

# Book Reviews

Thomas Alexander Szlezák. *Platon: Meisterdenker der Antike*. Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 2021. Pp. 779. Hardback, €38.00.

Since 1976, when Thomas A. Szlezák held his inaugural lecture as a private lecturer (*Privatdozent*) at the University of Zurich entitled “The Dialogue Form and Esotericism: On the Interpretation of the Platonic Dialogue the *Phaedrus*” (“Dialogform und Esoterik. Zur Deutung des platonischen Dialogs *Phaidros*”), the now-emeritus professor at Tübingen has advocated a particular interpretation of the Platonic dialogues and especially of the *Phaedrus*: namely, that what is referred to in the latter dialogue—without further explanation—as “more valuable” (*timiōtera*) than what is set down in writing corresponds to Plato’s “so called unwritten doctrines” (Aristotle, *Physics* IV.2, 209b14–15), or for Szlezák, “unwritten positions ascribed” (116–17) to Plato. This expression ‘more valuable’ does not merely refer to occasional oral help provided by the author in order to better understand his writings, but rather to those Platonic views that were transmitted in unwritten form, whose contents go beyond what is found in the written *Corpus Platonicum* and that specifically concern the principles of his philosophy. Having collected a large portion of his scholarly output in his *Essays on Greek Literature and Philosophy* (*Aufsätze zur griechischen Literatur und Philosophie* [Baden-Baden: Academia Verlag, 2019]), Szlezák now presents here a “summa” of his research in three parts for a broader public: (1) Life, (2) Works, and (3) Plato’s thought. Additionally, there are two appendices: one on the *Seventh Letter* and another dedicated to the concepts of irony and register.

In the first part of the book, Szlezák claims, among other things, that the “unforgettable” Socrates, as we know him from the early and middle dialogues, is a “creation of Plato” (43). Szlezák rightly notes that Socrates understood his philosophical activity—that is, his activity of “examining himself and others” (*Apology* 28e5–6)—as a service to the God (*Apology* 23c1), and that Plato’s *Apology* was not written immediately after Socrates’s trial in 399 BC, but “years later,” as Nietzsche had already concluded (“The *Apology* is such a masterpiece, that it can only be attributed to a fully mature author” [*Lecture Notes*, WS 1874/75–WS 1878/79, *History of Greek Literature I and II*, in *Nietzsche Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), II-5:196–97]). Szlezák sees the Platonic Academy as a cross between a private university and a life community oriented toward free research. Plato’s three Sicilian voyages are recounted at length, along with his relationship to Dion, who was “the great love of Plato’s life” (84).

In the second part of the book, Szlezák emphasises that “everything that Plato published” was “preserved for posterity” (95). However, Plato should not be understood solely on the basis of his written publications, but also on the basis of the “unwritten positions ascribed” (116) to him. In an extended interpretation of the *Seventh Letter*, whose authenticity according to Szlezák can be assumed in the absence of proof to the contrary, Szlezák interprets the famous claim that what Plato is seriously concerned with is not sayable, unlike other doctrines, in a twofold sense: on the one hand, the “transmission of the spark” (187) is not sayable; on the other hand, the “dialectical thought-processes leading to the illumination of understanding” (187) should not be communicated (in writing), because they would then also be accessible to readers who have neither the character traits nor the intellectual capacities necessary to understand them.

In the book's voluminous third part, Szlezák provides specific interpretations of Plato's metaphilosophy, anthropology, theory of the soul, ethics, politics, cosmology, discovery of the Forms, and theory of principles, and, finally, of Plato's views of myths, religion, gods, and the "God." In doing so, Szlezák draws attention to the so-called "passages of omission" (*Aussparungstellen*) (198–200, 210–17, 242–44 *passim*), which point toward the "unwritten positions ascribed" to Plato; he provides an imposing overview of Plato's thought; and he defends claims such as that the Platonic Forms have "change, life, soul and understanding" (*Sophist* 248e6–7)—that is, that the Platonic world of Forms is "a self-thinking, transcendent intellect" (474–75). But the dark side of Plato's politics is not overlooked either, such as not to raise the "disabled" children of the proposed ruling class.

It is impossible to do justice here to this extraordinary book. That said, it does raise a number of questions. First of all, the immense secondary literature, especially on Plato's thought, is only selectively referred to. For instance, why is there no mention, for example, of the competing interpretation of the *Seventh Letter* advanced by the Italian Plato scholar Luigi Stefanini (*Platone*, vol. I, 2nd rev. ed. [Milan, 1949, repr. Padova: Istituto Di Filosofia, 1991], chap. 3, xxxii), which enables the philosopher to reach not the truth, but only "truth-likeness" (*verosimiglianza*) (chap. 4, xlvi)? Furthermore, how is the "illumination" in the *Seventh Letter* to be understood? Since the Platonic *nous* is "always [connected] with true *logos*" (*Timaeus* 51e3), the "light" in the soul would have to be a "super-*nous*" (so to speak) that no longer knows "with true *logos*" or true propositions. However, the soul of the philosopher is also embodied, and, at least according to *Phaedo* 66e2–67a2, only arrives at the goal of ultimate understanding after death. Must the soul, then, not be disembodied in this life to reach this "light" while still alive? Is the best that the embodied soul, even that of the philosopher king and queen, can attain not the full truth, but a mere "approximation" to the truth, if *nous* is only "closest (*engytata*) in kinship and likeness" to the "fifth" item, that is, the Platonic Form (*Seventh Letter*, 342d1; cf. *Phaedo* 67a3)? The ideal city, too, can only be realized approximatively (cf. *Republic* 473a8). Whether Plato—who in the later *Philebus* refers to the Socratic "divination" about the Form of the Good (*Philebus* 64a3)—left his teacher so far behind him that he himself no more divines, but knows, and allows his embodied philosopher kings and queens to know, what his teacher did not, remains an open question, since no one can peer into Plato's mind. To modify Goethe's *Faust* (II, v. 9983): *Mit meiner Königin zu seyn, verlangt mich heiß*: Plato fervently desired to be with his queen and king, but did he ever forget the "unforgettable" Socrates and the Socratic interpretation of the Delphic oracle: "This one of you, O human beings, is wisest, who, like Socrates, recognizes that he is in truth worthless in respect to wisdom" (*Apology*, 23bc–4, trans. Brickhouse/Smith with modification)? Ultimately, we must ask the question of the extent to which the unwritten Platonic positions of the One and the Indefinite Dyad belong in a museum of philosophy or remain relevant for today and the future.

However we might answer these and other questions, Szlezák's book is a wonderful accomplishment that also introduces new (or at least unusual) elements to Platonic thought, for example, an interpretation of the Platonic world of Forms as "a self-thinking, transcendent intellect." His philological skill and lucid style are particularly commendable. Plato's admirers and specialists owe Szlezák a considerable debt of gratitude for the fact that he once again did take the "path of Eros" (cf. *Parmenides* 137a6) and completed this magnum opus. (I thank Ch. Jorgenson for helping me with my English.)

RAFAEL FERBER

*University of Lucerne / University of Zürich*

Matthew Duncombe. *Ancient Relativity: Plato, Aristotle, Stoics, and Sceptics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. xii + 294. Hardback, \$70.00.

In this book, Matthew Duncombe argues that Plato, Aristotle, certain Stoics, and Sextus Empiricus each held a broadly "constitutive" view of relativity. According to constitutive

accounts, a “relative” (one *relatum* in a relation) is constituted by the relation that it bears to its “correlative” (the other *relatum* in that relation) (3, 14). Such treatments of relativity sharply contrast with more familiar nonconstitutive accounts, according to which standing in some relation suffices for being a relative. On such a view, versions of which many scholars have assumed to be at work in antiquity, Alcibiades counts as a relative because he is related to Socrates through the “is more beautiful than” relation. On constitutive views, by contrast, only items like “the more beautiful thing”—items that are such that being them depends only on bearing a relation to something else—count as relatives. This book argues that such a view, foreign and ontologically fine-grained though it is, underlies ancient philosophical thinking on a large variety of topics. Duncombe convincingly shows that a proper appreciation of this view allows us to make new progress on certain longstanding interpretive issues in the texts he discusses.

The book’s introduction distinguishes the constitutive account from several nonconstitutive ones and helpfully details some of the formal features of constitutive relatives. For instance: if  $x$  is relative to  $y$ , then (i)  $x$  relates only to  $y$  (exclusivity) and (ii)  $y$  is relative to  $x$  (reciprocity) (16–17). Chapter 2 then proceeds to show that these formal features of constitutive relativity are at work in a variety of passages in Plato. The varied nature of the passages Duncombe surveys makes for a strong initial case that Plato holds a constitutive view, but the exegetical value of the project becomes most apparent in the following two chapters, where Duncombe shows that an appreciation of constitutive relativity makes available attractive solutions to two major interpretive cruxes. In chapter 3, Duncombe shows that a constitutive account provides us with a reading of the “Greatest Difficulty” at *Parmenides* 133c–134e—a challenge to the theory of the Forms that has been described as “almost grossly fallacious” (52)—on which that argument is valid and does not beg the question against proponents of the Forms. The following chapter then considers Plato’s argument for the separation of reason from appetite in *Republic* book 4. Duncombe first shows that the question whether this argument produces either too few or too many soul parts amounts to the question whether certain opposite relatives relate exclusively to the same thing. He then persuasively argues that, on Plato’s constitutive view, the relevant opposites—thirst and aversion to drink—do so. However, as Duncombe points out in the conclusion of this chapter, this view about opposite relatives forms an inconsistent set with the two key formal features: exclusivity and reciprocity. Here I worry that Duncombe’s “tentative” solution to that problem—that the linguistic expressions for correlatives in such cases are ambiguous (88)—undermines his elegant answer to the issues that this chapter set out to solve. According to such a picture, thirst relates to *drink* (*relative to thirst*), whereas aversion to drink relates to *drink* (*relative to aversion to drink*). However, on this view, although thirst and aversion to drink respect the formal features of reciprocity and exclusivity, they no longer appear to relate to *the same thing*, raising yet again the worry that the partition argument produces either too few or too many soul parts.

Chapter 5 transitions to Aristotle and surveys his explicit treatment of various formal features of constitutive relativity in the *Categories*, *Topics*, and *Sophistical Refutations*. Duncombe’s aim here is “exposition and problem solving rather than a diatribe in favor of the constitutive reading” (116), but a fuller, more polemical treatment of Aristotle’s discussion of babbling in the *Sophistical Refutations* could have helped his case. After all, Aristotle’s remark in that passage that “one ought not to allow that predications of things said in relation to something signify something when separated off by themselves” (*SE* 181b26–27) is one of the key pieces of ancient evidence for the most common nonconstitutive view, according to which relatives are “incomplete” predicates (8). The following two chapters then further illustrate the puzzle-solving power of the constitutive view. Chapter 6 shows that Aristotle’s distinction between “schematic” and “specific” readings of relative terms allows him to distinguish relatives from (parts of secondary) substances. Chapter 7 then argues that Aristotle’s treatment of relatives in *Categories* 7 and *Metaphysics* 5.15 are not substantially different. In addition to demonstrating the exegetical value of the constitutive approach, a second major concern of the book is to show that thought about relativity affected ancient

philosophers' broader philosophical views. Chapter 8 reintroduces a prominent example of this phenomenon from chapter 3—the difficulties that constitutive relativity creates for the theory of the Forms—and persuasively reconstructs one of Aristotle's arguments against the Forms in *On Ideas* as a valid reductio, based only on assumptions about the nature of relativity that are shared by Aristotle and his Platonist targets.

Chapters 9 and 10 take up the Stoic treatment of relatives. Chapter 9 provides a constitutive reading of two kinds of relatives that the Stoics distinguished. "Relatively disposed things," like "father," are directly constituted by a relation, whereas "differentiated relatives," like knowledge and perception, are directly constituted by a power that is, in turn, constituted by a relation to its correlative. Chapter 10 then surveys the philosophical uses the Stoics may have made of these notions. For instance, Duncombe finds a role for differentiated relatives in the Stoic account of mixture and makes illuminating use of his account of relatively disposed things in reconstructing a debate between Aristo and Chrysippus about the unity of virtue.

The study concludes with Sextus Empiricus, who, according to Duncombe, operates with a "conceptual" view of relativity in his arguments against his dogmatic opponents. The conceptual view modifies the standard constitutive view by introducing the qualification that a relative "is constituted by being *conceived* relative to something" (244). Duncombe suggests that Sextus moves to the conceptual level because the standard constitutive views involve claims about the natures of relatives—claims that Sextus, as a Pyrrhonian Skeptic, cannot endorse (245). This is an intriguing example of Duncombe's third major thesis in the book, that philosophers' larger philosophical outlooks affected their views of relativity (249), but I found myself wondering whether this explanation for Sextus's innovation is consistent with the idea that skeptics speak without endorsing the claims they make (*PH* I,13; 192–93), which Duncombe invokes in claiming that Sextus's commitment to conceptual relativity is purely dialectical (233, 237). If Sextus's remarks about relativity are purely dialectical, considerations about what Sextus, as a skeptic, can and cannot endorse should be irrelevant.

This book is a rare kind of achievement in ancient scholarship, dealing as it does with a subject that is understudied and yet, as Duncombe convincingly shows, indispensable for properly understanding ancient philosophical thought on many key topics. Given the range of problems on which the book makes new progress, it will be a rewarding read for just about anyone working on Greek philosophy.

IAN J. CAMPBELL

*Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin*

Jack Visnjic. *The Invention of Duty: Stoicism as Deontology*. Philosophia Antiqua 157. Leiden: Brill, 2021. Pp. xiv + 174. Hardback, €90.00.

This provocative study presents philological, philosophical, and historical arguments that with the Greek term καθήκον (*kathēkon*, pl. *kathēkonta*) and its Latin equivalent *officium* the ancient Stoics invented a new concept that anticipated the modern notion of moral duty, for example, *Pflicht* in Kant. Scholars began to shift from translating *kathēkon* as "duty" to translating it as "appropriate or fitting action" in the late 1800s, according to Visnjic. The usage of the verb *kathēkein* in Greek literature prior to the Stoics suggests to him that it described something prescribed by law, tradition, or decree. Visnjic believes the etymology of *kathēkon* offered by Zeno, the founder of the Stoa, was meant to reveal the additional sense of "what has come in front of someone." This is interpreted to fit with both how Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius seem to use the term as well as the idea in Stoic ethics that we ought not to feel dissatisfied with our station in life, but rather focus on performing the duties attached to our prescribed roles. Moreover, *kathēkonta* come to be "in accordance with one's character" throughout each stage of one's biological and social development, as described by the Stoic theory of *oikeiōsis* ("appropriation").

The second major thesis builds on recent scholarly work to contend that, contrary to the traditional assumption, the Stoics did not conceive of *kathēkonta* as rules of conduct but as prescriptions specific to situations. They held that there are some universal duties, like believing in the gods, believing that the gods are benevolent guardians of humanity, and being a good person, but that such duties offer no concrete, practical guidance for determining how to act. Some *kathēkonta* obtain in usual circumstances, like honoring one's parents, siblings, and country. Other *kathēkonta* obtain only in dire circumstances, like stabbing oneself, incest, and cannibalism. A typology of Stoic duties is constructed, dividing them into those that are always prescribed (i.e. perfect duties, performed on the basis of virtue) and those that are not always prescribed (i.e. so-called "middle duties"), which are subdivided into those in normal situations and those in dire circumstances (*peristaseis*). Visnjic emphasizes the importance of the "middle duties" lying between the extreme of perfect virtue possessed only by sages and the extreme of perennial viciousness of fools. This middle space is "inhabited by the vast majority of us, who undoubtedly make plenty of mistakes but may also aspire to perform our (middle) duties as much as possible" (55). This blurs a sharp distinction between the external act and the epistemic state of the agent. Both sages and nonsages can, for example, dutifully act to honor their parents, but nonsages do so lacking the wisdom that only sages possess. Visnjic explains how scenarios where we select or reject what we would normally not select or reject change our deliberative calculation among things that are neither morally good nor morally bad (*adiaphora*, "indifferents") by forcing new objects of value or disvalue into the equation: eating human flesh is preferable to starvation; incest is preferable to extinction of the human race.

The two core chapters are the most imaginative and probably the most controversial. Visnjic reconstructs a method of deliberation by which the Stoics meant to guide not aspiring sages, but ordinary people hoping to progress toward virtue. From Cicero and Seneca, he reconstructs the content of the *formula* informing this deliberation. This formula is not a rule, but a set of three interrelated doctrines or tenets: (1) Nature made us social beings with common interests and a common law; (2) all human beings are parts of one body; and (3) the benefit of each individual and the benefit of all together should be the same.

The idea that our responsibilities are determined by our various relational roles (e.g. son, brother, father, friend, neighbor, teacher, patient, citizen) forms the core of *role ethics*. An especially bold thesis is that role ethics was not Epictetus's innovation but played a key part in the theory of *kathēkon* at least since Panaetius. Visnjic criticizes Brian E. Johnson, *The Role Ethics of Epictetus: Stoicism in Ordinary Life* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014), for ascribing originality to Epictetus for reframing all of Stoic ethics in terms of roles while downplaying the four canonical virtues. Johnson interprets Cicero's *De Officiis* as packaging Stoic ethics principally in the four traditional virtues with his four *personae* solely serving the fifth virtue of *decorum*, whereas Visnjic contends that the four *personae* framework of Cicero (Panaetius) encapsulates a comprehensive rubric for moral deliberation (89). Visnjic judges the first *persona*, encompassing our rationality, humanity, and deliberative faculty, to be the most important for determining our duty (93), yet it is difficult to see how rationality-cum-humanity-cum-deliberative faculty constitutes a *role* for Cicero. More instructive on Stoic roles is Brian Marrin, "Ariston of Chios and the Sage as Actor: On the Stoic Concept of *Persona*," *Ancient Philosophy* 40 (2020): 179–95. Moreover, the uncertainty about how much of *De Officiis* derives from Panaetius and how much is Cicero's own spin warrants caution if not (Ciceronian) skepticism.

The most innovative contribution of this work is the collection and collation of pieces of practical advice scattered throughout extant sources to devise a four-stage process of deliberation. The preparatory stage consists in the injunction "Do not rush to act. Remember to do only what reason commands or what can be rationally justified." Second stage: "Make sure your action will be done for the sake of the right end (viz. virtue = the good = conformity with nature)." Third stage: "With the proper end in mind, calculate the value of the relevant indifferents and select them accordingly as means to that end." Final stage: "Do not fail to act once you have rationally determined the right thing to do" (98).

The two chapters on Kant seem comparatively cursory. Solid historical spadework from Kant's biography yields a plausible sketch of the Stoic ideas he was likely to have learned as well as errors he made interpreting them. Yet several scholarly lapses are troublesome. First, the claim that "Cicero downplays any religious element in Stoicism" (119) is egregious, given Cicero's voluminous discussions of Stoic theology in *De Natura Deorum*, *De Divinatione*, and *De Fato*. Second, Visnjic repudiates the statement that "*Pflicht* (duty) and *Wille* (will) have nothing in Stoicism which corresponds to them," citing "Long 1974, 208" in a footnote (120)—annoyingly, no such reference appears in the bibliography. Third, the all-too-brief discussion of Kant and the Stoics on suicide neglects to cite Michael J. Seidler, "Kant and the Stoics on Suicide," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 44 (1983): 429–53.

When contrasting Kant's view of *Glückseligkeit* with the Stoic conception of *eudaimonia*, Visnjic insists that the latter "has nothing to do with the satisfaction of desire, but is just another way of saying 'living in accordance with nature' or 'living virtuously'" (115). Yet Epictetus, for instance, tirelessly repeats that *eudaimonia* results from having the *correct* desires, namely, desires regarding only what is "up to us" (*eph' hēmin*) or "ours," specifically, making the correct assents and decisions, forming the correct beliefs and judgments, and having the correct intentions and attitudes. Otherwise, we are doomed to be miserable slaves to the countless things "not up to us." Correct desires accordingly produce genuine freedom, imperturbability (*ataraxia*), and what the Stoics call life's "smooth flow" (*europaia*). To bungle these nuances of Stoic *eudaimonia* is a serious flaw.

On the whole, this book, at times daringly inventive and occasionally unapologetically speculative, is a welcome reminder of what we already knew but can now appreciate even more—that the shadow the ancient Stoics have cast on the history of philosophy looms larger and deeper the more dutifully we study it.

WILLIAM O. STEPHENS

Creighton University

Peter Adamson. *Al-Rāzī*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. Pp. 264. Paper, \$35.00.

As there are several famous al-Rāzī relevant to philosophy, I need first to specify that this remarkable book deals with Abū Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariyyā' al-Rāzī (d. 925), also known as "Galen of the Arabs," and in Latin as well as in the *Canterbury Tales* as "al-Rhazes." He proudly presented himself as both a philosopher and a physician taking Galen (129–after 200 AD) as his model. Just as in Hellenistic times Galen was highly valued as a physician but put demeaned as a philosopher, so often was al-Rāzī. This book reinstates al-Rāzī as an interesting philosopher, who claims to be a disciple of Galen and Plato but clearly understands that discipleship implies following Galen's own example of avoiding uncritical acceptance of his masters's views and of testing them. Recently Pauline Koetschet published a masterly edition with an extensive introduction and notes to his *Doubts against Galen* (Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, *Doutes sur Galien*. [Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019]), which testifies to al-Rāzī's search for truth and to his philosophical acumen. Following suit Adamson titles his first chapter "Doubts about Rāzī" but Adamson's doubts are of a different sort.

Adamson's first chapter not only gives information about al-Rāzī's life and works, but also explains the great difficulties one encounters working on his philosophy. The main problem is that in contrast to his medical works few of his philosophical works have survived. Thus, one needs to rely on indirect information, which at times seems very biased. This explains why some Islamic thinkers dubbed al-Rāzī the "heretic" and attributed to him unusual views such as belief in transmigration and denial of prophecy. In this chapter Adamson not only managed to clearly explain a complex situation but also raises doubts about the accuracy of some of these reports. The following chapters focus on the five eternal principles—God, Soul (a world soul), Matter, and Time and Place—at the basis of al-Rāzī's views, which are mainly known through reports. In each case Adamson carefully explains which reports are available and which degree of accuracy each of them deserves

and how well each fits with the little evidence we can get from al-Rāzī's own works. He also takes into account the secondary literature and evaluates it with fairness and courtesy. This coherent and balanced presentation of al-Rāzī's metaphysics required plenty of work and Adamson cautiously builds this presentation while indicating what information seems secure and what seems more hypothetical.

Adamson claims that al-Rāzī choose to have five eternal principles in order to explain suffering and what he considers an overabundance of evils originating in an action of the World Soul, thereby absolving God of any responsibility for evil. In fact, after the Soul's fall into matter, God grants humans intellect to help mitigate the evil inflicted by this fall. The extant works, particularly *The Spiritual Medicine* and the *Philosophical Life*, certainly support this hypothesis and present ethics as an attempt to minimize evil and suffering as much as possible in imitation of God's action.

The chapter on eternal matter includes an interesting section on alchemy, which al-Rāzī wrote on and practiced. Adamson there raises the question of the connection between al-Rāzī's metaphysical views and his practice of alchemy.

After the four chapters on the five eternals, Adamson tackles the disputed issue of al-Rāzī's views on prophecy. He thinks that, as al-Rāzī had attacked the Ismaili belief in an infallible Imām, the Ismailis unfairly attributed to him a denial of any form of prophecy. Reports of such denial do not crop up much in other theological schools. Al-Rāzī certainly defended some unorthodox positions, but they do not seem to have been as extreme as his arch-adversaries made them.

There follows a chapter on the Razian views of medicine and its foundations. As many of al-Rāzī's medical works have survived and exercised much influence, Adamson's task is easier and more straightforward. He focuses on the relation between al-Rāzī's medical views and particularly its methodology and his philosophy.

Finally, the book tackles ethics, the philosophical field, for which we have most extant works and, therefore, more previous scholarly literature. Adamson makes clear that much of Razian ethics rests on or is in contrast to Galen's views (a couple of Galen's ethical texts survived only in Arabic version) and on Plato's *Timaeus*, may be known only through Galen's summary of it. Quite rightly Adamson explains some superficial discrepancies between *The Spiritual Medicine* and the *Philosophical Life* as grounded in a different targeted audience. The former intends to attract a broader audience who is not always philosophically sophisticated; the latter targets more sophisticated readers.

Throughout the book Adamson cleverly shows that al-Rāzī made original contributions to philosophy and, in his criticisms of Galen, at times made use (without explicitly saying so) of some of Aristotle's views.

Putting together all the aspects of al-Rāzī's thought, be they philosophical, medical, or alchemical, is no mean achievement. Adamson in his presentation of Razian medical and alchemical works never loses his focus on the connection with the philosophical underpinnings. The book successfully argues that al-Rāzī, far from being a great physician and a poor philosopher, contributes much to philosophy in his own unique way. We can only regret that so many of his philosophical works have not survived.

THÉRÈSE-ANNE DRUART

*The Catholic University of America*

Aurélien Robert. *Épicure aux Enfers: Hérésie, athéisme et hédonisme au Moyen Âge*. Paris: Fayard, 2021. Pp. 367. Paperback, €24.00.

Always an essential component in histories of philosophy, Epicureanism has taken on a special importance of late because some scholars have seen its doctrines as triggering modernity (Catherine Wilson, *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007]; and Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* [New York: W. W. Norton, 2011], or, alternatively and more modestly, with the subtitle

*How the Renaissance Began* [London: Random House, 2011]). Certainly, Greenblatt can be accused of historical malpractice. Robert, in the book under review, calls Greenblatt's work a "bon roman" (14); see also my July 2012 review in *Reviews in History*, [reviews.history.ac.uk/review/1283](https://reviews.history.ac.uk/review/1283), and that of Laura Saetveit Miles: <https://www.inthemedievalmiddle.com/2016/05/the-ethics-of-inventing-modernity.html>. But in point of fact, Greenblatt's extravagant claims about the transformation wrought by Poggio Bracciolini's discovery of Lucretius's poem *De Rerum Natura* in 1417 set the context and, indeed, can be viewed as provoking the title of the book under review.

The basic premise of *Épique aux Enfers* is that it was the Middle Ages, and not the Italian Renaissance, that first recovered a true understanding and appreciation of Epicureanism as opposed to the vulgar view of it as the philosophy of pure sensual hedonism that justified Dante in the *Divine Comedy* placing Epicurus in hell instead of in limbo, as he did the other great philosophers of antiquity. As Robert puts it at the very end of his book, "En ce qui concerne Épicure, aucun doute, c'est bien le Moyen Âge qui l'a sorti des enfers" (318). Fittingly, the book cover reproduces a Vatican manuscript miniature by Guglielmo Giralardi of Dante and his guide Virgil visiting the souls in hell, just as does, I might add, a nearly contemporary book on the same subject: Christian Kaiser's *Epikur im lateinischen Mittelalter* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019), which reproduces a different miniature in a Florentine manuscript of the same scene.

Robert finds Epicurus rescued from hell in the face of a seemingly unrelentingly hostile tradition first by examining the treatment of Epicurus in the writings of the great twelfth-century figures Peter Abelard, John of Salisbury, and William of Malmesbury, as well as of thirteenth-century authors such as John of Wales, Hélinand de Froidmont, and Giovanni Colonna, and then by introducing the reader to the medieval medical literature that had a certain sympathy for Epicurus since the doctors considered pleasure, and specifically coitus, valuable for a healthy life. Relying especially on Seneca, who had sought to reconcile Epicureanism with Stoicism, the twelfth-century authors took note of Epicurus's denial of divine providence and the immortality of the soul, but also recognized that Epicurus himself not only led an exemplary moral life, but also taught that virtue, justice, and temperance were the keys to the true pleasurable life, quite in contradiction to the wild hedonism popularly attributed to him.

Before reaching these rescuers of Epicurus, Robert examines in detail the history of Christian attitudes toward Epicurus and Epicureanism from the second century onward. By the end of antiquity, 'Epicurean' had become a term synonymous with a heretical opponent of Christianity. Despite some hints in Lucian, however, Robert finds no firm evidence of a corresponding anti-Christian polemic on the part of the Epicureans. Ironically, as Tertullian once proclaimed, just as the name was once enough for Christians to be persecuted, so too now the name 'Epicurean' had become grounds for condemnation as a heretic. Among the other two medieval religious traditions, Judaism shared Christianity's notion of the Epicurean heretic while the matter is ambiguous for Islam. In the case of the latter, much depends on how one interprets the word *dahriyyūn* in medieval Muslim literature.

In what may be viewed as the one philosophical part of the book, in a section titled "Aristote et Épicure," Robert carefully analyzes how, despite their having different finalities, Epicureanism and Aristotelian ethics shared an emphasis not only on practical wisdom (*phronesis*) but also on pleasure inasmuch as for Aristotle pleasure was a component of the good life, including the highest: the contemplative life of the philosopher. The problem is that Robert cannot identify a single medieval author who elaborated a similar analysis. Rather, this section turns out to be an introduction to Albert the Great's commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* in which Albert, relying on Byzantine commentaries recently translated by William Grosseteste, took notice of Epicurus's threefold division of desires (natural and necessary, natural and not necessary, and neither natural nor necessary) to criticize them from an Aristotelian perspective and also to comment on Epicurus's injunction against political involvement as having something in common with the Aristotelian ideal of the autarchic philosophical life. But Robert admits that Albert's engagement with



Epicurean ethics, limited though it was, proved virtually unique, with only modest echoes in subsequent scholastic commentaries.

In contrast with the favorable presentations of Epicurus put forward by medieval authors in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in the fourteenth century Boccaccio defended Dante's condemnation of Epicurus in his commentary on the *Commedia* while Petrarch and Coluccio Salutati, the leaders of the first generations of Renaissance humanism, vigorously continued the hostile tradition, thus returning the antique philosopher to the hell whence the Middle Ages had rescued him. Robert ends his volume with a discussion of two authors roughly contemporaneous with these first humanists: the scholastic Matteo Garimberti (d. 1412), who, heavily reliant on Seneca, essayed a harmonization of Aristotle, Seneca, and Epicurus, and the humanist Cosimo Raimondo (death by suicide in 1436), who wrote the first advocacy of Epicureanism at the purely natural level against Aristotelian and Stoic ethics. Herein lies the fundamental difficulty of Robert's deeply learned and informative book. Given Lorenzo Valla's well-known, even if bizarre, proclamation of an Epicurean ethic in his *De Vero Bono* in the very same years of Raimondo's defense of Epicurus, and then the growing knowledge and appreciation of Epicureanism as the Renaissance progressed (e.g. in the 1450s, before Valla had died, the young Marsilio Ficino had already temporarily become enamored of Epicureanism), Robert's thesis relies on a selective concentration of texts from both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Abelard and John of Salisbury may have spoken well of Epicurus, but they did not launch any sort of campaign of rehabilitation, nor did the subsequent favorable mentions of Epicurus in thirteenth-century histories amount to such. The texts adduced by Robert are not representative of any school of thought in the broad sweep of the Middle Ages outside of medical literature concerning sex. It was Dante rather than Abelard who reflected the general medieval attitude toward Epicurus. The philosopher of the Garden did not escape hell in the Middle Ages only to be returned to it by the Renaissance.

JOHN MONFASANI

*University at Albany, State University of New York*

Aloysius P. Martinich. *Hobbes's Political Philosophy: Interpretation and Interpretations*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021. Pp. xi + 292. Hardback, \$99.00.

A. P. Martinich has been perhaps the most prolific and influential contributor to a general understanding of Hobbes over the last three decades, producing a much-admired Hobbes biography, a volume introducing Hobbes's entire philosophical system, another placing it in historical context, an excellent student edition of *Leviathan*, a magnificent Oxford handbook of Hobbes (edited with Kinch Hoekstra), a monograph presenting Martinich's highly original interpretation of Hobbes's political philosophy, and more than a score of papers engaging controversial aspects of Hobbes interpretation or historical interpretation generally. Martinich's landmark *The Two Gods of Leviathan: Religion and Politics in Hobbes's Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) was one of two monographs published that year that argued for taking seriously Hobbes's intense engagement with questions of religious doctrine and practice, which had expanded across each successive version of Hobbes's political philosophy and his later works. Those books forced reconsideration of the narrow rational-choice interpretations dominant in the mid-1980s. Both works argued that Hobbes sought to show the compatibility of a properly interpreted Christianity with civil obedience to an absolute sovereign, although the other deemed doing so necessary to Hobbes's political project for the purely sociological reason that "transcendent" religious interests may motivate rebellion that the state's coercive threats cannot deter, a position agnostic about Hobbes's personal religious orientation. Martinich argued that Hobbes was a *sincere believer* who was also trying to demonstrate the compatibility of Christianity with the modern science of Copernicus and Galileo, and, most controversially, that the normative force of the laws of nature at the heart of Hobbes's political theory came

from having been commanded by God. Martinich's arguments ignited critical attacks from interpreters seeking to preserve the *status quo* of a fully secular Hobbesian political theory. Some argued that Hobbes was an atheist who treated religion only in order surreptitiously to discredit it. The present volume, *Hobbes's Political Philosophy: Interpretation and Interpretations*, provides Martinich's forceful response to that and other critiques of his central theses.

Kudos to Oxford University Press, and its philosophy editor Peter Ohlin, for issuing this collection of mostly previously published pieces, when other first-rate presses are market-shy of such projects, because this volume adds up to very much more than the sum of its parts. Reading these essays together makes it impossible not to appreciate Martinich's deep reservoir of evidence, based on his truly staggering command of Biblical exegesis and the history of religion, of the political and religious context of Hobbes's England and of the history of philosophy. It also reveals how Martinich's expertise in the philosophy of language shapes both his own original theory of interpretation and his devastating critiques of the interpretive theories and strategies of his critics. His application of philosophical analysis brings welcome clarity to debates that have sometimes faltered on the fuzziness of the contending positions.

To illustrate, chapter 5 assesses Quentin Skinner's theory of historical interpretation as presented in a well-known paper claiming that the only way to understand what an author meant (that is, was doing) in writing a text is to understand the author's context, which involves privileging the author's contemporaries' understanding of what the author meant. Martinich distinguishes four senses of "mean" or meaning: literal, communicative (Gricean nonnatural meaning), intentional, and significance (importance for someone), explaining what objects each takes, and which entail the truth of their objects. His close reading reveals that because Skinner systematically conflates communicative-meaning with intention-meaning with significance-meaning, Skinner's theory is left without any cogent defense. Historians, Martinich notes, are typically concerned to uncover significance-meaning; and although Skinner mistakenly tries to do this by uncovering communicative intentions, his theory commits him to looking in the wrong place. By privileging the understandings of contemporary commentators, Skinner puts "Hobbes at the mercy of second- and third-rate minds and bigots" (113) and introduces circularity (understanding a contemporary requires understanding the understandings of that contemporary by other contemporaries, the understanding of whom requires the same). Skinner looks for evidence of the writer's communicative intentions in how near subsequent readers of the writer's text perceived it; but understandings of *Leviathan* were grossly distorted for at least twenty-five years after its publication (113). As Martinich sensibly observes, the most "direct evidence is the text in its original context" (114), that is, in the context of *prior* influences on its writing. This essay is a tour de force of philosophical critique, which, so far as I have been able to discover, remains unanswered.

Martinich elaborates his original theory of interpretation, elaborating what he terms a "Network of Beliefs," across several chapters. It explains why interpreters cling to their views in defiance of contrary evidence when it challenges elements of their network that are either deeply entangled with other elements or are more tenaciously held. I see a possible application of that theory to his debates with Edwin Curley, discussed in two chapters, over whether Hobbes's admittedly unsatisfactory account of the Trinity (which Hobbes retracted) and of Biblical covenants are evidence of Hobbes's intention to undermine Christianity in (at least) the *cognoscenti*, as Curley maintains. Curley's interpreting Hobbes's deficiencies in this way (rather than as honest errors in sincere attempts in the face of tough Biblical texts, as Martinich does) may be an expression of Curley's conviction that Hobbes *must* have been an atheist, and Hobbes's religious "interpretations" must be intended to convey or encourage atheism, because Hobbes's political philosophy would lose interest for us if it were not *secular*. Curley's introduction to his own superb edition of *Leviathan*, in which he endorses Kavka's and Hampton's secular, "prisoners' dilemma" rational-choice interpretations of Hobbesian reasoning, strongly suggests that commitment to making Hobbes a figure of ongoing significance is a tenacious element of Curley's network of belief.

Chapter 7, engaging John Deigh over the status of Hobbes's laws of nature, is less about theory of interpretation than philosophical understandings of linguistic implication. Should 'law of nature' be understood as connecting the concepts "law" and "nature," or rather as referring to entities that are not laws at all? At issue is whether the normative force of Hobbes's "laws of nature" comes only from those precepts having been commanded by God to be observed *as laws*, or whether it comes instead from their prudential instrumentality. Although some recent research pursues how Hobbes may have transcended that dichotomy to advance a robust secular morality appealing to a noninstrumental mode of reasoning, the Martinich/Deigh debate advanced in this volume is a classic.

Martinich's book makes the most sustained case yet for understanding Hobbes as a much finer Biblical scholar than his critics, attempting in Enlightenment spirit to reconcile pure biblical Christianity with Galilean natural science and with political absolutism too, and as an English Calvinist in theology, supporting episcopacy in ecclesiology. Hobbes "wanted not a brave new world, but a safe old world, reinforced by an accurate understanding of the Bible and compatible with the new science" (31). Martinich succeeds in decisively shifting the burden of argument to advocates of deflationary or subversive interpretations of Hobbes's engagement with religion. General readers looking to situate Hobbes's political philosophy historically should find Martinich's Hobbes more plausible than atheistic interpreters', but also more interesting because Martinich's Hobbes can speak to religious motivations today. For Hobbes specialists, cover to cover study of Martinich's book is essential.

S. A. LLOYD

*University of Southern California*

Ruth Boeker. *Locke on Persons and Personal Identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. Pp. xxi + 336. Hardback, \$85.00.

According to Ruth Boeker, her account is unusual in "distinguishing Locke's account of personhood from his account of personal identity," which allows her to make sense of "both his claim that 'person' is a forensic term and his claim that personal identity consists in the same consciousness" (xiii–xiv). In her emphasis on the connection between personhood and responsibility, Boeker's position is like the one advanced in Galen Strawson's recent book (*Locke on Personal Identity: Consciousness and Concernment* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011]), but where Strawson emphasizes the connection between personality and responsibility in this life, Boeker emphasizes it in the life to come. According to her, Locke wants to advance a picture of the afterlife that can explain how someone can continue to exist and be held responsible there.

The longest and most involved chapter in Boeker's book concerns Locke's view on consciousness. Many of the details in the chapter are not essential to her main project. Instead, it is a scholarly and philosophically sophisticated survey of various topics that have come up in the literature: the relation between consciousness and reflection, how to make sense of Locke's claim that we cannot perceive without perceiving that we perceive, whether all consciousness is self-consciousness, the relation between memory and consciousness, and whether and how consciousness might extend to the future.

Among Anglophone historians in the last half century or so, one of the main disputes in the interpretation of Locke has been shaped by a dispute in analytic metaphysics about whether, as Boeker puts it, "one or multiple identity predicates are needed in our language" (34). As I would put it, on one side of the dispute are those who would analyze "a is the same F as b" as "a=b and F(a) and F(b)" where the equal sign signifies the relation of numerical identity, the relation that holds between an object and itself and nothing else in virtue of that object's existence. On the other side of the dispute are those who think that we do not have a concept of plain numerical identity and that the concept of sameness always needs to be supplemented, either tacitly or explicitly, by a kind term. The usual interpretive dispute was, in the first instance, which side Locke was on, and then after that a matter of filling in the details.

Boeker reconceptualizes this interpretative debate. Instead of worrying about numerical identity, she considers what she calls “absolute identity,” where absolute identity is a sort of identity that “for all kinds is ontologically grounded in the same way” (33). According to her, it is clear that Locke rejects absolute identity, since “he emphasizes that the persistence conditions or the relations that ground identity over time differ depending on the kind under consideration” (31).

This is an interesting and original way of looking at metaphysics of identity. Her transformation of the problem leads to some distortion in her recapitulation of the secondary literature, however. In particular, Vere Chappell’s achievement was not only to give good evidence that Locke has a concept of plain numerical identity, but also to show how his theory gives us a framework for seeing how one and the same thing can persist over time while changing in constituents and in its qualities. Boeker, however, takes the plain equal sign when put between things existing at different times to signify a commitment to “absolute identity.” Thus, out of a kind of charity, she omits Chappell’s attribution to Locke of the view that numerically the same thing persists over time. Only his rump attribution that the horse and its matter are distinct at a time remains, where this distinctness is not a clearly understood notion of numerical distinctness, but rather some concept that has not yet been properly explained. Those who believe that we do not have a clear concept of numerical identity or who think that it is anachronistic to attribute such a concept to Locke will not mind her transformation of Chappell’s interpretation. They may, however, think that she sometimes exaggerates the differences between her view and the views she calls Relative Identity interpretations.

We might be tempted to think that for Locke sameness of person is a transitive relation, since that is a feature of ordinary identity. Moreover, it would be a good way around the objection that people forget events without ceasing to be the same person. Following John L. Mackie (*Problems from Locke* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976], 181–82), Matthew Stuart (*Locke’s Metaphysics* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013], 353–56), and Strawson (*Locke on Personal Identity*, 53–56), Boeker observes that in various places where Locke could adopt the transitivity of sameness of person, he rejects it. Instead, he seems to insist that actual memory, or at least the ability to remember something, is required for sameness of person.

Boeker has the new idea of sneaking the transitivity of identity in through heaven’s gate. She observes that it is up to God what memories we will have upon being resurrected. So, in order to give Locke’s theory of personal identity all the advantages of transitivity, we can just suppose that God creates us with the memories that the person had upon death, plus all the memories that we can reach through a chain of memories.

Given how much flexibility God has in restoring the memory of the dead, before we attribute one restorative policy to Locke’s God rather than another, we should make sure that it fits the textual evidence that we have. One piece of text is Locke’s implication that the goodness of God entails that he will not transfer to any other thinking substance the memories that bring responsibility: he will not “by a fatal error” toward one of his creatures “transfer from one to another, that consciousness, which draws Reward or Punishment with it” (*Essay*, 2.27.13). You can keep that condition with the requirement that people be held responsible for deeds accessible through transitive chains of memory, but it is an extra condition. More importantly, if Locke liked the view that personal identity is constituted by chains of memory, then he could have adopted it, both for this life and the next. I do not think that Boeker gives us enough positive reason to suppose that that is how Locke thinks how an account of personal identity ought to run.

Having said all that, it seems to me that Boeker’s book represents the state of the art in thinking about Locke on personal identity. She is a careful scholar, a good historian, and an acute philosopher. If someone decides to do philosophical research on Locke’s chapter on personal identity, there is not a better starting point than her book.

MICHAEL JACOVIDES

*Purdue University*

Ryan Patrick Hanley. *The Political Philosophy of Fénelon*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. xvi + 306. Hardback, \$41.95.

In his monograph, Ryan Patrick Hanley offers a revisionist interpretation of the political philosophy of François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon, archbishop of Cambrai. A series of Enlightenment commentators (Montesquieu, Rousseau, Hume, Jefferson) and their progeny have hailed Fénelon as a political subversive who boldly attacked the injustices of the reign of Louis XIV and who prepared the arrival of an egalitarian society with socialist and pacifist traits. Hanley, however, argues that Fénelon actually defended a more moderate and realistic model of political society than his Enlightenment exegetes have suggested. Like earlier commentators, Hanley attempts to prove his argument primarily through an analysis of *Telemachus*, the pedagogical novel Fénelon had composed for Louis, duc de Bourgogne, the “petit Dauphin” and grandson of Louis XIV, when Fénelon served as his tutor.

Three strong chapters demonstrate Hanley’s thesis concerning Fénelon’s moderate politics and philosophy. Hanley argues that Fénelon’s philosophy of education rests on a distinction between true and false glory. True glory resides in virtue and a humble recognition of divine glory, while false glory is the self-centered glorification of the human agent, which easily deteriorates into vanity. Rather than simply condemn self-interest, in his treatment of the education of the prince Fénelon argues that self-interest must be gradually transformed into a broader interest for the good of one’s subjects and a deeper recognition of the glory of God. Earning the praise of his Enlightenment acolytes and later feminist commentators, Fénelon defends a solid education for women, but he clearly wants this education to prepare women for their domestic role as wives and mothers; his celebrated treatise and letters on the education of women are not an exercise in gender equality.

The economic theory of Fénelon has often been interpreted as a type of utopian socialism. This is largely based on the central place taken by Bétique in the *Telemachus*. In this mythical land, the happy citizens practice a communist economics; private property is foreign to them. All their basic needs are provided for through communal cooperation. Luxury is also foreign to them; precious metals like gold and silver are used in practical construction as if they were pieces of iron. But Hanley argues that the prosocialist exegetes ignore the varied economies presented in the passages concerning Egypt, Crete, and Tyre. Bétique does not stand alone as an economic ideal. When Fénelon details how the economy of contemporary France should be reformed, it is far from simple socialism. The state has a strong initial role in the state’s economic reform, but it works in tandem with private initiatives that will gradually become the stronger partner. “Fénelon differs from later socialists in insisting that the use of state power is not an end in itself, but necessary only to establish the conditions whereby a free economic system can emerge and flourish—at which point direct intervention of the state into economic affairs will diminish, and a free (though hardly unbridled) pursuit of self-interest will be encouraged” (81).

Hanley also attacks the common argument that Fénelon is a pacifist who excoriates all recourse to war. Fénelon does indeed condemn war in the most graphic terms. As Archbishop of Cambrai in northern France, he had witnessed the savage carnage and attendant famines that had decimated the population in repeated wars in this border area. But his nuanced critique of war rests on a distinction between false and true courage. False courage is found in the warrior who initiates war for the sake of his own false glory. True courage lies in those who defend the innocent out of a proper sense of duty; this courage contrasts with cowardice disguised as pacifism. Hanley argues that the confederation of nations that Fénelon envisions as a mechanism to mediate conflict and reduce the recourse to war is less a species of international government than an effort to create an institutional balance of power among states that will always retain a substantial amount of national self-interest. Again, the apparent idealism is tempered by a realistic analysis of power, interest, and conflict.

One of the weaknesses of Hanley’s argument is the decision to link each chapter and each chapter title to a particular moral or theological virtue. Prudence, courage, justice,

faith, hope, and love serve as key categories for the analysis of Fénelon's political thought. This virtue-schematization does not always serve the analysis well. Hanley's effort to excavate the theological hope in Fénelon's political views (chapter 6), for example, seems forced; the conviction that one will overcome present adversity is far from hope in the resurrection of Christ.

Hanley's interpretation of Fénelon as a moderate realist successfully corrects the effort to interpret the archbishop's thought through the lens of his mystical doctrine of "pure love," a love of God in which all self-interest is simply annihilated. Hanley's work invites the readers to grasp the complexity of the political thought of Fénelon and to discover the pragmatist behind the long-haired visionary prophet.

REV. JOHN J. CONLEY, SJ

*Loyola University Maryland*

Peter S. Fosl. *Hume's Scepticism, Pyrrhonian and Academic*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020. Pp. xiii + 378. Hardback, \$100.00.

Peter Fosl presents an engaging and historically rich account of Hume's skepticism. For those readers interested in deepening their knowledge and understanding of Pyrrhonian and Academic skepticism, both in regard to their origins and their legacy, I highly recommend it. But I also recommend it for those who would like to better understand Hume's skepticism, although I do think there is some tension in Fosl's reading.

Before I discuss this tension, a brief summary of the book is in order. Fosl's primary claim is that Hume's skepticism is a hybrid of Academic and Pyrrhonian skepticism. To show this, Fosl divides the book into two parts. In the first, Fosl presents a detailed account of the ancient and modern versions of Academic and Pyrrhonian skepticism. In the second, Fosl argues how and why Hume's skepticism is a combination of Academic and Pyrrhonian skepticism.

In chapter 1, Fosl defines "Clitomachean . . . 'Academic sceptical non-realism'" (31), which, he argues, reflects Hume's position. This kind of "scepticism does not entail making positive epistemological claims about the true and the real, probable or otherwise; and it does not involve any positive epistemological claims, even the minimal epistemic egalitarianism on the basis of epistemic nullity" (34). Fosl also calls this "doxastic scepticism" (171).

In chapter 2, Fosl highlights five points about early modern Academic skepticism, "cull[ed] from Cicero," that are "characteristically Humean": (1) "Non-Apprehending," that is, one does not affirm or deny truths about reality; (2) "Doxastic moderation," which "produces results that are persuasive . . . rather than proven" and so is neither dogmatic nor an instance of extreme skeptical doubt; (3) "Limited inquiry," that is, inquiry that is limited to what we can actually experience; (4) "Integrity," which takes priority over making truth claims; and (5) "Modesty," which is opposed to immodest claims to the truth (69–70).

Fosl then explains in chapter 3 that, contrary to many common interpretations, ancient Pyrrhonism does not entail the "radical and complete elimination of belief" (110). Rather, Pyrrhonism is not dogmatic and has a number of positive aspects. In chapter 4, Fosl argues that Hume adopts a modern version of Pyrrhonism. In the process, Fosl summarizes the seven Pyrrhonian points that are salient in Hume's skepticism (170): (1) We must conform to appearances rather than dogma (e.g. abstract rational and/or theological inquiry)—and this conformation is "fourfold": we must conform to "a.) nature, b.) custom, habit and tradition c.) passions, and d.) technical arts." (2) We must practice a suspension of belief. (3) This suspension is "Apelletic" (i.e. follows the example provided by the painter Apelles of Kos in the anecdote reported by Sextus Empiricus; see 99–100), that is, open to its fortuitous outcomes. (4) We must not be assertive about the "non-evident or hidden." (5) We must be "zetetic," that is, we must remain open to critique and revision. (6) Our inquiries should end in "undisturbedness, peace or tranquility." (7) We must adhere to common life.

For the remainder of the book (chapters 5–8), Fosl examines how the “Pyrrhonian Fourfold” (210), mentioned directly above, applies to Hume’s thought. Specifically, in chapter 5, Fosl argues that Hume’s naturalism is “most fundamentally . . . centered on the ongoing press of nature disclosed through his Apelletic empiricism” (210). According to Hume, there is a “press” of nature (this is a. in the Fourfold) that occurs “prior to any theory of an independent causal order” (203). As such, it informs our theories: “nature . . . [is] an unbidden, resistant, irresistible and non-rational press—the press of *impressions*, the *pressure* to conceptualise experiences discursively and to act” (203). To clarify these ideas, Fosl writes, “The ‘nature’ and ‘necessity’ that Hume confronts here is neither rationalistic necessity nor the necessity of causal realism. It is rather the pressing, propelling quality of the current of experience that makes possible thinking, perceiving and doing, despite sceptical arguments or fantasies to the contrary. It is a press that we might deny (or wish to deny) but that will not be denied. Nature as this press, is the human fate” (203–4).

Fosl addresses how the Pyrrhonian dependence on custom (b. in the Fourfold) manifests itself in Hume’s philosophy in chapter 6. In particular, Fosl reminds us how, according to Hume, thinking and reasoning are based on habit, or custom. In chapter 7, Fosl discusses how Pyrrhonianism manifests itself in Hume’s notion of theory—*technai* (d. in the Fourfold). More precisely, he argues that according to Hume, his method engages in both “Ongoing-Critique Zeteticis” (107) and “Ongoing-Inquiry Zeteticis” (106). This means, generally speaking, and respectively, that Hume’s method is open to revision and critique, and open to new discoveries; as such, it employs a certain kind of “hope” (106).

In chapter 8, Fosl addresses the remaining aspect of the Pyrrhonian Fourfold, that is, the role that Hume’s notions of the passions, feelings, and sentiments play in his skepticism. Fosl focuses on feeling—where belief is a feeling—particularly, what he characterizes as Hume’s skeptical understanding of “the real.” Specifically, Fosl claims that “Hume is a doxastic as well as an epistemological and metaphysical sceptic” (332). This means that “Hume follows his non-dogmatic theory of *perception* with a non-dogmatic theory of *belief*. For Hume, no beliefs about the world bear intrinsic metaphysical commitments” (315), that is, no probability, no matter how great, connects to or reflects (even partially) a mind-independent reality. “That one idea or proposition or claim is more ‘probable’ for Hume cannot mean the apprehension of some reality of the external or logical world” (329). This represents what Fosl identifies as Hume’s “Clitomachian non-dogmatic [notion of] ‘probable’” (325).

Very briefly, the tension that I see in this interpretation of Hume’s skepticism is as follows: “the press” (200–4) of nature tells us what we ought to do, while simultaneously Fosl claims that Hume cannot justify any claim. Why? Because “all knowledge reduces to probability, and probability reduces to zero, the completely absence of epistemic warrant” (276). This is the “epistemic nullity” (36) that Fosl discusses in chapter 1 and again in chapter 8 in regard to Clitomachian probability. However, if all probability reduces to zero, it seems that even the “press” drops out. For the “press” of nature is actually the *regularity* of nature, the constancy and coherence of impressions (*T* 1.4.2), which, I think, Fosl does not pay enough attention to. As such, irregular, or inconstant and incoherent patterns of experience are, according to Hume, not efficient guides for behavior; they do *not* model how we *ought* to behave (*T* 1.4.4.1). Rather, we *ought* to behave in a way that reflects that regularity of nature; this is, generally speaking, the “press” that Fosl highlights; see my *Imagined Causes: Hume’s Conception of Objects* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012); “Constancy and Coherence in 1.4.2 of Hume’s *Treatise*: The Root of ‘Indirect’ Causation and Hume’s Position on Objects,” *European Legacy* 4 (2013): 444–56; and “Regularity and Certainty in Hume’s *Treatise*: A Humean Response to Husserl,” *Synthese* 199 (2020): 579–600. As such, the “press” cannot manifest a complete “absence of epistemic warrant” (276). This reflects the main weakness of the book. There is a wealth of relevant scholarly and historical detail, but in places, not enough close textual analysis of Hume.

STEFANIE ROCKNAK

Hartwick College

Paul Guyer. *Reason and Experience in Mendelssohn and Kant*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. ix + 368. Hardback, \$50.00.

Paul Guyer's *Reason and Experience in Mendelssohn and Kant* is the product of over forty years of scholarly research. Guyer published his first article (on Kant) in 1976 and his first book (also on Kant) in 1979. His work has encompassed the whole of Kant's corpus: while he began his career writing on Kant's aesthetics, he was concerned even then with the epistemological and practical contours of Kant's thinking. His subsequent work takes up these aspects of Kant's thought directly. Methodologically, too, Guyer's work has situated his close analysis of Kant's texts within the context of contemporaneous debates of Kant's immediate predecessors. *Reason and Experience in Mendelssohn and Kant* bears the hallmarks of a work of such erudition and reads like a work that is the culmination of years of careful reading and thinking about both Kant and Mendelssohn. This book traces the influence that Kant and Mendelssohn had on each other's thinking and offers a developmental account of each of them on topics central to their philosophical projects.

Kant and Mendelssohn were writing at a decisive moment in the history of European philosophy. The long supremacy of rationalism had suffered two blows: the loss of the authority of the Catholic Church in the Reformation, attending an overall collapse in the ancient and medieval cosmological worldview, and the rise of empiricism. The challenge for philosophy at this moment in history was to found itself anew. Kant, famously, takes up this challenge and initiates a radically new mode of philosophizing. Kant's introduction of the transcendental method along with his commitment to a suite of a priori transcendental faculties of the human soul will account for many of the differences between the two thinkers. Guyer, for his part, takes this historical moment as the lens for his own comparison: "My argument in this book will then be that, although he did not put it in precisely the same terms, Mendelssohn too was engaged in the project of reconciling rather than dividing rationalism and empiricism, and that it will be useful to compare his version of this project to Kant's in order to see the strengths and weaknesses of each" (5). Throughout the book, we find that each thinker emphasizes rationalist or empiricist elements; comparing them along this axis of interpretation is illuminating and sometimes surprising.

Readers of this book will come away having gained multiple insights. First, Guyer offers detailed examinations of Kant and Mendelssohn on the topics that are points of intersection for these thinkers: metaphysics and epistemology (first and foremost), aesthetics, religion, and history (moral philosophy does not play a central role in this text). The second insight, deepening the first, is a developmental picture of each philosopher. The developmental story Guyer reconstructs adds depth to the analysis. Especially on topics explored in detail, there is a real sense of probing the matter and the problems it presents, rather than simply restating arguments or positions. Third, readers are reminded—though Guyer does not draw this out—of the unexpected and continued relevance of the differences between Kant and Mendelssohn on fundamental issues, many of which are still matters of dispute today. The most interesting of these cases are those in which Guyer finds Kant to be "the more extreme rationalist" (255) and in which Mendelssohn's empiricism demonstrates a "greater common sense" (257). Here, we find an earlier iteration of what has come to the fore in contemporary criticisms of Kant and others in the history of European thinking—a rejection of emotions in moral life, universalism (as opposed to Mendelssohn's interest in diversity [290]), and his notion that historical faith traditions should and will be transcended by a thoroughly rationalized religion. Guyer sides with Mendelssohn in these moments. He even goes so far at one point as to write that Mendelssohn has an "epistemically more privileged position as a member of a barely tolerated religious minority" (277) on matters of religious pluralism. Here, as elsewhere, Guyer endorses Mendelssohn's privileging of one's personal experience over and against Kant's insistence on the universal aspects of experience. It would have been interesting for Guyer to delve deeper into this methodological debate between the two—Kant has his own argument about why we should reject Mendelssohn, and it would have been illuminating to see this difference addressed head on. This is not,



however, a criticism—no book can do everything, and this one certainly does very much. If nothing else, readers should be reminded that many of our own philosophical debates have long provenances that may serve as resources for our own thinking.

The book comprises twelve chapters. The first six treat matters of metaphysics and epistemology. The scope and limits of metaphysics are examined principally by way of whether and by what means we may be able to prove the existence of God. What emerges here is the prominent difference between Mendelssohn's idea regarding the "positive powers of our thought" (140) and Kant's insistence that our theoretical insight is limited to what is given in experience. Kant, then, only admits of a practical assent to belief in God, but nothing further. While this matter takes center stage, Guyer also treats the question of immortality, which loomed larger for Mendelssohn than it did for Kant, but which has implications for how each thinks of freedom. On these two topics, Guyer writes, "Kant sought to replace Mendelssohn's more traditional theoretical rationalism with his own practical rationalism" (201). Guyer also takes up the problem of the ideality of time, a discussion that comes to focus on what each thinker argued we can know about the external world.

Chapters 6 through 9 focus on aesthetics. Here, Guyer first outlines Mendelssohn's aesthetics, then Kant's, and then offers a comparison. The difference between the two thinkers in this arena comes down to what Guyer calls the "full range of human experience" (254). Mendelssohn, he writes, is more attentive to this, specifically with respect to emotions that may play a role in aesthetic and moral life. Kant, by contrast, emphasizes the role of the imagination and also focuses on the "possibility of consensus in taste" (254).

The final three chapters examine religion, politics, and history. They coalesce around two central issues of the Enlightenment: religious freedom and moral progress. Here we find what we might call the "real world" implications of the methodological differences that Guyer has been tracing throughout. Mendelssohn's notion of enlightenment relies on theoretical reason, and his views on religion coincide with his empiricist and common sense commitments, rendering him more open and pluralistic than Kant. Kant's full transcendental commitments come out here, too, as reason itself is the sole measure of the good in the spheres of religion, right, and history.

This book will be of great benefit to scholars interested in Kant, in Mendelssohn, in their relation, or in this particular turning point in European philosophy. Its arguments are detailed and careful. The comparison of the two thinkers offers a broader context for reflecting on each of the issues and the commitments they entail. This book also reminds readers that the debates of our age may not be so unique, but have deep iterations across the history of philosophy.

KRISTI SWEET

*Texas A&M University*

Benjamin Berger and Daniel Whistler. *The Schelling-Eschenmayer Controversy, 1801: Nature and Identity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020. Pp. xvi + 269. Hardback, £80.00.

This excellent book focuses on a decisive moment in Schelling's philosophical development: his 1801 dispute with Eschenmayer shortly before publishing *Presentation of My System*, the inaugural text of his identity philosophy. Carl August Eschenmayer was a German physician whose Kant-inspired writings in the philosophy of nature greatly influenced Schelling, especially with respect to the doctrine of the potencies. Nonetheless, he is a marginal figure in the history of philosophy, and one might assume that this volume will only interest Schelling specialists or those concerned with the minutiae of nineteenth-century *Naturphilosophie*. That would be a mistake. As Berger and Whistler demonstrate, the 1801 controversy has significant implications for understanding the trajectory of German Idealism and its debates on methodology, the meaning of identity, and the place of nature in philosophy.

Part 1 of this volume contains translations of the two essays at the heart of the dispute, both published in January 1801 (Judith Kahl and Daniel Whistler are the translators). The essay by Eschenmayer, “Spontaneity = World Soul, or The Highest Principle of Philosophy of Nature,” critiques Schelling’s 1799 nature-philosophy and presents his own Fichte-inspired approach. Schelling’s rejoinder is the essay “On the True Concept of Philosophy of Nature and the Correct Way of Solving Its Problems,” which anticipates the new identity philosophy he would present later that year. Translations of the two thinkers’ correspondence and selections from other works by Eschenmayer are included in appendices. Overall, the translations are precise and quite readable—an achievement for German texts with scientific jargon. Moreover, the translators are thoughtful in their rendering of tricky words like *Verhältnis*, which can mean “relation,” “proportion,” or “ratio” in different contexts (see xiii–xiv). Occasionally there are minor inaccuracies, but they do not detract from the texts’ main arguments.

What, then, are the main points of disagreement between Schelling and Eschenmayer? In the preface, the authors identify a “twofold difference” (ix). The first concerns the relationship of the philosophy of nature to transcendental philosophy. Eschenmayer follows Fichte in including the former within the latter: the “I” is ultimately responsible for nature’s determinate features. By contrast, Schelling insists on the self-sufficiency of nature-philosophy and argues for its priority: consciousness and the transcendental standpoint are not original but are derived from nature (9–10). The second difference concerns the source of qualitative difference among natural phenomena. While Eschenmayer reduces quality to mathematical proportions of attraction and repulsion, Schelling argues that such a reduction amounts to explaining nature’s diversity through varying degrees of density (56).

The bulk of the volume (part 2) is a series of chapters on themes related to the dispute and its aftermath. Though labeled “commentaries,” they are really critical essays, providing historical context and analysis while engaging with an impressive range of secondary literature. The first chapter is devoted to the construction of material qualities, the “guiding thread” of Eschenmayer’s essay (83). The authors carefully trace the problem from Kant through the two philosophers’ evolving conceptions of nature-philosophy leading up to the 1801 dispute. Though Schelling rejects Eschenmayer’s account of quality in terms of attraction and repulsion, he is “greatly influenced” by his sparring partner’s emphasis on quantitative difference in explaining quality, even adopting some of his mathematical concepts (89).

The most important of these is “potency,” the subject of the next chapter and one of the central concepts in Schelling’s thought for the next forty years. After an account of its roots in mathematics and Eschenmayer’s nature-philosophy, the authors analyze core features of potency in the 1801 *Presentation*, contrasting it with *dynamis* in Aristotle. Fundamentally, the series of potencies involves differentiation through intensification of the same underlying identity: “Life is nothing more than intensified inorganic matter” (102). The chapter concludes with a strong defense of Schelling against Hegel’s charge of formalism—though it still seems to me that the schema of the potencies is (at times) procrustean.

The third chapter focuses on the nature of identity, specifically the nondialectical “indifference” of the 1801 *Presentation*. The authors note the tendency among scholars of German Idealism to privilege the Hegelian model of an identity that includes opposition—a model Schelling himself would come to adopt in various forms. In contrast, the authors argue that the indifference model is distinct and “not obviously inferior” (124), allowing for quantitative difference that is nonoppositional (136–37). It is part of Schelling’s “series of experiments in modelling the concept of identity” (132).

The last two chapters have to do with the foundations of nature-philosophy. The theme of chapter 4 is the concept of “drive,” which Eschenmayer employs to account for nature’s activity and diversity. Building on Fichte’s use of the concept, he places the “original drive” at the midpoint between the I’s spontaneity and nature’s passivity (146). It may appear as if nature has the source of spontaneity within itself, but its ultimate source is the I and its drive.

Schelling, by contrast, maintains that nature is originally active and that the I is derived from nature. But how do we gain access to nature's activity? This is the theme of the final chapter, "Abstraction." In *On the True Concept*, Schelling claims that by abstracting from the subjective element in intellectual intuition, one can break out of "the circle of consciousness" (49) and access nature as it is in itself. Though Schelling's method here was met with harsh criticism by Hegel and scholars like Eckhart Förster, the authors offer an insightful—even poetic—defense. Through abstraction, philosophers "become nature" (173), immersing themselves in its depths so as to philosophize from its point of view. Questions remain about the possibility of such an abstraction, but the authors helpfully connect it to Schelling's later interest in mysticism (181).

On the question of abstraction, the authors read *On the True Concept* in continuity with *Presentation of My System*, published five months later. And yet there is an element of apparent discontinuity they do not discuss, but which gets at the heart of the controversy. It comes down to the question, Where does philosophy begin? In Schelling's exchange with Eschenmayer, the answer is clear: nature. The product of abstraction is nature in its lowest potency, from which point nature-philosophy begins its series of constructions. In the *Presentation*, however, the result of abstraction is absolute identity as indifference, and the initial sections are dedicated to understanding this identity without a specific focus on nature-philosophy—a pattern followed in the 1804 *Würzburger System*. So, is nature-philosophy "first philosophy," or should that designation be reserved for the initial account of absolute identity? Whatever the answer, it remains the case that nature-philosophy is prior to the standpoint of consciousness; moreover, the account of absolute identity is itself heavily indebted to nature-philosophy, as the authors have effectively demonstrated.

A final word about the nature of Schelling's dispute with Eschenmayer. The word 'controversy' in the book's title calls to mind the intellectual firestorms set off by Jacobi's accusations of pantheism and atheism. This exchange has a very different character. Berger and Whistler show how much the two philosophers learn from each other despite their fundamental disagreements, and one senses their friendship and mutual respect. To be sure, this volume makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the development of German Idealism—but it also provides a model for dialogue and philosophical collaboration.

MARK J. THOMAS

*Central College*

