

DAVID D. COREY: *The Sophists in Plato's Dialogues*. State University of New York Press, Albany 2015. ISBN 978-1-4284-5618-8. XII, 316 pp. EUR 23.23.

David Corey's fresh volume *The Sophists in Plato's Dialogues* is, as the name indicates, a treatise on the role and significance of the sophists in Plato's dialogues. It contributes to the recent revival of interest in the so-called sophistic movement, initiated (among others) by Guthrie's 1969 *The Sophists* and Kerferd's 1981 *Sophistic Movement*, and followed by others in the past decades. Unlike many other recent treatises on the sophistic movement, this book does not, however, primarily aim at distilling the undistorted doctrines of the historical sophists from Plato's dialogues, in which they often are presented in a biased manner and in light of Plato's own interests and intellectual goals. Rather, Corey focuses precisely on Plato's depiction and use of the sophists in his dialogues, scrutinizing the important differences *and* affinities Plato identifies between the sophistic thinkers and his preferred philosophical protagonist, Socrates. This general approach is, in this reviewer's view, both well motivated and illuminating: the sophists formed, after all, a major and renowned group of intellectuals contemporary with Socrates, in relation to whose ideas and activity Plato was shaping his own idea of philosophy. Many sophists make an appearance in Plato's dialogues as Socrates' interlocutors, and several dialogues are named after well-known sophists; in fact, Corey (p. 1) claims that as many as 21 out of 35 of Plato's dialogues touch upon the sophists or their teaching in one way or another.

In this fairly short review it is naturally not possible to deal with all the suggestive ideas expressed in the book. Instead, I shall first present the main thesis and contents of the book and then discuss Corey's somewhat controversial understanding of Plato's definition of the sophists and the surprising exclusion of Gorgias, usually considered an eminent sophist, from the intellectuals treated in the book.

If Corey's central claims are correct, the book revises certain widely held opinions on Plato's view of the sophists and of his use of them in his dialogues. While the old *communis opinio* that Plato's view on the sophists was plainly negative has already been questioned in the recent scholarship, Corey takes a step further in arguing that there are several important affinities between Plato's Socrates and the sophists. Three such affinities are presented on a general level in the introductory Chapter 1 and argued for in detail in the following chapters: In Corey's view, both the sophists and Socrates (i) shared an interest in *areté*, (ii) used similar argumentative techniques such as refutation, diairesis, antilogic, revisionist myth-making or eristics (see also p. 205), and (iii) agreed on the basic epistemological point that appearances (*Gr. phainomena*) are unstable and subject to radical variation depending on the point from which they are viewed. Corey argues that, though dealing with these topics in ways different from the (Platonic) Socrates, the sophists and their doctrines often function in the Platonic dialogues as an important *propaedeutic* or *protreptic* to Platonic-Socratic philosophy. The sophists thus play an important dramatic role in various Platonic dialogues. Speaking of the dramatic aspects of Plato's dialogues in the "Introduction" (pp. 8–11), Corey acknowledges his methodological debt to the recent studies on the literary and dramatic aspects of Plato's artistry (e.g., use of irony, characters and interlocutors as psychological types, intentional obstacles in argumentation, rich literal allusions). This is also in this reviewer's view a fruitful way of reading Plato.

In fleshing out the theses (i)–(iii) in the chapters that follow, Corey is careful to point out that Plato was sensitive to differences in different sophists' teachings and in their respective

approaches. Thus, the following chapters deal with Plato's representations of individual sophists: two chapters are devoted to the arch-sophist Protagoras, whose 'Great Speech' from the eponymous dialogue is treated in Chapter 3, "The 'Great Speech' in Plato's *Protagoras*", while Plato's reaction to his epistemological ideas is discussed in Chapter 7, "Protagorean Sophistry in Plato's *Theaetetus*". Chapter 4, "Prodicus: Diplomat, Sophist and Teacher of Socrates", deals with Platonic depictions of Prodicus of Cea in various dialogues, which, as it turns out, are surprisingly many in number, as the author points out on p. 70. The encounter between Socrates and Hippias of Elis in *Hippias Minor* is the topic of Chapter 5, "The Sophist Hippias and the Problem of *Polytropa*". The extensive Chapter 6 deals with Plato's treatment of the "Brother Sophists: Euthydemus and Dionysodorus" in *Euthydemus*. The final Chapter 8, "Plato's Critique of the Sophists?", turns from the treatment of the individual sophists to Plato's general depictions and criticisms of the sophistic movement as a whole, focusing on relevant passages in *Meno*, *Republic*, *Sophist* and *Gorgias*. The book also contains, as an Appendix, a "Primer on Hesiod's Myth of Prometheus", which provides supplementary background material for Chapter 3.

In this reviewer's view, Chapters 4–5 dealing with Hippias and Prodicus, who have not enjoyed as great popularity as Protagoras (or Gorgias) among scholars, were especially illuminating. They also illustrate neatly Corey's central idea that the sophists were, in many respects, surprisingly close to Socrates (or to Plato's Socrates, actually, whom Corey regrettably does not always distinguish clearly enough from the historical one in his text). This affinity is perhaps most evident in the case of Prodicus, discussed in Chapter 4. As Corey points out, Prodicus is often presented respectfully by Plato as Socrates' teacher, to whom Socrates is said to have sent many of his pupils, who shared Socrates' interest in *aretê*, and who is also mentioned as a specialist on names and language in the *Cratylus*. Especially exciting detail on Plato's use of Prodicus is the fact that in *Euthydemus*, Prodicus' method of linguistic distinction making is used constructively as a tool in Socrates' exposure of Euthydemus' and Dionysodorus' fallacies (pp. 82–90, cf. *Euth.* 227e–278): there Socrates is arguing against sophists by sophistic means! The sophists do seem, as Corey insists, to appear in various forms in Plato.

Throughout the book, the author is not afraid to question traditional interpretations of Plato. For example, in the thought-provoking Chapter 8, dealing with Plato's general criticisms of the sophists, Corey argues that the seven definitions of the sophist probed in the *Sophist* do not present Plato's own views, but are rather meant to exhibit the limitations of the *diairetic* method used by the Eleatic stranger (pp. 226–227). This chapter also illustrates how Plato's critical evaluation of the sophists in general often seems to contradict his positive depictions of the individual sophists (see e.g. p. 207, pp. 219–220). In fact, Corey's view is that Plato's real (and more respectful) views of the "sophists' significance are better found in those dialogues that treat them individually rather than collectively" (p. 230). In this context, one would have expected a discussion of the once-popular view that Plato treats sophists of different generations somewhat differently; while more respectful to the older ones, he is more critical of more recent developments.

I was not as convinced of Chapter 3 and its treatment of Protagoras' "Great speech" in the eponymous dialogue; there Corey's thesis is that Socrates presents Protagoras *two* challenges, which the great sophist sets to answer in his speech. The first challenge is the obvious intellectual challenge of demonstrating that virtue can be taught, whereas the second challenge is a rhetorical one of demonstrating "his hallmark political 'caution' or 'discreditation' (*eulabeia*)" (p. 44). According to

Corey this challenge is essentially one of arguing for the teachability of virtue without simultaneously insulting the mob or the Athenian elite. It is admittedly true that the idea of *caution* plays a role in Protagoras' self-presentation (316d1), but to me, Corey seems to be over-emphasizing the role of *eulabeia* in the central challenge put to Protagoras by Socrates.

Gorgias of Leontinoi, who is commonly counted among the sophists, is not treated separately in this book. This, however, is an intentional omission, internally related to the author's central (and controversial) thesis that Plato did not count the rhetoricians such as Gorgias, Polus, Callicles or Thrasymachus among the sophists in the proper sense. (This thesis has, in fact, been defended by others before, e.g., Raeder 1939, *Platon und Die Sophisten*, and it seems to reappear now and then.) In fact, Chapter 2, entitled "Defining the Platonic Sophists", substantiates Corey's claim that Plato, fairly consistently, defines the sophists as "paid teachers of *aretê*" (p. 16). And since Gorgias is represented by Plato as somebody who does *not* profess to teach *aretê*, but only the art of *rhetoric* for a fee (cf. *Meno* 95b–c, *Gorgias* 449a–b), Gorgias is, in Corey's view, not a sophist in the strict platonic sense. Corey thus claims that the groups of rhetoricians and sophists are differentiated from each other in Platonic dialogues in a fairly systematic manner (pp. 29–33). Furthermore, Plato's depiction of the rhetoricians is, according to Corey, more negative than that of the sophists, and the conflation of the two groups of intellectuals has contributed to the common idea that Plato views sophists in a negative light. Thus, Corey's account of the definition of sophists in Plato also contributes centrally to his thesis that sophists stand closer to Plato's Socrates than what is commonly believed.

I remain somewhat sceptical of Corey's analysis of the definition of the sophists in Plato's dialogues. Granted, Corey presents many arguments for his thesis: he has, for example, studied all the instances of Plato's use of the term *sophistês* and investigated which intellectuals are *in fact* called sophists by Plato (p. 21–29). But simultaneously, Corey has to downplay the passages in which Gorgias is in fact designated as a sophist (*Hippias Major* 282b) or mentioned along with many 'proper' sophists on the same level (*Apology* 19d–20a). He also has to deem some crucial passages such as the final definition of the sophist in *Sophist* 268c–d as tendentious. Moreover, Corey seems to imply that the use of *necessary* and *sufficient conditions* underlies Plato's use of the term *sophistês*. My tentative suggestion is that Plato approaches the sophists in various ways in different dialogues, sensitive to their various outlooks, and to the similarities and differences in their activities and doctrines. (Which, in fact, is, as indicated above, also Corey's approach in his treatment of the various sophists. But he does not extend this liberal approach to the criterial *definition* of sophist in Plato.) Pace Corey, I would propose that Plato identifies intellectuals as sophists in a contextual manner: It may be that when their *social role* is concerned, Corey's favourite characterization "paid teacher of *aretê*" will do in many contexts; but when viewed from some other, e.g., *epistemological* point of view, different signs and criteria are in play and, as a consequence, different groups of intellectuals emerge as sophists. In his use of *sophistês*, Plato does not seem to be operating with necessary and sufficient conditions, but rather with several marks and indications, which are given different weight in different situations. (One could perhaps say that the term is a *family-resemblance* concept.) This more contextual outlook on the definition of sophists in Plato would also leave room for all the 'definitions' probed in the *Sophist*: after all, many of them do seem to capture characteristic traits of sophistic thought. Furthermore, no separate explanation would be needed for passages where Gorgias is mentioned alongside soph-

ists such as Protagoras or Hippias. Still, Corey's provocative thesis on the question of definition will surely arouse much discussion in the future debates on Plato's approach to sophists. But the reader of this book should bear in mind that Corey's 'positive' thesis on the similarities between the sophists and Socrates partly hinges on his narrower-than-usual view of the definition of sophists in Plato, and has thus to be taken with a grain of salt.

The notes to the individual chapters contain valuable points and interesting additions. It is thus regrettable that the notes have been incorporated into the book as endnotes rather than as footnotes; now one has to browse the book back and forth. Greek fonts would also be a desideratum in a book aimed at classical scholars; now the reader has to do with transliterations of the key Greek terms. I also spotted some occasional misprints, errors and doublings in the final print of the book (e.g., "diamonion" instead of "daimonion" on p. 171, the disturbing "anger" instead of "angler" on p. 216, the doubled "the" on p. 175, missing full stops on p. 219, p. 270 n. 21, etc.). I am also afraid that some potential buyers of the book may be discouraged by its external appearance: the paperback-edition bears a somewhat garish nighttime picture of the Parthenon with grossly over-saturated colours, resembling a cheap postcard rather than a serious scientific treatise. While one surely should not judge a book by its cover, in this case I am rather judging the cover by its book; a book with such interesting and substantial contents as this one assuredly deserves more suitable wrappings.

To my knowledge, this is the first monograph written from this particular perspective, covering all the central intellectuals of the sophistic movement appearing in Plato's dialogues – with the intentional exception of Gorgias. Some other gaps remain too: *Hippias Major*, though often referred to, is not discussed in detail. In investigating Plato's fascinating intellectual encounters with the sophists with an eye for detail and for the dramatic aspects of Plato's dialogues, Corey's book fills a gap in the existing scientific literature not only on Plato, but on the sophists as well. For since our access to the doctrines and ideas of the sophists is so strongly mediated by the platonic reception of them, a more balanced understanding of Plato's use of the sophists will also help us extract the historical sophists out of Plato's characterization.

Lassi Jakola

*Religiöser Alltag in der Spätantike.* Potsdamer Altertumswissenschaftliche Beiträge 44. Herausgegeben von PETER EICH – EIKE FABER. Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 2013. 293 S., 24 s/w Abb., 5 s/w Fotos. ISBN 978-3-515-10442-5. EUR 58.

*Alltag*, or everyday, in the sources of Antiquity is by no means an easy subject since it is mostly ignored in the corpus of preserved texts. In the introduction "Erzählungen aus dem religiösen Alltag einer vergangenen Epoche – Eine Einführung" (pp. 7–22), the *Ägypten zwischen* editors, Peter Eich and Eike Faber, sum up the 14 conference papers. The conference was held in 2010 at the University of Potsdam in Brandenburg, Germany. The methodological problems are considered briefly in this introduction. *Alltag* or the everyday in religious context is justly considered a wide concept and, because the nature of the book is cultural history, the problem of scarce evidence is most beautifully put in German: *Althistoriker sind Allesfresser*.