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*Aristotelismo* by Andrea Falcon

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In *Aristotelismo* (*Aristotelianism*), Andrea Falcon traces the history of Aristotelianism from the Hellenistic period to Late Antiquity. Right from the introduction, Falcon defines his notion of this history: it corresponds not with the history of the Peripatos but with the history of the presence of Aristotelian elements in ancient authors. For this reason, the book includes the examination not only of members of Aristotle's school but also of authors who did not consider themselves exponents of the Aristotelian tradition or who even regarded themselves as its opponents.

The book is divided into five chapters following a brief introduction on the nature and intent of the work. Chapter 1 concerns the Hellenistic period, discussing the activity of the Peripatos as well as Epicurus and the Stoics. Chapters 2 and 3 address the post-Hellenistic age. Chapter 2 focuses on the exponents of the Peripatos (e.g., Boethus of Sidon, Xenarchus of Seleucia, Alexander of Aphrodisias), whereas chapter 3 concentrates on the presence of Aristotelian elements within the Platonic and Stoic traditions (i.e., Antiochus of Ascalon, Eudorus of Alexandria, Plutarch of Chaeronea, Alcinous, Apuleius, the pseudo-Pythagorean treatises, and Stoics such as Panaetius of Rhodes and Posidonius of Apamea). Chapter 4 deals with Late Antiquity, in particular with Porphyry, Iamblichus, and the School of Athens (e.g., Sirianus, Proclus, Damascius, and Simplicius) as well as that of Alexandria (e.g., Ammonius and John Philoponus). Finally, chapter 5 provides considerations about the relation between ancient Aristotelianism and the supposedly genuine Aristotle.

One key point that Falcon conveys throughout the book is that the history of Aristotelianism is a complex phenomenon consisting of a plurality of readings of Aristotle, none of which is the authentic or privileged one. The struggle to achieve an orthodox and, therefore, monolithic understanding of such a tradition is misguided. In this sense, the history of Aristotelianism

is similar to the history of Platonism: there are only different readings of Aristotle just as much as there are only different readings of Plato.<sup>1</sup>

A highly valuable trait of Falcon's book is the continuous engagement with interpretative problems that the historian of philosophy might encounter in addressing such a complex and rich tradition. Alongside the above-mentioned problem of orthodoxy, there are some other points that I should like to highlight. In chapter 1, Falcon challenges the equivalence of the absence of explicit references to Aristotle in the Hellenistic period to ignorance of his works. The fact that the Hellenistic thinkers do not make explicit references to the works of Aristotle known by the modern reader does not mean that they do not know his works or that they know only the esoteric ones. Indeed, both Epicurus and the Stoics are shown to engage with Aristotle's works. Concerning in particular Aristotle's biological works, not only does Falcon oppose the idea that the Hellenistic period ignored them, by pointing to the case of Aristophanes of Byzantium, he also rejects the common view that the Hellenistic Peripatos was a declining phase of the school: the Hellenistic Peripatos, on the contrary, was wholly engaged in a dynamic, common project of biology.

If Falcon challenges the view that the Hellenistic period ignores Aristotle in chapter 1, in chapter 2, he scales down Aristotle's comeback in the post-Hellenistic period. First of all, the renewed interest in Aristotle is to be explained with reference neither to one event, such as the discovery of Aristotle's books, nor to a single person, such as Andronicus of Rhodes and his edition. Second, it cannot be identified with the success of the *Categories*. Third, it is not, as often thought, a phenomenon of little originality or low speculative value. Finally, and most importantly, it is not a single homogenous phenomenon. Aristotle's works are fluid texts that Peripatetic authors addressed without a single, common goal, and from a plurality of perspectives, sometimes even as part of different philosophical endeavors.

The renewed interest in Aristotle also concerns non-Peripatetic philosophers. In this case, Aristotle's comeback unfolds as a gradual phenomenon occurring in different places, at different times, and with different goals. For instance, Falcon highlights that, in the post-Hellenistic period, Stoics made a selective appropriation of Aristotle in the course of projects that are differ-

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<sup>1</sup> See M. Bonazzi's *Il platonismo* [2015] in the same series.

ent not only from Aristotle's but also from one another: Antiochus aims at returning to the great masters of the past, Plutarch wishes to update Plato, and Posidonius seeks to adapt Aristotelian notions to Stoic theory.

Another problem of interest to historians of philosophy is the boundary between philosophy and exegesis. Falcon denies the presence of a sharp boundary between the two and reminds the reader of the plurality of philosophical tools available to ancient thinkers. For instance, in chapter 2, great attention is drawn to Alexander of Aphrodisias and his use of commentaries in a manner evidently consistent with high-level philosophical exposition. In chapter 4, emphasis is put on the commentary as a way of doing philosophy in late ancient philosophers, Iamblichus in particular. As a result, it is crucial for historians of philosophy not to confine their interpretative enterprise to technical philosophical texts, but to broaden the scope to the inclusion of different exegetical yet philosophical writings such as commentaries and paraphrases.

*Aristotelismo* touches upon a sufficient number of thinkers interesting to the historian of philosophy. However, it also draws particular attention to the *fortuna* of Aristotle's science, which will be of interest to both historians of philosophy and historians of science. Throughout the book and principally in the final chapter, the author traces a helpful and competent history of Aristotle's logic and biology, two disciplines that had intriguingly different destinies. With respect to Aristotle's logic, the *Organon* enjoyed extraordinary success in the ancient tradition. The *Categories* are shown to constitute a key point of reference within and without the Peripatetic tradition. Within the Peripatetic tradition, examples include Boethus of Sidon with his semantic interpretation of the *Categories* and the commentaries of Alexander of Aphrodisias on the *Prior and Posterior Analytics*, *On Interpretation*, *Categories*, and *Topics*. Without the Peripatetic tradition, Eudorus of Alexandria and Andronicus of Rhodes attempt to harmonize the *Categories* with the Academic tradition. The Stoic tradition was, it seems, less permeable to the appeal of the *Categories*, with the exception of Cornutus and Athenodorus, who take the Aristotelian treatise as a linguistic one. In particular, late ancient authors transmitted Aristotelian logic beyond the ancient world. But, even so, Falcon does not fail to point out that the potent idea that logic should be an instrument for philosophers cannot be found in Aristotle.

With respect to biology, Falcon emphasizes how this discipline demonstrates the selective reading made by ancient thinkers, and, therefore, the discrep-

ancy between Aristotle's own thought and the history of Aristotelianism. The Stagirite ascribes an important role to biology—made clear also from the number of biological works written—to the point that physics without biology is considered incomplete. However, both in the post-Hellenistic period and in Late Antiquity, biological works are dismissed. Biology, i.e., the study of life, is for Aristotle crucial from a scientific and philosophical perspective; his successors, however, did not embrace this view, and Aristotelian biology wound up circulating outside philosophical circles.

Falcon's book offers a competent and well-informed map of the history of Aristotelianism. The narrative is enriched by his attention to the problems encountered by historians of philosophy. In comparison with P. Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen* [1973–2002], it additionally examines the Hellenistic period and Late Antiquity. The timeline covered by *Aristotelismo* also stretches further than H. Baltussen, *The Peripatetics: Aristotle's Heirs* [2016], which traces the development of Peripatetic thought from Theophrastus and Strato to Alexander of Aphrodisias. In contrast to Falcon's *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Aristotle in Antiquity* [2016], it leaves out of the survey the reception of Aristotle in the Latin world and among the early Christian philosophers. The immense amount of material spreading over such a long period calls for inevitably arbitrary choices, such as the exclusion of spurious works. Although some writings have been misattributed to Aristotle (e.g., *On Colors*, *On Things Heard*, and *Problems*), it would still be interesting to understand why they are in the corpus and the extent to which they are Aristotelian. Given that the notion of Aristotelianism embraced in the book is broad enough to include traditionally excluded authors, it seems indeed broad enough to include works that are traditionally included—at least in the corpus. Furthermore, the analysis of the chosen examples sometimes requires a great deal of familiarity with the primary authors and texts of ancient philosophy. Overall, however, *Aristotelismo* represents a desirable contribution within Italian as well as international scholarship. All in all, the history of Aristotelianism—as Falcon says and his book does—teaches how certain aspects of Aristotle's thought can be brought to the surface.

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