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The Virtue of Agency: Sōphrosunē and Self-Constitution in Classical Greece. By Christopher Moore. New York: Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. 408. $110 (hardback). ISBN-13 978-0197663509.

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With the exception of courage and maybe justice, virtues typically lack the narrative power and excitement of their corresponding vices. Temperance is a prime example. We would much rather read a story about or watch a YouTube video of someone acting outlandishly—throwing a drunken fit on a plane or engaging in lewd activities at the theater—than see someone being composed and decent (how boring!). Perhaps this is connected to the reductive way we think of temperance: a character trait that governs food, sex, and drink (see William Ian Miller. *The Mystery of Courage.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002, 7-8). However, the contemporary conception of temperance has its roots in the ancient virtue of σωφροσύνη, and while σωφροσύνη probably has never garnered the attention of the masses like its corresponding vice/s, Christopher Moore's admirable new book, *The Virtue of Agency: Sōphrosunē and Self-Constitution in Classical Greece*, demonstrates that it is a rich, complex, and interesting virtue—one that precludes reduction to being well-ordered with respect to food, sex, and drink, as temperance is treated today (see Moore's discussion on 18-20).

Indeed, Moore's book demonstrates just how nebulous and elusive a concept σωφροσύνη is. Its meaning ranges from self-control, self-mastery, self-knowledge, being sensible, inner agreement, inner harmony, being disciplined to being restrained. It has culturally specific meanings as well, such as female domesticity and political isolationism. This raises the question: What is the unique area of human excellence that σωφροσύνη picks out? Moore argues that it addresses the conflicts arising from having heterogeneous and conflicting ends. It is through σωφροσύνη that we can silence loud desires and pointless goals and instead pursue what we judge we ought to pursue (2). Moore argues that this makes σωφροσύνη the virtue of agency and self-constitution: when one sorts through these disparate and opposing desires and goals, one commits oneself to being a certain way.

Moore's method is to examine key examples of what people say about σωφροσύνη in the classical era and then to offer an analysis of it with the aim of finding a coherent line of meaning that runs throughout. However, Moore frequently traverses textual and philosophical rabbit holes as they are dug up. While these are often stimulating and of value, they make the book less reader-friendly, especially since these issues are often approached conjecturally.

Helen North's *Sophrosyne: Self-Knowledge and Self-Restraint in Greek Liter-*

ature (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966) is perhaps the closest to Moore's project. But besides being written over 50 years ago, there are critical differences in approach. Moore focuses more narrowly on the classical era and the direct uses of the term, while North examines σωφροσύνη from the archaic period to Augustine and interprets its meaning in non-direct uses of the term. Interpretively, the most significant difference is that Moore aims to find a unified concept underlying the various uses of σωφροσύνη, while North does not and thus, in the words of Moore, 'leaves unresolved what holds those usages together and what questions about the human condition talk of *sōphrosunē* was answering' (16; see also A. Rademaker. *Sophrosyne and the Rhetoric of Self-Restraint: Polysemy and Persuasive Use of an Ancient Greek Value Term.* Leiden: Brill, 2005).

The book comprises 13 chapters, an Epilogue on translating σωφροσύνη, an Epigraphical Appendix containing and translating all entries that include σωφροσύνη terms from the *Carmina Epigraphica Gracea*, and an extensive bibliography in addition to an Index Locorum and Index. After introducing the subject of the book in chapter 1, chapters 2 and 3 examine early uses of σωφροσύνη. Chapter 2 begins by arguing that the etymology of the word suggests that it means something like 'sound (or "safe") judgment', with 'sound' or 'safe' coming from the -*sō* element, and 'judgment' coming from the -*phro* element, which connects to having a φρήν, or 'seat of judgment' (32). Moore then unpacks and corroborates this account by looking at Homer, Theognis, Pindar, and Aeschylus. Chapter 3 analyzes Heraclitus' claims that σωφροσύνη is the 'greatest virtue' and is connected to self-knowledge. Chapter 4 turns to Euripides, and chapter 5 discusses Critias, Antiphon, Thucydides, and Democritus of Abdera. Chapters 6-7 examine Socrates' account of σωφροσύνη. The former includes discussions of Socrates in old comedy, Antisthenes, Stobaeus, and the *Alcibiades*, and the latter focuses on Socrates in Xenophon. Of particular note is the discussion of Xenophon's distinction between σωφροσύνη and self-control (ἐγκράτεια), which anticipates Aristotle's more complex moral psychology.

Chapters 8-10 are devoted to Plato, with chapter 8 focusing on the *Phaedo*, *Protagoras*, and the *Gorgias*, chapter 9 focusing on the *Republic* and *Charmides*, and chapter 10 focusing on the *Statesman* and the *Laws*. In each of these works, Plato has characters defend the importance and breadth of σωφροσύνη. However, the broader it becomes, the more difficult it can be to distinguish it from other virtues. Notoriously, for instance, the *Republic*'s description of σωφροσύνη and justice seem to amount to the same thing: Σωφροσύνη is described as an agreement between the parts that the wise should rule, and justice is described as one doing one's own thing and not meddling in the affairs of others. Moore speculates that perhaps 'justice tells you to do your own thing; *sōphrosunē* tells you that sometimes you need to take guidance from or give guidance to others. So justice allows a community of independent and mutually respectful citizens; *sōphrosunē* allows those independent and mutually respectful citizens nevertheless to work together as a community' (224). But Moore's larger point is that the ambiguity reveals that, for Plato, both virtues share scope and importance, and thus we should not see justice as being more outwardly directed or σωφροσύνη as being more inwardly directed (225).

In the *Laws*, the puzzle is not so much how to tell the difference between σωφροσύνη and justice, but how to tease apart σωφροσύνη and wisdom. Part of this question hinges on how to understand the Athenian Visitor's ranking of virtues at i 631c-d: 'Now, the one that is first and leader of the divine goods is φρόνησις, second μετὰ νοῦ[ν] is a σώφρων state of the soul; from these, mixed with courage, would be the third, justice; and fourth is courage' (Moore trans. 243). Depending on which manuscript tradition one follows, the text reads either νοῦ (genitive), meaning: 'with mind, is a σώφρων state of the soul', or it reads νοῦν (accusative), meaning: 'following mind, is a σώφρων state of the soul'. The former takes the σώφρων state of the soul only to be second best when it includes mind, while the latter treats it alone as second best. As Moore puts the issue: '[I]s *sōphrosunē* a virtue of agency, or only the raw material for such a virtue? Is it more like reason itself, or is it more like self-mastery and endurance?' (245). While the genitive version is the dominant interpretation, Moore convincingly argues that there are strong reasons for the accusative version, and the reasons in favor of the genitive version are not as powerful as they might first seem (243-254). So, if the accusative reading of σωφροσύνη is a virtue of agency and contains elements of reasoning, then how might we understand the difference between it and φρόνησις? In his analysis of the puppet metaphor, Moore suggests that φρόνησις determines what to do, while σωφροσύνη is the capacity to follow reason (256).

In chapter 11, Moore critically examines Aristotle's innovative account of σωφροσύνη. Aristotle is careful to distinguish σωφροσύνη from self-control (ἐγκράτεια), a sense of shame (αἰδώς), natural σωφροσύνη, and practical wisdom (φρόνησις). For Aristotle, σωφροσύνη is quite narrow: this virtue and its associated vices ('self-indulgence'/ἀκολασία and 'insensibility'/ἀναισθησία) relate to the sense of touch shared with animals, namely, food, sex, and drink. This means that someone who reads too many books, watches too many movies, smells too many sweet smells, or even enjoys too many warm soaks in a tub, would not suffer from the related vice of 'self-indulgence' (ἀκολασία). In perhaps the most philosophical part of the book, Moore argues that, while Aristotle's account is original, it ultimately fails to 'save the appearances, either of the common Greek speaker or the theorist of the virtues' (280). For instance, Aristotle identifies the pleasures of food, sex, and drink with touch, but is this really the case? Take, for instance, drinking. The pleasure of drinking is of 'quenching' (i.e., moistening of what is dry), but does this count as touch (271)? Additionally, as Moore points out, '[N]obody chastises others as undisciplined for drinking too much water or milk; but even if they were to do so, excessive hydration is not what *akolasia and sōphrosunē* pertain to. What gets chastised is alcoholic drunkenness that leads to rowdiness or dissipation' (271). While

Aristotle's account of σωφροσύνη has modern admirers and seems to capture our account of temperance, Moore cogently demonstrates what is lost in his reduction. Given Aristotle's taxonomical project of neatly carving up virtues and avoiding overlap, narrowing the scope of σωφροσύνη was inevitable, but reducing it to touch shared with animals leaves out core aspects of the virtue and the related vices.

Chapters 12 and 13 turn to lesser-known works. Chapter 12 examines Aristoxenus' writing on Pythagorean views of σωφροσύνη. Chapter 13 leaves the classical period and examines the issue of whether this is a gendered virtue. Moore tackles this issue by analyzing both *On Women's Sōphrosunē*, which is attributed to Phinty, and Iamblichus' letter to a woman named Arete. Moore's discussion of Phinty's is particularly illuminating in how it raises key questions about the ethical status of this virtue: does Phinty's endorsement of this virtue support the submissiveness of women and thereby deny agency, or is it an expression of a women's agency within their social sphere?

In the Epilogue, Moore examines how we should translate σωφροσύνη. He prefaces the Epilogue by clarifying that he is not prescribing more σωφροσύνη for the contemporary world, but rather he is describing it, and this 'thereby allows us to see our ethical lives through the schema of *sōphrosunē*; it is then up to us to decide whether that helps' (336). Older translations include 'virtue', 'wisdom', and 'chaste'. The first two fail to distinguish σωφροσύνη from other virtues, while the last is overly sexualized to be appropriate (337). Today, common translations include 'temperance' and 'moderation', but both of these are misleading: the former's historical connection to alcohol laws colors its meaning, while the latter is problematic for students of Greek since it suggests a *metr*- word, and for translations of Aristotle, seems to capture the 'golden mean' rather than a unique virtue. Additionally, both terms are not aspirational and active enough to capture the meaning of σωφροσύνη (338). 'Self-control' is another option, but among other reasons, the problem with this is that it better captures ἐγκράτεια.

Moore and his colleague Christopher C. Raymond arrive at 'discipline' as the appropriate translation for four reasons. Like σωφροσύνη, (1) it is a highly desirable trait; (2) it involves sorting through various desires and aims in working toward one's goals; (3) It has both an intellectual and non-intellectual flavor; and (4) it can be ambiguous between a good quality involving autonomous judgment and a bad quality of mere social conformity (339-340). While Moore himself is not interested in engaging in contemporary debates about the need for σωφροσύνη, it strikes me that if 'discipline' had been the common translation, σωφροσύνη's place in the contemporary catalog of virtues would have fared better. I began this review by contrasting the excitement and complexity of courage with that of temperance. Though discipline perhaps cannot rival courage in terms of narrative power, it is far more captivating than temperance (see Moore 18-20). And if we understand σωφροσύνη as Moore wants us to—that is, as the virtue of agency and self-constitution—then his reluctance to advocate for its place in contemporary life is too restrained: agency and self-constitution clearly have a place in present-day ethics, even if we do not understand these features in exactly the same way as the Greeks.

Moore's book is an invaluable resource for studying σωφροσύνη. In addition to offering a novel thesis about the virtue, it raises many fascinating questions and provides ample references to primary and secondary texts. Knowledge of the Greek language is not a prerequisite for reading this book or utilizing it as a tool, but it will be necessary for critical engagement with many of Moore's arguments, as they often involve philological considerations. Accordingly, the book will be of most use to classicists and scholars of ancient philosophy, and for studies of σωφροσύνη it will be an essential resource.

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