

which ran across four volumes from 1854 to 1896, bears the label with which it appeared in the volume itself – ‘Casa della Reg. VIII, Isola 2, Pompei’ – but the interior displayed here is not a careful and accurate recreation of that house or any other in Pompeii. Instead, the image reproduces the interior of the Pompeian Court, a Pompeian house built as part of the exhibits for the Sydenham Crystal Palace in South London in 1854.<sup>11</sup> Unwittingly, Zink has perfectly demonstrated the influence of successive layers of modelling on our vision of the ancient world.

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### *Philosophy*

The Ancient Commentators of Aristotle series has recently published three important volumes. The first two are the last instalments of Simplicius’ commentary on Aristotle’s *Physics*, the culmination of a monumental endeavour that started in 2001 and now comprises twelve books. One of these two final volumes contains the translation of Simplicius’ *On Aristotle Physics 1.1–2*,<sup>1</sup> the other is a detailed *General Introduction* to the whole commentary,<sup>2</sup> both authored by Stephen Menn. In his acknowledgements, Menn explains that the translation began as a joint work with Rachel Barney, who contributed, among other things, by revising early drafts, composing the paragraph summaries, and collaborating on the endnotes. Unfortunately, we are told, she had to withdraw from the project, leaving Menn to finish it and take all responsibility for the final product. The translation is accompanied by an eighteen-page preface by the series editors, Michael Griffin and Richard Sorabji (which, in fact, offers a shorter version of Menn’s *General Introduction*), and a twelve-page note on the text and translation. The translation is, of course, careful and beautifully assembled, supplied with diagrams by Henry Mendell.

As the series editors point out, Menn’s *General Introduction* amounts to a ‘significant new monograph on Simplicius’ commentary’ (vi), which is the longest surviving text by a single author from Greek antiquity and which expands to more than half a million words (1). With lucid prose, Menn gives justice to Simplicius’ rich and multilayered text and rightly emphasizes the importance of reading well-known passages in their original context and minding Simplicius’ philosophical aims and methods in his

<sup>11</sup> S. Hales and N. Earle. “A copy – or rather a translation...with numerous sparkling emendations’: Re-building the Pompeian Court of the Crystal Palace’, in K. Nichols and S. Turner (eds.), *Whatever is to be Done with the Crystal Palace?* (Manchester, 2017), 205.

<sup>1</sup> *Simplicius. On Aristotle Physics 1.1–2*. Translated by Stephen Menn. London, Bloomsbury, 2022. Pp. x + 258. Hardback £85, ISBN: 978-13-50-28568-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Simplicius. On Aristotle Physics 1–8. General Introduction to the 12 Volumes of Translations*. By Stephen Menn. London, Bloomsbury, 2022. Pp. xii + 161. Hardback £85, ISBN: 978-13-50-28662-7.

commentary, but to call it a *General Introduction* to the whole commentary might have been a bit of a stretch (it seems that it grew out of what was only intended as the introduction to Menn's translation of *On Aristotle Physics 1.1–2*). The volume is divided into five uneven sections and one appendix. In the first two sections, Menn briefly covers Simplicius' philosophical context and discusses his philosophical aims in his commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* and *On the Heavens* (1–9). The third section focuses on Simplicius' commentary methods and his use of earlier commentators (9–32). The bulk of the book, however, offers a detailed discussion of the themes in *Physics 1.1–2* (section 4, 32–99). The introduction closes with a useful explanation of some of the complicated decisions dealing with the text, including its manuscript tradition and the problems derived from the lack of a proper critical edition of the Greek.

The third volume I received from this series is the translation by Dirk Baltzly and Michael Share of the second part of Hermias' commentary to Plato's *Phaedrus* (245e–257c).<sup>3</sup> The translation comes with a helpful introduction divided into three parts. In the first one, the authors explain that the commentary focuses on theology and a detailed interpretation of 246a3–249d3. Then they explain Hermias' peculiar exegetical strategies and patterns, offering three examples, including Hermias' interpretation of *idea*, *hypopteros*, and *ptēros*, and his discussion of the inventory of lives in *Phaedrus* 248d2–e3. Finally, the introduction closes with a comparison of Hermias' and Proclus' 'theotaxonomies', using it to support their proposal, introduced in the translation to the first part of the commentary, that 'the teaching contexts from which our Plato commentaries emerge might be thought of as a performance of what we call "Platonic literacy" – the capacity to creatively synthesise the text of the Platonic canon so as to live in and through the metaphors and images authorised by those texts' (28). Overall, this is an excellent contribution to Neoplatonic studies.

The copy on the book jacket of *Plato's Second Republic* by André Laks tells us that the volume offers 'An argument for why the *Laws* can be considered Plato's most important political dialogue'.<sup>4</sup> On the back cover, we read two impressive endorsements: Melisa Lane writes that 'This is a landmark in the scholarly literature on Plato', and Christopher Rowe goes as far as to say that 'This is one of the most important books on Plato published in the last fifty years or more'. Does the book deliver on such promises?

I can report that Laks presents us with a careful, nuanced, and ambitious appraisal of Plato's long and unpolished gem. The book contains an introduction, ten chapters, a conclusion, and three appendixes. Much of the material is based on various previously published pieces now reworked into a smooth read and a coherent project. The volume certainly succeeds in bringing to the forefront of the academic debate the novelty of the *Laws*, its indirect but significant influence, and the complexity of its literary construction. It also makes important contributions to the topics of friendship, persuasion and its limits, and the relationship between the *Laws*, the *Republic*, and the *Statesman*. According to Laks, the *Laws*' influence and novelty is due to four basic principles that lie at its core: (1) without accountability, power corrupts; (2) the

<sup>3</sup> *Hermias. On Plato Phaedrus 245E–257C*. Translated by Dirk Baltzly and Michael Share. London, Bloomsbury, 2022. Pp. x + 239. Hardback £85, ISBN: 978-1-350-05192-8.

<sup>4</sup> *Plato's Second Republic: An Essay on the Laws*. By André Laks. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2022. Pp. xii + 278. Hardback £30, ISBN: 978-06-91-23313-0.

law should rule; (3) a 'mixed' constitution is the best we can achieve; and (4) laws require preambles to persuade the citizens to follow the law (2–3).

The introduction and first four chapters set the scene for Laks's interpretation and are an excellent introduction to the *Laws*.<sup>5</sup> These chapters examine its structure, the ways of understanding the possibility of a just city, and the conception of the human condition in the *Laws* and its difference from the one found in the *Republic*. The book's second part develops Laks's main theses in more detail. A highlight here are chapters 7, 'Constructing the Preambles', and 10, 'Plato's Best Tragedy', although there is much to be learnt from and discuss in the other chapters and the appendixes.

Laks's approach is cautious and subtle, but candid. He refers to his project as 'a schematic essay' with a 'speculative nature' that reflects 'a mode of reading that is sensitive to the promptings that emerge from the text itself in the absence of explicit statements or clarifications' (8). He acknowledges that his overall interpretation 'relies on a small number of short, cryptic, or sinuous passages, echoes, syntactical peculiarities, and stage directions. The slimness and fragility of these elusive passages stand in inverse proportion, so to speak, to the monumentality of the work they support' (8). He responds to the critics of his previous work by claiming that some of their disagreements depend not on matters of fact but on methodology and differences in what it means to adhere to the textual evidence (9, 183). Unfortunately, Laks treats these disagreements as an irresolvable impasse. So, instead of fully defending his decisions, he bites his critics' bullet describing his own project like a harsh reviewer would but inviting the reader to trust him and come along anyway. Could there be a dose of false modesty or Socratic irony here? I will not speculate, but this is definitively a thought-provoking book pushing Plato's scholarship forward.

In the last weeks of last year, Oxford University Press published the much-awaited *Psychology and Value in Plato, Aristotle, and Hellenistic Philosophy*, edited by Fiona Leigh and Margaret Hampson.<sup>6</sup> This excellent collection of articles, dedicated to Sarah Broadie's memory (1941–2021), arose from the ninth Keeling Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy (London, 2011). The volume offers a brilliant introductory chapter by Hampson, revised versions of the papers presented back then, and one chapter commissioned after the colloquium to tie loose ends and strengthen the book's proposals.

One of the unique features of this book is that it preserves the paper-response format of the original colloquium, which put two generations of exceptionally talented scholars in dialogue. So, for example, Terry Irwin's chapter responds to Rachel Barney's 'Intellectualism and the Method of Hypothesis in Early Plato'. In the same way, Sarah Broadie's piece responds to Raphael Woolf's 'Courage and Pleasure in Aristotle Ethics', and David Sedley's chapter responds to Daniel C. Russell's 'Three Mistakes about Stoic Ethics'. Given the topics of some chapters, this format is less strict in the responses by M. M. McCabe and Anthony Price. McCabe engages with both Jessica Moss, 'Against Bare Urges and Good-Independent Desires: Appetites in *Republic IV*', and Matthew Evans' 'The Blind Desires of *Republic IV*'. Price's original

<sup>5</sup> Although I suggest contrasting it with work by, for instance, Francisco Lisi and Melisa Lane.

<sup>6</sup> *Psychology and Value in Plato, Aristotle, and Hellenistic Philosophy. The Ninth Keeling Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*. Edited by Fiona Leigh and Margaret Hampson. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022. Pp. xvi + 223. Hardback £60, ISBN: 978-0-19-285810-8.

piece was meant to respond to James Warren's 'Memory, Anticipation, Pleasure', but the present version responds to Moss and, to a lesser extent, to Warren. Finally, the commissioned chapter by Margaret Hampson and Katharine O'Reilly focuses its response on Warren. As can be seen by the chapters' titles, the book's scope is ambitious, and its topic is as philosophically rich as it is difficult, but the authors do not disappoint. Moreover, the conversation between them illustrates different styles and approaches in anglophone scholarship in ancient philosophy and how lively and rich is the current debate.

With *Selfhood & Rationality in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, A. A. Long gathers a beautiful collection of previously published papers, now reprinted with minor changes and corrections.<sup>7</sup> The exception is chapter 6, 'Socratic Idiosyncrasy and Cynic Exhibitionism', which explores how Socrates and his personality became 'the standard of someone who lived and died for philosophy' (96), and whether we can make progress on the question of how the historical Socrates behaved by comparing and contrasting him with the outrageous displays of the Cynics. From the other thirteen chapters, there are some well-known pieces from the 1990s and 2000s that deserve mention, including 'Finding Oneself in Greek Philosophy', 'Parmenides on Thinking Being', 'Ancient Philosophy's Hardest Question: What to Make of Oneself?', and 'Platonic Souls as Persons', but Long also includes more recent, and thus less known but excellent, pieces such as 'Second Selves and Stoic Friends' and 'Politics and Divinity in Plato's *Republic*: The Form of the Good'. Undoubtedly, this volume collects some of the most interesting pieces on selfhood in ancient Greek philosophy and its connection with rationality, divinity, and happiness. The book's scope spans from early Greek philosophy up to Marcus Aurelius and Plotinus.

Apart from some chapters in Leigh and Hampson's edited volume and Long's collection, students of Hellenistic philosophy have much to celebrate with the publication of four new books. Two of them focus on Stoicism, and the other two on Epicurean philosophy. I start with the latter pair.

With casual and enjoyable prose, engaging examples, and multiple analogies, Emily A. Austin's *Living for Pleasure* gifts us with a careful and well thought out introduction to Epicureanism, presented as a remedy to our often stressful, anxious, and painful lives.<sup>8</sup> The conversational and informal tone appropriately aims at offering a pleasant reading experience, even if, at times, some might feel she is trying too hard, but none of that takes away from the fact that the book offers a masterclass of accessible reading without oversimplification. Austin divides the book into twenty-four pleasantly short chapters that touch on a wide variety of topics, from happiness (Ch. 3), resilience in the face of adversity (Ch. 15), and death (Ch. 21) to impostor syndrome (Ch. 9), work (Ch. 13), and drinks and food (Ch. 18). Scholars will find this book a fitting recommendation to undergraduate students, the general public, and even academics with no previous contact with ancient philosophy and an appetite for life-guidance content. For sure, a great alternative to yet another Stoic guide for life.

If Austin's book offers an engaging, down-to-earth introduction to Epicureanism, in *Theory and Practice in Epicurean Political Philosophy*, Javier Aoiz and Marcelo Boeri

<sup>7</sup> *Selfhood & Rationality in Ancient Greek Philosophy. From Heraclitus to Plotinus*. By A. A. Long. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022. Pp. xiv + 267. Hardback £72, ISBN: 978-0-19-880339-3.

<sup>8</sup> *Living for Pleasure. An Epicurean Guide to Life*. By Emily A. Austin. New York, Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. x + 307. Hardback £14.99, ISBN: 978-0-19-755832-4.

provide a sophisticated and cutting-edge study of Epicurean political philosophy.<sup>9</sup> Their project aim is simple: to reconstruct Epicurean political thought with the most up-to-date list of sources, including papyri, epigraphic material, Roman prosopography, and a critical assessment of hostile sources to argue that, despite any appearances to the contrary, 'Epicureans were not indeed averse to political life' (9).

To defend this thesis, which seems to conflict with well-known Epicurean slogans (e.g. 'Live unnoticed!' and 'Do not engage in politics!'), the authors offer a reconstruction and discussion of the Epicurean concepts of justice, security, usefulness, friendship, philanthropy, gratitude, peace of mind, and the sage's engagement with its community. The resulting picture shows that Epicureans had a sophisticated understanding of the nature of political communities, that they probably engaged with Plato's philosophy more than is usually thought, and that their views in this area are in harmony with their general understanding of philosophy as a study of nature.

With an introduction, six main chapters, and a conclusion, the book is divided into two main parts. In the first one (chapters 1–3), the authors reconstruct the political thought from Epicurean texts. The first chapter examines how Epicureans conceive justice in naturalistic terms, offering a genealogy of justice and the laws (which the Epicureans distinguish from the just, and think they are only required when societies become complex). According to the authors, the Epicurean analysis of justice neither leads to conventionalism nor mere relativism. For the Epicureans, we learn, justice is not conventional 'because it is constrained by conformity to the purpose established in the first pacts of human communities ("neither harming one another nor being harmed")' (32), but this conformity is sensible to context and circumstance, which explains the diversity we discover in political communities. This chapter is complemented by chapter 3, which deals with the preconception (*prolepsis*) of the just, the relation between justice and usefulness, and the role of circumstances and temporality.

Chapter 2 focuses on the Epicurean notion of 'security' (*asphaleia*) and argues that it is the key to understanding the genealogy of justice and the law. Here we learn that the Epicureans acknowledge that the security that makes it possible to embrace the life they seek is provided by political communities that also promote many of the fears and limitless desires they reject; but this is why the Epicureans promote the 'purest security' through the analysis of nature and, in this way, an understanding of necessary natural desires, the gods, and the importance of friendship and philanthropy.

Chapter 4 offers a revisionary examination of hostile sources of Epicurean material, especially reports by Cicero, Plutarch, and Lactantius. The authors survey how these writers decontextualize and mutilate Epicurean slogans, framing their accounts negatively by omitting certain views, banalizing Epicurean hedonism, and using scaremongering tactics against it. In the next chapter, the authors focus on the Epicurean sage and how it relates to political communities, engages with the law, and cultivates friendship, philanthropy, and gratitude.

Then, in chapter 6, the authors directly tackle how apolitical the Epicureans were. By now, the author's answer is unsurprising. Epicureans engaged with the

<sup>9</sup> *Theory and Practice in Epicurean Political Philosophy. Security, Justice and Tranquility*. By Javier Aoz and Marcelo Boeri. London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2023. Pp. x + 242. Hardback £85, ISBN: 978-1-35-0346543-.

socio-political world and developed theoretical reflections on justice. They were interested in understanding the conditions that allowed the life they advocated. Hostile sources are untrustworthy and hyperbolic in presenting Epicureans as completely apathetic in this regard. This chapter shows that some Epicureans served as royal advisors, diplomats, ambassadors, and priests of the state religion, but they were no activists nor political reformists. As we know, and the authors acknowledge, they refused to participate actively in politics. However, with their focus on political stability and respect for the laws and political institutions, one might wonder whether their outlook on life ultimately becomes amenable to the type of conservatism that delays and hinders radical systemic change. This line of thought, however, was not fully explored in this volume. Nevertheless, the study presented by Aoiz and Boeri will surely open this and many other debates.

The first book on Stoicism is a terrific monograph by Christopher Gill titled *Learning to Live Naturally. Stoic Ethics and its Modern Significance*.<sup>10</sup> The volume's aim is twofold: to present Gill's interpretation of Stoic Ethics and to highlight its contribution to modern virtue ethics. The overall project is to present Stoic Ethics as a coherent, strong, and credible theory. Gill goes as far as to argue that Stoicism offers a better framework for virtue ethics, eudaimonism, and ethical naturalism than Aristotle. Gill divides the book into three parts. The first focuses on Stoic moral theory, especially the connection between virtue and happiness, practical deliberation, and the mutually supporting relationship between ethics and universal nature or god. The second part, dedicated to ethical development, offers a detailed reconstruction of the Stoic theory of 'appropriation' (*oikeiōsis*), the therapy of emotions, and how they link to the project of learning to live in accordance with nature. The final part explores how Stoicism can inform modern moral theories, including modern virtue and environmental ethics, and how Stoic ideas inform modern 'life-guidance' content.

The most welcomed features of Gill's interpretation are, on the one hand, its attention to the social and caring dimensions of life in the Stoic theory (especially in sections 4.5, 5.2, and 6.4), and on the other the possible connections between Stoic ethical theory and modern environmental ethics. On this last point, Gill argues that, by strongly linking virtue and happiness with universal nature, Stoicism is uniquely positioned to inform and support our response to the climate crisis (see Ch. 7, 'Stoic Ethics, Human Nature, and the Environment').

Overall, the book offers not only an interpretation of Stoicism but also an authoritative defence of its perennial relevance. It highlights the best the Stoics have to offer and finds innovative readings and strengths where others see downsides; but the account sometimes feels too one-sided and in need of taking some critical distance. Although it could be unfair to criticize someone for what it leaves out, the framing of this book seems intentional. It tends to omit or downplay any criticism or problematic aspect of Stoicism or a thorough discussion of the trade-offs of embracing it as an ethical framework. The last part of the book, dedicated to the positive impact Stoicism has made on modern self-guidance discourse, would have benefited from

<sup>10</sup> *Learning to Live Naturally. Stoic Ethics and its Modern Significance*. By Christopher Gill. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022. Pp. xii + 365. Hardback £90, ISBN 978-0-19-886616-9.

acknowledging that some of the recent interest in Stoicism derives from deeply problematic misappropriations, as described, for example, by Donna Zuckerberg.<sup>11</sup>

I would like to close this review with a mention of a noteworthy translation. Robin Waterfield, who has published many beautiful translations over the years, now turns his attention to Epictetus (as reported by Arrian). With *Epictetus. The Complete Works*, Waterfield has made a tremendous contribution to students, scholars, and enthusiasts of Stoic philosophy by putting together an annotated translation of the *Handbook*, the *Discourses*, and the remaining fragments.<sup>12</sup> As with his previous work, Waterfield tries to find a balance between ‘accuracy and English fluency and readability’ (xiii). The translation is accompanied by a lucid introduction that offers all the necessary information to access the texts, including details of Epictetus’ life, Arrian’s role in the *Discourses* and the *Handbook*, general account of Stoic philosophy, and Epictetus’ Stoicism and his philosophical training.

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### Reception

Over the last few years, much of public discourse has been concerned with the rise of populist movements across the world. Hindu nationalism, Brexit, and the rise of Le Pen are just some of the phenomena that have garnered attention and concern. Although, in *Rome and America*,<sup>1</sup> classicist and political scientist Dean Hammer does not start with this topic, contemporary populism is his destination, specifically in the shape of Donald Trump and the conditions in which his presidency arose. As Hammer investigates several aspects of both the creation and undoing of self-identity and political norms in the United States, he cites templates, points of comparison, and, finally, warnings in both Rome’s founding myths and the history of its transition from republic to principate.

In many ways, the central question of the work is ‘Who are We?’ (author’s capitalization, 10). Hammer argues that, with *Rome and America* having similarly violent and unsavoury origins, their elites share anxieties regarding the makeup and

<sup>11</sup> D. Zuckerberg, *Not All Dead White Men. Classics and Misogyny in the Digital Age* (Cambridge, MA, 2018), chapter 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Epictetus: The Complete Works. Handbook, Discourses & Fragments*. Translated by Robin Waterfield. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2022. Pp. xii + 460. Hardback £44, ISBN: 978-0-226-76933-2; paperback £15, ISBN: 978-0-226-76947-9.

<sup>1</sup> *Rome and America. Communities of Strangers, Spectacles of Belonging*. By Dean Hammer. Cambridge, New York, Melbourne and New Delhi, Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. xi + 252. 9 illustrations. Hardback £85, ISBN: 978-1-009-24960-7.