coherent thought or two, but also some historical errors (D. thinks Greek tragedy and Athenian democracy lasted less than a century, p. xii), the introduction wilfully manipulates the *Poetics* beyond recognition. All human action supposedly 'imitates' other action, an idea for which no shred of Aristotelian evidence is adduced. Tragedy thematizes human action in its reflective aspect—fair enough, perhaps, though not an emphasis easily pinned down in the *Poetics.* But then we learn that because true reflection is essentially 'invisible' and unshowable, while *lusis* in *Poetics* 18 means, 'in its deepest sense', interpretation/analysis (pp. xxvii–viii), Aristotle is telling us that tragedy dramatizes the meaningfulness of life while making it clear that what matters most cannot be said. To conclude, D. preposterously claims that the *Poetics* itself 'imitates' tragedy: thus the position of Chapter 12 in the work is modelled on a tragic stasimon (pp. xxix–xxx)!

D.'s arguments are conducted mystagogically: arbitrary premises are confidently conjured out of nowhere, then treated as unquestionable ('recognition will always in some sense be false recognition', p. xxv, later 'the recognition of tragedy is always spurious recognition', p. xxix); Delphic pronouncements are gravely issued ('the action which poetizes the world cannot be shown in poetry', p. xxvii). The impression is created that the author knows something the rest of us do not, which we must take on trust from his unutterable insight.

In addition to its befogging literalism, the translation contains numerous errors, among them: 48a22, two clauses run into one, garbling the sense; 48b18, the logic of a contrastive statement jumbled; 49a2, *paraphaneisês* misconstrued as '[appear] side by side' (and the syntax of the same sentence of the translation is very misleading); 49a20,49b2, *opse* misunderstood as 'just lately' (referring to events at least a century and a half before the *Poetics*!); 49a26, Aristotle does not claim 'we speak mostly iambs'; 49a38, a masculine relative pronoun mistaken as neuter; 51b9–10, 'what poetry aims at in attaching names' spoils Aristotle's logic (and the whole important sentence is badly rendered); 51b24, the relative pronoun refers to plots not characters; 52a4, Aristotle's paradox missed; 52a9–10, 53a4–5, 54b28–9, syntax mangled; 59b36, epic does not exceed other genres 'in oddness' (=*perittê*!); 60b10–11, three neuter plural subjects translated as singular (presumably because of their verbs). D.'s defective knowledge of Greek is betrayed by his assertion (p. xx) that at 52a25–6 there is possible ambiguity about the subject of the verb *epoiêsen*.

This book is not safe to be put in the hands of unguarded readers. It places faulty scholarship at the service of a cryptic ideology.

University of St Andrews STEPHEN HALLIWELL

ARISTOTLE ON BODIES AND MOTION

A. FALCON: *Corpi e movimenti. Il* De caelo *di Aristotele e la sua fortuna nel mondo antico*. Pp. 275. Naples: Bibliopolis, 2001. Paper, €30.99. ISBN: 88-7088-383-3.

The purpose of this book is to provide us with a study of different kinds of bodies and, in particular, simple bodies and Aristotle's theory of their movement. The book is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is devoted to bodies in general, both in Aristotle and in the Hellenistic tradition. The second chapter covers the Aristotelian doctrine of simple bodies and his arguments in favour of the existence of a simple celestial body. The topic of the third chapter is the ancient polemic against Aristotle,

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and the fourth chapter deals with the heavens and celestial motion. Generally, the great importance of this book lies especially in its exploration of the objections of Xenarchus, preserved in Simplicius' commentary on *De Caelo*, which have not been previously looked at from a philosophical point of view, but mainly from a historical one. The greatest shortcoming of this book is the absence of a general index. There are, however, three indices: an *index locorum*, an index of ancient and medieval authors, and one of modern scholars.

The objective of the book is to tell the history of the reception of Aristotle's *De Caelo* in antiquity. For this, two main sources are used: Simplicius' commentary on *De Caelo* and Proclus' commentary on *Timaeus*. One of the most important theses in Aristotle's work—the existence of the fifth element—was not well received in antiquity, and it was only in the Middle Ages that it became widespread. The criticism of Aristotle's thesis started soon after Aristotle. Falcon focuses on Xenarchus as a starting point in the polemic against the fifth element. His lost book *Against the Fifth Element* seems to have offered a list of objections against Aristotle's argument for the fifth element. In the first and second chapters of *Corpi e movimenti*, F. explores aspects of the polemic against the fifth element in antiquity, and focuses on Xenarchus' objections against Aristotle's doctrine of simple, natural, and unnatural movement. Xenarchus was the first to challenge Aristotle for having offered a contradictory doctrine of the movement of simple bodies in *Meteorologica* and *De Caelo.* F., however, seeks to demonstrate here how Aristotle has left us a coherent doctrine of movement, even if in some passages of *De Caelo* he expresses himself in a way that is unclear and equivocal. In F.'s discussion of the first, second, and third arguments of Aristotle in favour of the existence of a simple celestial body, he suggests that in the second and third Aristotle employs two different notions of unnatural movement. In the third argument, circular motion is unnatural because it is not in accordance with the natural movement of the element in question, without reference to the notion of contrariety. On the other hand, in the second argument a movement is unnatural because it is contrary to the natural movement. Aristotle did not emphasize these two different notions of unnatural movement, as F. says, because the difference between them might have seemed to him sufficiently clear. Secondly, F. argues that Aristotle distinguishes simple from natural movement. Although Xenarchus claims that water has two natural motions (i.e. it moves naturally upwards from earth, and downwards from air and fire), F. wants to argue that this doctrine does not have to be less Aristotelian than in the case of an element (e.g. water) that shares its natural downward movement with another element (i.e. earth). F. points out, however, that the natural motion of water is always distinguishable from that of earth, because of their different point of arrival. In the last chapter, the reasons for most of the criticisms of Xenarchus are identified and developed.

In the third chapter F. mainly discusses Plotinus. A comparison is drawn between the system of Aristotle and that of Plotinus, with their similarities and differences well examined. Also discussed is Philoponus as a final link with the long chain of the subsequent cosmological tradition. In his Prologue F. discusses why the ancients would have a need for a new element as a material of celestial bodies in addition to fire. He points out that the idea of perfection is found in Aristotle's *Politics.* A thing can be perfect only if it has only one use, not many. F. therefore argues that for Aristotle a world would not be perfect if there were two different elements of fire (as in the system of Plotinus), which belong to two discrete spheres (i.e. the sublunar and the celestial sphere) and act differently (i.e. produce rectilinear and circular motion).

Aristotle's second reason for choosing aither over fire as the material of the celestial

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region, according to F., was that aither was a separate body, not reducible to the other four. This is what clearly showed the existence of the discontinuity, which exists for Aristotle between the celestial and sublunar worlds. Further, the theory that celestial objects are simple in Aristotle (and also in Plotinus) was not widespread among the ancients, since they mostly believed stars to be a combination of the four bodies (or more precisely, of purer versions of these). F. argues that the reason Aristotle and Plotinus had for holding the opinion that stars are made of a simple body was the destructibility of a composed body, an idea already found in *Timaeus*. By making celestial bodies simple, Aristotle and Plotinus were able to guarantee their incorruptibility.

The quality of this book is very high, and anyone interested in Aristotle's cosmology and its influence on subsequent cosmologies will profit from reading it, especially since the literature on *De Caelo* generally is not very extensive. Besides the two commentaries in English, those of Elders and Leggatt, which are not very philosophical in their treatment of *De Caelo*, it is discussed partly in Solmsen's *Aristotle's System of the Physical World*, and to a greater extent (in German) in Seeck's *Über die Elemente in der Kosmologie des Aristoteles. Untersuchungen in De Generatione et Corruptione und De Caelo* and in Moraux's valuable introduction to his edition of the text with French translation.

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COMMENTARIES ON THE *METAPHYSICS*

C. Luna: *Trois études sur la tradition des commentaires anciens à la* Métaphysique *d'Aristote*. Pp. viii + 252. Leiden, Boston, and Cologne: Brill, 2001. Cased, €82. ISBN: 90-04-12074-2.

The corpus of surviving ancient and Byzantine commentaries on Aristotle includes four commentaries on the *Metaphysics*. We possess the commentary by the Peripatetic Alexander of Aphrodisias (*c*. 200 A.D.) on books *A–Δ*; the continuation on books *E–N*, commonly since Praechter attributed to Michael of Ephesus (first half of the twelfth century A.D.); the commentary on books *B*, *Γ*, *M*, and *N* by Syrianus (first half of the 5th century A.D.), the Neoplatonist teacher of Proclus; and the commentary on books *A–Z* by Asclepius of Tralles recording the oral teaching of the later fifth/early sixth century A.D. Alexandrian Neoplatonist Ammonius son of Hermeias.

In this learned monograph, setting out and discussing nearly 200 pairs and triplets of parallel passages, L. examines the relations between these commentaries. Her work will be definitive for future work on them; it also makes valuable contributions to the general study of the methods of commentators in later antiquity. There are implications for the Orphic fragments (107 Kern: L. 9) and for those of Aristotle's lost works (Appendix II, pp. 193–6).

L. shows, by a detailed examination of all passages where there is either an explicit or an unacknowledged relation between the commentaries, that Syrianus knew and used the genuine commentary of Alexander (on *MN* as well as *BΓ*; L., pp. 45–51), and that Asclepius combined material from Ammonius' lectures with (on *A–Γ* only) direct use of Alexander's commentary, frequently thus reproducing the same material from Alexander twice. Ammonius used Syrianus' commentary directly, not just through oral

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