A.G. Long (ed)  

*Plato and the Stoics* is a collection of articles that explores “the contribution of Plato’s dialogues to the intellectual life of the Stoa” (p. 1). Some of the chapters of the book were initially presented at two workshops in the School of Classics at the University of St Andrews in 2008 and 2009. The book is part of a new, though now already well established, interest in the interaction between Platonism and Stoicism and is a welcome addition to Bonazzi and Helmig’s *Platonic Stoicism—Stoic Platonism* (2007) and to Harte, McCabe, Sharples and Sheppard’s *Aristotle and the Stoics Reading Plato* (2010). As will be made clear from the following, the overall quality of the book is very good and the collection contains some excellent studies.

The first chapter is by Malcolm Schofield: ‘Cardinal virtues: a contested Socratic inheritance’ (pp. 11-28). S. focuses on the history of the four cardinal virtues (*phronēsis*, *sōphrosunê*, *andreia* and *dikaiosunê*) in the Stoa, looking at it from the perspective of the Socratic inheritance of the Stoics. The Stoics (or some of them) thought of themselves as Socrates, but since there has been several Socrates, depending on the author who staged him, there were also several ways to be Socratic. Or, at any rate, two: the Platonist and the Xenophontian. Zeno’s claim that the virtues are forms of *phronēsis*, as reported by Plutarch, reminds us of Plato’s Socrates’ account in the *Meno* and the *Phaedo*, where the three virtues of moderation, courage and justice are all forms of knowledge. Cleanthes, Zeno’s successor, took seemingly a more Xenophontian approach, having *enkrateia* as the leading virtue of the four and defining all virtues as forces. As to Chrysippus, he apparently reverted to a more Platonist approach, saying that virtues are all *epistemai*. Finally, S. suggests that Hecaton of Rhodes, a Stoic of the 11th century BC, may have wanted to re-incorporate some of Cleanthes’ Xenophontian approach, saying that a non-epistemic virtue (like health or strength of the soul) follows upon and is co-extensive with the epistemic virtue.

The next chapter, by G. Reydams-Schils (‘The Academy, the Stoics and Cicero on Plato’s *Timaeus*’, pp. 29-58) is one of the best in the volume. R.-S. offers us a meticulous and comprehensive revised account of the origin of Stoic physics and its alleged debt to the Old Academy. In his groundbreaking article ‘The origins of Stoic god’, published in 2002, D. Sedley had argued that Polemo, last head of the Academy before it turned sceptic (and also one of Zeno of Citium’s teachers), developed an interpretation of the *Timaeus* that anticipated Stoic physics. Other commentators, like J. Dillon, also aimed at demonstrating that the Old Academy had a similar approach to the first
principles as the Stoics. According to R.-S., however, “Dillon and Sedley (…) underestimate the complexities of the hermeneutics of rivalry and co-optation” (p. 29). There are, she says, “many features of the Old Academy’s metaphysics that have no counterpart in Stoicism” (idem). In particular, she points out that there are no indications that the successors of Plato at the Academy abandoned the transcendence of the first principles. As to Polemo’s physics, apart from Aetius’s report that he “declared god to be the kosmos”, our only source is to be found in Antiochus of Ascalon’s account (in Cicero’s Academica I 24-29). R-S.’s refreshing analysis of the latter shows (rather convincingly I must say) that the Stoic-like elements attributed there to the Old Academy are in all likelihood the results of retrojections on the part of Antiochus, and should therefore not be taken at face value.

Another very interesting study follows, by J. Bryan: ‘Chrysippus and Plato on the fragility of the head’ (pp. 59-79). B. is investigating how Chrysippus interpreted Plato’s teleological account of the head in Timaeus 74e1-75-c7. The case of the fragility of the head is part of Chrysippus’ account of providence and theodicy and B.’s study shows how he used this example as an illustration for his explanation of evils as ‘necessary concomitances’ of goods. Her analysis shows that the kind of necessity here involved has both an epistemic/ontological dimension (the idea that opposites like good and bad are interdependent) and a more physical or material one. Regarding the latter, she argues, following Sedley, and Johansen’s interpretations, that evils are not due to material necessity, but to ‘conditional necessity’: “It is not the case that matter qua matter resists intelligence, but rather that intelligence must work with the consequences of its own providential creative activities” (p. 74).

P. Scade’s ‘Plato and the Stoics on limits, parts and wholes’ (pp. 80-105) is concerned with the ontological status the Stoics granted to limits and argues that their account is reminiscent of Plato’s treatment in his Parmenides. I found Scade’s interpretation of Stoic limits very stimulating and his idea of distinguishing between two sorts of limits rather appealing. In short, he argues that while it is true that the Stoics, who saw matter as something continuous, could not grant the existence of limits in the atomistic sense, they nevertheless acknowledged the existence of limits at a less fundamental level, to account for the distinction between bodies. These, in Scade’s words, are objective and non-corporeal markers (p. 86). As to Scade’s evidences for the influence of the Parmenides, I must admit I found them too speculative and eventually unconvincing.

As the title of his article shows, ‘Subtexts, connections and open opposition’, A.G. Long is interested in mapping out the forms of the engagement of the Stoics with Plato. L’s approach is subtle and leads to clearly noteworthy results.