

EDITORIAL

ARISTOTELICA, WHY NOW?

by Silvia Fazzo and Jill Kraye

Aristotle is probably the most influential thinker ever. This is not, however, one man's success. The experiences of the earliest philosophers, as well as Plato's heritage, were incorporated in a multiplicity of ways in Aristotle's works. Then, in Aristotle's aftermath, his writings were collected and reorganized increasingly by Peripatetics, until they progressively constituted a common legacy for philosophical schools, and for humankind as a whole.

It is not surprising, therefore, that even currents and authors that do not refer to Aristotle or that oppose his theories can be shown to be Aristotelian in one way or another, either in their presuppositions or their conceptual categories. In this sense, Aristotelianism is still today, as it was probably intended to be, a general grammar of rational thought and a foundation for scholarly dialogue.

Does this suffice to explain why now, in the midst of a global pandemic, we have decided to publish a journal of Aristotle studies, and in particular, this one, *Aristotelica*?

In fact, the reasons for doing so are too numerous to be set out in this initial editorial. We want instead to highlight, firstly, the importance of online publication, which during the past two years has become a standard mode of collaboration, and, secondly, the axis of interests which, somewhat surprisingly, has turned out to be highly appropriate for this form of communication: dealing with exegetical and text-critical issues.

Our weekly Aristotle Reading Seminar was born in April 2020 with the start of the first Italian national lockdown. It was instituted for the sake of philosophy PhD students at the University of Eastern Piedmont (the FINO PhD School) but is also open to some students and scholars from abroad, reading and commenting on the Greek text of Aristotle, everyone in their native

or preferred language. Since then, as a multilingual seminar, we have been concentrating on those books of the *Metaphysics* whose meaning and textual constitution are particularly controversial. As a key innovation, we have been focusing on the neglected readings of the earliest manuscript of the *Metaphysics*, Vind. phil. gr. 100, which dates from the ninth century and which can be seen on the journal's cover. This codex also preserves the entire *corpus physicum*: Aristotle's *Physics*, *De caelo*, *De generatione et corruptione*, *Meteorologica*. When, in 2020/2021, we organized a brief online course on philology, paleography and digital humanities focused on the transmission of Aristotle's works, we experienced how this kind of debate can benefit from the development of a broader interdisciplinary network of expertise. Through the medium of online seminars, it has become possible to bring together, with speed and efficiency, data which was previously distant and rarely put into dialogue, and to consult historians, philologists, Orientalists, philosophers, and Aristotelian readers of very diverse tendencies.

Today, as in the past, it is essential for critical editions, no less than word-for-word interpretations, to be discussed, compared, and contrasted. In this way, progress is made through dialogue with the many readers who have investigated the same texts, at different times and in different places, language, and cultures.

Engaging with Aristotle has always entailed serious scientific effort on his works. We can see this by looking at significant periods of Aristotelian revival over the last two millennia: each and every time the starting point has been texts – their constitution and translation; their interpretation, whether literal or analytical, systematic or comprehensive; and the search for documentation which is as original as possible. Studying texts lays the essential groundwork for factual and intellectual progress.

In this sense the textual emphasis of *Aristotelica* aims to serve future generations. No one can know how Aristotelian studies will develop over the course of the twenty-first century, but one thing is certain: Aristotle will continue to be studied. This will require, on the one hand, the most secure and well-documented textual evidence and historical reconstructions which can be obtained by any means, and, on the other, critical editions which are more reliable, reusable, and scholar-friendly than those previously available,

deploying the most innovative and advanced techniques to come ever closer to the original and most ancient text.

Strikingly, the common ground among ‘Aristotelizing’ scholars of the past seems to have been the conviction that a certain permanent order of rational truth is deposited in Aristotle’s text. Otherwise, it is difficult to comprehend why so many generations of scholars spent their lives reading and studying Aristotle. What type of truth this might be has never been easy to determine. In our times, the emphasis seems to be on textual truth and analytical consistency: what the original text says and means, what exactly the available text was when Aristotle was interpreted in such and such a way, how the various histories of transmission developed, and what factual value the text has nowadays.

Hence, our interest in the reception of Aristotle’s text, as well as in the future of Aristotelian studies, both of which are represented in *Aristotelica*. In this first issue, we have promising FINO PhD students writing on medieval and Renaissance Aristotelianism. Future contributions might be devoted, for instance, to different schools of interpretation in the twentieth century.

Such questions have the power to unify the virtual Aristotelian community, which gets together in seminars and discusses material and methods, examining each advancement and new acquisition on the basis of texts. This is the area of interest which has always linked Aristotelians beyond geographic, linguistic, religious, and cultural borders.

In order to maintain this progress, factual standards need to be spelled out from the outset. This means that when quoting from Aristotle, authors submitting papers to *Aristotelica* must be responsible for the punctuation and translations they adopt, even if they take these over from other sources. In addition, Aristotle’s words, like those in any other ancient work, must be referenced precisely, with exact citations of the lines in critical editions of the Greek text, which should be listed in the bibliography.

Where do Aristotelian studies flourish in the modern era? “Jonathan Barnes once said that if Aristotle were alive in the twentieth century, he would certainly settle down in Oxford, and would spend part of the year in Louvain. Someone else wittily remarked to Barnes that, at least during his vacations, Aristotle would perhaps spend time in Padua.” In the twenty-first century,

in our view, there can be little doubt: Aristotle is happily revived among us in the ether, conversing not only with Heidegger, as suggested by Franco Volpi (whose monograph, *Heidegger e Aristotele*, Padua, 1984, p. 13, starts with the Barnes anecdote) but with anyone who wants to engage with him. In the past, the most profitable locations for intellectual encounter were found among prestigious institutions. Now, journals as well as events can be hosted in the cloud, where interactions of various disciplines facilitate collaborations and exchanges from very distant places and where it is easier than ever to organize collaborative projects to produce texts and commentaries thanks to fast moving developments in the digital humanities. For this reason, the online *Aristotelica* can be entirely Open Access. Freed from commercial pressures, the journal will welcome submissions in a wide range of languages.

Aristotelica is published online by two different channels: as a quasi-traditional Rosenberg & Sellier online journal and as a HTML text journal hosted on Open Journal System by the ILIESI Institute of the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, directed by Enrico Pasini.

Our warm thanks are due to our Advisory Board, which many celebrated experts have generously agreed to join. They make *Aristotelica* a place of work and of encounter between specialist interests, skills, and disciplines.

A key role in this endeavor has been played by Enrico Berti, with whose encouragement we decided to launch *Aristotelica*. On 5 January 2022, while the final proofs were being checked, Enrico passed away. We dedicate this first issue of *Aristotelica* to him, as a tribute to what he cared for so much.