C. D. C. Reeve has written a book that contains stimulating insights and arguments. His analyses of individual passages are both original and plausible; the reader will learn much and be goaded to rethink numerous aspects of his understanding of the Republic. Yet this estimable material is embedded in an overall interpretation of the work that is so wildly implausible that one wonders how Reeve can seriously advance it.

In his Preface Reeve says that his intention is to explode four "interpretive myth[s]" about the Republic. Very briefly, the myths are as follows (pp. xi-xii): (a) that the work contains a theory of transcendent, separate, knowable forms, that alone are completely real and completely knowable, in contrast to the sensible world, which is neither; (b) that the Republic is "neither a philosophically nor an artistically unified work," in that Books I and X do not seem to fit, the three central images of Sun, Line, and Cave are not philosophically coherent, and for other reasons as well; (c) that the political theory of the work centers upon a totalitarian police state; (d) that the work's central argument is vitiated by equivocation, in that "Plato sets out to defend justice but ends up defending something else altogether." In countering the myths, Reeve attempts to present a unified interpretation of the Republic, free from these defects. Because orthodox interpretations of the work are predicated on the myths, Reeve resolutely places himself in opposition to traditional scholars: "Philosopher-Kings is a revisionist work, a work which casts the Republic in a new and heterodox light." (p. xii).

An additional aspect of Reeve's interpretive stance bears mention. His
approach to Plato is that of the analytical philosopher. He is a professor of philosophy and it is primarily for other philosophers that he writes (p. xii), although, while portions of the work will be tough sledding for non-philosophers, he hopes to attract a wider audience as well. The reader cannot but pause when Reeve claims that central elements of the scholarly consensus on the Republic are completely wrong. What appears to move Reeve is his desire to rescue Plato from an unspoken fifth interpretive myth, that the Republic is not a sophisticated philosophical composition, when assessed against contemporary standards. Reeve's self-consciously philosophical stance appears to lie behind his attempt to uncover a side of Plato that has not only gone unnoticed for hundreds of years but is also central to the argument of the work.

In discussing the work I will say something briefly about the interpretive myths before turning to the central argument.

Clearly, the four myths are a mixed lot. Leaving aside the rhetorical excesses of Reeve's specific accounts, I think it is fair to say that versions of all four are indeed interpretive orthodoxy among Plato scholars—to the extent that a consensus can be found within this deeply divided group. However, in three of the four cases, Reeve's presentation is forced. For instance, in his discussion of Book I, he attempts to demonstrate its integral connection with the rest of the work. On the whole, little in his discussion is surprising or original. The most original portions, his analysis of Thrasymachus' argument (pp. 10-22), strike me as incorrect. For instance, his reinterpretation of Thrasymachus' response to Clitophon, which has long puzzled commentators, leaves us with a view that amounts to a restatement of Clitophon's position—or at least presents no reason why Thrasymachus finds it necessary to reject Clitophon's suggestion (pp. 11-15, esp. 15). At the conclusion of his discussion of Book I, Reeve states that he has shown that "Book I is clearly a cohesive and intelligent component of the Republic as