

message outweighs many-fold the very minor defects of its delivery. Philosophy is still an attempt to leave the cave, not the "joyless quest for joy."

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In Defense of Plato. By RONALD B. LEVINSON. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953. Pp. xii, 674. \$7.50.)

This is one of the most useful books on Plato ever written, eminently readable and learned. Its one great limitation is succinctly stated in the title and spelled out on p. 499: "In the preceding chapters the order and substance of our argument was largely determined, as must always be true for the defender, by the tactics of the attackers." The immediacy of a new vision of Plato is lacking; his image is always refracted through innumerable charges and rebuttals. Even in the long chapters "Outlook on Sex and Marriage" (over 50 pages) and "Was Plato an Abnormal Personality?" (over 100), the book approximates an encyclopedia more than a full-length portrait. This impression is further heightened by sixteen appendices which allow the author to pursue every subject that interests him, uncramped by any over-all outline. One result is that this is a very rich book indeed. The last and longest appendix, for example, deals with "Socrates and the Origins of Plato's Thought." A Bibliography, an Index of Persons, and a good Index of Subjects make the book doubly helpful.

Professor Levinson, Chairman of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Maine, answers such critics of Plato as J. J. Chapman, Warner Fite, A. D. Winspear, Toynbee, R. H. S. Crossman, and Karl Popper. Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies* had made a particularly great impression — partly because some of his own ideas, developed in the later part of the book, are of unusual interest, and partly because a naive conception of Plato as really a democrat had lorded it too long. Popper's methods, however, were widely considered indefensible and his picture of Plato, though head and shoulders above his ignorant distortion of Hegel, provoked many a demand for a good defense of Plato. Now those prone to fall under Popper's spell can be referred to Levinson.

Plato's critics, however, were far from completely wrong. And

near the beginning of Levinson's Chapter 9, "Was Plato a Totalitarian?" we encounter two long and involved sentences in which it is admitted that Plato was a totalitarian according to the definitions of that word offered by Webster, and by Sabine in his *History of Political Theory*. After that, the chapter continues for another seventy-nine pages in defense of Plato.

The student of Plato, however, should face up to two fascinating paradoxes. In the first place, it is an important part of education to expose people to what is strange, to let them suffer the shock of this exposure, and to break down their narrow horizons. And an educated man should be able to confront a strange view without any compulsion to attack or defend it, with the ability to profit from it. This conception of education is not primordial but can be dated. Its first great proponent was Socrates, and its first great literary representative was Plato, whose dialogues breathe this spirit. Nevertheless, this spirit has no place either in the ideal city described in the *Republic* or in the best possible city described in the *Laws*. And the one criticism of these dialogues which is certainly not unfair, which does not depend on external standards, and which Plato himself would have had to take very seriously, is that neither city could produce or harbor a Socrates. Popper saw this but vitiated this criticism by contaminating it with an elaborate, highly speculative and implausible psychological theory, contending that it was Plato's deliberate and malicious intent to betray his master.

In fact — and this takes us to the second paradox — Plato's totalitarianism was, ironically, due to the fact that he was, in one sense of the word, too democratic: he was too concerned with the mass of men, too little with the élite, the men like Socrates. This point may be sharpened by considering the one plea for free inquiry which approximates the eloquence of the Socratic *Apology*: Milton's *Areopagitica*. Milton's uncompromising opposition to any censorship, expressly including Plato's, depends on the thesis that "God sure esteems the growth and compleating of one vertuous person, more than the restraint of ten vitious." Let the mass of men go to hell, as Calvin had taught that they would in any case; what matters is the creation of those conditions under which exceptional men can develop, and this involves the abolition of restraints.

Plato's totalitarianism, like that of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor in *The Brothers Karamazov*, goes hand in hand with his concern for the greatest possible happiness of the greatest possible number. He

recognizes three kinds of men and wishes to make all of them happy and virtuous — but even his élite is several notches below men like Socrates and Milton. The truly excellent must be exiled, as the great original poets are exiled in the *Republic*, or put to death as free-thinkers are in the *Laws*.

But to return to our first paradox: any attempt to tone down Plato's radicalism, as if he was not so far after all from what we have believed all along, betrays the spirit of Plato's dialogues almost as much as the allegation of wicked motives. We should welcome exposure to views which are radically different from our own, get a better grasp of the underlying problems, and rethink our unexamined assumptions as well as Plato's. Must Levinson prove that Plato is no security risk before we can learn from him? Does higher learning consist of agreement with those who can teach us? It is not Plato's least value that he proves so well how much we can learn from a man without agreeing with him and that unacceptable views do not prevent a man from being a superb teacher.

In sum, this is as good a book "In Defense of Plato" as we are likely to get, but no such defense can do justice to Plato. Now that his slanderers have been answered, let someone write as unapologetic an essay as the Socratic *Apology*, resting his case not on rebuttal but on positive claims transcending the plane of agreement and disagreement. Let it be said that Plato was one of mankind's greatest benefactors because, like Socrates, his master, he is an immortal gadfly.

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Plato's Modern Enemies and the Theory of Natural Law. By JOHN WILD. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953. Pp. 259. \$5.50.)

Professor Wild, well known by his previous studies of Plato, has attempted to do two things in his most recent work. First, he seeks to defend Plato against what he calls misunderstandings and misinterpretations of basic Platonic concepts as expressed in some critical analyses of Plato in recent years. In particular, he concentrates on Warner Fite's *The Platonic Legend* (1934), R. H. S. Crossman's *Plato Today* (1937), A. D. Winspear's *The Genesis of Plato's*