

Two more volumes are here welcomed from this important new series, now well under way (Gallop’s *Phaedo* is reviewed elsewhere in these pages). No library will want to be without the *Clarendon Plato*, the aim of which is ‘to provide students of philosophy with an accurate rendering and critical elucidation’ of the dialogues. Thus the intended readers are not primarily classicists, and will, one presumes, be largely Greekless.

Taylor’s is easily the largest edition of the *Protagoras* available to the reader of English; formerly there was the Adam edition of the Greek text (with commentary) and a handful of translations with introduction and notes, in particular Guthrie’s Penguin and Vlastos’ fascinating introduction to Ostwald’s revised Jowett (Bobbs-Merrill). Of course the standard works on Plato all have a section on the dialogue (it is a pity that Taylor was unable to see Guthrie’s, in volume IV of his *History of Greek Philosophy*); but with 150 pages in his commentary Taylor is able to discuss points at considerable length when he wishes.

Admirers of Socrates and Plato have mixed feelings about the *Protagoras*. Dramatically it is superb, with its wickedly satirical portraits of the sophists gathered at Callias’ house: Plato at his magnificent best. But the rude, forthright Socrates of the dialogue, with his many fallacious and questionable arguments, his obstinate insistence on having his own way and his complete lack of social graces in comparison with the elegantly mannered Protagoras, is far removed from the saint of the *Symposium* or the impassioned evangelist of the *Gorgias*. Even some of the positions that he defends seem by what else we know of him to be quite untypical.

Taylor’s translation is excellent, probably the best available. It is painstakingly literal (as, to be any use, such a translation of Plato must be), and yet contrives to be readable and reasonably idiomatic. Especially praiseworthy is Taylor’s habit of letting the reader know what word he is translating; for example, ἀρετή (aretē) is usually translated ‘excellence’, but at 323a8 his note reads: “Skills” translates aretai, since “excellences” is too artificial.’ I also liked his explanation of why he uses ‘holy’ and ‘holiness’, quite artificially, to render ὅσιον (hosion), though idiomatic English would not cling to the same word. So often in Plato an English word must be a mere cipher representing something constant in the Greek.

My criticisms of the commentary come from a particular point of view, and
many readers, perhaps the majority of those for whom the *Clarendon Plato* is intended, will praise precisely what I find to blame. But the question is fundamental: do we take a Platonic dialogue as it stands and by thorough analysis break it up into arguments and consequences of arguments that Plato cannot possibly have intended; or do we try to consider what Plato’s intentions were in writing the dialogue, and see it in the moral and historical context to which it belongs? Taylor takes the former approach, and one result of this is that there is no assessment of the dialogue as a whole (a difficult task, but it should surely be attempted); thus apart from Preface, ‘biographical notes’ and the usual indexes etc. the whole book consists of translation and notes (contrast Gosling’s *Philebus*). And the dialogues of Plato’s early period, of which the *Protagoras* is one of the most important, need, because of their indirection and discursive dramatic character, more of this general exposition than do the later ones, where the argument is often more systematically set out and clearly articulated, and the subject of the dialogue can be more easily discerned.

It is against this background that a few detailed criticisms should be read:

P.67: A useful note on Plato’s failure to distinguish between technique and content of rhetoric. A reference to Dodd’s note on *Gorgias* 449e5 would have been useful. Pp.71-76: Taylor does not really touch the question of what a ‘good citizen’ (319a5) means and therefore of what *arete* means in fifth century Athens. More emphasis would have been welcome on the question of whether *arete* can be taught, and on Plato’s other treatment of this subject (*Meno* and, implicitly, *Gorgias*). P.73: For Plato (and Socrates), questions of value are questions of fact, and should not be distinguished from them. P.75: Taylor wants to distinguish between the good citizen and the good man; surely the *Republic* (if nothing else) is written on the assumption that there is no such distinction. Pp.78-9: Interestingly, Taylor is willing to date the *Dissoi Logoi* after the *Protagoras*. Pp.90-6: This long and detailed discussion of theories of punishment undoubtedly has its intrinsic interest; its relevance to the *Protagoras* is minimal. P.99: Senses of *didakton*: Taylor ignores the sense ‘that which is taught’; see Bluck on *Meno* 70a1.

On Protagoras’ *epideixis* as a whole: there are many readers for whom Taylor’s careful and intricate analysis of the arguments will be less useful than, for example, Adkins’ 1973 JHS article, which interprets it as a sophist’s manifesto. Pp.103-108: Unity of the virtues: how much point is there in arguing about logical subtleties that Plato clearly did not recognise? P.111: ‘The ambiguity of the sentence (330a6-7) probably reflects a failure... to distinguish between the different implications of “like”.’ But 331c suggests that the intelligent reader will re-examine the argument; a clear case where Plato is using dramatic technique to make the reader think for himself. Pp.112-3: Some good remarks on self-predication. Pp.122-131: The notorious argument where Socrates ‘proves’ the identity of wisdom (*sophia*) and *sophrosune* by giving them
a common ‘opposite’ in *aphrosune* (folly). Taylor does not consider the question of equivocation on *aphrosune*; *amathia* is far commoner as the ‘opposite’ of *sophia*, and at 349d Plato allows Protagoras to use words other than *aphrosune* as opposites to both *sophia* and *sophrosune*. Again, the reader is meant to think for himself. Pp.136-140: A good note on Prodicus, but is Plato really very serious in the nice distinctions he puts into his mouth? Pp.174-6: Taylor keeps an open mind on whether the hedonism is Socrates’ own. This probably does matter. P.192: On the hedonistic calculus: to speak of ‘failure to act on the result which is reached by correct employment of the technique’ implies deliberately not choosing happiness, which for a Greek is absurd.

So in some ways this is a disappointing volume. It is full of interest and will naturally be essential reading for any serious study of the dialogue; but, while it is true that Plato more than any other philosopher intends his readers to go beyond the actual written word, Taylor seems to forget that he wrote with a specific purpose (protreptic in this case?) and to miss completely the moral urgency of the Platonic Socrates.

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Of all Plato’s dialogues the *Philebus* is probably the one least likely to be read for relaxation; its literary merits are minimal and its difficulties extreme. Yet it has considerable importance; it contains Plato’s maturest thinking on the subject of pleasure, and if he maintained one feature from his earliest work to his latest it was a refusal to confine himself to a single subject in a dialogue, with the result that the *Philebus* is far from being merely a rebuttal of hedonism. Precisely what else is discussed must be a major question in any examination of the dialogue.

Gosling’s is not the first translation of the *Philebus* with commentary; Hackforth’s *Plato’s Examination of Pleasure* appeared in 1945 (recently reprinted) and A.E. Taylor’s posthumously published version, which contains a long interpretative essay, in 1956. But Gosling is considerably more detailed than either of these. His format is importantly different from C.C.W. Taylor’s in the *Protagoras*: the translation is preceded by an introduction stating the main problems and adumbrating possible lines of approach, and followed first by ‘Notes’ (66 pages) and then by a 90-page ‘General Commentary’, containing, as may be surmised, much of the meat of the book. This arrangement allows Gosling to separate large scale discussion of major issues from questions of text, translation and detailed interpretation, and allows him to take where necessary the synoptic view that was lacking in the other volume under review. Inevitably the lion’s share of the General Commentary is devoted to ‘The Heavenly Tradition’ (16-19) and ‘The Determinant and Indeterminate’ (23-28).

The translation is of great accuracy, and Gosling like Taylor is careful when appropriate to tell the reader what he is translating. He avowedly eschews, on
occasion, readability — surely the right course in this dialogue — but usually not at the expense of clarity; a possible exception is at 53e, where ‘everything there is is always either directed to something else, or else is that towards which in any case that which is directed to something is in process of being directed’ (Gosling) seems a more obscure rendering of a not outstandingly difficult piece of Greek than Hackforth’s ‘things are always of two kinds, namely those which are with a view to something else, and those for the sake of which the first sort come to be, whenever they do come to be’. All divergences from Burnet’s OCT are noted; there are quite a number, the text of the *Philebus* being far from the high standard of certainty that can usually be expected in Plato.

Of fundamental importance to Gosling’s interpretation is the presence of Eudoxus in the Academy, on which he places more stress than other scholars have done; though Philebus does not represent Eudoxus ‘he does represent the repercussions of Eudoxus’. This one may surely accept. For his exposition of the three fiendishly difficult pages on the ‘heavenly tradition’ he produces a list of 13 points that any interpretation must take into account. Two main lines of interpretation, that of Jowett and that followed by the majority of more recent scholars, are discussed in some detail, showing where they can cope with these points and where they cannot. Then Gosling offers his own interpretation, which starts from what I have always considered the obvious likelihood that *peras* and *apeiron* (‘determinant’ and ‘indeterminate’) owe at least something to the Pythagorean tradition, a likelihood that seems to be increased if the *Philebus* is in some sense a reaction to Eudoxus, a mathematician of strong Pythagorean connexions who is reported to have worked with Archytas and was interested in irrational numbers. Such an interpretation, which concludes that Socrates is interested not in genus and species but in *technai* of pleasure and knowledge, has much to recommend it, though inevitably there are some points on which it does not fare as well as the other approaches. In particular Gosling’s view of this passage makes it much easier to reconcile with the later passage (23-28) on *peras* and *apeiron*, where again he sets out his commentary as a number of points that need considering, followed by efforts to accommodate them.

Gosling writes in an easy, conversational style, refreshingly (for the classicist) free from philosophical jargon. When faced with possible inconsistency and incoherence he properly starts with the assumption that Plato knew what he was doing, and thus that a reading that makes the parts of the dialogue into a coherent whole without large tracts of irrelevance has a prima facie claim to preference over one that does not. He is open-minded and undogmatic, and while he cannot be said to have solved all the problems of the dialogue he has shown the way to several fascinating new lines of discussion. This is far from being an easy book, and the constant references both backward and forward make it at times difficult to follow; though they also demonstrate the futility of
trying to understand the *Philebus* after a single reading. This is Oxford Platonism at its best; we look forward to more.

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This important book consists in substance of the six lectures delivered in the University of Cambridge in May 1973 in honour of G.M. Trevelyan and given, in a revised form, as the Flexner lectures in Bryn Mawr College early in 1974. To these lectures the author has added a most valuable bibliography of some 450 titles, arranged chronologically by chapters.

During the past 45 years Professor Momigliano (M.) has devoted several books and a vast number of articles — his *Contributi* now fill seven substantial volumes — to the interpretation of the history of the Jews, Greeks and Romans. The present volume is a further contribution to that central theme. It is, in his own words (p.6), 'a study of the cultural connections between Greeks, Romans, Celts, Jews, and Iranians in the Hellenistic period', but the Celts and Iranians are clearly less important. In this field, as in many others, the conquests of Alexander marked a turning point and it was in this period that Greek intellectuals — and the author reminds us that Hellenistic civilisation remained in essence Greek — first became aware of the importance of the Romans, Jews and Celts, and changed their attitude to the Iranians. It should be said that, although M. is particularly concerned with the Hellenistic age, he outlines previous contacts between Greeks and the other civilisations.

In Chapter 1 (‘The Greeks and their neighbours’) M. gives us his reasons for omitting the Egyptians and Carthaginians, touches on the character of the Hellenistic age, then devotes the remainder of this chapter and all of Chapter 2 (‘Polybius and Posidonius’) to an examination of the unique relationship of Greeks and Romans. Significantly, it was only after the war with Pyrrhus showed Rome to be a first-class power that Greek writers began to concern themselves with her history. M. stresses the readiness of the Romans to assimilate Greek culture and language and points out the advantage this gave them in their dealings with the Greeks, who did not care to learn Latin or indeed the languages of other peoples. M. repeatedly (see, e.g., pp.148-9) comes back to this ‘insularity’ on the part of the Greeks and to the far-reaching effects of their lack of languages. Much later, even so learned a man as Plutarch had an imperfect command of Latin. However, M. perhaps exaggerates if he suggests, as he seems to do (p.21), that a knowledge of Latin might have preserved Greek independence.