

But there is a downside to both his clip and the bird's eye perspective Corlett offers. He trips lightly over the intricacies of the above authors' views (of necessity perhaps), but then comes down with a very heavy hand when making his criticisms. Annas, for example, is dismissed in two pages. She is accused of appealing to authority (Sextus's) and conflating scepticism with Plato not being dogmatic. Yet even the brief representative quotations reveal that Corlett has been too quick to criticize (Annas is shown agreeing with Sextus, not invoking him as an authority) (p. 32). Irwin and Kraut are accused of begging the question in a simple minded and obvious way. Frankly, it is not likely that any member of this crowd is going to be guilty of clear logical fallacy. Readers of these authors will remain aware of the significant nuances in each view which go overlooked by Corlett. The authors themselves are sure to feel that they have been misrepresented, and furthermore, that their view does meet the desiderata Corlett puts forward.

For these reasons, Corlett's 'informal' demonstration of his own approach's merit matters more than he advertises. He shows that, in contrast to the other approaches, only his can handle the notion of *mimesis*, for example. Corlett, is, as is typical throughout, clear and quick with his points. But if this is a contest for best interpretative method, the insights gained through the other scholars' approaches are also relevant, and these are not referenced (not in particular nor in terms of their sheer number). Corlett chastises Irwin for thinking that one cannot spend too much time on meta-philosophy when it comes to Plato (p. 64). He writes that, instead, "it might be said that it is a mistake for one to spend too much time attributing this theory or that doctrine to Plato, especially if the fundamental purpose of the dialogues is not to discern Plato's theories, doctrines, or views, but to enable the reader to develop his or her own sense of truth with respect to human knowledge (given the discussion in the *Theaetetus*), justice (given the discussions in the *Republic* and the *Laws*), the obligation to obey the law (given the discussions in, for example the *Crito*), art (given the discussions in the *Republic* and the *Ion*), love (given the speeches in the *Symposium*, and so on" (p. 64).

Let me conclude by suggesting that neither this description of method, nor a robust recognition of Socratic method, nor associating views with Plato's characters prior to attributing them to Plato himself, is clearly at odds with the methodologies to which Corlett objects. Corlett's work is an exceedingly helpful introduction to the field of Platonic studies, but readers will want to turn to the views he critiques in their original form, and begin keeping score for themselves on the meta-philosophical debate that Corlett introduces so nicely.

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*Plato: Political Philosophy*

By MALCOLM SCHOFIELD

Oxford University Press, 2006. x + 384 pp. £55.00 cloth, \$18.99 paper

Many would argue that Plato's political philosophy is now of only historical interest: his times are too remote from our own and most of his prescriptions

too far removed from any we might conceivably endorse for his thoughts on political matters to be relevant to the modern world. So in seeking to offer an account of Plato's political thought which, among other things, highlights those of its aspects which will have a 'resonance' for contemporary readers, Malcolm Schofield faces a significant challenge.

Schofield meets the challenge by organising the Platonic material around a number of themes. He begins in Chapters 2 and 3 with Plato's well-known hostility to democracy. While accepting that freedom and equality, the values by which democracy sets greatest store, are indeed promoted under a democratic constitution, Plato nonetheless believes that democracy will inevitably lead to "a radically corrupt system of values" (pp. 64–65), as politicians, motivated by self-interest, flatter the *demos* rather than confronting it with the hard truths it needs to know. Further, if freedom is regarded as the supreme value, it will be self-destructive: there will be an erosion of respect for all forms of authority, and the upshot will be chaos. However, Plato's most fundamental objection to democracy—an objection which Schofield believes contemporary defenders of democracy have tended to overlook—is its inability to ensure that those in authority have genuine political expertise or 'true political knowledge'. But how are we to conceive of 'true political knowledge'? We are unlikely to be impressed by the *Republic's* insistence that the rulers in the Ideal State must have metaphysical knowledge of the Forms. But, as Schofield shows in Chapter 4, Plato elsewhere considers other possibilities, sometimes taking 'true political knowledge' to be a kind of moral wisdom, sometimes taking it to be essentially the skill of the technocrat, a kind of managerial expertise which enables its possessor to make the best use of others' specialist knowledge. Utopian writing, of which the *Republic* is perhaps the most celebrated example in western thought, is currently out of fashion, but in Chapter 5 Schofield suggests that the tendency to utopianism is an ineliminable feature of human thought, utopianism being simply "a particularly ambitious and comprehensive exercise in the imagination of alternatives" (p. 199). Plato's utopianism, he argues, is not "a flight from reality but a way of coming to terms with it" (p. 203), and some features of the *Republic's* Ideal State, such as its emphasis on community, should find favour with contemporary liberals. Another feature of the Ideal State—Plato's refusal to allow the Guardians to own property or to use money—is the theme of Chapter 6. The desire for gain or *pleonexia*, extolled by some as the motive force of capitalism, is viewed with suspicion by Plato, who sees it as "fuelling *stasis* within a city and powering imperialistic . . . ambition" (p. 251) and, more generally, as a prime motive for injustice. Schofield explains how Plato believes that in the individual "dominated by appetite money will become the natural focus of naturally unlimited human desire" (p. 258), and examines the educational and other provisions Plato proposes to combat this tendency in human nature. Amongst the means Plato employs for this purpose and, more widely, for ensuring good order in society is the use of ideology, and particularly religious ideology: the *Republic's* Noble Lie is for many one of the Ideal State's most repugnant features. In Chapter 7 Schofield does what he can to defend Plato by arguing that, although what the Noble Lie claims is not literally true, it does embody an important *moral*

truth, and pointing out that the introduction of the Noble Lie does not involve the manipulation of the lower classes by the Guardians, since, once the Ideal State is established, *all* the citizens, even the Guardians, believe it.

This is an excellent book: engagingly written, well argued, stimulating, sympathetic to Plato but not overindulgent. The themes which Schofield concentrates on are undeniably themes with a 'resonance' in contemporary political thought, even if we often find the positions for which Plato argues uncongenial. In developing these themes Schofield proceeds by careful and sensitive exposition of the Platonic texts, not confining himself—despite the impression my summary may have conveyed—to the *Republic* but drawing on all the overtly 'political' dialogues as well as relevant passages in other dialogues. On the surface therefore the focus is on understanding Plato, but at the same time below the surface there is an implicit conversation between Plato and ourselves—a conversation in which although we may not always much like what Plato says, we cannot deny the pertinence of his questions and must sometimes admit that we do not have satisfactory answers to them.

If I have a criticism, it concerns Chapter 1. Certainly this chapter provides a great deal of useful introductory information about Plato, but I fear that the issues it deals with (for example, whether the *Republic's* assertion that the condition of all existing societies is irremediable results from Plato's own experience or from reflection on the life and death of Socrates) may not much interest all Schofield's readers, some of whom may be discouraged by this chapter from reading further. This would be a great pity because, while a little difficult for, say, first year undergraduates, this is a book from which I cannot imagine any other readers failing to derive profit and pleasure.

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*The Stoic Life: Emotions, Duties, and Fate*

By TAD BRENNAN

Clarendon Press, 2005. xii + 340 pp. £25.00

Stoicism is one of the great philosophical traditions of antiquity, effectively offering a synthesis of the practical Socratic approach to philosophy ('philosophy as a way of life') with a more Aristotelian and theoretical taste for system building. As Brennan's title indicates, our concern here is supposedly with the value of Stoicism as a way of life. While in the Middle Ages Christian teaching dominated what we would now call 'practical philosophy', it was only with the flowering of Humanism in the Renaissance that Stoicism as a possible way of life re-entered intellectual consciousness. One of the earliest expressions of this can be found in Petrarch, who hoped to draw upon Stoic insights for what would remain fundamentally a Christian way of life. In the sixteenth century Justus Lipsius attempted a more thoroughgoing revival of Stoicism as a way of life, but still found the negotiation with Christianity uncomfortable. Such discomfort remained for admirers of Stoicism in the seventeenth century and the situation became worse in the eighteenth century when, in the wake of the reception of Spinozism, Stoicism was explicitly attacked as a form

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