

Edward FESER, *Aristotle's Revenge, The Metaphysical Foundations of Physical and Biological Science*, Neunkirchen-Seelscheid, Editiones scholasticae, 2019, 14,8 × 21 cm, 515 p., ISBN 978-3-86838-200-6

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Volume 74, numéro 1, janvier-avril 2022

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1084597ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Collège universitaire dominicain, Ottawa

ISSN

0316-5345 (imprimé)

2562-9905 (numérique)

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Citer ce compte rendu

Hunter, G. (2022). Compte rendu de [Edward FESER, *Aristotle's Revenge, The Metaphysical Foundations of Physical and Biological Science*, Neunkirchen-Seelscheid, Editiones scholasticae, 2019, 14,8 × 21 cm, 515 p., ISBN 978-3-86838-200-6]. *Science et Esprit*, 74(1), 140–140.

Edward FESER, **Aristotle's Revenge, The Metaphysical Foundations of Physical and Biological Science**, Neunkirchen-Seelscheid, Editiones scholasticae, 2019, 14,8 × 21 cm, 515 p., ISBN 978-3-86838-200-6.

Professor Edward Feser, the author of *Aristotle's Revenge* (henceforward "AR"), is a prolific and skilful writer, with wide philosophical interests. Breadth of learning is necessary equipment for an author prepared to argue that "Aristotelian metaphysics is not only compatible with modern science, but is implicitly presupposed by modern science" (AR, 1). Feser says this not only of *early* modern science, but of relativity theory, quantum mechanics, chemistry, evolution, neuroscience and more. According to Feser, none of these theories or branches of science is free of the central ideas of Aristotelian philosophy of nature, and all of them "presuppose those ideas in a very general way" (AR, 1). Every scientist from Descartes to yesterday, Feser believes, draws on Aristotle.

Feser acknowledges a debt of his own to E.A. Burt (1952), *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science* (AR, 2). But moving on from Burt, whose lucid account of modern science ends with Newton, Feser devotes hundreds of pages to educating the reader in the many debates and controversies that have shaped recent philosophy of science. Realism and instrumentalism, phenomenism and physicalism, confirmation and falsification, intentionality, neuroscience, verificationism and a host of other topics are explained and shown to presuppose Aristotelian natural philosophy.

I much enjoyed the hundreds of pages of explanation that I read. They would have improved my understanding of the undergraduate, and even graduate introductions to philosophy of science I enjoyed in my long-gone student years. Students in such courses today will find in AR a useful tutorial.

It is more difficult, however, to see why scientists or philosophers of science would find AR very interesting. Its feisty title suggests that it is not aimed at a philosophically mature audience. Does it make sense to say that Aristotle is going to take revenge on contemporary science, or that he would have wanted to? Feser's defence of a Thomistic Aristotle will also be off-putting to historians of philosophy. Christopher Byrne's recent and much shorter book, *Aristotle's Science of Matter and Motion*, shows more succinctly and more effectively what is defensible in the scientific thought of the historical Aristotle¹.

What we have in AR is a useful popularization of contemporary philosophy of science and a useful extension of the work of E.A. Burt. Most of Feser's ambitious project, however, remains unachieved. Readers will agree with Feser that, "[i]f the relatively cursory treatments [in AR] encourage others to carry out these jobs more thoroughly, [one] will not be displeased" (AR, 2).

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1. See my review in this journal: *Science et Esprit*, 71 (2019), pp. 277-279.