

Socrates (*Republic* 335d and 353b–e) that underlies the disagreement here with Thrasymachus and previously with others: namely, that the speciality (*ergon*) of a human being is to live thinkingly, and justice is the state of those who think well and hence can live well. This argument, which is mentioned cursorily by S. (pp. 112–13), is not just the foundation of Aristotle's 'virtue ethics' and the background of Stoic tradition; it is the foundation of the *Republic*. Indeed, it is only with a careful study of this defense that one can understand, in the author's words, Plato's 'strange and enchanting conclusion' that philosophy is the best activity of the thoughtful soul, and as such is the sustaining cause of justice in the person. This brings us to the second point mentioned above. The proposal that justice is the internal condition of human life is not a necessary and natural consequence of ordinary beliefs, as S. implies, but quite the opposite. It is because the ordinary beliefs about justice are found to be so inadequate that the fantastic conception of justice and all its attending metaphysics is ushered in on the back of the Function Argument. Socrates, at least, understands that his model of justice will be found by the ordinary folk not just out of this world, but out of theirs as well.

Toronto

ASLI GOCER

THE PAST IN PLATO

B. WILKE: *Vergangenheit als Norm in der platonischen Staatsphilosophie*. (Philosophie der Antike, 4.) Pp. 276. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1997. Cased, €63.00/Sw. frs. 100.80. ISBN: 3-515-06619-5.

This book argues that Plato's dialogues generally present the past as valuable in principle, but only refer to it selectively, in terms that suit his philosophical aims. The past's value extends beyond the exemplary constitutions and political morality of conservative Sparta, Athens during the Persian Wars, and Persia under Cyrus or Darius (all discussed in *Laws* 3), and ancient Athens in *Timaeus/Critias*, to the divine authority of political founders and other predecessors (Chapters 1 and 2). Both mythical and historical past are used in the dialogues to provide norms of moderation, friendship, respect, and virtue (Chapters 3–5). The value of the past follows from Plato's philosophy of history, W. argues (Chapter 6). Political and moral deterioration predominate over progress within each epoch of cyclic time, and political salvation depends upon conserving the original form of a virtuous constitution from moral decay.

Although discussion of Plato's political–philosophical aims does emerge in passages and sections drawing conclusions, W. focuses primarily on the relevant texts. In addition to the *Laws* and *Timaeus/Critias*, *Menexenus* and *Republic* are prominent, but most dialogues provide some evidence, and W. claims comprehensiveness (pp. 53–4). The method is literary–historiographical description and interpretation, and some important assumptions made about Plato's political philosophy are not subjected to systematic reflection or justification. The claim that the past has normative value for Plato is taken as demonstrated by survey of the textual evidence (p. 240). Another characteristic that the book retains from the dissertation out of which it emerged is its enormous wealth of scholarly references and sumptuous bibliography.

I am not sure W. does demonstrate that the past is profoundly important to Plato,

notwithstanding both its occasional function as a source of political paradigms and his pessimism about political progress. Admittedly a valuation of right traditions as divine and unchangeable (cf. pp. 201, 233) is instrumentally necessary for the citizens of Magnesia in the *Laws*, on the Egyptian and Spartan model. Again, as W. notes (pp. 167, 234–5), *R.* 499cd proposes the past (along with the future or some distant barbarian land) as the context in which Socrates' *kallipolis* might be realized. Yet the latter indicates rather the unimportance of the ideal city's historicity, while the former does not alone show that Plato values the past for itself.

W.'s first chapter ('Grounds for the Sanctification of the Past') is aimed at establishing this point. Of her three arguments, that from the divine authority of a founder is treated as dispositive, and elaborated in terms of Plato's appropriation of the Hesiodic conception of a Golden Age, in which mankind received the gods' gifts of culture, laws, and cults. Subsequently Chapter 5 discusses the function of myth in Plato, and even the use of lies for a city's good: these are only to be believed when they correspond to a philosophical maxim; but this consideration is absent in Chapter 1. The *Laws* is the work most cited here, but W. never questions whether mythic portrayals of human political dependence upon the gods here and elsewhere might be meant not literally, or only to persuade the non-philosophical.

Regarding the authority of age, W. wrongly implies that the seven bases for claiming authority at *Laws* 690a–c are ranked in order of merit (p. 57), with that of parents first and seniors generally third. On the contrary, the claim of knowledge, which is explicitly best (690b8–9), comes later. W. certainly demonstrates that Plato's characters are articulated in terms of age relationships (pp. 62–7), but it is not clear that any particular conclusions overall can be drawn here. She admits (pp. 68–9) that old age in the dialogues is not authoritative unreservedly, but only when associated with dialectically tested conclusions (as for the poets, see p. 111). Yet this implies that age is only circumstantially connected with authority. Only in a city such as the *Republic's* *kallipolis*, or Magnesia or ancient Athens, would the elders be imbued with law-abidingness or philosophy, and so authority. The value of age follows from the nature of the right kind of constitution, and is not the basis for it.

By contrast, W.'s subsequent investigation of Plato's normative use of events and institutions of the mythical and historical past, as a means to depicting such a constitution, is much more plausible and useful.

I append some minor criticisms and typographical errors. It seems odd to call Glaucon a sophist (pp. 93–4, 107). The theory of natural law elicited by Socrates from Hippias (*Xen. Mem.* 4.4) seems (contra p. 102) unlikely to be historical. The speculative argument (p. 185) that both the rôle of women in the *Republic* and the myth of the Amazons are based on a folk memory of Greek matriarchy seems particularly implausible. Cleinias does not mean at *Laws* 707b4–6 that the Cretans saved Greece at Salamis (p. 217 n. 125; unless this is deliberate amphiboly): the construction is acc. and inf., since τῆν . . . ναυμαχίαν . . . would otherwise be in the genitive; and cf. the Athenian's reply (τῆν . . . πρὸς τὴν μάχην . . . ἄρξαι 707c1–4). At p. 13 read 'die einer genauen Prüfung'; on p. 37 the references for nn. 81 and 82 are reversed in the text; at p. 82 n. 132 read 'Anm. 42'; p. 125 read a reference for n. 5 (not n. 54); p. 189 read 'Staatsphilosoph'; p. 219 read 'Themistocles' (presumably); p. 221 read 'inferiorität'; p. 231 n. 36 read 'politisches'.

University of Auckland

DOUGAL BLYTH