

intellectual *tour de force* that may be admired from beyond the pale delineated by its fundamental postulates.

That this essay should conclude this volume says a great deal about the challenge of B.-S.'s agenda to the received accounts of the evolution of ancient philosophy. A philosophical tradition that had in fact undergone the sort of transformation he describes, and had embraced as a central commitment the elucidation of truths couched in the enigmatic language of old stories and poems, would be a tradition ripe for absorption into the scripturalism and irrationalism of the monotheisms. That, however, is another story, and one that needs to be assessed on its own merits.

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ANCIENT ETHICS

S. EVERSON: *Ethics. Companions to Ancient Thought 4*. Pp. vii + 300. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Paper, £15.95 (Cased, £45). ISBN: 0-521-38832-5 (0-521-38161-4 hbk).

This book follows the general formula of the Cambridge Companion series, and nicely supplements the other 'Ancient Thought' volumes edited by Stephen Everson (*Epistemology, Psychology, Language*). It contains scholarly treatments of the most recent noteworthy issues in the professional study of Ancient Greek ethics. It spans the Pre-Socratic, Classical and Hellenistic periods, with articles on Pre-Platonic Ethics, Plato, Aristotle, Epicureans, Sceptics, and Stoics. The contributors are pre-eminent in their respective fields, and include, along with E., Charles Kahn, C. C. W. Taylor, John McDowell, David Sedley, T. H. Irwin, Julia Annas, and Susan Suavé Meyer. There is no pre-established unifying theme to the book—topics range over happiness, justice, metaphysics, human nature, psychology, physics, and responsibility—but there is some concentration around themes to be found in Aristotle, who is the focus of three of the book's nine chapters. The emphasis on Aristotle is representative of current trends in ancient philosophy: Aristotle is seen as the culmination of classical ethics, a philosopher who draws together the diverse strands of previous popular and philosophical tradition and systematizes them (as far as possible) into a single ethical outlook. Although the Hellenists (Sceptics excepted) augment and innovate, particularly in the area of moral psychology, the fundamental place of virtue, *eudaimonia*, and knowledge in their ethics cannot be fully understood except in the light of Aristotle. E.'s *Ethics* presents a sample of the specialized secondary literature in ancient ethics, and is suitable primarily for graduate students and academics.

The introduction of the book concerns the relation between morality and ethics, and the question whether the ancient Greeks had a concept of morality or not. There are two comparisons of special interest here, one between ancient ethics and (a form of) Kantian moral theory, and the other a comparison between ancient theories of motivation and Hume. E. argues that the ancient Greeks did have, and were better off for having, a concept of morality (as identifiable in categorical moral reasons and altruism). He then further argues that the Greeks had a more nuanced view of motivation than some moderns, according to which reason can be seen as involved in proposing ends and not simply calculating means of action. These discussions represent current debates in Ethics generally, and readers will find plenty to argue about. E.'s choice to focus on themes relevant to contemporary ethics reflects an

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optimism about the continued significance of ancient Greek ethics, but it does not fully acknowledge its primitive condition. In the introduction, E. does not mention what the subsequent chapters collectively reveal: that ancient Greek ethics was an incredibly rich, diverse fusion of properly distinct moral, ethical, and psychological issues. Some of the views of the Greeks anticipated more exact moral theorizing, and some showed sophisticated thinking about prudential reasoning, but the confusions and mistakes need to be acknowledged, too.

The first two historical articles, on pre-Platonic ethics and Plato, are introductory and cover a huge range, within which are many topics that require more specialized investigation. These articles are extremely succinct and are limited mostly to presenting the most expert current opinions. The book begins with 'pre-Platonic' ethics, by which is meant primarily the ethics found in Presocratics and sophists. Although there is brief mention of Herodotus and Homer, the poets are, astonishingly, mostly ignored. Nevertheless, Charles Kahn manages to set the whole period of philosophical ethics before Plato into perspective. Christopher Taylor's subsequent discussion of Plato's ethics is a standard, almost perfunctory introduction, centred around the development of Plato's views through the early, middle and late periods of his writing. There is hardly anything in Taylor's discussion to tantalize those who are familiar with Plato, but as an introduction, perhaps, Taylor's adumbration of Plato may be wise.

E.'s article 'Aristotle on Nature and Value' takes up long standing questions about Aristotle's views of the ethical end. E. follows the majority of contemporary scholars in taking Aristotle's account of happiness to be an 'inclusive' one; that is, an account according to which a number of goods, including external goods are constitutive of happiness. E. explains Aristotle's intellectualist account of 'perfect happiness' in *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.7 as a sort of exercise. The account is accurate as far as perfect happiness goes, but the sort of life described is not really possible for a human (composite) being. This argument will not, however, adequately address the question of the extent to which Aristotle thinks intellect should be dominant over other admittedly necessary goods in the good life for a human being.

In 'Some Issues in Aristotle's Moral Psychology', John McDowell concentrates on the rôle of intellect in specifying one's conception of happiness. McDowell argues that practical wisdom, which is that capacity by which we grasp the end, has a 'double aspect'; it is both correctness of motivational orientation and a cognitive capacity. Seen this way, practical wisdom manages to span the divide, which has survived in many contemporary Humean accounts of motivation, between the passions and the intellect. McDowell's careful interpretation leaves little doubt that this is the way Aristotle understood practical wisdom. His argument for Aristotle's motivation is somewhat weaker. McDowell suggests that Aristotle believes that just one conception of the end is the correct one. If this were the case, however, he would need some extra-ethical validation (or means of validation) of the end. McDowell believes that Aristotle is confident that he has such validation, not as a result of his realist metaphysical assumptions, but from the 'healthy' and 'innocent' conviction that the kind of upbringing he and his audience have had is the one conducive to the correct conception of the end.

The next three articles of the book all concern Hellenistic ethics. There is a discussion of Epicurean ethics by David Sedley, and there are examinations of Stoic ethics (T. H. Irwin) and Sceptical views on objectivity (Julia Annas). Sedley reveals the parallels in Epicurean ethical and physical methodology and in that way shows how uniform Epicurean philosophy was meant to be, but he stops short of drawing conclusions about how successful the Epicurean programme might be. Irwin argues

that 'the Stoics can present a strong case to show that their doctrine of happiness, virtue, the indifferents and the passions introduces some distinctions that we need in order to justify some of Aristotle's principle doctrines' (p. 192). This is an interesting, even somewhat provocative thesis, and if Irwin is right it will begin to show that Stoic ethics has a much deeper connection to Aristotelian ethics than has previously been thought. Julia Annas argues persuasively that ancient and modern sceptics have very different ideas about what it means to deny the objective existence of values. Her concern lies with the contrast between contemporary philosophers and the ancient Sceptics. The three articles on Hellenistic ethics are all outstanding contributions in their own right, but what is lacking is any sense that they belong together, or that they bring to light a period in which the Epicureans, Stoics, and Sceptics were deeply concerned with each others' views.

Ethics closes with an article on moral responsibility in Aristotle and the Hellenistic philosophers. What is refreshing about this chapter is that Susan Suavé Meyer does not merely reiterate her published views on responsibility in Aristotle and then tack on the Hellenistic arguments as an appendix. Instead, the article is thematically organized around such topics as fatalism, determinism, choice, cause, and control. To have the different views of Aristotle and (mainly) Stoics presented in this manner sharpens our understanding of ancient views of responsibility.

Ethics is a useful book and a handy introduction to current scholarly issues in ancient philosophy.

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THE GODS IN MYTH

M. LEFKOWITZ: *Greek Gods, Human Lives. What We Can Learn from Myths*. Pp. xii + 288, maps, ills. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003. Cased, US\$30/£19.95. ISBN: 0-300-10145-7.

Without defining 'god', 'myth', or 'religion', Lefkowitz sets out to prove that the 'gods' in Greek 'myth' were not frivolous conventions of literature, as most believe, but beings with important 'religious' value.

In the introduction she objects to popular misunderstandings in handbooks of Greek myth by Thomas Bulfinch, Edith Hamilton, Robert Graves, and Joseph Campbell, who believe that Greek gods are frivolous or immoral, 'human' more than divine, or these writers remove Greek gods from their historical contest. Such errors she will remedy through a study of how the gods play out in several literary narratives.

L. then proceeds to summarize Hesiod's *Theogony*, *Works and Days*, and the long Homeric Hymns to Aphrodite, Demeter, Apollo, and Dionysus. For some reason declaring the *Iliad* to be a 'religious text' (like the Quran? Like the Pentateuch? The gospel of John?) she gives a thirty-one-page summary of its narrative, concluding with observations about the preeminence of Zeus and his almighty will, and how the gods behave in a rather haphazard way toward mortals, whose fate is to suffer. Observations about the relations between men and gods, next pepper a twenty-seven-page summary of the *Odyssey*, but they can be banal: 'Athena's affection for Odysseus and his family is extraordinary, especially since she is not his mother or his lover'.

Turning to drama, L. assumes that the purpose of the festival of Dionysus in Athens was to honor the god (as the mass honors Jesus?), looking past its function of affirming the solidarity of the democratic polis (a purpose that many would see as