

## BOOK REVIEWS

Jamie Dow, *Passions and persuasion in Aristotle's Rhetoric*. Oxford Aristotle Studies. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. ix + 248 pp. ISBN 9780198716266.

How does Aristotle's discussion of the arousal of emotions fit into the general plan of his *Rhetoric*? This question has been of constant interest amongst the interpreters of the *Rhetoric* and the answer, which this book tries to provide, will depend largely on what one's position is regarding the following questions: (1) How should we read the chapters of the *Rhetoric* that deal with the arousal of emotions? (2) Is there an Aristotelian theory of emotions and what is it? (3) What is Aristotle's view of rhetoric? Dow has been dealing with these questions since 2007 and has published many articles on the subject.<sup>1</sup> The culmination of many of his investigations are found in this very clear and well-written book.

The first question has been a subject of great interest in the scholarly field, especially in the last 20 years. The only place where Aristotle discusses emotions in any detail is in *Rhet.* 2.1-11. Some scholars try to read those chapters as an Aristotelian theory of emotions, meaning that Aristotle fully endorses it. However, other scholars deny that those chapters represent a theory of emotions; and while their explanations vary, they try to deny or at least minimize Aristotle's endorsement of it. Regarding Aristotle's view of rhetoric, the scholarly opinion varies from a position that Aristotle sees rhetoric as a means to persuade the audience — a position very similar or identical to Gorgias' as represented in Plato — to a reading which attributes to Aristotle a moralizing view of rhetoric, similar to Plato's. The divergence is largely based on how to interpret *pistis*. The matter gets complicated when one considers the role of persuasion through emotions. In *Rhet.* 1.1, Aristotle seems to dismiss the emotions as not belonging to the *Rhetoric* but in *Rhet.* 1.2 Aristotle says that emotional proofs are one of the three kinds of rhetorical proofs (*entechnoi pisteis*). *Rhet.* 1.1 has seemed problematic to scholars, and some have dismissed it as representing an earlier Aristotle. If one considers Aristotle's position to resemble Plato's, one has to explain how the arousal of emotions can be compatible with a moral rhetoric. This is the background against which Dow's book is written. The answers he promotes are developed in consideration of this debate, and he displays a complete command of the sources pertinent for the discussion.

The book is divided into three parts, comprising ten chapters. In the first part (Chap. 1-5), Dow argues that Aristotle, in *Rhet.* 1.1, is consciously criticizing Gorgias, Thrasymachus and others who consider rhetoric a neutral force which fulfills its goal by persuading the audience whatever be the ends or means. According to this view, rhetoric is morally neutral and its use is what makes it moral or immoral. Dow proceeds to argue that Aristotle's position is not as demanding as Socrates', which held that rhetoric must aim at the good, and that the true rhetorician necessarily has full knowledge of the truth of the matter being discussed as well as an extensive psychological knowledge. According to Dow, Aristotle takes a middle path for he 'saw rhetoric as an expertise in producing "proofs" (*pisteis*), understood as *proper* grounds of conviction' (p. 34). This means that for Aristotle, *in contradiction to* Plato, the aim of rhetoric is to persuade. However, in contradiction to Gorgias, persuasion cannot come by any means but only through means that give the audience good ground for conviction and are politically acceptable.

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<sup>1</sup> Dow's publications which deal with Aristotelian emotions include: 'A Supposed Contradiction about Emotion Arousal in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*', *Phronesis* 52.4 (2007), 382-402; 'Feeling Fantastic? — Emotions and Appearances in Aristotle', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 37 (2009), 143-175; 'Aristotle's Theory of Emotion', in Pakaluk, M. and Pearson, G. (eds.), *Moral Psychology and Human Action in Aristotle*, Oxford, 2011, 46-74; 'Feeling Fantastic Again – Passions, Appearances and Beliefs in Aristotle', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 46 (2014), 213-251.

This book is skillfully written to defend this claim by showing its consistency with the entire composition of *Rhetoric*, and solving possible difficulties that arise from it, and this leads to some fresh interpretations of issues in Aristotelian scholarship. However, while the book didactically guides the reader from its foundations to its conclusion, there is an important issue that is not clarified. The expression *proper grounds of conviction* can sometimes be read in a weak sense, i.e. as a means of simple persuasion (p. 54) and other times almost as a synonym of dialectics (p. 46). It would have been of great help had Dow clearly presented the difference between rhetoric and dialectic according to his interpretation.

The second part of the book (Chap. 6-7) tackles two difficulties: The first is a challenge that Dow's reading of the rhetoric faces: If rhetoric aims at producing proper grounds for conviction, how can one explain Aristotle's exposition that *pathos* (together with *logos* and *ethos*) is an integral part of the rhetoric? To answer this challenge, Dow argues that *pathos* proofs work in a very similar manner to *logos* proofs. This can be illustrated with this example (summarized from pp. 101-104):

1 – I register evidence that Smith is a dangerous character

2 – I feel afraid of Smith

This leads to the conclusion

3a – I believe Smith is guilty of assault

Which comes with an underlying reason

3b – because I feel he is a dangerous character.

While this explanation seems to be consistent with how rhetoric operates, one *caveat* must be registered. This view depends on emotions being necessarily representational which is what Dow claims on behalf of Aristotelian emotions. But this position is hard to sustain because it cannot sufficiently account for situations in which the person experiences an emotion but does not believe in it. Aristotle himself brings some examples of this (as in *De Anima* 1.1). Admittedly, Dow is aware of this problem (p. 105) but his book does not succeed in providing a clear solution for it.

The second difficulty stems not from Dow's explanation but from Aristotle's. In *Rhet.* 1.1, Aristotle seems to disregard persuasion through emotions as useless while in 1.2 he includes it as a kind of rhetorical persuasion. Dow's arguments here are organized and convincing. He dismisses readings which try to consider *Rhet.* 1.1 as deriving from an earlier Aristotle by arguing that *Rhet.* 1.1 should be read in its context, i.e. as a criticism of other rhetoricians and writers of rhetorical manuals and their use of emotions. Accordingly, Aristotle is not disregarding persuasion through emotions as a valid rhetorical proof but only rejects the way those rhetoricians use it. One may add to Dow's explanation that it is consistent with Aristotle's methodology of bringing and criticizing what his predecessors have said in the opening of some of his writings. Furthermore, it is consistent with the rest of the book and offers less difficulties than other explanations.

The third part of the book (Chap. 8-10) turns to a question which has gained much attention recently in the scholarly world, namely: What is Aristotle's understanding of emotions? Dow tries to answer this question mostly in the light of what is written about the emotions in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. In doing so, he touches on three very important points. First, he joins a growing number of scholars who consider Aristotelian emotions a mixture of pleasure and pain. Although his arguments do not bring novelties to this point, they are well formulated and his exposition in itself is a contribution to the discussion. Second, he defends (mainly in Chap. 10) a minority view that says *phantasia* is the faculty responsible for the representational contents of emotions, as opposed to belief. While I agree with the general framework of his view, he could have developed the relationship between *phantasia* and emotions in more depth. For example, he fails to distinguish the differences between the three types of *phantasia* and their relationship to emotions. Also, he tends to extrapolate from what Aristotle writes about emotions in the *Rhetoric* without considering

what he has written in other writings. One must be cautious with this, because the *Rhetoric* was not written as a scientific book on emotions, and it is possible that the examples and definitions Aristotle brought here only reflect what was relevant to be taught to rhetoricians and not a fair reflection of how Aristotle perceived emotions.

The final point is where Dow's view of emotions departs in an interesting way from most interpretations. While most scholars consider that for Aristotle emotions make things appear in a certain way, Dow goes beyond this and explains that 'passions are pleasures and pains, where these are understood as states with representational contents, and where these contents are taken by the subject to be the way things actually are' (p. 131). This innovation should be considered seriously by those studying Aristotelian emotions since it brings a coherent explanation of the definition of emotions found in *Rhet.* 2.2-11 while at the same time taking into account Aristotle's psychology. Nevertheless, there are two shortcomings. The first issue is that Dow's interpretation seems to assume a single account of all the emotions presented. But while some of them can easily be explained in the context of *phantasia* alone, without the necessity of belief, that is not the case for all emotions. For example, belief seems necessary for friendly feeling, as Aristotle frames it (*Rhet.* 2.4, 1380 b 36-37). The second issue has to do with the recalcitrant emotions. While Dow indicates he is aware of the problem (p. 222) he leaves it open to further investigation. In all fairness, it may indeed belong to a further study and it does not hinder Dow's conclusions.

In short, the book is a welcome contribution to the study of Aristotle, both for its contribution to the interpretation of the *Rhetoric* and — perhaps even more — for its contribution to the study of Aristotelian emotions. He presents his ideas in a well-organized style. The footnotes and references show a clear and detailed knowledge of the subject and its current discussions. The book is a worthy addition to the libraries of classicists and philosophers, and a necessary reference for anyone working on the emotions.

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Lee M. Fratantuono and R. Alden Smith, *Virgil, Aeneid 5: text, translation and commentary. Mnem.* Suppl.386, Leiden 2015. x + 784 pp. ISBN 978-90-04-30124-5.

For a moment, the appearance of FS (as I shall call the *Aen.5* of Fratantuono and Smith, authors and book alike) seemed to promise the birth of a new scholarly generation, at least in a personal sense, for at p.viii FS proclaim themselves with surabundant enthusiasm followers of my own Virgil commentaries. They go on to cite the reviewer's name with deafening frequency, almost as though to conceal an alarming ignorance (to which we shall have to return) of the wider bibliography. They also promise another volume of commentary, of which more will have to be said. As the explicit model cited by FS, this reviewer finds himself in something of an embarrassment, above all because he has not been read with understanding, nor followed with care. A precise, thoughtful, careful application of my manner of commentary (with perhaps, some simplification of my notorious punctuation and sentence structure) would have been fascinating and would have entailed weeks of care and thought from any serious reviewer. But are FS revealed as competent? Are they stuffed full to the very brim of Virgil and the whole story of Virgilian studies? Do they abound with sound sense and good judgement? To those three questions, this review will not offer a positive answer, nor shall I be able to offer any glow of hope for their projected *Aen.8*. Alas, quite the reverse.

The commentary is defined with almost excessive precision as 'aimed primarily at a scholarly audience ... and to graduate and university students' (p.vii). Given the price, one thinks of library consultation. Above all, we have to consider whether this lofty view that FS express of their public actually squares with the book's intellectual and scholarly realities.