

"Early Hellenistic Analysis of Aristotelian Eudaimonia"

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Abstract:

History has not been kind to Hellenistic Aristotelians. Cicero's dismissive verdict in *De finibus* 5, derived from his teacher Antiochus, has long held sway: "degenerant" (Fin. 5.13), "Totenschlaf" (Wilamowitz), "Niedergang" (Wehrli), "Dekadenz" (Morau), "petered out" (Annas). Paucity of evidence makes these assessments hard to contest, but also hard to confirm. But analysis of Cicero's testimony (esp. his critique of Epicurean hedonism in Fin. 2) alongside related material in the *Magna Moralia* (esp. the analysis of pleasure in 2.7) shows that Aristotelian ethics was far from moribund. Members of the Lyceum responded to major innovations by Epicurus and the first Stoics more creatively than Cicero acknowledges.

The leading Aristotelians of the mid-third century, Hieronymus of Rhodes and Lycon of Troy, engaged in the vigorous contemporary debates about the human telos, and both formulated credible eudaimonist positions. Hieronymus related eudaimonia to *aochlesia* or "untroubledness", and Lycon to "true joy". The apparent shift toward hedonism and subjectivism notwithstanding (cf. Striker "Happiness as Tranquillity"), both moves represent serious attempts to resolve basic problems in Aristotelian ethics. I address two of these here: first, the analysis of pleasure and its relation to the exercise of natural capacities; and second, the criteria for eudaimonia and its relation to rational excellence and virtue. Both Hieronymus and Lycon, I argue, advanced a model of satisficing that is indebted to the doctrine of the mean and tailored to highlight problems in both Epicurean and Stoic moral psychology.