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Why we write in Japanese: A brief introduction to recent Plato studies in Japan¹

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Plato is read and discussed all over the world. But most of the works on Plato known in the world are written in a few major European languages, in particular, English. We can see this in the activities of the IPS, given in five official languages, namely, English, French, German, Italian and Spanish. This language policy comes from a long history and tradition of Plato scholarship, but regrettably many works about Plato written in other languages remain unknown and mostly neglected.

Native speakers of the Japanese language are confined to the Japanese people, living in the Japanese islands. Although studying Japanese has become popular among East Asian countries, e.g. Korea and China, academic researchers of Western philosophy seldom study the Japanese language because of its notorious difficulty. Its unique writing system (with three types of letters, i.e. *hira-gana*, *kata-kana*, and *kanji*, that is, Chinese characters) is extremely challenging to learn, even for native speakers. Japanese cannot be easily read like Dutch or Portuguese, which can be guessed from their neighbouring languages. Therefore, when we Japanese scholars write in Japanese, we are aware that our scholarly literature is read only by ourselves.

One may suggest that Japanese scholars should write in English or one of the other major European languages, so as to be read in the international academic world. However, there are three reasons why we continue to use Japanese as the main language of Japanese scholarship.

First, education is given in Japanese in schools and universities in Japan. Whereas natural sciences attract more foreign students from Far-East and South-East Asian countries and use communication in English, the humanities are studied and taught mostly in Japanese, even at the major universities.

¹ The introduction has been written by Noburu Notomi and the review of Yutaka Maruhashi's book by Satoshi Ogihara.

Second, with 126 million people, Japan is proud of a high capacity of publication in Japanese. While academic books normally sell around one thousand copies per book, general-interest books on Greek philosophy often win popularity and sell over a few dozen thousand copies. Readers are not only specialists, but also ordinary citizens and students who hardly read books in English or French. So, the domestic market guarantees a reasonable sale for Japanese writers.

Third, many Japanese scholars have experiences of studying abroad, and they usually read academic works in European languages without difficulty. Nevertheless, it is not easy to express one's ideas properly in English, etc. Philosophy is by no means language-neutral, but deeply affected by each natural language: grammar, vocabulary, logic, and rhetoric, in one word, 'style'. The Japanese way of thinking is not automatically translatable to other languages, but we are proud of the rich styles of Japanese writing and thinking. Writing on Plato in Japanese must have some special aspects, which we wish to demonstrate to the world in the future in the major European languages.

Over the past one hundred years, Plato's dialogues have been translated several times from original Greek into Japanese. For example, the *Apology of Socrates* has more than ten translations, from Masaru KUBO's first edition in 1921 to my own in 2012, Il-Gong PARK's in 2017, and Ichiro KISHIMI's in 2018. Plato's *Apology* has been one of the most popular books of Western Philosophy in Japan.

Academic books and articles on Plato and other Greek philosophers are published every year. Both the Philosophical Association of Japan and the Classical Association of Japan issue two types of journals, one in Japanese and the other in European languages. Articles written in

English, French, and German are published in *Tetsugaku* (PAJ website) and in *JASCA* (CAJ), so they are accessible for foreigners, but articles in Japanese are hardly read outside Japan. We see many articles on Plato in these and other academic journals (see Luc Brisson's *Plato Bibliography*, for further information).

While academic papers are read within academia, many books are written for general readers. Here I introduce some books on Plato published in recent years, categorized in four types.

The first category is academic books, which are based on doctoral dissertations and often modified for a wider audience. They are usually published by university presses with a small number of copies. In addition to Yutaka MARUHASHI's book on the *Laws* in 2017, which is reviewed by Satoshi OGIHARA below, we have Ikko TANAKA's *Plato and Mimesis* (Kyoto University Press, Kyoto 2015, based on his doctoral dissertation submitted to Kyoto University) and Akira MIKAMI's *Mousikē in Plato's Republic* (Lithon, Tokyo 2016, based on his doctoral dissertation submitted to Tsukuba University). The former examines Plato's concept of *mimesis* in the *Republic*, *Sophist*, and *Timaeus*, and the latter discusses the concept of *mousikē* in the historical and cultural contexts of classical Athens by focusing on *The Republic*.

The second category is collections of articles by a single author or a team of contributors. *Between Immanence and Transcendence: A Festschrift in Honour of Shinro KATO on His Eighty-Eighth Birthday* (edited by Shigeki TSUCHIHASHI, Noburu NOTOMI, Yuji KURIHARA and Osamu KANAZAWA, Chisen-shokan, Tokyo 2015) contains sixteen chapters, of which seven deal with Plato's dialogues and discuss Kato's interpretations of Plato. Yuji KURIHARA's second book, *Plato on Public and Private* (Chisen-shokan, Tokyo 2016, with an English summary; the first book is *Plato on Forms*

and *Human Happiness*, Chisen-shokan, Tokyo 2013), consists of thirteen chapters, many of which were revised from his earlier papers. This original and excellent book examines Plato's early and middle dialogues, i.e. *Protagoras*, *Apology*, *Gorgias*, *Menexenus*, and *Republic* (the main focus), from the viewpoint of the ancient antithesis of public (*dēmosios*) and private (*idios*). Shigeki TSUCHIHASHI's *The Horizon of Living Well: Philosophical Papers on Plato and Aristotle* (Chisen-shokan, Tokyo 2016) includes his five earlier papers on Plato, namely *Lysis*, *Euthydemus*, *Hippias Major*, *Symposium* and *Menexenus*. Akihiro MATSUURA's *Plato's Later Dialectic: On the Unity and Plurality of Forms* (Shoyo-shobo, Kyoto 2018) focuses on the *Parmenides* and the Third Man Argument.

The third category is commentaries. Takashi YAMAMOTO's *The Symposium of Plato* (University of Tokyo Press, Tokyo 2016) is a unique contribution, which includes a Japanese translation with extensive commentary and notes on the *Symposium*. Although it is common that a translation of Plato's dialogues is accompanied by an introductory essay and footnotes, this monograph provides a full commentary and exegesis. It is meant for more advanced readers

who want to know Plato and his works in detail. On the other hand, it is a pity that this type of publication rarely appears, mainly because publishers face difficulties in sales.

Finally, the last category is culture books in pocket-size paperbacks featuring Plato. The most recent one is my own monograph, *Philosophy with Plato: Reading the Dialogues*, published in the series of Iwanami-shinsho (Iwanami, Tokyo 2015). This monograph is intended for students and ordinary people, and it introduces how we read Plato's dialogues philosophically. Each chapter focuses on one dialogue and starts with a citation of the key passage. Then, the comments and analysis of the passage invite readers to consider philosophical problems together with Plato. It analyses the *Gorgias*, *Apology*, *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Republic*, *Timaeus*, *Sophist* and the *Seventh Letter*. Iwanami-shinsho is the most popular paperback series in Japan on a variety of topics of culture and society (similar to the French Collection *Que sais-je?*). The series also includes Ninzui SAITO's beautiful monograph, *Plato* (1972), and Norio FUJISAWA's concise guidebook, *The Philosophy of Plato* (1997). My book is the third one in the series on the same philosopher, which shows how much Japanese people like Plato.

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Yutaka MARUHASHI, *The Rule of Law and the Philosophy of Dialogue: A Study in Plato's Dialogue Laws* (in Japanese), Kyoto University Press, Kyoto 2017. xiv + 443 + 25 (indices).

This is the first monograph ever written in Japanese on Plato's *Laws*. This dialogue has long been the focus of Professor Yutaka Maruhashi's study. His book is largely based on his doctoral thesis submitted to Kyoto University in 2004, which was mainly consisted of previously published papers. *The Rule of Law and the Philosophy of Dialogue* is unquestionably one of the

most important works written in the language on the *Laws*.

In Preface Maruhashi beautifully reports his pilgrimage to Crete, especially to Zeus' cave in Mt. Ide, that followed the paths of the characters in the dialogue.

Introductory Chapter (How to Read Plato's Dialogue *Laws*) has four sections: 1. The significance of the study in the *Laws*; 2. In search of the unity of Plato's political philosophy; 3. The structure of the *Laws* as a whole; and 4. The plan for this book. This chapter already and fully reveals the author's profound trust in Plato as a great philosopher. For Maruhashi, Plato penetrates into truths about humanity and the world, which we can learn by careful, unprejudiced reading of his texts. In particular, the *Laws* as well as the *Republic* presents his deep insights into political matters, grounded in his understanding of human nature, Maruhashi holds, and these insights constitute viable messages for the contemporary world in which liberalism is important (section 2). In section 3 the author shows how arguments in the *Laws* execute 'dialectical procedure', in which the question is raised, opinions and hypotheses put forward, and the conclusion reached. Here as well as below, limited space prevents me from covering all the important points that Maruhashi makes.

Chapter One (Plato's Political Philosophy and Socrates' Spirit) has four sections: 1. 'The rule of law' in ancient Athens; 2. Socrates' dialogue with 'the laws of the state' in the *Crito*; 3. 'The rule of law' and the idea of democracy; and 4. 'The rule of law' and the tasks for Plato's philosophy. In this chapter Maruhashi specifies three fundamental principles for political governance that are presented in the imaginary dialogue between Socrates and the Athenian laws in the *Crito*. First, the citizens ought to obey the laws. Second, the citizens have the right to ask for justification of the laws themselves, given

interpretations of them, and new legislations. And third, certain conditions should be met for securing agreement from the citizens. These conditions include the availability of occasions for joint deliberation. Maruhashi maintains that these fundamental principles continue to work, and require justification, in Plato's political philosophy.

Chapter Two (On the *aitia* of Action) has five sections: 1. Socrates' critique of *akrasia* in the *Protagoras*; 2. 'Civic virtues' as *aitiai* of action; 3. The significance of the introduction of the tripartite-soul theory; 4. 'Genuine virtue' as the *aitia* of action; and 5. Prospect: *akrasia* and its overcoming in the *Laws*. In this chapter when considering the 'aitia of action' in *Protagoras*, *Republic*, and *Laws*, Plato invariably discusses both civic virtues and wisdom, which is to ground them.

Chapter Three (Why Philosophy Can Influence Reality) has four sections: 1. What grounds the claim for philosophers' governance; 2. The background and the overview of the 'knowledge / *doxa*' theory in the *Republic*; 3. Knowledge and *doxa* as 'capacities (*dunameis*)'; and 4. The ground for the superiority of philosopher-kings in political practice. In this chapter Maruhashi concisely considers the *Republic*'s claim for philosophers' rule, to be contrasted with the case of the *Laws*.

Chapter Four (The Figure of 'a Puppet of the Gods') has four sections: 1. The myth of late Plato's pessimism; 2. An analysis of the figure of 'a puppet of the gods'; 3. Contrast with the tripartite-soul theory; and 4. Education to freedom in the *Laws*. In this chapter Maruhashi interestingly suggests that the Athenian's apparently pessimistic prospect of human moral development means to emphasize the indispensability of this development, and that the figure of the puppet suggests that we have to exercise

our intelligence on our own initiative if we do not want to be reduced to blind automata.

Chapter Five (The Logic of the Banishment of Poets) has four sections: 1. The starting point of Plato's critique of literature [in early dialogues]; 2. The composition of the *Republic* as a whole and the place of the critique of literature; 3. The critique of literature I [*Rep.* II-III]; and 4. The critique of literature II [*Rep.* V]. In this chapter Maruhashi overviews Plato's critical treatment of poetry in the *Republic*, to be compared with the case in the *Laws*.

Chapter Six ('The Most Beautiful Drama') has five sections: 1. Constitution and laws; 2. The third constitution [so mentioned in the *Laws*]; 3. The first constitution; 4. 'The second method of sailing' in the *Statesman*; and 5. The second constitution. In this chapter the author considers what he calls 'paradigmatism' in Plato's political philosophy in the *Laws* as well as in the *Republic* and *Statesman*. Generally speaking, paradigmaticism is, as I understand Maruhashi, the view that for a given topic one has to present the ideal in its purest form, and that even when one takes into consideration a certain set of realistic conditions, one still has to seek for the best possible form under those conditions.

Chapter Seven (The Birth of the Dionysian Chorus) has five sections: 1. Fight against desires and pleasures; 2. The essence and the purpose of *mousikē*; 3. The organization of three *chōroi*; 4. The use of drinking parties; and 5. The guardians of education. In this chapter Maruhashi carefully considers the topics specified by the titles of the sections, and claims that for the author of the *Laws* education through *mousikē* can only function if citizens at large continuously engage in philosophical inquiry.

Chapter Eight (Dialectic as an Art of Persuasion) has four sections: The prefaces to the laws and persuasive rhetoric; 2. *Prooimion*: the figure of 'free doctors'; 3. *Epōdē*: *choreia* and *muthos*;

and 4. *Dialogos*: dialogue with young atheists. In this chapter Maruhashi considers various, pervasive use of persuasion in the governance of Magnesia, and claims that its use should not be understood as paternalistic imposition of norms. The reason for this claim is that each citizen is supposed to engage in internal dialogue in the course of persuasion.

Chapter Nine (Therapeutic Education of the Soul) has four sections: 1. The principles of penal code; 2. Various kinds of ignorance, and *akrasia*; 3. <Ignorance> as the cause of crime; and 4. Punishment as therapeutic education of the soul. In this chapter Maruhashi identifies Plato's view, both intellectualist and 'philanthropic', that since injustice comes from ignorance, anyone can be cured of injustice if he/she comes to realize his/her ignorance through 'self-education'.

Chapter Ten ('The Nocturnal Council' and the Rule of Law) has four sections: 1. Where the issues are; 2. The circumstances of the introduction of 'the nocturnal council', and its members; 3. The proper tasks and the essential roles of 'the nocturnal council'; and 4. The guardians of the constitution. In this chapter Maruhashi curiously claims that Magnesia's treatment of religious dissidents does not violate the freedom of thought and belief. The reasons for this claim are that it aims to restore sound mind to the dissidents, and that in prison they can discuss with members of the Nocturnal Council, who provide them with most enlightened arguments for the orthodoxy. Maruhashi seems to have a unique conception of the freedom of thought. In what I take to be the usual conception, if a government grants citizens the freedom of thought and belief, this implies that atheists, for example, can remain atheists and be not imprisoned or executed for that. Magnesian atheists would enjoy no such freedom. Given this usual conception, Maruhashi would have been

consistent in his attempt to defend Magnesia's religious policies from liberal critiques if he had claimed instead that the freedom of thought was overvalued today. Anyway, Maruhashi concludes Chapter Ten by pointing out that Socratic examination familiar from Plato's early dialogues is incorporated as a key element in the decent public life conceived in the *Laws*.

Final Chapters (The Tasks for Philosophy in the Dialogue *Laws*) summarizes the foregoing discussions.

There are two appendices. The first (Love, Intelligence, and Freedom) is an engaged response to Georg Picht's *Platons Dialoge >>Nomoi<< und >>Symposion<<* (Klett, Stuttgart, 1990). It has three sections: A. For the revival of genuine philosophical spirit in the present age; B. The natural-philosophical account of constitutions in the *Laws*; and C. The truth of *amor Platonicus*, and for its renaissance. The second appendix is a review of K. Schöpsdau's translation of and the commentary on the *Laws*. The book also contains a detailed analysis of the *Laws*.

To conclude, Yutaka Maruhashi's *The Rule of Law and the Philosophy of Dialogue* is an excellent example both of sincere high-quality scholarship and engaged thoughtful reflection on Plato's *Laws* ever produced in Japan.