Recognition
Remembrance
&
Reality

Edited by
Mark L. McPherran
Recognition
Remembrance
&
Reality
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The essays included in this volume are revised versions of a selection of the papers presented at The Fourth Annual Arizona Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy: Plato’s Epistemology and Metaphysics, held February 19-21, 1999, on the campus of the University of Arizona in Tucson.

I regret that we are unable to provide a fuller record than this of our proceedings, but I trust the following selection of papers reflects the overall excellence of the conference. I also want to express my pleasure here that our meeting was such an intense and fruitful gathering of scholars of ancient philosophy in the welcome February warmth of the Arizona desert.

This volume is entitled Recognition, Remembrance, and Reality as a way of representing the Platonic affiliation of knower, knowledge, and the Known that unifies these essays by virtue of their common concern with that affiliation. Besides this general, surface unity, however, I trust readers will discern a number of deeper, common threads; in particular, an appreciation for the complexity of Plato’s texts and consequent problems of interpretation, and a desire to respond to Plato’s implicit invitation/provocation to take his texts as a perennial source of education and fruitful puzzlement in epistemology and metaphysics.

In the first essay, ‘Knowledge and Being in the Recollection Argument’, Lloyd P. Gerson reconsiders the logical structure of the Recollection Argument at Phaedo 72e3-78b3. Gerson takes as his particular

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Concern the argument’s premise that sensibles fall short of their Form with respect to sameness, showing how Plato attempts to demonstrate that a deficiency in sensible equals could not be affirmed by someone who compared them with a merely universal equality or with a notionally perfect paradigm. Rather, the judgment of deficiency could only be made by someone who had a previous cognition of a real entity that is ontologically prior to its instances or copies. And since in some cases of such recognition there is no evidence that the relevant cognition occurred incarnately, we must have previously existed discarnately. Gerson goes on to explore the identity of this ‘we’ — this discarnate self the argument presumes — and its connection to Plato’s view of philosophy as a practice for dying and being dead.

In the second essay, ‘Hesuchia, a Metaphysical Principle in Plato’s Moral Psychology’, Asli Gocer contends that scholars have regularly conflated the Socratic injunction to mind one’s own business (apragnosunie) with the Platonic edict to keep quiet (hesuchia echein) and thereby have accused Plato of advocating political quietism. In this paper, she argues that this conflation is misguided, and shows that hesuchia echein operates as a metaphysical principle in Platonic moral psychology. Like many of his medical contemporaries Plato seems to view hesuchia as a condition of health to which all living things aspire. Unlike them, however, he takes this condition to be reflective of god’s condition. Since Plato takes goodness to consist in becoming like god as much as humanly possible, Gocer concludes that hesuchia echein is paradoxically Plato’s most and least political admonition.

Mi-Kyoung Mitzi Lee, in her ‘Thinking and Perception in Plato’s Theaetetus’, argues that the Theaetetus contains not only a refutation of Protagorean relativism but also a diagnosis of the background assumptions which make it plausible: (A) thinking and having a belief are like perceiving, (B) perceiving is a kind of passive affection, and (C) a perception of some property F cannot occur apart from the F-itself. Focusing on these three assumptions, she then argues that Plato may have as his target not only Protagoras, but virtually all the Presocratics as well as himself. As she sees it, Plato rejects one model of thinking according to which it is essentially the same as perceiving. Plato then proposes a number of different models of thinking in the next section of the Theaetetus (including the wax block and the aviary) — models taken up by later philosophers like Aristotle and Epicurus. But, as Lee points out, Plato himself does not endorse any one of these — that he left for others to work out.
Mitchell Miller’s project in ‘Figure, Ratio, Form: Plato’s Five Mathematical Studies’, is to understand why Plato considered the five mathematical studies he has Socrates recommend in Republic VII to be so helpful in enabling the philosopher-to-be to turn from sensibles to Forms and the Good. Why does Socrates select arithmetic and calculation, plane geometry, solid geometry, astronomy and harmonic theory and why does he recommend that the study of them proceed in this definite sequence? Miller shows (i) how each shares with the others the power to turn the soul to a field of non-sensible objects, and so break the hold of our ordinary ‘trust’ in the sensible; (ii) how the middle three studies reconstruct the structure of the sensible world; (iii) how the interposition of the three geometrical studies between the first and the fifth provides an occasion for a reorientation of the philosopher-to-be’s understanding of number; and (iv) how the full sequence of the five is a series of purgations. Thus understood, the study of the five disciplines not only leads the soul to a mode of thinking that, in being purged of spatialization, stands ready for Forms, but it also invites a metaphysical question: Is it the case that, as figure is expressed in figured arrays of units and as ratio is expressed in figures, Form is expressed in ratios? Miller closes with a series of reflections on this possibility.

In ‘Forms, Fallacies, and the Purposes of Plato’s Parmenides’, Richard Patterson contends that the second part of the Parmenides contains too many deliberately unsound arguments for it to provide a series of true conclusions based on sound arguments. He argues instead that Part II has two main purposes: (i) to force us to think about issues central to Plato’s Platonism, partly by seeing how certain bad arguments could be fixed, and (ii) to give us practice in the forms of reasoning necessary for such an investigation. Patterson finds four main types of such reasoning to be illustrated, with each capable of being used to produce good or bad arguments at will. Although we may find in Part II a means of refuting some of Parmenides’ arguments in Part I, Patterson argues that this discovery does not address the underlying problems involved: we must also take into account Plato’s competitive motive (to top Zeno’s ‘Forty Arguments’) and his desire to turn virtuosity in argumentation to positive philosophical use.

My own contribution, ‘An Argument “Too Strange”: Parmenides 134c4-e8’, examines the second half of the ‘Greatest Aporia’ of the Parmenides (133a8-4e8), an argument which purports to show that the gods can neither know nor master sensible particulars such as ourselves. It is typically assumed by scholars that the entire Aporia is symmetrical, and badly so; that the same logical moves and fallacies constituting the first
half of the argument likewise constitute its second half. But in opposition to this trend, my paper offers a valid reconstruction and assessment of the second half according to which it is uniquely designed by Plato to force on its students the recognition of an important problem latent in both the metaphysics and epistemology of the Theory of Forms. In particular, I show how this problem centers on Plato’s commitment to the idea that knowledge is a *dunamis*.

Christopher Shields, in ‘The Logos of “Logos”: The Third Definition of the *Theaetetus*’, notes that the conclusion of that dialogue causes consternation. At the dialogue’s end, Plato considers his final account of knowledge (*epistēmē*) a promising proposal, according to which: $x$ is an instance of knowledge $\equiv_d x$ is (i) a judgment, (ii) $x$ is true, and (iii) $x$ is accompanied by an account (201c9-d1). But Plato rejects this ‘TJL’ proposal, and for reasons which, Shields argues, are problematic at best. Some of Plato’s expositors implicitly acknowledge this by seeking strategic reasons for his arguing incompletely; others evidently fail to appreciate the problems with his arguments, sometimes going so far as to endorse them as wholly successful. Shields argues that neither of these approaches is tenable. He shows that Plato’s treatment of TJL is insufficient, since it fails to take up the doctrine in its strongest possible formulation, and it even fails to undercut the weaker interpretations considered in any decisive way. Hence, Plato’s arguments against TJL ought not to dissuade its proponents.

In our concluding essay, ‘Images, Education, and Paradox in Plato’s *Republic*’, Nicholas D. Smith turns to the *Republic’s* curricula for the education of the future rulers of the Kallipolis. It would seem that Plato intended his work to serve to educate his readers. But, notes Smith, this observation raises the question of how well — if at all — Plato’s *Republic* would fit into the sorts of educational programs described within the work itself. He then surveys what Plato says about education in the *Republic*, and considers how our education, as Plato’s readers, may be seen to fit with the education provided to those who become philosopher-rulers. Smith finds that the question of ‘fit’ raises several interesting paradoxes, similar in kind to many others found by those who seek to apply what the *Republic* advocates to the work itself. He then closes with some remarks about why we find such paradoxes, explaining how they may be seen to be part of Plato’s educational program as a philosophical author.

The Colloquium was made possible through the efforts of many individuals. Particular thanks are owed to Julia Annas, Ann Hickman (the Department’s Administrative Assistant), Christopher Maloney
(Chair of the Department of Philosophy at Tucson), David Owen, Daniel Russell (the Colloquium Assistant), and the many commentators and session chairs. We were all particularly pleased with the work of those commentators and chairs who came from the ranks of the graduate students at Tucson: John Armstrong, Mark LeBar, Daniel Russell, and Jennifer Ryan. Finally, I owe a special debt of gratitude to Julia Annas and Nicholas Smith, who joined me in serving as this volume’s informal editorial committee.

We the authors are grateful to the Editorial Board of *APEIRON* — and Roger Shiner in particular — for affording us the opportunity to present the work of the conference. My thanks to every contributor, to Daniel Russell for his careful preparation of the indexes, and to Jennifer Reid, for all her support. I also wish to thank the University of Maine at Farmington and the University of Maine System for the award of a Trustee Professorship (1999-20), which allowed me the time to organize and prepare these essays, especially my own contribution.

Mark L. McPherran  
University of Maine at Farmington  
August, 1999
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