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*The Art of Dialectic between Dialogue and Rhetoric: The
Aristotelian Tradition* by Marta Spranzi (review)

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sense" (97), and deals primarily with the tricky evidence of Plutarch at *Moralia* 1023b–c. Her thoughtful interpretation requires her to treat linguistic details of the passage as distinctly Posidonian, but she allows that Plutarch may be working through a source, in all likelihood Eudorus (100n21). While her conclusions are nevertheless modest, I am puzzled by the last sentence: "This emphasis [on mathematical reason] allowed Posidonius to reinterpret inherited Platonism by mathematicising it . . ." (117), given that Speusippus and Xenocrates were already mathematicized. Roberto Polito's polished article on Asclepiades and Heraclides subtitled "medical Platonism?" seems more marginally relevant, being somewhat more interesting on fourth-century Heraclides than on Asclepiades. Since a basic hypothesis is "that Asclepiades appropriated themes from the tradition to which Heraclides belonged for the purpose of criticising or ridiculing them" (138), Asclepiades turns out to be somewhat anti-Platonist.

A. A. Long tackles the Pythagorean work of Alexander Polyhistor, for which it is difficult to find any philosophic context. After some sensible and at times intriguing discussion, Long comes down in favour of it being a learned *literary* construct. We stay partly with Pythagoras for Mauro Bonazzi's article on Eudorus, "an interesting philosopher, who substantially contributed to the renewal of Platonism, from both an historical and a philosophical perspective" (160). Bonazzi weaves magic out of the evidence for Eudorus and key passages of Platonic, Aristotelian, and pseudo-Pythagorean sources. Sedley tackles Cicero's Academically-slanted translation of the cosmogony of *Timaeus*, and the part that it was intended to play in a wider Academic construct.

Julia Annas offers an elegant but less detailed account of the debt of Cicero's *de Legibus* to Plato's *Laws*, philosophic as well as literary. While this is not stated, it seems relevant to the themes of this volume that at this stage we see a Cicero still approaching Plato largely through the eyes of a philosophic tradition (thanks no doubt to his following Antiochus's approach to philosophic history). For, as Ingo Gildenhard argues in the final article "Cicero's use of both Plato himself and his philosophical *oeuvre* is thus complex, comprising diverse modes of appropriation and engagement" (226). A key point here is that Platonic Forms only appear negatively in the dialogues of the 50s BC, and much more positively in the works of 46–44. The Plato of "heuristic fiction" (231) becomes the Plato of the Forms as well. This rich article concludes with a political explanation of this change. How much more in line with other themes in the book this would have been if Cicero had been inspired by the new philosophic environment to see that Plato and Aristotle were importantly in disagreement over Forms, and that Platonic Forms opened up important new channels in philosophic discourse.

This is a fine volume, but it would have benefitted from a short conclusion from the editor, reflecting on the differences this research has made.

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Marta Spranzi. *The Art of Dialectic between Dialogue and Rhetoric: The Aristotelian Tradition*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2011. Pp. xii + 239. Cloth, \$158.00.

Ever since G. E. L. Owen's well-known paper on Aristotelian logic ("Tithenai ta Phainomena," 1986), there has been a growing interest on Aristotle's dialectical method and its modern interpretations. Perhaps the most important of all contributions was made in 1997 by Paul Slomkowski with his detailed study of *Topics*, and in the same year by Robin Smith with his translation of *Topics*. More importantly, there were different interpretations of Aristotle's *Topics* and dialectic among scholars such as J. D. G. Evans and P. M. Huby. In May Sim's edited collection *From Puzzles to Principles?: Essays on Aristotle's Dialectic* (1999), scholars of classical philosophy disputed whether or not Aristotle was a dialectical thinker.

Within this context, Marta Spranzi's *The Art of Dialectic between Dialogue and Rhetoric* offers a comprehensive legacy of the Aristotelian dialectic while exploring the significance of the

art of dialectic in the development of philosophical methods of inquiry. Spranzi tries to reconstruct an “Aristotelian tradition” in dialectic by using Aristotle’s *Topics* as a source text for the later philosophical development of dialectic, both in form and content. Spranzi’s central argument is that Aristotle’s text holds the blueprint for the later development of two different types of dialectic: opinion-oriented *disputational* and truth-oriented *aporetic*.

She carries out her project in seven chapters. The first chapter discusses the origin and definition of dialectic through a detailed analysis of Aristotle’s *Topics*. Chapter 2 explores connections between Aristotelian dialectic and the form of dialectic that emerged during the Renaissance. She discusses the dialectics of Cicero and Boethius within the scholastic tradition, and how they also influenced Renaissance dialectic. The author uses this chapter as a transition between Aristotle’s original context and the Italian Renaissance that she subsequently discusses in greater detail. Chapter 3 lays out her points regarding the three ways in which Renaissance dialectic followed in the Aristotelian tradition. Here, Spranzi notes that the Renaissance saw a revival in the Aristotelian model of dialectic, and that those Renaissance authors recovered what they believed to be the “real” Aristotelian view of dialectic.

Spranzi represents Rudolph Agricola in chapter 4 as one of the founders of the “new dialectic” movement, which bridged the gap between rhetoric and dialectic and set the stage for a more thorough Aristotelian approach. She claims that Agricola’s theory emphasizes the development of “probable” arguments rather than “true” arguments. Chapter 5 discusses Agostino Nifo, who defended Aristotle’s *Topics* against medieval interpretations by utilizing the commentaries of Alexander of Aphrodisias and Averroes. Spranzi then sets up her goal for the following chapters (5 and 6), discussing dialectic and its role on the “road to truth,” rather than winning the argumentation.

In chapter 6, Spranzi draws our attention to the final development of the Renaissance period through Carlo Sigonio’s treatise *De dialogo liber*, published in 1562. She claims that Sigonio’s theory is a turn back toward the Aristotelian sense of dialectic, in its emphasis on dialectic as a road to truth through the testing of opinions and beliefs in disputation. The seventh and final chapter begins with a discussion of the relative abandonment of dialectic during the Scientific Revolution due to the search for a reliable scientific method. Spranzi then moves the discussion forward into modern times and points out the works of more recent theorists including Stephen Toulmin, Chaim Perelman, Van Eemeren, James Freeman, and Douglas Walton. She discusses whether or not their approaches position them in the Aristotelian tradition in terms of dialectic.

Throughout the book, Spranzi compares and assesses the sources and contents of Aristotelian traditions; however, there are three areas which may need further elaboration and clarification. First, her text is thorough within the context of the Greek and Italian philosophers; however, she does not discuss the way Aristotelian dialectic was developed and modified in other European (i.e. German *ars disputandi*) and non-European philosophies (i.e. Arabic *âdâb al-bahth*) during the Renaissance. Second, the mention of “Aristotelian tradition” in the title of the book also raises the fundamental question in the history of philosophy: what does tradition mean? Before applying the label ‘Aristotelian’ to a particular area in the history of philosophy, should one have to decide whose Aristotle and whose Aristotelianism ought to be chosen? The reader may find this question left unanswered. Third, while Spranzi provides profound analysis of Aristotelian dialectic as a thorough reader of philosophical texts in Greek and Latin, the book fails to formulate and answer any specific question in the history of philosophy. The author favors a chronological-textual approach, looking at the various thinkers’ thoughts instead of responding to any specific question about their epistemological, religious, and political implications in their specific historical context. Nonetheless, advanced graduate students and scholars who seek a closer analysis of trajectories of Aristotelian dialectics, particularly within the context of the Italian Renaissance, will benefit from Spranzi’s work.

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