

## Reviews

*L'autre et l'amitié chez Aristote et Paul Ricœur: Analyses éthiques et ontologiques*, by Gaëlle Fiasse. Bibliothèque Philosophique de Louvain, 69. Louvain: Peeters/Éditions de l'Institut supérieur de Philosophie, 2006, iv+318 pp. ISBN 978-90-429-1747-7 €50

This book is a revision of a doctoral thesis presented in 2002 at the Catholic University of Louvain. Gaëlle Fiasse analyzes the theme of friendship in Paul Ricoeur and Aristotle, explaining how Aristotelian ontology and Ricoeurian hermeneutical phenomenology intersect in the ethics of friendship. These choices and their order are well justified. Ricoeur is explicit in granting primacy to the phenomenon of friendship among other philosophical themes. As for Aristotle, this is the author whom Ricoeur explicitly relies on in his ethical analysis, and from whom, again explicitly, he distances himself. What Fiasse proposes is a critical presentation of Ricoeur's use of Aristotle measured against a consideration of Aristotle on his own terms and in his own context. Fiasse shows how, according to both Aristotle and Ricoeur, friendship is the necessary mediation to the formation of personal identity.

The book consists of two studies. The first, 'Ricoeur, lecteur d'Aristote dans *Soi-même comme un autre*', provides a detailed analysis of Ricoeur's idea of ipseity and interpretation of Aristotle's ontology and ethics. The second, 'Reprise de la lecture d'Aristote', is an excellent study of Aristotle's understanding of substance, which offers the basis for a final assessment of Ricoeur's interpretation of the Aristotelian notion of friendship.

The first study discusses the Ricoeurian notion of ipseity—the phenomenon of self as a unique, dynamic, ethically oriented subject of action and discourse, as opposed to being or substance, which Ricoeur views as too static and generic to account for concrete human existence. For Ricoeur, friendship is the constitutive mode of ipseity. Esteem and love for oneself, and therefore genuine self-discovery, are mediated by friendship. Alterity in friendship not only mediates the constitution of *ipse*, but also solicits the extension of esteem to the other: inasmuch as it makes possible esteem for the other as an equal self, friendship makes just actions possible. The experience of friendship results from a voluntary engagement in the life of the other as an excellent good in itself. Actions are naturally oriented toward the good as happiness, and here Ricoeur is in full agreement with Aristotle; but that the other (both the proximate and the distant other, the morally praiseworthy and the unjust other, etc) is the other as oneself, worthy of esteem for the irreplaceable self that he/she is, is not an innate mental occurrence. It is a rational desire filtered by choice.

Fiasse compares Ricoeur's notion of esteem to Aristotle's notion of magnanimity. According to Ricoeur, Aristotelian ethical notions, even though they revolve around the phenomenon of friendship, overemphasize intellectual contemplation to the detriment of human praxis (p. 65). Ricoeur judges that in a framework dominated by the Aristotelian *ousia*, where the dialectic between alterity and ipseity is absent, one is unable to account for

self-discovery as a subject-oriented, infinitely free praxis (pp. 61–3). Fiasse assesses this interpretation of Aristotle as hyper-exigent: Aristotle's *boulēsis*, the rational appetite for the good, is not only *meta logou*, but also 'profoundly incarnate' (p. 66). Therefore the will-to-good is at the same time an active tension, a praxis, and a seduction, as well as an intelligent motion that distinguishes the real good from the apparent one, and finds the being of the other *qua* friend good in itself (p. 67). Fiasse discusses the equivocity of Ricoeur's notion of justice, just actions, and just institutions; in fact, Ricoeur himself acknowledges this ambiguity in *Oneself as Another* (Ricoeur 1992). On the one hand, he associates justice with normative ethics, which he calls 'moral' life (by opposition to 'ethical' life, which refers to the voluntary and non-normative life of the self); as such, just behavior falls under a deontological rather than voluntaristic description. On the other hand, Ricoeur describes justice as rooted in ethical life—esteem and love for the other—which affirms justice as a natural extension of goodness ('un excès, un surcroît de bonté', p. 56) unto every distant other; this view equates justice to compassion ('miséricorde', p. 56). For Aristotle, on the contrary, just actions remain unequivocally ethical or voluntaristic works of the friendly self, laying the foundation for political harmony ('concorde' as distinct from 'miséricorde'). Another ambiguity concerns the notion of alterity: 'Ricoeur attribue à la notion d'"altérité" une signification plurivoque, pour ne pas dire floue' (p. 31). It is not clear how the move in one's ethical life passes from the proximate to the distant other and in what distant regions the other can be reached. While recognizing his indebtedness to the Levinasian idea of one being called by and for the other, Ricoeur is openly and straightforwardly critical of Levinas' notion of the other as a pure, absolute, affecting subject, and of the self as purely affected (in being called to responsibility, in being discovered as fragile, etc). By returning several times to this criticism, Fiasse points out that Ricoeur's understanding of alterity is fundamentally a matter of reciprocal ethical recognition. Fiasse explains that Ricoeur's reflexive philosophy places action as the fundamental philosophical category. While developing his analysis of *ipse* against the background of Aristotelian metaphysics (*Metaphysics* Δ 7), Ricoeur replaces Aristotle's privileged category of substance and the theory of analogical unity of being with a new privileged category (action) and a theory of analogical unity of *praxis*. Instead of being founded in an original, pure, standard-like action, *praxis* identifies the subject within a horizon of diverse possible and actual *praxeis*, a subject whose identity arises from the solicitude of others to inter-action. To the Aristotelian notion of substance, which he interprets as a permanent, temporally unaffected substratum of experience, Ricoeur opposes the notion of a temporally affected self that is his/her own ethical task. In fact, Ricoeur comes to understand the notions of ipseity, alterity, capacity, intelligence, and truth as components of a personal ethical task mediated by the presence of the lovable or respectable other.

In sum, the first part of the book is an excellent study of Ricoeur's philosophy of *ipse*, drawing primarily on *Oneself as Another*. Fiasse shows how Ricoeur's reflexive philosophy was shaped by the interpretation of Aristotle's ethics and metaphysics and by the dialogue with other major philosophical figures (e.g. Plato, Augustine, Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Levinas, Rawls, Arendt); among the contemporary scholars who have influenced Ricoeur's understanding of the ethically mediated personal identity, Fiasse lists Aubenque, Ravaisson, Brague, Volpi, Le Blond, and Taminiaux.

In the second study, which comprises two sections, 'Le statut éthique de l'ami' and 'L'ami à la lumière de la substance et de l'être en acte', Fiasse focuses on Aristotle's ontology and ethics in order to set forth the Aristotelian position on friendship and otherness, and assess Ricoeur's interpretation and criticism of Aristotle. In the first section

Fiasse shows how the Aristotelian ethics revolves around the theme of friendship. Among the relevant texts priority is given to the *Nicomachean Ethics*, especially books I, VIII and IX. According to Aristotle, of the two crucial parameters of human life, *praxis* and *theoria*, *praxis* is ethical and aims at friendship. Friendship is not simply a good, but rather the good itself of human action, its very *telos* ('l'activité essentielle du bonheur', p. 169). Friendship is identical to *eupraxia*. Unlike *poiesis*, *praxis* is an activity whose *telos* is immanent, while at the same time involving transcendence: in ethical action, human reality is always ahead of itself through the attraction toward the final, absolute, and at the same time concrete good—properly speaking, the attraction of the friend. The teleological aspect of friendship affirms the reality of the other as mediating the ethical constitution of one's own reality ('lorsque j'atteins le bien, il n'est donc plus à proprement parler "extérieur", mais il est "autre" en ce sens qu'il me précède et que sa réalité est antérieure à mes facultés', pp. 156–7). Fiasse also exposes the distance between Ricoeur and Aristotle on ethical issues. For instance, while Ricoeur views friendship as constitutive of ipseity, for Aristotle friendship amounts to the very end of *praxis*. On the other hand, while for Ricoeur the good itself/*eudaimonia* is a 'visée' that in no way determines the self, Aristotle views it as precisely the *telos* determining human life. Ultimately, Aristotelian *eudaimonia* requires both *theoria* and *philia*. Wisdom is unintelligible without friendship ('même le sophos n'est pas exempt du bonheur de l'amitié', p. 171). As for the voluntary character of human action, Fiasse shows, against Ricoeur, that this concept holds crucial importance for Aristotle's ethics. This is evidenced by the recurring idea of *orexis qua boulēsis*, even though Aristotle does not pursue this theme in a rigorous manner (p. 154). The same applies to the notion of alterity, which Ricoeur failed to detect in Aristotle. The Aristotelian God is alone self-sufficient; human reality finds its plenitude via friendship. For a life of ethical excellence, of *eudaimonia*, the lovable that replenishes the self is not the useful or the pleasant, but the good as such. In being loved for who he or she is, the other is not constituted by a subjective feeling, but rather rationally recognized as a good in itself (p. 193: 'la bonté de l'ami qui révèle ce qu'il est en profondeur suscite une attraction, et le choix réciproque de l'un et de l'autre uni à la connaissance des sentiments mutuels va nouer l'amitié. Ce choix n'est pas un amour romantique, mais une volonté d'agir en vue du bien de l'autre'). *Alter ipse amicus*: the presence of the friend, according to Fiasse, is the only Aristotelian route to *eupraxia*.

In the second section, entitled 'L'ami à la lumière de la substance et de l'être en acte', Fiasse comments on the connection between the metaphysics of *ousia* and the ethics of friendship in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Aristotle's substantial being is not opposed to becoming and being in act, consequently it does not have a static, atemporal signification. Fiasse points to the understanding of *ousia* as cause, principle—known through induction—beyond both primary and secondary substance; this element is absent from Ricoeur's interpretation of Aristotle. Fiasse proposes a deepening of the issues of *energeia* and *entelecheia* for a rigorous understanding of being in Aristotle, based on a textual reconsideration of the relevant passages in the *Metaphysics* and *De Anima*. She discusses the difference between Ricoeur and Aristotle with regard to the mode of givenness of the other. While for Ricoeur the other is primordially given as the distinct being, a non-I, for Aristotle the other is primordially given as existing subject, so that existence has primacy over negation. By way of consequence, the other is, according to Aristotle, fundamentally independent, while according to Ricoeur the other is fundamentally dependent upon one's own self. In Aristotelian metaphysics, the existence of oneself and of the other precede the recognition of the self as ethical subject, subject of discourse, subject of self-narration. Fiasse expounds Ricoeur's critical response that such existence does not account for the

unique self-identity, or the *ipse*, but rather for the generic human identity, the *idem*. Fiasse assesses Ricoeur's response as hasty: her textual examination of the notions of actuality and potentiality in the *Metaphysics* and *De anima* leads her to the conclusion that the principle of being, *ousia* beyond any subject-determination (substantial or accidental, primary or secondary) not only accounts for a foundational unique identity, subject-identity, but is also dynamic since the principle itself is *energeia*.

Fiasse considers Ricoeur's endeavor of comprehending ipseity through friendship, and the overall connection of phenomenology and ethics, to be rich, fertile, and coherent. However, she argues that Ricoeur failed to fully appreciate the fact that Aristotelian ontology of substance and ethics of friendship are already dialectically related, already dynamic and phenomenal in character, already affirming the mediation of the human reality through friendship.

Fiasse's accomplishment is impressive in its obvious mastery of the relevant Ricoeurian and Aristotelian texts and of a wealth of scholarly literature, its eminently clear and precise prose, and the persuasiveness of the arguments. This book is of high importance for students and scholars specializing in both phenomenology and the history of philosophy.

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***Real Metaphysics*, edited by Hallvard Lillehammer and Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra. London and New York: Routledge, 2003, viii + 248 pp. ISBN 0-415-24981-3 hb £65.00**

This collection of new articles on metaphysics in honour of D. H. Mellor is very much to be welcomed, both for including some important contributions by leading metaphysicians and for enabling Mellor to reply in some detail to various criticisms raised by them to views that he has developed over the course of a very distinguished forty-year career in philosophy. The magnitude of his own contribution to the subject is highlighted by the very useful complete bibliography of his work to date that is contained at the end of the volume. The range of contributors and topics discussed is broad, reflecting Mellor's own breadth of interests and numerous intellectual debtors. Unsurprisingly, however, the emphasis is on questions to do with truth, physicalism, causation, properties, dispositions, laws, and time. The contributors, apart from Mellor himself, are: David Armstrong, David Lewis, Gideon Rosen, Peter Smith, Chris Daly, Tim Crane, Frank Jackson, Paul Noordhof,