

Book Reviews

DANIEL N. ROBINSON, *Aristotle's psychology*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1989, 8vo, pp. xi, 144, \$28.00.

This book, by a historian of psychology, covers not only topics dealt with by Aristotle in his treatise *On the soul*, but his whole treatment of the nature of human beings. There is a clear attempt to cover the subject comprehensively (including, for example, what Aristotle says about women and slaves), suggesting that the book is chiefly intended for non-specialists interested in the comparison of Aristotle's thought on human nature with that of more recent theorists. Robinson's interpretations are helpful here not only in connection with the explanations of sensation and action in Aristotle's psychological works, but also concerning questions of character development and socialization in the *Ethics* and *Politics*.

The first two chapters survey relevant areas of earlier Greek thought. Contrasts between Plato and Aristotle form a recurrent theme in the book, which concludes with discussion of the tension between the theoretical and practical lives in *Nicomachean Ethics* 10 and its implication for Aristotle's view of the nature of human beings.

The treatment of some topics is inevitably compressed. Page 63 links the active as opposed to the passive intellect of *De anima* 3.5 with scientific knowledge of universals as opposed to knowledge based on perception, which is at least a questionable interpretation of a notoriously difficult chapter, and promises further discussion in ch. 7, but there is no explicit reference there to the distinction of *De anima* 3.5. The citation at p.33 n.6 of *Posterior Analytics* 75a30–5 as saying that we cannot really explain what happens *usually*, but not *always*, is accurate in itself but needs to be modified in the light of *Metaphysics* E 2 1037a20. Anaxagoras is misrepresented as having taught that all reality was *reason*, coupling him with Parmenides against the materialists (p. 47).

There are also minor irritations such as the citation of passages from Hesiod's extant *Works and Days* with "Fragment" numbers, and errors like "Euripedes" (twice on p. 9), "the faculty of *praktikos*" (p. 81), and *telo*i as the plural of *telos* (p. 99). "Rejuvenated" is mis-spelled twice on p. 18, and there are other printing errors ("caressing" mis-spelled on p. 124, for example).

There is some interesting material in this book; more of the occasional blemishes should have been ironed out by a publisher's reader.

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ANTON J. L. VAN HOOFF, *From autothanasia to suicide: self-killing in classical antiquity*, London and New York, Routledge, 1990, pp. xv, 306, £35.00 (0-415-04055-8).

All you ever wanted to know about ancient suicide—and a good deal more—can be found here. Ravished virgins, defeated generals, heroic slaves, and aged invalids cluster in a catalogue of 960 cases involving 9,639 individuals. This mathematical precision at times comes close to self-parody, and the carefully constructed charts of the frequency of suicide, despite Dr van Hooff's advocacy, do not, to my mind, prove more than the fact that we have far more information about the late Roman Republic and early Empire than about Hellenistic Greece or the third century AD. One can here learn about a whole variety of possible methods of doing away with oneself (opening the veins was not as common as Seneca's example might lead us to believe), and the words one might choose to describe such an act (but not "suicidium", a neologism of the seventeenth century). For those who prefer visual to literary descriptions of suicide, there is a small selection of paintings of famous suicides, including Dido, Decebalus, and Seneca.

To this exhaustive catalogue of the hows, whys, and wherefores of human self-destruction, I append one comment and three quibbles. As Dr van Hoof remarks, suicide figures little in the surviving medical literature from antiquity. Galen's discussion of the Hippocratic *Aphorism* 2.43, which deals with suicide (and attempted suicide) by hanging, gives no example from his