

Aiming at Virtue in Plato is definitely worth reading for any serious philosophically oriented student of Plato. Vasiliou has an ambitious and somewhat controversial main theme, which he manages to keep in focus throughout while simultaneously engaging in many scholarly disputes with scrupulous attention to detail.

Eero Salmenkivi

RICHARD SORABJI: *Gandhi and the Stoics: Modern Experiments on Ancient Values*. Oxford University Press, Oxford 2012. ISBN 978-0-19-964433-9. XIV, 240 pp. GBP 20.

A distinguished scholar in ancient philosophy, Richard Sorabji broadens his gamut innovatively in this treatise on Mahatma Gandhi and Stoicism. Pointing out that Gandhi was not influenced by the Stoics, Sorabji juxtaposes him with them in word and conduct, bridging adroitly with Christian (esp. Tolstoy), Hindu (esp. *Bhagavadgita*) and other material that did influence him. This subtle yet flexible comparative approach is justified and consistent all through the book. "Where he was actually influenced, he still reinterpreted almost everything he read. The result is that ideas inspired by Western influence may finish up looking rather unlike the originals, whereas ideas that have merely *converged* with the Western ones may be less altered" (p. 5).

Paralleling the idea of a Stoic sage, Gandhi emerges as a *philosopher* in the ancient, original sense of the word. And while a modern man, he looks the part considerably. He even dresses like the strictest of the ancient. The effect is almost as if Sorabji had revived some major figure of the messianic stock to carry out large-scale experiments on internalized philosophy. The Stoics profit by gaining proof of feasibility of their ideas. Possibly even greater are the heuristic merits: "Gandhi also provides a picture of what the Stoic sage might be like at least in certain respects if he ever existed" (p. 45). But the benefit is mutual. The Stoics for one thing provide a philosophical background and a frame of reference especially apt to Gandhi, at least in the West, as West is where the author's expertise and readership reside. Moreover, there *are* striking doctrinal similarities, most notably *indifference* and avoidance of general rules as a consequence of a shared focus on the individual. The conformity seems significantly more pronounced and relevant than any differences, of which, according to Sorabji, views on private property are the most conspicuous.

An introductory chapter that outlines the philosophical Gandhi and his influences is followed by ten chapters concentrating on interrelated and overlapping philosophical topics like emotional detachment and love of family and mankind, detachment and politics, freedom, nonviolence, human rights, *svadharma*, general moral rules, conscience, private property and depoliticization. Some chapters deal more with the Stoics, some with Gandhi. A concluding chapter returns to the thematic of the introduction with an evaluative review of Gandhi as a philosopher. Nonviolence is undoubtedly the most recurrent topic throughout. The Sanskrit word *svadharma*, 'individual duty' turns out to be central in Gandhi's thought and very useful in coping with consistency issues and real-life diversities.

Dispassion is presumably the most estranging aspect of Stoicism for the comfortable European and bothers also the author especially when it comes to disinterest in one's own family. While moral philosophy often amounts to little more than the systematic idealization of personal preferences, Sorabji delightfully comes to see military necessity behind this awkward

but important principle: "But reflection on Gandhi has shown me that, if one wants to have a liberator of one's country or a reformer of society, it may be necessary to have one or two people who think that few things matter. It is best if they are not in one's family" (45).

Gandhi's philosophical statesmanship penetrates all the way to ethical meta-levels. A good example is his counsel of perfection: he would rather admit being insufficiently non-violent than accept exceptions to the absolute principle of non-violence. And yet his politics was always subservient to his spirituality. The book makes perceivable how important this flexible subtlety and sensitivity to circumstance *combined* with Gandhi's doctrinal rigour was in making him a political force: an algorithmic zealot would have been just as easy prey for the British as a spineless yes-man. Another success feature was a loving attitude that enabled the targets of his harsh criticism to take notice instead of striking back. Gandhi was an Indian nationalist for whom nationalism was – very sensibly – compatible with the love of all nations.

There is a curiously popular conception of studies in ancient philosophy being "mere history of" philosophy as opposed to work citing more recent authors being the actual stuff. A less common but similarly limited misnomer is the replacement of good old "classical philology" with "study of antiquity". *Gandhi and the Stoics* could even enlighten souls shadowed by such limitations.

Teemu Huttunen

RADEK CHLUP: *Proclus: An Introduction*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge – New York 2012. ISBN 9780521761482. XVI, 328 pp. USD 110.

There is no doubt that Radek Chlup's book, appropriately published on the 1600th anniversary of Proclus' birth, will serve for a long time as a standard introduction to Proclus. It is the first comprehensive, general one-volume account of Proclus' thought in English after Rosán's somewhat uneven and now outdated work (*The Philosophy of Proclus. The Final Phase of Ancient Thought*, New York 1949), and, as far as I know, has no relatively modern and adequate counterpart in any language with the exception of the solid work of Maria Di Pasquale Barbanti (*Proclo tra filosofia e teurgia*, Catania 1983, 1993²).

One possible approach in any attempt to unfold the content of the Neoplatonic doctrines is to start from the existential condition of the human soul in order to show how it is rooted in and conditioned by hypostases of Intellect and the One, and how reality in all its levels is derived from these causes. The other alternative is to begin with the treatment of the highest hypostasis, and to descend from it to the lowest levels of reality. The first alternative is the pedagogical path used by Neoplatonists themselves, the second the way generally adopted in modern presentations.

Chlup, too, chooses the latter alternative. This alternative has often resulted in oversimplification and arid listings of metaphysical levels making Neoplatonic philosophy look even more strange than it is. Chlup, however, avoids these pitfalls and manages to explain to his readers the rational foundation upon which Neoplatonic philosophers built their theoretical constructions. In addition, the author goes beyond the domain of pure philosophical thought and succeeds in contextualising the Neoplatonic movement as a historical phenomenon. This book is thus not only a valid introduction to a particular philosophy, faithfully mirroring the