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PROJECT

Magna Moralia as Aristotle's Ethics

My short research project (it should be a review of a new book on the subject followed by a paper or two) is the result of my lectures on Aristotle's ethics, in the course of which I suddenly recognised how insufficient the grounds are for denying Aristotle's authorship of one of the three Ethics in Aristotle's Corpus, the Great Ethics (Magna Moralia). Although its authenticity was defended in the 1920s by Hans von Arnim and then in the bulky and enormously learned commentary written by Franz Dirlmeier, what prevails in scholarship is still the negative and in part even dismissing view of it established by 19th-century scholars and later endorsed by Werner Jaeger and his pupils, who tried to build a line of evolution in Aristotle's ethics (the Protrepticus - the Eudemian Ethics - the Nicomachean Ethics), considering the Magna Moralia post-Aristotelian. This evolutionary scheme is certainly wrong, but it is possible to maintain some doctrinal differences between Aristotle's ethical treatises. I believe that Magna Moralia should be posited as being among Aristotle's ethical treatises, as the earliest of them, but not as early as most of the supporters of its genuineness thought. I also hope to show that the really existent peculiarities of language and style are compatible with Aristotle's authorship and that they shed light on the origin of the treatise.

Recommended Reading

Verlinsky, Alexander. "Philologia inter Disciplinas: The Department of Classics at St. Petersburg University 1819-1884." *Hyperboreus* 19 (2013) = A. Verlinsky, ed. *Institutions of Classical Scholarship in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries/Institutionen der Altertumswissenschaft im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, 162-202*. Sankt Petersburg: Bibliotheca classica petropolitana, 2014.

- "Theology and Relative Dates of the Timaeus and the Statesman." *Hyperboreus* 16/17 (2010/2011) = A. Verlinsky, ed. *Variante Loquella: Alexandro Gavrilov Septuagenario, 328-345*. Sankt Petersburg: Bibliotheca classica petropolitana, 2011.

- "The Cosmic Cycle in the Statesman Myth. Part I-II." *Hyperboreus* 14 (2008) [2009]: 57-86; *Hyperboreus* 15 (2009) [2011]: 221-250.

Epicurus on the Origin of Language

Epicurus' theory of the origin of language is most the famous of ancient theories about this subject. It is usually treated as the heir of the earlier non-teleological and non-theological evolutionist doctrines of the 5th - 4th centuries BC, most notably of Democritus' teaching. Not denying the importance of this pedigree, which was formative for Epicurus' acceptance of emotional sounds as the initial stage of language and of gesture as an inborn tool of reference in human beings as opposed to the voice, which only gradually takes on this function, I try to argue for another heritage that was equally important for Epicurus' theory, namely that of the discussion in Plato's "Cratylus" with its controversial results.

Particularly, I argue that Epicurus' most original contribution to the debates on the origin of language, the idea that words are spontaneous utterances provoked by emotional reactions to the visual impressions of external objects and thus are connected with things by an objective, non-doxastic bond, may be read as taking into account the difficulty brought to light by Socrates' argument in the "Cratylus": if one assumes that the appropriate word for the thing could be coined only by wise name-givers who completely and exactly understood the nature of things, how should imagine one these name-givers grasping the things without words at their disposal. Plato's Socrates was also important for Epicurus as a predecessor in bringing forward his own version of linguistic naturalism, according to which there is a general semantic correspondence of nomina to nominate, which does not prevent there from being different words for the same things in different languages. Epicurus' tacit denial of radical linguistic naturalism (he holds that the words correspond to things, but does not attempt to reduce the words to elements that correspond to elements of reality) seems to take into account Socrates' effective dismissal of this view in the "Cratylus".

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Preface

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Theology and relative dates of the Timaeus and The Statesman : some considerations

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