

question of the good and the heterogeneity of beings to explain why the mathematicians fail to arrive at a satisfactory answer to the question of knowledge. It is because Socrates understands the need to tie the theoretical to the practical that his way of living is circumscribed by the political; he lives and thinks in the polis.

Lastly, Stern's insistence that the dialogue is as close as we will ever get to receiving a written account from Socrates himself is not entirely plausible and it is not clear what can be gained from this assumption. It might be more useful to connect the fact that Plato denies being the author of the dialogue to the problem of knowledge, by revisiting Socrates' critique of writing in the *Phaedrus*. In particular, if Stern is right about the importance of this as Socrates' only quasi-written dialogue, then there should be implications for other dialogues that are not such, and for the corpus as a whole. *Knowledge and Politics in Plato's Theaetetus* is a stimulating and thought-provoking scholarly study, which should inspire both Plato scholars and students to undertake further investigation of that puzzling dialogue.

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*From Protagoras to Aristotle: Essays in Ancient Moral Philosophy.* By Heda Segvic. Edited by Myles Burnyeat with an introduction by Charles Brittain. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008. Pp. xvii + 196. \$45.00 (hardback). ISBN 978-0-691-13123-8.

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At the time of her premature death in 2003 Heda Segvic had published two papers and a book review. Five papers have been posthumously published. The present book collects these eight pieces. Myles Burnyeat, Segvic's widower, has edited the pieces, and Charles Brittain, a friend, has written a preface to the collection. Brittain's preface provides some biographical information and briefly, but helpfully discusses many of the pieces in relation to Segvic's philosophical and historical-philosophical interests and ambitions.

The collection can be read in at least two ways: as a set of independent if related pieces or, focusing on pieces one and three through six, as work progressing toward a unified account of a certain stretch of ancient ethical psychology. Segvic herself did not intend to publish the pieces as a collection. Instead, Brittain informs us, she had planned to write a book on Socratic intellectualism and a

monograph on Aristotle's theory of practical knowledge. Thus, understandably, the intentions behind the publication of the various pieces as a single book partly conform and partly do not conform to the intentions of the author of the pieces.

The collection is divided into three sets of three, three, and two pieces. I will discuss the contents of the more substantial pieces, the first six.<sup>1</sup>

Piece one, 'Protagoras' Political Art', argues that Protagoras, like Socrates, teaches an 'art of living' (26). The goal of this art is to empower its students (23) to 'shape the social and political life' of their times and places (25). Success in this political art requires understanding that humans 'construct their values' (16) and that the moral and religious beliefs of the communities in which the student has been raised do not have the status of 'objective...truth' (17).

This strikes me as a plausible interpretation of either the historical Protagoras' or the fictional Protagoras' ethical-political thought. It would be helpful if Segvic more carefully distinguished between the two or more explicitly defended the claim that the views of Plato's Protagoras are the same as the views of the historical Protagoras. Another problem is that Segvic does not adequately clarify how learning the ethical relativism that Protagoras teaches is conducive to the achievement of political power. One can speculate that, for example, the student would come to appreciate the function and force of social values, while in certain respects not feeling beholden to them; thus, the student would be empowered to manipulate these values in a self-serving way. Still, the reader should not be left to speculate here.

Piece two, 'Homer in Plato's *Protagoras*', argues that if we examine the contexts in Homer of allusions to Homer in Plato's *Protagoras*, we see that Plato employs these allusions in order to cast Protagoras, like Circe, as a sorcerer (*goês*) who threatens the psychological salvation of those who come under his influence. Socrates in turn emerges as endeavoring to liberate Hippocrates from 'Protagoras' grip' (45).

This seems to me a plausible explanation of the Homeric allusions. It is worth noting, however, that there appears to be some tension between Segvic's thesis here and her treatment of Protagoras in piece one. In piece one Segvic claims that 'it would certainly be wrong to think that Plato himself has portrayed the Sophist Protagoras...as deceptive' (23); but this is precisely what a *goês* is.

Piece three, 'No One Errs Willingly: The Meaning of Socratic Intellectualism', discusses Socratic intellectualism in Plato's early dialogues and argues that Socrates is introducing a conception of wanting that we 'occasionally grope for, and...that we need' (63). According to this conception, 'I (Socratically) want to  $\phi$  only if my wanting to  $\phi$  is linked to my recognition of the goodness of  $\phi$ -ing; if it is a mere coincidence that I believe that  $\phi$ -ing is the right thing to do and that  $\phi$ -ing in fact is the right thing to do, my wanting to  $\phi$  is not Socratic wanting' (55). Socratic wanting thus differs from the conception of desire for the good at *Meno*

<sup>1</sup> Piece seven is a review of Roger Crisp's translation of *Nicomachean Ethics*. Piece eight, 'Two or Three Things We Know about Socrates', is very brief.

77b6-78b2 where Socrates argues that we desire what we take to be good, since what we take to be good may not in fact be good. Granted this, it might seem that the Socratic conception of wanting cannot by itself explain Socratic intellectualism since one may recognize something as good, say, remaining faithful to one's spouse, but nonetheless commit adultery. The recognition of things as good or bad must therefore be understood in a more robust way. Such recognition, Segvic holds, must bespeak knowledge where knowledge is conceived as 'a stable overall condition of a well-functioning reason' (80). Such knowledge is virtue and 'certain desires and feelings are part of the knowledge that is virtue' (80). This robust conception of knowledge in turn depends upon a certain conception of the soul as unitary. The unity of the soul that Socrates envisages 'ties inextricably together the practical side of our nature—the desiderative, the emotional, and the volitional—with the supposedly non-practical side of us, namely the side that forms judgments and possesses knowledge' (79).

The interpretation of two passages among Plato's early dialogues is crucial for supporting Segvic's account: the denial of *akrasia* in *Protagoras* and the argument that orators and tyrants do not have power in their cities. Given the limited space available to me here, I must restrict myself to saying that I have published interpretations of the *Gorgias* and *Protagoras* arguments that differ from Segvic's.<sup>2</sup> That said, I can here point to the following problem for Segvic's interpretation of Socrates' denial of *akrasia*. Socrates' denial covers both knowledge- and belief-*akrasia*: 'no one willingly pursues bad things <that is, things one knows are bad> or things one thinks (*oietai*) are bad' (358c). In other words, Socrates maintains not only that one acts in accordance with one's knowledge of what is good, but also that one acts in accordance with one's mere belief of what is good. Socrates' commitment to this view, which is ignored in Segvic's discussion, jeopardizes her thesis, for it indicates that the denial of *akrasia* is not entirely explicable in terms of the robust, motivationally involved conception of knowledge she attributes to Socrates.

Piece four, 'Aristotle on the Varieties of Goodness', examines Aristotle's conception of goodness as Aristotle himself develops his view against Plato's conception of the Form of the Good and Eudoxus' ethical hedonism. Against Plato, Aristotle argues that the good must be practical, but that neither the Form of the Good nor goodness as a common character of all good things is practical. Against Eudoxus, Aristotle argues both that pleasure is heterogeneous and that in fact humans value many things besides pleasure. Finally, Segvic examines the relation between happiness (*eudaimonia*) and specific goods, focusing on Aristotle's claim at 1102a2-4 that happiness, understood as a good life, is the *aition tôn agathôn*. Segvic explains that 'practical reason gives unity to our various pursuits by introducing the standpoint of a life as a whole' (105). The full value of spe-

<sup>2</sup> 'The Ridiculousness of Being Overcome by Pleasure: *Protagoras* 352b1-358d4', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 31 (2006) 113-136; 'Rhetoric's Inadequate Means: *Gorgias* 466a4-468e5', *Classical Philology* 103 (2008) 109-134; *Trials of Reason*, Oxford University Press, 2008, 40-49, 51-59.

cific goods is, then, ‘determined by the place they occupy in this larger context and how they interact with other goods’ (105). In light of this, Segvic explains Aristotle’s three formal criteria for the highest good, finality, self-sufficiency, and choiceworthiness, and how happiness satisfies them.

I have two concerns. One pertains to the near complete absence of engagement with secondary literature on the subject of Aristotle’s conception of goodness. While I find most of what Segvic has written persuasive or at least incisive, I wonder how much of it is novel. I would have liked to see, if only in footnotes, her views situated in relation to some of the many treatments of these matters. My other concern pertains to Segvic’s engaging point that Plato’s and Eudoxus’ conceptions of the singular nature of goodness were perhaps misguidedly motivated by the desire to secure the objectivity of ethical value against Protagorean relativism. As an ethical pluralist, Aristotle shares something with Protagoras; yet Aristotle’s ethical pluralism does not sacrifice ethical objectivity (103). Granted this, I would have liked to see some expression of the limits of Aristotle’s ethical pluralism, including Aristotle’s conception of human nature as defining and determining those limits. Indeed, with respect to Aristotle’s ethical naturalism Segvic is almost completely silent in all three of her Aristotle pieces.

Piece five, ‘Aristotle’s Metaphysics of Action’, is a long and rich discussion of Aristotle’s conception of action, particularly ethical action. At the core of Aristotle’s conception is the concept of a *telos*. A *telos* is understood both subjectively, as that at which the agent aims in acting, and objectively, as the achievement of the action. Contrary not only to ‘many modern moral theories, but also...most ethical theories in antiquity’ (115), Aristotle regards both aspects of an action as ethically significant. Qua intentional object, a *telos* relates to desire and apparent goodness. We aim at what appears good to us. Moreover, appearances, whether resulting from reflection or mere impression or feeling, imply valuation (119). Thus, Aristotle does not hold the view that values are second-order desires. Subjective *telê* are, furthermore, symptomatic of a ‘larger motivational structure’ constitutive of the ‘kind of life the action is a part of’ (137). As such, an agent’s *telê* reflect his character. Finally, with regard to the objective aspect of a *telos*, for Aristotle, and contrary to Socrates, ‘successful ethical life requires achievement’ (139). Thus, good action requires both that the agent aim at the right goal and accomplish that at which he aims. Segvic proposes to call an action that achieves its goal a ‘third (that is, tertiary) actualization’ (139). Moreover, she explains Aristotle’s view that pleasure accompanies such action on the grounds that desire-satisfaction ‘usually involves pleasure’ (140).

Two quick critical points on this piece. Once again, I was surprised by the nature of Segvic’s engagement with the secondary literature. In particular, there are no references to David Charles’ *Aristotle’s Philosophy of Action* or Martha Nussbaum’s work. The second point is simply that it is difficult to square the importance that Segvic places on the concept of tertiary actuality with the fact that Aristotle himself does not explicitly identify any such thing. My suspicion is that what Segvic proposes as tertiary actuality is in fact secondary actuality and

that she has not adequately handled Aristotle's treatment of the latter.

Piece six, 'Deliberation and Choice in Aristotle', offers an account of these two crucial elements of practical reason and their relation. Deliberation (*bouleusis*) is the 'process of arriving at a choice <about what sorts of thing conduce to the good life in general>' (150, with the quotation of 1140a27-8 at 145). This process should not be understood as practical argumentation. A practical argument might be constructed in hindsight to justify or explain the deliberative process, but deliberation itself does not unfold in the manner of a practical syllogism. (Compare the distinction between the logic of inquiry and that of demonstration.) Furthermore, deliberation is not merely to be construed as instrumental reasoning, but also as reasoning that shapes one's desires about intrinsic or terminal goods. Thus, Segvic also characterizes deliberation as the 'effective determination of desire toward the right goal by means of reasoning' (146). Choice (*prohairesis*) results when deliberation brings desire and belief together in a conclusion. More precisely, my action is chosen if '(a) it is caused by my willing to  $\phi$  (where my willing to  $\phi$  involves a belief that my wishing to  $\phi$  will bring it about that I  $\phi$ ),<sup>3</sup> and (b) this willing to  $\phi$  is caused by deliberation' (162).<sup>4</sup> Finally, the practically wise person (*phronimos*) is 'the standard of ethical correctness', for he is 'someone who is as good as one can be at using his reason in modifying his desires, and in arriving at choices to act, with a view to living the best possible life' (166).

I have no critical remarks to make of piece six. It struck me as the most illuminating and thoughtful contribution of the collection.

On the whole, perhaps the most compelling idea to emerge from these essays is the emphasis on Protagorean relativism as a challenge in response to which both Plato or Socrates and Aristotle endeavored to formulate their ethical psychologies. It is a pity her research could not advance further, but what she leaves behind is of a high order, searching, inspiring, *spoudaion*.

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<sup>3</sup> One may wish for, but not will, states of affairs that one believes one cannot bring about.

<sup>4</sup> Segvic offers a still more precise definition in paragraph 2 of page 164 in response to a possible counter-example.