

159). The idea of philosophy being an activity and the problem of propositional knowledge are the main themes in Wolfgang Wieland's *Platon und die Formen des Wissens* (1982), which, surprisingly, is not referred to. Also in the chapter on "Platonism and Platonic interpretation", the author dismisses the importance of Plato's revival in German philosophy in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, represented by Schleiermacher and his contemporaries, who explicitly asserted in the introduction to his translations of Plato that dialogic form should not be separated from philosophical content. The dismissal of an important Platonic scholarly tradition where the question of the dialogue is taken to its very end seems unintentional, because Press does not consider dialogue to be the key issue in Plato's philosophy. In fact, with regard to Plato's philosophy, Press is offering old solutions with new terminology: he does not want to talk about doctrines but is more concerned with Plato's vision, which means that the traditional theory of ideas is replaced by the concept of "Plato's two level vision".

However, the doctrinal conception of philosophy is not overturned by stating that instead of dividing reality into two realms, ideas and sensory world, Plato "envisions the world existing simultaneously at two levels" and "the ideal is there to be seen with the eyes of the soul *through* the real" (p. 163). In fact, this statement sounds very unPlatonic if we recall the famous cave allegory in the *Republic*, where one could state exactly the opposite, namely that the real is to be seen through the ideal. Plato was not interested in the ideal as such but in reality. He was interested, for example, in education which is impossible without the idea of the ideal, and in which the relation between the ideal and the real is always under consideration. This raises the question of the nature and function of the ideal in Plato's philosophy.

A good guidebook can remind us that Plato is trying to make us pose apt questions which show things in a different light. A better guidebook also applies this principle to reading Plato by including such questions in the book so as to make Plato topical even today. This indivisibility of theoretical and practical knowledge is the real challenge of Plato's philosophy, and this interconnection can only be transmitted by writing in a sufficiently applied way.

*Salla Raunio*

DAVID M. LEIBOWITZ: *The Ironic Defense of Socrates. Plato's Apology*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge – New York 2010. ISBN 978-0-521-19479-2. IX, 194 pp. GBP 50, USD 80.

Leibowitz's interpretation of Plato's *Apology of Socrates* pays special attention to Socrates' irony. Playful, humorous and ironical writing is naturally something that no reader of Plato can overlook. In addition, there is the question of specifically Socratic irony as a philosophical stance. Leibowitz discusses and criticises many earlier interpretations of irony in the *Apology*. For him the meaning of irony comes close to the pre-Aristotelian meaning of the Greek word *eirōneia*, namely "concealing by feigning" (see, e.g., Aristophanes, *Wasps* 174). Discussing the relation between the historical speech of Socrates and Plato's *Apology* Leibowitz argues that the dialogue contains clear hints that Plato had a desire to conceal some features of Socrates as a philosopher (p. 6).

Leibowitz's conception of irony is due to his openly Straussian framework. The numerous references to Strauss and his students enable an informed reader to contextualise the approach and the concept of irony. The Straussian approach might be called a branch of esoteri-

cism which emphasises that philosophers hide their criticism of popular beliefs behind irony, ambiguity and a multi-layered style of writing. In Strauss's view, irony is a political necessity for philosophers; they have to hide their superiority from the masses. Leibowitz's effort to disclose hidden or double meanings from the text leads to many interesting but also speculative interpretations. When the reader has to be alert for both Plato's Socrates and, perhaps, Leibowitz using irony to wilfully conceal or deceive (see pp. 16–37, particularly pp. 19–20 n. 21), the reading experience for a non-Straussian, like the present reviewer, is very demanding.

Leibowitz makes many interesting observations and discusses just about every possible instance of irony in the *Apology*. The problem in many cases is that the interpretation seems to be rather farfetched and when any references to Plato, Xenophon, or even Aristophanes can be used as evidence, questions of the correctness or truthfulness of the interpretation are very difficult to handle. The setting is, naturally, ironical, as the first issue Leibowitz takes up about Socrates's actual speech is truthfulness (pp. 8–21). The hints of Socrates lying are interesting in many cases, and Leibowitz is able to find some clear problems in some older interpretations of the *Apology*.

The book follows the text of the *Apology* from beginning to end, including seven chapters on different parts of the speech, like the prooemium, the defences to the accusers, the digressions, the penalty and the final speech. In addition there is a short introductory part, an analysis of Socrates's rhetorical strategy and a conclusion. The book contains a general index but no index locorum.

Leibowitz's speculative approach already becomes evident in the introductory analysis. He argues that the *Apology* is the key to the Platonic corpus and, based on the dramatic dates of the dialogues, he suggests that the *Apology* may be the missing fourth dialogue, *Philosopher*, from the tetralogy of the dialogues *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, and *Statesman* (p. 3). The approach is similarly ultra-unitarian throughout. Platonic dialogues are not only a truthful report of one and the same Socrates and of one and the same philosophy but they are also all produced with a complete knowledge of each other. For example, in discussing Socrates' engagement with natural philosophy/science Leibowitz builds a history for Socrates, using Aristophanes' *Clouds* and Plato's dialogues the *Phaedo*, the *Parmenides*, and the *Symposium* as parallel historical sources (cf. pp. 41–2, 66–9).

The relation between on the one hand philosophy/science implying atheism and on the other hand pious worship of gods is one of the central contrasts in Leibowitz's interpretation of the *Apology*. Taking into account that the impiety charge was the gravest (see p. 130), this is not surprising. Leibowitz, however, bases a lot of his argumentation on the *Laws* and even on his own argument that science/philosophy is necessarily against an omnipotent god because a rational explanation of nature would demand necessity, and that is impossible in an ontology that incorporates an omnipotent god (p. 42). Leibowitz tries to tie this speculation, which does not sound Greek, to the *Apology* with the Delphic oracle story, because in Socrates' interpretation of the story his elenctic mission has a divine source. I do not find the complex of contrasts between religion and philosophy/science that ensue very convincing (see pp. 66–102, cf. 130–5, 177–8). Leibowitz also presents many interesting points concerning the Delphic oracle story. For example, combining Xenophon's testimony on the troubled relation between Chaerephon and his brother and Socrates statement in Plato's *Apology* that this brother is the only possible, albeit silent, witness for the story, he argues that Socrates actually points out to more informed listeners that the story is not meant to be taken as true (pp. 63–4).

Leibowitz agrees with the numerous interpreters who consider that even Plato's *Apology* implies that Socrates aimed for the death sentence with his defence. According to Leibowitz, it is evident, partly due to his old age, that Socrates was indifferent towards death. His plan was both to enrage the jurors and to present himself as god's gift to Athens. With this plan Socrates aims to get the jurors to sentence him to death – but to regret the decision later. This regret would then protect philosophy and Socrates' companions later (pp. 154–60). The textual evidence could be more direct and more robust, but there is a certain sting in Leibowitz's treatment of Plato's presentation of Socrates as a god-sent gadfly to Athens. Although many philosophers have been eager to follow suit and to see themselves as gadflies, Leibowitz points out that the gadfly is actually a parasite and horses would do better without them – sleepy or not (p. 146). "His [Socrates'] self-characterization as god's gift to Athens is not only provocative but amusing: in his great concern of the city, the god sent it ... a bug." (p. 155 n. 2).

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PROCLUS: *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*. Vol. III. *Book 3, Part 1: Proclus on the World's Body*. Edited and translated by DIRK BALTZLY. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007. ISBN 978-0-521-84595-3. (hb) XII, 205 pp. GBP 45.

This volume is part of Cambridge University Press's major project of making available to a scholarly audience a central work of the Neoplatonic philosopher Proclus. Proclus, while less known than classical or Hellenistic philosophers or even the founder of the Neoplatonic approach, Plotinus, and hard-going and at times almost impenetrable, has nevertheless had an immense aftermath. Indirectly, he influenced both the thinking of the Western and the Eastern Middle Ages, becoming known and studied directly in the Renaissance, and continuing to influence thinkers in the Early Modern period, all the way to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Proclus is very much in vogue: there is a new introductory volume (also by CUP), a more detailed collection of articles on each major aspect of his style and thinking being planned for Oxford University Press, and a growing number of articles and other scholarly studies. Cambridge's high-quality translation of one of his most central works, the commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*, provides a crucial foundation for this development.

The volume at hand is one of the early ones – the fifth volume is still to appear – focused on Plato's view of the constitution and make-up of the world's body (*Timaeus* 31b–34b), and its Proclean interpretation (*In Tim.* III.1–102,4). Now, a reader with little acquaintance of Platonism might expect some relatively straightforward ancient physics. This, as anyone who has read the *Timaeus* knows, is far from what is offered. Already in the commented text, physics is entangled with mathematics, ethics and theology. Nature is both mathematical and divine. For Plato, elements of fire, water, air and earth, borrowed from Empedocles, consist of geometric bodies, thus rendering the whole material world geometrical. Furthermore, whatever is made of these elements is constituted of complicated proportions, resulting in an understanding of the cosmos that is deeply mathematical. As regards divinity and goodness, the *Timaeon* universe is a result of Demiurgic creation, meaning not only that the world has a maker, but that it was made for a reason, and as perfectly as possible. In this kind of universe, things have purposes, and the cosmos has a structure with both aesthetic and moral value. This means that