ARISTOCLES OF MESSENE

M. L. Chiesara (ed.): *Aristocles of Messene: Testimonies and Fragments* (Oxford Classical Monographs). Pp. xlii + 218. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. Cased, £40. ISBN: 0-19-924154-6.

Aristocles of Messene is a little known Peripatetic of imperial times (his dating still is a matter of ongoing discussion), who in the last years has excited much interest for students of ancient philosophy for two basic reasons. Historians of Aristotelianism have found in him a representative of a very obscure period of that tradition, since Paul Moraux set aside the old prejudice, according to which Aristocles had been the teacher of Alexander of Aphrodisias, and dated him at the turn of the era. Students of Pyrrhonism on the other hand have found Aristocles' outline of Pyrrho's thought and his treatment of Aenesidemus an invaluable source for reconstructing the thoughts of Pyrrho before its systematization by Sextus Empiricus. It looks as though Ch. wants to satisfy both streams of scholarship, yet she is much more concerned with Aristocles as a source of Pyrrhonian scepticism, as she was in her D.Phil. thesis (*Aristocles of Messene and the Pyrrhonians* [Oxford, 1996]), from which the present book arose. This becomes evident from the fact that her commentary on Aristocles' report on Pyrrhonism (fr. 4) takes one-third of the entire commentary. This uneven focus is not necessarily a disadvantage of the book. In fact, her detailed commentary of fr. 4 is the most interesting part. The problem is that Ch.'s aim to study Aristocles as a whole (p. xiii) is achieved only in the sense that all of his fragments are studied together. But to study Aristocles as a whole also involves studying him *per se*, and in this Ch. has failed. Despite the title of the book, neither Aristocles' place in his contemporary philosophical context, and especially in the history of Aristotelianism, nor his own philosophical views are examined.

To begin with Ch.'s introduction, this is divided into three sections, the man, the work, and textual history, but says nothing about the Aristocle's own philosophy, or his perception of Aristotle's philosophy. Ch. actually argues, following Donini, that 'Aristocles was not so much interested in the interpretation of Aristotle's school texts as in the spreading of his philosophy' (p. xxi), and thinks that his polemics against the various schools of philosophy, such as the Sceptics, the Cyrenaics, and the Epicureans, confirm this. But how credible is this? To begin with, we basically know Aristocles through Eusebius' quotations, who, as is known, exploits Greek sources for his apologetic purposes, so any picture of one's intellectual profile based solely on him should be treated with caution. Besides, in Aristocles' time, school polemics are quite widespread but always go along with a systematic effort to construct convincing interpretations of the texts of one's school authority. We see this clearly in the cases of Antiochus, Eudorus, and Plutarch. All of them argue against other schools of philosophy and/or variant interpretations within their own school, yet they do this not only by criticizing the others but also in each case by arguing about how Plato's philosophy in their case is to be construed.

An important aspect of Aristocles' philosophical profile, which Ch. has failed to appreciate, is his favorable attitude to Plato's philosophy and also, to some extent at least, to Stoic philosophy. Ch. says that Aristocles nowhere accepts one Platonic or Stoic doctrine (p. xxiii), and throughout her book she is quite concerned to show Aristocles' loyalty to Aristotle's philosophy. Yet this leads her to underestimate Aristocles' debt to Platonic and Stoic philosophy, which were prominent at Aristocles' age. One may wonder, for instance, why Aristocles, who, as Ch. admits, in several cases

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does not hesitate to draw from Academic sources (cf. pp. 149, 151, 167), should depend only on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in his criticism of the skeptics, or only on the *De anima* when discussing the validity of the judging faculty in his criticism of Epicureans, and not also draw on Stoic arguments which suited his cause, as Antiochus had done (pp. 112–14, 149–50). Yet Ch., quite surprisingly, makes Antiochus also dependent on Aristotle in his argument against the Academics (pp. 114, n. 38, 149). Further, Ch. argues that Aristocles' report of the Stoic principles (fr. 3) may have been followed by criticism, and tries to explain away Aristocles' debt to certain Stoic views (e.g. pp. 65–7, 142). But such a debt need neither go along with an approval of the Stoics, nor with a wish to combine their doctrines with those of Aristotle and Plato. Antiochus, as is known, was much indebted to the Stoics, but criticized them for stealing their doctrines from Plato (Cicero *De finibus* 5.22). Aristocles also judges the Stoic doctrine against the yardstick of Plato's authority (fr. 3.1, p. 18; cf. fr. 1). Just as Antiochus accepted Stoic physics (Cicero *Acad.* 1.24, 28), presumably because for him this had been largely based on the *Timaeus*, the same could also be true for Aristocles, as Ch. herself seems to realize (pp. 81–2). This must be the case also with Aristocles' concern about the 'accordance with nature' (frr. 5.7, 6.7, 7.4). Ch. argues that Aristocles derives this doctrine from Aristotle despite its use by the Stoics (pp. 142, 145, 159). But like other contemporary Peripatetics such as Boethus and Xenarchus, Aristocles, who also had been living in a philosophical climate dominated by Stoicism, was influenced by the Stoic conception of living in accordance with nature, but like them probably justified his adherence to it on the grounds that the Stoics had taken it over from Aristotle.

Aristocles' debt to Plato is even more evident; he thinks highly of Plato (test. 1, fr. 1), he is concerned to discharge Aristotle of the criticism of being ungrateful to Plato (fr. 2.12), and refers explicitly to Platonic works and arguments (e.g. fr. 6; cf. pp. 110, 142–5). This favorable attitude to Plato, which characterizes also some later Peripatetics such as Adrastus, Aspasius, or the anonymous commentator on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, again does not mean that Aristocles compromises his Aristotelianism, but rather that he considered Aristotle's philosophy as being largely in accord with that of Plato, especially in epistemology and in ethics. This is suggested by the fact that Aristocles clearly relies on both Plato and Aristotle in the construction of some polemical arguments, e.g. against Protagoras' view, as Ch. herself shows (pp. 144–6), and receives some confirmation from the structure of Aristocles' *On Philosophy*. As Ch. admits (p. xxvi), frr. 1–3 come from Book 7, while frr. 4–8 are from Book 8, which seems to suggest that Aristocles first tried to outline what he calls 'the principles of philosophy' (fr. 4.30) or 'the right philosophy' (fr. 7.9), which is that of Plato, Aristotle, and to some extent also the Stoics, and then, on that basis, criticize the various divergent schools of philosophy, such as the sceptics and the Epicureans. Aristocles' appreciation of the Platonic and Stoic philosophy does not necessarily suggest Antiochus' influence, but there are some interesting similarities between the two. Aristocles appears to be similar to Antiochus not only in accepting the accord of Plato and Aristotle in the basics of philosophy and the debt of the Stoics to them (cf. e.g. p. 64), but also in his argument for Socrates' limited, though beneficial, philosophical contribution (pp. 63–4) as well as in his strong anti-skeptical tendency. Ch. does not consider such similarities, and her position about their relationship is ambivalent (pp. xxiii, 167).

Ch.'s edition and translation is in general of high quality. She has added two testimonies by Asclepius *On Nicomachus' Introduction to Arithmetic* (T3, T4), which Heiland left out, and has argued convincingly (p. xxxiii) for a different order of Aristocles' fragments *On Philosophy* from that followed by Heiland. Her commentary

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is learned but she does not always argue convincingly for a point. Regarding Philoponus' report (test. 5), for instance, she does not really argue convincingly about the question she set herself, that is how much of it reflects Aristocles' account (pp. 58–60), a question that should be resolved before discussing Aristocles' dependence on Aristotle's *On Philosophy*. Concerning the adjective ἀστάθμητος, Ch. does not argue why it should refer to the things themselves and not their perception (p. 95); her references to Lucian and Sextus in this regard strongly suggest the latter.

The book closes with a rich bibliography and four useful indexes, of sources, names, Greek words, and *locorum*. I have noticed some misprints and mistakes (p. 25, l. 5 'are' is missing; p. 25 para. 15, ll. 6–7 'why did he changed'; p. 34 para. 5, l. 10 ἐιπειν [the circumflex is missing]; p. 91, l. 4 'hought' for 'thought'; p. 93, l. 10 full-stop is missing; p. 114, l. 4 ἀδιάροροσ for ἀδιάφοροσ; p. 180 the title of Wilamowitz's book is 'Antigonos von Karystos' not 'Antigonus', and Wolffs' 'Porphyrius' not 'Porphyr'), and some awkard English (p. 93, para. 2, p. 151, n. 11), while some references are not precise enough (p. 99, n. 16 Bett [1994a], p. 106, n. 27 Long [1981] without page numbers, p. 139 Plato's *Theaetetus* 156, 182). In general, Ch.'s book is learned, cautious, sensitive to detail, and definitely fills a gap in scholarship. But eventually the reader learns little about Aristocles and his philosophy.

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HIEROCLES THE NEOPLATONIST

H. S. SCHIBLI: *Hierocles of Alexandria*. Pp. xvi + 419. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. Cased, £60. ISBN: 0-19-924921-0.

Relatively little is known of the life and work of Hierocles of Alexandria. He was a student of Plutarch of Athens, who died around A.D. 431/2, and he himself must have been active in the first half of the fifth century. The only work preserved in full is his *Commentary on the Golden Verses of the Pythagoreans* (122 pages in the Teubner edition by F. W. Koehler). In addition, the ninth-century humanist Photius preserved excerpts and summaries of Hierocles' *On Providence* (*Bibl.* cod. 214, 251). Hierocles has thus far not received much attention in Anglo-Saxon scholarship, but this situation has been admirably rectified by Schibli's book, which offers us a comprehensive introduction to Hierocles' life and work, as well as copiously commented translations of both the *Commentary* and the fragments of *On Providence*.

The introduction (which makes up almost half of the book and is in itself a short monograph on Hierocles) starts out with a discussion of the meagre evidence we have for Hierocles' life. S. succeeds in filling this out by locating Hierocles' life within the Neoplatonist tradition, the Alexandrian intellectual milieu and the pagan and Christian conflict. We learn *inter alia* that he was probably a fellow-student of Syrianus, that he was an effective and influential teacher in Alexandria, and that he was at some stage of his career flogged and exiled by the Christian authorities in Constantinople before resuming his teaching career in Alexandria. S. suggests that this severe punishment could only have been for practising sacrifices or theurgical rites, or a combination of both (p. 40), both of which would have been an essential part of the life of a Neoplatonist pagan philosopher.

For the contents of his teaching we depend on his only two known works, the

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