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Sylvain DELCOMMINETTE, *Aristote et la nécessité*. Paris, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin (coll. "Tradition de la pensée classique"), 2018, 645 p.

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Nouveau Testament jusqu'au vingtième siècle. Il croit cependant que sa méthode sera utile non seulement aux catholiques, mais également aux protestants et même aux penseurs des religions non chrétiennes.

Lonerger ne pensait pas qu'une seule personne fût capable de pratiquer toutes les spécialités avec succès ; ce qu'il envisageait, c'était une collaboration entre experts opérant dans divers champs. Il croyait que son principe de distinction des fonctions théologiques et de division du travail servirait à modérer des ambitions totalitaires ou unilatérales de la part de théologiens qui valoriseraient excessivement leur domaine de compétence aux dépens des autres.

Dans cet ouvrage, une première partie, qui contient cinq chapitres, porte sur le problème de la méthode, le bien humain, la signification, la religion et les fonctions constituantes de la théologie. Le chapitre premier introduit l'appui épistémologique, basé sur une connaissance de soi comme sujet connaissant. Le chapitre 2 part des acquis de Piaget pour expliquer les opérations intellectuelles et continue avec une présentation de l'affectivité humaine, des valeurs, des croyances et du progrès/déclin des sociétés. Le chapitre 3 a trait à l'intersubjectivité, à l'art, au symbole et à divers éléments de la signification. Au chapitre 4, nous trouvons une esquisse d'une philosophie de la religion, avec des thèmes tels que la question de Dieu, le dépassement de soi, l'expérience religieuse, la parole révélée, la foi et les croyances. Cette première partie se termine avec une description des fonctions constituantes de la théologie.

La deuxième partie, qui contient neuf chapitres, expose en détail le fonctionnement de ces huit fonctions constituantes : la recherche des données (critique textuelle), l'interprétation (herméneutique des textes), l'histoire (en deux chapitres, analysant ce qui évoluait, dans la pensée d'un auteur, d'un mouvement ou d'une époque), la dialectique (positions et contrepositions), l'explicitation des fondements (les catégories de base chez les sujets humains dans leurs connaissances, leurs morales et leurs convictions religieuses), l'établissement des doctrines (théologie dogmatique), la systématisation (une visée de cohérence) et la communication (théologie pratique ou pastorale).

Les lecteurs intéressés pourront lire la version française, intitulée *Pour une méthode en théologie*, sous la direction de Louis Roy, avec plusieurs traducteurs et réviseurs, et comprenant un glossaire ; cette version française a été publiée à Montréal, chez Fides, et à Paris, aux Éditions du Cerf, en 1978. Je rappelle qu'il existe une version française de Bernard Lonergan, *L'insight. Étude de la compréhension humaine*, traduit de l'anglais par Pierrot Lambert, Montréal, Bellarmin, 1996. On trouvera une mine d'informations sur le site Web www.francais.lonerger.org.

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Sylvain DELCOMMINETTE, **Aristote et la nécessité**. Paris, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin (coll. "Tradition de la pensée classique"), 2018, 645 p.

The stated goal of this book is to reconstruct Aristotle's philosophy on the crucial assumption that it is a coherent whole even though it has been transmitted to us in a form that betrays later interventions and several layers of interpretation. There is no need to return to the vexed question of the gap that exists between the Aristotelian *corpus* and what Aristotle may have left behind in the form of more or less polished lecture notes, let alone to recall the various ways in which the interpreters of Aristotle's thought have tried to fill this gap. What matters here is that the book under review is best understood as a vindication of the working assumption that this thought does not consist in a series of loosely connected investigations but displays a remarkable unity and coherence.

A quote from the general introduction will help the reader appreciate the overall project attempted in the book as well as the ambition of its author : “[...] pretending to reconstruct Aristotle’s thought in its coherence is certainly not to deny its richness by reducing it to two or three fundamental propositions, but rather to seek to rediscover the heart that animates it in order to breathe life back into this thought” (p. 16-17, my translation). For Sylvain Delcomminette (hereafter Delcomminette), the heart that animates Aristotle’s philosophy is the concept of necessity. His study of necessity becomes the springboard for an ambitious reorganization of this rich and complex philosophy. With the exception of the *Politics*, *Rhetoric*, and the *Poetics*, virtually all the major works transmitted under the name of Aristotle are approached and discussed from the vantage point of what they can teach us on the topic of necessity.

The volume offers an impressive *tour de force* in which large and difficult questions are thoroughly re-examined. Among them, I recall the solution offered to the problem of the so-called future contingents (chapter 4 : “Le nécessaire et le statut des modalités”) ; the meaning of the *terminus technicus* “analysis” as a key to understand the project attempted in the *Analytics* (chapter 5 : “La démarche analytique”) ; the significance of the claim that the conclusion follows of necessity from the premises in Aristotle’s syllogistic (chapter 6 : “Nécessité et raisonnement”) ; the thesis that science consists of what is necessary (chapter 7 : “La nécessité dans la théorie de la science”) ; the equation of eternity and necessity (chapter 8 : “Modalités et temporalité”) ; the claim that the source of this necessity is found in the first principles of a science, with a detailed account of how we discover those principles (chapter 9 : “La connaissance des principes propres de la science”) ; the sense in which we find necessity in the realm of becoming via a study of final causality and hypothetical necessity (chapter 10 : “Nécessité et contingence dans le devenir”) ; the nature and object of Aristotle’s metaphysics (chapter 11 : “Nature et objet de la *Métaphysique*”) ; the status of the principle of non-contradiction and its elenctic demonstration (chapter 12 : “Le principe de non-contradiction”) ; the overall argument of Book *Zeta* (chapter 13 : “*Ousia* et définition”) ; and the way in which the subsequent books contribute to the project of the *Metaphysics* (chapter 14 : “Vers l’unité des principes”). The last (shorter) section of the book is concerned with Aristotle’s ethical thought. It deals with the way in which moral responsibility requires the contingent rather than the necessary (chapter 15 : “Le problème de la responsabilité morale”), attempts a *rapprochement* between practical and theoretical philosophy (chapter 16 : “Le rôle de la connaissance dans l’éthique”), and suggests an answer to the question of how necessity is found in human life (chapter 17 : “La nécessité dans la vie humaine”).

The book reaches its natural end in chapter 14, with the last three chapters being a sort of coda to the main argument. A citation from chapter 14, in which Delcomminette looks back at what he has accomplished, helps us appreciate how he sees this argument unfolding in the book. Clearly, he considers his discussion of the *Metaphysics* (with a focus on books *Gamma*, *Zeta*, *Eta*, *Theta*, and *Lambda*) as the culmination to the study of the place of necessity in Aristotle’s thought :

[...] all previous works (in the argumentative order) agreed in identifying a twofold origin of necessity : the principle of non-contradiction and definition as discursive expression of the *ousia*. The *Metaphysics* shows us (in Book *Gamma*) how these two sources of necessity converge in the *ousia* to the extent that the principle of non-contradiction can be interpreted as a *per se* property of the *ousia* (in the sense of *per se*₁). Then, by showing that the first *ousia* — namely the *ousia* that is principle — corresponds to the *eidos*, and by interpreting the latter as actuality, the subsequent books (*Zeta*, *Eta*, *Theta*) progressively bring into focus the locus of necessity. *Lambda* illustrates the consequences of this whole argument by identifying the ultimate source of all necessity — *identified* purely and simply with absolute necessity — with actuality as

such, which is found in an *ousia* that is nothing other than actuality and is therefore perfectly simple, which also means eternal and not subject to motion” (p. 515-516, my translation, italics in the original).

The most obvious merit of the book is that it builds bridges and establishes passages that allow its author to move from one Aristotelian work to another. The outcome is a global reassessment of Aristotle’s philosophy. While this philosophy is often understood as a form of empiricism, Delcomminette argues that Aristotle’s thought is grounded in experience but goes beyond experience because the latter (understood as *empeiria*) does not yield necessity. This idea resurfaces several times in the book. In connection with the discussion of *Apost* II 19, for instance, Delcomminette says that “necessity is not found in experience but rather is *introduced* [into reality] by philosophy, which offers a discursive analysis of experience” (p. 241, translation is mine ; italics in the original). This way of speaking may be taken to suggest that the mind projects necessity onto reality. But I don’t think that this is what the author really means. Rather, his idea seems to be that the mind finds necessity in reality as soon as it engages in a discursive analysis of the data given by experience.

I would like to elaborate further on how Delcomminette reads *Apost* II 19 because I believe that his reading of this crucial yet difficult chapter sheds some light on how he understands Aristotle’s thought as a whole. Let us recall, first of all, that *Apost* II 19 is concerned with the question of how we acquire knowledge of the first principles of a science. These principles have to be necessary because the necessity that we find in a science derives directly from them. But how do we come to know these principles ? The short answer is “by induction.” However, by Delcomminette’s lights, experience gives us only “a first universal” (100a16 : *prôton katholou*). He takes this first universal to be the universal of experience, which he understands as a merely extensional universal. As such, it is only an *interim* stage in the search for a truly scientific universal. The latter is a universal that can be predicated of necessity and *per se* of a subject. According to Delcomminette such a universal can be achieved at a subsequent stage of the search for the first principles of a science by means of an analysis of the data given by experience. What this analysis amounts to remains a bit underdetermined in the book. Delcomminette gestures toward the progressive determination of what is initially confused (or confounded) as outlined in *Physics* I 1.¹ He also mentions division (*diairesis*) and the role that it may have in the search for the essential predicates as outlined in *Apost* II 13 — with the important caveat that division cannot discover these essential predicates but only organize them. However, his overall position is clear : the foundation of a science, and scientific thought in general, cannot be grounded in the perceptual knowledge that is obtained by experience. The reason is that the distinguishing feature of a science is necessity, which alone gives a truly scientific universality to its object.

By Delcomminette’s lights, “the source of necessity is the *eidos* or the *ousia* that is expressed by the [scientific] definition” (p. 576, my translation). In order to see how Aristotle’s essentialism — namely, the view that the essence of a thing is its *ousia* understood as *eidos* — can be the ultimate source of necessity and the condition of possibility of a scientific account of reality, we have

1. The connection between the way in which Aristotle describes the route to the principles in *Apost* II 19 and the method outlined in *Physics* I 1 have also been explored by Robert Bolton. See R. BOLTON, “Aristotle’s Method in Natural Science : *Physics* I 1,” in L. JUDSON, ed., *Aristotle’s Physics. A Collection of Essays*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 1-29. Since Delcomminette distinguishes his interpretation of *Apost* II 9 from the one advocated by Bolton, additional work on the points of contact and difference between the reading advocated in the book and the interpretation offered by Bolton would have been helpful in this context.

to turn to Aristotle's actual investigation of the natural world. The third part of the book ("Nécessité et devenir") can be seen as an attempt to show how, according to Aristotle, a science of becoming is possible. The question that Delcomminette attempts to answer in this part of the book is the following : if science consists of what is necessary, how can we discover necessity in the realm of becoming ? This is far from being a rhetorical question. Recall, in particular, that Plato famously denied that we can have science of becoming. A full answer to this question would require an in-depth study of Aristotle's writings on natural philosophy. Instead, Delcomminette concentrates his attention on the so-called foundational texts, with a special concentration on the *Physics* (most notably *Physics* II) and the *Parts of Animals* I. While this is understandable (and, indeed, inevitable in a book that is already over 600 pages), it is also a limitation for a project the stated goal of which is to offer an in-depth re-examination Aristotle's thought as a whole.²

Having said this, it is still possible to get an idea of how a scientific account of becoming would be possible. The key resource in this context is surely natural teleology, which Aristotle considers his most important contribution to natural philosophy. The starting point of a teleological account is a definition (*logos*) that expresses the *ousia* in the sense of the *eidos*. In connection with this claim, we should recall a famous methodological passage from *Parts of Animals* I 1 :

We must also consider whether we should follow the procedure of our predecessors, by studying how a thing naturally comes to be rather than how it is. For it matters quite a bit which procedure we follow. Now, it would seem that in the case of coming to be we should begin from how things are ; for, just as we said before, we must begin with the appearances about a given kind of thing and then go on to state their causes. For in the case of building also, this comes about because the form of a house is of this sort, whereas it is not true that a house is of this sort because this is how it comes to be ; for coming to be is for the sake of being, and not being for the sake of coming to be (Parts of Animals I 1, 640a10-19 ; T. Irwin and G. Fine translation ; italics are mine).

The importance of the methodological principle outlined in this passage can hardly be overstated. It shapes and controls Aristotle's natural philosophy well beyond the narrow boundaries of his biology. Unlike all his predecessors, Aristotle thinks that a scientific investigation of *X* should take its starting point from the way *X* is (that is, the *ousia* of *X*) in order to explain how *X* naturally comes to be (that is the *genesis* of *X*) rather than *vice versa*. When we try to implement this methodological insight, we should start from a definition (*logos*) that tells us what the natural thing under study is. Such a definition would capture the *eidos* of *X*. It would also fix the goal of the process that is responsible for the coming into existence of *X*. The ensuing hypothetical necessity would spell out the material processes, and more generally the steps, that are necessary in order to reach that goal.

In light of the above reconstruction of Aristotle's natural teleology, it may be clear why Delcomminette thinks that "it is from the *eidos* that necessity can be *breathed* into becoming in order to make the latter intelligible" (p. 525, italics mine). This way of speaking is ambiguous because it suggests, again, that the mind projects necessity onto reality. But the position defended in this book is a more nuanced one. Delcomminette finds the locus of necessity in the *ousia*, understood as

2. In relation to this point, it is worth stressing that Delcomminette places himself in continuity with the most recent attempts to show that Aristotle adopts his theory of science in his actual science (most notably, his biology). However, given that Delcomminette restricts himself to dealing with the prolegomenon to the study of the nature (*Physics*) and the prolegomenon to the study of animals (*Parts of Animals* I), it remains difficult to see how his interpretation of Aristotle's thought fits with the most recent work done in this area.

the end of the process. By his lights, this is a thing that can be found in the natural world even though the teleological reasoning that takes its lead from the end is our reconstruction of the natural process. Consider, in particular, the following quote : “[...] insofar as teleology consists in reconstructing a process according to *a reasoning that does not take place in nature*, it must be conceived as a method of knowledge. [...] However, the end, for its part, is indeed present in nature — at least when it does obtain — since it is to be identified with the *eidos* of the thing studied” (p. 298-299, italics in the original).

This last quote helps us focus on another key aspect of the reconstruction attempted by Delcomminette. A word that is repeated over and over again in the book to characterize Aristotle’s thought is “idealism.” To begin with, this thought is a form of *methodological* idealism to the extent that language and logic are used to articulate our pre-linguistic experience in a discursive way. It is also a form of *epistemological* idealism because experience, once it is articulated by language and logic, makes a science of becoming possible. Last but not least, this epistemological idealism rests on an *ontological* idealism to the extent that the very possibility of a scientific account of reality rests on the *eidos*, which cannot be reached except by a rational analysis that entails the operations of a mind.

This is a well-researched and philosophically rich book. It is also a book that does not shy away from dealing with some of the most difficult texts in the Aristotelian corpus. Since these texts are open to more than one reading, and since there is no scholarly agreement either on the solutions that Aristotle advances or the views that he advocates in them, the book is inevitably open to a number of local objections. However, this observation is not meant to take away from the book’s significance, which lies not so much in how Delcomminette reads any particular text but rather in his attempt to offer a comprehensive treatment of central tenets of Aristotle’s logic, epistemology, and metaphysics. The outcome of this treatment is a global reinterpretation of Aristotle’s thought that is at the same time clear, original, and compelling.

Very few books can rival this one in terms of sheer ambition.³ Time will teach us how fertile the theoretical framework outlined in the book is for research in the field of Aristotelian studies. For the present, we can only congratulate Delcomminette for having put together a truly impressive book.

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Céline DENAT, Patrick WOTLING, dir., **Les enjeux de l’herméneutique en Allemagne, et au-delà.** Reims, Éditions et Presses universitaires de Reims (coll. « Langage et pensée »), 2018, 303 p.

Les enjeux de l’herméneutique est issu d’un colloque tenu à l’Université de Reims le 27 mars 2017. Il rassemble les textes de conférences présentées lors du colloque ainsi qu’un certain nombre d’autres contributions. Comme son titre l’indique, l’ouvrage accorde une place centrale à l’herméneutique allemande, et spécialement à des auteurs qui s’inscrivent dans l’histoire, pour ainsi dire canonique, qui mène de Friedrich Schleiermacher à Hans Georg Gadamer. Il a la particularité de proposer également des vues alternatives sur le problème de l’interprétation, notamment par une ouverture à d’autres domaines culturels (la Chine ancienne, le monde musulman, l’Italie moderne).

3. The first that comes to mind is T. IRWIN, *Aristotle’s First Principles*, New York, Oxford University Press 1988.