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Substantial Knowledge: Aristotle's *Metaphysics* by C. D. C. Reeve

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but if on the other hand what this disclosedness reveals cannot be expressed in propositions, then anyone who has not been vouchsafed an original experience of this disclosure might legitimately doubt whether it has any content at all. (A thorough investigation of this dilemma would require a reconsideration of the notion of a formal indication.)

Even if it should turn out to be not quite fair to the tradition to regard its assumptions as a *prejudice*, and even if the disclosedness that Heidegger draws our attention to is not best characterized as a kind of *truth*, this does little to diminish the value of Dahlstrom's interpretation. Anyone trying to understand Heidegger's doctrines regarding truth and logic—and the implications of those doctrines for the often problematic status of Heidegger's own philosophical enterprise—will find this book highly rewarding.

EDWARD WITHERSPOON

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Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 21 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1976).

<sup>2</sup> *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 257 (H. 214).

<sup>3</sup> *Being and Time*, 272 (H. 230).

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*The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 111, No. 3 (July 2002)

C. D. C. Reeve, *Substantial Knowledge: Aristotle's Metaphysics*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000. Pp. xviii, 322.

Books on Aristotle in recent years have been directed almost exclusively to individual topics or treatises, and small wonder. The range and scope of Aristotle's interests together with the apparent inconsistencies among his different works make the prospect of a comprehensive treatment daunting. The volume under review stands in startling contrast to this trend. It articulates, in rich detail, Aristotle's single and unified solution to what Reeve calls the Primacy Dilemma—the central problem that is at the core of his metaphysical and epistemological theorizing.

The dilemma is this. Aristotle holds that substances are both epistemological and ontological first principles. But he also holds that epistemological first principles are universals, while ontological first principles are particulars. Since nothing can be both a universal and a particular, the twin demands on substance to be both ontologically and epistemologically primary are incompatible. So how can Aristotle maintain that substances are epistemologically and ontologically primary?

Reeve arrives at his solution—that God is the primary substance *par excellence*—at the end of a long and tortuous path that winds its way through a variety of Aristotelian texts culminating in *Metaphysics* Λ.6–10. The primary substances of the *Categories* are particulars, most of which turn out, when viewed from the hylomorphic perspective of the *Physics* and *Metaphysics* Z, to be compounds of matter and form. But such compounds are not made up of a particular subject and a universal attribute; rather, they involve “pre-particular” matter and “suniversal” form. (*Suniversals*, such as the substantial forms *human* or *tiger*, are not predicated of already individuated subjects, as ordinary universals are, but “carve up or individuate the world into particular objects of singular reference” (131).) A suniversal form is thus a very special kind of universal that provides a crucial first step toward seeing how something can be both universal and particular. For form is activity, and substantial forms “qua potentials ... are suniversals [and] qua actualities ... are particulars” (156). Reeve next focuses on understanding, the activity that is characteristically human. Aristotle distinguishes between the passive understanding (*nous pathêtikos*) that becomes its objects and the productive understanding (*nous poiêtikos*) that creates them. Since *nous* can understand all things, it can understand itself. This productive self-understanding is “both a suniversal essence and a particular” (188), and is hence a candidate for primary substance. But primary substance must be “prior to everything else in definition, knowledge, and time” (189), and human *nous* is neither eternal nor prior to the non-eternal essences of animal species.

What is needed is a productive understanding that avoids these drawbacks, and God—the divine productive understanding—fills the bill perfectly. He is eternal and is identical to the object of his understanding; God is, in Aristotle’s famously obscure formula, an understanding that is an understanding of understanding (*hê noêsis noêseôs noêsis*, 1074b35). Eternal and unmoved, God moves everything else by being an object of wish and desire. Thus, he is clearly ontologically primary. But why is God epistemologically primary? The answer is that God is also the highest good—happiness—and is therefore the teleological cause of every other substance. Hence God is included in the “extended essence” of every other substance. So God unifies the substances in the same way that substances unify all the categories. Theology, then, must be first among the sciences, and therefore identical with first philosophy, the study of being qua being. God is therefore epistemologically primary, as well.

This summary scarcely does justice to the subtlety and complexity of Reeve’s extended argument in this breathtakingly ambitious book. Nor does it convey the demands that the argument places on the reader. Although addressed to the general philosophical reader rather than the specialist, the book will surely prove daunting to those who have not already struggled with the texts that Reeve is attempting to weave together into a coherent whole. When it comes to

the detailed treatments of particular topics, specialists will surely find much to quarrel with. I will mention three examples.

(1) Aristotle admits that the laws of a natural science may hold only “for the most part,” yet he insists that standard syllogistic reasoning still applies to them. That is, he takes deductions of the following form to be valid:

For the most part, all  $F$ s are  $G$ s.

For the most part, all  $G$ s are  $H$ s.

Therefore, for the most part, all  $F$ s are  $H$ s.

But if “for the most part, all  $F$ s are  $G$ s” just means that most  $F$ s are  $G$ s, this argument form is invalid. For it may be true that most  $F$ s are  $G$ s and most  $G$ s are  $H$ s, but not true that most  $F$ s are  $H$ s. This presents what Reeve calls the *validity* problem.

His solution turns on what he calls *sneccessity*, his name for Aristotle’s notion of natural necessity. The idea is that when the universal generalization “All  $F$ s are  $G$ s” holds “for the most part,” there is a relation of *sneccitation* that holds between  $F$  and  $G$ . Reeve abbreviates this relation as  $N\star(F, G)$ . The validity of our original argument, Reeve says, depends on the validity of this one:

$N\star(F, G)$

$N\star(G, H)$

$N\star(F, H)$

And this argument is valid, Reeve tells us, because of the transitivity of  $N\star$ . “When  $N\star(F, G)$  and  $N\star(G, H)$  are both instantiated by  $x$ ,” he tells us, “so will  $N\star(F, H)$  be” (33–34), and so the argument goes through.

It is not clear how this is supposed to work. The idea seems to be that *normal*  $F$ s instantiate  $N\star(F, G)$ , and  $F$ s that are not  $G$  are not normal. Unfortunately, the inference:

All normal  $F$ s are  $G$ s

All normal  $G$ s are  $H$ s

All normal  $F$ s are  $H$ s

is not valid, since there may be a normal  $F$  that is a  $G$ , but not a normal  $G$ , and hence not guaranteed by the second premise to be an  $H$ . The only way to save this inference is to treat being “normal” as a feature that belongs to a thing absolutely, and not merely relative to a kind. In this case, Reeve’s suggestion amounts to this: we should take the laws of a natural science to be those that hold without exception of normal members of the *genos* of that science. The problem with this suggestion is that it presupposes that we have an independent way of determining which members of the *genos* are normal. If the normal members are just the ones that do not falsify any of the laws of the science, then we will need to know those laws. But the laws are the generalizations that hold universally for all normal members. There seems no way to break out of this circle on the suggestion we are considering.

(2) It is familiar Aristotelian doctrine that the heavenly bodies are made of ether, a kind of matter that is different from the four elements—earth, air, fire, and water—of which all things here in the sublunary realm are ultimately composed. But on Reeve’s account, ether is widespread in the sublunary realm as well. It is the material basis of human understanding (58); indeed, in a less “pure” form, it is part of the makeup of every being with any psychological potential (165). What is more, since “ether is crucial to color,” all visible bodies have ether present in their surfaces (151).

The textual evidence adduced for this astounding interpretation is very thin. Reeve cites three passages as establishing that ether is the stuff of which human understanding is constituted: *GA* 2.3 736b29–737a1, *DA* 2.7 418b6–9, and *Sens.* 3 439a21–25. Although none of these passages mentions ether by name, it seems likely they are referring to it; however, they establish no more than an analogy between ether and the “breath of life” (*pneuma*) in living things. When we turn to passages where Aristotle does mention ether explicitly (*De Caelo* 2.2 and 2.3), we learn that it is “beyond the bodies that are about us on this earth, different and separate from them” (269b13–16), and found exclusively in the superlunary realm.

(3) A central thesis of Aristotle’s embryological theory is that, in animal generation, the father contributes form (conveyed by *sperma*) and the mother contributes matter (the *katamênia*). A notorious problem for this theory is that offspring of both sexes may resemble either parent, or the ancestors of either parent, which seems impossible without the contribution of form from the maternal side. Reeve tries to solve this problem in the course of a detailed elaboration of Aristotelian embryology. The crucial moves are these: movements (*kinêseis*) that code for inheritable traits are present in the *sperma* both actually and potentially, but in the *katamênia* only potentially. An actual movement in the *sperma* may “fail to master” the corresponding potential movement in the *katamênia* and be thereby “altered or deformed, as a saw might be blunted by the wood it is cutting” (53), so that it becomes “formally identical” to that potential movement. Thus, an inherited trait may resemble the maternal side, but the actual movement that produced it comes from the form of the father. What this solution omits is how the potential movements alter or deform the actual movements in the *sperma* in the particular way that they do. The analogy of the saw that is blunted by the wood it is cutting is too weak to help here. For the saw would have to be not just blunted, but blunted in a particular way that depends upon the form of the wooden object that blunts it. But, according to the central thesis, the form is supposed to come exclusively from the paternal side. So it is unclear how Reeve’s solution is supposed to rescue Aristotle’s theory.

There is much to admire in this rich and provocative book—the account of Aristotle’s theology alone is worth the price of admission—and the reader’s journey through its pages is an exhilarating one. Even those who are not per-

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suaded by its holistic interpretation will be challenged and enlightened. It should be read by anyone with a serious interest in Aristotle's philosophy.

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William of Auvergne, *The Soul*. Translated from the Latin with an introduction and notes by Roland Teske, S.J. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2000. Pp. 514.

One of the biggest challenges facing both students and scholars working in the field of medieval philosophy involves the inaccessibility of relevant texts. Reliable Latin editions often just aren't available, even for works by such central figures as Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus; furthermore, it's difficult to find English translations of any but the most significant works in medieval philosophy, much less readable translations that remain faithful to the original text. The paucity of English translations is especially unfortunate, since it then becomes difficult to introduce the real intricacies of medieval philosophical and theological thought to anyone who doesn't already possess a good foothold in medieval Latin. To that end, Marquette University Press's *Mediaeval Philosophical Texts in Translation* series constitutes a valuable resource for anyone interested in gaining further knowledge or a deeper appreciation of influential medieval texts, and *William of Auvergne: The Soul*, the most recent volume, makes for a most welcome addition to the series.

Although largely overlooked today, William of Auvergne (c. 1180–1249) deserves recognition for being one of the first philosophers (and one of the first theologians) seriously to address the huge volume of Aristotelian and Islamic philosophy arriving in the Latin West toward the latter half of the twelfth century and the first part of the thirteenth century. It's difficult to determine exactly how influential his own works proved for later philosophers, but William does seem to have possessed a knack for identifying and discussing topics that became central to Western philosophy in later centuries. For instance, he draws attention to the importance of the relation between the intellect and the will (maintaining that the will is the supreme power of the soul, ruling over the intellect); he also presents arguments for the claim that he is not his body that closely resemble Descartes's Sixth Meditation arguments to the same effect. In fact, as Teske points out in his introduction, some of William's comments on our discovery of necessary connections even prefigure Hume's comments on necessity and custom.