

Catalin Partenie and Tom Rockmore, editors, *Heidegger and Plato: Towards Dialogue* (Northwestern University Press, 2005), pp. xxviii + 234.

Though it is common knowledge that Heidegger wrote and lectured extensively on the history of ancient philosophy, it is uncommon to find a book devoted to the pairing of Heidegger and Plato rather than the more familiar pairings of Heidegger and the pre-Socratics or Heidegger and Aristotle. A book comprised of collected essays entitled *Heidegger and Plato: Towards Dialogue* may seem even more surprising since it is often taken to be the case that insofar as Heidegger is a reader of Plato at all, he is not a good reader of Plato. Thus, one might think that if, in fact, *anything* is going on between Heidegger and Plato, it is likely to be the former misreading the latter and unlikely to be something as mutually profitable as the term ‘dialogue’ would suggest.

In their brief, but useful, introduction to this collection of original essays, Partenie and Rockmore highlight both the complicated nature of Heidegger’s interpretation of Plato and offer a helpful survey of existing literature on the topic. After commenting that Heidegger’s views of Plato are “extremely complex,” they go on to claim that “a simple way to describe Heidegger’s reading of Plato might be to say that what began as an attempt to appropriate Plato (and through Plato a large portion of Western philosophy) finally ended in an estrangement from both Plato and Western philosophy” (xix). And though this simplification may turn out to be something of an oversimplification, it does announce to the reader a theme which recurs in several of the essays: much is made of the turn (*Kehre*) in Heidegger’s thought and how it affects/precipitates his changing interpretation of the history of ancient philosophy. The introduction also offers a helpful chronological synopsis of Heidegger’s relevant lectures and writings in an effort to summarize the trajectory of his evolving interpretation of Plato—early appropriation and later estrangement, according to Partenie and Rockmore. This template helps orient the reader to a very complicated issue within Heidegger’s complicated career, but runs the risk of suggesting that there is a clear consensus when it comes to interpreting Heidegger’s approach to Plato.

The ten essays in this volume are written mostly by scholars who work primarily within the field of contemporary philosophy (including Theodore Kisiel, Jacques Taminiaux and Johannes Fritsche), but also include several scholars who work predominantly among the ancients (including Enrico Berti and Partenie) and a few who straddle fields (such as Stanley Rosen). The first two essays focus on the implicit stamp of Plato’s legacy on Heidegger’s career rather than on his explicit writings on Plato. (Kisiel treats the specter of Plato that pervades Heidegger’s infamous rectoral address and Taminiaux looks at the legacy of Plato as it affects Heidegger’s reading of *Antigone*). The majority of the essays engage Heidegger’s direct comments on Plato. Several focus on Heidegger’s view of truth as it is presented in his analysis of Plato’s cave allegory (Michael Inwood, Enrico Berti, Maria del Carmen Paredes and Joseph Margolis). Fritsche traces Heidegger’s changing view of Plato throughout his famed turn. Rosen and Rockmore focus on elements of Heidegger’s philosophy that they believe suffer from Heidegger’s flawed readings of Plato. The contributors offer very diverse readings of Heidegger on Plato (in one essay, Heidegger is declared a metaphysical realist, in another

he is deemed a creative antirealist of sorts) and as is the case with many collected volumes, the stylistic quality and argumentative cogency vary from essay to essay. In places, the reader may wish for more documentation of certain views, where elsewhere copious footnotes highlight useful points and offer suggestions for further reading.

The volume, as a whole, is a very useful resource for those who would like to do further research on this topic, and the combination of essays itself should convince the reader that there is much to be gained from continued study. In addition to the clear introduction that provides helpful orientation, the volume offers several other indispensable features. Appendix 1 moves chronologically through Heidegger's career, listing Platonic texts and issues that occur in Heidegger's work during each year, as well as specific references that guide the reader to places in Heidegger's corpus where discussion of the text or issue can be found. Throughout the volume, references to Heidegger's work are given for the German text and, when possible, also for the English translation, and the bibliography of Heidegger texts is arranged so that an English speaker can easily find translations when they exist. Appendix 2 directs the reader, by category, to suggested further readings. The general bibliography is extensive and essential for anyone who wants an encyclopedic summary of the current literature on Heidegger's Plato. Newcomers to the topic will find a helpful sourcebook while seasoned scholars will want to be aware of the original scholarship that includes contributions from industry heavyweights.

This collection of essays does a nice job of highlighting a topic that deserves more attention, particularly in the English speaking academy—namely Heidegger's complex and changing interpretation of Plato's work. However, one might wonder if *Heidegger and Plato: Towards Dialogue* is quite the right title, since Plato isn't given much of a chance to participate in the exchange. The majority of essays take Heidegger to task for misappropriating or unfairly disparaging Plato for the sake of his own agenda. Consequently, ancient scholars may feel that this volume tells us a lot more about Heidegger's philosophy than it does about Plato's. A notable exception is Partenie's contribution, which gives us a glimpse of what it might mean for Heidegger and Plato to dialogue. Partenie argues that Heidegger's unique reading of Plato may help uncover a distinction in the Platonic text, namely that between authentic and inauthentic human existence, which merits attention both for readers of Plato and readers of Heidegger.

Still, certain readers might worry that the volume as a whole doesn't pay enough attention to the distinction between historical reconstruction and creative appropriation, with the result that it isn't clear on what basis Heidegger is being judged. For one could surely acknowledge that as a historical reconstructionist Heidegger doesn't get Plato "right" in certain places, while still maintaining that Heidegger's creative appropriation of Plato offers a rich resource in which we may find possibilities Plato himself never explicitly saw. One flaw of the collection may be that many of its contributions fault Heidegger for being a poor historian of Plato, while failing to address adequately the fact that this may not have been Heidegger's goal. Thus, readers likely to be disappointed are those who had hoped that, by moving Heidegger and Plato "towards dialogue," perhaps this work would do something to exonerate Heidegger from the familiar charge of

misusing Plato for his own purpose. Alas, these optimists will have to find a pardon for Heidegger elsewhere.

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