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Plato and the Power of Images. By Pierre Destrée and Radcliffe G. Edmonds III (ed.). Leiden: Brill 2017. Pp. 243.

Jana Schultz

Ruhr-Universität Bochum

jana.schultz@rub.de

In his *Republic*, Plato describes the power of images as something rather threatening. The cave analogy pictures images as more or less spellbinding us to ignorance. Furthermore, the imitating poets are banned from the ideal city because of the (potentially) disturbing effects of their poetical images. But, on the other hand, Plato presents his critique against images and imagination by using images. This is most obvious, of course, in the case of the cave analogy, but also the critique against poetry in books II-III and X is included in the project of imagining an ideal city in order to understand justice.

Pierre Destrée's and Radcliffe G. Edmond III's edited volume *Plato and the Power of Images* is dedicated to precisely this tension in Plato, namely the aiming at investigating what kind of power inhabits images according to Plato and what makes them simultaneously a potential harm for the soul and a useful (if not indispensable) element of philosophical investigations, the volume unites twelve contributions of international renowned scholars which examine different aspects of this general topic. The volume includes also an introduction by the editors, an *Index Locorum* and an *Index Thematicum* as well as detailed bibliographies accompanying each contribution.

The first two contributions examine the images of Socrates in Plato's *Symposium*. Andrew Ford focuses on the presentation of Socrates as a statue (an εἰκών) of a Silenus containing beautiful ἀγάλματα (215a6-b3). With regard to this image, Ford develops an interpretation of the difference between εἰκόνες and ἀγάλματα according to which εἰκόνες aim at likeness and ἀγάλματα at amazement. And while creating εἰκόνες of intelligible entities must necessarily fail, creating ἀγάλματα is an appropriate way to 'present' intelligible entities since amazement can lead to soul towards the divine. In a second step, Ford reads the image of the statue contain-

ing ἀγάλματα as an instruction for the reception of the *Symposium* itself: The readers are encouraged to search for the ἀγάλματα behind the εἰκόνες on the surface of the dialogue.

Elizabeth Belfiore's contribution centers on the claim in Alcibiades' speech according to which Socrates is special to such a degree that he cannot be compared to any other human being (221c3-6). The incomparableness of Socrates is shown by Plato's effort to picture what Socrates is not, that is, by the emphasis of Socrates as not being an image of a Homeric hero. Belfiore states that Socrates – instead of being pictured as having a likeness to some Homeric hero – is presented as a 'Reversed-Achilles' since he is described throughout the *Symposium* as contrary to the hero in his physical appearance, his inner qualities and his actions. This thesis is supported by a detailed and compelling analysis of the *Symposium* which reveals that even passages which don't include a direct reference to the *Ilias* contribute to the image of Socrates as the 'Reversed-Achilles', as, for instance, Socrates' staying awake at the end of the *Symposium* (223d8-12) stands in contrast to Achilles' falling asleep at the end of the *Ilias* (XXIV, 675-6).

The next two contributions offer different perspectives on the potential benefit and harm provided by beautiful images. Francisco Gonzales determines beautiful images as essentially ambivalent because they are simultaneously satisfying (and thereby bind the soul to the sensible) and unsatisfying (and thereby turn the soul towards the intelligible). The philosophers and the lovers of sights and sounds are both determined by a special relationship to beautiful images and therefore appear somewhat similar to each other, but the lovers of sights and sounds content themselves with the beautiful images, while the philosophers realize that the images point to a beauty which lies beyond them and long for this transcendent entity. These differ-

ent effects of the beautiful images – which are grounded in their ambivalence –explain why Plato on the one hand criticizes images as (potentially) harmful and on the other hand uses images as a means for philosophy.

Radcliff G. Edmonds III interprets the palinode of the *Phaedrus* – especially its reference to *agalmatophilia* (251a1-7) – as emblematizing a right and a wrong way of dealing with images. The image of the beloved as a statue shows that recollection is successful if reason follows the trace of the original – that is, the trace of the Form of beauty – which is contained in the image but unsuccessful if the soul regards the image as something to be enjoyed in itself and is thereby driven to sexual pleasure. Edmonds argues that these two ways of dealing with images are transferred to (beautiful) speeches in the second part of the dialogue. Phaedrus' admiration for Lysias' speech is misdirected in the same way as the love of a person who strives for sexual pleasures when seeing a beautiful body since Phaedrus treats the speech as something to be simply enjoyed instead of treating it as stimulation for further examination.

Christopher Moore's contribution examines the constitutive power of images by analyzing the importance of self-images for self-knowledge and for the improvement of one's own character. Moore shows by means of examples from the *Protagoras*, the *Charmides*, the *Alcibiades* and the *Phaedrus*[1] that self-knowledge is impossible without a self-image which does not actually create the self but constitutes it as a (potential) object of knowledge. Such a self-image – which is not the result of self-knowledge but its precondition – is necessarily incomplete but this incompleteness is unproblematic as long as the self-image encourages moral improvement. According to Moore, Plato tries therefore to offer images which encourage the recipients to picture themselves as imperfect beings with the

potential to become perfect. With this analysis, Moore provides a differentiated picture regarding the question of image and reality with regard to the self. The image is not just a more or less perfect representation of the self but also a paradigm in accordance with which the self is formed.

Gerd van Riel examines the relationship of images to the divine. He establishes the thesis that theology – according to Plato – is dependent on images of the divine while these images simultaneously block a direct comprehension of the gods. This thesis is connected to Van Riel's interpretation of the relationship of gods and humans in Plato according to which 'becoming like god' is not assimilation to a divine intellect but assimilation to god as the measure which is accomplished by the virtue of moderation.[2] Moderation implies the recognition of one's own cognitive limitations. Gods can be understood adequately only from a divine perspective which humans are unable to take. The images used in theology are therefore necessarily incomplete or even inadequate. Philosophy has to warn us not to confuse these images with truth while it is itself – when speaking about the gods – dependent on images.

The last six contributions of the volume are focused on images in the *Republic*. Grace Ledbetter offers an original explanation for the special appeal of the image of the cave in book VII (514a1-518d7)[3]. According to her interpretation, the cave-image is extraordinarily effective because it provides us with the feeling of ascending from the cave. This interpretation is based on the specific presentation of the cave-image which prompts Glaucon (and the readers) at each stage of the ascent to imagine what the prisoner thinks and how he feels. They are encouraged to identify with the prisoner who is freed from his bounds and ascends. Parallel to this imagined ascent to the Forms, Glaucon (and the readers) accomplish a 'real ascent' during the unfolding of the cave-image: While they start with a wrong concept of education as the implantation of knowledge in the soul, they end with the more accurate concept of turning the attention of the soul towards the intelligible.

Olivier Renaut's contribution focuses on the political images of the soul in the *Republic* and their power to constitute the 'rule of law'. According to Renaut, these images are part of Plato's rhetoric strategy which aims at justifying the rule of law before the non-philosophers. Images which encourage people to think about their souls as small cities should establish the idea of law as interchangeable with one's own reason which justifies the power law hold over each individual. Renaut emphasizes that the power of these political images of the soul is independent of their 'truth' in the sense of an adequate presentation of 'preceding' relations between political and psychological elements of reality. Plato uses these images rather with regard to their formative than with regard to their descriptive powers which means that these images create the entanglement of city and soul instead of just presenting them.

Alexander G. Long aims at showing by means of Socrates' use of images in the *Republic* that he is not presented as an 'incomplete' philosopher-king but as a law-giver and founder whose role is fundamentally different from the role of the philosopher-kings.[4] Long first compellingly shows that Socrates uses images in most cases not to grasp Forms (as the geometers) but to grasp something in the sensible realm, as the ship-image of the state is used to explain why experts are often despised by people who could profit from their expertise (488a7-489a2). In a second step, the author argues that the art of ruling which depends on philosophical knowledge is fundamentally different from the art of founding a city and of giving laws which de-

pends on the art of persuasion. Socrates' use of images in the *Republic* must be regarded in most cases as part of his art of persuasion and thereby does not reveal him as an 'incomplete' philosopher-king still sticking on the level of διανοία but as a law-giver and founder whose activities are necessarily different from the activities of the philosopher-kings.

Kathryn Morgan examines the image of the philosopher-king as a goat-stage in *Republic* VI (488a4-6). This image shows that the philosopher-king is seen – by the majority of people – as a hybrid, paradox and somehow unreal creature because it unites the philosophical and the political which are apparently incompatible. The idea of the philosopher-king as a monstrous creature in the eyes of the majority sheds light on the other political images in book VI which explain the difficult situation of philosophers in most cities. Furthermore, the image of the goat-stage points to the process of creating images. By presenting Socrates as the painter of the goat-stage it reveals the creation of images in philosophy as the collection and unification of (apparently) separated elements.

Penelope Murray's contribution analyses the connection of tyranny and poetry and the function of images in establishing this connection. Murray argues that the interdependence of tyranny and tragedy is revealed in the *Republic* mostly through the associative power of images. This power is independent from the author's intention and for this reason Murray is primarily interested in images as poetical means which create meaning on their own. She shows that – on the level of images – tragedy is crucial for understanding tyranny since the tyrant is pictured by Plato as a tragic figure which is enslaved by its own desires. Furthermore, tragedy is imagined as causing this enslavement so that tragedy helps to imagine both the origin and the constitution of tyranny. And the other way round,

tragedy is also made apprehensible by the picture of the tyrant since both – the tyrant and tragedy – are imagined to hide their confused inside by an (apparently) beautiful outside.

The volume closes with Douglas Cairns' examination of the image of the tripartite soul. He argues that the tripartite soul is not just explained by metaphors but that it is in itself a metaphor which Plato uses to explain the behavior of people. Cairns supports this thesis by a close analysis of Plato's description of the different degenerated characters in books VIII and IX. According to Cairns' interpretation, the whole talk about 'soul-parts' as personified agents interacting with each other, with the environment and with the person to which they belong, aims at making human behavior understandable to Socrates' interlocutors (and the readers) – who are regarded as the real agents – and to encouraging them to modify their behavior in the right way. With this approach, Cairns offers not only an interesting analysis of Plato's use of metaphors but also a challenge for interpretations which regard the 'soul-parts' as agent-like subjects.

All in all, Pierre Destrée and Radcliff G. Edmonds III provide with *Plato and the Power of Images* an excellent collection of papers which contain original insights and ideas and which will surely stimulate further discussions on the topic of images in Plato. What should be noted is that the volume – despite its quite general topic of images in Plato – is strongly focused on the middle dialogues, especially on the *Republic*, the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*. While six contributions are dedicated to images in the *Republic*, the volume contains just one contribution which put emphasizes on images in the early dialogues (Christopher Moore discusses self-images in the *Protagoras,* the *Charmides* and the *Alcibiades*) and one contribution which focuses on the late dialogues (Gerd van Riel examines the problem

of images in theology mainly with references to the *Theaetetus,* the *Timaios* and the *Laws*).

Of course – as the editors point out in the introduction –, the focus on the *Republic* can be justified because the dialogue is of special interest regarding the topic of images in Plato for it includes simultaneously the most famous images used in Plato's philosophy and Plato's most severe critique on images and the artists creating them. But given this focus it might nevertheless have been interesting to include one or two more contributions which center on the beginning of Plato's ambivalent approach to images in the early dialogues or its development in his later works. However, this is just a small point which shouldn't overshadow the high quality of the volume as a whole and of the particular contributions which make the volume recommendable for everyone interested in the topic of images in Plato.

NOTES

1   Christopher Moore offers a detailed analysis of self-knowledge in the *Charmides,* the *Alcibiades* and the *Phaedrus* also in *Socrates and Self-Knowledge*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2015.

2   This approach is connected to Gerd van Riel's thesis that Plato's god is not a transcendent intellect. Van Riel develops a detailed argumentation of this thesis also in *Plato's* Gods, Ashgate, Farnham 2013.

3   That the cave image continues until 518d is part of Ledbetter's argument. See 122-123.

4   Alexander G. Long discusses the difference between the art of ruling and the art of law-giving also in "The political art in Plato's Republic". In V. Harte and M. Lane (ed), Politeia *in Greek and Roman Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2013, 15-31.