

Book Reviews

Julia Annas. *Virtue and law in Plato and beyond*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. vi + 234. \$45.00.

About Plato's *Laws*, Aristotle rather uninspiringly wrote, "Most of the *Laws* consists, in fact, of laws, and [Plato] has said little about the constitution. He wishes to make it more generally attainable [κοινωτέραν] by actual city-states, yet he gradually turns it back towards the *Republic*" (*Politics* 2.6, 1265a1–4). Julia Annas's new volume seeks to counter such dismissive interpretations of Plato's *Laws*. Rather than view the work as Plato's final written dialogue, written by a crabby, old, pessimistic author, she argues that "the *Laws* presents us with a remarkably fresh and original approach to social and political issues" (2–3), one grounded in views about law-abidingness and cosmic law which is novel in the Platonic corpus. Annas, the author of several landmark works in ancient Greek ethical and political thought, makes a very persuasive case for a rich interpretation of Plato's *Laws*, an interpretation that she further connects to Stoic natural law (in the works of Cicero) and Jewish divine law (in the works of Philo of Alexandria).

Although Annas's book is divided into ten chapters, to my mind the book is composed of three parts. Following a first introductory chapter, chapters 2 and 3 probe the relationship between the *Republic* and the *Laws* with respect to Annas's target subject of law-abidingness. Therein, her thesis is that what most importantly distinguishes the *Laws* from the *Republic* is the former's concern with "the specific and explicit role of conscious commitment to strict and unquestioning obedience to the laws" (4). The second part of the book, chapters 4 through 6, shows how, in the *Laws*, Plato thinks that law-abidingness can be grounded in a peculiar mix of both Athenian and Spartan institutional arrangements. The third and final part of the book, chapters 7 and 8 (followed by a brief concluding chapter), explores the reception of the notion of law-abidingness in three post-Platonic traditions: in Aristotle, who largely omits such a notion in his *Politics*; in Cicero, who extends such a notion both universally (in Stoic natural law) and specifically for the Roman Republic (in his *De legibus*); and finally, in Philo of Alexandria, who also extends such a notion universally (as the laws of God) and specifically for the people of the Torah.

The first part of the book aims to correct the (mistaken) notion that, whereas the *Republic* advocates the untrammled ruling of philosopher kings, accountable only to themselves, the *Laws* advocates a "second best" constitutional rule of law. Annas provides ample evidence to show that the notion of law pervades much of the *Republic* and that more generally, the *Republic* and the *Laws* share the same goal, namely, that of discerning "how a city might best be run and individually how a person might best live their own life" (*Laws* 702a7–b1). Rather, the correct contrast to draw is that the *Laws* focuses on the political (rather than philosophical) education of its citizens, their legal institutions, and their religious framework (such as the account of god and public religion in book 10) that produce a mindset of strict obedience to the law. The second part of the book examines such aspects of Magnesia, the imaginary city described in the *Laws*, and argues that they are viewed as equally the result of superlative Athenian and Spartan institutions, while at the same time avoiding the deficiencies of both city-states (37). For instance, whereas justice is the central virtue of the *Republic*, moderation (σωφροσύνη) is the central virtue of the *Laws*, one which,

as we see in Thucydides's *History of the Peloponnesian Wars*, is equally attributable to both Athenians (according to Pericles's funeral oration [II.39–40]) and Spartans (according to their Corinthian allies [I.68, 84]).

The third and final part of Annas's book traces the development and reception of law-abidingness in the Stoic and Jewish traditions. She points out that, although Plato "rejects the idea of a law expressing or based on nature," nonetheless "there is a real similarity between the *Laws's* position and that of the Stoics, in that both take law to exist objectively and independently of what states actually institute, both define law in terms of reason, and both think that existing laws have ethical authority only to the extent that they embody what is really law" (138). Whereas chapter 8 develops such similarities as are found in Cicero's unfinished (but clearly Platonically inspired) *De legibus*, chapter 9 develops similar comparisons in the works of Philo of Alexandria. Although Annas makes a powerful case for finding echoes of Plato's *Laws* in both subsequent traditions, my only question is whether she finds the same transmission of ideas to the Islamic tradition, perhaps especially in the writings of the tenth-century jurist and philosopher Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī. However, asking for one additional chapter in Annas's volume does not undermine the accomplishment of the impressive and well-written ten chapters she has provided us.

THORNTON C. LOCKWOOD

Quinnipiac University

Cinzia Arruzza. *A Wolf in the City: Tyranny and the Tyrant in Plato's Republic*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. Pp. xi + 296. Cloth, \$74.00.

In this excellent book, Cinzia Arruzza offers the first book-length study of Plato's prominent treatment, in the *Republic*, of tyranny and the tyrannical character type. The book is divided into two parts of roughly equal length, entitled "Tyranny and Democracy" and "The Tyrant's Soul," each subdivided into three chapters. Part I focuses on Plato's political thought, and Part II on his moral psychology. Although the two parts could be read independently, Arruzza insists, rightly, that they inform and enhance each other, and are best read together. This reflects her conviction that the psychological and political strands in the *Republic* are inextricably intertwined.

Arruzza's main claims in Part I are that Plato's detailed depictions of tyranny and the tyrant in *Republic* 9 (i) represent an amalgam of well-established literary tropes, not a critique of some specific historical individual or regime, and (ii) are best understood as part of his attack on democracy. Both claims are grounded in the idea, defended in chapter 1, that common depictions of tyranny in (primarily fifth-century) Greek literature played an important role in shaping democratic self-understanding. Specifically, Arruzza argues, negative literary depictions of tyranny served as a kind of "inverted mirror" in which democrats might "contemplate the key features of democratic practice by way of opposition" (9). Plato's key move in the *Republic*, Arruzza maintains, was to unsettle democrats' use of tyranny as an inverted mirror by identifying as the opposite of tyranny, not democracy, but rather a society ruled by philosophers. Indeed, Plato goes further: democracy is not only *not* the opposite of tyranny, but also tyranny's natural progenitor—both because a regime ruled by popular opinion will be susceptible to capture by a demagogue, and also because democracy's valorization of freedom (understood merely as lack of constraint) and characteristic hedonism naturally lead people to aspire to the tyrant's life.

Arruzza's claims here are original, well defended, and plausible. Her interpretation also explains some features of the *Republic* that have puzzled or frustrated interpreters: Plato's stereotypical and exaggerated depiction of the tyrant; his portrait's failure to align with any particular historical figure; his low ranking of democracy among corrupt regimes; and his claim that tyranny naturally "grows" out of democracy. The book's first part also nicely illustrates two general features of Arruzza's approach to Plato. The first is her focus