have stable characters (p. 150). On the other hand, G. introduces the notion of equilibrium with the image of a well-balanced set of scales, where a given set of circumstances will be matched by the appropriate response by the virtuous agent. Vice, on this picture, would be like a badly-calibrated set of scales, such that (e.g.) a given set of circumstances would call forth an exaggerated response on the part of the vicious agent. Vice conceived along this model need not be unstable.

G. does not always succeed in avoiding the distortions that may result from aiming at an interpretation of Aristotle that can also pass muster in contemporary debate. She dismisses Aristotle's view of women and slaves as a mere misapplication of his theory that the mean is relative to different features of the agent in different circumstances (pp. 8, 32). In defence of the triadic structure of virtue and two vices, G. proposes that all the vices of deficiency go together to form a coherent 'mentality', as do all the vices of excess. She admits that '[t]he match is not perfect' (p. 35), and proposes to rearrange some of Aristotle's vices to produce a better fit. And she ascribes a scope and importance to the Aristotelian virtue of truthfulness that will strike many as overblown and implausible as an interpretation of Aristotle. None the less, all G.'s suggestions are worth considering by those interested in the relevance of Aristotle's ethics to contemporary virtue ethics.

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NICOMACHEAN ETHICS 7

NATALI (C.) (ed.) *Aristotle's* Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VII*. Pp. viii + 296. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. Cased, £55, US$90. ISBN: 978-0-19-955844-5.
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The Proceedings of the XVII[th] Symposium Aristotelicum divide Book 7 of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* for treatment by different authors according to successive sections of the text – rather than, say, according to theme or question. Such a structure suggests a multi-author commentary, rather than a collection of critical essays. This may seem a fitting approach for a book, treating pleasure and *akrasia*, whose inner coherence is itself not obvious. But as commentary is a genre of many faces, with varying mixtures of philology, exegesis, critical analysis and philosophical interpretation and re-interpretation, a multi-author commentary is bound to turn out to be a rather uneven thing.

Thus, readers looking to the book for a steady hand to guide them through the awkwardnesses of Aristotle's text will be frustrated. One gets something very different from consulting T. Tieleman's contribution on Chapters 9–10 than from G. Aubry's reflections on the end of Chapter 14. While N. is informative on philology and historiography regarding 7.5–6, Tieleman offers a more or less straight commentary, without much fuss. While Cooper, Bobonich and Broadie, for instance, are more inspired (in varying degrees) by the commentarial mode to offer further critical reflections, Charles, Frede and Aubrey, by contrast, use the occasion to compose self-sufficient pieces of philosophy on the issues raised by their respective passages of *Nicomachean Ethics* 7.

In one of the highlights of the volume, D. Frede offers incisive and sober analysis of Aristotle on pleasure in ethics. Frede points out the discrepancy between

what Aristotle owes us – indeed, what he promises – and what we in fact get in Book 7 (and Book 10) on the topic of pleasure. Instead of a proper treatment of the nature and kinds of pleasure, the last chapters of Book 7 are a treatise on *hedonism*, very likely directed at Academic anti-hedonists, with Aristotle's own account of pleasure arising only in passing, and without proper elaboration or defence (p. 185). Frede is well placed to identify both the insights and limitations of Aristotle's response to Academic anti-hedonism; and her essay brings together masterfully the many difficulties that have already accumulated around the topics of pleasure and pain by this point in the *Ethics*. By illuminating the various roles for and kinds of pleasure implicitly at work, Frede shows how badly the missing account of pleasure is needed. Anyone working on Aristotle on pleasure will want to consider this piece.

D. Charles's piece on Chapters 2–3 also defies the commentary genre, fitting instead squarely into the specific and venerable debate about Aristotle on the Socratic question: does one ever knowingly act badly? Charles's ambition is to revive an older view, reaching back to the medieval commentator Burley for a predecessor, according to which Aristotle's answer is a definite 'Yes'. As Charles argues, Aristotle allows bad action with knowledge in two senses: (i) when one fails to draw the good conclusion from premises one (in some sense) has; and (ii) in the stronger sense that, in full awareness of the good conclusion, one can act to the contrary because one lacks rational conviction in the conclusion. This is the phenomenologically more satisfying view of *akrasia*; but the challenge is to show that Aristotle holds it, and in particular that it is to be explained by the presence or absence of something called 'rational confidence'. Charles takes on the challenge, and goes some way towards meeting it. This discussion is perhaps most rewardingly read in the context of his and others' work on Aristotle on agency and the Socratic question.

In S. Broadie's reflections on Chapters 8–9, and Aubrey's piece on the end of Book 7, we witness at work philosophical imagination in its finest sense. While Broadie divides the text and treats it in order, her contribution goes well beyond commentary, at each stage pressing the claims that are on the table, in order to examine carefully their grounds and implications. Further, by drawing attention to the way Aristotle's arguments do *not* proceed as expected, Broadie highlights the themes of constancy and change running throughout these passages, and through Aristotle's ethics. The result is to see in the whole of Aristotle's discussion of the differences and relations between *akrasia*, *enkratia* and their look-alikes something richer than analysis – it is rather, in the context of Book 7 and the *Nicomachean Ethics* as a whole, an ethically driven concern with which sorts of change and constancy are commendable or otherwise. Aubrey distinguishes between 'ethical' and merely 'pathological' concern with pleasure, in order to offer us an Aristotle with a deep, almost modern, feeling for the tragedy built into the human condition. 'The proper feature of human nature', Aubrey writes, 'is to be composed of two natures' – one corruptible, one incorruptible; so that 'Man is therefore that living being whose nature is to be constituted of two natures, each of which is contrary to nature for the other' (p. 256). Aristotle's treatment of pleasure and happiness is a struggle to give each aspect of our nature its due, while maintaining the superiority of the incorruptible and its promise of the occasional reconciliation of our conflicted nature.

Other contributions conform more to commentarial expectations. J. Cooper opens the volume by setting out the structure of Chapter 1, indicating philosophically

interesting points easily overlooked – for instance, that Aristotle's interest in *akrasia* is primarily a concern with character traits, not with individual episodes of action. For Chapter 2, Cooper helpfully sets out the *aporiai* and – while acknowledging that this is no template for what is to come – indicates which *aporiai* are addressed where, and how. Like Lorenz and Bobonich, and like N.'s philologically informed and informative discussion of Chapters 5 and 6, Cooper offers extensive translation of the text within his discussion.

Lorenz, Bobonich and Rapp each combine commentary and analysis, arguing for one unconventional reading over another more standard reading of their respective passages. For Lorenz, dealing with 7.4, the question is whether we try to reconcile Aristotle's apparently repetitious remarks about the kinds of *akrasia* (if any) and *akrasia*'s proper objects; or whether we instead, with Cook Wilson, take the repetition to be revision, so that the latter supersedes the former. Lorenz recommends following Cook Wilson. Bobonich, for his part, argues against Cook Wilson and his more deflationary reading of Chapter 7 – Aristotle's chapter on self-control has more integrity than that, Bobonich argues. While Bobonich does offer philosophical reflections that go beyond glossing the text, there is here rather a lot of reliance on how things 'intuitively seem'. C. Rapp also argues against a standard interpretation, in his case rejecting the fastidious view that refuses to allow Aristotle is a hedonist. In addressing himself to Chapters 13 and 14, on pleasure and *eudaimonia*, Rapp insists that Aristotle's final view *is* a kind of hedonism – with a very particular understanding of what pleasure really is, or what experiences are really pleasures. This does not so much stretch our common notion of pleasure, Rapp maintains, as show us the tacit conception of pleasure already present in our common conceptions of happiness.

There is a good deal of good philosophy in this volume, and more insights scattered throughout. But what we miss is an overview. The Introduction does not supply the unity or overview that the whole, perhaps of necessity, lacks; instead it recapitulates the variety without offering a golden thread through the text or the themes raised in it. If one seeks a substantial connection between pleasure and *akrasia* (the Editor suggests in passing [p. 4] a methodological one), it is left to D. Frede to raise the question of the unity of Book 7 and to argue that this plausible link is only superficially present in the actual discussion of pleasure – which on her view forms a quite distinct and self-contained treatise. Where contributors disagree fundamentally about how to read the text, this is not highlighted in the Introduction – even when interpretations offered in one chapter would rely on the interpretation offered in another being wrong. More generally, one misses the following of an argument consistently through the whole of Book 7.

More superficially, but also more taxing, the contributors have not agreed translations of key terms. With such notoriously untranslatable words as *akrasia*, *enkrateia* and *sôphrosunê* under discussion, perhaps this is readily understandable – but then transliterations might have been used throughout. One minds the absence of some such device when, for instance, one seeks references to *sôphrosunê* in the index and is duly referred to entries under temperance, but not thereby to Bobonich's interesting remarks on *sôphrosunê* – for *he* has chosen to translate that term as 'moderation', which is not related in the index to 'temperance' or to '*sôphrosunê*'.

This volume offers a kaleidoscope of commentary fragments, pieces of larger theories and occasions for compelling insights, with occasional overviews and sparkles of ideas sprinkled throughout. Like a kaleidoscope, these contrasting pieces jostle and shift alongside each other, but they never really come into focus – nor, more

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

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METAPHYSICS Θ

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 *Θ*'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 *Θ* 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 *Θ* 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 *Θ*, 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 *Θ*, 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 *Θ* 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 *Θ*, 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 *Θ* to the translation question, it seems to me that these are distinct issues and