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Abstracts

Shaul Tor 'Plato on Divine Disclosure'

Does Plato have a notion of divine disclosure? Trivially, Plato talks at various junctures about divination, poetic inspiration, the divine dispensation of true beliefs, and Socrates' divine sign. But are these just so many isolated religious phenomena or does Plato operate with a broader theological framework within which these distinct phenomena fit as different constituents? I will argue that Plato does indeed encourage us to understand these phenomena in relation to one another, as species of the same genus. There emerges from the dialogues a flexible but broadly unified notion of divine disclosure, which coordinates these different species of disclosure in relation to one another, and which evaluates them in the light of the same, coherent set of theological and philosophical preoccupations. Furthermore, and importantly, this is indeed *Plato's* notion of divine disclosure. This notion of disclosure is not reducible to earlier or contemporary religious attitudes found outside of Plato. We can identify both important continuities and instructive divergences between Plato's idea of disclosure and these other, earlier and contemporary attitudes. Indeed, I will suggest that, in order to appreciate the role of disclosure in Plato's thought, we must recognise this combination of involved appropriation and critical innovation.

Myrto Hatzimichali 'The divine in Aristotle's biology'

This paper aims to make a contribution to the debate concerning Aristotle's position on 'global teleology', i.e. the notion that there is purposiveness in nature at a cosmic level, above and beyond the final causes of individual substances. Furthermore, even if such a cosmic *telos* is to be found e.g. in the *Metaphysics* (cf. A 10), the question remains whether this is also present in, or even compatible with, the outlook of the biological works. The paper will address this problem by taking as a point of departure those passages in the biological works that make reference to the divine and/or require a 'cosmic' reading of Aristotle's remarks on nature and its operations.

Tobias Reinhardt 'Antiochus' Construction of the Old Academy'

Antiochus of Ascalon, famously one of Cicero's philosophical teachers, broke away from the sceptical Academy and devised what he called the Old Academy. In the history of the Academic tradition as he saw it, Plato's successors in the Academy and the Peripatetics were largely in agreement on central aspects of doctrine, while the Stoics offered mere corrections whose novelty they sometimes exaggerated. This construct has met with limited enthusiasm amongst modern interpreters, not just because it was seen as schematic and Procrustean, but also because it does not appear to have had a significant effect on the renaissance of dogmatic Platonism which soon followed. In my paper I want to look again at some of the passages in which Cicero reports on Antiochus' justification for his project, with a view to showing that, while

later Platonism owes Antiochus little doctrinally, it owes him something methodologically.

Margaret Hampson 'The Puzzle of *NE* II 4: What is Aristotle Puzzled About?'
Aristotle in *NE* II 4 famously poses a challenge to the account of virtue acquisition developed in the preceding chapters of Book II, the account according to which we become just by doing just things. The challenge Aristotle poses invokes the claim that if one does just things one is just already, but it is less than clear what the precise nature of the challenge is and what Aristotle's purpose in raising it. Most commentators take the challenge to concern the possibility of performing virtuous actions prior to the acquisition of virtue, as required by his virtue acquisition thesis, and take Aristotle in what follows to be defending this possibility. I argue for an alternative reading of the challenge, and see Aristotle instead as concerned to defend the thought that there is anything like a temporally extended process of becoming virtuous, and something that we should aim at over and above the performance of virtuous actions. By reading the challenge in this way we can interpret what follows in the passage as a both consistent and sustained argument and, through the response to the challenge that Aristotle offers, see more clearly the precise question we should be seeking to answer in examining and elucidating Aristotle's account of moral development.

Vangelis Pappas 'Numbers as Universals: An account of Aristotle's Philosophy of Arithmetic'

Writing an essay on Aristotle's philosophy of number poses quite a few challenges. On the one hand, the scarcity of the evidence forces commentators to rely on a few scattered remarks (primarily from the *Physics*), and to extract Aristotle's own views from heavily polemical contexts (such as the convoluted arguments that occupy much of books M and N of the *Metaphysics*). On the other hand, the Fregean tradition casts a great shadow upon the majority of the interpretations; indeed, a great amount of the relevant scholarship is dominated by Fregean tendencies: it is, for example, widely held that numbers for Aristotle are not supposed to be properties of objects, much like colour, say, or shape, but second-order properties (properties-of-properties) of objects. The scope of this essay is to critically examine some of the Fregean-inspired arguments that have led to a thoroughly Fregean depiction of Aristotle, and to lay the foundations for an alternative reading of the crucial texts. The resulting picture will be supplemented by general considerations about the Greek conception of number, and by a surprising Socratic view on number.

Marije Martijn 'The impossible in the ancient geometrical method'

In ancient geometry, the impossible plays two important, but in some respects problematic, roles. First of all, it figures in *reductio ad absurdum* arguments, which are quite common in mathematical demonstrations. One of the downsides of such arguments, especially for those who consider mathematics an explanatory science, is the fact they are not, or hardly, explanatory (depending on one's notion of explanatoriness in mathematics). This paper will discuss a Neoplatonic solution to this problem, which consists in downgrading *reductio* arguments to mere supplements to direct and explanatory demonstrations. As a corroborating side-dish, we will briefly discuss the second role of the impossible, in constructions using infinite lines. Such lines are impossible to the extent that they cannot be actual. This gives the

constructions using them, as Rabouin has shown, a lower cognitive status - analogous to the lower status given to reductio arguments.

Riccardo Chiaradonna 'Essence and existence: a Neoplatonic distinction?'

Some scholars argue that Greek Neoplatonic philosophers developed a metaphysical distinction between essence and existence, with the further assumption that essence and existence coincide in the first principle but are distinct in what comes after it. The present article argues that such readings are not plausible. First it is shown that Plotinus' use of *hupostasis* in treatise 6.8 does not point to a notion of existence as different from essence. The same holds for the distinction between *infinite einai* and *energein* in the anonymous commentary on Plato's *Parmenides*: there is no ground to assume that the commentator conceives of the first principle as a "pure act of being". Finally the late antique use of *huparxis* as distinct from *ousia* in authors such as Damascius and Marius Victorinus does not point to a distinction between existence and essence, but rather to a distinction between a very general notion of "reality" and that of "substance" or "essence", which entails further specification.