

mainstream Christianity and mysticism (which is frequently referred to). John of the Cross is referenced several times; it is interesting that he, along with several other mystics (e.g. Catherine of Siena and Theresa of Avila), received the venerable title ‘doctor of the Church’ though Roman Catholics are not usually encouraged to follow the devotion of these figures. To be fair, V. makes it clear that his task is not to survey every single figure but to show the Platonic and Dionysian current running through Western mysticism. The book is clearly successful in this aim and makes for a short and readable account of Western mysticism with a stress on its Classical roots. The endnotes point to further scholarship in which the present study is well situated. The only typo that caught my eye is Plato’s τὸ ἐν misspelled as τοεν (p. 11), a blend that may curiously fit the metaphysical implications of the concept.

The British School at Rome

KREŠIMIR VUKOVIĆ
k.vukovic@bsrome.it

ARISTOTLE, ATHENS AND BEYOND

LINTOTT (A.) *Aristotle’s Political Philosophy in its Historical Context. A New Translation and Commentary on Politics Books 5 and 6*. Pp. x + 219. London and New York: Routledge, 2018. Cased, £115, US\$140. ISBN: 978-1-138-57071-9.

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The appearance of this volume is a cause for celebration. Not because translations of the *Politics* are thin on the ground – at least five have appeared in the last 21 years, including D. Keyt’s version of these two books (1999). Nor because commentaries are few: although, as L. notes (p. viii), very little besides W.L. Newman was available in English when he began working on Aristotle in the 1970s, others have appeared since then. But none has a historical focus, and since Books 5 (on political change) and 6 (on democracy) are the most empirical parts of the *Politics*, a guide is very welcome; and though L. is best known as a historian of Rome, his *Violence, Civil Strife, and Revolution in the Classical City* (1982) and two important articles on Aristotle on democracy and the mixed constitution respectively make him a very good guide.

The supplementary historical material amply justifies the volume, but the translation is impressive in its own right, arguably the best now available. When faced with Aristotle’s sometimes inelegant prose (in L.’s opinion, not lecture notes, but ‘the words of someone who wrote as he spoke, with all the conversational touches and intermittent clumsiness that this entails’, p. 7), translators have either aimed at fluency, often leading to more flowery sentences and varied vocabulary than the original, or stuck close to the Greek, which can seem clunky and wordy. Keyt, taking the latter route, translates the first line of Book 6, ‘How many varieties and what varieties there are (a) of the deliberative and supreme element of the constitution, (b) of the system of offices, and (c) of courts, and (2) which variety has been organised with a view to which sort of constitution, and also (3) regarding the destruction and preservation of constitutions, from which sorts of thing they come about and through what causes – these subjects have already been discussed’. This is syntactically faithful, but a little tedious and long at 66 words. L., reorganising freely, offers a

stylish 54 words: ‘We have already discussed the varieties of deliberative and sovereign body in political systems and of the organisation of magistracies and law courts, how many there are, what they are, and which have been constituted for which political system. We have also considered the destruction and preservation of political systems, their origins and causes’. This is much easier to digest. A similar level of polish and brevity is maintained throughout.

Regarding terminology, L. is no iconoclast and keeps discussion of his choices to a minimum, though his occasional elaborations are of interest. *Stasis* he renders as both ‘faction’ and ‘civil strife’, sometimes in the same sentence (5.1301b5–6); as he notes, such conflicts were ‘not necessarily violent, but they were contests for power, not simply differences of political opinion’ (p. 14). *Hubris* is ‘outrageous arrogance’, ‘more than an attitude of superiority: an insolence which translates itself into the humiliation of others, perhaps physically’ (p. 15). *Politeia* receives special care. The senses ‘constitution’ and ‘polity’ have been much discussed, but L. joins M.H. Hansen (*Reflections on Aristotle’s Politics* [2013], pp. 39–48) and J.J. Mulhern (‘*Politeia* in Greek literature, inscriptions, and in Aristotle’s *Politics*: Reflections on translation and interpretation’, in T. Lockwood and T. Samaras [edd.], *Aristotle’s Politics: a Critical Guide* [2015], pp. 84–102) in giving more prominence to the meaning ‘citizenship’, as at 6.1317b27, where ‘constitution’ is usually found: ‘jury service should be undertaken by the whole citizen body . . . in all cases, or in the greatest number, the most important, the most critical – for instance, holding officials to account, questions of citizenship, and private contracts’ (pp. 173–4, cf. 92, 118, 128).

Relevant philosophical issues, such as Aristotle’s defence of rule by a multitude, are treated in the introductory chapters – eight mini-essays situating Books 5 and 6 in the context of the *Politics* as a whole. Recent philosophical accounts, such as D. Riesbeck’s fine *Aristotle and Political Community* (2016), are also consulted throughout. But, as noted, the focus of the volume is historical, and L. benefits in particular from M.H. Hansen and T. Nielsen’s *Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis* (2004) and E. Robinson’s *Democracy beyond Athens* (2011). Over 100 *poleis* are mentioned in the *Politics*, and the ability to discover immediately what is known about, say, the tyranny at Sicyon (5.1315b12–21), significantly enhances the text. Aristotle does not cite Rome (though he did know it – see Plut. *Cim.* 22.2), but L.’s references show what rich grounds there are for comparison, weighted voting (p. 179) and censorship of immoral living (p. 131) being only two of the practices mentioned by Aristotle found in the Republic. Context also reveals how Aristotle sifted his material, as when L. shows him ‘seizing on a single feature of a revolution to make his immediate point’ with respect to Rhodes (p. 97). Most valuable is the commentary on passages where no historical examples are adduced, such as 5.8 on the preservation of constitutions. Clearly, Aristotle drew from life, but how innovative or idiosyncratic were his recommendations? Learning that, for instance, abjuration of the redistribution of property (5.1309a15–17) was sufficiently widely valued to be included on an oath engraved at Itanos in Crete (p. 132) is very helpful.

The best known of all Greek *poleis* is of course Athens, and its pre-eminence here opens L. to some criticism. Athens was the largest and most powerful democracy in Aristotle’s time; he studied, taught and wrote the *Politics* there; we have more evidence, especially literary, relating to Athens than to any other Classical city; and the *Constitution of the Athenians* is the only one of the 158 studies of *politeiai* produced by Aristotle’s school to survive in more than fragments. When searching for illuminating context, therefore, Athens will often be found. Yet Aristotle named it surprisingly seldom. The most cited *polis* in the text as a whole is Sparta, and in Book 5 (as L. notes, p. 98), Syracuse. Most importantly, the discussion of democracy in Book 6 is couched in general terms (‘these are the features that democracies have in common’, 6.1318a3). It is not an account of Athenian democracy, though L. implies otherwise. ‘In Book 6 he conducts a

more detailed study of what he considered the ultimate form of democracy, that of Athens' (p. 1; contrast Robinson [2011], pp. 220–2).

This Athenocentrism carries two risks: features common to many Greek democracies may be misinterpreted as distinctively Athenian, and the respects in which Athenian democracy was actually anomalous may be obscured. L. skirts close to the first issue with respect to pay for public service, listed as an element of democracy at 6.1317b35–8. No one who has read G.E.M. de Sainte Croix's energetic rebuttal of M.I. Finley's claim that only Athens offered such pay (*Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* [1981], pp. 602–3) could repeat this mistake, and L. does include a line on Iasos in the middle of two paragraphs on Athens (p. 176). But he does not mention Boeotia (*Hell. Oxy.* 19.4 Chambers) or even Rhodes, where political pay, Aristotle tells us, sparked a revolution (5.1304b27–31, discussed on p. 97).

More significant, with respect to the second issue, is the powerlessness of the fourth-century Athenian assembly to make law. Aristotle repeatedly identifies control of the laws by a popular assembly as the mark of the 'ultimate' (*teleutaia*) form of democracy that, he says, was the norm in his day (4.1298b15, 5.1305a32, 5.1310a 4–5). But as L. notes (pp. 116, 135), this was truer of Athens in the fifth century than in the fourth, when final legislative responsibility belonged to the *nomothetai*, large panels of ordinary citizens randomly selected from those who had taken the judicial oath. How then can fourth-century Athens be considered the epitome of 'ultimate' democracy? There is a puzzle here, but L. does not pursue it.

There are a lot of typos and some small slips (e.g. the commentary on the 'question of citizenship' at 6.1317b27 refers to assemblies rather than courts [p. 173], though the relevant verb is *dikazein*, translated 'jury service'). I also found the lack of spaces in primary citations distracting (e.g. *Xen.Lak.Pol.* 8.5) and would have loved Aristotle's references, which stretch from Marseilles to the Black Sea, to be represented cartographically. But these issues do not detract from the usefulness of this very welcome volume.

Yale University

DANIELA CAMMACK
daniela.cammack@yale.edu

ARISTOTLE'S VIEWS ON RELIGION

SEGEV (M.) *Aristotle on Religion*. Pp. viii + 192, figs. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. Cased, £75, US\$99.99. ISBN: 978-1-108-41525-5.

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Aristotle's view of religion presents a puzzle. Aristotle is dismissive of traditional belief in the gods, remarking (in a famous passage of *Metaphysics* 12.8) that everything beyond his own austere belief in the planetary movers was added to the myths 'with a view to persuading the masses and for its usefulness in supporting the laws and bringing about the general advantage'. His critique extends beyond that of Xenophanes and Plato, for he rejects not only anthropomorphic depictions of the gods and the attribution to them of immoral acts, but the attribution of any kind of intentional action at all. At least, that would seem to be the implication of his argument that it is absurd to suppose that the gods engage in virtuous