

opinions on the matter. Unless divine providence did intervene in an extraordinary way, I would not expect to find in this book (which I have been unable to acquire) any reference to the opinions of those whom most would today regard as worth considering.

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PLATO'S ART

ROWE (C.) *Plato and the Art of Philosophical Writing*. Pp. x + 290. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Cased, £55, US\$99. ISBN: 978-0-521-85932-5.

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The Platonic corpus exhibits differences of literary form, dramatic structure and philosophic teaching. Contemporary interpretation of Plato struggles with four old but increasingly dubious strategies for explaining them: the developmental hypothesis that Plato's views changed over time; the subordinate idea that a 'Socratic' precedes a 'Platonic' philosophy; the view that dialogues' literary and dramatic features are irrelevant to their philosophic meaning; and neglect of the dialogues' rhetorical features or intentions. R.'s book makes important and welcome contributions to each of these discussions.

Although R. accepts division of the dialogues into 'early', 'middle' and 'late' compositional groups (without, however, considering the substantial contrary evidence), he denies development and defends a unitarian view that hearkens back to Shorey, even to Schleiermacher. But he accepts neither the doctrinal nor the sceptical account of Plato that he sees as the main alternatives on offer. His Socrates (and Plato) knows some things but not others.

For R., the ethical and non-knowing Socrates remains the same and remains Plato's mouthpiece 'by and large' throughout (p. 15). Always dialectical, wanting people to rethink, he steers interlocutors 'towards some kind of identification of the *definiendum* with knowledge' (p. 93). He is a know-nothing, but not completely, even in the earliest dialogues, which are thus only outwardly aporetic. His views include that virtue is knowledge and virtue alone is happiness, even though he may not be able to define virtue exactly. He has 'pieces of knowledge' (e.g. that some things are bad), which is all that humans can acquire; even a 'preferred account of the nature of knowledge', but not 'the full, synoptic knowledge that ... deserves to be called ... wisdom' (p. 37). On Plato's view, we always desire what is really good for us and there is no *akrasia*, only ignorance or error. Forms are present implicitly from the beginning.

What changes is the literary form in which stable philosophic content is stated, and this in turn is driven by Plato's unchanging but rhetorical intention as a writer to persuade readers to the philosophic life. In the later dialogues, accommodating himself to those who attend to appearances, he lets the argument be shaped in part 'by the interlocutors' assumptions and starting points' (p. 17).

The background for this picture arises from analysis of the Cave parable (Introduction), exhibiting the difference between Plato's view and ordinary ones: Plato as educator, and the dialogues as self-instantiating educational steps leading to

liberation but with no guarantee of success. The ‘starting point for the interpretation of the dialogues’ (p. 91) is the *Apology* (Chapter 1), which is both Plato’s philosophic manifesto and an exhortation to philosophy. From here on, the book argues for R.’s unitarian Socratic Plato by reinterpreting what have been taken as changes in Plato’s views.

The *Phaedo* myth (Chapter 2) about the soul’s survival is unique in the corpus and explicable in terms of Socrates’ particular (Pythagorean) audience. In the recurrent talk about Forms, only the *language* is new. Socratic self-examination (Chapters 3 and 5) concerns one’s possession of knowledge, not pursuing consistency in deeply held belief sets as a way to attain the truth, as Vlastos supposed. Self-examination is not introspection, nor is this the point of recollection. In fact, recollection only means that one must pursue philosophy and dialectic.

Plato’s moral psychology (Chapter 4) does not change either. A close reading of *Gorgias* 469–79 reveals that the necessary psychic ‘punishment’ is dialectic described in the *language* of punishment. Socrates’ discussion of self-control (491–505) frames the argument in terms understood by the interlocutor, but he does not endorse those terms. The divided soul (Chapter 5) exhibits Plato’s recognition of a difference between how virtues, souls and cities truly are in themselves (unified) and how they appear to observation under present circumstances (divided). Socrates makes strategic rhetorical use of this inferior view to persuade Glaucon and Adeimantus, who need to reason from appearances.

Chapters 6–10 are brief sketches applying R.’s view to the problems for a unitarian in various ‘middle’ and ‘late’ dialogues. Knowledge and belief in *Republic* 5 (Chapter 6) are ‘states of mind’, not capacities, nor are there two kinds of object, ‘two worlds’. The argument has been constructed for the ‘limited grasp’ of ‘a specific audience’ (p. 211). The *Republic*’s philosopher-rulers (Chapter 7) do not have complete knowledge; they ‘are searchers rather than knowers’ (p. 215), who deserve to be rulers because they are better at exploration and acquiring the pieces of knowledge that alone humans can acquire. Plato’s preferred account of knowledge (Chapter 8) is true belief with a *logos*, but the *logos* is the result of dialectical activity and is subject to the same human limitations. The form of the Good in the *Republic* (Chapter 9) is the original Socratic human good ‘dressed up in new clothes’ (p. 244) and extended ‘to a broader context’ (p. 248). Socrates’ presence as auditor in the *Timaeus* (Chapter 10) indicates that Timaeus’ cosmology is not Plato’s. It is only a ‘likely account’ because of the limitations of human reason, because Timaeus (like Glaucon and Adeimantus) begins ‘from *the way things appear*’ (p. 259), and because unstable sensible objects cannot generate stable accounts.

Many of R.’s positions will be controversial within the Anglophone community to which he primarily speaks. Although rejection of the developmental view of Plato has become increasingly common, R. also rejects other widespread beliefs, including the two-worlds metaphysics. He denies that Plato outgrew ‘Socratic philosophy’ and that the non-Socratic leaders of most ‘later’ dialogues represent Plato. R. recognises that the dialogues have distinct levels, delivering different messages to readers at different philosophic stages, that they are multi-functional and make use of deliberate ambiguity (e.g. p. 67, n. 6). His might be called a ‘semi-doctrinal unitarianism’. His Plato has unchanging views, but they are matters more of principle than of detail; and they are views to which Plato persuades and guides readers indirectly. Thus, R.’s view is nearer the ‘third way’ or ‘new Platonism’ of recent years than to much of recent Anglo-American Platonic scholarship, as he himself notes (p. 6, n. 14). These views will be less controversial to non-Anglophone and non-analytical interpreters, who

have long acknowledged the protreptic and paideutic functions of the dialogues. They may also consider the Plato who emerges here a more designing and demanding but more impoverished writer than the author of the dialogues. Like Schleiermacher and Kahn (1996), R. thinks that the corpus has an overall plan, that Plato means us to read all the dialogues and connect them. On this view the dialogues become texts for academic seminar analysis, but their literary brilliance and dramatic subtlety become puzzling interpretative impediments. Thus some interpreters will consider Plato's art of philosophic writing far richer than R. does here, including not only characters' thoughts and words, but also their actions and passions, the temporal and physical settings of their encounters, the jokes and stage-business, the verbal and structural ironies.

R.'s book should challenge and enrich discussions among analytical interpreters as its many insights will reward all who read it carefully. The arguments depend on close readings of specific passages that are marvels of subtlety. His thorough criticism offers a plausible alternative to the long-running story of Plato's development. R.'s use of 'literary' aspects of Plato's dialogues as part of his argument and his recognition of Plato's rhetorical aims may provide a useful bridge between older and newer modes of interpretation.

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ANCIENT INTERPRETATIONS OF PLATO

TARRANT (H.), BALTZLY (D.) (edd.) *Reading Plato in Antiquity*. Pp. x + 268, figs. London: Duckworth, 2006. Cased, £50. ISBN: 0-7156-3455-0.

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This collection of essays builds on the findings of several relatively recent scholarly works, which focus on the ancient Platonist tradition of interpreting Plato¹ and have demonstrated the historical and philosophical importance of this tradition. The historical importance lies in what it teaches us about the practice of ancient philosophers; to a large extent, we learn, ancient Platonists, like us today, were often guided in their interpretation of Plato by their own philosophical preferences. As for the philosophical significance of the Platonist tradition, we learn from the recent studies how many different positions can be justified with reference to Plato.

Ancient Platonists were in disagreement in two ways. First was the question of how Plato's philosophy as a whole should be interpreted, namely as sceptical, dogmatic, or perhaps a blend of both. Second, within each of those currents there were differences regarding the sense in which Plato was sceptical or dogmatic, and especially within the so-called dogmatic tradition of interpretation there was strong disagreement as to how certain views expressed in Plato's dialogues, taken to

¹J. Annas, *Platonism Old and New* (Ithaca NY, 1999), H. Tarrant, *Plato's First Interpreters* (London, 2000), J. Dillon, *The Heirs of Plato* (Oxford, 2003) and L. Gerson, *Aristotle and Other Platonists* (Ithaca NY, 2005), to mention some of the most prominent.