



BOOK REVIEWS

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be inclined to stop reading on the spot. But regardless of order, this book should be read in its entirety particularly because of what it reveals about Strauss's reading of Plato, a revelation made possible by the fact that unlike Benardete, Lampert never blinks (see p. 303 n. 73).

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Holger Thesleff, *Platonic Patterns: A Collection of Studies by Holger Thesleff* (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2009), pp. xviii + 626, \$68.00, ISBN 978 1 930972 29 2 (pbk.).

This volume contains three of Holger Thesleff's major works on Plato, ranging from 1967 to 1999, as well as several articles. As a source for bibliography on dating and other Platonic questions, it is unrivalled; Thesleff's deep command of the scholarship shows everywhere. For that alone, the reprinting of his work would be justified. Thesleff's work provides an acute and comprehensive critical history for important areas of Platonic scholarship.

The first monograph (1967), on Plato's 'styles', intriguing as it is, has always been to me somewhat disappointing. While it contains many interesting and suggestive individual points, the book fails to nail down effectively the elusive concept of style or to separate style from generic requirements (e.g. a speech like that in *Menexenus* will have a 'rhetorical' style). Most interesting, although difficult to follow, is a survey of *Republic* (pp. 83–98) tracing the mercurial changes of tone and variegated tropes in that text. Satiric or parodic intent, however, often present in quasi-poetic and elaborate passages, called by Thesleff the 'heavy' style (p. 64), does not receive a separate treatment.

Thesleff also has interesting things to say about what he calls *ongkos*, the elaborate and difficult style apparently dating from Plato's last years (pp. 63–4, 98, 140–1). It may well, as he suggests, have been intended as a substitute for poetic form; but it is unconvincing that Plato designed it for *psychagogia* (cf. *Phaedr.* 261a, 271c), since this convoluted and rebarbative style seems more likely to repel than to attract an audience.

There is a tragic aspect to Thesleff's work on dating, the focus of the second book, *Studies in Platonic Chronology* (1982). Examining the evidence for the dating of Platonic works, he makes a powerful negative case. While there is strong stylistic and other evidence that a group of dialogues can be set apart as late (e.g. *Sophist*, *Politicus*, *Timaeus*, *Laws*) this does not clarify Plato's 'development' as a philosopher before that period. Above all — theories about an 'early, Socratic' period in his work are without foundation, resting

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merely on the lax assumption that, because Socrates was a less important figure in the identifiably late dialogues, those most prominently featuring Socrates must be early (p. 170). This is an extremely important point, relevant today, since anglophone scholars persist in using the term 'early' to refer to a shifting list of dialogues, including but not limited to the shorter, aporetic pieces.

Having shown the virtual impossibility of creating a line of development (pp. 165–6), and the pitfalls of attempts to manufacture a chronology of Plato's works (pp. 218 ff.), Thesleff then betrays his own insight by attempting to do what he has warned against. Further, in pursuing these aims, he falls into scholarly habits that for good reasons had come into disuse by the middle of the last century. Relative dating of two dialogues is established by determining which has the more elaborated version of the same argument (cf. parallel themes in *Laches* and *Protagoras*, pp. 192–8), hence the later one — or, in instances of 'secondary concentration', the reverse may be argued (p. 271). It should be noted that Thesleff refers in the 1999 monograph to the *Laches/Protagoras* comparison as resulting in a *non liquet* (p. 490). But in fact, in spite of the cautious way in which the original conclusion is stated (p. 198), on a later page Thesleff makes use of the conclusion to support a further argument, stating that 'as has already been shown (p. 198), we have reason to believe' that *Laches* is the later work (p. 210).

Thesleff speculates about revisions that may have been made in various dialogues and attempts to position these earlier versions within a chronological sequence. He can then establish a date line in which the (imagined) first versions of *Gorgias* and *Menexenus* precede the *Protagoras*, which is followed by a theoretical first version of *Republic* (p. 267). At the same time, and increasingly between the first two volumes, Thesleff eliminates from consideration almost all the shorter dialogues, which, at least at the time of the second volume, he believed to have been composed by Platonic followers at the Academy under Plato's tutelage. This belief is in itself somewhat persuasive, and Thesleff has very interesting things to say about the concept of authorship and the meaning of 'publication' in antiquity. But determining Platonic authorship is as difficult, or as close to impossible, as the attempts to spot revision or to create relative dates by comparing parallel passages. Thesleff himself points out the sterility of such speculations by others (p. 165).

Thesleff believes he can trace a gradual change in Plato's later career, from narrated to dramatic dialogues, a form that he believes to have been invented by Plato. The narrated form would be suited to a more exoteric presentation to a general, if select, audience, while the dramatic form, in which attribution to speakers was absent, would suit an esoteric audience, probably confined to the Academy (pp. 309, 543–6). An important support for this change would be evidence for revision in *Gorgias* 447b7–8, where the scene seems to change from outside to inside the house of Callicles without notice and in a

rather confusing way (p. 234, and cf. the article, pp. 551–6), while the opening dialogue among three speakers might be somewhat difficult to follow. Thesleff argues that this is an indication of a revision in which *Gorgias* was changed from a narrated to a dramatic dialogue.

The narrated–dramatic distinction does not seem to parallel closely that between exoteric and esoteric dialogues. *Meno*, which is dramatic, hardly seems more esoteric than narrated dialogues like *Protagoras*, *Charmides* or *Lysis*. Further, most of the shorter dialogues, whether composed by Plato or by Academy students under his direction, are dramatic. Yet several of them seem better suited to an exoteric audience than, for example, *Protagoras*. The distinction between narrated and dramatic dialogues can usually be correlated with the need to provide a background to the interaction, as in the vivid scene-setting of *Protagoras* or *Lysis*, while the portraits of Socrates presented in *Symposium* and *Phaedo* clearly require an exterior narrator.

Thesleff's second piece of evidence for revisions is *Republic*. This evidence falls into two parts, one more convincing than the other. The stronger evidence is Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae*, which has striking parallels to the political programme of *Republic* (pp. 251–4, and more extensively the article, pp. 522–4). It seems most unlikely that Plato borrowed his ideas from the comic stage, and we have Aristotle's statement that they were original to Plato. Thesleff argues that an earlier version of Kallipolis may have been Plato's first foray into the public eye, one that met with devastating ridicule. He points (p. 254) to Socrates' attempt to ward off laughter at the incongruous elements in the communistic state (*Republic* 452). It seems believable that the enormous, epic structure of that dialogue could have served in part to re-present and justify an initial failure.

Less convincing to me is Thesleff's acceptance of the common assumption that the first book has been tacked on and represents the revision of an early work on justice. Thesleff himself has demolished the evidence for the 'early, Socratic' period. The fact that the first book can be detached does not mean that it should be. Socrates calls the first discussion a *prooimion* (357a2), and as such it serves an important stylistic function, preparing the way for a changed approach in this monumental work, 'nicht diese Töne . . .'. To call *Republic*, as Thesleff does, a 'body of texts' (p. 333) is to overlook the possibility that this massive work is composed in a way different from the shorter works. It is indeed heterogeneous, but so is the *Iliad*.

The last monograph in this volume, *Studies in Plato's Two-Level Model*, published in 1999, is to me the most interesting. In it, Thesleff traces an underlying theme of Plato's philosophy in the hierarchical relation between an upper and a lower level. The two levels are united by the dependency of the lower upon the upper, which provides the subordinate with a structure and a system of values. This pattern is repeated throughout Plato's thought, in philosophical concepts, in political structures and in religion. Such pairs as

knowledge/opinion, Forms/sense objects, mental/physical, philosopher-kings/ lower orders, or gods/humans illustrate the pairing.

Thesleff traces this pattern throughout the dialogues, as it appears in many changing guises. He argues that it provides a better and more consistent guide to the underlying themes of Plato's work than does, for instance, the 'theory of Forms' (p. 437). In his analysis of that theory, Thesleff sees the *auto to* idiom as more basic than either *eidos* or *idea* (p. 443); and he carefully traces the variegated uses to which these concepts are put in different dialogues, distinguishing particularly between the higher 'Ideas', e.g. *to agathon*, *to kalon*, which lack a negative correlative and are thus clear instances of the two-level model, and what he chooses to call 'Forms', e.g. 'the equal' and the 'unequal' (pp. 447 ff.), these latter being more closely related to the visible and physical world. He correlates the flexibility of these concepts with the playful, non-dogmatic tone of the dialogues and with the evident encouragement of diverse ideas in the Academy. Thesleff seems correct to me in arguing that the 'unwritten doctrines', which are apparently based in Pythagorean concepts of the One and the Dyad and have been an important topic in German scholarship in recent decades, were a favourite and suggestive 'thought experiment', probably belonging to Plato's later years and never fully developed (pp. 486–8).

Thesleff's conclusion on Plato is that he never went through a 'Socratic period' in which he investigated virtue without coming to any firm conclusion. As the pervasive presence of the two-level model indicates, he was from the start, an 'intensely committed moralist with "metaphysical" inclinations' (p. 534). This seems an effective way to unify our view of a thinker and artist as various in style and method as he was consistent in vision.

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Lara O' Sullivan, *The Regime of Demetrius of Phalerum in Athens, 317–307 BCE: A Philosopher in Politics*, Mnemosyne Supplement 318 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. xii + 344, \$154.00, ISBN 978 90 04 17888 5 (hbk.).

The rule of Demetrius of Phalerum is a relatively poorly attested and rather understudied period in Athenian history. This remains true even after the publication of Fortenbaugh's and Schütrumpf's excellent *Demetrius of Phalerum: Text, Translation and Discussion*, a book which makes the figure

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