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ARISTOTLE AFTER AUSTIN

COLIN GUTHRIE KING

INTRODUCTION

MOST of us in the field of ancient philosophy today acknowledge that the *liaison* between analytic philosophy and the history of ancient philosophy has been an important one, at least for ancient philosophy.¹ Particularly those of us who study the texts of Aristotle today are children of this *liaison*, both in our approach to the reconstruction of arguments and in our attention to philosophical problems related to logic and language. But, as is the case with *liaisons*, the best policy in having them is to remain discreet. This has been the rule in ancient philosophy, where explicit reference to concepts and problems from analytic philosophy is rare and guarded, though their presence is often patently obvious.

This was not always so. In the course of this relationship there were occasional frank acknowledgements of contemporary analytic themes in the interpretation of ancient philosophy. At the risk of seeming indiscreet, I would like to recall some seminal texts in this connection – not out of irreverence, but with a view to something like a (selective) history of interpretive paradigms in the contemporary study of Aristotle. In particular, I would like to identify the shift in interpretive paradigms introduced through set of analytically informed arguments concerning Aristotle and the proper interpretation of his philosophy. These pertain to Aristotle's «dialectical method» and the «materials» upon which it is supposed to operate. Many influential positions can be traced, most proximately, to the work of G. E. L. Owen, but in the following I will argue that his interpretation of Aristotle's dialectic was informed particularly by the «ordinary language philosophy» movement associated with Austin. My intention in investigating the analytic-philosophical roots of the renaissance of Aristotelian dialectic is not to re-hash or superfluously criticize the interpretations which led to it, but rather to better understand these interpretations within their own contemporary philosophical context. It is also helpful to see how the interpreters made a claim to the historical adequacy of their interpretations. I take it that this is a useful and even necessary preliminary to the full-disclosure assessment of recent interpretive claims concerning Aristotle and his use of *endoxa*. But it also has a further use: by explicitly integrating the history of ancient philosophy into the philosophical present, we continue to engage in the interpretation of Aristotle with a view to our present, a practice which is both historiographically legiti-

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¹ That includes the author of the article, who gratefully acknowledges Christof Rapp, in particular, for lessons learned in this and other matters pertaining to philosophy and ancient philosophy. His forthcoming paper *Über den Liaison zwischen analytischer und antiker Philosophie* provided an impetus for thinking about many of the issues treated here. I would also like to thank Terry Irwin, Christopher Shields, Vasilis Politis, and the participants in the conference *Ancient philosophy and analytic philosophy* at St. Anne's College in Oxford, October 25-27, 2013, for many helpful remarks and criticisms on an earlier draft of this paper. Last and not least, I thank Giuseppe Cambiano for his patient encouragement during its revision.

mate and (when practiced rightly, at least) highly fruitful. The following is in the spirit of this enterprise, as well as a preliminary to a larger study devoted to Aristotle's concept of *ἔνδοξα*.

1. «ENDOXCIC METHODS»

To G. E. L. Owen and many after him, it seemed compelling to attribute to Aristotle, in some or all of his works, a method which is dialectical or based upon *endoxa*.¹ The underlying philosophical reasons for this were manifold, and will be discussed below. But we should begin with the touchstone text for this reading, a now reknowned passage from Aristotle's discussion of *ἀκρασία* in the *Nicomachean* (and *Eudemian*) *Ethics*:

It is necessary, here as elsewhere, to lay down the *φαινόμενα* (τιθέναι τὰ φαινόμενα) and, having first gone through the difficulties (διαπορῆσαι), thus to establish (δεικνύναι), if possible, all the *ἔνδοξα* concerning these affections, or if not all, the greatest number and the most authoritative of them; for if the difficulties are resolved and the *ἔνδοξα* remain, this will be a sufficient proof (NE 7.2, 1145 b 2-7).²

The history of the interpretation of this passage in terms of a «method» was made famous by Owen, but it is interesting to note that he was not the only, or the first, or even the most important interpreter to read the passage in this way. No lesser an Aristotelian than W. D. Ross cites this passage at the beginning of his Gifford Lectures on *The Foundation of Ethics*.³ Ross' introductory account of his own procedure in these Lectures is a kind of extrapolating paraphrase of the passage:

I propose to take as my starting-point the existence of what is commonly called the moral consciousness; and by this I mean the existence of a large body of beliefs and convictions to the effect that there are certain kinds of acts that ought to be done and certain kinds of things that ought to be brought into existence, so far as we can bring them into existence. It would be a mistake to assume that all of these convictions are true, or even that they are all consistent; still more, to assume that they are all clear. Our object must be to compare them with each other, and to study them in themselves, with a view to seeing which best survive such examination, and which must be rejected either because in themselves they are ill-grounded, or because they contradict other convictions that are better grounded; and to clear up, as far as we can, ambiguities that lurk in them.⁴

«This», Ross concludes, «is the time-honoured method of ethics», practiced by Socrates and Plato no less than by Kant; and «it was the method of Aristotle, and has indeed nowhere been better formulated than by him».⁵ After then citing NE 7.2, Ross goes on to explain why this is an appropriate method in ethics, though it is not appropriate in

¹ The first interpreters to make Aristotle's dialectic out to be a *method* were LE BLOND (1939 1973³) ROSS (1939), WEIL (1951), and OWEN (1961); a prominent reprise of this interpretation came with BARNES (1980), NUSSBAUM (1982) and IRWIN (1988). These two stages of reception are animated by somewhat different philosophical interests: the first by a conception of the role of logic in conceptual analysis and a concern for philosophy's relationship to science, the second by a rehabilitation of intuitionism in ethics and the problem of finding and grounding first principles.

² EN VII 2 (1145 b 2-7): δεῖ δ', ὡςπερ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων, τιθέντας τὰ φαινόμενα καὶ πρῶτον διαπορῆσαντας οὕτω δεικνύναι μάλιστα μὲν πάντα τὰ ἔνδοξα περὶ ταῦτα τὰ πάθη, εἰ δὲ μή, τὰ πλεῖστα καὶ κυριώτατα· ἐὰν γὰρ λύηται τε τὰ δυσχερῆ καὶ καταλείπηται τὰ ἔνδοξα, δεδειγμένον ἂν εἴη ἱκανῶς. This passage is in one of the books common to both the *Eudemian* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*, NE 5-7 (= EE 4-6).

⁴ ROSS (1939), p. 1.

³ ROSS (1939), p. 1.

⁵ ROSS (1939), p. 1.

the physical sciences. Whereas physical science may appeal directly to observations and experiment for determining the truth concerning its objects, there is no such direct appeal in ethics. Here, Ross writes,

[w]e must start with the opinions that are crystallized in ordinary language and ordinary ways of thinking, and our attempt must be to make these thoughts, little by little, more definite and distinct, and by comparing one with another discover at what points each opinion must be purged of excess and mis-statement till it becomes harmonious with other opinions which have been purified in the same way.¹

These passages from the beginning of Ross' Gifford Lectures (published 1939), though seldom if ever cited in the wealth of literature on *Nicomachean Ethics* 7.2, are explicit and concise in giving the philosophical ambit of what would later become Aristotle's «endoxic method». This method was congenial to Ross' own ethical theory and the intuitionist movement in ethics, including G. E. Moore, H. A. Prichard and Henry Sidgwick. «Ethical intuitionism», very briefly, may be understood as the position concerning the proper object of 'data' of ethics and the role of the philosopher in dealing with them. We all gain moral knowledge through habituation, and as fully formed moral agents we have ethical knowledge in the form of intuitions; the ethical theorist reflects upon the intuitions which constitute such knowledge.²

We find Ross appealing to such data in the passage above, where he refers to «opinions that are crystallized in ordinary language and ordinary ways of thinking». The focus here is not so much on language (as it would be later) as on opinions. In his ethical works, Ross refers to «what we really think» or the views of «most plain men» as arbiters for the critical assessment of philosophical moral theories.³ He writes that «the moral convictions of thoughtful and well-educated people are the data of ethics just as sense-perceptions are the data of empirical science».⁴ The passage in *NE* 7.2 reflects the variety of sources for the intuitionist's ethical data: all of us, the majority, and the «wise», that is, the «thoughtful and well-educated». Ross could use this passage also to stake out a position within intuitionism concerning the proper role of the theorist vis-à-vis ethical intuitions. Sidgwick held that the role of the moral philosopher was to systematize, unify and correct the moral intuitions of the common man. The objective expressed in *NE* 7.2 seems to be somewhat more humble. Laying out *φαινόμενα*, going through difficulties, and showing the *ἐνδοξά* is a procedure for making a body of propositions more coherent, but it does not seem to have grand systematic ambitions.

By citing *Nicomachean Ethics* 7.2 as a statement of *method* in connection with «ordinary language and ordinary ways of thinking», then, Ross drafted Aristotle as an intuitionist of a particular stripe. But raising this passage to a statement of method was an important step which would later have more general implications. This interpretive assump-

¹ Ross (1939), p. 3.

² SIDGWICK (1907) distinguishes between «intuitionism» and «philosophical intuitionism». Intuitionism is used by Sidgwick in the context of a critique of Utilitarianism as a method in which the rightness of some kinds of actions can be determined without consideration of their consequences (SIDGWICK [1907], pp. 96 ff.). Philosophical intuitionism accepts a premiss of intuitionism, namely that we have the basic power to recognize right actions, and makes ordinary ethical beliefs the object of philosophical reflection. This latter position is the one Sidgwick would adopt.

³ Ross (1939), pp. 102 & 186.

⁴ Ross (1930), p. 41.

tion remains uncontested, even where interpreters disagree on the scope and nature of the method, or agree that the scope is very limited.¹

In his choice of words for paraphrasing the data of the intuitionist method, Ross anticipated another, later movement in British philosophy, ordinary language philosophy, under the influence of which G. E. L. Owen would make something quite different out of the appeal to *φαινόμενα* in *NE* 7.2. It is here that Aristotle got the «linguistic turn» which would prove influential for interpretations of his work right up to the present. But the interpretation of Aristotle as intuitionist would also impact contemporary ethical theory, where endoxic methods would be seen as a way for dealing with the justification of first principles in ethical enquiry.² This, in turn, led naturally to the study of Aristotle's own first principles and the role of the 'method' in justifying them.³ Indeed, the cascade of influences and philosophical interpolations which flowed from the juncture of intuitions, ordinary language, and Aristotle's presumably «endoxic method» cannot be completely grasped in the course of this article. But I will try to lay out at least some main lines of influence by locating the most prominent interpretive positions on Aristotle's «endoxic methods» in their contemporary philosophical context.

Against the background of Ross' intuitionist use of *NE* 7.2, we may better appreciate how Aristotle's linguistic turn was accomplished under the influence of G. E. L. Owen, and what it implied for interpreting Aristotle. The seminal interpretation in this connection is Owen's *τιθέναι τὰ φαινόμενα*.⁴ Owen's particular interpretive innovation on Ross consisted in freeing the supposed method of *NE* 7.2 from a merely ethical context and making it more widely applicable; and this meant making the method 'dialectical'. To this end, Owen argued that in *NE* 7.2, but also in other passages, the «things which seem true» (*τὰ φαινόμενα*) do not mean «the facts of the matter», but are to be understood in such a way as to include the *ἔνδοξα* as some part of them.⁵ The appropriateness of this sense of *φαινόμενα* is suggested by the context. Aristotle is discussing «incontinence» (*ἀκρασία*) and «continence» (*ἐγκρατεία*) (*NE* 7.1-10). It is a topic on which there is a variety of real phenomena in the sense of observable actions, but also a number of ways to describe and evaluate these actions. It is therefore understandable that Aristotle prefaces his discussion with an inventory of the normative notions which inform descriptions of such instances, since any «mere description» of them would already beg important questions which they involve. «Both continence and endurance are deemed to be among things good and praiseworthy, and both incontinence and softness among things bad and blameworthy» (1145 b 8-10). And we believe that «the incontinent man» knows that what he does is wrong, but acts without restraint because of passion, where-

¹ More recently, COOPER (2009), pp. 19-29, interprets the passage as a statement of method, but points out several ways in which Aristotle's discussion of *ἀκρασία* and *ἐγκρατεία* diverge from it. FREDE (2012), pp. 187-193 & 208-213, also interprets the passage in terms of a method, arguing however that is limited to the discussion of *ἀκρασία* in *NE* 7. FREDE (2012) goes so far as to deny that the discussions of the predecessors in e.g. *De anima* 1 or *Metaphysics* A constitute instances of enquiry upon the basis of *ἔνδοξα*. I hold this view to be an over-reaction against the (justly criticized) abuse of the «endoxic method» in the interpretation of Aristotle, but that cannot be the object of further discussion here.

² Ross' influence in this connection is tangible e.g. in RAWLS (1971).

³ IRWIN (1988).

⁴ OWEN (1961).

⁵ BONITZ (1870), 809a60-b6, identifies this sense of *φαινόμενον*: «in a usage transferred from external senses to the thought of the mind, *φαινόμενον* is τὸ δοκοῦν, τὸ ἔνδοξον». In addition to the present passage, Bonitz also cites *An. Pr.* A 1 (24 b 11) and *Top.* Θ 5 (159 b 21).

as the continent man follows his reason (b 11-14). Aristotle goes on to list several other established notions which are relevant to incontinence and concludes with the words «these are the things which are said» (τὰ λεγόμενα, b 20-21). He then produces views and arguments which contradict what is commonly said and present difficulties for these accepted views (1145 b 22 - 1146 b 6). (Socrates' contention that the incontinent act out of ignorance is one of these.) He concludes his presentation of opinions with words which recall the passage above:

These are the certain kinds of difficulties (ἀπορίαι) which result. One must reject some of these things and leave the others in place; for in the solution of the difficulty lies the discovery of the truth (NE 7.3, 1146 b 7-9).¹

Owen cited this entire discussion in pointing out an equivocation between φαινόμενα in the sense of «that which seems to be true» on the one hand, and λεγόμενα, «what is said» and ἔνδοξα, or «reputable views», on the other hand.² His interpretation depends crucially upon claiming that Aristotle can disambiguate φαινόμενα into things which are *perceptual* and things which are *conceptual* (i.e. λεγόμενα and ἔνδοξα), but that he can also choose not to disambiguate them. Thus Owen argued for the importance of a consciously undisambiguated sense of φαινόμενα in Aristotle's own approach to science. The perceptual-cum-conceptual φαινόμενα accommodate and integrate perceptual experience, but in certain cases they may even be superior to 'raw' perceptual φαινόμενα:

Ἐνδοξα also rest on experience, even if they misrepresent it. If they did not Aristotle could find no place for them in his epistemology; as it is, an ἔνδοξον that is shared by all men is *ipso facto* beyond challenge.³

The implication that certain kinds of ἔνδοξα might be, much like *a priori* propositions, beyond challenge by recourse to experience, was not lost on Owen's contemporary readers. It would have a large impact on the interpretation of Aristotle, particularly in regard to the venerable problem in the scholarship concerning discrepancies between Aristotle's actual argumentative procedures and his methodology. A problem often raised in this connection was that Aristotle does not employ in his own inquiries the demonstrative kind of arguments which he describes for scientific inquiry in the *Analytics*. Owen addressed this old difficulty, and he gave it a new turn. The particular discrepancy which exercised him concerns the securing of first principles, the first premisses of scientific demonstration. There is a passage in the *Prior Analytics* in which Aristotle states that experience provides the principles of each particular inquiry, a claim which he justifies with the example of astronomy: «For when the φαινόμενα were sufficiently grasped, the demonstrations of astronomy were discovered» (*An. Pr.* A 30, 46 a 20-21).⁴ If these φαινόμενα are understood as perceptual ones (and it seems they must be), then the general picture of inquiry we have in this passage is this: collect the perceptual φαινόμενα through observation; from observation win principles; and demonstrate upon the basis of these. Owen put over and against this a methodological counter-model for Aristotle's practice in the inquiries of the *Ethics* and *Physics*. The model is derived, of course, from the passage in NE 7.2 and is decidedly less empiricist: take up

¹ NE 7.3, 1146 b 7-9: Αἱ μὲν οὖν ἀπορίαι τοιαῦται τινες συμβαίνουσιν, τούτων δὲ τὰ μὲν ἀνελεῖν δεῖ τὰ δὲ καταλιπεῖν· ἡ γὰρ λύσις τῆς ἀπορίας εὐρεσίς ἐστιν.

² OWEN (1961), pp. 85 ff.

³ OWEN (1961), p. 90.

⁴ See OWEN (1961), pp. 84-85, *ad loc.*

observational-*cum*-conceptual *φαινόμενα*, analyze the difficulties they involve, and save the best of them. One wonders what the ancient Greek equivalent of an arm-chair might have been.

This interpretation challenged central orthodoxies and raised several questions. The issue of the form of Aristotle's inquiry into principles had, for the most part, not been raised at all, it being consensus that dialectic was not a form of inquiry, and it being established Aristotelian doctrine that the principles of demonstration are, by definition, not to be proved.¹ The orthodox view on the role of dialectic was that demonstration is *the* method of science and superior to dialectic, the method of argumentation in the *Topics*. In particular, Ross – who, as we saw, took *NE* 7.2 to express a very important principle of method in ethics – did not identify the method as specifically dialectical, though he does contrast it specifically with a manner of proceeding in natural science. Owen, however, rejected the idea that Aristotle's science is incompatible with his dialectic. But he also employed a misleading brachylogy in referring to 'dialectic', a term employed by Aristotle in two different senses of reference. In one sense, *διαλεκτική* refers to a certain practice (or set of practices) of argumentation, one which Aristotle describes in parts of the *Topics* (notably *Topics* VIII), and upon which the *Topics* reflects. In another sense, *διαλεκτική* refers to the art and 'method' of argumentation which is presented in the *Topics* in order to increase facility in dialectical argumentation.² The distinction between dialectical argument and the theory of dialectical argumentation is not always clear in Aristotle's texts, but often it is; and applying the distinction whenever possible is crucial in interpreting Aristotle's remarks on dialectic.

But if, with Owen, we take «dialectic» as any argument upon the basis of *φαινόμενα* which are basically linguistic and conceptual (*ἔνδοξα* constituting only an important sub-class of such *φαινόμενα*), then the extent of dialectic will be very broad indeed. Much of Aristotle's inquiries do seem to have this character. In arguing that Aristotle endorsed a crucial equivocation between perceptual *φαινόμενα* and the *φαινόμενα* of language and established opinion, Owen implied that, in certain cases at least, the methods of science and dialectic cannot meaningfully be distinguished.³

But does the «endoxic method» in *NE* 7.2 even reflect a dialectical procedure? This is not obviously the case. We find no recommendation to argue *to* *ἔνδοξα* in Aristotle's theory of dialectical argumentation in the *Topics* and the *Rhetoric*, but rather the recommendation to argue *from* *ἔνδοξα* (*Top.* 1.1, 100a29-30), or from what is more *endoxon* (*Top.* 8.5, 159a25), or from what is most *endoxon* (*SE* 34, 183a37-b1).⁴ The reading of *NE* 7.2 as an example of dialectic will only work if we subsume *ἔνδοξα* to the *φαινόμενα* and argue

¹ Aristotle argues that the principles of demonstration are immediate and indemonstrable in *An. Post.* A 3, 72 b 20-22. An early exception to the consensus that dialectic is unrelated to inquiry may be found in LE BLOND (1939 1973³).

² See SMITH (1999), pp. 39-55. Smith rightfully insists upon the distinction between dialectical practice and dialectical art (45): «Dialectical argument existed long before Aristotle; he himself credits Zeno of Elea with its discovery. What he offers in the *Topics* is an art of dialectic, to stand in the same relationship to dialectical argument as does the art of rhetoric to orations». See also SMITH (1997), p. 41.

³ HAMLYN (1990), pp. 465-476.

⁴ In discussing a particular kind of argument «for the sake of training and testing» (*γυμνασίας καὶ πείρας ἕνεκα*, *Top.* 8.5, 159a25), Aristotle states that the answerer must defend a thesis which is either *endoxon*, *adoxon*, or neither of the two, and this either without qualification or in a qualified way, i.e. with respect to a certain person, either himself or another (159a38-b1). From this it follows that certain premisses will be accepted because they are more *endoxon* than the conclusion, though not *endoxon* without qualification.

that they, too, can be the grounds of dialectical argumentation – which is precisely what Owen did. Still, it should also be noted that the procedure espoused in the *Ethics* is from *φαινόμενα* to *ἔνδοξα*, not simply from *ἔνδοξα*. Now, however we characterize the method with regard to dialectic, it is clear that most interpreters agree on two aspects of it: 1. it is general and 2. it is based upon a generally valid norm or standard of proof or argument. The procedure is based upon a general norm, it is argued, for Aristotle states that when the difficulties are solved and the reputable opinions are left intact, «it would have been sufficiently shown» (δεδειγμένον ἂν εἴη ἰκανῶς). And the procedure is generally applicable, for the passage introduces the procedure with the generalization that it is to be applied here «as in other cases» (ὥσπερ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων).

Jonathan Barnes gave the first detailed account of how, and to what extent, the endoxic method might serve as a general norm of argument on Aristotelian grounds. He gives us the following picture.¹ Confronted with conflicts between reputable views of the wise and certain reputable majority views, Aristotle pursues a three-part procedure: 1. lay down the *φαινόμενα*; 2. go through the difficulties; and 3. try to show as many of the reputable and accepted views, or *ἔνδοξα*, as possible – foremost among these the most reputable and accepted. This tripartite ‘Method of Ἐνδοξά’ has a clear purpose: to reduce inconsistency in a given set of ethical views which are, at bottom, *ἔνδοξα*.² The first part of the procedure consists in «doxography», the collection of opinions on a given subject. These opinions may yield certain difficulties, and this initiates the second component of the method, «going through the difficulties (διαπορῆσαι)» (1145 b 3). The sources of difficulties are two: *ἔνδοξα* on a certain subject may be inconsistent with one another; and particular *ἔνδοξα* may also themselves be «obscurely or inadequately expressed» or «vague, ambiguous, [and] apparently contradictory».³ The aim of the method is expressed in its third component, which is to derive «the largest consistent subset of the initial set of *ἔνδοξα*», with the caveat that this subset also contain the «most important» *ἔνδοξα* (τὰ κυριώτατα).⁴ Though the criteria for the «importance» of an *ἔνδοξον* remain unclear here, it is to be assumed that the *ἔνδοξα* which remain at the end of this procedure contain the truth: «Once the difficulties are solved – once the original *ἔνδοξα* are purified or emended, and the appropriate consistent subset of them is determined – the truth is to be found, exclusively and exhaustively, in the *ἔνδοξα* that remain».⁵

Barnes himself pointed out the similarity of the procedure, on his interpretation, to the philosophy of Common Sense. But in fact Common Sense was his strawman. In distinguishing the Method of Ἐνδοξά from this tradition, Barnes too gives us something rather resembling analysis in the fashion of ordinary language philosophy. The focus here is on a methodological approach to belief, it makes no strong epistemological appeal to intuitions; and the range of its applicability is clearly not limited to ethics. Barnes admits a certain likeness between the Method of Ἐνδοξά and Common Sense in that the Method also provides a place for «the things which are held true by everyone or by most people». As *ἔνδοξα* are «the things which seem true (δοκοῦντα) to everyone, or to most people, or to the wise (σοφοῖς) – to all of them, or to most, or to the most renowned (γνώριμοις) and reputable (ἐνδόξοις)» (*Top.* 1.1, 100b21-23), Barnes argues, the method which uses them does take account of at least part of what would matter for

¹ BARNES (1980).

² BARNES (1980), pp. 490-493.

³ BARNES (1980), p. 492.

⁴ BARNES (1980), p. 492.

⁵ BARNES (1980), p. 493.

Common Sense. But the *φαινόμενα* – which Barnes assumes (with Owen 1961) to include the *ἔνδοξα* – include both more and less than Common Sense. Endoxical *φαινόμενα* include more than Common Sense, for *ἔνδοξα* also include expert opinion: «that which seems true to the wise – to all of the wise or the most of them or the most famous and reputable» (b 22-23). And *ἔνδοξα* exclude at least a certain part of Common Sense, since Aristotle's determination of *ἔνδοξα* does not include the things which seem true to the *many* (οἱ πολλοί), but those which are held to be true by all or by *most* (οἱ πλεῖστοι).¹ In addition, the Method, on Barnes' description, is not limited to Common Sense: instead of simply deferring to accepted views, the adherent to this method goes on to disambiguate them and sometimes even reject them.

This Method is analytical and linguistic: it makes implicit beliefs pertinent to a certain subject explicit. Barnes finds implicit beliefs included in the *δοκοῦντα* mentioned in the determination of *ἔνδοξα* in the *Topics* (A 1, 100 b 21). He assimilates these to the relevant *ἔνδοξα* for a given topic, and distinguishes three kinds of implicit belief which may be involved in them: propositions entailed by explicit beliefs; beliefs which may be ascribed to us on the basis of our actions; and beliefs which are «latent in language».² Thus the Method, as Barnes sees it, is not merely descriptive of views which have been articulated. It is analytic in that it seeks out pre-dominating yet unarticulated *intuitions* and *beliefs*, and articulates them.³

Disambiguation, explication, attention to «basic beliefs»: this is not just a method for ethics, it is a programme of more general scope which goes well beyond the tripartite model posited for the passage in *Nicomachen Ethics* 7.2. Taken as a way of dealing with intuitions or beliefs, it would seem to be an epistemological programme. Picking up on this, further interpreters attributed to Aristotle an epistemological background theory to justify the endoxic method. Based upon this description, it could be argued that Aristotle was engaged in the study of *ἔνδοξα*, or at least of certain *ἔνδοξα*, in an attempt to reach greater certainty with regard to particularly foundational beliefs.⁴ But also the very different attempt to read into Aristotle a particular concern for the way «we» do things, animated by a realism based upon deeply shared beliefs and thus «internal», was a further variation on this theme.⁵ In reaction to both tendencies, some prominent recent interpretations have entered a motion to «demystify the authority of *endoxa* in Aristotle» and «deflate the importance attributed to the so-called endoxic method».⁶ This work has rightly focused on differentiating and limiting the concept of *ἔνδοξα* with a view to carefully interpreting *NE* 7.2 in context and in relation to the rest of the *Ethics*.⁷ Yet for reasons which I hope are now more apparent, the mystique of *ἔνδοξα* is not limited to particular passages in Aristotle's texts. It derives its appeal, reasonably enough, to a deeper resonance with 'methods' of the philosophical present and recent past, mediated by a concept (in particular the notion of «beliefs») which makes the passage in Aristotle appear relevant. My aim in this paper is

¹ BARNES (1980), p. 504, cites two passages which could be construed as endorsing the views of οἱ πολλοί: *EN* I 4 (1095 a 18); *NE* I 8 (1098 b 27-29), but these are somewhat weak in this regard. However, a clarification Aristotle makes in regard to his definition of the dialectical premiss in *Topics* A 10 strongly suggests that Barnes must be wrong in excluding the opinions of πολλοί from *ἔνδοξα*: «One may posit something which seems true to the wise as long as it does not stand in opposition to the opinions of the many (ταῖς τῶν πολλῶν δόξαις)» (104 a 11-12).

² BARNES (1980), p. 501.

³ BARNES (1980), p. 503.

⁴ This is the basic interpretive strategy in IRWIN (1988).

⁵ NUSSBAUM (1982).

⁶ Thus FREDE (2012), pp. 185.

⁷ See in particular COOPER (2009), pp. 19-29, and FREDE (2012).

not to lament this, since I assume that the philosophical appeal of any interpretation will have something to do with how a contemporary reader thinks. My aim is rather to identify how the interest in Aristotle's dialectic and its so-called material, ἐνδοξία, relates to a longer term shift in the philosophical framework for the interpretation of Aristotle. The shift can be seen in recalling the now nearly extinguished scholarly debate on Aristotle's philosophical development – a topic which, along with a more philological and historically oriented style of interpreting Aristotle, analytic Aristotelians effectively buried.

2. ARISTOTLE'S DEVELOPMENT AND TWO PARADIGMS OF ITS INTERPRETATION

The literature concerning Aristotle's development is interesting in itself, because in it we find explicit statements concerning what it means to adequately interpret a work of ancient philosophy. Developmental theories inevitably force the interpreter to determine what sort of questions and issues are *the* governing ones for a the developing philosopher at her mature and final 'stage'; and this is both particularly interesting, and seldom convincing. At the heart of theories of Aristotle's development there was a question which today is seldom if ever a topic of scholarly attention: which doctrines were important for Aristotle in the formation and articulation of his own views, and why?

G. E. L. Owen wrote at a time when it was still important to have a view on this question. In writing on Aristotle's method in the context of *De caelo* and an abstracting strain in Aristotle's physical theorizing, Owen articulates the following position:

This leads to a more general point which must be borne in mind in understanding his way of establishing physical theory. When he appeals to common views and usage in such contexts he is applying a favourite maxim, that in the search for explanations we must start from what is familiar or intelligible to us. (Once the science is set up, the deductions will proceed from principles 'intelligible in themselves'.) The same maxim governs his standard way of introducing concepts by extrapolating from some familiar, unpuzzling situation.¹

The connection between method and ἐνδοξία in the values attributed to Aristotle should now be apparent. Aristotle begins with «common views and usage» for epistemological reasons, in order to clear the conceptual ground of an investigation; and the procedural imperative of beginning in this way makes those things which are 'familiar' and 'unpuzzling' privileged, or at least prior, objects of Aristotle's own theorizing. Strictly speaking, Owen introduces the importance of the ordinary here as only a hermeneutic principle in «understanding his way of establishing physical theory». But it is clear that Owen would not invoke such a hermeneutic principle if the procedure we are meant to understand is not well-grounded. For Owen, beginning with what is «more familiar to us», rather than «more familiar by nature», is part and parcel of a post-Positivist approach to method and science which questions the that would a naive kind of Empiricism which take the 'facts' to be the stright-forward basis of all natural inquiry.

It is instructive to compare this with some earlier statements of Aristotle's scientific values, and how best to understand them. Werner Jaeger introduces his *Aristoteles*:

¹ OWEN (1970), p. 254.

Grundlegung einer Geschichte seiner Entwicklung with programmatic remarks in this vein.¹ There he laments that the application of a theory of development to Aristotle's works had long been hindered by the Scholastic interpretation of his philosophy. Scholasticism offered a fixed and rigid scheme of concepts which its users applied masterfully in interpreting Aristotle, but which afforded little insight into the dynamic and interplay between Aristotle's strictly philosophical works (his «metaphysics» and «logic») and his «empirical study of reality».²

In determining the 'modern' task of interpreting Aristotle as establishing the relationship between his «empirical works» and «philosophy», Jaeger was not offering just any interpretive framework. He was in fact invoking a philosophical interpretation of Aristotle which *already had* liberated him from the interpretive frame of Scholasticism. This was a major outcome of the Aristotle renaissance in German university philosophy anticipated by Hegel, but also directed against him.³ The particular interpretation of Aristotle as the mediator of metaphysical philosophy and empirical science through logical analysis is due in large part to Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg. *His* Aristotle, born in the wake of German Idealism's decline, was the progenitor of a 'scientific' philosophy which satisfied an important post-Hegelian requirement: it integrated the philosophical disciplines of logic and metaphysics and empirical sciences.⁴ The renaissance of Aristotle scholarship in the 19th Century in Germany can be understood as motivated at least in part by the search for a philosophy which, as the thinking went, did provide a logic and metaphysics upon a somehow empirical basis, and was thus fitting as a model for the *rapprochement* of philosophy and the departmental organization of scientific research and knowledge. Importantly, Aristotle was perceived as a philosopher who – like Kant – was capable of formulating a 'methodology', a theory of the laws governing the acquisition of scientific knowledge which promises to teach us how to derive all truths from first principles.

Jaeger's interpretation of Aristotle's development was still informed by this powerful movement of Aristotle reception in 19th Century German philosophy and scholarship, as was his scheme for Aristotle's development. The developmental theory provides an historical account for the picture of an Aristotle who bequeathed us a methodology of science.⁵ It begins with a period of 'methodological' and dialectical training in the Academy, followed by Aristotle's journey to Lesbos and the beginning of empirical research, and ending with the foundation of the *Lykeion* and the integration and application of empirical research to the metaphysical problems inherited from the Academy. On this view of Aristotle's development, he began his career by acquiring a «method» and a «logic» which, at their core, were already irreconcilable with Platonic theories of being. Since his logic and metaphysics developed as it were independently, Aristotle drew the negative consequences only much later and under the influence and pressure of an empiricism acquired through his late-budding career as an empirically-minded philosopher of nature. This particular stage of Aristotle's development is described by Jaeger in al-

¹ JAEGER (1923).

³ See in particular KÖHNKE (1986).

⁵ Many of the themes which are central to Jaeger's account of Aristotle's development of such a methodology, such as the relationship between Aristotle's «Erkenntnistheorie» and his «empirische Forschung», the influence of mathematics as a model science, and Aristotle's shifting dispositions to Platonic theories, were already treated by Trendelenburg's student Rudolf Eucken in EUCKEN (1872).

² JAEGER (1923), pp. 2-3.

⁴ See HARTUNG (2006).

most Hegelian fashion as the development of Greek philosophy in general from a type of mysticism to a rationalist justification of the old view through a new theoretical paradigm, that of teleology.¹

Owen would point out one unseemly consequence of some of Jaeger's broader assumptions concerning Aristotle's logic and metaphysics. It follows from them that Aristotle in his early period would have held certain (middle-Platonic) theses to be true without being able to justify them with the means of his own 'method' – indeed, while being able to refute them.² He located and attacked this weak spot in Jaeger's account, and developed his own counter-model of Aristotle's development with particular attention to Aristotle's logic and its relation to metaphysics. But there certainly would have been other, philosophical reasons for a bright member of the philosophy faculty of Oxford in the 1960s to be dissatisfied with Jaeger's model. For one, it would seem that, in positing an early, Platonic and 'speculative' phase and a mature, anti-Platonic and empiricist phase, Jaeger foists upon the mature Aristotle a naïve sort of empiricism. Owen explicitly attacks naïve empiricism through a central thesis of his «τιθέναι τὰ φαινόμενα». There he claims that for Aristotle, research concerning principles need not proceed upon the basis of perceptual or observational φαινόμενα *only*, but may *also* be based upon linguistic and conceptual φαινόμενα.³

In stating that Aristotle's concept of φαινόμενα could accommodate both observation and – in the form of the distinct sub-sets of ἔνδοξα and λεγόμενα – the «conceptual structure as revealed by language», Owen was making a point which just as well could have been directed against logical positivists such as Carnap.⁴ By this time Austin had made this same point on several occasions, for example in the lectures which would be published posthumously as *Sense and Sensibilia*. Austin's critique of the concept of «sense data», and his rejection of the concurrent notion of «empirical facts» as those propositions relating to them, undermined cherished positivist theories of truth and meaning.⁵ Owen's Aristotle is an ally in this endeavour. He argues in several of his papers that Aristotle's practice in at least some parts of his natural science runs against the positivist demand that language must be «empirical» in order to be meaningful. For if some of the φαινόμενα for the investigation of the principles of *Physics* are themselves linguistic and involve «conceptual puzzles», they are not reducible to statements concerning observation.

It is in this constellation of problems surrounding the status of language, meaning and empiricism, that the interpretation of Aristotle's dialectical method gains currency. Establishing this interpretation was a two-part accomplishment. One part consisted in contextualization. In criticising Jaeger's developmental theory and offering a counter-model which could account for the criticism of Platonic doctrines, Owen set the stage

¹ Thus JAEGER (1923), p. 308, remarks with regard to the development of Aristotle's natural philosophy from the dialogue *Περὶ φιλοσοφίας τοῦ De caelo*: «Hier zeigte sich uns ein allmähliches Sichfreimachen von den Voraussetzungen mythischer Naturerklärung, die im griechischen Geiste stets mächtig geblieben ist und die durch die Sternseelentheorie Platons einen neuen Impuls erhalten hatte». This 'gradual emancipation' from the assumptions of the tradition is thus at the same time an emancipation from Plato. – Jaeger's argument here is based upon a rather simplified picture of Plato's place in the history of ancient Greek natural philosophy.

² OWEN (1965b), p. 128.

³ See OWEN (1961), pp. 84 ff.

⁴ OWEN (1961), p. 85.

⁵ See AUSTIN (1962). For a recent overview of the historical context and Austin's critique of logical positivism, see CHAPMAN (2008), pp. 72-74.

for Aristotle the reformed Platonist: an Aristotle who has remained influential until the present day. The other part of the shift in interpretive paradigm was to convincingly introduce the analytic philosophical framework of ordinary language and conceptual analysis for the interpretation of Aristotle. This coincides with the interest in «methodology» and «method», and is concomitant with a return to metaphysical themes.¹ The background for interpreting Aristotle was no longer referred to a theory of the sciences, but rather to methods based upon reflection on logic, language and concepts – an Aristotle suitable for philosophy in the latter half of the 20th Century. It is by way of this philosophical re-framing of Aristotle that ‘his’ endoxic method could leave the rather narrow scope of intuitionist ethics and Common Sense and become something ostensibly deeper and ‘dialectical’, wherein the real mystique of ἐνδοξία seems to lie.

In the first part of this interpretive project, Owen states that Aristotle’s training in the Academy *itself* fostered a critical stance to the theory of ideas and the project of a theory of being *qua* being, but that Aristotle later (in particular: in *Metaphysics* IV) developed arguments in sympathy with certain aspects of both.² The crucial component of Aristotle’s development in logic is the discovery, or rather full application, of a semantic concept, the concept of «focal meaning». This is the notion that certain expressions are related to «some single nature» in a way which cannot be explained by synonymy or even mere ambiguity. Aristotle uses it in the *Eudemian Ethics*, which is generally agreed to be early.³ His developmental story is concerned, therefore, with explaining why it only later enabled Aristotle «to convert a special science of substance into a universal science of being».⁴ This theory is, like Jaeger’s, based upon a conversion narrative, but one directly opposed to Jaeger’s assumption that Aristotle came to distance himself from his master in the course of time. It supposes a development from general hostility to the Theory of Ideas to a gradual acceptance of an *analogon* to the Platonic form in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. The notion of focal meaning serves as the analogue of the Platonic form in the context of Aristotle’s semantic analysis. One is reminded, in reading Owen’s account, of the slogan allegedly «common to Vienna and Oxford»: that «philosophy has, as its first if not its only task, the analysis of meanings».⁵ The crucial stages of Aristotle’s development are the formation of his views on predication and the gradual development of a positive use of semantic analysis to accommodate a universal science. Jaeger’s account of a shift in world-view was couched in the traditional terms of ontology. Owen’s Aristotle stands well above ontology, which he handles only through reflections on language.

All the details of Owen’s developmental theses cannot concern us here, but one aspect of them is instrumental for understanding their scope and influence. Like Jaeger’s model of Aristotle’s development, Owen’s counter-model comes with a distinct conception of Aristotle’s philosophy and the means by which it should be interpreted. Two core Aristotelian values – a scepticism toward philosophers’ tendency to «over-simplify» and an «occupational» sensitivity to expressions with multiple meanings – are identified in a passage with explicit reference to J. L. Austin.⁶ These concerns animate Owen’s studies of Aristotle throughout, which were innovative also in their

¹ Examples of this tendency may be found in MANSION (1961).

² OWEN (1960), pp. 163-164 *et passim*, OWEN (1965a), OWEN (1965b).

³ See *EE* VII 2, 1236 a 7-36.

⁴ OWEN (1960), pp. 169.

⁵ Cited in RORTY (1979), p. 262.

⁶ See OWEN (1965b), pp. 147-148, cited below.

focus upon particularly semantic aspects of Aristotle's arguments, such as his application of the concept of homonymy in the *Metaphysics*.¹ But Owen also gave an account of the proper approach to Aristotle's texts, one which operates on the assumption that these core philosophical values were expressed in the application of a dialectical 'method'. This comes with a corollary for the interpretation of those texts which are supposed to be based upon dialectical method: we are not permitted to view inconsistencies within them as cases of self-contradiction or evidence of various stages in Aristotle's development.

The implications of this principle and its corollary are far-reaching in that they provide a strong motivation for finding ordinary beliefs and language in Aristotle. One of Owen's central objections to Jaeger's interpretation was this: If we assume that Aristotle adopted certain theses out of personal commitment to Plato, then Aristotle's alleged «Platonism» is a subjective, psychological factor which can be made to explain just about anything.² Against this, Owen enjoins as interpretive requirement for the theory of Aristotle's development: «At every stage Aristotle's logic had its roots in philosophical argument and scientific procedure: it would be an anachronism to think otherwise».³ But he also offers another reason to doubt Aristotle's doctrinal commitment to one particular person, be it even his teacher: «When Aristotle discusses the views of 'the many and the wise', it is the second party that gets the shorter shrift».⁴ In other words, we must interpret Aristotle, at no matter which stage, against the background of ordinary beliefs.

This is an important statement in the context of the developmental controversy, for it means that a critical attitude toward a Platonic doctrine cannot be taken, at face value, to date a given passage of Aristotle in the framework of his development. Aristotle is rather, as a philosopher, fundamentally sceptical of philosophers, and this includes Plato (but is by no means limited to him). This description, to which Owen would often return, has at least two important features.⁵ First, it assigns Aristotle a reasonable and even properly 'analytic' motivation for accepting the views of «the many» against that of experts. This forms part of the background justification for the use of dialectic which Owen formulated, and which we shall consider in the next section. Secondly, it traces Aristotle's development by reference not only to particular theses and positions but primarily against the background of Aristotle's «method», foremost a «dialectical» and «logical» method which operates precisely through the analysis of multivalent expressions. These two aspects are related: the use of dialectical method is an expression of a core Aristotelian and analytic-philosophical value, the concern with meaning and with misleading talk. Aristotle is, as

¹ OWEN (1965a).

² OWEN (1966), p. 128.

³ OWEN (1966), p. 133. IRWIN (1988) consistently applies this interpretive guideline in his own developmental account when he claims that Aristotle employs two different types of dialectic – one mature or «strong», the other developmentally prior and «pure» – in the course of his development. «Strong» dialectic, unlike pure or ordinary dialectic, is not based upon just any *endoxa*, but a special set of them. Strong dialectic constitutes the method of first philosophy as introduced in *Metaphysics* Γ and, on Irwin's interpretation, pursued in the main books of the *Metaphysics* with the objective of establishing the principles of a science of being *qua* being. This enterprise leads to a qualification of its premisses: «If some dialectical arguments argue from the assumption that there are objects of scientific study, they do not begin from common beliefs indiscriminately, and the consequences of this assumption are not the consequences of any old set of common beliefs» (IRWIN [1988], p. 19).

⁴ OWEN (1966), p. 131.

⁵ See OWEN (1965b), pp. 147-148, and the first lines of OWEN (1965a), p. 69: «Aristotle's commonest complaint against other philosophers is that they oversimplify. One oversimplification to which he is especially attentive is the failure to see that the same expression may have many different senses».

Owen writes, «occupationally sensitive to expressions with more than one meaning» (Owen [1966], p. 147). And he continues: «For Aristotle, this is one more expression of the conviction that he shared with J. L. Austin, that ‘it is an occupational disease of philosophers to over-simplify – if indeed it is not their occupation’» (*ibid.*).¹

The setting of the discussion in terms of «method», which we see beginning with Ross, shows here its significant implications. It is indicative of a type of interpretation which shifts focus away from certain ‘positions’ of Aristotle and concentrates instead on the manner in which he pursues his discussions. An important consequence of interpretive focus on «method» is that it frees the reader from the assumption that Aristotle’s arguments are designed to establish certain pre-established positions. This is salutary, because it increases our sensitivity to the nuances of Aristotle’s views, in placing more emphasis on the arguments by which he arrives at them. The assumption that Aristotle employs a *dialectical* method has a further consequence: it loosens the requirement of consistency in the interpretation of Aristotle’s works. For in interpreting Aristotle’s method as dialectical, Owen argued that dialectic was the mode of Aristotle’s works in progress, and that it would therefore be inappropriate to seek a high level of doctrinal consistency in them – or to explain inconsistency by dating different «layers» of the text to various different periods. Thus in commenting on the dating of certain books of *De Caelo* and the *Physics* with regard to the fifth element, Owen remarks that «on another view of his methods (see below, on dialectic) it becomes more intelligible that he should try different and even discrepant approaches to a topic at the same time».²

Interpreting Aristotle as a practitioner of dialectical method thus disqualifies, or at least relativizes, the interpretive model of *Schichtenanalyse* («layer analysis») which Jaeger (following an established practice of *Quellenkritik*) employed. This shift had the positive effect of focusing interpretation on the detail of Aristotle’s argumentative procedures. It needed, however, to be defended against another interpretive approach which also assumed dialectic was an important procedure for Aristotle, and focused upon these argumentative procedures – but under the assumption that they operate on the basis of pre-established conclusions, and are employed merely as a means to refute the views of others or reduce them to conformity to certain core doctrines of Aristotle’s own. This was the general tenor of the studies of Harald Cherniss who, in the spirit of another kind of *Quellenkritik* than Jaeger’s *Schichtenanalyse*, subjected Aristotle’s criticism of Plato and the Pre-Socratics itself to a vigorous critique. Against this critique, Owen advanced at least one important counter-example in his interpretation of dialectic and eristic in Aristotle’s treatment of Plato’s forms in the *Topics*. But an even stronger antidote to historicizing readings of Aristotle was to be found in an interpretation which strongly linked the concern for common conceptions with a certain notion of philosophy as concerned with puzzles. To this account we now turn.

3. DIALECTIC, PHILOSOPHY, AND THE SCIENCES

I have argued above that the discovery and development of endoxic and dialectical methods in Aristotle is connected to particular paradigm for interpreting his texts, one

¹ Cf. AUSTIN (1975), p. 38: «And we must at all costs avoid over-simplification, which one might be tempted to call the occupational disease of philosophers if it were not their occupation».

² OWEN (1970), p. 250.

which requires that we locate them against the (historically hard to define) background of «ordinary opinion». As we shall see in this section, this interpretative paradigm is rooted in a certain conception of what the stuff of philosophical argument is, and how it is to be distinguished from scientific procedures. Here, too, we see a question with many points of contact to contemporary philosophical discussions get played out in the interpretation of Aristotle. But the elective affinity between certain British analytic philosophers and ancient philosophy was not limited to Aristotle. Here are some telling remarks near the conclusion of one of Ryle's two essays on Plato's Academy and its relation to Aristotle:

I believe that the correct answer to the question 'What is the philosophical value of elenctic argumentation?' is much the same for both Plato and Aristotle. Both know in their bones that ἀπορία are the driving force of philosophical, as distinct from scientific, thinking; but neither is able to state to himself why this should be so, or what sort of knowledge or insight comes from the unravelling (λύσις) of an ἀπορία. Aristotle says, with his enviable pungency, 'the resolution of a perplexity is discovery' (ἡ γὰρ λύσις τῆς ἀπορίας εὕρεσις ἐστίν) (*Nic. Eth.* 1146b6; cf. *Met.* 995a24-b5); and in his practice he regularly first marshals ἀπορία and then moves to their λύσεις. But he never explains clearly why the person who has never been in an ἀπορία at all is to be pitied rather than envied. It is, however, not for us to complain. We, too, know in our bones how philosophical problems differ in kind from scientific problems; but our statements of the differences continue to be inadequate. Wittgenstein's fly-bottle is the ἀπορία of the Academy. But what has the fly missed that has never got into the bottle, and therefore never looked for or found the way out of it?¹

The reference to Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (§309) and the distinction between scientific and philosophical problems contain audible echoes of a break with positivism and scientific philosophy. Solutions to philosophical problems are not positive but negative. Aristotle and Plato are, at least «in their bones», brothers in the enterprise – for their arguments are basically «elenctic», and thus the product of dialectical procedures.

Ryle's characterization of philosophical argument, in opposition to scientific reasoning, as based upon ἀπορία or «problems» itself based upon further considerations concerning the proper character of philosophical arguments.² According to Ryle, it is the particular domain of the philosopher to reflect upon the principles or presuppositions of the sciences, or of whatever intellectual activity one is engaged in.³ Unlike other intellectual practitioners, the philosopher is concerned with a theory of the presuppositions of all forms of science. The arguments «proper and even proprietary» to philosophy are neither deductive nor inductive, but reductive: operating by «extracting contradictions or logical paradoxes from its material».⁴ The manner in which Ryle formulates the diagnosis and cure of logical paradoxes is dependent upon his own theory of logical types and logical powers, a theory of the relational properties of concepts which makes use of *reductio* argumentation to identify the particular conceptual relation of incompatibility. But Ryle is explicit in locating his own enterprise within the context of a longer, 'dialectical' tradition:

This process can without injustice to the genealogy of the word be called "dialectical", though there seems no reason to constrict the process within the symmetrical confines of the hallowed

¹ RYLE (1990), p. 114.

³ RYLE (1959), p. 327.

² See his inaugural lecture at Oxford: RYLE (1959).

⁴ RYLE (1959), p. 330.

double-entry method often associated with its employment. It is also the procedure followed, though not explicitly prescribed, by those who prefer to describe philosophy as being the clarification of ideas, the analysis of concepts, the study of universals and even the search for definitions.¹

The orientation on *reductio* argumentation, the linking of conceptual analysis with the search for definition and the study of universals: all this points to an ancient analytic philosophical heritage going back to Zeno, Socrates and Plato. That Ryle anchored his own conception of philosophy and its scope in an ancient style of argumentation, and not in any particular thesis or problem, indicates a distinguishing feature of his particular analytic programme, which was quite unlike that of other analytically inclined philosophers of that time. Positive engagement with the history of philosophy did not figure largeley in the movement of analytic philosophy in the middle of the 20th Century. As we know, Quine or Ayer were less disposed to describing their own pursuits with reference to philosophy's past, though past philosophers often served them as a foil. This historical turn in analytic philosophy is perhaps as important as an analytic turn in the history of philosophy.

Would Aristotle recognize the values and aims of his own inquiries in Ryle's description? Would he have ultimately allied himself with a style of argumentation which was philosophical but not scientific, in the sense that it did not prove, but merely tested the theses over others by reducing them to absurdities? This seems doubtful. The author of *Metaphysics A*, at any rate, engages the views of only those predecessors whom he understands as engaged in *causal explanation* in an attempt to show that his own project integrates theirs. This project is presented in the positive terms of a kind of wisdom which is knowledge of the four causes.² The characterization of dialectical philosophy in opposition to positive science would seem even less appropriate for Plato, who stylizes dialectic as the method of the *most* exact of sciences.

But Ryle was right when he noted that Aristotle has little to say on the epistemic merits of dialectic, and is far from providing a justification for it in epistemological terms. There is a gap here, but not only here: it correponds to a gap in Owen's picture of Aristotle's method as it was presented in his contributions to the debate on Aristotle's development. It must still be argued on the grounds of Aristotle's texts how dialectic functions as a 'method', and moreover why Aristotle understands it as concerned with meaning, and why it is admissable in *Ethics* and in *Physics*. The filling of this gap was a project which Owen began, and which a following generation of scholars continued – in part inspired by Owen, but also encouraged by the renewed repute of ethical intuitionism following Rawls' introduction of the method of reflective equilibrium.³

Here, however, I will limit myself to discussing the interpretation of ancient dialectic for finding the proper relationship between philosophy and the sciences, a perennial concern of modern philosophy and a particularly sensitive issue since the *Wiener Kreis*.

¹ RYLE (1959), p. 336.

² See the discussion in *Met. A 1* and its conclusion in 982a2-3 («that the wisdom concerned with certain principles and causes is knowledge, is clear»), together with *Met. A 3*, 983 a 24-b 6, where Aristotle identifies the four causes and introduces the discussion of those «who entered upon an investigation of things and philosophized about truth» in terms of a test for this description: «for either we will discover some other type of cause, or we will increase our trust in the types just mentioned».

³ See the remarks on «The rises and falls of intuitionism» by Philip Stratton Lake in his introduction to STRATTON-LAKE (2002), especially pp. 2-18.

We begin by noting some general assumptions about dialectic which are involved in the analytic interpretations. Owen and Ryle agree (and disagree with Jaeger) in positing a strong continuity in the practice of dialectic, both as a form of argument displayed in Plato's dialogues and a set of argumentative procedures identified by Aristotle as dialectic. Consider, for example, the following statements by Owen concerning dialectic. There is «one form of inquiry which is designed to examine people's assumptions, in mathematics or in morals or wherever: the inquiry or family of inquiries that Plato calls 'dialectic'». ¹ At least one member in this family of inquiries is basically identical, from Socratic argumentative practice all the way to Aristotle's theory of dialectical argumentation:

Dialectic at its simplest is what Socrates and other speakers do most of the time in Plato's earlier dialogues. ... The propositions handled in the argument are the stock material of philosophical discussion, generally matters of common conviction or usage, sometimes the minority views of intellectuals. Aristotle in his own account of dialectic calls them 'things accepted by all men or by the majority or by the wise'. ²

This description assumes a strong continuity in what Owen elsewhere calls the «materials of dialectic». Remarkling on the use of dialectical procedures in the *Physics*, *De caelo* and *De generatione et corruptione*, Owen writes:

The phenomena he now wants to save – or to give logical reasons (rather than empirical evidence) for scrapping – are the common convictions and common linguistic usage of his contemporaries, supplemented by the views of other thinkers. They are what he always represents as the materials of dialectic. ³

This nicely summarizes one significant result of Owen's seminal essay «τιθέναι τὰ φαινόμενα». The resemblance between Owen's description of dialectic's «materials» – «common conceptions» and «common linguistic usage» – and the objects of ordinary language philosophy require no further comment, other than this: it is highly misleading if it is meant as an explication of Aristotle's concept of ἐνδοξία (as it most likely is). But the interpretation of this concept need not concern us yet. Let us look first to the reasons which Owen attributes to Aristotle for using dialectical «materials».

In his essay Owen takes up the problem, already mentioned above, of the «discrepancy between the methods of scientific reasoning recommended in the *Analytics* and those actually followed» in his other works, in particular in the *Physics*. ⁴ He begins with a familiar contrast between the *Posterior Analytics* and the *Physics*: the former presents science as a formal deductive system based on necessary truths, whereas the latter is «more tentative and hospitable» in its premisses and methods. ⁵ Owen offers an alternative contrast: the *Analytics* distinguish the processes of finding and applying the principles, while the *Physics* do not. Moreover, the two works differ in regard to the means by which the principles of science are reached. Owen cites in particular the model of the growth of astronomy offered in *Prior Analytics* I 30:

¹ OWEN (1965b), p. 142.

² OWEN (1965b), p. 143. This account of dialectic in Plato is somewhat simplistic by the standard of Plato scholarship of the time. Compare ROBINSON (1953), who studied various constituent parts of Plato's concept of dialectic developmentally, beginning with the Socratic elenchus, and continuing on with the method of hypothesis (middle period) and the method of division (in later dialogues such as the *Sophist*).

³ OWEN (1970), p. 252.

⁴ OWEN (1961), p. 83.

⁵ OWEN (1961), p. 83.

It is a matter of experience to provide the principles of each subject. In astronomy, for example, it was astronomical experience which provided the principles of astronomical science, for it was only when the *φαινόμενα* were sufficiently grasped that the proofs in astronomy were discovered. And the same holds true for any art of science whatsoever (*An. Pr.* I 30, 46 a 17-22).¹

As Owen notes, there are several other passages in which Aristotle uses the term *φαινόμενα* to refer to the observational basis of *φυσική*.² And he contrasts this model of principle-acquisition with the *Physics*, in which no such collection of data informs Aristotle's discussion. The contrast is between two very different bases for the principles of a science, one 'empirical' and one not. It is in this connection that Owen cites Aristotle's discussion of *ἀκρασία* in *Nicomachean Ethics* 7, in order to illustrate an alternative sense of *φαινόμενα*, one which also accommodates the type of *φαινόμενα* relevant in the *Physics*:

Here as in other cases we must set down the *φαινόμενα* and begin by considering the difficulties, and so go on vindicate if possible all the common conceptions about these states of mind, or at any rate most of them and the most important (*EN* VII 1, 1145 b 2-6).³

In his interpretation of this passage and its context, Owen makes three central interpretive claims. First, he rejects David Ross's translation of *φαινόμενα* here as «observable facts», in pointing out that what Aristotle proceeds to set out are in fact views and not observations. Secondly, in noting that Aristotle concludes his survey with the words: *τὰ μὲν οὖν λεγόμενα ταῦτ' ἐστίν* (1145 b 20), Owen remarks that the *λεγόμενα* cited «turn out as so often to be partly matters of linguistic usage or, if you prefer, of the conceptual structure as revealed by language».⁴ As discussed above, Owen is careful to preserve the ambiguity of *φαινόμενα* and its alleged sub-sets, *λεγόμενα* and *ἔνδοξα*. But he also differentiates the possible referents of *λεγόμενα* according to context, stating that «an appeal to a *λεγόμενον* may be an appeal either to common belief about matters of fact or to established forms of language or to a philosophical thesis claiming the factual virtues of the first and the analytic certainty of the second».⁵

¹ *An. Pr.* I 30, 46 a 17-22: διὸ τὰς μὲν ἀρχὰς τὰς περὶ ἕκαστον ἐμπειρίας ἐστὶ παραδοῦναι, λέγω δ' οἷον τὴν ἀστρολογικὴν μὲν ἐμπειρίαν τῆς ἀστρολογικῆς ἐπιστήμης (ληφθέντων γὰρ ἱκανῶς τῶν φαινόμενων οὕτως εὐρέθησαν αἱ ἀστρολογικαὶ ἀποδείξεις), ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ περὶ ἄλλην ὁποιαοῦν ἔχει τέχνην τε καὶ ἐπιστήμην. The translation is my own.

² Owen cites *De part. an.* A 1, 639 b 5-10 with 640 a 13-15; *De caelo* III 7, 306 a 5-17; *An. Post.* A 13, 78 b 39; *De caelo* II 13, 293 a 23-30; *Meta.* Λ 8, 1073 b 32-38; BONITZ (1870), 809 a 34ff.

³ *EN* VII 1, 1145 b 2-6: δεῖ δ', ὥσπερ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων, τιθέντας τὰ φαινόμενα καὶ πρῶτον διαπορήσαντας οὕτω δεικνύναι μάλιστα μὲν πάντα τὰ ἔνδοξα περὶ ταῦτα τὰ πάθη, εἰ δὲ μή, τὰ πλεῖστα καὶ κυριώτατα. The translation is by Ross, as cited in OWEN (1961), p. 85.

⁴ OWEN (1961), p. 85.
⁵ OWEN (1961), p. 89. Owen draws his examples for all three types of referring to *λεγόμενα* from the *Nicomachean Ethics*. 1. As an appeal to common belief about a matter of fact he cites *EN* I 11, 1101 a 22-24: «That the fortunes of one's descendants and all of his friends should not affect in any way his happiness, seems to be a very loveless notion and opposed to opinions». 2. As an appeal to established forms of language he cites *EN* VII 2, 1145 b 19-20: «Furthermore, akratics are said to be akratic with respect to courage, honor and gain», and *EN* VII 2, 1146 b 4-5: «No one has all the forms of incontinence, but we say that some people are incontinent without qualification». 3. As an appeal to «a philosophical thesis claiming the factual virtues of the first and the analytic certainty of the second», Owen cites *EN* I 8, 1098 b 12-18, where Aristotle claims an agreement between a common division of goods into extrinsic and bodily-psychical, and the idea (which «we say») that activities and actualizations concerning the soul are best. This is adduced as support for Aristotle's claim that happiness consists in a rational function of the soul – «so that it would be well said, both according to an opinion both ancient and agreed upon by the philosophers» (1098 b 17-18). To speak of «analytic certainty» with regard to this unusually rhetorical passage in the *Ethics* seems strange – Aristotle's attempt to persuade invokes not certainty but two sources of authority: tradition, and the consensus of the wise.

Third, Owen was careful to note that even if Aristotle's uses of the terms *φαινόμενα* and *λεγόμενα* could vary and be ambiguous, they were not to be conflated. The ambiguity in Aristotle's use of the term *φαινόμενα* belied a common aspect of both perceptual and non-perceptual information: each kind of *φαινόμενα* is fallible and subject to scrutiny before it may even pass as 'data'.¹

The regard for non-perceptual *φαινόμενα*, for *λεγόμενα* and also for *ἔνδοξα* was thus assimilated to a philosophical endeavor compatible with, but different from, empirical science. Even if Aristotle states that «the goal of *φυσική* is that which always seems most true in perception» (*De caelo* III 7, 306 a 16-17), there is nevertheless room in this conception of *φυσική* for a *Physics* which is not bound by perceptual *φαινόμενα*. But how are these parts of Aristotle's science related? Owen is suggestive on this point, but not definite. The analyses of the *Physics* proper are «preliminary to other more empirical enquiries and consequently must be justified, in the last resort, by their success in making sense of the observations to which they are applied».² Though this investigation is preliminary to more empirical inquiries and draws, for the most part, upon a different kind of *φαινόμενα*, it is not unempirical, not even when its primary material consists of *ἔνδοξα*: «*Ἐνδοξα* also rest on experience, even if they misrepresent it. If they did not Aristotle could find no place for them in his epistemology; as it is, an *ἔνδοξον* that is shared by all men is *ipso facto* beyond challenge».³

This reading would have had resonating appeal in the environment of post-Positivist analytic philosophy. It found a place for philosophical procedures which were empirical but not subordinate to any particular empirical science. Far from being subordinate, dialectic was even foundational for the starting-points of science. Owen could cite one very suggestive passage for this particular interpretive claim. Aristotle states in the *Topics* that one of the uses of that investigation regards the *πρῶτα* of each particular science:

Furthermore, the study is useful for the first things with respect to each science. For, as it is impossible to say anything about the principles of each particular science upon their basis, since the principles are first of all, it is necessary to go through all the *ἔνδοξα* about them. And this is particular to, or most characteristic of, dialectic. For, being probative, it offers a way to the principles of all other types of procedures (*Top.* A 2, 101 a 36-101 b 4).⁴

The passage is definite in distinguishing dialectic from the proper procedures of particular sciences, and in attributing to dialectic the use of *ἔνδοξα*. But does the use of *ἔνδοξα* suffice for claiming that a dialectical 'method' is in play? This is a tacit assumption made by Owen and many later authors under his influence. It has recently, and rightly, been challenged.⁵ The adjective *ἔνδοξος*, which we may translate with Barnes as «reputable», does not refer in Greek to something epistemically basic in the sense of «obvious».⁶ And apart from this, it is not at all characteristic of Aristotle's procedures in the *Ethics* or

¹ OWEN (1961), p. 90.

² OWEN (1961), p. 91.

³ OWEN (1961), p. 90.

⁴ *Top.* A 2, 101 a 36-101 b 4: ἔτι δὲ πρὸς τὰ πρῶτα τῶν περὶ ἐκάστην ἐπιστήμην. ἐκ μὲν γὰρ τῶν οἰκείων τῶν κατὰ τὴν προτεθεῖσαν ἐπιστήμην ἀρχῶν ἀδύνατον εἰπεῖν τι περὶ αὐτῶν, ἐπειδὴ πρῶται αἱ ἀρχαὶ ἀπάντων εἰσὶ, διὰ δὲ τῶν περὶ ἕκαστα ἐνδόξων ἀνάγκη περὶ αὐτῶν διελθεῖν. τοῦτο δ' ἴδιον ἢ μάλιστα οἰκείον τῆς διαλεκτικῆς ἐστίν· ἔξεταστικὴ γὰρ οὖσα πρὸς τὰς ἀπασῶν τῶν μεθόδων ἀρχὰς ὁδὸν ἔχει. The translation is my own.

⁵ FREDE (2012).

⁶ FREDE (2012), p. 199: «... 'reputable' has to be taken with caution, in the sense that it entails no entitlement to truth in the case of propositions and to acceptance by everyone».

elsewhere to have recourse to the «obvious» or «ordinary» in the sense of that which is uninferred.¹ The recent critiques of inflationary interpretations of the endoxic method based upon the passage in *Nicomachean Ethics* 7.2 are thus long overdue, and include many incisive remarks which go far in correcting the excesses in the interpretation of Aristotle's notion of ἐνδοξία and dialectic. But they do not fully explain the 'mystique' of ἐνδοξία. The 'mystique', or rather real attractiveness, of ἐνδοξία is (or perhaps now rather: was) due in large part to the potential this concept acquired in the specific context of a particular kind of post-Positivist analytic philosophy. This was an analytic philosophy which, like analytic philosophy at its origins, was focused upon logic and language. Yet unlike the logical philosophy of Frege and Tarski, it was ready to take a position on problems in philosophical epistemology and eager to positively engage metaphysics.² One pressing epistemological problem, directly related to philosophy's relationship to empirical science, concerns the very possibility of sorting 'content' into parts linguistic and empirical. The integrity of philosophical epistemology as a discipline independent of empirical science depends to no small extent upon the possibility to do this. And it faced a challenge from within analytic philosophy itself: the challenge to the distinction between analytic and synthetic, between concepts and intuitions, or between the 'given' and the 'mental'.³ It is well-known that one prominent critic of these «dogmas of Empiricism» concluded with characteristic consistency that philosophy could be wholly replaced by science.

Owen's Aristotle is both alive to this problem, and capable of staking out a place for specifically philosophical methods which are well-defined and empirical without being subordinate, or reducible to, a particular science. Aristotle is not a naïve empiricist, as evidenced by his «loose and inclusive» (Nussbaum) notion of φαινόμενα, which integrates both linguistic-conceptual and perceptual kinds of data. Accordingly, the procedures of Aristotle's investigations are not always limited to the perceptual φαινόμενα, even if these play a decisive role in certain kinds of natural science. Moreover, these philosophical methods are charged with examining anything which raises a claim to be accepted as a starting-point in investigation. That Aristotle himself should define this particular procedure as argument from ἐνδοξία was no hindrance to their general applicability, as long as ἐνδοξία were understood in a sufficiently broad sense as «common conceptions» and «conceptual structure as revealed by language». A certain sub-set of these common conceptions could even serve as the intuitive foundation for epistemology, in analogy to the *a priori*.⁴ Philosophy in the spirit of Austin and Ryle could not have found a more congenial ancient philosopher.

4. CONCLUSION

In making ἐνδοξία out to be common views', positing such views as the 'material' of an outcome-neutral procedure of dialectic, and attributing to Aristotle such a dialectical method, Owen – and many interpreters following him – made an interpretive move with several consequences. One consequence of this approach was that it defused cer-

¹ FREDE (2012), pp. 187-193. See also COOPER (2009).

² See RORTY (1979), pp. 257 ff.

³ RORTY (1979), pp. 168-169.

⁴ OWEN (1961), p. 90: «Ἐνδοξία also rest on experience, even if they misrepresent it. If they did not Aristotle could find no place for them in his epistemology; as it is, an ἐνδοξίον that is shared by all men is *ipso facto* beyond challenge».

tain other approaches to Aristotle's texts, such as the method of *Schichtenanalyse* employed by Jaeger for the purposes of analyzing Aristotle's development. Another, and for our purposes more important, consequence was that it made Aristotle's argumentative procedures resemble, at least in certain important respects, the ordinary language philosophy which held sway in the Oxford of Owen's day. The 'material' of Aristotle's dialectical arguments now embraced ordinary language and the intuitions which attend to it, as well as philosophers' theses. They were not limited to the particular «things which seem true to all, or the majority, or the wise» of his own time, or (*contra* Cherniss) on Aristotle's own blinkered interpretation. The material of his methods, as well as the procedures themselves, became broader and overlapped with those of contemporary philosophy.¹ Seen in this light, Aristotle's criticism of his predecessors is not the product of eristic zeal, but a reflection of his skepticism toward a philosophical sophistication which is deaf to Common Sense.²

Locating the historic roots of this interpretation is not the same as criticizing it, even if it points to an anachronism. Anachronism, in itself, is not objectionable as a mode of philosophical interpretation, and in fact it can be quite productive. We must judge the interpretation on its overall philosophical and historical merits. And this interpretation certainly has its merits. It increased appreciation for the semantic observations which inform much of Aristotle's philosophy throughout the corpus, and stimulated further work in this vein.³ The deflection of certain philological and historicizing approaches to the interpretation of Aristotle, in particular approaches from source criticism, have left Aristotle as a reputable authority for information about the views of his predecessors and contemporaries largely intact. On the other hand, this probably killed much of the impetus to understand Aristotle more exactly in historical context, and made developmental studies less attractive. Whether this is good or bad cannot be a question of consideration here; it certainly is a significant result when one considers how a few articles of Owen melted the arsenal of historical and philological critique mounted by Cherniss' massive and dense publications.

The justification of Aristotle's procedures in terms of Oxford, ordinary language style analytic philosophy had perhaps the most significant implications. In consequence, Aristotle (or what counted as Aristotle) became a serious philosophical interlocutor in a whole range of contemporary discussions, many of them generated well after Aristotle, from the philosophy of action (Davidson) to problems in the metaphysics of persons (Wiggins), and the theory of justice (Rawls). Of course this was, in itself, nothing new: Aristotelianism has ever been an engaging of Aristotle with the problems and concerns of later readers. But one consequence of the general and persisting tendency to connect ancient texts with contemporary analytic philosophy should be drawn: this means that the history of ancient philosophy belongs itself, at least in part, to the history of analytic philosophy. The study of Aristotle in an analytic framework is an enterprise which we should gladly welcome, so long as it is pursued with rigor and philological competence. But it must be complemented by an awareness of the place of analytic philosophy in the history of philosophy, as well as some knowledge of the history of «Aristotelian research» in a broad sense, including both Aristotle

¹ This consequence of Owen's interpretation was drawn out by NUSSBAUM (1982).

² This consequence of Owen's interpretation was drawn out by BARNES (1980).

³ See for example IRWIN (1988), SHIELDS (1999).

scholarship and philosophical movements which appropriate Aristotle for their various ends. As it turns out, the boundaries between these two types of «Aristotelian research» are fluid.

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