

REVIEWS

10.R.4 (2009): Riin SIRKEL

Galluzzo, Gabriele; Mariani, Mauro (2006) *Aristotle's Metaphysics book Z: the contemporary debate*. Pisa: Edizioni della Normale. VI, 230 p. ISBN 88-7642-176-9.

Considering the tremendous scholarly attention that has been given to Book Z of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* over the past fifty years, it is a very good time to write a book on the scholarship on *Metaphysics* Z. This is what Gabriele Galluzzo and Mauro Mariani have done. Their book – or, more precisely, the second part of it – is the first (to my knowledge) serious scholarly work on recent Aristotelian scholarship. It puts some order into scholarly disputes and provides a map of the most heated controversies surrounding *Metaphysics* Z. Such a map is highly welcome, for the study of Book Z has become so complex and extensive that it is difficult even for the specialist to orient herself within the labyrinth of different and often conflicting interpretations. Further, since the dispute over Book Z has run parallel to the re-discovery of Aristotle's metaphysics by analytic philosophers, their book – or, more precisely, the first part of it – gives also a general outline of some of the crucial issues discussed in contemporary metaphysics.

The book consists of two parts which are written by different authors (the first part is written by Mauro Mariani, and the second by Gabriele Galluzzo). Although each part contributes to understanding the other, it is often not clear how discussions in different parts of the book are related, and how precisely the understanding of contemporary metaphysical debates should “help to cast some light on the different interpretive options we are confronted with when dealing with Book Z” (p. 1). This need not be seen as a weakness of the book. Rather, one could say that this book addresses two different, though occasionally overlapping, audiences – contemporary analytic thinkers, and Aristotelian scholars. And both of those audiences are likely to come away from this book with something new to think about.

In the first part of the book, Mauro Mariani presents some modern accounts of essentialism (§ 1), as well as several views concerning the structure and identity of concrete particulars (§ 2). My discussion will be confined to Mariani's account of essentialism, which is his main focus. His discussion of modern treatments of essence (e.g. Quine, Kripke, Brody, Putnam, et al.) is lucid and insightful. Nonetheless, I am not convinced that Mariani achieves the aim “to highlight both similarities and differences between Aristotle's and the modern treatment of essence” (p. 2). His references to Aristotle are somewhat obscure (especially for those who do not have a strong background in Aristotle's philosophy) and also rather brief. For example, when discussing Quine's criticism of modal logic, according to which quantified modal logic leads inevitably to the “metaphysical jungle of Aristotelian essentialism”, Mariani concludes that “Quine's Aristotelian essentialism is all in all genuinely Aristotelian” (p. 14). Although I agree with Mariani's conclusion (at least in its general form), I wish he had explained in greater detail what (and why) precisely is “genuinely Aristotelian” about Quine's account. This is not self-evident, especially because there have been authors (e.g.

Nicholas P. White) who have resisted such a conclusion, and because Mariani's later discussion about essentialism and necessity in Aristotle (§ 1.5) suggests that the fact that Aristotle (unlike Quine) recognizes properties that are necessary but not essential is one of the (important?) differences between Aristotle's and contemporary accounts of essence.

Another author who Mariani discusses is Kripke, who distinguishes between three types of essential properties: (a) sortal properties, (b) the properties of origin, and (c) the properties expressing the type of matter by which an object is originally constituted. Mariani concludes that "Kripke's essentialism seems to have little in common with Aristotle's, except for the properties of type (a)" (p. 22). Again, I am inclined to agree with this conclusion. But the intriguing question is why Aristotle excludes (b) and (c) from the essence of an individual substance? This question would have deserved a more elaborate treatment, especially because Aristotle recognizes the importance of matter and "origin of the motion" or efficient cause in the causal history of the material substance. Although Mariani's discussion in general is only loosely connected to *Metaphysics Z*, this does not reduce the value of his account. He accomplishes his goal of giving a general outline of some of the crucial issues in contemporary metaphysics, and his short references to Aristotle provoke the reader to continue thinking about the relationship between Aristotle's and contemporary discussions, when reading the second part of the book.

In the second part of the book (which is twice as long as the first one), Gabriele Galluzzo gives an insightful overview and analysis of the scholarly disputes surrounding three major philosophical issues of *Metaphysics Z*. These issues are the problem of the relationship between matter and form (§ 2), the question of definition (§ 3), and the status of Aristotle's forms (§ 4). Galluzzo says that the "main point I would like to illustrate is that Aristotle's analysis of these issues in *Metaphysics Z* is completely incomprehensible without a detailed examination of his doctrine of matter and form" (p. 61). I strongly sympathize with such a starting point since authors (especially when discussing Aristotle's views from the contemporary perspective) sometimes tend to forget (or ignore) that Aristotle's metaphysics relies on some peculiar assumptions, the most important of which is hylomorphism.

Galluzzo reads Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in the most traditional way, namely, in light of the *Categories*. The traditional focus on Aristotle's *Categories* is probably one factor that is responsible for the centuries-old neglect of Aristotle's biological works, which have become the object of serious scholarly research only during the last few decades. In fact, the recent decades have witnessed a proliferation of scholarly works on Aristotle's biological writings (e.g. Balme, Lennox, Gotthelf, etc.). Since these works have given some new and valuable insights into the issues under discussion in the present book (especially the relationship of matter and form, and the nature of the universal), it is a pity that Galluzzo ignores this scholarship altogether. On the other hand, however, his neglect is also understandable, given that Galluzzo's focus is on the recent scholarship on *Metaphysics Z*, which has been directed toward the *Categories* rather than toward Aristotle's biological writings.

The first issue Galluzzo considers is the relationship between matter and form. He focuses on the question of whether "matter and form are somehow really distinct or whether their

distinction is just the result of the different ways we can look at a sensible substance" (p. 89). Galluzzo's use of the expression "real distinction" is somewhat confusing, because in its most traditional sense it means that two entities can *exist* apart from each other. But surely, as Galluzzo himself admits, form and matter cannot be existentially distinct – this would run counter to the whole idea of hylomorphism. Rather, Galluzzo's notion of real distinction seems to be identical with what could be called "essential" distinction, for he claims that "matter and form are really distinct if the identity of the one does not depend on the identity of the other" (p. 90). Galluzzo begins by discussing and criticizing what he calls the "accidental" view according to which matter and form are two distinct entities entering into some kind of accidental relationship. He contrasts the "accidental" view with Sellars' "projectivist" and Scaltsas' "holistic" views according to which matter and form are not really distinct but rather really identical. The main difference between these two approaches to the matter/form relationship is that Sellars' and Scaltsas' approach implies that the identity of matter depends on the identity of form, which, on Galluzzo's account, shows that matter and form cannot be really distinct. For "if it should turn out that matter essentially depends on form for its own identity, then clearly matter and form would not count as really distinct" (p. 90). I am not entirely convinced that the conclusion (viz. that matter and form are not really distinct) must necessarily follow. It would follow if the essential dependency of form and matter is mutual. But since it is asymmetrical (i.e. matter depends on form for its identity, but not vice versa), there is room for arguing that form (being essentially independent of matter) is distinct from matter.

The second set of problems Galluzzo discusses concern Aristotle's notion of definition. He considers the problem of the object of definition (whether it is form alone, as the majority of scholars maintain, or composite substance, containing both form and matter), and the problem of the definition of the composite substance (whether it contains reference to form alone, or to matter as well). Galluzzo's treatment of these problems is shorter and more textual than his treatment of two other issues. By considering textual evidence for and against the view that the definition of a composite substance contains reference to form alone, he concludes that "the central books of the *Metaphysics* present different lines of thought concerning the definition of sensible substances" (p. 158). On the one hand, Aristotle seems to be attracted to the idea that the essence and definition of the composite substance includes only form. On the other hand, he cannot abandon altogether the view that a complete account of a sensible substance should include its matter as well.

Galluzzo's conclusion that *Metaphysics* presents different lines of thought raises a more general question about how to read the central books of *Metaphysics* and Book Z in particular. Should we assume that Book Z presents one coherent line of thought (one unified theory), or that Aristotle presents many different lines of thought, tries out different approaches or theories? This question is relevant, because many controversies and problems surrounding *Metaphysics* Z (especially the problem about the status of forms) consist in reconciling texts and passages, which appear to contradict one another. Hence, it is a matter of initial surprise that Galluzzo does not discuss this question, and ignores Myles Burnyeat's influential idea (in *A Map of*

Metaphysics Z, 2001) that Book Z is not a linear treatise, and thus it is not the case that the successive chapters build continuously upon the results of their predecessors.

The third and last issue Galluzzo considers is the controversy surrounding the status of Aristotle's forms, which, I agree, is the most hotly disputed issue in recent history of the Aristotelian scholarship. The controversy centres upon the question of whether Aristotle's forms are particular or universal – there are authors who argue that forms are particular (which is a more recent and revisionary position) and authors who maintain that forms are universal, and there is persuasive evidence for both positions. Galluzzo takes as his starting point the recognition that there is a great variety of positions circulating under the label “theory of particular forms” and “theory of universal forms”, and tries to “put some order into these matters by setting apart the different views put forward on both sides of the controversy” (p. 169).

Galluzzo thus confines his attention to presenting different versions of two, supposedly mutually exclusive, positions: (i) forms are particular, and (ii) forms are universal. Nonetheless, it should be pointed out that these are not the only positions taken in the dispute over the status of Aristotle's forms. There are authors who have maintained that (iii) forms are both universal and particular (which sometimes, but not always, corresponds to the position that forms, being in themselves universal, are particularized by the matter they are joined to), or that (iv) forms in themselves are neither universal nor particular (most notably, J. Owens, 1963), or that (v) the question of whether form is particular or universal (i.e. numerically one or many) is not the right question to ask (e.g. Lennox 2001). It is surely impossible to discuss all the different positions taken in the dispute over the status of forms within the scope of the present book as it is perhaps the single largest, and most controversial, interpretative issue concerning Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Nonetheless, considering the rich and variegated history of scholarly discussion about the status of forms, the question of why the author chose to limit his attention to these alternative positions would have deserved some elaboration.

Galluzzo's discussion of the critical debate over Book Z has many merits. He is successful in “putting some order into intricate debate”, and I deeply admire the depth and neutrality with which Galluzzo approaches and discusses these overly complicated issues. However, since one of Galluzzo's aims is to present the history of the scholarly debates, he often discusses positions that have, over the years, become classical and widely known – this gives to his discussions a somewhat old-fashioned feel. In sum, Galluzzo's and Mariani's book is unmissable for the reader who wants to gain deeper understanding of issues surrounding Aristotelian metaphysics, and will repay the attention of anyone interested in Aristotle or metaphysics.