

BOOK REVIEW

The Advent of Pluralism: Diversity and Conflict in the Age of Sophocles. By Lauren J. APFEL. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press 2011. Pp. xvi + 380. Hardcover, £70.00/\$135.00. ISBN 978-0-19-960062-5.

This solid and thought-provoking monograph investigates the extent to which the ancient Greeks possessed the concept of pluralism: that is, the idea that ethical questions can have more than one right answer. A clear introduction is followed by sections on Protagoras, Herodotus, and Sophocles (though no conclusion, alas). Apfel writes intelligently and is usually easy to read, although footnotes are sometimes a little long (188 n. 75 is an especially egregious example). Her discussion of Sophocles (to cite the section relevant to my own interests, and highlighted by the book's title) is intelligent and worth reading. I did not always agree with her. Sometimes she seemed too keen to assert moral equivalence between conflicting characters and values when Sophocles appears to me to be directing his audience in the direction of support for a particular side. I also wonder how hard she has thought about the terms "heroism" and "Sophoclean heroism" (e.g., 244), which seem decidedly question-begging, especially when used in a work concerned with ethics. But unanimity on such matters is hardly to be expected. The key point is that Apfel's close readings of the ethics of *Ajax*, *Electra*, *Antigone*, and *Philoctetes* will stimulate thought and deserve to be widely cited.

Some points of detail. (31 n. 129) Apfel cites lyric poetry via Campbell's outdated 1967 edition (not 1997, as she cites it); this will confuse readers, especially as they are notified here and not in e.g. a section on abbreviations at the beginning. (109–11) Apfel has a heading "The Poem of Simonides," referring to the poem cited by Socrates in Plato's *Protagoras*, but nowhere refers her readers to a text of that work. (134) It is Orestes, not Electra, who in Sophocles' play "grasp[s] the idea that people can benefit from having been thought dead." (135 n. 71) Read "Sophocles" for "Sophocle's". In the same note Apfel cites Sophocles *O.R.* 1528–30 without indicating that almost every scholar who has seriously investigated the question considers this final tailpiece spurious (cf. *Philologus* 153 (2009) 59 n. 50). (135 n. 74) Apfel concludes that there is a "strong probability" that Sophocles read Herodotus; does she thereby exclude the possibility that

Sophocles listened to Herodotus reciting parts of his work? And might Herodotus not have attended performances of Sophocles' plays? I rather think he might have enjoyed them. (210) Abraham's aborted sacrifice of Isaac did not take place on Mount Sinai. Apfel's discussion here is vitiated by a lack of historical awareness concerning ancient attitudes towards the autonomy of children vis-à-vis their parents; I also miss a reference to Noort and Tigchelaar (eds.), *The Sacrifice of Isaac* ... (Leiden etc. 2002). (211 n. 4) "Homer <Il.> 23.22–3." (213 n. 14) Apfel dismisses the Epic Cycle as "inferior poems"; Sophocles himself apparently took a different view (Athenaeus 277c–e). (224 n. 63) Rieu's translation is not in the bibliography. (225 n. 70) According to Apfel, "we can grant the suitors the valid point that Penelope has been stalling rather duplicitously and that it is high time she gets on with her choice." Personally, I find Penelope's fidelity admirable and inspiring, but perhaps I am just a romantic at heart. (253 n. 66) Ajax is hardly characterized by "mental slowness and inarticulateness" throughout ancient literature: cf. Hom. *Il.* 7.288–9, Soph. *Aj.* 119–20, Philost. *Her.* 35.2. (291) Sophocles' use of Chrysothemis and Ismene as foils to Electra and Antigone was commented on by the ancient scholia (on *El.* 328, p. 162 Xenis), well before Kamerbeek. (301 n. 113) Van Erp Taalman Kip in *AJP* 1996 refutes Apfel's claim concerning Electra's language here (305). Apfel mistranslates Soph. *El.* 1415 ("twice as hard," not "a second blow"). (346 n. 131) For "interesting possibility," read "uninteresting impossibility."

The book contains a few errors in the Greek: ἐπιδ' (87), καὶ (103), ἡδ' (223, for ἡδ'), σὺ (226), εὐγνηῆς (289–290), αἰσχύνειν (299), αἰσχίω (300), καὶ (300 n. 107), ἐγω (301 n. 113), Ἀπόλλων (306). The Bibliography contains errors, too; for example, several works are given the wrong publication date (somebody should have noticed that Finley's *The World of Odysseus* came out somewhat earlier than 1999). On the dust jacket, in the description of the jacket illustration, a comma after "Protagoras" might have cleared up a potential confusion. I would also query Apfel's definition here of "pluralism" as "the idea ... that values and moral codes can and will come into conflict with one another"; the key point is not the existence of conflict (since conflict can occur between right and wrong), but the validity of the competing values. These mistakes can be corrected in the paperback reprint that this useful book deserves.

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