
This is a brave venture. Other Platonic dialogues in this series have been Apology, Meno, Republic V, Republic X, and, by Rowe himself, Symposium and Phaedrus. This is the first entry into their catalogue of one of the artificially written and blatantly non-socratic dialogues generally described as ‘late-period’. The Phaedrus, though likewise fairly late, has all those literary charms that make Plato accessible to the non-philosopher. The Statesman, particularly when translated into honest English rather than elegant English (the policy here, v and 19), will largely seem too technical, too unfriendly, perhaps too cumbersome to be really attractive. I should be happy to read it with a small group of honours students, but I could not set it in any edition for our regular undergraduate courses, so I suspect that its market opportunities will be very limited in this part of the world. Things would be slightly different in the UK, where it is usual to specialise in Classics in a manner not possible within the ‘generalist’ BAs of the Antipodes.

However, there are a number of positive reasons why I regret the lack of opportunity to teach through this volume. Rowe organised the Bristol 1992 Symposium Platonicum and edited the Proceedings (Reading the Statesman, Sankt Augustin, 1995), and is in an excellent position to produce a up-to-date new edition. The introduction abounds with common sense, and presents in a non-threatening manner some of the aspects of the dialogue about which the casual reader might have occasion to complain. The text has benefited from the opportunity to take into account the development of a new Oxford Text, and exhibits an unfashionable degree of accuracy. Reading fast, I failed to notice any typos until the top line of the twentieth page (an unaccented lone eta). The workmanlike translation would be of particular use to those philosophy graduates who have taken up Greek relatively late in
order to do research into Plato's philosophy. The presentation of
the commentary is hard on the eyes, as the print is unusually small,
and in this copy at least was sometimes darker, sometimes lighter.
But it is the material in the commentary upon which the work will
eventually be judged.

Personally I regret that the introduction and commentary are
not indexed, which would help me to discover whether some topics
have in fact been tackled. And there are always certain
disadvantages as well as advantages in having a commentary
which is keyed into the translation rather than the text. A total
review of the commentary is out of the question, so I shall remark
upon Rowe's treatment of certain passages of interest.

I begin with the prologue to the work, since this normally
includes many interpretative clues. I deduce that Rowe, who
rightly tends to view dramatic treatments of this work with
suspicion (10), does not think the opening of the dialogue especially
helpful. He might have asked 'Do we really have a separate
prologue at all, or just a link passage that allows the Statesman
to follow on naturally after the Sophist?' If the answer is negative,
then one is breaking into a literary unity at the half-way point, and
must systematically supply relevant background from the earlier
dialogue. I do not believe that enough has been done here, and in
particular there is no discussion of the cast-list. On the Eleatic
Stranger one is referred back in the commentary to an unspecified
point of the introduction, and on Young Socrates I could find
nothing at all. Yet the reason for including another character
named Socrates is an important issue which has received recent
treatment. Theodorus is also not systematically treated. There is
nothing on the tone of Socrates' teasing rebuke of Theodorus
(257a6-b4). There is nothing from the disconcerting leap from the
transitional passage to the mechanics of the dialogue at 258b2, a
leap which also moves from dialogue-with-drama to a virtually
characterless exchange between two participants who might
equally be called A and B,1 at least until the very close of dialogue

1 I make no apology for this remark in spite of the attempts of H.R. Scodel,
Diaeresis and Myth in Plato's Statesman, Göttingen 1987, and others to read
where Rowe suspects (and I concur here) that the last word ought to be given to (Old) Socrates. But that would then raise another interesting question: why is Socrates' final comment on this discussion the last speech in the *Politicus*, when his equivalent comment on the treatment of the sophist appears rather as the first speech of *Politicus* rather than the last of *Sophist*? Does it not indicate that the division into two dialogues is as suspect as that of the *Timaeus-Critias*?

My next passage is one which often attracts philosophers today, the passage that claims that a division of classes is best effected by dividing into two clearly recognisable forms, rather than into one which is united by a positive characteristic and another which is identified only by the absence of that characteristic, such as where 'animal' in divided into 'human' and 'beast' (262a-263a). The basic philosophy of division here is summed up in the remark at b1-2: 'let the part [which you are dividing into] have an *eidos*.' Rowe translates *eidos* 'class' which I think misses the key notion of recognisability (due to its etymological origin which relates to vision). Skemp had translated 'specific form', and Rowe's commentary suggests that 'form' might be more literal. His comments might suggest that he wanted a term which would not suggest the presence of the middle period 'theory of forms', which he correctly sees as being neither implied nor excluded. It is also noted (182) that *eidos* and *idea* and *genos* are synonyms in the passage, though this could be qualified by the observation that choice of term still relates to context. Plato uses his vocabulary to effect here, partly in order to avoid seeming too technical: in this way he will not embroil himself through his language in difficult problems that the Stranger refuses to consider (263a): roughly equivalent to the modern problem over the reality or otherwise of universals. I do not believe that classicist readers would have been averse to a brief outline of corresponding modern positions in the commentary.
The myth has often attracted far more attention than other parts of the work, and is pleasant reading even in isolation from its surroundings. I looked for a little extra here, and the introduction gives a very useful analysis. Rowe favours the minority view that the myth has human beings presently living in a universe which moves as it did in the Golden Age, not in the reverse direction, which had prevailed for a short time in between. I shall not make a decision on this key issue, though the thesis is attractive, but comment rather on the very fact that something seemingly so fundamental should not have been made plain by the author. It is more intelligible if the details of the universe's rotation did not matter too much to the meaning of the myth. Myth typically casts into a narrative sequence explanations of the world which in fact involve simultaneous opposing forces, and Neoplatonists typically gave myths in Plato a synchronic interpretation. Rowe, influenced by the Timaeus, seems to favour such a synchronic interpretation (note on 274e1), though I am tempted to suggest, again influenced by the Timaeus, that it did have a diachronic sense when translated from macrocosm to microcosm: the sequence, divinely led Golden Age—catastrophic upheaval—present age of self-motivated reconstruction, conforms perhaps with the sequence unborn psyche modelled on perfection—trauma of birth into this material world—self-motivated restoration of the psyche. But the microcosmic sequence is taking place on the macrocosmic level at all times. So Rowe's treatment of the myth has been thought-provoking; that is a good thing, though I take full responsibility for the thoughts here provoked!

Finally I brought myself to look closely at the key passage at 285d-286a, which can so easily conjure up pictures of the 'theory of forms' in a reader's mind. Here I was delighted to find a fair but firm critique of J.B. Skemp (Plato: The Statesman, second edition [Bristol, 1987]), in some fairly full notes. Rowe places the necessary emphasis on what the author was trying to say in context, and seeks to avoid the import of unnecessary metaphysical ideas from elsewhere in the corpus.

The final litmus test may well be the question of whose translation and introduction or notes I shall use when next I am
troubled by individual passages of this work: it may occasionally be Skemp’s translation, but Rowe has the Greek alongside, and it will certainly be Rowe’s introduction and notes. I shall also have Reading the Statesman not too far away.

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A good cheap commentary on a rich primary source, aided and abetted by skilful reference to a good bibliography, is sometimes worth more than a score of monographs on its themes. Sommerstein is already well known for his racy Penguin translations of several of Aristophanes’ plays, and these must be now supplemented by his series of texts, translations and commentaries for Aris and Phillips. Vol. 8 in the series The Comedies of Aristophanes is a suitable text to set for students who have the good fortune to be required to have a little Greek as well. The Penguin translations are fun enough on their own, and informative enough too, but even beginning students of Greek will enjoy the challenge of spotting the gender changes in the vocabulary of this play and deciphering the barbaric language of the Scythian archer in their original form.