

William W. Fortenbaugh, with contributions on the Arabic material by Dimitri Gutas, *Theophrastus of Eresus Commentary Volume 6.1: Sources on Ethics*, Leiden: Brill, 2011. 879 pp. ISBN: 978-90-40-19422-9.

Theophrastus of Eresus was Aristotle's successor as the second head of the Peripatos, but it was under his headship that it prospered and turned into a school in the administrative sense. He was a popular teacher, a prolific writer, and the only member of the school from whom a sizeable body of writings has survived. This brief description immediately brings to light a major reason for studying Theophrastus, whose writings were largely neglected until the last few decades: he was the first to institutionalize and propagate the teaching of Aristotle's philosophy, thereby playing a historically crucial role in the gradual though intermittent process whereby Aristotle's philosophy was transmitted to and developed by later generations. However, Theophrastus' significance does not merely lie in the role he played in the history of Aristotelianism. Studies of his ideas reveal a thinker who made far-reaching contributions to various fields, such as logic, where he developed a theory of hypothetical syllogisms, and natural philosophy, where he questioned Aristotle's conception of place and introduced the notion of microvoid.¹

William Fortenbaugh's (=F.) commentary on the ethical fragments of Theophrastus accompanies the collection of sources for Theophrastus' life, writings, thought, and influence edited and translated into English by William Fortenbaugh, Pamela Huby, Robert Sharples, and Dimitri Gutas.² Its thorough examination of Theophrastus' ethics constitutes another valuable study that enriches our knowledge and understanding of this historically and philosophically significant figure.

Our evidence on Theophrastus' ethical views bears witness to his interest in a wide range of topics: virtue, education, happiness, pleasure, emotions, fortune, friendship, and marriage, to list but a few. F.'s commentary on this evidence aims, among other things, to assess the accuracy of the sources' ascription of certain views to Theophrastus and to determine, as far as possible, the treatise in which he expounds these views. To prepare the ground for this study, F. opens his commentary with a discussion of the sources for Theophrastus' ethical views and then another of the titles of his ethical writings. The former contains historical information about thirty eight authors from the late Roman Republic, the Imperial era, and the Middle Ages and examines their possible sources, the accuracy of their reports, and their philosophical agendas. This discussion also includes Dimitri Gutas' analysis of the Arabic sources. The upshot is that we should treat with caution even major and relatively early sources, such as Cicero and Plutarch. The second discussion identifies thirty titles as concerned with ethics, shows that they are of Theophrastean origin, and calls into question the dichotomy of esoteric and exoteric writings on the ground that certain materials intended for a wider audience might have been used in lectures and esoteric writings.

While this discussion facilitates a methodologically sound analysis of the sources, it is not meant to dispel all the methodological problems involved in reconstructing the views of an author whose works are preserved mostly in fragmentary form. Ideally, the sources' reliability should be examined in light of the author's extant writings and independently of their interpretation. F. adheres to this ideal wherever possible. For example, in Al Fārābī's Prerequisites to the Study of Aristotle's Philosophy 3, Theophrastus' followers are said to be of the opinion that the study of ethics comes first in the order in which the subjects of philosophy are to be studied (466A FHS&G). Commenting on this passage, F. recapitulates and endorses Gutas' painstaking analysis

¹ See 111A-113D, 146-149, FHS&G, *De Ign.* 42 respectively.

² *Theophrastus of Eresus: Sources for his Life, Writings, Thought, and Influence*, edited and translated by William W. Fortenbaugh, Pamela M. Huby, Robert W. Sharples, and Dimitri Gutas, 2 vols. Brill: Leiden 1992.

of the textual tradition that ultimately led to the ascription of this view to Theophrastus – an analysis that establishes that this report reflects a tendentious retelling of the history of philosophy that postdates the sixth-century AD commentator Elias.³ Still, F. is careful not to dismiss this report altogether; he goes on to explain why this view, tendentious or not, was ascribed to Theophrastus. F. convincingly shows that this report reflects a careless or confused understanding of Theophrastus' view that acquiring good habits is a prerequisite for learning. In so doing, he offers a sound assessment of the reliability of this source and at the same time explains how the view reported by this source came to be associated with Theophrastus.

This method of analysis cannot be applied to all sources. In the majority of the cases, the reliability of the sources may be determined only on the basis of certain presuppositions, particularly regarding the context in which the thinker articulated his views. Theophrastus' views may be placed in several contexts, but our knowledge of them is limited. Theophrastus was Aristotle's follower, but our sources provide no definite answer as to whether he departed from his teacher's views. While Quintilian reports that Theophrastus dissented fearlessly from Aristotle, Cicero, Boethius, and Simplicius relate that Theophrastus tackled topics previously handled by Aristotle, touched lightly on things he said, and followed him in almost everything.⁴ Further, Theophrastus was the head of the Peripatos when Zeno founded the Stoa, but we have no evidence that Theophrastus' interacted with any member of this school. Consequently, we do not know whether or to what extent controversies with this school led him to develop views not found in Aristotle. Finally, we have evidence of personal interactions between Theophrastus and other members of the Peripatos but we can only speculate about whether debates with other Peripatetics shaped Theophrastus' views, for instance whether the controversy between him and Dicaearchus over whether a practical or a theoretical life is morally preferable led him to highlight the effects of fortune and education on happiness.

In the absence of clear evidence on the context in which Theophrastus expounded his views, our understanding of the fragmentary sources is bound to be based on certain presuppositions regarding Theophrastus' relationship with Aristotle and his contemporaries. F. is not explicit in his presuppositions. He appeals to all the above contexts but throughout his commentary gives precedence to the assumption that Theophrastus' ideas are to be understood in light of Aristotle's views on the same topics. This assumption is conspicuously manifest in F.'s commentary on the sources for Theophrastus' account of emotions. Here he interprets Theophrastus in terms of Aristotle's analysis of emotions, namely that they are complex phenomena involving thought or belief as their efficient cause, a desire to achieve a certain goal as their final cause, and bodily change as their material cause. A major source from which we can learn about Theophrastus' general analysis of emotions — Simplicius *In Phys.* 964.29-965.6 Diels (= 271 FHS&G) — does not confirm this interpretation outright. Here Simplicius quotes a passage from Theophrastus' *On Motion*, where he says that 'desires, appetites, and impulses (*ὄργαι*) are bodily motions and have their origin in [the body]'. This quotation may imply that Theophrastus conceived of emotions as bodily phenomena involving no cognitive element such as judgment, but F. utterly rejects this. He rightly argues that the word *ὄργαι* does not necessarily mean 'bodily turbulence' but may also denote 'episodes of anger'. Accordingly, he reads into Simplicius' quotation an implicit reference to a cognitive component, i.e., a judgment on perceived slights. This inference presupposes Aristotle's claim that anger is necessarily caused by apparent outrage (*Rhet.* 1378a30-32).⁵

³ Gutas, D. (1985), 'The Starting Point of Philosophical Studies in Alexandrian and Arabic Aristotelianism', in W.W. Fortenbaugh, P.M. Huby, and A. Long (eds.), *Theophrastus of Eresus: His Life and Work*, New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 115-122.

⁴ Quintilian *Int. Or.* 3.8.62, 175.30-176.3 (= 694 FHS&G), Cicero *De Fin* I.6, 3.16-18 (= 50 FHS&G), Boethius *In Int.* 12.9-12 (= 72A FHS&G), Simplicius *In Phys.* 789.5-6 (= 151B FHS&G).

⁵ In support of this interpretation, F. also appeals to source 438 FHS&G, where Simplicius reports that Theophrastus said that fault-finding, anger, and rage differ in their intensity (or in respect of the more

Similarly, F. considers entirely wrong the claim found in Simplicius' quotation that desires, appetites, and impulses originate in the body on the grounds that bodily condition is not enough for the occurrence of anger. In support of this interpretation he stresses that Simplicius' quotation says nothing about what actually causes the bodily change during emotional responses; he concludes that this cause, in Theophrastus' view, would be the judgment that triggered the response, rather than the body, which according to Simplicius' quotation is the origin of emotions.

Although these considerations are undoubtedly correct, it is methodologically advisable to entertain the possibility that the quotation is not entirely wrong, but indicates that although Theophrastus does not ignore altogether the cognitive component of emotions, he emphasizes the bodily component more than Aristotle did. Three related sources (440A-C FHS&G) may prompt this suggestion. These sources report on Theophrastus' remark that the soul pays the body high rent on account of experiencing emotions. While this remark does not entail that the body is the principal or efficient cause of emotions, it may suggest that its causal role in emotional responses is not merely that of a material cause; that is, that the bodily aspect of emotional response is not merely a necessary concomitant to or effect of cognitive judgment, but that it is somehow responsible for the soul's experiencing emotions. Pseudo-Plutarch's claim that the soul can justly file suit against the body because it encounters (*συμφερομένη*) emotions in the body conveys this idea through a legal metaphor which implies that the body plays a more active role in emotional responses than Aristotle's material cause. Of course, this conclusion is uncertain and leaves open the question of what pseudo-Plutarch's legal metaphor actually means. Nonetheless, consideration of this conclusion has two methodological advantages: it avoids an outright dismissal of information that has come down to us in a quotation and it allows a more nuanced account of Theophrastus' view of emotions than does the assumption that he did not depart from Aristotle.

However, all things considered, the thorough examination of Theophrastus' views on ethics in light of the teaching of Aristotle leads to a cautious and sound assessment of the sources. The scope of this review does not enable me to present the results of this assessment in detail. But to mention a few examples, F. persuasively shows that in acknowledging the effect of fortune on happiness, Theophrastus did not significantly depart from Aristotle, as Cicero claims, but merely expressed himself, perhaps in opposition to the Stoics, more forcefully than his teacher did. Further, it leads to the conclusion that it is plausible, though not certain, that Theophrastus departed from Aristotle in attributing calculation (*λογισμοί*) to animals. And finally, that Theophrastus did not view women as an impediment to a happy life, as Saint Jerome's report states.

In addition to substantiating these and other conclusions, F.'s commentary paves the way for further studies of the subject. It contains a philological analysis of the sources, presents alternative interpretations, and includes an updated bibliography for each source and subject under consideration. Also, with non-professional readers in mind, each section contains a general introduction to the various ethical subjects discussed therein, which helps familiarize the modern reader with Theophrastus' views. In so doing, and in offering meticulous analyses of the philological, historical, and philosophical aspects of Theophrastus' ethics, this commentary will undoubtedly make a long-lasting impact on the historiography of ancient philosophy.

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and less in Simplicius' words). He infers from this report that the phrase 'bodily motions', which appears in Simplicius' quotation, should not be understood as excluding all thought. True enough, but since this report mentions neither the body nor the soul it does not exclude a purely materialistic interpretation either. That is, degrees of intensity may reasonably refer to the intensity of bodily reactions.