

One and Many in Aristotle's Metaphysics: Books Alpha-Delta. By Edward C. Halper. Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2009. Pp. xli + 578. \$48.00 (hardback). ISBN: 978-1-930972-6.

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Halper's volume entitled *Metaphysics Books Alpha-Delta* is the second in his series concerned with showing that Aristotle's work contains a central unifying thesis, the problem of the one and the many, with the present volume devoted to the first five books of that work. Continuing the line of approach from the 1998 volume covering *Metaphysics* iv-ix, Halper finds that the compilation of books known as *Metaphysics* is an organized whole, not the incomplete, disorganized text that many modern scholars have alleged. The opening remark by W.D. Ross that 'it is evident...that this is not a single work, meant to be read in its present form' (*Aristotle Metaphysics* vol. 1, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924/1997, xiii) may be considered illustrative in this regard. So, from the outset, Halper is disputing a received view about the work's lack of a fundamental the-

matic and argumentative unity, a lack that has given rise to some of the deepest, most intransigent problems about the nature of metaphysics. One set of views in the scholarship of the past two centuries takes as central the idea of developmentalism, the notion that Aristotle's work reflects changes in his ideas about metaphysics and substance, among others, while another group rejects this stance for a wholly different approach. The developmental interpretation, that pioneered by Jaeger in the early twentieth century, has faced serious interpretive challenges in the last century, and for the most part has been succeeded by a new heuristic, that of reading the books as providing insight to individual puzzles and their solutions, rather than interpreting the text as a whole. The latter kind of interpretation is what Halper describes the approach of 'the philosopher at work' (34-35), what we may call, alternatively, an *aporematic* approach. According to the latter, Aristotle's work should be seen as the attempt to engage with specific, distinct metaphysical problems, such as the nature of substance or the subject-matter of metaphysics, that are raised in book 3. That this perspective requires a close reading of the text is all to the good, but Halper finds that this approach too often reflects the contemporary interests of the scholars as driving the elucidation of the problems at hand. So, he rejects this for a more unitarian approach. Another conflicting set of views about *Metaphysics* concerns the scope of its subject-matter: depending on what one takes *being qua being* to signify, metaphysics is considered either to comprehend a wide or a narrow range of subject-matter. On the former view, the phrase signifies the widest scope of being, and the resulting discipline constitutes ontology; on the latter, it refers to a special case, the highest kind of being, God, and comprises theology. And so, the problem of general versus special metaphysics is born. Nor does the consideration of more nuanced interpretations involving the sense in which being may be homonymous remove the standing difficulty. For, if the homonymy of *being qua being* is taken in an extensional sense, we embrace general metaphysics, and if, on the contrary, we find the Prime Mover as the primary instance of being, we recognize the specialized variety.

Both the former and the latter kinds of interpretation are rejected by Halper with the argument that *Metaphysics* should be read as developing a single line of argumentation, taking the one and the many as its unifying theme. On a broad level, he considers Aristotle's work to consist in three main sections, with *Metaphysics* i-v comprising the first, vi-ix the second, and x-xiv, the third section, with each group representing a distinct stage in Aristotle's metaphysical inquiry into causes. As he sees it, the first section treats all beings as substances and comprises the lowest stage of inquiry; the second section treats substances as forms and represents a higher level; the third section treats primary substances, the unmoved movers, as first causes, and reflects the highest level of the inquiry. The study of metaphysics thus becomes, progressively, a more focused study of causes, one that moves from the kind of inquiry we would consider ontological to one we would call theological. This kind of approach presents advantages over the previous lines of interpretation that require choosing a single focus through-

out; it allows him to avoid making the determination about *Metaphysics* being a work devoted either to ontology or theology. For Halper, it can be both.

With the thesis that the *Metaphysics* should be read as developing a single line of argumentation and analysis, taking the one and the many as its unifying theme, his work takes up a different line of approach than the other interpretations mentioned above. As developed in chapter 1, he proposes a third line of interpretation that draws from the other two, but is distinguished from them by three distinct features. Specifically, Halper proposes a distinct scholarly line of approach that rests upon three individual components: an interpretive theme, a standard of truth, and a conception of method. To state the contrast, his approach differs from the developmental interpretation by eschewing the assumption about different stages in Aristotle's thought that are distinguished as being more or less Platonic in orientation. As well, his view differs from the aporetic one in that he rejects its piece-meal approach by proposing an over-arching interpretive theme, the one and the many, as that which drives the subordinate pieces within the overall puzzle about the nature of being. The other two elements of his approach, the standard of truth and method, rest upon the thematic element in that their plausibility adds to or detracts from the overall success of the first element. Concerning his notion about the standard of truth, he argues that since the objects of metaphysics cannot be known with the same kind of precision as the objects of mathematics, the notion of truth we should use to apply to metaphysical claims and theories must be different. As a result, he states that it is appropriate to employ a standard that does not require strict demonstration, but will be able 'to resolve difficulties' (40). With regard to his idea about philosophical method, Halper distinguishes two features of Aristotle's method in *Metaphysics*, the first is being end-directed, and the second, procedural; both are related to Halper's view of the work as an inquiry rather than as a proof. For example, as distinct from the method of geometry in which the conclusion for the geometric proof is directly adduced, the method of the metaphysician differs: the conclusions for metaphysical arguments are made indirectly, as Halper sees it, by using the conclusions from the various puzzles to advance the general line of argument forward.

The overview in chapter 1 also provides the unifying structure he finds behind the first five books: to begin, book 1 and 2 take up the general subject matter of metaphysics as the study of first causes, and also provide an extended treatment of the four causes. Next, book 3, which will form the subject of extended discussion in chapter 2, offers a catalogue of the fifteen *aporiai* concerning whether and how metaphysics exists. In this regard, Halper claims that the problems stated in book 3 are divisible into three groups, each of which is addressed in a different part of the *Metaphysics*. With reference to the present study, book 4 takes up most of the problems belonging to the first group; specifically, it addresses four of the five difficulties regarding the possibility of metaphysics that concern whether the subject matter of metaphysics falls under a single kind. Only the fifth *aporia*, that relating to the possibility of non-sensible substances, like forms or numbers, sees its solution falling outside book 4 in books 13 and 14. The motiva-

tion of book 5 arises from the possibility of terms ‘being said in many ways’, the topic of which is taken up in chapter 2, ‘The Ways of Being One’. This chapter, along with chapter 5, entitled ‘The Unity of Being’, comprise the heart of the study.

In chapter 2, he claims that book 5 should be seen as concerned with analyzing the common terms of dialectic, such as ‘one’, ‘same’, ‘other’, ‘contrary’, and ‘being’, but not, as is typically understood, simply as providing a philosophical lexicon. He argues, first, that Delta requires a three-component analysis of term, thing, and definition, and second, that the analysis of these terms demonstrates that they are trans-categorical, and so, have no single, real essence. Their ‘irreducible plurality’ is one result of book 5, he finds, the other being that the plurality of each term refers back to a ‘primary instance’ (70). Since none of the terms in book 5 refers to single characters with definable, real essences, Halper argues their study rightly belongs to metaphysics as the science dealing with trans-categorical genera. The majority of chapter 2 then takes up specific terms discussed in book 5, with special attention given to the ways in which ‘one’ (v 6) and ‘being’ (v 7) are ‘said in many ways’ and yet, reflect unity. In chapter 5, he takes up the themes of book 4, that are, broadly speaking, the arguments for the possibility of metaphysics and the discussion of the logical principles governing reasoning. Considered synoptically, book 4 provides the justification for the study of the attributes discussed in book 5 as belonging to one science. He re-considers book 5 in light of book 4 in chapter 6, where he argues that book 5 contains the discussion of the *per se* attributes of being and book 4 provides the justification for these attributes falling under metaphysics. Considered in this light, he makes the case that his grouping of the first five books rightly belongs together. Finally, in chapter 7, he addresses the conflict over special versus general metaphysics, arguing that the *pros hen* unity behind ‘being *qua* being’ announced in *Metaphysics* iv 2 provides for both a wide and a narrow interpretation. For, Halper considers Aristotle’s notion of being *qua* being in *Metaphysics* iv a ‘placeholder’ in the sense of designating any of the various aspects of being that Aristotle comes to describe in the different chapters of the work. In this sense, he claims that Aristotle is working with what he terms a ‘rich ontology’, not one that pre-determines a certain outcome about the nature of the subject-matter from the outset.

Halper’s contribution to the current scholarship is to propose a holistic line of interpretation for *Metaphysics*, arguing that the problem of the one and the many is the single theme driving the outline of the arguments throughout the work, from the opening *aporiai* in book 3 to the final discussion of the Prime Mover in book 12. While he admits that he cannot establish the thesis in the sense of providing a direct proof, he claims to furnish indirect evidence that his thesis is persuasive by showing how understanding the issues of the one and the many afford a better comprehension of the text than previous interpretations. In regard to the elucidation of specific problems, his analysis is often successful, as when he distinguishes equivocity, polysemy, and homonymy in regard to a common term like ‘one’ that is ‘said in many ways’ in chapter 2. But this discussion forms part

of a larger thesis about the line of continuity between book 5 and book 4 on which this reader remains unconvinced, and so, the question remains whether Halper's overall interpretive theme about the one and the many is fully successful. For example, one discontinuity between books 5 and 4 concerns the absence in book 5 of *pros hen* analysis, or systematic homonymy, in regard to any of its terms and definitions, a lack made more apparent by its central use in *Metaphysic iv 2* concerning being.

There are two other central issues where this reader does not find the line of argument fully convincing. The first concerns Halper's discussion about the standard of truth that Aristotle is supposed to be employing with regard to metaphysical speculations. Halper claims that in his metaphysical treatise, Aristotle employs a less than rigorous standard of truth; his support for this claim depends on his view of Aristotle's familiar distinction between what is 'knowable in itself' and 'knowable to us' (cf. *Meta.* 993a30-b11, 1029b3-12; *PA* 644b22-30). For Halper, the upshot of the distinction is that, for Aristotle, the highest metaphysical objects, including God, are not knowable to us. He presses this conclusion into service when necessary to explain the limited extent to which knowledge of first causes is possible, an implication this reader finds unconvincing. From the fact that an object or a subject-matter is not knowable by the faculty of sense-perception, it does not follow that it is 'barely knowable to us' or that the objects of metaphysics are less knowable than those of mathematics, as he claims (39). In fact, the core passage from *Parts of Animals* he cites for the distinction between things knowable to us and knowable in themselves does not state that imperceptible things are 'barely' known or 'inaccurately' known, as Halper claims, but rather that they are grasped with difficulty because as Aristotle reminds us, our chances for studying them are scant as these things lie at a remove from sense-perception. But being grasped with difficulty does not imply being badly grasped or inadequately understood; rather, it emphasizes the necessity of using reason, not sense-perception as a means to their comprehension, the understanding of which, Aristotle claims, affords us a greater pleasure than understanding 'all the things around us' (644b33). The other area for comment concerns the propriety of the discussion about the logical principles, namely, non-contradiction and excluded middle (PNC, PEM) in book 4, and so, within *Metaphysics*. As Halper sees it, the discussion of these principles fits well into the plan of book 4 in that Aristotle demonstrates them indirectly by assuming the unity of substances (cf. 290). In other words, since *Metaphysics* is a work treating 'characters that belong to more than one categorical genus', the discussion of the PNC properly falls within its scope (464-465). But the conclusion he gives seems to skirt the differences in kind between logical principles, substances, and attributes; not only does the justification for the placement of the discussion of PNC in book 4 remain unclear, but the lack of clarity weakens the evidence for the larger thesis about the one and the many unifying the work. In spite of these concerns, it should be stated that this reader finds the general thesis Halper is advancing both stimulating and worthy of deeper study. In addition to the origi-

nality of its broad interpretive theme, Halper's work provides textual analyses that are close and illuminating, executed in a highly accessible style that will prove a resource both to specialists and advanced students working in Aristotle's theory of language as well as his metaphysics. The book possesses a general index combining concepts and proper names, but lacks an index locorum that would be desirable in a scholarly work of this kind. Overall, the present volume will be considered a welcome addition to the recent scholarly literature on the *Metaphysics*.

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Aristotle's Ethics: Moral Development and Human Nature. By Hope May. New York: Continuum, 2010. Pp.xiv + 189. \$120.00 (hardback). ISBN 978-0-826491107.

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Hope May's *Aristotle's Ethics: Moral Development and Human Nature* has two main goals. The first essentially exegetical goal of the book is to develop a novel interpretation of Aristotle's view of human flourishing (*eudaimonia*), one that enables ethically virtuous activity to be a substantive component of flourishing together with contemplation. The book's second primarily philosophical aim is to show that even if we cannot today accept all of the details of Aristotle's conception of flourishing—specifically, his view that flourishing consists in a single activity—the fundamentals of his view are defensible within a contemporary liberal framework. Given these two aims, May's extremely ambitious but clear and easy-to-follow book is bound to be of interest not only to contemporary philosophers or specialists working on the *Nicomachean Ethics* but also to any reflective person with an interest in the good life.

Aristotle's Ethics: Moral Development and Human Nature can be divided into two main parts. The first part, which contains the first three chapters (1-3), discharges the exegetical task of the book. The first chapter gives concise introductions to the function argument of *NE* i 7 and the infamous debate between intellectualists and inclusivists over the nature of flourishing. The second chapter compares Aristotle's view of the production of craft products to his conception of the generation of natural organisms and argues that the latter underwrites the *premises* of the function argument. The third chapter, which is the culmination of May's Aristotle exegesis, undertakes to show what implications Aristotle's view of natural production has for the *conclusion* of the function argument, specifi-