

## BOOK REVIEW

*The Development of Dialectic from Plato to Aristotle*. Edited by JAKOBL FINK. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Pp. 364. Hardcover, \$99.00. ISBN 978-1-107-01222-6.

The longstanding characterization of an Aristotle who systematized the Platonic conception of dialectic into a system of logicis taken up and taken down in this collection edited by Jakob Fink. The essays approach the development of dialectic from Plato to Aristotle from a range of approaches embracing literary genre, philological analysis, semantic analysis, and argument analysis. Fink lays out the guiding question for the collection as: “how did the concept of dialectic develop from Plato to Aristotle?” (1). Those who have studied the conception of dialectic in these ancient authors only to discover the complexity, evolution, and multiplicity present in each are well-guarded against the conceit that the answer to the question is easy or clear. This volume confirms but also clarifies the complexity.

The determinative role of the question in Platonic dialectic and so Fink’s description of it seems apropos as “the engine that drives the debate forward, with answers acting like fuel, as it were” (5). Consistent with the practice of dialectic in the Platonic dialogues and the definition of it in Aristotle, Fink defines dialectic in his introduction to the essays as argumentation directed toward another, most typically in a question and answer format. The volume then falls into three parts. In the first section, “Dialectic as inter-personal activity,” Luca Castagnoli examines self-refutation in Platonic and Aristotelian dialogues demonstrating precisely why we cannot extract propositional claims, particularly in her study self-refutation arguments, from their dialogic form unless we “misrepresent their logic and their conclusions.” (28). This is true even when one employs *consequentia mirabilis* (demonstrating the truth of a proposition by demonstrating the inconsistency of its negative), which in any case is an anachronistic move. Marja-Liisa Kakkuri-Knuuttila describes how something implicit in Plato becomes explicit in Aristotle, namely, the critical role of the respondent in dialectical exchange. It is the respondent, she shows, who is most able to generate a good argument. The section ends

with Fossheim's essay on the status of division in Platonic texts, arguing that too much has been made of it as a method *per se*.

The second section, "Form and Content in the Philosophical Dialogue," begins with the uses of dialectic in specific Platonic dialogues (*Lysis* and *Laches*) by Thaning and Thesleff. These present the value of the practice of dialectic for intellectual pursuit of its own value and for influencing others. In a consistent vein is Kahn's essay describing how the dialogic form, or genre, demonstrates "the oral practice of philosophy" (158). At the same time, the form, which utilizes multiple voices leaves the actual positions of Plato the philosopher unclear and instead highlights multiple perspectives, "the doctrinal content of the dialogues is essentially context-dependent" (159). Finally, Fink shows that Aristotle was attuned to the Platonic dialogic form and sees in the surviving fragments of Aristotelian dialogues the development of that form particularly in that "respondent is certainly given serious consideration" (196).

Vasilis Politis opens the third and final section of the collection, "Dialectical Methodology," by addressing a fundamental issue in Platonic studies, Plato's rationale, explicit or not in the texts, for the asking of *ti esti*? He answers this question affirmatively locating the rationale for the question in the dialogues themselves in the use of *aporia* focused upon questions about the nature of concepts. Hayden Ausland shows how in the Socratic dialogues the selection of examples, in the form of inductive reasoning, is done for the purpose of generating agreement from interlocutors rather than, as with Aristotle's induction, the selection of particular examples to establish universal claims. Thus, Aristotle's use of Platonic induction was not duplicative but rather formulated and extended the use of this process in a new and distinctive manner.

This section then turns to two chapters on *elenchus*. Louis-André Dorion finds in Aristotle's *Sophistical Refutations* a definition of *elenchus* inspired by the description of *elenchus* in the *Sophist*. Not surprisingly, he shows that while Aristotle built upon and retained the logical aspect of the definition in the *Sophist* he did continue, explicitly in any case, the pedagogical and moral aspects. Robert Bolton demonstrates that rather than focus upon demonstrating that an interlocutor is ignorant, the Aristotelian use of *elenchus* seeks to demonstrate that a proposition is false. Finally, Wolfgang Kullman shows through a survey of multiple texts how Aristotle took Socratic dialectic, originally directed toward the movement from opinions to "the theory of ideas," to the exchange between interlocutors and a focus upon claims made using particulars and grounded knowledge.

And so, in this volume the well-worn view that dialectic naturally and inevitably evolved from the Socratic question and answer form to the logical method of Aristotle is complicated and our understanding of the concept significantly enriched. This book will be of use to those working in classical studies, rhetorical studies, and philosophy.

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