

## BOOK REVIEW

*Plato's Phaedrus: A Commentary for Greek Readers*. Edited by PAUL RYAN. Introduction by MARY LOUISE GILL. Oklahoma Series in Classical Culture. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012. Pp. xxviii + 384. Paper, \$29.95. ISBN 978-0-8061-4259-3.

This student edition of the *Phaedrus* includes a twelve-page introduction by Mary Louise Gill, an unmodified version of Burnet's OCT text, a generous 250 pages of grammatical, textual, historical, prosopographical, and translation notes, a spare four-page bibliography, and indices of Greek and English terms and of proper names. By and large it leaves editorial history to DeVries' *A Commentary on the Phaedrus of Plato* (Hakkert, 1969) and concision plus a *tour-de-force* overview to Yunis' green-and-yellow commentary (Cambridge, 2011). It should replace Rowe's useful commentary (Aris & Phillips, 1987) for visual appeal, completeness, pedagogical tone, consistent attention to variant MSS readings, and interpretative restraint, though Rowe's includes an elegant facing-page translation. There is no vocabulary or discussion of reception.

Gill's introduction, which includes a single page reference but augments Ryan's "Works Cited" list, starts by announcing the strangeness of Socrates in the strangeness of the setting, and argues that an indeterminate dramatic date adds to this sense of strangeness. It claims that the *Phaedrus* was written in the years of the *Parmenides* and *Theaetetus*, and thus is transitional (middle-late) with respect to doctrine, but infers nothing from this about reading strategy except to ask: "in what way is Socrates' role atypical and why?" (We should just as well also ask in what way his role is typical.) The two explicit topics in the dialogue are love and rhetoric; only slightly less explicit is the dialogue's challenge to the reader to fit them together. Gill spends two pages talking about the "unity" of the dialogue, which section she had foreshadowed by saying that the "dialogue breaks into two dissimilar parts, three long speeches about love in the first half, discussion of their persuasiveness in the second half." I do wonder whether students actually feel this supposed formal or topical discontinuity, and so whether adverting to a potentially factitious scholarly dispute is useful. After all, much (U.S.) education proceeds by the teacher reading aloud several exemplary passages and following

them up with *explication de texte* or free-wheeling discussion. Many young people's introduction to persuasive discourse in popular or high culture is in terms of amatory seduction. All the same, Gill proposes that the conversation's variety meets the needs of Phaedrus' variegated soul, and that Socrates wishes to turn Phaedrus toward a "more productive form of rhetoric, one in which the speaker knows the truth, though he may persuade his audience of something false." She believes that the Palinode, which describes "a *Fantasia*-like parade of divine souls," shows that Socrates knows the truth about love.

The commentary proper is loquacious but assured, comprehensive but useful. It is didactic about grammar and always characterizes the pragmatic force of the Greek particles. It has a good sense for the questions an intermediate student might ask.

A disadvantage of the book is that it does not take care to outline extended arguments, and sometimes the synopses heading sections of the commentary could mislead a reader. Here are two examples, though such infelicities are infrequent.

First, Ryan summarizes the immortality of the soul demonstration that comes early in the Palinode (245c5–246a2): "The ever-moving, [Socrates] says, is immortal, but nothing but the self-moving is ever-moving. The self-moving is, therefore, the origin or first principle of all other motion, and a first principle can neither come to be nor suffer extinction." Ryan's first sentence implies a connection from self-moving to immortal, which, upon linking soul to the self-moving, would be sufficient for the argument; the "therefore" of the next sentence both (i) makes it seem that being an *archê* follows immediately from the conclusion, which it does not, and (ii) obscures the fact that Ryan has construed the second part as a parallel argument for the same conclusion. Ryan's ensuing analysis of an admittedly gnarled passage—and thus one needing the most judicious help—does not fully untangle it. It entertains Hackforth's condescension that the difference between individual souls and collective soul is "not here before Plato's mind"; it accepts without explaining Dennison's figurative language that the repetitious phrases "flood and permeate, rather than strike, the ear"; and it rejects Philoponus' and Burnet's reading γῆν εἰς ἔν (245e1) because the contrast between οὐρανός and γῆ "is a rhetorical amplification that lacks point in this context," even though if anything in the dialogue takes part in rhetorical amplification it is the Palinode.

Second, Ryan summarizes the argument at 261e5–262c4, about the sort of knowledge successful deception requires: "In order to deceive efficiently, the

antilogician must work from the truth to its opposite by small increments, from which it follows that he must know the truth." Ryan's "efficiently" must refer to τεχνικός, but its sense in the argument is "reliably" rather than "not slowly or haphazardly." Socrates is ambivalent whether deception starts from the truth (262a3 vs. b2). More importantly, the argument is about "know[ing] the truth," but the question is about the truth of *what*. Within the discussion, it would have been welcome for Ryan, analyzing the very rare ἀλλά γε δὴ, to have explained the logical difference between his two options, "further" and "again."

I should stress, however, that Ryan's commentary otherwise excels in informativeness, clarity, and usefulness, and I would recommend it to any new readers of the *Phaedrus*.

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