

Christopher P. Long, *Aristotle on the Nature of Truth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Pp. vii, 275. ISBN 9780521191210. \$72.00 (hardbound).

Professor Long's *Aristotle on the Nature of Truth* is clearly intended for professional philosophers. Early on, he issues a caveat especially momentous for classicists:

The original title of this work was *The Saying of Things: The Nature of Truth and the Truth of Nature as Justice*. Although the title under which it is here published, *Aristotle on the Nature of Truth*, accurately describes the book's content, it does not quite capture the spirit in which the book was written or the structure it embodies. (xi)

For those expecting a scholarly work in the history philosophy, the last claim here—that the title “does not quite capture” the spirit or the structure of the book—is an understatement. Given the actual title, we expect that the book is primarily concerned with Aristotle's account of the nature of truth. It is not. The book certainly offers an interpretation of what Aristotle has to say about truth, but Long explicitly and correctly states that the focal point of his book is “the responsibility endemic to ontological encounter,” an idea broached in his earlier *The Ethics of Ontology: Rethinking an Aristotelian Legacy* (SUNY Press, 2004).

The main argument of the book has three parts. In the first part—comprising chapters one and two—Long explains truth in terms of justice. Long interprets the correspondence theory of truth in terms of “the symbiotic flourishing of the relationship between the appearing of things (τὰ φαινόμενα) and the saying of things (τὰ λεγόμενα),” (48) an approach he derives largely from Heideggerian phenomenology. He conceives of this symbiotic relation in terms of justice. In the second and longest part of the book, he attributes this sort of correspondence theory to Aristotle. In chapters seven and eight, the third part of the book, Long converts his principal proposition and attempts to explain justice in terms of truth. In what follows, I will address those aspects of Long's argument likely to be of interest to classicists.

Long seeks to explain truth in terms of justice. In the final analysis, he understands “[...] the meaning truth as an attempt to do justice to the appearing individual.” (200) By ‘doing justice’ he means “to remain true to the things themselves as expressions also of the larger ecological community we co-habit with all things.” (243) Long is quite explicit that he does not intend to “develop a complete account of justice in Aristotle,” (245) but it would have been helpful if he had provided the reader with a better sense for how his notion of “doing justice” relates to Aristotle's discussion of the justice in the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics* and the *Politics*.

Long looks to Heideggerian phenomenology as his model for an account of truth that strives to incorporate the insights of direct realism with those of philosophical hermeneutics. The essence of Long's naturalism—which he derives from the work of the American pragmatists, particularly that of the relatively unknown Frederick Woodbridge—is summed up by Long when he states that “if discourse is itself a sort of cooperation with nature, truth, which grows out of and is nourished by this discursive

cooperation, too belongs to nature.” (47) Long’s brand of naturalism is, in particular, not circumscribed by the methods and traditions of natural science. Long synthesizes and applies the ideas he derives from Heidegger and the American pragmatists to the Aristotelian texts on truth, arguing that Aristotle propounded a theory of truth the main insights of which anticipate those of these later schools of thought.

We surely could use a detailed scholarly exposition of the relationship between Heidegger’s conception of truth and Aristotle’s understanding of ἀλήθεια. Similarly we would gain a great deal by carefully comparing what the American pragmatists have to say about truth with Aristotle’s account. Indeed, in spite of recent scholarly work such as Modrak’s *Aristotle’s theory of language and meaning* (Cambridge UP, 2001), De Rijk’s two-volume *Aristotle: Semantics and Ontology* (Brill, 2002), and Crivelli’s *On Truth* (Cambridge UP, 2004), we still need a definitive account of Aristotle’s theory of truth. Each of these projects taken by itself would require a book. Long doesn’t pretend to these scholarly feats.

In the first chapter, entitled “The Saying of Things,” Long introduces three claims that dominate the rest of the book: (a) things in nature literally express themselves, (b) we can discern what these things say, and (c) things in nature hold us accountable for what we say about them. He also asserts that “the peripatetic methodology is legomenology.” (7) “Legomenology,” as Long introduces it, involves careful attention to how we use language and to how things in nature express themselves. Long’s discussion, in the first chapter, of all of these claims quilts the disparate fabrics of thought in the works of Martin Heidegger, John Dewey, John Herman Randall, Georges Santayana, and Frederick Woodbridge. Long’s discussion of the contributions of these difficult thinkers to the theory of truth, and of the relevance of these contributions to our understanding of Aristotle’s account of truth, is suggestive but no more. Long also lays out some basic semantic assumptions concerning the ancient Greek words λόγος, τὰ λεγόμενα, πρᾶγμα, and ἀληθευτικός. Those familiar with the debates about these technical philosophical terms will find little new here. However, Long’s decision to take the virtue of truthfulness as the basis for his interpretation of Aristotle’s theory of truth—claiming that truth, for Aristotle, is an intrinsically ethical relation (“a ἔξις won in the course of lived experience informed by a deliberate engagement with the saying of things”)—is surely intriguing and, even if wrongheaded, whets the appetite for what follows.

In the second chapter, “A History of Truth as Cor-respondence,” Long articulates his understanding of the expression of things and the nature of the correspondence involved in truth. The chapter has three parts. The first provides a very brief comparison of the proposed conception of correspondence with the views held by Aquinas, Descartes, Aristotle, and Peirce. The second offers an all too brief excursus on the Presocratic usage of the ancient Greek term ἀλήθεια. Here the classicist will wish for a more detailed response to ideas contained in works such as Detienne’s *Les Maîtres de vérité dans la grèce archaïque* or Kahn’s *The Verb ‘Be’ in Ancient Greek*. The third part broaches the fraught discussion of Heidegger’s interpretation of the meaning of ἀλήθεια. Here Long uses the

obscure to explain the difficult. With regard to the correspondence relation, Long claims that “whatever else a correspondence theory of truth involves, at its core is an attuned ability to correspond to and with the expression of things.” (22) This will come as a surprise to most correspondence theorists, especially given Long’s interpretation of ‘expression’ as “the mode of presentation in which the unicity of things announces itself.” (22) Long clearly distances himself from any account of correspondence in terms of *adaequatio intellectus et rei*: “[...] Truth is not the correspondence of the intellect and thing. Rather, truth is rooted in the co-responsive community of dialogical encounter between the expression of things and the human capacity for articulate response.” (164)

In “Saving the Things Said,” the third chapter, Long looks to the *Physics* and *Parts of Animals* in order to vindicate Aristotle’s approach to the history of philosophy, which Long interprets as a respectful attempt to develop “the underdetermined possibilities” (61) of his predecessor’s thought. Most of the chapter is a reworking of his earlier article “Saving *ta Legomena*: Aristotle and the History of Philosophy” (*Review of Metaphysics*, 60, 2006). It is only tangentially related to the main thesis of the book.

Long interprets Aristotle’s generic concept of a λόγος ἀποφαντικός (Long renders this phrase by ‘declarative saying’), and its subordinate kinds κατάφασις and ἀπόφασις, in the fourth chapter, “By Way of Address *Lending Voice to Things*.” He claims that, for Aristotle, a λόγος ἀποφαντικός is a “joint occurrence: it takes place between beings as they address and respond to one another,” (108) and Long interprets this literally in terms of the nature of physical joints [καμπαί]. Long also lays out his understanding of Aristotle’s related technical terms λόγος, φωνή, ψόφος, διάλεκτος, and φαντασία. Given the stakes, and the extensive commentary on these topics, both recent and ancient, one wishes Long would have provided us with more argument in support of his proposals.

In the fifth chapter, “By Way of Response *The Logic of Cooperative Encounter*,” Long develops an interpretation of Aristotle’s account of the relationship between perception and thinking. Long argues that, for Aristotle, perception is “dialogical: it names a cooperation according to λόγος between the powers of the soul and the things already-at-work in such a way as to be perceived.” (124) Thought is similarly cooperative in response to what is intelligible in things. Long’s interpretation crucially depends on his understanding of Aristotle’s concepts of φαντασία, καθόλου and καθ’ ἕκαστον, which he sketches.

In “The Truth of Nature and the Nature of Truth in Aristotle,” the sixth chapter, Long considers the homonymy of truth. He claims that “if [...] truth is said in many ways, still it remains oriented toward some one nature, indeed, toward the expression and intelligibility of nature itself.” (161) Readers familiar with recent and important work by Christopher Shields, *Order in Multiplicity* (Oxford UP, 1999) and Julie Ward, *Aristotle on Homonymy* (Cambridge UP, 2008), on the role of homonymy in Aristotle’s philosophical system will wish Long had made use of their insights. In this chapter Long also presents his readings of number of notoriously difficult texts: *De Anima* III and

Metaphysics E 1-4, Z 3-8, and Θ 10, arguing for his interpretation of μορφή, εἶδος, and τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι.

Long turns to Aristotle's account of God in Λ in the seventh chapter, "On Saying the Beautiful in Light of the Good," bolstering his reading of this text with his interpretations of *NE* III and *Metaphysics* A 1-2. He argues that Aristotle's God involves a dimension of potentiality, (236) and that, for Aristotle, God is "a living activity of thinking that poignantly articulates the nature of cooperative encounter by which each and every thing enters into relations with others." (231) Both claims are speculative and intriguing.

In the last chapter of the book, "Ecological Justice and the Ethics of Truth," Long explores the relationship between what he calls "an ethics of truth" and what he calls "ecological justice." Here he decidedly moves beyond what Aristotle says about justice, but classicists might be interested in his brief discussion of φρόνησις.

Long's book is provocative. It is best not to judge it as a work in the history of philosophy helping us to better interpret Aristotle's texts. Rather, we should consider whether or not it helps us to better understand the nature of truth.

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