Philosophy

It seems appropriate to start by mentioning Christoph Riedweg's excellent *Pythagoras*,[1] which is now out in English translation: it is, after all, among Riedweg's contentions that we owe to Pythagoras the very word 'philosophy' (90–7). I liked the book when it originally appeared (*G&R* 50 [2003] 125–6), and I'm pleased to see it become available to a wider audience. The translator has a cloth ear for English, though, so stick with the original if your German is up to it. Riedweg makes a serious case for the philosophical sophistication of Pythagoras; but, according to Arnold Hermann at least, Pythagoras' project failed – and the failure of it was the starting-point for the philosophy of Parmenides. In *To Think Like God*,[2] Hermann suggests that Parmenides' poem develops a method of approaching certainty in any given field by eliminating contradiction from one's evidence. The first part of the poem (the 'Way of Truth') applies this procedure to what Hermann calls the 'naked IS', as the limiting case of inquiry (the 'bookend for thinking': 190). The second part of the poem shows that certainty cannot be achieved within the 'disjointed stimuli offered by sense-perception' (207) – though what it doesn't show is that the evidence of the senses is actually *false*. Hermann thus overcomes the difficulty encountered by commentators who read the Way of Truth as itself a secure cosmological account, and cannot explain why Parmenides goes on to give an avowedly misleading account as well. This is a fresh and stimulating study of the father of Eleaticism – and it would be interesting to see whether this construction of Parmenides could be made to work as a reaction to the modes of thought implicit in the cosmologies of his Ionic predecessors. Their relevance, and their sophistication, it has to be said, are rather underplayed in a work which hints that there is little more than dogmatic shamanism and dodgy numerology on the scene before Parmenides. Hermann has not only devoted a book to Parmenides, but also founded a publishing house in his honour (aim: 'to renew interest in the origins and scope of thinking as a method'). Further offerings from its list include Patricia Curd's *The Legacy of Parmenides*[3] (originally published in 1998: see *G&R* 46 [1999] 99–100). This reprint contains a new introduction and a supplementary bibliography, but otherwise minor changes only to the text: it is not intended as 'a revised or second edition' (xvii, n. 1). Also from Parmenides Publishing comes Néstor-Luis Cordero's *By Being, It Is*,[4] a work which shares with Curd and Hermann the view that Parmenides' interest is primarily in method; though Cordero takes a more metaphysical line on what the method is *for*, arguing not only that Parmenides' poem was not cosmological, but that it makes no sense even to talk of cosmology in a Parmenidean context (160). The sum of Parmenides' contention is that 'that which is being is' (83) – a thesis explored in the first route described by the goddess. (The second route, identified with the path taken later on by mortals when they mix being with not-being, explores the absurdity of negating this thesis.) Cordero could have benefited from a bit of editing: his coverage of pre-Parmenidean

[1] *Pythagoras*. His Life, Teaching, and Influence. By Christoph Riedweg. Translated from the German by Steven Rendall. Cornell UP, Ithaca/London, 2005. Pp. xi + 184. 1 map. Hardback £16.50.

[2] *To Think Like God*. Pythagoras and Parmenides: The Origins of Philosophy. By Arnold Hermann. Parmenides Publishing, Las Vegas, 2004. Pp. xxx + 374. Hardback £22.50.

[3] *The Legacy of Parmenides*. Eleatic Monism and Later Presocratic Thought. By Patricia Curd. Parmenides Publishing, Las Vegas, 2004. Pp. xxix + 280. Paperback £15.50.

[4] *Be Being, It Is*. The Thesis of Parmenides. By Néstor-Luis Cordero. Parmenides Publishing, Las Vegas, 2004. Pp. xi + 215. Hardback £20.

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philosophical history is purely tokenistic, and there are passages of digressive explanation that imply an unrealistically wide expectation of target audience. (There are, just for example, very few people capable of meeting the logical and linguistic expertise required by Cordero's main argument who would benefit from his beginners' guide to textual criticism at 12–13.) Nevertheless, the argument itself its powerful, and Cordero's work invaluable for its reassessment of the textual tradition for Parmenides, which has led him to challenge crucial readings whose speculative roots most of us have forgotten, or else ignore. Parmenides Publishing does not *only* have Parmenides on its list. It is also responsible for the reappearance of Mitchell Miller's *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman*,[5] a work first published in 1980. Miller gives a detailed and sensitive reading of this dialogue *as a dialogue*, in which he sees Plato delivering a cautionary message to young Academics (represented by the Younger Socrates). Their crude reading of the *Republic* has led them to believe that they should champion dictatorship. But the 'Homeric' image of the statesman as shepherd is challenged in the reworking of Hesiod that forms the central myth of the dialogue, in which the Eleatic Stranger makes it clear – at least to those who have ears – that the true statesman has a more divine calling as the author of a legislative system by which the autonomous individuals who make up a community are best organized. The 'second best' course represents, not Plato's failure to answer his own question; but a safer alternative for those, like the Younger Socrates, who are philosophically incapable of following him there. To this text, Miller appends an essay first published in 1999 in which he shows that the fifteen arts which are the ultimate product of the investigation in the *Statesman* are produced and organized according to an ontological scheme which corresponds with the 'unwritten doctrines' of Plato listed by Aristotle. Otherwise differences (as with Curd) are restricted to introductory and bibliographical material. If the *Politicus* was written as a corrective to certain readers of the *Republic*, Randall Clark argue that the *Laws* was written as corrective to the idealism of the *Republic* itself. In *The Law Most Beautiful and Best*,[6] Clark suggests that the *Laws* explores a polarity fundamental to Plato's *Realpolitik*: the tension between the idealism of youth, and the reactionary character of the old. For Magnesia to work, the Stranger has to moderate the hawkish conservatism of its Dorian founders as much as they in their turn have to control the excesses of the young. Onto this polarity, Clark projects a number of interesting correlates: the young are associated with 'forward-thinking', philosophical rationalism, and the Hippocratic medicine which was one of its triumphs; the old with unreflective proto-fascist attitudes and the coercive hocus-pocus of traditional medicine. With this apparatus Clark explains how different readers have found in the *Laws* both an agenda of liberal rationalism (Bobonich), and a model for totalitarianism (Popper). Simply put, they are both there, with the Stranger in the middle. He wins some ground from the elderly Kleinias and Megilllus by his appeal to a gentle, 'Hippocratic' model of healing which supports the famous discussion of the prologues to the laws in book 4; he is harsher in bringing the young up short against the physical limitations of the

[5] *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman*. Together with 'Dialectical Education and Unwritten Teachings in Plato's *Symposium*'. By Mitchell Miller. Parmenides Publishing, Las Vegas, 2004. Pp. xxxiii + 186. Paperback.

[6] *The Law Most Beautiful and Best*. Medical Argument and Magical Rhetoric in Plato's *Laws*. By Randall Baldwin Clark. Lexington Books, Lanham/Boulder/New York/Oxford, 2003. Pp. xiv +178. Hardback £42.

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kind of programme outlined in *Republic* 5. Clark's discussion is fascinating, and full of insight into the text. I am not so convinced by the paired polarity between Hippocratic medicine and persuasion on the one hand, and tradition and coercion on the other: the boundaries between the two were surely permeable in any number of ways. But Plato certainly works with the view that there are different *kinds* of persuasion, which is enough to support Clark's broader thesis. This I found convincing and helpful. Furthermore, the location of the *Laws* in terms of the *Republic* and the strong thematic core supply two useful handles on a work which can seem both isolated and unwieldy. With all this negative reflection on the *Republic* it is as well to have a reason to go back to it, and we have one in a new Hackett translation by C. D. C. Reeve.[7] Reeve was responsible for revising the old Hackett translation, by G. M. A. Grube; but the present rendering is all his own work: excellently done, and furnished with spare but telling notes. One eccentricity cannot pass without comment, though: Reeve's decision to recast the work in direct speech. This is for the most part successful enough as an aid to clarity, and perhaps unobjectionable; but one might have expected Reeve at least to have acknowledged the irony of his doing this with, of all works, the *Republic* (cf. 392c ff.)! The political theme continues with *Dialectic in Action*,[8] a systematic study of the *Crito* and its arguments by Michael Stokes. Stokes' view is that Plato's early dialogues are meant to explore the particular viewpoints represented by the various interlocutors; so here, the dynamic of the *Crito* is determined by its eponymous character, whom Stokes saves from the negative assessment of many commentators. Crito, he argues, is a decent, well-balanced, law-abiding citizen; and all but the most philosophically advanced students of the dialogue would find it easy enough to identify with him. The personified Laws, for their part, are no more than an extension of Socrates' own persona. The upshot is a more straightforward defence of conformity to the laws in properly-constituted society than readers have sometimes found in the *Crito*. Another upshot of Stokes' approach is that the arguments are allowed sometimes to be more rhetorically effective than technically sound – depending on what most suits the character of Crito and, through him, Plato's imagined audience (195). One wonders a bit, then, why Plato chose *this* character and *this* audience for this subject. Was he merely trying to vindicate Socrates' historical decision? Or trying to exhort the decent Athenian to a similar fidelity by the example of Socrates' 'moral heroism' (168)? Stokes' work is complemented by a collection of twelve previously published essays on *Plato's Euthyphro, Apology, and Crito*[9] brought together by Rachana Kamtekar. They are very well chosen, and the collection will be a standard on bibliographies for undergraduate courses on the trio. In fact, I suspect that the existence of undergraduate courses on the trio is what motivated the collection; though one could have hoped for a more interesting account of why these dialogues are usefully taken together than Kamtekar's plain observation that their common dramatic setting is the last days of Socrates' life (ix). For all that Plato wrote on the subject, it is probably fair to say that the roots of modern political philosophy lie in self-conscious reaction (e.g. by

[7] *Plato: Republic*. By C. D. C. Reeve. Translated from the New Standard Text, with Introduction. Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis, 2004. Pp. xxxiv + 358. Paperback.

[8] *Dialectic in Action*. An Examination of Plato's *Crito*. By Michael C. Stokes. The Classical Press of Wales, Swansea, 2005. Pp. ix + 246. Hardback.

[9] *Plato's Euthyphro, Apology, and Crito*. Critical Essays. By Rachana Kamtekar. Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, 2005. Pp. xix + 264. Paperback.

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Hobbes) to the views of Aristotle. But if the rhetoric of rebellion has led contemporary political philosophers to feel that they owe little to Aristotle, Andrés Rosler sets out to show with *Political Authority and Obligation in Aristotle*[10] that the contrast is in some measure exaggerated. Aristotle, if not exactly a contemporary political thinker, stands less at odds with the axioms of contemporary political thought than is often assumed. Aristotle's appeals to 'nature' underpin rather than obviate normativity; he has a notion of political authority and obligation which is complementary rather than alternative to the exercise of practical reason in the individual. Aristotle can be made to talk of 'duty' and raise arms at 'oppression'. This is, avowedly, a corrective book which faces an agenda set by secondary literature: it contains its own bias in consequence, and takes seriously at times opinions which an unprejudiced reader of Aristotle could hardly have entertained. None of this aids its accessibility; but it is nevertheless a well written and convincingly argued book in which readers of the *Politics* will find much of interest. Still very much on Plato and Aristotle (despite the title), but away now from politics, Lee's *Epistemology After Protagoras*[11] emerges from a thoroughly commendable feeling that the sharp divide between the epistemological discussions of the Classical and Hellenistic periods needs more study and more nuance. Lee's attempt to provide it begins with a long and detailed examination of Protagoras' treatment at the hands of Plato and Aristotle, and finishes with two chapters on Democritus' theory of knowledge which, so Lee argues, is cognate with the picture of Protagoras they develop. I am careful not to talk about what Protagoras actually thought, because Lee's conservative reading of the evidence is quite minimalist: her idea is that Plato and, in his wake, Aristotle take him as a convenient pot in which to boil down a whole list of distasteful philosophical ingredients (which cluster around what seems to Plato a sinister alliance of knowledge with perception), and eventually to throw the whole lot down the sink. Democritus' epistemology (reconstructed by Lee along less sceptical lines than usual) represents a stand for those who think that the senses count, if not for everything, at least for something in knowledge. Out of all this emerge ideas and arguments which in various ways prefigure the arguments familiar to us from debates around scepticism from Arcesilaus onwards – ideas, then, whose existence 'in the air' breathed by Plato and Aristotle is offered as the nuanced history we were looking for. I am not sure that this conclusion can quite satisfy: the shadowy terms of 'prefigurement', and ideas 'in the air', are no substitute for the more tangible language of reception and development (assuming that 'influence' is too strong for Lee's taste). It may be, for example, that one can read Protagoras' 'measure' doctrine as a 'forerunner' of the Pyrrhonist modes (128); but I wonder if it will make any difference to students of Sophistry or Scepticism to do so? Still, no harm is done by it; and there is no question that there is a great deal of substance here on Protagoras, Democritus, Plato, and Aristotle. Christopher Gill's *Virtue, Norms, and Objectivity*[12] brings together a fascinating collection of essays which build on the observation that there is no Greek term which means quite the same as the English word *objectivity* – a word which

[10] *Political Authority and Obligation in Aristotle*. By Andrés Rosler. Oxford UP, 2005. Pp. xiv + 298. Hardback £40.

[11] *Epistemology after Protagoras*. Responses to Relativism in Plato, Aristotle, and Democritus. By Mi-Kyoung Lee. Oxford UP, 2005. Pp. x + 291. Hardback £45.

[12] *Virtue, Norms, and Objectivity*. Issues in Ancient and Modern Ethics. By Christopher Gill. Oxford UP, 2005. Pp. xi + 326. Hardback £40.

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seems so central to our moral vocabulary and outlook. This is not to say that the Greeks lack the concept, of course; but the authors here are able to do something quite illuminating by asking how (and when) the Greeks expressed the idea; and, conversely, what room there is left for us to follow the Greeks in using *nature* to establish ethical values and their objectivity. There are thirteen sparkling essays, of which the first seven deal with concepts and approaches common to ancient and modern theories, while the remaining six tackle specific ancient theories. With the exception of the final paper, in which R. W. Sharples uses the evidence of Alexander of Aphrodisias, the bias is strictly towards Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, with a dash of Stoicism. It would have been interesting to hear more from ancient thinkers, as Epicurus, who lacked the guarantee of natural teleology: but this is only to say that the collection has, in my mind at least, successfully opened an intelligent dialogue between ancient and modern theories that has some way to go. The development of philosophical vocabulary and the (sometimes related) evolution of ideas is a minor theme of Brad Inwood's collection of twelve of his own essays in *Reading Seneca*.[13] Working in what Inwood calls the intellectual 'micro-climate' of first century philosophers writing in Latin, Seneca reflects on literary form and appropriate translation, and in a number of cases develops the conceptual vocabulary of the West in the process. The history of terms such as 'will', moral 'law', moral 'judgement', and the 'self' all owe something to Seneca. Not that Inwood exaggerates how much: his picture of Seneca is at its core of an ambitious, but conservative Stoic, faithful to the early scholarchs. For many of the essays, in fact, Seneca is identified as the best source of evidence for our reconstruction of particular themes in earlier Stoicism. All but two of these essays have appeared in print before, but all fairly recently, and all retain their savour as part – an important part – of a welcome trend to rescue Seneca from the source critics who have long menaced the philosophy of this period, and done no good to our knowledge of earlier thought in the process. As the Stoa, so the Garden is represented this year by a study of one of its brighter Roman alumni. John Godwin's **Lucretius*[14] makes a claim for the modernity of that author. The highly sympathetic account of Lucretius touches on his historical and literary context, but majors on his use of language and persuasive technique. A beguilingly straightforward series of reflections on various aspects of his art builds into a sophisticated picture of the way in which Lucretius seduces the reader into finding happiness by coming to view the cosmos as a piece of theatre in which comedy alternates with tragedy, but both entertain. Godwin assumes that his readers will be studying Lucretius in Latin since he engages in some close analysis of his use of language; but very little is actually inaccessible to those who are not. A different branch of the arts forms the starting-point for Oiva Kuisma's reflections on Plotinus in *Art or Experience*.[15] On the basis, in part, of a passage in which Plotinus praises Pheidias' great statue of Zeus at Olympia, it has often been thought that Plotinus held artists in higher regard than Plato had done; believing, in particular, that artists could imitate forms in their work. Kuisma sets out to show that

[13] *Reading Seneca*. Stoic Philosophy at Rome. By Brad Inwood. Oxford UP, 2005. Pp. xvi + 376. Hardback £45.

[14] *Lucretius*. By John Godwin. Ancients in Action. Bristol Classical Press, London 2004. Pp. 141. Paperback £10.99.

[15] *Art or Experience*. A Study on Plotinus' *Aesthetics*. By Oiva Kuisma. Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum 120. Societas Scientarum Fennica, Helsinki 2003. Pp. 207. Paperback.

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this view is fundamentally incompatible with Plotinus' ontology and psychology. There are things that art can *symbolize*, but it cannot *imitate* forms. To this extent it is no substitute for philosophy. Plotinus has plenty to say about the *experience* of beauty (this is the point of Kuisma's title); but no positive 'aesthetics' of a kind relevant to the evaluation of art. This is a well-argued thesis with a sensible conclusion; and a welcome sidelight on Plotinus. Many of the papers in Andrew Smith's excellent collection *The Philosopher and Society in Late Antiquity*[16] are concerned with the impact that Neoplatonist philosophers were able, or willing, to have on the lives of their fellow-citizens. Able, because the period was one in which Christianity was increasingly dominant; willing, because the perennial problem that administration and teaching are not always conducive to research activity arises with notorious piquancy for a movement whose avowed aim is assimilation to god through contemplation. (This last observation goes for Christians too, as Aideen Hartney shows in a lively account of John Chrysostom's failure to reconcile his ascetic bent with successful discharge of episcopal duties.) The fourteen papers are all of the highest interest and quality. They include a gripping paper by Polymnia Athanassiadi whose ostensible purpose is to assert the significance of the change wrought in Neoplatonism by its adoption of the *Chaldaean Oracles* as an authoritative text, but which also weaves a fascinating thesis about the origins of this work in the courtyards of the Temple of Bel in Apamea. This is a really informative and well-rounded collection – though when I come back to use it as reference (which I shall) I shall regret the absence of an *index locorum*. With a doff of the hat to *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*[17] (papers this year deal with Plato's 'early' dialogues in general, and with the *Meno* and *Republic* in particular; with Aristotle's *Categories*, *Analytics*, and ethics; with Pyrrho, and with Alexander), I approach my end with two introductions, both well-pitched as serious but accessible accounts of the subject: David Roochnik's *Retrieving the Ancients*,[18] and James Arieti's *Philosophy in the Ancient World*.[19] Arieti's book is wider in scope – in fact it is unusually wide-ranging for its pitch: it goes from the beginnings to Boethius with few obvious gaps. There is nothing on the Academy, and I suspect in general that Scepticism does not fit into Arieti's picture of what is good in ancient philosophy; but there are, to compensate, discussions of intellectual developments cognate with philosophy, from medicine to city planning; and it is certainly pleasing to find Philo of Alexandria and Christian thinkers included. Arieti writes with an easy style and a good eye for interesting detail; each section ends with a useful series of questions to encourage further thought. This is in fact, an extremely successful example of its genre – and if I have a complaint, it is really a complaint *about* the genre. There is a tendency for these introductions to reinforce rather old-fashioned approaches to the subject – particularly outside the areas of the author's principal research interests. (The quality and age of entries in Arieti's sections of further reading is high, but variable enough to be telling, I suspect.) It is also the case

[16] *The Philosopher and Society in Late Antiquity*. Essays in honour of Peter Brown. By Andrew Smith. The Classical Press of Wales, Swansea, 2005. Pp. xiv + 249. Hardback.

[17] *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*. Edited by David Sedley. Vol. XXVII, Winter 2004: Oxford UP, 2004. Pp. 350. Hardback £40; paperback £19.99.

[18] *Retrieving the Ancients*. An Introduction to Greek Philosophy. By David Roochnik. Blackwell, Oxford 2004. Pp. vii + 238. Hardback £50; paperback £14.99.

[19] *Philosophy in the Ancient World*. An Introduction. By James A. Arieti. With illustrations by David M. Gibson. Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham 2005. Pp. xxiii + 385, with 1 map. Paperback £21.99.

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that they find it hard to maintain a consistent sense of narrative. Arieti, for example, finds that Presocratic philosophy is, 'despite its genius', fundamentally compromised by its failure to establish 'steady refinement or progress in the course of knowledge' (126). The way he tells it, this claim might be extended to the whole of ancient philosophy. But if the question is (not to dwell on the whiggishness) about engagement and development with a tradition, the failure here is purely historiographical in origin: it is there if you want to bring it out. Cue Roochnik's approach in *Retrieving the Ancients*. Roochnik's canvas is, to be fair, rather narrower than that of Arieti: he restricts himself to Presocratic and Classical philosophy. But he creates a good sense of narrative simply by taking a 'dialectical' approach to the subject, in which each thinker is read in reaction to their predecessors. Roochnik writes clearly, and simplifies intelligently; he draws connections between ancient to modern thought which would almost certainly not stand very much deeper scrutiny, but which at this level prove to be attractive and illuminating. I warmed to the book in other words – though in truth it required a little warming to. The introduction makes the egregious assertion that Greek philosophy 'culminated' in Aristotle (1), and the downright false claim that Aristotle 'became far and away the dominant thinker for at least the next 1,500 years' (2). Frankly prejudicial treatment of the 'mythological' writers in chapter 1 did not bode any better. (Consider the following claim on p. 15: 'Unlike the big-bang theory, there is no explanation of the beginning. For Hesiod, the world just popped up.' *Unlike* the big-bang theory, did you say?) But with Thales things began to look up; and by the time we reached the Sophists (compared to 20th century post-modernists), I was starting to enjoy the ride. The chapters on Plato and Aristotle are among the best general introductions to those thinkers available at this level.

doi: 10.1017/S001738350600012X GEORGE BOYS-STONES

General

Another set of reviews brings another cluster of books about women in antiquity. First an interesting and attractive collection of essays on *Women Poets in Ancient Greece and Rome*,[1] which ranges in chronological extent from Sappho to Sulpicia. The essays offer distinct perspectives on individual poetesses, but the volume is unified by its sensitivity to the tension between the lives of women in a male-dominated ancient world and the creativity which suffuses their words. For those who continue to recite the commonplace that 'we have only the voices of men from the ancient world', this book will come as an eye-opener; for those already attuned to the slight, but fascinating, glimpses available into the thought-world of women, the volume will offer a commentary on still relatively little studied texts. It would make an excellent accompaniment to a course on women's literature, whether specifically ancient or not, or to one on the role of women in classical antiquity. Another collection, but this time one of sources in translation is Lefkowitz and Fant's **Women's Life in Greece and Rome*.[2] This is, of course, already an extremely well-known and well-used volume, now in its third edition, and has already provided an invaluable route into many

[1] *Women Poets in Ancient Greece and Rome*. Edited by Ellen Greene. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 2005. Pp. xxi + 234. Paperback $16.95.

[2] *Women's Life in Greece and Rome*. A source book in translation. By Mary R. Lefkowitz and Maureen B. Fant. Duckworth, London, 2005; first edition 1982. Pp. xxvii + 420. Paperback £18.

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