THE ROLE OF PHILOSOPHERS IN ANTIQUITY

BRYAN (J.), WARDY (R.), WARREN (J.) (edd.) *Authors and Authorities in Ancient Philosophy*. Pp. xiv + 370. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Cased, £90, US$125. ISBN: 978-1-316-51004-9.

doi:10.1017/S0009840X19001380

Most contributions in this volume were presented at a conference to mark David Sedley's retirement as Laurence Professor of Ancient Philosophy – and all of them pay tribute to his seminal ideas about how philosophical schools in antiquity were organised around the allegiance to some philosophical authority. Besides covering a wide range of philosophers, periods and traditions, the papers develop several aspects involved in the subject. In the introduction, in order to give some context for the rich diversity of contributions, the editors highlight three important issues. First, against a somehow true but possibly oversimplifying view about the centrality of oral interchange and personal interactions between philosophers in earlier times, they stress that the circulation of texts was by that time already widespread in such a way that their reception was a significant part of the development of authority issues – remember Socrates' report about reading Anaxagoras' book in the *Phaedo*. Second, there is an important distinction between doctrinal and methodological authority: the allegiance to some philosopher might be either in terms of accepting the doctrinal content of the texts or in terms of following a methodological attitude, as in the case of Socrates and Pyrrho. Third, philosophy has very early developed an anti-authoritarian tradition (or 'frame of mind', to put it in Wardy's words).

Wardy's contribution starts by exploring the anti-authority frame of mind of philosophy in general and then argues that the concept of authority as defined in social epistemology is not applicable to philosophers. He identifies two sources of the demand for authority in philosophy: paraphilosophical movements such as Pythagoreanism, which strive to find a guru, and eagerness for a systematic history of philosophy – and he has a very severe judgement on the commentarial movement and its 'destructive lust for inherited authority' (p. 326). Agreeing with N. Denyer's conclusions (see below), he argues that the utmost achievement for philosophers is to demonstrate ignorance in the way Socrates has done, i.e. to detect lurking fallacies, to identify the logical contours of a theory and to spot 'argumentative rot' (p. 329).

This anti-authoritarian frame of mind has some relation to Socrates' preference for dialectic. Denyer asks what the rationale of Socrates' disdain for rhetoric and preference for dialectic was. Having remarked that Socrates did not reject every form of rhetoric equally, he argues that dialectic was important for Socrates because it aims at a sort of serious assent (which is not yet persuasion) of the interlocutor. This serious assent makes the interlocutor's non-knowledge commonly known in such a way that one turns out to be the only authority for his or her own persuasion.

A. Long discusses an interesting point concerning Plato's deference to Socrates' authority. When Plato has Socrates discuss non-Socratic topics, Plato connects them with less controversially Socratic topics, which were found in other contemporary Socratic authors (such as Xenophon). Topics shared with other Socratic authors appear in the *Apology*: Socrates' divine sign and his lack of knowledge about specific matters (in this case, about what death is). Turning to the *Phaedo*, Long remarks that another Socratic topic, the notion of 'logical harmony' (which goes further than mere consistency), plays a central role: Socrates' obsession with logical harmony explains why Plato's *Phaedo* has the

content it has – for instance, why *Phaedo*'s last argument for the immortality of the soul is compatible with the notion of a corporeal soul.

D. Frede focuses on Aristotle's attitude towards the authority of the Academy, first examining the attitude towards authority within the Academy itself. After gathering several signs of the liberal and welcoming spirit of the institution, she argues that Plato's dialogues were probably seen as a repository of arguments for exercise and discussion – a sign of this can be traced in the way in which arguments found in Plato's *Lysis* are explored in Aristotle's *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics*. Plato probably was not fond of indicating a 'correct' way of interpreting his dialogues, having treated authorities (such as Homer, Anaxagoras, Heraclitus, sophists and Socrates) in the same liberal way – discussing their views and offering alternatives. Going against the trend originated by H.F. Cherniss, Frede takes Aristotle as a serious witness on the Academy (p. 84) and argues that Aristotle has followed his master's steps: he was as liberal as Plato in dealing with authority – both Plato's and previous philosophers' authorities.

Still on Aristotle's attitude towards Plato, there is a widespread belief according to which Aristotle's *Categories* is an anti-Platonic treatise. But M. Duncombe argues in a very compelling way that Aristotle adopts Plato's views on relatives. With a careful discussion of *Categories* 8 and relevant passages from Plato (such as *Symposium* 199d1–e8), he shows that Plato and Aristotle shared the same intensional view about relatives and its several features (like the reciprocality of correlatives). He persuasively establishes that, at least in this respect, there was complete continuity between Plato's views and Aristotle's *Categories*.

A group of papers consider philosophers who had no personal interaction with each other (mostly because they lived in different periods), so that their attitude towards an authoritative ancestor comes in terms of interpreting the texts. Thus, K. Rudolph rehabilitates Theophrastus as a reliable source for Presocratic philosophy, by highlighting Theophrastus' method of report and criticism of Plato's *Timaeus*. By comparing Theophrastus' report in *De sensibus* and Plato's text, she discerns patterns of selective abbreviation that do justice to what Plato developed in a more complex way. M. Hatzimichali discusses the Pythagorean pseudo-epigrapha – cases of forgery probably meant to fill the gap in the Pythagorean tradition by taking Plato's and Aristotle's traditions as being in the same line as Pythagoreanism. Pseudo-Archytas on *Categories* is the case under discussion. Hatzimichali stresses the author's eclecticism in mixing Stoic *lekta* with Aristotle's account to say that what *Categories* divides into ten categories are 'signifiers'. She stresses that Iamblichus' (as well as Simplicius') use of pseudo-Archytas' work has transformed it into an authority for integrating the ten categories schema into a Platonic dualistic ontology of two realms. G. Boys-Stones directly goes back to Sedley's seminal papers (in *Philosophia Togata* I [1989] and II [1997]) to show that allegiance to Plato in the case of the Neoplatonic tradition is somehow different from what happened with Epicurus and the Stoa. Platonism in the post-Hellenistic era did not have concerns or interests in the Academy tradition – about questions such as the continuity of the school, who have been its masters etc. Platonism as a movement in the post-Hellenistic era did not care for predecessors and did not claim to be the continuation of the original school of Athens. Warren's contribution focuses on Demetrius of Laconia. Warren shows that Demetrius was concerned with the *text*, the *syntax*, the *amphibolia* and the *right interpretation* of a small threefold sentence of Epicurus (F 68 Us., from *On the Telos*) – mostly against (possible or actual) misinterpretation by critics and detractors. It is amusing to see how Demetrius' concerns and procedures, as depicted in Warren's paper, are similar to what we ancient philosophers still do. G. Tsouni discusses how Antiochus (through Cicero) viewed the authority of his predecessors, especially Plato and Aristotle. She argues that Antiochus

saw authority as a positive quality founded in the notion of doctrinal consistency and systematicity, to the point of taking this notion as an expression of the truth and reliability of their views.

Some contributions do not fall into a particular group. S. Broadie discusses an interesting problem about authority in the practical field: the match (or mismatch) between 'words' and 'deeds' in the case of moral advice. She argues that, in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1179a17–22, Aristotle presents himself as living according to the ideal of theoretical life and, therefore, as an authority giving weight to the practical advice about the highest good. The passage on Eudoxus' views about pleasure (*NE* 1172b15–18) does not contradict this procedure, for what Aristotle blames is not the mismatch itself between Eudoxus' words and life, but the fact that his view is not well founded in argument. Bryan argues that *Doxa* in Parmenides' poem was meant to have doctrinal authority about cosmology even if not meant to have argumentative authority over mortal thinking. D. Butterfield discusses how Lucretius adhered to Epicurus' authority and how his quasi-religious allegiance to Epicurus led him to a strikingly different theological view. A.A. Long explores Zeno's biography in Diogenes Laertius to conclude that his inspirational influence within the Stoic tradition was a question of personal example, not a question of doctrine. M. Schofield discusses Cicero's attitude towards authority and his many ways of negotiating between *ratio* and *auctoritas* in political, religious and philosophical matters. In philosophy, *ratio* prevails, but *auctoritas* is appealed to not only for stylistic reasons (to predispose the reader to persuasion) but also to give weight to material amassed from experience. That is why respected Romans from the past take the leading roles in works such as *De republica*, *De senectute* and *De amicitia*. G.E.R. Lloyd compares the relations between reason and authority in ancient China and ancient Greece and Rome. China knew no public form of debate as the forms of rhetoric that thrived in ancient Greece. The emperor (or his representatives) ultimately decided matters. The norm for intellectuals was to offer advice to rulers. Instead of advocating originality, intellectuals (the 'wandering persuaders') aimed at preserving and transmitting canons.

Through their rich diversity, the papers in this volume highlight striking continuities between the ancient traditions and our contemporary way of studying ancient philosophy. 'Discussions of the meaning, force, precise wording, and even the very authorship of those texts [i.e. 'the canonical founding texts'] became modes of philosophical debate' (p. 1). Thus, when Warren (for instance) sharply argues that the fragment from Epicurus does not include an attempted definition of the highest pleasure of the body (or of the soul), but only an account that the most secure pleasure involves present bodily *aponia* and its anticipation in the future, it is not a surprise to see him taking Demetrius almost as a contemporary interlocutor. Of course, these continuities should not be exaggerated. But they are there, and their presence is a forceful reason why the subject deserves careful consideration. Most of the traditional history of ancient philosophy – as well as the traditional vocabulary we usually employ – have stemmed from sources in antiquity. When we discuss the exact meaning of a claim or argument made by an ancient philosopher, it is extremely important to be aware of the ancient debate around the same points – and even more important to have a critical assessment of the reliability of the authorities that we are normally inclined to follow.

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https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009840X19001380 Published online by Cambridge University Press