

Albert Rijksbaron, *Plato: Ion or: On the Iliad*, edited with Introduction and Commentary, Amsterdam Studies in Classical Philology, Brill, Leiden and Boston, 2007, Euros 99.00 / US\$ 147.00.

All too often, philosophers who specialise in ancient thought are unaware of the extent of their debt to the editors of the texts they study. An occasional nod in the direction of the apparatus criticus, an even more occasional mention of Greek (or Latin) usage at the time of their author, and a reference or two to LSJ are generally all that authors of philosophical monographs on ancient thought give their readers by way of information on the state of the original text that they claim to interpret. Whatever the reasons for such reluctance, it fosters among non-specialists the illusion that our text of, say, Plato's dialogues reproduces, in almost every detail of wording, accentuation and punctuation, the text that Plato wrote.

The extent to which the philosophical study of ancient texts relies on the often silent labour of codicologists and philologists is impressively demonstrated in the present edition and commentary of Plato's *Ion* by Professor Rijksbaron (hereafter R.). Even those who treat their ancient texts as manna from heaven will not fail to be interested in R.'s detailed account of the sources, both direct and indirect, of his edition. He explains that a collation *in situ* of all the available manuscripts convinced him that S, a Venetian manuscript originally from Cardinal Bessarion's library, is not only a primary witness, but also a more reliable source than had so far been thought. For these reasons, R. added it to the bank of manuscripts (T, W, and F) upon which most other modern editions of the *Ion* (as well as of other dialogues in the same tetralogy) are based. R.'s handling of the indirect tradition is just as impressive, especially since, unlike Burnet and Méridier, he has taken care to record, not only the readings of Stobaeus, but also those of Proclus. Proclus is a particularly intriguing witness in so far as his quotations of the *Ion* reveal that his text of the dialogue differed from ours in a number of places; there was, in his time, no canonical edition of Plato. As a result of R.'s meticulous collation of the sources, his apparatus criticus is a model of its kind and his edition of the dialogue set to become definitive for a long time to come, especially when it is supplemented by a full account of the textual transmission that is currently being prepared by Lorenzo Ferroni.

Also included in the introduction to the edition of the text is a brisk survey of the Homeric quotations in the dialogue. R. largely endorses the conclusions reached by Labarbe in his 1949 classic study (*L'Homère de Platon*), but adjusts them whenever they depend upon the incomplete or unreliable apparatus criticus of earlier editions. One might have expected R. to compare Plato's Homeric quotations in the *Ion* with Xenophon's references to the same lines in his *Symposium*, although the fact that the two works are unlikely to be independent of each other

goes some way to justifying the omission. R.'s attitude to the Homeric question and its bearing upon the interpretation of the dialogue is brisk and matter of fact. Since he assumes that Plato quoted Homer from a copy rather than from memory and thus that, by the time the dialogue was composed, the Homeric text was relatively stabilised, R. does not tangle with Nagy's evolutionary model of the stages in the shaping of the Homeric poems and the putative role that rhapsodes played in this evolution. This may have been a prudent decision.

R.'s rare knowledge of Greek syntax—especially the syntax of the verb and the use of particles—as well as his familiarity with the distinctive features of Plato's style makes his commentary especially valuable. All scholars of classical Greek will benefit from his detailed notes on the use of: the vocative and the proper name (pp. 96-100) in forms of address; $\mu\omega\nu$ to elicit a positive answer, as opposed to its more usual function (p. 108); the value of the indicative active perfect to express what Goodwin (1889:45) called 'the continuance of the result of an action down to the present time' (e.g., pp. 131-32); the present infinitive *versus* the aorist infinitive after $\sigma\chi\omicron\lambda\eta$ and verbs expressing volition, command, ability etc.; $\sigma\chi\epsilon\delta\omicron\nu$ $\tau\iota$ and the difficulties of translating it (pp. 215-218). Plato scholars will be more immediately interested in R.'s account of the differences in meaning and context of utterance between expressions often taken to be synonymous in their author, such as $\epsilon\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega$ and $\beta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$ (p. 116); $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\chi\eta$ and $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\mu\eta$ (pp. 151-52 and 202-04) and $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\eta\theta\eta$ $\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\omega$ and $\tau\acute{\alpha}\lambda\eta\theta\eta$ $\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\omega$ (pp. 154-55). Plato's use of $\acute{\epsilon}\tau\epsilon\rho\omicron\varsigma$ and $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\omicron\varsigma$, as R. also demonstrates, is less tidy than it is usually taken to be (pp. 196-200). Lastly, R.'s account of Plato's use of $\tilde{\eta}$ and $\hat{\eta}$ to formulate questions (pp. 103-06) achieves the rare distinction of filling a lacuna in Denniston, who had not included $\tilde{\eta}$ in his discussion of interrogative particles.

The book, however, is not all about editorial decisions and Greek usage at the classical period. Far from it since R. also deals with the philosophical significance of Plato's various pronouncements on the value of poets and poetry and offers a detailed reconsideration of the lexical and other evidence to determine the likely date of composition of the dialogue.

R.'s overall interpretation of Plato's poetics appears to me to be the only section that leaves something to be desired in this otherwise superb book. The few pages that are devoted to the issue are too brisk and too systematising in intent to provide a fully convincing analysis of Plato's ambiguities on the issue of the epistemic status and value of poetry. R.'s position, which may, understandably, have been evolved partly as a reaction against recent attempts to claim that Plato's thinking on poetry was both less negative and closer to ours than previously assumed, is that Plato's hostility to poets and poetry neither lessened nor varied in the course of his writing life:

... the *Ion* would seem to be an integral—and therefore authentic—part of what may be called Plato's *programme* to show that traditional poetry, being mimetic of the imperfect world as we know it, and *a fortiori* rhapsodes, imitators of imitators, should be rejected, and should not be admitted to a state if that state is to be well governed. The other dialogues displaying (elements of) this programme are the *Phaedrus*, *Gorgias*, *Meno*, *Republic*, *Laws*. While the *Ion* belongs, then, to this *programme*, its technical vocabulary comes closest to that of *Phaedrus* and *Republic*. (pp. 13-14, my italics)

In this uncharacteristically clumsy bit of prose, R. makes what appears to me to be a number of questionable assertions. Firstly, as he himself recognises elsewhere in the book, the concept of *mimēsis* makes no appearance in the *Ion*. Secondly, Plato's concern in that dialogue is not to safeguard the state against the baneful influence of imitators, be they twice- or thrice-removed from reality. Indeed, there is no mention of the state in the *Ion* and therefore no proposals for protecting the citizens' minds against poetry. Admittedly, in the *Ion*, Plato presents poets and rhapsodes as agents of irrationality. But that is not the same as claiming that mimetic compositions, especially when composed in a state of poetic frenzy, are liable to charm audiences away from true reality. As for Plato having had a lifelong anti-poetry 'programme', is this really what emerges from the evidence of the dialogues? Here, I suspect, is an unresolved hermeneutical crux: is the proposition that Plato had an anti-poetry 'programme' an exegetical hypothesis on R.'s part or is it a conclusion that he has reached after sifting through the evidence available in the *Ion* and elsewhere?

The question arises all the more since R. categorically denies that the corpus contains any evidence that Plato wavered on the issue as to whether or not the composition of poetry requires mastery of a *technē*. Even the following, oft-quoted, lines from the *Phaedrus* fail to impress him:

... if any man comes to the gates of poetry without the madness of the Muses, persuaded that skill [ἐκ τέχνης] alone will make him a good poet, then shall he and his works of sanity with him be brought to naught by the poetry of madness. (245 A 5-8, tr. R. Hackforth)

The passage leaves R. unimpressed because, as he writes, it 'does not belong to the words of Socrates/Stesichorus but is part of the conviction of the frenzy-less person referred to in the ὄς-clause [πισθεὶς ὡς ἄρα...], p. 10.)' In this, R. is surely right, and commentators—this reviewer included—should generally be more forthcoming in alerting their readers to the fact. [Collegial charity might conceivably have prompted R. to note that, in making this mistake, we follow Proclus'

lead, as testified by *In Remp.* V 57.24-26.] Yet, if Socrates and Stesichorus disagree with the frenzy-less person, it is not over the existence of a *technē* of poetry, but over the role that it plays in the composition of fine poetry. Do Socrates and Stesichorus take a putative τέχνη ποιητική to be a necessary, though not a sufficient, condition of poetic excellence or, more radically, do they deny that it is a condition at all? While there is nothing in the lines in question to enable us to infer Stesichorus and Socrates' answer to that question, the fact that Socrates quotes Stesichorus' palinode with approval and in support of his own palinode shows at the very least that he shared his view on the importance of inspiration in general and poetic *mania* in particular. So much is confirmed both by Socrates' mention, in 235C-D, 238 C and 241 E, of a source of inspiration located outside himself, and by his later classification of poetic inspiration amongst the beneficent manifestations of divine *mania* (265 B). On the issue of the value of poetic frenzy, therefore, *pace* R., Socrates does not speak exactly with the same voice in the *Phaedrus* as he does in the *Ion*. And, one may add, the *Phaedrus* is not the only dialogue in which reliance on non-rational means, poetic or other, is presented in a less depreciative light than in the *Ion*. In the *Symposium*, Diotima's concept of the daimonic and her classification of poets, alongside shoemakers, medical men and temple-builders, as *dēmiourgoi*, and thus as 'makers' (*poiētai*) who are, by definition, proficient in a *technē*, suggest a less hostile attitude to poets and poetry than is expressed in the *Ion*.

No doubt, R.'s conviction that Plato did have an anti-poetry 'programme' predisposed him to place the date of composition of the *Ion* close to that of dialogues traditionally classified as 'early-middle' and 'middle'. But R. is too good a classicist and too conscientious a reader of ancient texts to let the matter rest at such impressionistic considerations. His view that the dialogue was written during Plato's 'middle' period—possibly in the intervals of writing the *Republic*—follows from a detailed comparative analysis of key technical and procedural terms in dialogues generally thought to date from Plato's maturity. As for the lingering problem of authenticity that continues to surround the *Ion*, R. will have none of it, and his authority should dispel the long shadow cast by Wilamowitz' wavering on the issue. In any case, the realisation that Wilamowitz had probably himself laboured under the influence of Schlegel and Schleiermacher's eccentric approach to Platonic authenticity—only thirteen dialogues passed their test of authenticity—should go a long way towards freeing us from this particular worry.

R.'s *Plato: Ion or: On the Iliad, edited with Introduction and Commentary* should now take its place as the prime point of reference for all those who aim at doing serious work on Plato's poetics in general and the *Ion* in particular. This is especially so since the new edition of Plato's text that is currently being prepared for the Oxford Classical Texts series, to replace Burnet's, is proceeding at an inevitably

slow pace. [Habitual users of Burnet beware: there are differences in lineation between his edition and R.'s.] R.'s commentary will be found invaluable by all those able to use it, but is likely to be beyond the capabilities of undergraduate and Greekless audiences: passages in languages other than English are left untranslated, the (Latin) technical vocabulary of grammar and linguistics is frequently used, and references to the vast secondary literature on the subject abound.

Not infrequently, R.'s references to the work of others are critical. From the vantage point of his years of experience, he often finds himself in a position to correct what he perceives to be interpretive errors on the part of his colleagues, past and present. Although he, very rightly, does not hesitate to point to areas of disagreement, he does so with the matter-of-fact urbanity of someone who has repeatedly been proved right in the past. His short and sharp rebukes are confined to footnotes, leaving the main text uncluttered and, although frequently technical, remarkably easy to follow.

The book is beautifully produced and the Greek font exceptionally easy on the eye. I noted a few typographical errors and other blemishes: p. 12, n. 22, read 'waste for 'waiste'; p. 43 'more generally' for 'more in general'; p. 53 'forty' for 'fourty'; p. 106, n. 182, 'us' for 'we'. Although steep, the price of the book is justified by the high quality of its contents.

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