

In Chapter 8 M. Bergomi argues that Plato uses Gorgias' treatise *On That Which is Not* (Περὶ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος) as a source for conventionalist arguments in the *Cratylus*. Though Gorgias is nowhere quoted or seemingly alluded to in the *Cratylus*, Bergomi enumerates parallels between the two works to take what she admits is a first step in the direction of establishing Gorgias as a philosophically relevant influence on the *Cratylus*. Some readers might worry that, given the little we know about Gorgias' treatise, such an endeavour is doomed to *obscurum per obscurius*. However, this ground-breaking chapter opens some extremely interesting questions about the relation between Gorgias' treatise and the *Cratylus*, and it will doubtless serve as the basis for future discussions of the relation between these two important works.

In Chapter 9, written in French, F. Ildefonse proposes a reading of the *Cratylus* that makes sense of some ideas developed by the *Sophist* and by Stoicism, respectively. In particular, she discusses how each work differs in its treatment of the parts of language – the *Cratylus*' position on natural names, the *Sophist* on *logos* and the Stoics on *lekta*. This chapter is rather impressionistic, though it contains a number of insights, particularly with respect to the translation of the terms involved.

In Chapter 10 F. Karfik tracks the transitions from a focus on names and flux in the *Cratylus* to a focus on *logos* and a more relational ontology in the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist*. He does this to show that the concern of the *Cratylus* is not primarily the adjudication of naturalist and conventionalist theories of language, but rather the question of whether or not we need language to acquire knowledge – whether or not mimetic language is sufficient for knowledge and truth. This essay is valuable as descriptive of these long-standing issues, but regrettably does not engage specifically with the secondary literature on them.

As noted, the quality of contributions is somewhat uneven. However, this volume contains a great deal of excellent work on Plato's *Cratylus* and constitutes an important contribution to the scholarship on that dialogue, one that scholars of the dialogue will need to become familiar with.

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THE TOPICS OF THE *METAPHYSICS*

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P.'s new French annotated translation is an important contribution to the study of *Metaphysics* book B. The accurate French version (based on W.D. Ross's edition of the Greek text) is accompanied by an introduction, in which P. discusses mainly the dialectical argument and the preliminary character of B. The lengthy notes to the translation clarify the meaning of each 'difficulté' – the French word that renders the Greek ἀπορία (p. 8 n. 1) – and provide information about parallels both in Aristotle and Plato. Some of the possible similarities and dissimilarities with the treatment of difficulties in Book K1–2 are considered

in the notes. The book is completed with annexes (of which the discussions and echoes of the *aporiae* in other books of the *Metaphysics* as well as in other treatises are especially helpful; pp. 146–9), indexes and a short bibliography. P. holds that book B is a quite complete discussion of the main difficulties that concern the core of ‘wisdom’ or ‘philosophy’, which, in the light of book A (to which B1.995a24 refers), Aristotle describes as the science of the first causes and principles. P. argues that books A and B (together with Γ and Λ , and to some extent M and N) form a coherent whole. While book A is a doxographical discussion about the science of the first causes and principles, B provides a dialectical treatment of difficulties about the same topic, and Γ considers the major principle of knowledge, i.e. the principle of non-contradiction. In this regard P. does not consider in particular whether the innovation represented by the focal meaning of $\Gamma 2$ could yield any disruption in the project of book A. Among the fourteen difficulties listed in B1 – presented after a compact account of the usefulness of ‘going through the difficulties’ (*diaporein*) in view of ‘the science we are seeking’ (995a24–b4) – the difficulties #1 to #5 are devoted, for P., to the *science* (or sciences) of principles. The next set of difficulties #6 to #14 focuses rather on the nature of *principles* (e.g. whether they are genera or elements [aporia #6], universals or particulars [aporia #12]) (pp. 21–43). P. counts one more aporia in the list of B1.995b20–25 (see pp. 83 n. 8, 87 n. 11) and an extra aporia (which commentators regularly take as an appendix to the aporia #14), discussed at the beginning of B6 (1002b12–32) but not listed in B1 (see pp. 40, 78–9, 127).

P.’s contribution to the scholarly debate on book B can be parcelled around three main issues (as distinguished by A. Madigan, *Aristotle, Metaphysics B and K1–2. Translated with a Commentary* [1999], pp. xiii ff.): (i) what sort of preliminary to the *Metaphysics* is B, (ii) in which sense is B aporetic and (iii) which is its dialectical procedure.

For P. B is preliminary in two ways. It is a *methodological preliminary* due to its ‘diaporetic’ (995b28) feature. This, in turn, mirrors a general aspect of Aristotle’s methodology as described in *Topics* 1.2, 101a34–36, since raising difficulties is preliminary to doing inquiry and a condition for more easily discovering what is true and false (*Top.* 8.9, 160b14–16, *De Anima* 1.2, 403a20–24). P. claims that B is also a *substantive preliminary* to metaphysics, since it provides this science with its central task and theme, i.e. to develop the science of the first principles. Two remarks on these claims. First, while stressing the dispositional aspects (actually passed on from Plato) of the Aristotelian dialectic – which combines mental perplexity arising from conflicting views with wondering about the greater difficulties and striving for overcoming ignorance (*Top.* 6.6, 145b1–2, b16–20; *Met.* A2.982a11–21) (pp. 4–11, and notes ad loc.) –, less attention is paid by P. to considering other aspects of the premises of the dialectical arguments of B. For instance, not all of the premises seem to be plausible or reputable opinions (*pace* Madigan [1999], p. xvii); and although the *aporiae* are generally in the form of contradictions, not all put into play two opposite propositions well defined and mutually exclusive (*pace* Crubellier and Laks, in: M. Crubellier and A. Laks [edd.], *Aristotle: Metaphysics Beta* [2009], pp. 9–10).

Second, the claims that books AB Γ are parts of a coherent project and that such a project could have been envisaged in the difficulties of B (pp. 43–5) are not uncontroversial. One option is to see B as a robust programme of the *Metaphysics* – a programme that is still under the strong influence of Plato and, in this regard, expresses a crisis in Aristotle’s thought (as claimed by W.W. Jaeger, *Fundamentals of the History of his Development* [1948], trans. R. Robinson, 2nd ed.). Another option is to see B as a rather loose set of problems to be removed (as held by W.D. Ross, *Aristotle’s Metaphysics. A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary* [1924] and by J. Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics* [1978], 3rd. ed.). P.’s proposal is a middle way since he

claims that B conveys a sort of map of difficulties that must be taken into account in the elaboration of the science of the first principles. Thus, B does not envisage providing us with a linear workflow planning – but then the very idea of B's programme is called into question.

Interpreters have often discussed whether the science sought in book B only considers separate supersensible substance or covers the sensible substance of ΖΗΘ too; whether the science of the principles, or the programme of B, was modified in the course of Aristotle's development; and whether B's method mirrors a development in Aristotle's conception of dialectic (for a survey of questions, see Madigan [1999], pp. xxiii–xxxviii). In this regard P. calls attention to A1.982a2–2, 982a6, where Aristotle seems to take the science of the first principles as if it were just one among the others. This would obviously yield problems for its claim to universality. A related problem concerns the method of that science: is it demonstrative *epistēmē* (pp. 22ff.), which, in the end, is restricted to one single genus, or is it rather a universal science whose method must be a special version of dialectic? These interpretative options might have deserved even more discussion to better outline the Aristotelian science of the principles that, according to P., is envisaged in book B.

Against Alexander of Aphrodisias and J. Tricot, P. rightly stresses that Aristotle's position cannot properly be found in one of the opposite claims examined in each *aporia* because, as he argues, first, almost each opposite statement contains opinions that are, at least, partially true. Second, unlike the final 'euporetic' stage mentioned in *Nichomachean Ethics* 7.1, 1145b2–7, book B's strategy is not to solve the difficulties, but rather to go through the *aporiae* by examining them exhaustively in view of eventually endorsing a plausible claim that is the result of replying to the opposite opinion (pp. 10–11, 33–4). It may be worth considering whether this pattern of argumentation matches with viewing B as programmatic writing, as suggested by P. (pp. 31–2, 43–4) – who thinks that B's difficulties are not answered in the rest of the *Metaphysics* because of the literary character of this treatise (an 'artefact éditorial'). As a rule, the interpreter has the option either of narrowing the books that would contain the unified project of the *Metaphysics* or of taking B's programme in the broader sense as to cover the extant books as much as possible. Crubellier and Laks (2009, pp. 13ff.) just speak of a project of primary knowledge (book A), whose difficulties are examined in B.

P. makes the valuable point of suggesting that ΑΒΓ are not just methodological books, since they offer the central topic of first philosophy: first principles. Needless to say, to show that we can start from the universal science of the first principles, as presented in A2.982a4–3983b3, to cover under a single programme a variety of topics, like being *qua* being, the central books on sensible substance, and the theory of the unmoved movers, still remains a major interpretative task to be done. P.'s approach to book B will be a useful source for whoever feels attracted to that project.

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