

BOOK REVIEW

Plato. Charmides. By CHRISTOPHER MOORE and CHRISTOPHER C. RAYMOND. Indianapolis, IN and Cambridge, UK: Hackett, 2019. Pp. xli + 124. Hardback, \$37.00. ISBN: 978-1-62466-779-4; Paperback, \$13.00. ISBN: 978-1-62466-778-7.

Plato's *Charmides* is one of several dialogues in which Socrates and friends seek without success to define a virtue—in this case, *sōphrosynē*, often translated as “moderation” or “sound-mindedness.” Since 2010, articles and book chapters on this hitherto rather neglected dialogue have been joined by in-depth studies by, among others, Tom Tuozzo, Voula Tsouna and Raphael Woolf. Its portrait of intellectual give-and-take among characters young and old, its inquiry into virtue and knowledge and its modeling of good and bad argumentation make the *Charmides* a candidate text for an undergraduate course, a graduate seminar or a specialist or generally interested reader.

Moore and Raymond's translation with historical/thematic introduction and running commentary will benefit all these audiences. Their version is both accurate and colloquial. They state their criteria for selecting an English word to render a Greek word: scope, salience, connotation, transparency (xxxiv). Their idiomatic renderings contribute clarity, e.g. “keen to impress” (φιλοτίμως ἔχων, 162c2-3), or “being a man with a reputation to uphold” (εὐδοκιμῶν ἐκάστοτε, 169c7). The Greek text is Burnet's, but Moore and Raymond signal and often argue for their decisions to diverge from Burnet in any given passage. Sometimes they adopt this reviewer's conclusions. They rightly do not emend out the fallacy in 160e but rather explain it.

Several translation decisions diverge from the majority's in interesting ways. Moore and Raymond's renderings of σωφροσύνη as “discipline” and ἡσυχιότης as “tranquility” are, as far as I know, unique, but thoughtful arguments defend each (cf. xxxiv-vii, 56-7). Unlike others, they translate γνωρίμων as “notable men” in the political sense rather than as “acquaintances” (153c1), their reasoning for which posits a dramatic date of 429 (but see below). In my few disagreements with their translation, I join all or most translators in opting for:

155c2-3 locating each dislodged chap at each end of the bench rather than together at one end of the bench;
 161a9 construing μή to negate ποιῆ... κακούς (sc. *sōphrosynē* does not make people bad) rather than οἷς ἂν παρή (sc. *sōphrosynē* makes bad those to whom it is not present), the latter construal adopted also by Sprague and Dorion;
 172b5 “keeps knowledge in view in addition” (προσκαθορῶντι) rather than “keeps knowledge in view”;
 175e6-176a1 “and that since *sōphrosynē* is a great good” rather than “since *sōphrosynē* is a great good” (the main verb is οἴομαι; Socrates only states his opinion).

A strength of the book is its care to lay open possible meanings of the characters’ interchanges without imposing the translators’ interpretation. Following the richly annotated translation, 70 pages of description and analysis guide the reader into the dialogue’s dramatic and philosophical elements. Avoiding overly technical language without dumbing down, Moore and Raymond spur the reader to draw connections between the characters’ conversation and the politics of their day, their intellectual forebears (poets, doctors, philosophers) and the views of their counterparts in other Platonic dialogues. Rather than defending a position on the philosophy of Plato’s Socrates across the dialogues, Moore and Raymond look at the work a passage does within the context of the *Charmides* itself, e.g., “The reader is left to discern what distinguishes Socrates’ and Critias’ views of knowledge” (102). At the same time, they point out themes of the *Charmides* that recur in Plato’s corpus—for example, the association of *sōphrosynē* and not thinking you know that which you do not know (cf. *Theaetetus* 210b-c). Evaluation of the different perspectives on *sōphrosynē* voiced by young Charmides and by his formidable older cousin, Critias, is particularly insightful. The translators’ discussion of Socrates’ proposal that *sōphrosynē* as “knowledge of knowledge” might confer a limited epistemic benefit to someone who also has first-order subject knowledge (172b-c) prompted me to rethink my earlier view that even this limited benefit is rejected.

Of course, scholars will disagree over interpretation *somewhere*. I incline to think that τις in ἡσυχιότης τις, “a kind of quietness/tranquility” (159b5), expresses class inclusion, while Moore and Raymond say that with τις Charmides may mean only that *sōphrosynē* is approximately like tranquility (58). Yet, Charmides twice says that *sōphrosynē* is doing *everything* quietly (b3-4). This entails

that limited or intermittent quietness is not *sōphrosynē*. At 174b8, in my view, Critias' μάλλον, "more," not rebutted by Socrates, leaves it open that medical knowledge may make some contribution toward happiness (cf. 165d1). Moore and Raymond on the other hand suggest that μάλλον "does not necessarily mean that [medical knowledge] produces *some* benefit ... perhaps it is *more like* the sort of knowledge that *does* produce benefit" (101 n. 185). I do not find the text supporting this reading. As a result, at both passages I am quicker than they to fault Socrates' logic. Their approach to reading Plato, though, sees divergent interpretations as prods toward our following Socrates: "even if he thinks he knows something, he realizes that this conceit may be false, and so he wants to investigate it again" (110-11).

The Introduction provides valuable material on the characters, setting, pre-Platonic treatments of *sōphrosynē* and of self-knowledge, the place of the *Charmides* within the corpus and its later reception. Included are a map and a tree of the family of Plato, Charmides and Critias. My only caveat concerns the dramatic date: I do not think we know that "the battle" (153a-b) is supposed to be Spartolus in 429.¹ I noticed only two typos, both on p. xlii: ἀσμένος should be ἄσμενος; πρ. ὠμολόγησα should be ὠμολόγηκα.

Moore's and Raymond's *Charmides* makes a welcome addition to Hackett's series of translations of ancient philosophers. The translators admirably achieve their goals of "readability, argumentative clarity, and descriptive accuracy" (vii). I recommend this book highly.

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¹ See my review of D. Nails, *The People of Plato*, in *AncPhil* 24 (2004) 197-200, at 199-200.