>1</sup> *Aristotle's Physics Book I. A Systematic Exploration*. Edited by Diana Quarantotto. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. xviii + 282. Paperback £24.99, ISBN: 978-1-316-64789-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Causality and Causal Explanation in Aristotle*. By Nathanael Stein. New York, Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. xi + 287. Hardback £54.00, ISBN: 978-0-197-66086-7.

causes, and for why scholars and philosophers have not reconstructed one' (7). That being said, the reconstruction is carefully put together. Perhaps the most original aspect of Stein's interpretation is that he thinks Aristotle's theory of causality is more metaphysically neutral and flexible than traditionally assumed. In other words, and perhaps more boldly, Stein thinks that in Aristotle there is no special metaphysics for causality and it can be disentangled from his applications to causal analysis, especially Aristotle's application of the theory to substances. This explains the broad range of examples we get to illustrate the four causes. Moreover, if Stein is correct, it is easier to advocate for Aristotle's relevance and actuality in the contemporary discussion of causality.

The book is divided into three sections. In the first one, which Stein labels 'Conceptual Structure', he offers an analysis of *Physics* II 3, discusses Aristotle's critique of his predecessors, science, and dialectic, and the argumentative context of *Physics* II 3, including a comparison with *Posterior Analytics* II 11. These short chapters lay the groundwork for Stein's reconstruction and do a decent job presenting the main interpretative issues. The main takeaway is that Aristotle rejects reductionist projects and instead sees four modes of causality not as four metaphysical relationships but as second-order roles that cover themselves an open-ended variety of metaphysical roles. However, this section will disappoint those interested in understanding Aristotle as a reader of specific philosophers.

The second section is titled 'Metaphysics'. It starts with a continuation of the discussion about Aristotle's pluralism within each mode of causality. This explains why, for example, efficient causes are not metaphysically uniform qua efficient causes, and likewise with the others (129). He argues that Aristotle extends causes not only to substances but also to changes, activities, and states of affairs of which the natural scientist can offer a real definition, that is, a definition that specifies what they are by stating why they are. In other words, by stating their intrinsic (i.e. *kath'hauto*) causes. In another chapter, Stein explains how different phenomena have different profiles and discusses in length some of the tensions and problems that Aristotle must navigate. The last section is dedicated to the epistemology of grasping causes in the context of moving from what is 'more knowledgeable to us' to what is 'more knowledgeable without qualification'. One of the salient claims in this section is that, according to Stein, there are epistemic asymmetries among different modes of causality, and in some cases causality is just as it appears, with no gap between appearance and reality, whereas that is not the case for other kinds of causes. Despite some quibbles I have with punctual exegetical decisions, I think this book contributes a welcome fresh look at the topic of causality in Aristotle, and even if the style of writing could have been more transparent for my taste, I am sure scholars of Aristotle will find it quite acceptable.

Finally, I want to note that it is a pity that Oxford University Press printed the volume on lower-than-usual-quality paper and printers. This, combined with the ever-smaller font size (a problem also in Cambridge University Press books), made reading a tiring business. This was especially obvious when comparing it with other volumes in Oxford's catalogue with better paper and print quality. An example is the next book I will discuss.

Despite the unnecessary addition of the birthplace and what feels like a generic subtitle, Robin Waterfield's *Plato of Athens. A Life in Philosophy* offers an accessible,

informative, and useful biography of Plato and the context of his life.<sup>3</sup> At first, of course, I was suspicious of the endeavour. The beginning of Waterfield's preface captures my reaction: 'The prospect of writing a biography of Plato is daunting, and many have judged it a lost cause' (ix). But to Waterfield's credit, the result is an extraordinarily useful resource for academics and teachers of Plato.

For the project to have something to say, however, we are asked to accept *Letters* 3, 7, and 8 as authentic (xxx–xxxiv). This is not a small ask, but those that are not fully persuaded (like me) can still gain a lot from indulging in reading the reconstruction of the life that emerges from these documents, even if one affords less factual credibility to the result. Waterfield complements the information in the letters with a well-documented knowledge of Plato's time, Plutarch's *Life of Dion*, and whatever can be lifted from the Platonic corpus (including *First Alcibiades* and *Hippias Major*).

The volume is divided into a preliminary section and eight chapters proper. The preliminary section includes a preface, maps, a timeline, a list of Plato's dialogues, an introduction, and a discussion about the sources. The chapters cover Plato's life right from the beginning, offering the context to understand his family, connections, and growing up in wartime, becoming an adult by the time Athens had been defeated, meeting and hanging out with Socrates, making various incursions into politics, the foundation of the Academy and dedicating oneself to writing philosophy, and the information we have of his last years. Along the way, we are presented with many of the well-known anecdotes and information that arose in the biographical tradition, and we get an updated assessment of their reliability (e.g. if Plato was born in 428/7, if his real name was Aristocles, and whether he was sold into slavery at some point). Black and white reproductions of famous paintings, engravings, and photos adorn the volume.

Waterfield's book should be contrasted with Malcolm Schofield's 'Plato in His Time and Place', originally published in 2019 and now included as the first chapter of *How Plato Writes. Perspectives and Problems*.<sup>4</sup> In this book, Schofield compiles and revises fourteen of his best articles on Plato (including six chapters dedicated to the *Laws*), all but one previously published elsewhere. The collection is masterfully put together and justified by a brilliant introduction that sees the chapters as examples of key aspects of Plato's writing, particularly his use of argument, allegory, myth, intertextuality, and paradox, as well as his treatment of the dialogue form, narration, and his assumed readership. The shared underlying assumption is that 'whatever and however he writes, Plato means primarily to be doing philosophy, conceived broadly as the search for wisdom and understanding' (1). And although this starting point might sound like a platitude to untrained eyes, it encapsulates a radical and nuanced approach to the Platonic corpus. Some of the articles in this collection include well-known pieces such as 'Likeness and Likenesses in the *Parmenides*', 'The Noble Lie', 'Metaspeleology', and 'The *Laws*' Two Projects'. Other highlights are 'Paradoxes of Childhood and Play in Heraclitus and Plato' (not previously published) and my favourite: 'Plato's Marionette'.

<sup>3</sup> *Plato of Athens. A Life in Philosophy*. By Robin Waterfield. New York, Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. xxxix + 255. Hardback £21.99, ISBN: 978-0-197-56475-2.

<sup>4</sup> *How Plato Writes. Perspectives and Problems*. By Malcolm Schofield. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. x + 308. Hardback £30.00, ISBN: 978-1-108-48308-7.

Mauro Bonazzi has published a revised and updated version of *Il platonismo* (Turin 2015) with Cambridge University Press. The English version, titled *Platonism. A Concise History From the Early Academy to Late Antiquity*, appears with a foreword by David Sedley and has been translated by Sergio Knipe.<sup>5</sup> The book contains four densely packed chapters and two appendixes. The first chapter is about the early Academy, the second one tackles the sceptical Academy, the third chapter is dedicated to Platonism in the early Imperial age, and the last chapter deals with Neoplatonism. The two appendixes cover the relationship between Platonism and politics and Platonism and Christianity, respectively.

Despite the foreword, some readers would have benefited from a proper introduction. The book presupposes a careful reader and some familiarity with ancient Greek and Roman philosophy (which might be a fair expectation in countries where philosophy and its history is a required subject at the secondary level). Having said that, I find the book remarkably clear (despite some minor missteps in the translation). Considering the limited space dedicated to each section, the book offers a reasonable treatment of the topics and interpretative problems in each author and period covered.

The book aims to show us that Platonism is not monolithic but diverse, multifaceted, and in dialogue with itself and other philosophical traditions. Given that aim, Bonazzi emphasizes the distinct contributions, originality, and main debates of each chapter of the history of Platonism. He understands Platonism broadly and includes both Platonists taken as those who ‘believe in the superiority of Plato’s philosophy’ (2), whatever that is taken to be, and Academic philosophers, that is, people affiliated to the school founded by Plato, irrespective of position with respect to the founder’s philosophy. This, for sure, spells out a common practice, but it also reveals its artificiality and lack of unity. I would have preferred a more cohesive and inclusive approach, which would simply refer to the Platonic tradition understood as the wide variety of philosophical communities reading and critically discussing Plato. This would solve some of Bonazzi’s questions regarding the relationship between Platonism and scepticism (Ch. 2) and Platonism and Stoicism (Ch. 3). It would require additional chapters on, at least, the Stoics and Peripatetics, but would help counter the misguided tendency to appeal to Platonism (or some consensus derived from it) as an authoritative source that can resolve interpretative disagreements on Platonic scholarship today. That is not to say that Bonazzi’s work is unhelpful in this regard. On the contrary, he takes important steps in the right direction by recognizing the plurality of philosophical methods, doctrines, influences, and contrasting interpretations of Plato.

Another translation published in 2023, this one with a better title than the original, is *The Dangerous Life and Ideas of Diogenes the Cynic* by Jean-Manuel Roubineau (originally published in 2020 as *Diogène: l’antisocial*).<sup>6</sup> The foreword by Phillip Mitsis presents the topic of the book and the author’s style of argument to successfully manage the English-speaking readership’s expectations. The book itself has an introduction and four chapters that present Diogenes in an engaging, accessible, and yet erudite manner.

<sup>5</sup> *Platonism. A Concise History from the Early Academy to Late Antiquity*. By Mauro Bonazzi. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. xvi + 233. Hardback £30.00, ISBN: 978-1-009-25342-0.

<sup>6</sup> *The Dangerous Life and Ideas of Diogenes the Cynic*. By Jean-Manuel Roubineau. New York, Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. xiii + 128. Hardback £14.99, ISBN: 978-0-197-66635-7.

At the same time, the prose highlights the subversive and provocative nature of Diogenes' life and ideas, the way he was dismissed by many, and the perennial allure for art and culture, even if sometimes the original Diogenes gets distorted, watered down, or unjustly caricatured. The edition is accompanied by a map, and reproductions of representations of Diogenes in different forms of art.

More interestingly, this monograph also critically discusses the problem with the sources and Diogenes' reception in late antiquity and beyond (although he is more optimistic than most regarding certain anecdotes). One of the distinguishing features of Roubineau's monograph is the emphasis on uncovering some ways in which Diogenes was a man of his own time and resembled the very people he criticized. But Roubineau also frames the book in a way that communicates very effectively how Diogenes had radical things to say regarding economic matters, the body, living in accordance with nature, and education.

In *Socrates and the Socratic Philosophies*, Claudia Marisco assembles an edited volume with a selection of papers presented at the SOCRATICA IV conference held in Buenos Aires in 2018.<sup>7</sup> The conference was also the occasion of the establishment of the International Society for Socratic Studies, and the resulting book offers an international, multilingual, and wide-ranging collection that also showcases a diverse range of methodological approaches and philosophical traditions.

The excellent volume begins with a brief prologue and contains twenty-seven short papers divided into four thematic sections. The first section is dedicated to (I) 'Socrates and the Socratic Environment', where 'Né filosofo né sofista' by Livio Rossetti stands out and sets up some of the recent discussions regarding the place and status of Socrates and his contemporaries. Other pieces in this section cover interesting ground, including an assessment of peritrope in arguments from Antiphon to Socrates (by David J. Murphy) and the writing of *erotikoi logoi* (erotic discourses) by Socratics such as Anthistenes, Aeschines, Plato, and Xenophon (by Alessandro Stavru), who agreed, we are told, on a 'non-passionate' nature of Eros as the desire which aims at satisfying the needs of the soul (108).

The second section, (II) 'Plato's Socrates', has less unity and a wider scope than the title suggests. Although pieces such as William H. F. Altman's 'Socrates in Plato's *Philebus*' and Silvio Marino's 'Socrates Medicus: una rappresentazione platonica' fit the description, other pieces in this section attempt to reach the historical Socrates or contrast Plato's Socrates with the Stoic Socrates, or Xenophon's. In this section, I would highlight 'Socrates desmemoriado. El olvido como dispositivo retórico' by Stefania Giombini and 'Socrates and the Sufficiency Thesis' by Joel A. Martinez and Nicholas D. Smith. In this latter piece, the authors argue that the historical Socrates identifies happiness with doing well, understands *eutuchia* in terms of 'success' and not 'good luck', that virtue is gradable, and that things outside our control affect our capacity to succeed.

Section three, (III) 'The Socratic Lines', also sounds vague and unhelpful, but contains brilliant papers on Antisthenes' philosophy, the Megarics, the Cyrenaics, Xenophon, and Aeschines. An interesting paper here is 'Terpsion of Megara and the

<sup>7</sup> *Socrates and the Socratic Philosophies*. Edited by Claudia Marisco. Baden-Baden, Academia Verlag, 2022. Pp. 427. Hardback €98,00, ISBN: 978-3-985-72004-0.

Socratic Daemon' by Stefano Mecci. The final section, (IV) 'Socrates' Reception', offers papers looking at Socrates through the lenses of Aristotelian philosophy, the Epicurean tradition, and Cicero's Socrates. Authors in this section include Marta Jimenez, Esteban Bieda, Dino De Sanctis, and Matthew Watton.

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### *Reception*

We have two volumes in Bloomsbury's Classical Receptions in Twentieth-Century Writing series edited by Laura Jansen, namely, *Derek Walcott and the Creation of a Classical Caribbean* by Justine McConnell, and *J. R. R. Tolkien's Utopianism and the Classics* by Hamish Williams.<sup>1</sup> Both texts have three main chapters to which is devoted one aspect of the author's reception of the classical world. In the former, McConnell identifies three recurring approaches or processes in Walcott's creation of a 'classical Caribbean', often drawing on postcolonial theory. These are: non-linear or non-colonial temporalities (explored under the heading 'Time'), 'Syncretism', and 'Re-creation'. At the same time, McConnell not only analyses the St. Lucian author's relationship to classical culture and education, but situates his work within that of other Caribbean writers. McConnell paints a cohesive picture of Walcott's (self-)positioning in these entanglements of times, places, and traditions, and makes a number of useful observations about classical reception more broadly.

In 'Time', McConnell wrangles several conflicting and sometimes ineffable models of temporality. On the one hand, Western notions of time have simultaneously emphasized linearity and regularity, while, on the other, those same notions put non-Western cultures at a temporal distance, somehow untouched by the same processes of development and progression that Westerners see in their own societies. McConnell argues that, contrary to this model, Walcott's view is that 'the "New World" is simultaneous with the "Old"' (38). While this might seem unremarkable at first glance, Walcott's work must be understood within a variety of temporal traditions. McConnell, for example, compares his work to Antonio Benítez-Rojo's evocation of an 'aquatic [culture], a sinuous culture

<sup>1</sup> *Derek Walcott and the Creation of a Classical Caribbean*. By Justine McConnell. London, New York and Dublin, Bloomsbury, 2023. Pp. viii + 193. 2 illustrations. Hardback £75.00, ISBN: 978-1-474-29152-1; *J.R.R. Tolkien's Utopianism and the Classics*. By Hamish Williams. London, New York and Dublin, Bloomsbury, 2023. Pp. xiii + 206. Hardback £75.00, ISBN: 978-1-350-24145-9.