that circular motion cannot naturally belong to any simple body. At first sight, at least, this would seem to be no less telling against his own theory of natural motion as reconstructed by Falcon (according to which circular motion naturally belongs to the simple body fire) as it would against Aristotle's theory. This might suggest that Xenarchus was not in fact trying to formulate his own positive doctrine, but merely raising a variety of possible objections that were not necessarily mutually supporting.

Although discussion of the objections to the fifth substance dominates the book, Falcon also brings out Xenarchus's significance for our understanding of the Peripatetic tradition in general. He lived at a key period in its history, when there was a major shift in philosophical attention toward the surviving written works of Aristotle, manifested in a variety of modes of exegesis. Falcon reevaluates the whole question of what Peripatetic orthodoxy might mean in this period and persuasively argues that previous assumptions and reconstructions have been highly distortive. He also gives due attention to less well known aspects of Xenarchus's project, such as his interest in Aristotelian ethics and his response to contemporary Stoic views on the cosmos.

Aristotelianism in the First Century B.C.E.: Xenarchus of Seleucia is a significant contribution that will be of interest to anyone concerned with the history of Aristotelianism and of cosmology and astronomy in general.

DAVID LEITH

Alan C. Bowen. *Simplicius on the Planets and Their Motions: In Defense of a Heresy.* (Philosophia Antiqua, 133.) xviii + 329 pp., illus., tables, bibl., index. Leiden: Brill, 2012. €128 (cloth).

The main subject of this book is Simplicius's commentary on Aristotle's *De caelo* 2.10–12, with a particular focus on 2.12, where Aristotle describes and explains the proportionality of the planetary motions. Simplicius's commentary was written after 532 A.D. and compiled for readers who were late Platonists like himself (p. 5).

The aim of this work is to analyze Simplicius's strategy in commenting on and defending Aristotle's argument concerning the planetary motions. In particular, Alan Bowen shows how Simplicius was explicitly trying to defend Aristotle's opinion against John Philoponus's attack, which was based on Christian teaching. In other words, the dispute that emerged in Simplicius's commentary concerns creationism versus the eternity of the world. The most interesting aspects of the book are the considerations regarding Simplicius's resort to modern (Hellenistic) astronomical hypotheses—basically a departure from Aristotle's cosmological view—when at the same time he affirms the validity of Aristotle's *De caelo*. Simplicius was therefore taking the risk of being judged as heretical by his fellow Platonists, who were philosophizing based on their faith in the Craftsman God.

In particular, Simplicius agreed with Philoponus's critique concerning the observation of the varying size of the planets at apogees and perigees, which, however, is the starting point of Philoponus's argument to show "that the heavens are not made of aether and, therefore, that neither the heavens nor the cosmos are eternal" (p. 33). The recognition of such particular phenomena concerning planetary motion obliged Simplicius to depart from Aristotle's homocentric theory of planetary motion. Therefore, he had to structure a strategy to reestablish the authority of the master in the framework of the Platonism of late antiquity.

Simplicius's need for an *apologia* is prepared by an analysis concerning the epistemic status of theories in the field of astronomy. This digression also addresses the phenomenon of the proliferation of astronomical theories of his time that aspired to be true like a physical (philosophical) theory. The reader can appreciate the sixth-century epistemic tension between ancient cosmology and current mathematical astronomy, between the Aristotelian and the Ptolemaic scientific traditions.

Simplicius's argument goes through three fundamental steps: Aristotle was not committed to the homocentric theory in terms of a physical theory, that is, a true theory—this serves to save Aristotle's authority; Aristotle's *De caelo* remains nevertheless a "sacral" work in the frame of religious education pertaining to the Craftsman God of late Platonism because of its strong educational value—this serves to save Aristotle's work; and the late Platonists prefer epicycle and eccentric astronomical hypotheses in agreement with Ptolemy's works, but "they are not really committed to them" (p. 70).

The last chapter of the book is an interesting excursus on Simplicius's historical sources—or, to be more precise, his reading of them: "Simplicius, the Historian."

The book is equipped with a great number of technical illustrations that allow for easier access to Bowen's discussions and to specific issues concerning the astronomical systems and observations. Most of the illustrations are furthermore compiled in the English translation of Simplicius's *In de caelo* 2.10–12, which is in turn complemented by a rich chapter of commentary at the end of the book.

Simplicius on the Planets and Their Motions is difficult to read. Although the author's argument only amounts to about a hundred pages, the reader should not believe that these can be read and digested in one afternoon. Comprehension requires analyzing long passages of the translation very carefully and also rereading the author's argument several times. This effort is rewarded, however, by the feeling that one has finally understood the fundamental early setting of a dispute that lasted for the next fifteen centuries.

MATTEO VALLERIANI

■ Middle Ages and Renaissance

Carole Rawcliffe. *Urban Bodies: Communal Health in Late Medieval English Towns and Cities.* xiii + 431 pp., illus., app., bibl., index. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2013. $99 (cloth).

In this wide-ranging and erudite history of public health in late medieval England (defined here as 1250–1530), Carole Rawcliffe takes aim at Victorian conceptualizations of medieval cities as stinking cesspools of waste, disease, and bacteria, which she claims still dominate both the academic world and popular imagination. While granting that these stereotypes may sometimes be rooted in fact, she seeks to turn attention to the *responses* to these health and environmental concerns, which were undertaken by individuals and collectives at every level of society, from aristocratic patrons to communal guilds, local governments to royal courts. This shift toward studying response aims to redirect the academic discourse, bracketing questions of efficacy and progress in favor of an examination of collective action and communal will for change. Her approach is largely successful, painting a richly detailed picture of daily life and civic engagement that contradicts assumptions of medieval apathy toward urban health and cleanliness.

Rawcliffe's book consists of six chapters. After an introduction examining the historiography of the subject, particularly its condescending treatment by nineteenth-century historians, she proceeds through examinations of the intersection between health responses and morality/religion; environmental issues surrounding urban waste and sanitation; water quality, delivery, and infrastructure; food production and safety; and communal care of the sick, leprous, and elderly. In nearly every chapter, Rawcliffe interestingly engages the medieval metaphor of the body politic, demonstrating ways in which conceptions of the town or city as a human body charged local authorities with particular ways of managing the sickness, discord, or corruption of that body (though at times she seems too willing to accept such metaphors at face value as direct reflections of belief, rather than investigating their role as literary or ideological constructions).

The book is a model of interdisciplinary historical investigation. It is a culmination of Rawcliffe's long career, continuing her engagement with medieval medical theory, practice, and institutions, but combining it with other crucial discourses on local government regulation, economic development, cultural history, political public relations, and institutional and popular piety. To cite just one example of her method, her investigation of prostitution demonstrates how the regulation of sex work was based on issues as wide ranging as health and hygiene, epidemic disease, moral contagion, urban planning, and transience/migration. Her sources intertwine conceptions of both moral and physical corruption, demonstrating their co-identity during the period; sources detailing the regulation of prostitutes, and their assignment to the edges of urban spaces, were often found next to regulations of other "polluting" industries like tanneries and slaughterhouses, rather than in sources dealing with moral behavior or social conduct. The example of prostitution highlights a salient feature of the book's method—the ways in which all of Rawcliffe's subjects become entangled. Her intertwining of discourses as she moves through the material demonstrates the complexity and interdependence of each subject and leads to richly complicated case studies, if also to occasional repetition.

One thread uniting the book is the struggle over regulation. The degree to which the study of economic development and government regulation is integral to the history of public health may surprise some medievalists unused to thinking of the history of science in these terms, but Rawcliffe demonstrates their centrality. The historical sources on local regulation, lawsuits against violators, industrial processes, and examples of communal action are delightfully anecdotal and a gold mine of information for specialists across numerous disciplines. With so many types of sources, though, one might wish for a greater discussion of methodology; the book offers but rarely engages an opportunity to reflect on the role of historical sources in reconstructing such a complex picture. Whose realities the sources reflect, which sources are descriptive and which are prescriptive, and which are representative rather than singular are ques-