

Francesca Guadalupe Masi, Stephano Maso, <i>Fate, Chance and Fortune in Ancient Thought</i>. Amsterdam: Hakkert, 2013. Pp. 250. ISBN 978-90-256-1288-7. € 48, 00.

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[Authors and titles are listed at the end of the review.]

This collection of essays is centered around the issue of chance and fortune (αὐτόματον, τύχη) in Classical, Hellenistic and Imperial philosophy, but it also extends to related problems like fate, necessity, causality and the rational autonomy of human agents. With one exception, a paper in French, all the studies are written in Italian and English. The contributions are generally of high standard, many of them containing original insights.

Herrmann argues that Plato's accounts of action and knowledge imply some kind of „determinism”, which seems to leave little room for human freedom: the good and the object of desire determine human motivations and actions, while the Forms determine true knowledge. He suggests that freedom is available exclusively for the philosopher in that he is capable of creating alternative analyses and descriptions of reality which are not externally determined. The latter claim is buttressed with an analysis of Plato's practice as a philosophical author. I wonder if such a notion of freedom – analogous to the freedom of artistic creation – is fruitful in interpreting Plato. In my view, Plato's philosopher is concerned to map the structure of objective reality rather than to liberate his thought of the constraints imposed by it.

Rossi examines <i>Metaphysics</i> E 3 where Aristotle argues that the existence of accidental causes guarantees that not everything happens of necessity. She compares <i>Physics</i> B 4-6, developing a subtle analysis of the causal structure of chance events. Cases of chance can be identified with reference to the end (τέλος), which is implicitly present in the moving cause. For instance, if a man goes to the agora for the sake of a spectacle, and on meeting a debtor collects his money, the original end (seeing the spectacle) implicit in the moving cause (the intention of the agent) and the outcome actually achieved (collecting the money) are different. The final cause marks out a causal chain leading to its own actualization. In the cases of chance, an intermediate cause in this chain changes its nature in such a way that it brings about a different outcome. Accidental causes are intermediate causes

capable of being for the sake of the original end as well as for the sake of the <i>de facto</i> achieved outcome. When an intermediary cause becomes an accidental cause, it changes its nature merely because of some spatio-temporal coincidence (in our example: the presence of the debtor in the agora). On the usual reading, in <i>Metaphysics</i> E 3 Aristotle rejects mechanical determinism involving efficient causes. Rossi's thesis is that what Aristotle is rejecting is rather a teleological determinism involving efficient-final causes: if there were no accidental causes, then every linear natural and deliberative process would necessarily achieve its original end, and would happen always in the same way. Rossi develops her thesis with admirable clarity and thoroughness.

Masi sets out to refute Dudley's claim that Aristotle's <i>Physics</i> contains two distinct notions of good fortune (εὐτυχία). According to Dudley, εὐτυχία in B 6 figures as a comprehensive and permanent state rooted in the nature of the agent, whereas in B 5, 197a31-2 it is temporary external prosperity depending merely on chance (τύχη).[1] Masi advances an interpretation of <i>Physics</i> B 5, 197a25-32 in order to show that the notion of εὐτυχία in B 5 is not incompatible with that of B 6, as it comprises not only goods of fortune but also goods due to the natural endowment of the agent, and, therefore, it is only partly dependent on chance. Her reconstruction has not entirely convinced me at every point. For instance, Masi's interpretation of 197a27-29 (roughly: the attainment of a negligible evil does not prevent us from having good fortune, just as the attainment of a negligible good does not prevent us from having bad fortune) largely depends on word order, which varies in the different manuscripts; moreover, I wonder if the verb ἐστίν can mean „does not prevent“. Notwithstanding my doubts, I think that Masi's detailed and tightly argued interpretation of <i>Physics</i> 197a25-32 must be taken into account in future research.

Bonelli examines the Peripatetic doctrine of fate elaborated by Alexander of Aphrodisias against Stoic determinism. She closely follows the argument of <i>On Fate</i>, chs. 2-6 where Alexander classes fate with „productive causes“ (αἴτια ποιητικά), and identifies it with <i>nature</i> (both specific and individual). Alexander insists that nature admits of exceptions, which is, in his view, indispensable for moral responsibility.

Wildberger examines Chrysippus' argument for determinism from bivalence, as well as his doctrine of <i>confatalia</i>, worked out in reply to the antideterminist Lazy Argument. Furthermore, she argues that Seneca's refutation of the Lazy Argument differs in logical

structure from that of Chrysippus. Wildberger re-translates the arguments transmitted by Cicero into Greek, and she attempts to identify the original Stoic terminology. For instance, she argues that in the argument from bivalence it is the concept of *effect* (ὄν ἐστιν αἴτιον, in Cicero simply *quod*) – in the Stoics' view, an incorporeal „sayable”, a predicate – that mediates between the logical and the physical plane of the argument, as predicates figure both in logical and in causal theory. I think at some points the identification of the Greek terms would require more explicit justification. For example, it is not obvious to me that Cicero's *causa efficiens* translates αἴτιον αὐτοτελέες. On the whole, however, Wildberger advances a subtle, well-argued and original analysis of the arguments in question.

Maso in his rich study distinguishes two facets in Seneca's theory of action. First, Seneca insists that human beings qualify as responsible agents capable of self-determination even if they live in a deterministic world and are exposed to fortune (that is, to changing external circumstances, viewed in abstraction from providential cosmic order) and to other persons' power. Maso suggests that Seneca's „defensive strategy” relies on Chrysippus' compatibilism, and it anticipates the notion of freedom which will take center stage in Epictetus. Secondly, Maso discerns a „provocative strategy” in Seneca: manifestations of human freedom may go beyond the limits set by reason and experience, and the consciousness of self-determination may incite human agents to take risks. According to Maso, the Stoic model of human action as used by Seneca comprises the following phases: perception – *phantasia* – decision (the function of the will) – assent – external action. He argues that in Seneca there is a notion of free will which is the basis for responsibility. Maso interprets „volition” (*velle*, *voluntas*) in terms of an abstract, general desire which takes concrete shape in assent. He seems to locate the *initia rerum* in volition – that is, the beginning of a behavioral pattern, which is originally in our power, but, once started, it follows its internal logic and potentially renders us vulnerable. I suspect that the decisive moment must be rather the following phase, i.e. assent (if they can in fact be separated) – Seneca anticipates later notions of the will mainly by embracing the Stoic psychological model which accommodates assent as a second-order decision-making faculty.

Alessandrelli examines a doxographical report in Calcidius' *Timaeus*-commentary (ch. 144) where two leading Stoics' views on fate and providence are contrasted: whereas for Chrysippus fate and providence coincide in extension, Cleanthes assigns fate a broader domain than that of providence. Alessandrelli argues that the report on Cleanthes is a

construct of a later interpreter who sets out from a tension present in Cleanthes' <i>Hymn to Zeus</i> (that is, the contrast between the providential force, Zeus, on the one hand, and the misdeeds bad men commit in their folly, on the other), and ends up in a cosmic dualism incompatible with Stoic orthodoxy.

Morel scrutinizes Epicurus' criticism of Democritean necessitarianism. He surveys Epicurus' much-discussed arguments for autonomous human agency, but the main focus of his paper is cosmology rather than psychology and ethics. In Epicurean physics, necessity is divested of its status as the sole and absolute principle. At the same time, Epicurus has an important place for necessity in his causal theory. Necessity is integrated into a threefold causal scheme, along with chance and human agency, and, in this way, its role is redefined. Epicurus is at pains to render necessity a less abstract notion in that he links it to the properties of atoms in his account of the formation of worlds.

Verde sets out from Democritus' fragment B 68 in which chance or fortune (τύχη) is interpreted in terms of a pretext of human folly or lack of counsel, and is contrasted with prudence (φρόνησις). He points out that Epicurus elaborates on this Democritean idea (*Principal Doctrines* 16, *Letter to Menoeceus* 133-135). Epicurus regards chance as a real causal factor, but he opposes the popular view that τύχη is a mighty god dominating human affairs, insisting that rational calculation (λογισμός) is capable of minimizing its impact on human life. Verde helpfully surveys various textual reconstructions of the sources. Finally, he examines the attitude to fortune of Epicurus' associates and that of later Epicureans.

Eliasson argues that Plotinus propounds a distinctively Platonic theory of fate. In his view, Plotinus follows Alexander of Aphrodisias in the identification of fate with nature, but, at the same time, advances a different account of human autonomy. While for Alexander human autonomy is grounded in ordinary deliberation and decision, as they are not fully determined by any external or internal factors, Plotinus restricts autonomous activity to disembodied souls and to the souls of wise persons. Non-wise persons who act according to their natural constitution remain enslaved to fate. Eliasson examines thoroughly Plotinus' treatise <i>On Fate</i> (III.1), and he offers a panoramic review of other pertinent texts. He rightly points out that Plotinus is relying on the same Plato passages as the Middle Platonist theory of conditional fate (especially the myth of Er in <i>Republic</i> X), but he is less successful in showing that the Plotinian accounts were shaped specifically by that theory.

Spinelli discusses the interpretation of ancient Cynism developed by Hans Jonas, an outstanding philosopher who also engaged in intellectual history (*Problems of Freedom*, 1966/1970). According to Jonas, the disappearance of the possibility of self-realization of the individual in the medium of the polis in Hellenistic times had far-reaching cultural consequences. Fortune gained greater importance than ever before, which is witnessed by the spreading of its religious cult. At the same time, a notion of a private, inner self emerged in philosophy. It is this background against which the provocative and contemptuous sayings of Diogenes of Sinope concerning Fortune can be understood. He defiantly sets against Fortune the ethical and intellectual power of the Cynic sage. Although Diogenes' reflections are confined to moral life, he prepares the ground, in Jonas' view, for Stoicism in which the problem of freedom, enriched by an ontological dimension, becomes a central issue for the first time. I missed a critical assessment of Jonas' account in Spinelli's paper.

The volume ends with useful Indices. Unfortunately, there are some typos, at two points even in the source texts.[2] The collection is not aimed to systematically cover the history of the ancient theories about chance, fortune and fate. Nonetheless, readers interested in this complex of problems will find in it useful discussions, and some of the papers – for instance, the articles on Aristotle, and the studies on Chrysippus and Seneca – make significant contribution to the interpretation of the ancient evidence related to the issues in question.

[1] J. Dudley, *Aristotle's Concept of Chance. Accidents, Cause, Necessity, and Determinism*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2012, 61 and 248. Dudley's larger thesis is that it is only in *Physics* B 6 that Aristotle distinguishes between αὐτόματον and a narrower notion of τύχη, and, in his view, chapters 4–5 were superficially reworked in the light of this distinction.

[2] P. 130 „very” instead of „every” in the translation of Seneca, *Ep.* 14.16; p. 145 *qui* instead of *quia* in Calcidius, ch. 144.

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