

## HUMANS IN ARISTOTLE

KIRK (G.), AREL (J.) (edd.) *Aristotle on Human Nature. The Animal with Logos*. Pp. viii + 225. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023. Cased, £85, US\$115. ISBN: 978-1-350-34831-8.  
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Aristotle distinguishes between the human ability to grasp immutable items in the world and general truths (*nous*), which is entirely theoretical and which few scientifically bent humans care to hone, and the ability to combine or dissociate concepts in propositions and to make inferences (*dianoia*). The latter ability is closely connected with the ability to express and understand concepts and propositions (*logos*), which seems to be universal among healthy human beings past their infancy. Aristotle's famous description of the human being as the 'animal with *logos*' (*zōion logon ekhōn*) is most probably referring to this universal and distinctive feature of human nature.

Unfortunately, Aristotle does not say very much about this feature. For instance, in *De anima* he seems to focus on the highly specialised theoretical ability (*nous*) and makes little effort to explain how that relates to the general human ability to reason and speak (*logos*). Similarly, in *De interpretatione* he distinguishes between an item in the world, our concept of it and the corresponding linguistic expression, but he is not interested in the questions of how we acquire and develop our linguistic abilities, and whether and to what extent they shape our thinking. Although Aristotle offers no systematic treatment of *logos*, there are passages scattered across his works that inform us, directly or indirectly, of what Aristotle meant by *logos* and why it is crucial for understanding human beings. The papers collected in this volume, partly originating from a conference held at Northern Arizona University in 2014, discuss some of these passages and interpret various meanings and repercussions of the term *logos* in Aristotle's opus.

The volume consists of an introduction followed by fifteen papers of agreeable length organised in four parts. The first part, 'The *Logos* of *Logos*', comprises a single paper by J. Russon and Ö. Aygün, in which the authors argue that Aristotle's notion of the animal with *logos* is closely connected with his projects of logic and metaphysics. Logic is an account (*logos*) of what is involved in giving an adequate account of anything at all, whereas metaphysics is an account of 'being as such'. This allows the authors to conclude that 'our identity as "the being with *logos*" precisely requires that we be constitutively oriented toward the *logos* of being, and it is precisely the revelation of the *logos* of being that allows us to be the being with *logos*' (p. 16).

The second part, 'The *Logos* of *Phusis*', contains five papers that explore various ways in which nature (*phusis*) is understood as *logos* and said to be 'in accordance with *logos*'. E. Diamond establishes the connection between Aristotle's recurring definition of the human being as a 'two-footed animal' and his more interesting description of the human being as the animal with *logos*. Diamond explains that our bodily frame with upright posture is 'the causal link between our walking on two feet and our having *logos*' (p. 29). This is among the most successful papers in the collection. G. Recco studies Aristotle's account of the nutritive soul in *DA* 2.4, struggling to find connections with *logos* beyond Aristotle's statement that there is a 'limit and ratio (*logos*) of magnitude and growth, and these belong to soul, not fire, <that is> to form/definition (*logos*) more than matter' (416a17–18, my trans.). R. Steiner Goldner picks up Aristotle's characterisation of flesh as a certain ratio (*logos*) of elementary qualities that allows it to function as the sense-organ of touch, and concludes that 'flesh, for Aristotle, is the vital *logos* of that which lives by self-determination' (p. 64). W. Howell compares the powers of perception

and intellect. Without much attention to the controversies surrounding Aristotle's discussion of these concepts in *De anima* 3.1–8, she claims that susceptibility to error in incidental perception is a 'contribution of the intellect', whereas perception pure and simple is free of error, which makes us 'potentially less integrated in the world of our experience' (p. 76). Russon's chapter "'Actuality in the First Sense" and the Question of Human Nature in Aristotle' is one of the shortest but philosophically most stimulating pieces in this volume. Russon takes Aristotle's definition of the soul as 'actuality' in *DA* 2.1 and argues that human beings are 'the being whose definitive ability is the ability to develop new abilities' (p. 88).

The four chapters of the third part, 'The *Logos* of *Ethos*', explore the practical significance of *logos* in our moral lives. In 'Wishful Thinking in Aristotle' Aygün argues that the 'wishful attitude is explanatory of many important aspects of the experience of the "animal having *logos*" we are: from prayer, regret, guilt, and cursing, to fatalism and utopian politics' (p. 95). Some readers will probably be confused by Aygün's foundational claim that 'all natural motion requires desire' (pp. 97, 98), as well as by the homonymy of the term 'wish', which in this paper refers mainly to *eukhē* ('prayer'), not to *boulēsis* ('rational desire'). Kirk makes an interesting case that *logos* enables us to dissociate ourselves from present situations and to 'project future states of character and to attend to current states of progress toward those desired future conditions' (p. 119), but this will hardly carry conviction without a discussion of *phantasia*. E. Rabinoff argues that *logos* has an integrative role of controlling our emotions and making them act *kata logon*, 'so that one's emotions and one's thinking act cooperatively and as one' (p. 132). J. Singer's paper discusses Aristotle's distinction between three ways in which people make use of their leisure and argues that music paves the way to contemplation, as the best and, presumably, most *logos*-related sort of leisure.

The final part, 'The *Logos* of the *Polis*', turns to *logos* in political life. R. Metcalf discusses what it means to be an animal with *logos* at different stages in life, taking inspiration from Martin Heidegger's readings of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. F. Guerin explores practical reason and its excellence (*phronēsis*), and argues that it presupposes mastery of rhetoric and its three constituents: argument (*logos*), character (*ethos*) and feelings (*pathos*). Arel tries to reconstruct Aristotle's account of animal motion and practical syllogism to the effect that our movements reflect certain goods that we have determined in advance, responding to Socrates' response to reductive explanations of human motion from the end of Plato's *Phaedo*. I am not sure, however, that Aristotle would agree that 'movement cannot occur until we have decided upon a general conception of the good' (p. 186). W. Brogan's piece 'Aristotle: the Politics of Life and the Life of Politics' promises to show 'that in a certain way for Aristotle *logos* is life, that is the *telos* of life and thus the source of life' (p. 189), but I confess that I failed to see the promise delivered. Apart from two references to Giorgio Agamben and Jacques Derrida, all the other references in Brogan's piece are to works included in this volume. The volume closes with an intriguing paper '*Logos* and the *Polis* in the *Poetics*' by P. Fagan, who explains the way in which watching the plays in Athens was a political activity. It is partly through dramas, Fagan maintains, that *logos* ensured that people care and rely upon each other in ancient Athens.

There is a joint bibliography at the end, a list of contributors and a basic general index, but no index of passages cited. The volume works well as a whole, with chapters making cross-references to one another, sometimes to the exclusion of more relevant scholarly literature. Although this nicely produced volume targets readers interested in Aristotle from the perspective of the broadly construed continental philosophical tradition, some chapters might appeal to other Aristotelian scholars too.

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