

Mauro Mariani
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Mauro Mariani is not only a distinguished Italian logician, but also a fine expert in Aristotle's logic, semantics and metaphysics. His interest in Aristotle spanned at least three decades and produced so far a significant number of original and stimulating papers. ETS has now taken the welcome initiative to publish Mariani's papers on Aristotle in one single volume. The fifteen articles in the volume cover a wide range of related topics including the principle of plenitude and the future contingents (3 papers), Aristotle's modal syllogistic (3 papers), identity (3 papers), universals (3 papers), the Third Man Argument (2 papers) and Aristotle's dialectic (1 paper). The list of topics by itself shows how Mariani engages with some of the most popular strands of Aristotelian scholarship in the analytic philosophy tradition. The papers are also conveniently arranged in a chronological order – which allows the reader to follow Mariani's different (but generally rather consistent) treatments of the same or similar topics.

It is impossible here to go into the details of the individual papers or of Mariani's interpretation of the different philosophical issues at stake. I shall confine myself, therefore, to outlining Mariani's general approach to Aristotle's logical and metaphysical works, and then provide a few examples of common interpretative motifs that somehow run through the collection. Mariani's approach to Aristotle is characterized by the rejection of what may be called the myth of the system. What is being contested here is not of course that Aristotle provides a systematic analysis of a number of crucial philosophical issues, because he obviously does. What Mariani is objecting to is rather the assumption that the Aristotelian *corpus*, as well as each single work, should be read as a philosophical system in which the different parts perfectly cohere or can be made coherent with just a few tweaks. In contrast with the systematic approach, Mariani puts emphasis on the different perspectives from which Aristotle often tackles a single issue in different works, and does not downplay the potential tensions and at times inconsistencies that the Aristotelian text recurrently reveals. It does not follow from this approach that Aristotle is an

irredeemably confused or even contradictory philosopher. The lesson to learn is rather that Aristotle's analyses a certain philosophical problem with several and often alternative tools and starting from several and often competing intuitions. Even though different tools and intuitions often manage to produce a sufficiently unified picture, this is not always the case or not so down the minute details. Alongside the systematic approach, Mariani also rejects traditional strategies to explain away contradictions in Aristotle's text, including developmental approaches: as is shown in the case of the notion of identity, for instance, but in other cases as well, developmental hypotheses are often insufficient to give a full account of tensions that also surface in closely related or arguably coeval texts. It is preferable, therefore, to bite the bullet and try to understand why Aristotle offers different solutions to a single philosophical issue in different contexts.

As Mariani himself observes in the preface to the volume (p. xi), the focal interest of his research is Aristotle's theory of modality. And certainly Mariani's treatment of modality displays the rich and contextual approach I have just outlined. In the three papers on future contingents ('Il principio di pienezza in *Met.* Θ 4 e *De Coelo* A 12', p. 1 ff.; 'Determinismo e verità: *De Int.* 9 e sue interpretazioni', p. 23 ff.; 'Discussione di Richard Gaskin, *The Sea Battle and the Master Argument*, de Gruyter, Berlin - New York, 1995', p. 319 ff.), for instance, Mariani convincingly argues, against Hintikka, that Aristotle does reject the so-called Principle of Plenitude, i.e. the claim that the possible is or will be (and so the eternal is necessary). But he also argues that Aristotle oscillates between the view that statements about future contingents have no truth-value and the idea that they do have truth-value without there being possible that the true and the false be distributed across a pair of contradictory statements about the future. Similarly, in the three papers on Aristotle's modal syllogistic ('Le dimostrazioni indirette in *An. Pr.* A 15', p. 53 ff.; 'Semantica aristotelica e sillogistica modale', p. 61 ff.; 'Sillogistica modale e teorie della predicazione', p. 193 ff.), Mariani strongly criticises all attempts to give a unified account of modal syllogistic based on a single notion of necessity, such as for instance the notion of *per se* at work in *Posterior Analytics*, A 4. Against this view, Mariani shows that Aristotle makes use of at least three notions of necessity and that different notions render true (or false) different modal statements. This variety of necessities is not corresponded to by a plurality of predicative structures, since Aristotle consistently maintains that all declarative sentences are of the form 'B belongs to A' or can be somehow reduced to it. This explains why it is difficult, if not impossible, to extract an entirely consistent theory from Aristotle's treatment of modal syllogistic in *Prior Analytics*, A 8-22, and makes it understandable why scholars have failed to come up with such a theory.

Possibly, however, Mariani's articles help us to dig out a deeper and more fundamental tension within Aristotle's logic and semantics, that is, the potential clash between an extensional and an intensional approach. To go back briefly to modal syllogistic, Mariani uses the medieval distinction between *de re* and *de dicto* readings of a modal statement to shed some light on Aristotle's different notions of necessity: some modal statements are true both *de dicto* and *de re*; others are true only when read *de re*; and yet others are true only *de dicto*. Although of course the distinction between extensional and intensional does not fully overlap with that between *de dicto* and *de re*, Mariani clearly shows that an extensional approach to predication favours a *de re*-only reading of modal statements, while the intensional distinction between things that are extensionally the same encourages a strongly *de dicto* reading. Mariani is skilful in showing how this clash of intuitions relates to other difficult aspects of Aristotle's semantics, such as the claim that declarative sentences that have an accidental item as their subjects (e.g. 'the white is wood') can be paraphrased away into sentences that have only substantial items as their subjects ('the wood is white'): this claim is true only if an extensional approach to predication is endorsed, while it is false if intensional distinctions between things that are extensionally the same still play a role. The tension between an extensional and an intensional approach is even more evident in Aristotle's treatment of identity, which is at the centre of three related articles ('Identità numerica e predicazione accidentale in Aristotele', p. 123 ff.; 'Identità e indiscernibili in Aristotele', p. 249 ff.; 'Identità, essenza ed accidente', p. 275 ff.). An illustration may clarify things here. Throughout his corpus, Aristotle talks about a rather strange class of objects, like *Socrates seated*, which have been labelled in the Aristotelian scholarship 'accidental compounds': these weird things are roughly the combination of a substance and an accidental property belonging to the substance. What is the relationship between the substance Socrates and the accidental compound Socrates seated? Are they identical? For Aristotle, Socrates and Socrates seated are accidentally the same, and accidental sameness is one variety of numerical sameness. So, Socrates and Socrates seated are numerically the same. But are they also identical? Well, Mariani shows that in the *Topics* and elsewhere, Aristotle emphasises the extensional equivalence between Socrates and Socrates seated and maintains that they are identical. Thus, Leibniz's law applies in their case. This approach allows us to eliminate from our ontology somewhat difficult entities as accidental compounds prove to be. But in other contexts Aristotle seems more keen to preserve an intensional distinction between Socrates and Socrates seated and to claim that they don't share all their properties and so are not identical. This is particularly evident in *Sophistical Refutations*, 24, where Aristotle discusses paradoxes

originating from what we would call intensional contexts. As Mariani shows, that of accidental compounds is not the only case in which Aristotle feels the need to introduce a stronger notion of identity than numerical sameness. I actually think (and Mariani seems to agree) that the intensional distinction between entities that are extensionally equivalent can be put to use to deal with a certain number of metaphysical issues, including the problem of material constitution or the relationship between matter and form. The clash between an extensional and an intensional perspective is also at work in Mariani's analysis of Aristotle's theory of universals in the *Organon* ('Gli universali nelle opere logiche di Aristotele', p. 331 ff.). In this case, however, Mariani is far more confident that a unified account can be negotiated between Aristotle's extensional definition of universals in the *De Interpretatione* and *Prior Analytics* and the more intensional characterisation in the *Posterior Analytics*. Actually, Mariani protests (rightly, in my view) that it is wrong to provide an entirely extensional account of Aristotle's theory of universals and hence turn Aristotle into some sort of quasi-nominalist. His analysis, therefore, turns out to be a sophisticated defence of a more traditional, realist interpretation of Aristotle's view on universals. Similarly, the two papers on the Third Man Argument ('Il «Terzo Uomo» nelle *Confutazioni Sofistiche*', p. 85; 'Aristotele e il «Terzo Uomo»', p. 217) provide a new and equally sophisticated defence of the traditional view that the source of the problem with the Third Man Argument is the separation of universals that is at the core of Plato's metaphysical theory.

One does not need to agree with everything Mariani says in the papers or with all solutions he provides to the many interpretative and philosophical problems under discussion. I, for one, entirely agree with his account of universals and identity, I am very sympathetic to his general approach to Aristotle's theory of predication, but still have some reservations about the (to some extent) marginal role Mariani assigns to dialectic in the *Metaphysics* ('Dialettica e principi in Aristotele', p. 145 ff.). I find the view that the science of being *qua* being is a standard demonstrative science quite difficult, though this is a position that has strongly been argued for in recent years by a number of Aristotelian scholars (e.g. Bell and Fraser). But, whether or not one agrees, this brilliant collection of essays is a must-read for all those interested in a sophisticated and in-depth analysis of Aristotle's logic, semantics and metaphysics.

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