

him up (156). The lack of specificity applied to the individual identities of the combatants allows viewers to make what they will of the death around them, Are the corpses one of their own or of enemies? Distant ancestors or contemporary friends? (189). Clifford's book is a challenging and inspiring read: a lesson in how we might grapple with the difficulty of showing and knowing antiquity.

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Philosophy

David Horan has gifted us all with the publication of a new translation of the dialogues of Plato.¹ The beautiful two-volume edition is the culmination of a monumental sixteen-year effort. It collects thirty-two dialogues and all the letters attributed to Plato, with a foreword by Professor John Dillon and a brief, beautiful, and fitting introduction by Horan. The list of dialogues includes all those considered authentic, as well as some of disputed authenticity, including *Cleitophon*, both *Alcibiades* dialogues, both *Hippias* dialogues, *Minos*, and *Epinomis*. The only thing that I missed in the printed edition was more space in the margins for the many marginalia that I intend to add.

Horan joins a very select list of individuals that have taken upon themselves the daunting task of translating all of Plato's dialogues and, as Dillon points out, 'not since the great enterprise of Benjamin Jowett, in the late nineteenth century (first edition in 1871, to be exact), has a single individual, to my knowledge, taken on the challenge of translating the whole corpus single-handed into English' (8). Both Dillon and Horan, of course, are quick to acknowledge that this achievement received many helping hands from fellow scholars, editors, friends, and funders. Still, readers used to collected translations such as Cooper & Hutchinson's² will quickly notice the difference (and many advantages) when jumping from one dialogue to another and finding the same style and principles of translation applied across them. Moreover, the Foundation for Platonic Studies, which funded the publication of the printed volumes, also gives free access to all preprints of the translation on its website (www.platonicfoundation.org/translation/) – no doubt an unmatched resource for students and teachers.

According to Horan, his overall aim is captured by the motto 'to move the reader toward Plato rather than leaving the reader in peace by adjusting the writings of Plato' (25). In this way, he departs from traditional renderings of specific well-known terms. For example, instead of translating *aretē* as 'virtue', he chooses 'excellence', for *technē* he

¹ *The Dialogues of Plato: A New Translation*, 2 vols. By David Horan, Cork, Gandon Editions Kinsale, 2025. Pp. 1,318. Hardback €60.00, ISBN: 978-1-910140-50-5.

² Cooper, J. M. and Hutchinson, D. S. (eds.) (1997), *Plato Complete Works* (Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing Company).

consistently translates 'skill' instead of the more common 'art', and perhaps less felicitously, he translates *nous* as 'reason' instead of the more traditional 'intelligence' (except in *Timaeus* where he leaves it untranslated). But Horan's explicit strategy could give the false impression that his translations are hard to read. This is far from true. Although no translation is perfect, Horan's is mostly enjoyable and a result of many years of graduate seminars at Trinity Plato Centre in Dublin. It fits both readers with little or no knowledge of Greek and those who follow and compare it to the original language.

If there were a prize for the best cover image for an ancient philosophy book, Ricardo Salles' latest monograph, *The Stoic Cosmos: Conflagration, Cosmogony and Recurrence in Early Stoicism*,³ paired with *The Swan* no. 17 (Group IX/SUW) by Hilma af Klint, would be my favourite to win. But that is just the least interesting fact about this book. Under the cover, readers will find the sharpest of prose, an exemplar of systematic scholarly rigour, and the intellectual humility of an author that, instead of simply synthesizing his previous work on the topic, prefaces the book by acknowledging 'I soon realized that many views I had defended in the past were incomplete, confused, or simply mistaken. It became necessary to change them entirely or at least reformulate and complete them. Thus, some ideas I now hold are inconsistent with those I had in the past, and very few are exactly the same' (ix).

The book has eight chapters: an introduction, an overview of the Stoic cosmos (Ch. 2), two chapters about conflagration (Chs. 3–4), one about cosmogony (Ch. 4), three chapters on everlasting recurrence and its philosophical puzzles (Chs. 5–7), and a closing chapter. Although the introduction gives a synopsis of the book, Salles plays his cards close to the chest and gives a 'no-spoilers' account of what lies ahead. The funniest extreme is his summary of the last chapter: 'Chapter 8 is the last. In it I deal with two issues that I leave open but that are closely connected to the argument of the book. One of them – cosmic creation and the link between the Stoic and the Christian god – is also of more general interest.' Nothing else is added to the introduction. It is not until we get to Chapter 8 that we learn what the first issue was: the question regarding why, according to Chrysippus, God would want a conflagration (Ch. 8.1).

The book also includes a helpful *index locorum* and a brief general index, and all ancient texts include a translation and the original Greek or Latin, together with philosophically meaningful textual variants. Salles uses a slightly overcomplicated internal numbering system to refer to these texts. I thought that would become tiring and confusing but it did not. More annoying, perhaps, was that, although he gives full references for the passages cited, those only mentioned in the footnotes were only referred to by the name of the source and its *SVF* number (i.e., H. von Arnim's *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, Leipzig, 1903).

Let me start by addressing what this book is not. Despite Stoic cosmology being closely interconnected to ethics, the book has little to say about this. Just as some enthusiasts of Stoic ethics today want to forget about their cosmology, Salles swims against the current and focuses on meteorology, metaphysics, and cosmotheology, leaving out, for the most part, its ethical implications. The complex and fantastic Stoic

³ *The Stoic Cosmos: Conflagration, Cosmogony, and Recurrence in Early Stoicism*. By Ricardo Salles, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2025. Pp. xvi + 300. Hardback £90.00, ISBN: 978-1-009-42279-6.

cosmological theories also raise interesting epistemological questions: for example, those concerning how confident the early Stoics were about the truth of these theories. That there were important disagreements inside the Stoa, as masterfully captured by Salles, gives away the answer. But the interesting tensions the status of the theories create in relation to Stoic epistemology and its high standards for knowledge are left unexplored. There is also relatively little about how the Stoics engaged with their predecessors (except for Chapter 3 on the Presocratic antecedents of the Stoic conflagration). There are, of course, plenty of comparisons between the Stoics, Aristotle, Plato, and others. But the details and discussion of the Stoics' historical reception of these predecessors' texts are mostly sidestepped in favour of a focus on the arguments by the early Stoics, especially Zeno, Cleanthes, and Chrysippus. Still, I would have expected a mention of the myth in Plato's *Statesman* in relation to ideas of a recurring destruction and restoration of the cosmos, and I would have loved some references to the Platonic *Epinomis* in relation to ether and the composition of the heavens.

According to Salles, then, the book's scope and main aim is 'to understand the philosophical reasons that drove the Stoics to uphold their theories of conflagration, cosmogony, and everlasting recurrence'(5). He structures the book around two main claims and five questions. The claims are 'first, that the three theories complement one another to solve specific philosophical puzzles, and second, that the position taken by the Stoics in each of them is largely conditioned by their position in other areas of their philosophical system, notably, in their physics and their metaphysics' (p. 5). The guiding questions include (paraphrasing): (a) why a conflagration would be necessary; (b) why it is followed by a restoration; (c) how the leftover fire of the conflagration transforms back into the elements that constitute the cosmos; (d) why the cosmos must be identical to previous and future versions; and (e) assuming the series of cosmos is identical, why the Stoic god would want to destroy the cosmos in the first place.

After the introduction and the overview in Chapter 1, Salles dedicates Chapter 2 to answering question (a). The main claim here is that the Stoic conflagration is rooted in the meteorological theory that the sublunary section of the cosmos undergoes an irreversible dissection due to exhalations that gradually consume all the water on Earth. The textual evidence detailing these theories is plentiful and undeniable. However, assigning which theory is the *explanans* and which one is the *explanandum* is less clear cut. A lot hinges on Salles' reading of Cicero *ND* 2.118 (quoted on p. 41). This text offers the strongest evidence that, for the Stoics, meteorological events explain the conflagration. However, I am not as confident as Salles is that this can be traced back to the earliest Stoics rather than being a reply to Panetius' views.

As mentioned above, Chapter 3 discusses the Presocratic antecedents of the Stoic conflagration. Here Salles argues that, although the Stoic theory of conflagration 'owes enormously to the Presocratics' (64), the Stoic innovation lies in logically connecting three ideas found dispersed in Presocratics such as Anaximander, Anaximenes, Heraclitus, Diogenes of Apollonia, Democritus, and Antiphon. The three interconnected ideas are that the celestial bodies, made of fire, consume evaporations of sublunary water, which in turn dries out the sublunary region, eventually leading the whole cosmos to turn into fire.

Chapter 4 addresses how the Stoics explained the reconfiguration of the cosmos after the conflagration (c), and argues that they distinguished at least three stages: the formation of the elements and the sublunary and supralunary regions, the formation of

composite but homogeneous substances, and finally, the formation of composite heterogeneous substances. However, the chapter focuses on the first stage and the polemic between Zeno and Cleanthes on this issue. For Zeno, we learn, all of the fire of the conflagration changes into a primigenial water. By contrast, Cleanthes thinks that some of the fire from the conflagration persists and never abates. Later, Chrysippus develops an account that seems to favour Cleanthes' version. Salles skillfully presents the philosophical dilemma at the heart of the polemic: 'either (1) the fire of the conflagration does not totally die out, as Cleanthes contends, but this runs against basic assumptions on the nature of fire that Zeno brings out, or (2) the fire of the conflagration does totally die out, as Zeno claims, but then the basic processes needed for the cosmogony, which seem to require some fire, would need some alternative explanation' (124).

The following three chapters (Chs. 5–7) focus on the theory of everlasting recurrence and the difficult questions of why the new cosmos must be identical to the previous one, and if that is so, then why god would want to destroy the world in the first place (d, e). In Chapter 5, Salles discusses two fundamental metaphysical problems about the structure of time that affect the theory of everlasting recurrence. The first one is to explain, given everlasting recurrence, why is the present cosmos present as opposed to past or future? The second one is to explain, given that the series of cosmoi are type-identical between them, how can they occupy a different moment in time? In other words, if two events are fully type-identical, doesn't that entail that they occur at the same time? And more basically, 'Can times be individuated independently from the events that occupy them' (125)? The topic of this chapter will sound familiar to those acquainted with Salles' influential paper 'Two classic problems in the Stoic theory of time' (*Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 55, 2018). But Salles departs from his previous views in various respects and offers an account of the Stoic theory of events and Chrysippus' theory of the present to solve the first puzzle, and the type-token distinction to solve the second problem. The chapter closes with a defence of the idea that for the Stoics, the differentiation of times is primitive and independent from events. In other words, according to Salles, the Stoics do not endorse the thesis that time implies change, understood as the idea that the passage of time requires 'change in the events that exist in time' (165), even though they accept that change involves difference in type of successive events.

Chapter 6 is devoted to different Stoic theories of everlasting recurrence and the arguments about why there must be a type-identity between the events of any two cosmic cycles (d). In the strongest theory, there is an identity thesis, 'according to which there must be a full type-identity' (174). The three main theories discussed in the chapter (R1, R2, and R3) are classified in relation to three main claims: that any cosmic cycle apart from the present one is either temporally earlier or later than the present one (Salles calls this claim *Time*); a second claim is the type-identity of the different cosmic cycles (*Identity*); and the third one is about the identity of individuals, and claims that the recurrent individuals in the cycles are numerically the same (*Individuality*). Only R1 endorses the three theses.

The most interesting part of the argument is devoted to the arguments for *Identity*, where Salles argues against Sandbach and Furley's interpretation, and proposes that 'when the Stoic god creates the cosmos, he seeks not just to ensure that it be good but also to maximize three other values: beauty, plenitude, and perdurance' (188). These

three other values are ‘preferred indifferents’ and if God chooses to maximize not only goodness but these other three values, it helps explain why the series of cosmoi must be not only equally good but type-identical. There is much more going on in this chapter, and some high-stakes metaphysical puzzles would require a lengthy discussion, especially with regards to the problematic Stoic conception of *Identity* and god.

Chapter 7, in turn, looks at a question that arises when conflagration and everlasting recurrence that embraces *Identity* are brought together. Assuming the rationality of the Stoic god, one might wonder whether it is not more rational for god not to destroy the world in the first place (e). In other words, would endorsing everlasting recurrence not make the Stoic god into a fool? Salles explains that for Zeno and Cleanthes this is not the case because, for them, the conflagration is not the goal, but an unavoidable side effect of the material constraints of the cosmos. This allows Zeno and Cleanthes to claim that the Stoic god is perfectly rational, despite the inescapable destruction of the cosmos. This presupposes that the Stoic god is not omnipotent. Salles’ reconstruction is convincing, but there are some texts that appear in tension with this interpretation, and addressing them would have been helpful, e.g. *pankrates* (omnipotent) in Cleanthes’ *Hymn to Zeus* (Stob. *Ecl.* 1.25, 4–27, 4=*SVF* 1.537). One answer is to say that matter has a recalcitrant nature that imposes limitations on god’s active capacity. But some texts suggest that matter admits all the activities of the active principle (Origen, *Orat.* 27.8, 9–27=*SVF* 2.318). Moreover, one might worry that if matter imposes serious limitations on god’s activity, that would mean matter has some re-*active* capacity, which would be incompatible with the Stoic description of it as purely passive and inert. The latter, of course, might simply be an unresolved tension in early Stoicism, not in Salles’ interpretation in particular. Chapter 8, section 1, continues the discussion of chapter 7 with regard to Chrysippus. There Salles convincingly argues against the idea that Chrysippus departs from Zeno and Cleanthes by thinking that the conflagration is in some way preferable to the cosmos. I found this, one of the most interesting parts of the book.

There is more good news for students of Stoic philosophy. John Sellars has edited an excellent volume for the Cambridge Companion series dedicated to Marcus Aurelius’ *Meditations*.⁴ With an introduction and a chapter by the editor and ten other chapters by an incredible international team of leading experts, the volume offers a solid and accessible introduction to the central ideas and themes in Marcus Aurelius.

The chapters cover good ground. They start from the contextual, with *The Man and the Meditations* (Ch. 1 by Caillan Davenport), and close with its early modern reception (Ch. 10 by Sellars) and its impact on contemporary psychotherapy (Ch. 11 by Donald Robertson). The central part of the volume includes all the main topics one might expect, including excellent contributions such as Chapter 2 *The Form and Function of the Meditations* as *Ethical Self-Cultivation* by Francesca Alesse, Chapter 4 *Nature, Providence, and Fate* by Gretchen Reydam-Schils, Chapter 7 *Ethics and Natural Philosophy in Marcus Aurelius* by Brad Inwood, and Chapter 8 *Virtue and Happiness* by Christopher Gill. Another highlight for me, although I partially disagree, was Benjamin Harriman’s well-argued Chapter 3: *Marcus Aurelius and the Early Stoic Tradition*.

⁴ *The Cambridge Companion to Marcus Aurelius’ Meditations*. Edited by John Sellars, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2025. Pp. x + 304. Paperback €34.34, ISBN: 978-1-108-93992-8.

Another impressively-edited volume, also accessible to the non-expert although perhaps not as transportable as other options, is *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Philosophy* edited by Myrto Garani, David Konstan, and Gretchen Reydam-Schils.⁵ This monumental book includes a brief preface by the editors and thirty-four chapters divided into four parts. The line-up is a dream team of scholars covering an impressive range that takes ‘Roman philosophy’ as a broad category, including Italic Pythagoreans, Epicureans, Stoics, Platonists, and Sceptics. Moreover, it not only include systematic thinkers but also poets and historians. The last part is dedicated to the reception of Roman philosophy by Christians, Byzantine philosophers, Medieval Neoplatonists, and Renaissance authors, among others. The volume’s division into parts is not as useful and informative as one might expect, though. But this takes nothing away from the clear and well-argued prose of all of its chapters, which also offer a great variety of approaches, styles, and length. Among the many authors and topics covered, the reader will find, for instance, excellent chapters on Cicero by Malcolm Schofield (Ch. 8) and Orazio Cappello (Ch. 16), two on Lucretius by Pamela Gordon (Ch. 2) and Tim O’Keefe (Ch. 9), and one on Plutarch by George Karamanolis (Ch. 13). I found especially interesting Chapter 14 *Parrhēsia*: Dio, Diatribe, and Philosophical Oratory by Dana Fields. Other chapters tackle specific concepts, such as James Warren’s Chapter 25 on Death, and Duncan F. Kennedy’s Chapter 24 on Time.

In *Aristotle’s Practical Epistemology*, Dhananjay Jagannathan offers a lucid study of *phronēsis* (‘practical wisdom’ or ‘prudence’).⁶ The book’s main aim is to elucidate what kind of knowledge it is and what role it plays, especially focusing on *Nichomachean Ethics* (*Eth. Nic.*). Jagannathan sets the scene by dividing recent debates about this topic into two camps: scholars that think *phronēsis* is ‘more like a skill or a facility for intuitively discerning the correct action to perform in varying circumstances’; or ‘more like scientific knowledge, a grasp of what is good for human beings and why that can be brought to bear on deliberative questions’ (2). As Jagannathan is quick to acknowledge, this divide looks more like a continuum, with very few (but renowned) people defending the extremes. But the grouping, understood as two inadequate interpretative strategies, serves as the motivation for his own proposal. Jagannathan argues that ‘*phronēsis* only comes into view when we see it as practical (or ethical) understanding’ (2). By this he means that *phronēsis* is *both* a kind of knowledge by which we deliberate the action demanded by the virtues of character in particular circumstances, *and* a virtue of thought that counts as a comprehensive understanding of human good. In other words, for Jagannathan, *phronēsis* must be both practical knowledge and intellectual virtue.

The book is divided into an introduction, six chapters, an appendix printed in an annoyingly small font size, and a surprisingly short bibliography of secondary literature, exclusively in the English language. The volume also includes a two-page general index and a one-page index of quoted passages (not to be confused with an exhaustive *index locorum*). Readers will look in vain for the details of the jacket image, which is simply credited as a stock photo. But it is a slightly cropped reproduction of *The Apotheccary* (c. 1752) by Pietro Longhi, held in the *Gallerie dell’Accademia* in Venice. The doctor in

⁵ *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Philosophy*. Edited by Myrto Garani, David Konstan, and Gretchen Reydam-Schils. New York, Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. xviii + 625. Hardback £127.50, ISBN: 978-0-19-932838-3.

⁶ *Aristotle’s Practical Epistemology*. By Dhananjay Jagannathan. New York, Oxford University Press, 2024. Pp. xiv + 201. Hardback £59.00, ISBN: 978-0-19-778148-7.

the painting maybe alludes to a case of practical knowledge and experience that falls short of practical wisdom, one of the topics developed in the book.

The first two chapters after the introduction focus on ordinary practical knowledge. The first one connects Aristotle's puzzles about practical epistemology in *Eth. Nic.* with Isocrates' rejection of practical knowledge and Protagoras' conventionalism. The Appendix continues this line of thought and introduces two more alternatives on practical epistemology, one found in Plato's *Statesman* and the other in Aristotle's *Eth. Eud.*

In turn, the second chapter offers a detailed analysis of *Eth. Nic.* 1.3–4, VI.7–8, and X.9. Here Jagannathan defends that ordinary practical knowledge is ethical experience (*empeiria*), and argues for five claims. First, that ethical experience is knowledge about how to act in accordance with virtue. Second, that this type of experience is the result of habituation, not only of the non-rational parts of the soul, but also learning to reason well about situations that require virtuous action. Third, is the claim that ethical experience is a grasp of the basic facts about ethics, i.e., knowledge of the 'that' (and not of the 'why') of what is just and noble. Fourth, is the idea that ethical experience gives us the starting point for a reflective enquiry into ethics. The last claim is that, since the person with ethical experience lacks knowledge of the reason why of ethics, they fall short of the understanding characteristic of practical wisdom (see 36).

The third chapter answers the question that will be in most readers' minds at this point: why is *phronēsis* a virtue of thought? In a nutshell, Jagannathan explains that *phronēsis* is a virtue by which we achieve practical truth, which is the task of the part of the intellect that deals with contingent things (97). This makes clear that it is not sufficient to act as virtue requires us to act, since someone with ethical experience can also do that. Practical wisdom provides us with autonomy and independence to conduct our lives and the capacity to arrive at practical truth, to 'bring about the goal of action itself, success in acting (*eupraxia*)' (98).

Chapter 4 argues against the idea that there is, in Aristotle, something like ethical science, labelled in the book as 'intellectualism'. Jagannathan understands this intellectualism in two forms, a strong and a moderate version, the latter understanding ethics as a special, inexact sort of science. I agree with rejecting the strong version of intellectualism. But I am not persuaded by the argument against the moderated version. The chapter's argument depends, I worry, on understanding science and demonstration very narrowly and on assuming that intellectualism must mean that ethics is about demonstration rather than action. In contrast, it can be about action through practical syllogisms. It could be that ethics has theoretical levels, even if they ultimately align with virtuous action. In any case, it was odd not to find a discussion of *Eth. Nic.* VI.3, where Aristotle explains science as a virtue of thought and, perhaps more importantly, a discussion of passages such as *Top.* VI.6 145a14–ff, *Top.* VIII.1, 157a10, and *Metaph.* VI.1, 1025b18–ff, where Aristotle distinguishes between theoretical, practical, and productive sciences.⁷

Chapter 5 offers Jagannathan's positive interpretation of the practically wise person's grasp of universals. This is spelt out as a 'distinctly practical form of understanding' (121), which means a grasp of ends or goals of virtuous action. Chapter 6 is devoted, in turn, to political wisdom, where the main claim is that the person with political wisdom has the same grasp of universals as the practically wise person, but deliberates in relation to the community as a whole.

⁷ I owe my understanding of the scientific character of ethics to H. Zagal, *Método y ciencia en Aristóteles* (Mexico City, 2005).

To continue on Aristotle's multifaceted understanding of science, I now turn my attention to Andrea Falcon's *The Architecture of the Science of Living Beings: Aristotle and Theophrastus on Animals and Plants*.⁸ The idea behind this interesting book is clear. Falcon is primarily concerned with the structure, scope, and logical sequence of the Peripatetic study of animals and plants. For this purpose, Falcon focuses on a series of transitional and introductory passages in *Parva naturalia*, *De anima*, *Meteorology*, and *History of Plants*, where Aristotle and Theophrastus offer the best clues related to how they understand their undertaking. The book makes a compelling case for the idea that the Peripatetics were engaged in a unified research programme aimed at studying perishable living beings. The unity of the research programme is given by Aristotle's *De anima*, as a treatise devoted to finding out the principle or principles of living beings. But the application of the principle and the explanation of the phenomena is divided into, first, a study of animals, and later, a study of plants. In this way, the study of living beings includes three components: a study of what is common to all living beings, and then a separate but coordinated study of animals and plants. One of the highlights of the book is a fantastic outline of Theophrastus' contributions to the study of plants in *History of Plants* and *Causes of Plants*. Falcon, as expected, offers detailed discussion of how this peculiar structure and approach to the study of living beings is connected, and to what extent, to Aristotle's theory of scientific explanation in *Posterior Analytics* and the epistemic principles that explain the complex architecture of Peripatetic biology.

I would like to close by mentioning the publication of Anders Dahl Sørensen's new and impressive edition of 'Anonymus Iamblichus', *The Fragments of Iamblichus' Unnamed Source in Protrepticus 20* in the Cambridge Classical Texts and Commentaries.⁹ The volume includes a detailed introduction, with sections on the language and grammar, the background and significance of the text, as well as an explanation of the manuscript tradition, the delineation of the fragments, and the presentation and division of the text. The Greek text is accompanied by a translation, a commentary, an appendix on some speculative suggestions as to the possible author behind the fragments, and the usual indexes. This is an impressive work of scholarship that casts light on an intriguing and important source for early Greek philosophy that deserves more attention.

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⁸ *The Architecture of the Science of Living Beings: Aristotle and Theophrastus on Animals and Plants*. By Andrea Falcon, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2024. Pp. 270. Hardback £85.00, ISBN: 978-1-009-42634-3.

⁹ *'Anonymus Iamblichus'*. Edited by Anders Dahl Sørensen. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2025. Pp. ix + 241. Hardback £100.00, ISBN: 978-1-009-53879-4.