

to the Platonic doctrine. The insertion of considerations of a scientific nature into myths makes them more credible, but is not enough to make them into true discourses. Thus, the question of the relation in Plato between these myths and his philosophical doctrine remains open. Nevertheless, and although it is sometimes difficult to justify particular points in the myths, it is still true that we can note a great deal of coherence between what they recount and the ethical questions developed in the dialogues in which they appear.

In spite of this consistency, one observes an evolution in the way these myths are presented. In the *Gorgias*, the punishments inflicted on the soul by the gods are presented as intended to make the soul better. The idea of reincarnation plays no role here, but it is present in the *Phaedo*. In this dialogue, however, the question arises of how to harmonize reincarnation with post-mortem punishments which, because of it, no longer seem to be necessary. In the *Republic*, emphasis is placed instead on the role of individual responsibility in the process of reincarnation. The *Phaedrus* continues in this direction, but is characterized by its allusions to the theory of intelligible forms. In the *Timaeus*, by contrast, Plato abandons the theme of a way of life and that of the judgment of souls, for a vision of the process of reincarnation that is integrated, not without difficulty, within a cosmological vision. The *Laws* continue along this path.

This analysis shows that Plato evolved on questions of eschatology and penology, even if he did not radically change his mind. Yet there is one point on which he never varied: even if he did not establish precise frontiers between science and religion, Plato never thought his myths to be true discourses, but he always considered their capacity for ethical edification and their pedagogical value.

This work is clear and well structured. It is completed by a bibliography and a general index, is easy to read, and presents a genuine usefulness. One also notes, on the part of the author, a good overall knowledge of the whole of Greek literature, from the origins to the end of Antiquity. Nevertheless, three criticisms may be made: (1) This publication merely reproduces the format of his thesis, with all the lack of elegance that that entails; it may also be noted that the Ancient Greek type, in general well accentuated, is often poorly aligned and therefore badly printed. (2) More seriously, practically no work in a language other than English appears in the secondary literature; this is a genuine handicap. (3) Finally, and above all, the author should have asked himself more thoroughly what a myth means for Plato, and why Plato uses precisely this means for speaking about the soul and its peregrinations.

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Deborah Achtenberg. *Cognition of Value in Aristotle's Ethics: Promise of Enrichment, Threat of Destruction*. Albany: The State University of New York Press, 2002. Pp. xiii + 218. Paper, \$20.95.

Deborah Achtenberg argues that, for Aristotle, virtue is a disposition to respond to situations with the appropriate emotions, where emotions are understood as *perceptions of the value of particulars*. To perceive the value of a particular is to perceive that particular as a *limit*; some limits enable what they limit to be more fully what it is, while other limits do the opposite. My activity in writing this review, for example, is "limited" both by the rules of grammar and by my computer's tendency to crash frequently; one kind of limit enriches my activity, while the other hinders and threatens it (hence Achtenberg's subtitle). An enabling limit is a *telos* or end; something is a *telos* of yours if it connects you to a larger context that in some way fulfills or completes you.

Achtenberg's interpretation enables her to steer Aristotle clear of a number of persistent false dichotomies. For example: is the doctrine of the mean an uninspiring counsel to do the middling thing, or a vacuous counsel to do whatever one ought to do? Neither, says Achtenberg; rather, it is Aristotle's way of insisting on the *flexibility* of the virtuous person's

responses. Is Aristotle siding, then, with Odysseus, who suppressed his emotions in order to suit his actions to the demands of the occasion, as against Achilles, who stubbornly followed his emotions regardless of circumstance? No, that dichotomy falls as well: the virtuous person has flexible *emotional* (not just behavioral) responses, and so can be as adaptable as Odysseus yet as sincere as Achilles.

Does Aristotle's ethics have a metaphysical foundation, or is it autonomous? Achtenberg dissolves that dichotomy by distinguishing two different ways in which Aristotle takes ethics to be an "imprecise" science. First, ethics and metaphysics are *both* imprecise, because they share a common subject-matter (final causation) that is an *analogical equivocal* and so indefinable. Second, ethics is less precise than metaphysics because ethics can establish *that*, but not explain *why*, its claims are true. Metaphysics can explain the *why* of ethics, but for practical purposes the *why* is not necessary; so metaphysics is explanatorily but not epistemically prior to ethics.

How can Aristotle's particularist-sounding denial that the virtuous person needs rules be reconciled with his insistence that the virtuous person follows a *logos*? Must we play down the *logos* passage, or instead conclude that Aristotle is a rule-theorist after all? Once again, neither: in this context, Achtenberg suggests, *logos* means "analogy," not "rule." Since goodness is an analogical equivocal, perceiving goodness means perceiving analogies. Being transcategorical, these analogies are not definable or codifiable, so the rule-theorists are wrong; but we are grasping something *common* to all good things, so the particularists are wrong too.

Let me close with a couple of criticisms. Once the notion of an *enabling limit* has been established, Achtenberg seems to accept as unproblematic the inference to the legitimacy of paternalistic legislation: citizens are more free, not less, for being subjected to such coercion. Now on a view that regarded persons primarily as moral *patients* or *recipients*, it might be reasonable enough to elide in this way the difference between imposing limits on oneself and having them imposed by external compulsion; but it is harder to see how forcibly imposed limits could be constitutive of a life's being happier when happiness is defined, with Aristotle, as a self-generated *activity*.

I think Achtenberg also fails to catch one false dichotomy. She contrasts Aristotle's theory, which seeks to *increase* and *enhance* emotional awareness, with the Stoic theory (as represented by Marcus Aurelius), which seeks to *decrease* or *suppress* such awareness. The contrast seems to me misleading. *Both* Aristotle and the Stoics agree that moral maturation involves learning to pay more attention to some things and less to others (and thereby to enhance some desires and diminish others). And they both see the decreased attention, no less than the increased, as cognitive enhancement, since it is a response to genuine differences of importance in the world. (Where they differ is on the question of what those relative importances are.) Aristotle and Marcus can agree that we should train our emotions to respond to particulars not in their own solitary right but as parts of a significant whole. They would also agree, I think, that correct perception of a whole sometimes requires a relative decrease in one's awareness of some of its parts; to correctly perceive a painting as representing something, one may have to attend to a figure and *disattend* from its background.

Quibbles aside, Achtenberg makes a convincing case for a fresh and attractive reading of Aristotle's ethics. Both classical scholars and contemporary ethical theorists will read it with profit.

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