

importantly, does the volume consistently bring the text, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* 7, into sharper focus.

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### METAPHYSICS $\Theta$

BEERE (J.) *Doing and Being. An Interpretation of Aristotle's Metaphysics Theta*. Pp. xiv + 367. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. Cased, £48. ISBN: 978-0-19-920670-4.

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This monograph makes a definitive case for Book  $\Theta$ 's philosophical cogency and importance. B. argues in impressive detail that Aristotle presents a complete and coherent case for the priority of being in *energeia* (in activity or actuality) in relation to being in *dunamis* (in capacity/power or potentiality). Hence, the primary purpose of  $\Theta$  is to contribute to the science of being as such, although B. largely defers the question how to integrate the priority of being in *energeia* into the science of being and, in particular, its relationship to the preceding investigation of substance in Books *Z* and *H*. Rather, B. proposes to read Book  $\Theta$  as Aristotle's response to the debate between the Gods and the Giants in Plato's *Sophist*, a project that is carried out intermittently and is only partially successful. Despite this weakness, B.'s interpretation stands out for its philosophical insight and lucidity, its thoroughness and its inclusivity. Although B. is not the first to stress the internal philosophical coherence and significance of Book  $\Theta$ , his interpretation of the details of Aristotle's argument and its philosophical import contains many original and useful proposals. I shall only be able to mention three of the most important (and controversial) here.

First, B.'s discussion of the difficulties of translating Aristotle's central concepts is original and important. I follow B.'s terminology and his conventions of transliteration here for the sake of convenience and intelligibility. B. is critical of the recent scholarly tradition's dual translations of both the ordinary Greek word *dunamis* (translated as both 'capacity/power' and 'potentiality') and Aristotle's technical term *energeia* (translated as both 'activity' and 'actuality'). According to B., the dual translation corresponds to, and reinforces, a mistaken interpretation of Book  $\Theta$ , namely that Aristotle discusses motion and change in Chapters 1–5 and then switches the topic to being in Chapter 6. This mistaken strategy of interpretation makes Book  $\Theta$  appear deeply divided in topic and purpose, and does not allow the unity and force of Aristotle's argument to emerge. B. argues that Aristotle begins with causal powers simply because they are the most accessible examples of being-in-*dunamis*. Therefore Aristotle's discussion of being-in-*dunamis* in Chapter 6 is not a change in topic but a further development of the same topic. This reading allows us to see that Aristotle's refutation of Megarian actualism is integral to the argument of Book  $\Theta$ , since the Megarians denied the existence of inactive causal powers. B. argues further, however, that the dual translation of *energeia* as both 'activity' and 'actuality' seriously distorts Aristotle's philosophical terminology, in which doing or activity is central and modal notions like possibility and actuality are foreign. Although B. connects the problem of the unity of Book  $\Theta$  to the translation question, it seems to me that these are distinct issues and

that it is possible to provide a unified interpretation of Book  $\theta$  while at the same time acknowledging that some of Aristotle's examples of being-in-*energeia* are best captured by the translation 'activity' and others by 'actuality'. Indeed, B. concedes that sometimes 'actuality' is the translation required by the context (pp. 202, 217). Still, B.'s discussion of the translation issue is useful; he makes a strong argument to support his preferred translations, and an even better argument that Aristotle does not switch topics in midstream.

A second crucial question is how to understand the ontological priority of being-in-*energeia*, which is the central claim of Book  $\theta$ . According to B., priority in being is 'a relationship of ontological dependence broadly construed' (p. 299). B. thinks that there are two types of ontological dependence described in  $\theta$  8, and that Aristotle deploys two distinct criteria for priority in being. One, which B. calls 'Plato's criterion', obtains between eternal and perishable beings; x is prior in being to y iff x were not then y could not be but not vice versa. The other criterion, let us call it 'Aristotle's criterion', obtains between perishable beings, like a man and a boy. As B. points out, Aristotle mentions Plato's criterion but does not state an alternative criterion in the chapter. None the less, it has not seemed possible to apply Plato's criterion to perishable substances, and B. does a good job of marshalling the evidence. Most importantly, Plato's criterion yields implausible results when applied to a power like house building, which is the central example of the distinction between being-in-*dunamis* and being-in-*energeia*. Surely the power of house building or the ability to play an instrument can exist even if it is not being exercised, while the exercise is dependent upon the existence of the ability. But then according to Plato's criterion being-in-*dunamis* turns out to be ontologically prior to being-in-*energeia*. So, B. argues, we need another criterion that is both related to Plato's criterion, and applicable to Aristotle's examples.

B. proposes that we understand Aristotle's criterion for ontological dependence in terms of an asymmetrical relationship between the essences of the being-in-*dunamis* and the being-in-*energeia*. For example, consider the boy (a being-in-*dunamis*) and the man (a being-in-*energeia*). According to B., there is 'a non-reciprocal dependence between their essences' (p. 308), and this is Aristotle's criterion for ontological dependence. What it is to be a boy is dependent upon what it is to be a man, but the reverse dependency does not hold. Similarly, what it is to be a house builder, the essence of that power, is dependent upon what the activity of house building is, but the reverse dependency does not hold. B. is certainly right to emphasise that what is at issue is a relationship of ontological dependence, and not an epistemological or explanatory dependency relationship between two items. Once we note this, however, it becomes more difficult to distinguish Aristotle's criterion from Plato's criterion. True, Plato's criterion straightforwardly equates ontological dependence with existential dependence, while B.'s version of Aristotle's criterion talks about the dependence of an essence on another essence with no explicit mention of existence. But if ontological dependence amounts to a dependence relationship between two essences we must ask what that dependence means for Aristotle, since he does not draw a sharp distinction between essence and existence. So, if what it is to be a boy is dependent upon what it is to be a man, it would seem that – for Aristotle – if there were no essence of man there would be nothing that it is to be a boy, and therefore no boy would exist. Further, it is plausible to think that – for Aristotle – the essence of man exists only in individual men, so that the existence of boys turns out to depend upon the existence of men,

but not vice versa. According to this interpretation Aristotle's criterion turns out to be a special application of Plato's criterion to natural, teleological beings.

Finally, and most impressively, B. provides a coherent and plausible interpretation of Aristotle's culminating argument in Book  $\theta$  that every *energeia* is better than its *dunamis*. As B. notes, this claim from Chapter 9 has received very little scholarly attention even though it is obviously an important aspect of the view presented in Book  $\theta$ . There are at least two reasons for this; first, the text is unusually terse and difficult, and second, Aristotle's intermingling of metaphysics and normativity is foreign to contemporary philosophical practice. On the latter point B. does an excellent job of orienting the reader to the world of classical philosophy, which intermingles metaphysical issues with questions of value very freely, and of placing this chapter in the context of Aristotle's metaphysics as a whole. B.'s suggestions for the interpretation of both the meaning of particular texts and their broader philosophical significance are original and sensible. I particularly appreciated B.'s explanation of the significance of Aristotle's argument that the eternal principles of our world are good, his suggestion that goodness is *energeia* for Aristotle, and his explanation of how this is so. The connections that B. draws to Aristotle's discussion of the good in his ethical writings are fascinating and provocative. This is a groundbreaking discussion of an important and often overlooked dimension of Aristotle's metaphysics.

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## SOPHISTIC ARGUMENT

TINDALE (C.W.) *Reason's Dark Champions. Constructive Strategies of Sophistic Argument*. Pp. xiv + 178. Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2010. Cased, US\$49.95. ISBN: 978-1-57003-878-5.

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The recent resurgence of scholarly interest in the sophistic movement has partially rehabilitated the image of the sophists. T.'s book attempts to further their rehabilitation with respect to sophistic argumentation. In Part 1 he undertakes the defensive aspect of his task, making the case that Plato and Aristotle have disproportionately shaped the legacy of sophistic argumentation. In Part 2, using copious examples, T. outlines various strategies of argumentation, evaluates them and connects them to their heirs in contemporary rhetorical argumentation theory. This book is part of The University of South Carolina Press's series 'Studies in Rhetoric/Communication', and it seems mainly to be directed at those working in the history of rhetoric and argumentation.

In Part 1, T. attempts to diagnose the origin of the bad reputation that sophistic argumentation has. He claims that the presentation of eristic argumentation in Plato's *Euthydemus* and in Aristotle's *Sophistical Refutations* caused the assimilation of sophistic to fallacious argumentation, and, further, that the differences between them and the sophists concerning argumentation boil down to theoretical differences about the nature of reality and our access to it. Neither of these claims is especially controversial, and they could have been easily defended in a single chapter. Much