A datum, prior or not, is precisely what need not be argued. If we opt for the kindest deduction, that K.'s faulty expression does his thought a profound injustice, then we must conclude that that thought, worthy or not, lies beyond detection, and put the book aside.

As for K.'s logic: he thinks that Aristotelian syllogism is aptly described as 'inference', without further qualification. Does he mean that it is a mental process? His translation of 'λέγος' as 'a form of speech' worryingly suggests as much, and he nowhere recognises that 'form of speech' and 'inference' are incompatible, if equally objectionable, construals of 'syllogism'. He confuses arguments with premises (unless he is thinking of syllogistic chains - but does not say so). He makes the crass mistake of assuming there are one-premiss syllogisms (p. 18). According to K., there is a term 'absence of glittering'. Rather, the term is 'glittering', and the quality of the premiss is negative: hardly a trivial logical distinction. He disconcertingly talks about the construction of syllogisms in a way that could hold good only for perfect ones and when, too late, he does qualify the exposition, K. fails even to mention the rôle played by the concept 'obvious' in the reduction of syllogisms (aptly handled in Jonathan Lear's Aristotle and Logical Theory [CUP, 1980] - apparently not known to K.).

Finally, within four pages he seems to skirt contradiction on what might just be the most important issue in Aristotelian syllogistic. First he maintains that all syllogisms are ad hominem, in itself a contentious but eminently reputable thesis; but then he baldly insists that in demonstration '...the syllogism must be constructed by means of propositions which are true simply' (p. 20). If this is a necessary condition on demonstrative syllogisms, still subject to the previously described demands of dialectical encounter, fair enough; but K.'s language implies, perhaps unintentionally, that arguing 'opposite another person' has dropped out of the picture of demonstration. This depressing catalogue, culled from K.'s supposedly safe, uncontroversial prolegomenon, could be multiplied almost indefinitely from the main body of the book. The uncompromising difficulty of pure logic has its own ravishing beauty, but that depends on its essential lucidity. K. is just difficult to read.

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DIMITRI GUTAS: Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works. (Islamic Philosophy and Theology – Texts & Studies, 4.) Pp. xiii + 342. Leiden, New York, Copenhagen and Cologne: Brill, 1988. fl. 120/$60.

Abū 'Alī al-Ḥusayn b. 'Abd Allāh b. Sinā is known to the West as Avicenna. Like so many other contributors to Arabic culture and thought in the Middle Ages he was of Persian nationality, having been born in Afshana near Bukhārā in 980; he died at Hamdān in Syria in 1037, having attained fame as a physician as well as a philosopher. The precise nature and the exact number of Avicenna's works pose a fundamental problem which any serious study of this philosopher must confront, as does the role played by his students in the preservation of his works, a hitherto mainly neglected avenue of research. Into this arena Dimitri Gutas has boldly entered with a book which is admirable for its rigorous systematisation and comprehensive scholarship. Championing the historical approach to Arabic philosophy and undertaking to place Avicenna firmly in his philosophical context - a methodology which has often been lambasted by scholars of oriental thought with the unfortunate consequence of sweeping generalisations and frequent misconceptions - G. has provided both Arabist and non-Arabist with a most reliable book. His eschewal of the pseudo-mystical filigree which is sadly all too common in the works of the propagandists of the 'esoteric' Avicenna is also to be commended. The study is divided into an Introduction followed by three Parts: Documents on Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition; Avicenna's Reception of the Aristotelian Tradition; Avicenna's Integration of the Aristotelian Tradition. It will be remarked that consistent emphasis is placed on Avicenna's relation to the Aristotle and the Aristotelian works with which he was familiar: he had frequently to rely on translations of somewhat dubious quality in addition to having access to commentaries from the Peripatetic tradition no longer available to us. G. himself succinctly sums up his own intentions:

Avicenna's philosophical work, as presented in Part One on the basis of his own statements and the inventory of his major philosophical writings, defines itself by constant reference, whether explicit or implicit, to the Aristotelian corpus and tradition... Part Two will discuss Avicenna's reception of the Aristotelian tradition. Reception is here to be understood in both its objective and
and subjective sense, or historical and epistemological; what there was, in other words, for Avicenna to receive, and how he says he received it... Part Three will treat Avicenna’s reaction to the Aristotelian tradition so received, that is, the different aspects of its integration, modification, and communication in his works (pp. 5–7).

It is a mark of G.’s achievement that he has successfully prosecuted these aims and has not stinted in his efforts to provide the general reader with translations of passages from both Avicenna and related philosophical texts. Throughout G. has striven tirelessly to place Avicenna in context, believing him to be the inheritor of Aristotle’s proposed awareness of his own contribution to the history of philosophy. I heartily congratulate Dimitri Gutas on his success.

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James E. Montgomery

Paul Veyne: Did the Greeks Believe in their Myths? An Essay on the Constitutive Imagination (Translated by Paula Wissing from the original 1983 French edition). Pp. xii+161. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988. £19.95 (Paper, £8.75).

The French edition of this book was scarcely reviewed in the English-speaking world and in some ways it is not hard to see why. V.’s involved if brief argument is an enquiry into the institutions of historical writing and the functioning of myth from the perspective of a cognitive anthropology. It is set firmly within a tradition of Continental philosophy – V. refers more readily to Husserl, Heidegger and Lévi-Strauss than to Syme or even Finley – and Hegel remains a massive if unspoken countertype, as the repeated, dismissive references to the ‘labour of the negative’ make plain. V. sets out to question the naive use of the criteria of truth and fiction, history and myth, and, in particular, he attempts to consider different modalities of belief and different possibilities of explanation within different cultures. V.’s elucidation of history as a ‘polygon with an in(de)finite number of sides’ rather than a linear or cyclical process, and his awareness of a dialectic between ideas of myth and history, are both a function of a relativistic questioning of the criteria and definition of ‘truth’, a term finally glossed as ‘the thin layer of gregarious self-satisfaction that separates us from the will to power’ (128). These are certainly areas of discussion that need opening to a more sophisticated analysis than is most often utilized in classical scholarship. Yet from the point of view of both the classicist and the anthropologist several worrying problems remain with V.’s analyses.

As the title suggests, the Greeks rarely escape from the straightjacket of the vast generalization. So we are told that the Greeks ‘never asked themselves why or how traditions were handed down. They were simply there and that was enough for the Greeks’ (68). A more sensitive analysis of Thucydides, Plato, Herodotus, might be expected. Or: ‘The glorification of the group... was not patriotic pride; the individual was proud, not to belong to that city rather than another one, but to be a citizen instead of not being one’ (81). So much for Pericles’ Funeral Speech. Above all, there is no consideration of a cultural or literary context for the texts he pillages for quotation. From Homer to Pausanias, they are The Greeks. Such blurring of differences can only distort an account of the discourses of truth and fiction, history and myth, especially with regard to the idea of ‘belief’.

The notion of ‘myth’ – for all its role in V.’s questioning – is scarcely tested against a modern theoretical problematization of the term – and certainly not adequately articulated against his use of words such as ‘ideology’. The problem of (paradigm) change and cultural conflict is reduced to the activity of ‘genius’: ‘Each epoch thinks and acts within arbitrary and inert frameworks... it takes genius to get out of [them] and innovate’ (118). And the political implications of his relativism are resolutely but superficially dismissed: ‘So what is to be done? That, precisely, is the question we should not ask’ (126).

There are, then, many striking generalizations in this book, but even more gaps, distortions and insufficiencies. The balance here of frustration and stimulation seems to me to be out of kilter.

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