*Philosophy*

From the books I received this term, some titles immediately grabbed my attention. I begin with two in-depth studies of equally complex and intriguing aspects of Aristotle's philosophy. One is *Fractured Goodness* by Christopher Shields.[1] In this book, the author invites us to rethink Aristotle's response to the Form of the Good. The monograph is a follow-up to his earlier work on the highest good in Aristotle,[2] this time with a comprehensive treatment mainly focused on *Nicomachean Ethics* I 6, but paying considerable attention to *Eudemian Ethics* I 8 and other relevant passages, too. Its most salient feature may be Shields' masterful elegance in walking through the minefield of exegetical difficulties and scholarly disagreements without losing focus or sounding dismissive, uncharitable, or partisan.

Shields aims to examine Aristotle's arguments 'neutrally and with no preconceptions as to their eventual merit', suggesting that, in this way, and through unpacking and reconstruction, we will find them formidable but not unanswerable (p. xix), especially if we are also careful in our reconstruction of Plato's view, and Aristotle's understanding of Plato or the Platonic view that is his primary target.

For that purpose, the first half of Chapter 1 focuses on the six features of the Platonic view that are most problematic for Aristotle: that the Form of the Good is (1) a form, (2) univocal, (3) something common, (4) universal, (5) a paradigm, and (6) separate. As Shields righty notes, 'none of them is uncontroversially correct as a characterization of Plato's view; all of them demand at least some preliminary explication' (p. 5). In the second part of this chapter, he offers a translation of *Nicomachean Ethics* I 6, and a first attempt at reconstructing Aristotle's arguments.

Although we get a careful treatment of the Platonic view targeted by Aristotle, I wonder if Shields is unintentionally tipping the rhetorical balance in favour of Aristotle by focusing exclusively on these six features. Of course, he can reply that a full treatment of the Good Itself in Plato would require its own book. Yet, without a more comprehensive outline of the Good in Plato, the purported neutrality seems at risk, not by what Shields says but by what he has decided to omit.

Despite this worry, Chapter 2 helps us see that, at least in comparison with other interpreters, Shields remains a fair judge and a careful reader. Where some see Aristotle's criticisms either with 'unbridled enthusiasm' (p. 66) and find his arguments 'utterly devastating' (p. 42), others regard them as 'woefully inadequate, even pathetic, as jejune attempts to refute a view the lineaments of which eluded Aristotle altogether' (p. 42). The chapter reflects on the reception of *Nicomachean Ethics* I 6, and focuses on two representative interpretations, that of the Byzantine Platonist and Bishop of Nicaea, Eustratius (*c.*1050–1120), and the reading of a committed medieval Aristotelian, Thomas Aquinas (1225–74). This is followed by a section that shows how the polarized reception of Aristotle's criticism of the Form of the Good continues, including contributions to the debate by Gadamer, Santas, and Jacquette.

[1] *Fractured Goodness. Aristotle's Response to Plato's Form of the Good*. By Christopher Shields. New York, Oxford University Press, 2024. Pp. xiv + 275. Hardback £80.00, ISBN: 978-0-19-891569-0.

[2] Shields, Christopher, 'The Summum Bonum in Aristotle's Ethics: Fractured Goodness', in Joachim Aufderheide and Ralf M. Bader (eds.), *The Highest Good in Aristotle and Kant*, Mind Association Occasional Series (Oxford, 2015), 83–111.

Chapters 3 to 8 discuss Aristotle's arguments in *Nichomachean Ethics* I 6 (hereafter referred to as *EN* for its Latin acronym). Chapter 3 focuses on an argument Shields calls 'A Series of Goods' (*EN* I 6, 1096a17–23), a brief but obscure two-premise argument. In its simplest form, it says that: '(i) there are no Forms set over items arranged in a series; and (ii) that good things are themselves so arranged; with the result that (iii) there is no Form of the Good' (p. 89). Most of the chapter is spent reconstructing and expanding the argument to assess its merits and force.

Chapter 4, in turn, deals with the famous and complex categorical argument found in *EN* I 6, 1096a23–29, which 'attempts to yoke goodness to being and to infer that since being cannot be predicated univocally across all ten Aristotelian categories, neither can goodness' (p. 90). Aristotle's argument concludes that goodness is not univocal. Appraisal of the argument is, however, a complex task, given that it is not a self-contained argument but one that draws on a conceptual framework it does not reproduce and is the locus of scholarly debate.

Shields rightly points out that to understand the argument, we need to clarify, among other things, the connection between transcategorial predication and univocity. But this is no trivial task, especially when the most natural approach, a predicational interpretation, renders an argument that 'falls short of its intended mark' (p. 102). Shields, then, turns his attention to an alternative approach that he traces back to Alexander of Aphrodisias (in *Top.* 105.19–25), and which 'effectively denies that "…is good" is a predicate at all' (p. 103). To complete the argument, Shields makes use of Geach's contention that 'there is no such thing as being just good or bad, there is only being a good or a bad so-and-so'.[3] This line of interpretation seems more promising. However, the argument still depends on another difficult claim, namely that 'the good is meant in as many ways as being' (*EN* I 6, 1096a23–24), a contention which the Platonist might simply reject (here the reader should note an unfortunate typo in the references to the Bekker pagination; where we find: '11026s23–24' on pp. 113, 116, and 117; it should say 1096a23–24).

The weakest argument Aristotle offers in *EN* I 6 is the subject of Chapter 5: the argument based on the diversity of sciences. Although this argument seems patently question-begging, Shields insists this accusation is unjustified. However, he acknowledges this is only on the condition of supplying independent reasons, based on texts mostly in *Topics*, to help Aristotle develop a better argument than we find in *EN* I 6. Still, Shields concedes that 'the argument from the diversity of sciences remains, at this juncture, inconclusive' (p. 139). But importantly, Shields notes, if this argument were sound, it would fracture goodness. It would show that goodness is meant in even more ways than being.

Chapters 6 to 8 are perhaps the briefest, but nonetheless philosophically rich. They discuss the remaining arguments in *EN* I 6, that is, the adding of 'itself', the argument from the plurality of intrinsic goods, and the pointlessness of the Form of the Good. The second one, as Sheilds understands it, engages with and responds to a kind of moderated Platonism that does not pursue an unrestricted version of univocity but only one ranging over intrinsic goods. This chapter shows how Aristotle's response to this moderated Platonism is 'perplexing and costly' (p. 173) because it seems to

[3] P. T. Geach, 'Good and Evil', *Analysis* 17 (1956), 32–42, quoted on p. 107.

risk the commensurability of intrinsic goods, fragmenting good further and creating some tension in Aristotle's own position.

The final argument in *NE* I 6, examined in Chapter 8, takes a different strategy to tackle paradeigmatism. It first argues that even if there were such a thing as the Form of the Good, it would be useless and irrelevant because it would be unattainable. Aristotle concedes that the Platonist will reply that the Form of the Good still can be a paradigm. However, Aristotle points out again that if that were so, we would find the sciences paying the Form of the Good is heed. Like in the diversity of sciences argument, this seems to depend on an appeal to scientific practices. According to Shields, Aristotle reintroduces some normativity by implying that scientists are right in ignoring the Form of the Good. However, this was not as clear to me as it is to him, but it might be my Platonic bias.

The last two chapters of the book switch the focus from assessing the arguments against the Form of the Good to how Aristotle deals with the consequences of these criticisms. The first problem is that rejecting univocity seems to take down commensurability, too, which would mean there is no way to rank options or to decide between two good courses of action.

Shields explains two possible unifying strategies: analogy and core-dependent homonymy. He thinks that analogy, or a combination of analogy and core-dependency fails (sec. 9.2). His argument for this conclusion is not without merit, but I wish he had elaborated it more. Shield suggests that core-dependency homonymy might be the way forward, even if it turns out that Aristotle is closer to Plato than we might have thought. Following this line of argument, the final chapter suggests that the Aristotelian framework might allow for a science which studies goodness *qua* goodness, like the science of being *qua* being we find in *Metaphysics*, even if nowhere does Aristotle systematically attempt to do so.

With a haunting close-up of Caravaggio's *Medusa* as the jacket image, Giles Pearson's *Aristotle on What Emotions Are* is the most recent monograph in the Oxford Aristotle Studies edited by Lindsay Judson.[4] The book offers a carefully argued interpretation and appraisal of what Aristotle has to say about emotions (*pathē*), highlighting some of its differences and advantages in relation to contemporary accounts.

According to Pearson, Aristotle sees emotions as 'representational pleasures or distresses that are formed in response to other intentional states that apprehend their objects' (p. 1). More specifically, Pearson is interested in emotions as occurrent states, i.e. emotional episodes, rather than dispositional states. Given that Aristotle's texts do not give a systematic treatment to this topic, the book aims to offer a reconstruction of the theory of emotions that Aristotle seems to apply in *Rhetoric* II.

The book is divided into an introduction, a first preparatory chapter, and four parts. The first part, composed of four chapters (chs 2–5), establishes the core thesis that emotions are representational pleasures and distresses alone. Part II examines the relationship between emotions and desires, and includes chapters on anger (ch. 6), appetite (ch. 8), and other (putative) cases where emotions are linked to desires (ch. 7). The third part of the book (chs 9–10) explores and discusses the material

[4] *Aristotle on What Emotions Are*. By Giles Pearson. New York, Oxford University Press, 2024. Pp. xiv + 381. Hardback £103.00, ISBN: 978-0-19-887934-3.

dimension of emotions and some cases that might be thought of as problematic for Pearson's interpretation. The fourth and final part offers an examination of the philosophical payouts of Aristotle's theory of emotion. This part of the book includes a chapter on the representational role of emotions (ch. 11), and an account of how Aristotle's theory could explain recalcitrant emotions. The book is appended with a useful catalogue of twenty emotions discussed by Aristotle, a bibliography, a general index, and an *index locorum*.

We learn in the introduction that, for the most part, Pearson wishes to remain neutral on the debate about what exactly is the intentional state that apprehends the object of emotions. Whether it is apprehended by a belief or a judgement, the perceptual capacity of *phantasia* (which he translates as 'perceptual construal'), or either of them, he does not argue here (although he is currently working on an MS that argues for the latter). However, Pearson does defend the view that for Aristotle, emotions are not, even in part, the intentional states that apprehend their objects, whichever states those are (p. 9). Instead, emotions are, he argues, pleasures and distresses formed *in response to* other intentional states that apprehend the emotion's objects. According to this model, emotions are reactive and have no desiderative or motivational aspect. This allows Pearson to say that the pleasure or distress of the emotion helps us individuate the emotion type and explain why two people (or the same person at different times) can, in principle, experience two emotions in response to the very same intentional state.

Take an episode of fear. In *Rh*. II 5, Aristotle defines it as 'a sort of distress or disturbance arising from the appearance of a future destructive or painful evil' (1382a21–22, trans. Reeve, and as quoted in p. 322). When I feel a cockroach walking across my bare foot in the bathroom of a questionable Airbnb, the emotion I immediately suffer is fear. This arises from my apprehension that the cockroach might carry all sorts of dangerous diseases that I might catch. But, in Pearson's interpretation, it is only my distress that constitutes fear, even if it is directed at and in response to my apprehension of the dangerous cockroach. After all, others might react with a different emotion at the sight of the bug, even if they agree with my evaluation of danger.

I am persuaded by Pearson's rejection of any identification between the representational pleasure or distress and the intentional state that apprehends the emotion's object. I am also sympathetic to the claim that their relationship is better explained as reactive rather than concurrence or causally. However, I am less convinced that emotions must be the pleasures or distresses *alone*.

Pearson wants to reject the view that emotions have two distinct components: the representational pleasure or distress and the intentional state that apprehends the object of the emotion. One of the reasons is that emotions are not generally directed at the intentional states, but at the objects they apprehend. Pity or envy, for example, are not directed at our intentional states but at those who suffered an undeserved misfortune or achieved some success (p. 103). I agree. However, the dual component view does not necessarily require that the representational pleasure or distress be directed at the intentional state, as Pearson seems to assume. Yet, the intentional state seems required to fully explain the emotion (the crucial sections here are 4.2 and 4.3).

But even if we concede that the intentional state that apprehends the emotion's object is not a proper part of the emotion, there are other emotions that seem difficult to fit into Pearson's account. Chapter 6 addresses the more salient of these cases: anger. Aristotle defines it as a 'desire accompanied by distress…' (*Rh*. II 2, 1378a30), which

suggests that some emotions have a desiderative component. Pearson's reply is surprising. He denies that anger is an emotion. He argues instead that anger is more than an emotion. It is a state that incorporates both an emotion and a desire. Although he is right in resisting the idea that all emotions involve desires, he seems to pass on the possibility that some emotions might be complex (a possibility that would have also helped with the case of appetite, discussed in Chapter 8). Surely, the representational pleasure or distress is a necessary condition, but cases like anger suggest it might not always be sufficient. A similar case is love, which in Pearson's framework cannot be an emotion proper either. Leaving these states and similar cases taxonomically homeless seems a big price to pay.

The book has much more to offer, though, and the final chapters deserve special mention. Here, Pearson elaborates on his idea that for Aristotle, emotions are neither descriptive nor prescriptive but have instead a reactive role and that Aristotle, as he understands him, is better suited to explain cases of recalcitrant emotions. This makes the book a fruitful read for students of Aristotle and those interested in the contemporary philosophy of emotions.

Another appealing title is *Stoic Eros* by Simon Shogry,[5] a recent instalment of the Cambridge Elements in Ancient Philosophy series, edited by James Warren. This concise book skilfully focuses on an unexpectedly rich topic while giving the reader enough context of Stoic thought to avoid oversimplification or obscurity. The study offers five sections. After an Introduction, Shogry focuses on the two basic forms of *erōs* (love) distinguished by the Stoic (one wise and pedagogical, the other vicious, ignorant, and disobedient to reason). A third section discusses what exactly the sage sees in their beloved and how it is perceived. Section 4, in turn, explores how the Stoic theory of *erōs* can be seen as a response or development of Plato's *Symposium*. A final section explores a series of objections to the Stoic theory, an excellent way to close any book on the Stoics, even if some readers might find Shogry's criticism a bit too mild.

But there is much to like in Shogry's study of Stoic *erōs*, including his constant reminders that, for the Stoics, both women and men can achieve sagehood and deserve philosophical education, his careful reconstruction of the Stoic theory of wise and vicious love, and the careful examination of the beauty of the Sage's beloved that consists, not in physical beauty but in the propensity to acquire beauty. Most of the possible criticisms are about what is not included or discussed at a longer length, but knowing the strict word limit of the series, it seems unfair to mention any. Yet, there are a couple of things I felt Shogry was close to saying out loud but did not. One is that a result of the Stoic account of the Sage seems to be that they cannot be open-minded. That, for the Stoic, would amount to ignorance. On the flip side, one might share all the true judgements of the Sage and, if open to changing one's mind, will still be nothing more than a fool and any loving relationship or action would be vicious.

There are a couple of things that I also found puzzling. For example, while discussing the perfect acting of the Sage and the Stoic commitment to the cooperation of the virtues (i.e., the idea that the Sage does everything on the basis of all virtues), Shogry introduces, under the pretext of charity, what he calls an Opacity Principle:

[5] *Stoic Eros*. By Simon Shogry. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2024. Pp. 68. Paperback £17.00, ISBN: 978-1-009-01771-8.

'the cognitive causes of the rational mind's activities are sometimes phenomenologically opaque to the agent' (p. 8). This allows Shogry to say that the Stoic Sage can act without consciously attending to the epistemic contributions of all virtues at once, even if they are always causally active. The worry is that requiring the Sage to consciously attend to all virtues at every turn seems humanly unattainable. However, Shogry's alternative may risk making the Sage ignorant of some dimensions of their actions while performing them (even if the Sage can recover the epistemic contributions of all the virtues later). Shogry could reply by introducing a distinction between unawareness and ignorance. Still, the issue might prove complicated if we look at how the Stoics conceive the workings of the ruling part of the soul and assent.

I am sympathetic to attempts at drawing closer links between the Stoic theory of *erōs* and the Socrates of the *Symposium*. Still, I was slightly exasperated at Shogry's insistence on labelling this as a Socratic inspiration instead of a critical engagement with Plato. The latter view might help to understand that framing the Stoic *erōs* as a theory of either Pausanian origin, as some have suggested, or of a Socratic provenance, as Shogry contends, is a false dilemma. The Stoics seem to have engaged more fully with the *Symposium* than Shogry and others before him allow. To no surprise to those who know me, I disagree with and find uncharitable the default and widespread assumption that Stoic appropriation of Plato is a 'typical Stoic maneuver' (p. 55).

Finally, I also felt that further comparisons between the Stoic Sage's *erōs* and *Lysis*' discussion of friendship would have proven fruitful. And I was disappointed to see this text so easily set aside. Despite the superficial difference in vocabulary, *Lysis* anticipates and perhaps exemplifies something close to what the Stoics envisage as the relationship between the Sage and their beloved. I hope the author explores this link in future work.

Chiara Graf's *Seneca's Affective Cosmos*[6] is an excellent option to complement the last two books. This monograph also looks at emotions but a somewhat neglected aspect of them in the study of Stoicism: their subjective feel. Moreover, Graf is interested in our broader human affective life, including not only the emotions (*pathē*) of the Stoic *proficiens* ('progressor'; the imperfect but committed philosophy student), but also the good emotions (*eupatheiai*) of the Sage and involuntary affective movements (*propatheia*, or *principia proludentia adfectibus*) that affect us all.

The book includes an Introduction, five substantive chapters that cover the topic in Seneca's scientific, philosophical, and literary works (with a special focus on *Natural Questions*), a conclusion, an epilogue on affect and the feminine, works cited, and a general index. The book's approach draws on contemporary affect theory, which some readers unfamiliar with it might find unhelpfully obscure or worry that its application to Seneca feels forced. However, this issue is alleviated by Graf's transparent prose, helpful paraphrasing, and careful analysis of Seneca's texts. One of the book's main arguments is that the subjective experience of several ethically ambiguous feelings such as anxiety, shock, overwhelm, wonder, and stupefaction, 'provide therapeutic and didactic aid to the Senecan *proficiens*' (p. 20).

[6] *Seneca's Affective Cosmos. Subjectivity, Feeling, and Knowledge in the* Natural Questions *and Beyond*. By Chiara Graf. New York, Oxford University Press. 2024. Pp. xii + 214. Hardback £76.00, ISBN: 978-0-19-890700-8.

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If one ought not to judge a book by its cover, one book made me think we ought not to judge them by their title either. Merrick Anderson's *Just Prospering?*[7] has many merits one could celebrate. However, the quality of the cover image (an oversaturated and vignetted detail of Giovanni de Min's *Hercules at the Crossroads*) and its puzzling title are not among them. The cover might have had nothing to do with the author, but it is genuinely off-putting. The choice of title, however, seems a mistake. It turns out that 'just' is not the adverb but the adjective, and 'prospering' is a translation of *eudaimonia*. If there was a pun intended, it lands flat and does the author a disservice. Happily, the book's subtitle is more helpful: Plato and the Sophistic Debate about Justice.

The book has an introductory and concluding chapter and two interrelated parts (plus bibliography and indexes). It is published by Oxford University Press for The British Academy, and its online version is Open Access. In the introduction, Anderson explains why he prefers translating *eudaimonia* as 'prospering' instead of the more traditional 'happiness', 'flourishing', or 'well-being.' His reasons for discarding these options offer nothing new. However, the positive reasons for his choice are unconvincing, too. Although I agree we should not forget that *eudaimonia* has a connotation of wealth, abundance, and success, he could have made that point and left the word untranslated.

In Part I of the book, Anderson reconstructs the fifth-century debate about justice. To prepare the ground, he begins with a chapter on Hesiod's traditional view of justice, followed by one dedicated to texts that challenge the traditional view of justice and sophists he labels Moral Cynics. This includes an examination of the Sisyphus Fragment, Antiphon's *On Truth*, Aristophanes' *Clouds*, and the Melian Dialogue in Thucydides' *Histories*. These texts challenge, for example, the traditional idea that the gods gave justice to humanity, that the gods reward the just and punish the unjust, and that justice benefits the just person. Chapter 3, in turn, offers some fifth-century defences of justice and contributions by sophists Anderson calls the Friends of Justice. This includes a discussion of the Anonymous Iamblichi, Prodicus' Choice of Heracles preserved in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, and Democritus' relevant fragments.

Part II reconstructs Plato's debate about justice, seen as a contribution and response to the debate examined in Part I. Anderson highlights parallels of the Sophistic debate with passages in *Gorgias* and *Protagoras* (ch. 4) and *Republic* (chs 5–7) and discusses the original contributions made by Plato.

The main contention of the book is that looking at the texts in both parts as a continuous debate helps us better appreciate both the philosophical richness of the sophists' contributions and how much Plato is aware of and responds to his predecessors, something that will make us reassess where the Platonic innovation and contribution lies. In this regard, Anderson offers a remarkable argument to reassess our understanding of the division of goods in the *Republic*. According to a widespread interpretation, the main distinction is between the intrinsic and instrumental value of justice. But Anderson contends that this is not quite right, and the real contrast is between the value of justice and the value of the appearance of justice.

[7] *Just Prospering? Plato and the Sophistic Debate about Justice*. By Merrick Anderson. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2024. Pp. x + 226. Hardback £76.00 (online version Open Access), ISBN: 978-0-19-726766-0.

Christopher Moore's *The Virtue of Agency. Sōphrosynē and Self-Constitution in Classical Greece*[8] offers a monograph on another well-known but less famous Greek virtue. This study, however, covers a lengthier period than Anderson's book on justice. It includes chapters not only on the classical period but also on the early history of *sōphrosynē* (traditionally translated as 'temperance', 'self-control', or 'sound-mindedness'), Heraclitus' fragments on *sōphrosynē*, Euripides' plays that touch on this virtue, as well as late Pythagorean texts, and an appendix on epigraphic material. Moore also discusses the translation in another appendix. There are, of course, chapters dedicated to the late fifth century, Xenophon, Socrates, three chapters on Plato, and one on Aristotle. I will resist the temptation of appraising such a monumental book here. Instead, I recommend anyone interested in virtue ethics and ancient theory of action read this erudite, well-written book.

DANIEL VÁZQUEZ

Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, Ireland
Daniel.Vazquez@mic.ul.ie

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*Roman history*

Three brilliant recent books get us to think harder about risk in ancient Rome and Roman approaches to risk-taking. They are very different from one another, both in the evidence they cover and the approaches they take, and that in itself reflects the ubiquitous, or indeed proteiform, nature of the subject matter: risk is all around, as we all know.

Jerry Toner has provided a general overview of risk in the Roman world that is in keeping with the remit and aims of the *Key Themes in Ancient History* series at CUP, and gives a fine example of how to produce a strong summative account whilst conveying a sense of the potential of the material and the scale of what remains to be done with it.[1] He engages, on the one hand, with recent work on risk and risk-taking in the social sciences, at the intersection between sociology and anthropology, and, on the other, with important contributions in ancient history, most notably Brent Shaw's argument that the Romans had a fundamentally different and profoundly narrower view of the future than the one prevailing in modern times. He seeks to explore areas in which 'various methods of probabilistic thinking' (p. 13) operated: law, religion, finance, trade. Even if Rome lacked a firmly quantitative or numerical

[8] *The Virtue of Agency. Sōphrosynē and Self-Constitution in Classical Greece.* By Christopher Moore. New York, Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. xiv + 394. Hardback £71.00, ISBN: 978-0-19-766350-9.

[1] *Risk in the Roman World.* By Jerry Toner. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2024. Pp. viii + 147. Paperback, £22.99, ISBN: 978-1-108-72321-3.