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Reading Plato is like
Solving a Jigsaw Puzzle:
Mary-Louise Gill's
Philosophos
A Discussion by Georgia
Mouroutsou on *Plato's*
Missing Dialogue

Georgia Mouroutsou

But cautious people must be *especially on their guard in the matter of resemblances*, for they are very slippery things.
Plato, *Sophist*, 231a.

And so we must *take courage and attack our father's theory here and now, or else*, if any scruples prevent us from doing this, *we must give the whole thing up*.
Plato, *Sophist*, 241a.

Wir dürfen kaum sagen, daß wir weiter seien als Plato. Nur im Material der wissenschaftlichen Erkenntnisse, die er benutzt, sind wir weiter. Im Philosophieren selbst sind wir *noch kaum wieder bei ihm angelangt*.

Karl Jaspers, *Einführung in die Philosophie*, p. 9.¹

I. PLATO'S MISSING *PHILOSOPHOS* AND GILL'S FINDINGS

Who is Plato's philosopher? Is she the true rhetorician or the true politician, or perhaps even the true poet? Plato's philosopher is excellent in persuasion; she conducts real politics and even composes philosophical poetry. But what about the danger of sophistry? Plato's philosopher-types may give the impression that they are sophists, and could have even been able to become sophists, had they intended to mislead. But they are unwilling to exercise their ability to deceive, and instead do nothing but educate.² To make matters worse, don't Plato's philosophers seem to fall into a kind of madness whenever they try to disturb common views and traditional customs, and when turning things upside down in their interlocutors and readers?³ Plato's philosophers admittedly

appear as if they succumb to such madness on many occasions: when meticulously working on and transforming their theories without pause, when bravely criticizing their predecessors and challenging their contemporaries, and when practicing the art of never resting too long on their laurels.

Even Plato, notorious for blurring things and concepts, or, better to say especially Plato, who has to draw clear boundaries between philosophy and rhetoric, politics, and poetry — notwithstanding all innate similarities and hastily imposed identifications — does not think that philosophy, rhetoric, and politics can be identified, or that the distinctions between them can be blurred. At the beginning of his *Sophist*, Plato asks who the sophist, the statesman, and the philosopher are. While not as obsessed as Gill with definitions, Plato still searches for clear-cut lines of demarcation. Philosophy pervades the whole Platonic corpus; it is not reserved solely for the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*.⁴ Yet it is in these two texts that Plato builds our anticipation for a separate dialogue devoted specifically to his concept of philosophy. Though Plato refers to this dialogue, he didn't write it down — instead leaving us to our own devices: We have to search for it within his work, and thereby explain his seemingly meaningful silence on the *Philosophos*.

Plato scholars have come up with many possible scenarios to explain why the *Philosophos* is missing (for a critical summary of the views about the interlocutors in this dialogue, see Gill's fn. 54, p. 201). The two main solutions that have been offered are as follows. The *Philosophos* is missing, either because (1) Plato *couldn't* write the dialogue down or, (2) because he felt that he *shouldn't* write it down. There are two further explanations to the first suggestion: (1a) either Plato couldn't fulfill the task of writing the dialogue down because he

died or lost interest after the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*; or, (1b) the philosopher's objects, which are the form of the good and forms in general, have no propositional character (e.g. Wolfgang Wieland) — the knowledge of them being a knowledge *how* rather than a knowledge *that*. To put it more succinctly, in this view Plato was incapable of composing the *Philosophos*, although he still wanted to highlight its importance. The second suggestion was given by the famous "Tübingen School" (Hans-Joachim Krämer, Konrad Gaiser, and Thomas Alexander Szlezák, among others). This view argues that Plato reserved the most important and most precious topics, such as the problems related to the first principles of reality, for his oral teaching in the Academy. Tübingen scholars don't deny that Plato expressed his main ideas in the dialogues, which they appreciate and read closely, making important comparisons between the texts in order to detect and reconstruct parts of the *Philosophos*, seemingly successfully. But according to them, this unwritten dialogue marks the most significant gap in the Platonic corpus, which cannot simply be filled in with the help of the other dialogues, nor with insightful esoteric readings.

On this point, Gill disagrees with the Tübingen School, and sides with Kenneth Sayre. Gill argues that the individual dialogues are not "stand-alone unified wholes" (p. 15, *pace* Schleiermacher) but part of a tightly-woven inter-relational system, which has no missing pieces or doctrinal gaps; instead we have to do the work and solve the jigsaw puzzle ourselves. Gill's solution of the riddle follows a third view, according to which the *Philosophos* can be detected somewhere in the existing Platonic corpus: either in one dialogue (the *Parmenides*, the *Sophist* or the *Philebus*, for instance) or in all dialogues. In the entire corpus, Plato continually and colorfully portrays the philosopher

and talks about her ‘type’, her nature, and her tasks. Some scholars take a “performative view” according to which the philosopher performs different aspects of her nature in different contexts; others want to pay more attention to the doctrinal underpinning of the concept of philosophy, in order to draw the philosopher’s portrait through selections from Plato’s dialogues. Gill’s endeavour is characterized by the idea of philosophical training that pervades the Platonic corpus, and this unifies her account of the philosopher. Training is a constitutive element of Platonic dialectics after all, along with critique — of both his predecessors and contemporaries — and theory. Gill’s book, the fruit of both long labours in ancient philosophy and extensive discussions with scholars and students, is essentially a handbook about training in Platonic dialectics. Gill is clearly an expert, and she exercises her readers in combining elements from various contexts in the Platonic corpus. As I read her, she vacillates — rather than mediates — between the Tübingen School and Kenneth Sayre. Although she claims to follow Sayre, she operates rather differently to Sayre when it comes to Aristotle, and though she claims to diverge from the Tübingen School in finding central Platonic ideas in the dialogues, this is of course common ground between her and the Tübingen scholars.⁵

II. THE BOOK’S CONTENT, GILL’S METHOD, AND HER MAIN BACKGROUND FIGURES AND UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

In what follows, I am far from being able to do justice to Gill’s far-reaching and comprehensive project. I will narrate the book’s chapters and Gill’s analysis in broad strokes. I will give a somewhat educational account,

by which I mean that I will focus on the arguments and aspects of the book that might support and improve upon Gill’s own project, and in this stay faithful to the book’s spirit — rather than work against it. My critical role will in no way eclipse Gill’s project, though I shall be critical at points, even sometimes going beyond Gill’s hermeneutical presuppositions and paradigm. There are therefore three levels in my discussion: narration, where for the most part I remain neutral; support of Gill’s points, with further argument; and critical comments that reach beyond Gill’s perspective. I will not always proceed sequentially.

I begin with three general remarks about the book’s content, addressing Gill’s underlying presuppositions and key philosophical figures, and looking at her method.

First, Gill’s ultimate goal is to lead us through the dialogues in order to solve “the puzzle of being” and reconstruct the *Philosophos*. As a quick look at the table of content reveals, Gill makes even larger claims. Her book reveals the Platonic dialectic in its threefold character: as theory, as critique, and, above all, as exercise. To do this, Gill interprets the dialogues *Parmenides*, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, and *Statesman*, paying more attention to some passages than others, while carefully avoiding the *Timaeus*, to some problems of which she has devoted herself in earlier articles.⁶ Gill fulfills her principal goal, not through close readings and discussions of the still hotly-debated passages, but rather by taking a joyful stroll through the four dialogues, sometimes making unjustifiably rash jumps though the minefields of the Platonic landscape and thick Plato scholarship, all the while providing helpful instruction to help us navigate the landscape.

Second, in her introduction, Gill makes her direction clear. Plato’s later philosophy displays a distinctly Aristotelian bent (p. 10). As such

it is no surprise that Gill appeals to Aristotle to clarify topics in Plato (fn. 27, Introduction). Throughout the book, Gill pursues this line: when making a case for the immanent forms in Plato, or speaking of Plato's overcoming his ontological dualism of being and becoming in the *Statesman* (fn. 1, p. 202), or when sketching how Plato paves the way for a more fully worked-out theory of change and rest, which was later developed by Aristotle (p. 231).⁷ Bearing in mind Gill's aim, nothing can really startle the reader, not even her idiosyncratic claim that it is because of his treatment of change and rest that Plato doesn't paint the philosopher's portrait in the *Sophist*. Gill is also indebted to Gilbert Ryle. But to go further, she is almost under Ryle's spell: She never criticizes a single view of Ryle's,⁸ despite confronting such a large amount of his work; from his *Plato's Progress* up to his esoteric or unpublished doctrines of the "Logical Atomism in Plato's *Theaetetus*", which were finally made available to the broader public by Burnyeat in 1990.

Third, through reading Plato's texts cover to cover — from front to back and back to front again — as all of us should do, though not everyone successfully does, Gill outlines problematic passages as well as those in which interlocutors broach the issue at hand (p. 13). She carefully follows Plato's allusions and intimations; his vital clues and stage directions. She even furnishes Plato's interlocutors with better arguments, and strikes Plato on the hand when he fails. Keeping to the spirit of the Platonic dialogues, Gill refines and revisits a number of parts to fit them into her jigsaw-puzzle, which she solves while composing, in an equally Platonic spirit, excursus and addenda — in order to provide the reader with a finely-woven Platonic fabric. To Gill, reading Platonic dialogues feels like solving a jigsaw puzzle (p.13).

As challenging an educator as Plato was, Gill claims that he "deliberately withheld" the *Philosophos* (p. 1) "because he would have spoiled the exercise, had he written it" (p. 5). The full portrait of his philosopher can be completed by diligent disciples, and is indeed completed by Gill, who provides and conducts the "final exercise". To put it differently: Gill's book should be regarded as *the Philosophos* — if not as the only possible reconstruction, then certainly as a good model for other experts and trainees. I cannot think of a loftier ambition in Plato studies than Gill's in this text. Let us then see how Gill fulfills her aim.

III. THE BOOK'S CHAPTERS: EXERCISE ON THE WAY TOWARD THE *PHILOSOPHOS*

According to Gill, for Plato philosophical ability can only be accomplished by continuous training. The disciple must learn "to recognize patterns across variations and gradually gains a settled disposition to solve a range of problems including ones not encountered before" (p. 11). Based on her interpretation of the hypotheses in the *Parmenides*, Gill settles on her own "dialectical pattern", which, she shows, repeats itself with variations throughout the text. The following pattern has been largely — and surprisingly — overlooked in Plato scholarship; nevertheless Gill makes it the "backbone of the book" (p. 3): An antinomy emerges whose arms are unacceptable (steps one and two). A middle path between the two arms is attempted (step three) and then dismantled (step four).

As Gill sees it, all the dialogues she interprets respond to *Parmenides* (p. 73), to whose prelude and second part she devotes the first two chapters of the book. Examining the first part of the *Parmenides*, Gill interprets every stage in

Parmenides' critique of his interlocutor. In the *Phaedo*, the older Socrates left it open whether forms are transcendent or immanent in their sensible particulars. Socrates, in his youth, tries in vain to pass Parmenides' test while introducing a theory of transcendent forms. Gill diagnoses that the remedy for his failure lies in training, and characterizes the second part of the *Parmenides* as "sheer gymnastics" (p. 45) with regard to the structural form of oneness. The forms, and thus the world and the capacity for Platonic dialectic, will be saved.⁹

Gill operates for the most part with the first four deductions of the *Parmenides*, which display a striking progression (p. 55). In the first and second, an antinomy emerges: the one is neither F nor not-F, and the one is both F and not-F. The appendix (*Prm.* 155e4-157b5) attempts, but fails, to find a constructive way forward. The positive hypothesis is then saved by the third deduction, while the fourth corresponds to the fourth step of Gill's "dialectical pattern" (see above). In the first antinomy, being emerges as a nature "outside the nature of beings, including oneness" (p. 63), whereas, we should correct this impression: being is inside the nature of things and thus the one can be one in virtue of itself, and can also have other features by partaking of natures other than its own. The problem of being is left unresolved in the second part of the *Parmenides*. Gill's treatment is insightful and imaginative, though I'm sure it won't be to every Plato scholar's taste; her discussion of Meindwald's interpretation is to the point.

The third chapter accomplishes the three steps of Gill's exercise about being, which runs as follows. The Heraclitean view that being is changing (step one, the *Theaetetus*' first part as an exercise in seeing and noticing things of significance buried in the text, p. 78) and the Parmenidean view that being is unchanging

(step two, the *Sophist*) should be rejected. A middle path is provided by the Eleatic Guest, who wishes to "have it both ways" (being is both change and rest), and then withdrawn, since change and rest are mutually exclusive opposites. For Gill, the contest between the types — and not historical figures — of Heraclitus and Parmenides concerns the same question about the nature of being, and cannot be reconciled through the distinction of being into the sensible and intelligible realms (p. 77). It is a mistake to see rest and change as mutually exclusive, as if they were categorical opposites, and not structural kinds, which prevents the Guest and his interlocutor Theaetetus from "defining the form of being" (p. 77). In Chapter four, Gill pursues an "open possibility" in the *Theaetetus*. On the model of language-learning, she argues that knowledge is an expertise that combines perception, true judgment, and an account added to true judgment. Knowledge by acquaintance (don't worry, Gill doesn't detect intuition or mental perception in the *Theaetetus*!), knowledge *how*, and propositional knowledge are intimately connected (p. 9). This is one of the most insightful moments of the book (pp. 131-7). Here, Gill is well aware of her going beyond Plato's text — an awareness often missing in the scholarship.

There are no dialogues that have left more generations of interpreters baffled with regard to their aim(s), than the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*. Gill's Chapter five focuses on the *Sophist*, in which Plato aims at and achieves many things at once. Gill helps us avoid a headache by taking the whole discussion as serving a single goal: the analysis of the false statement (p. 149). To found the possibility of falsehood is one of the greatest philosophical achievements, which Plato makes in order to capture the sophist. At the same time, Plato wishes to dispute with his predecessors and

contemporaries both being and not-being, to explicate some of the grammar of his dialectics of forms, and thereby to educate Theaetetus and all his readers.

Gill's key thesis is that the dialogue with the Giants (*Soph.* 245e-250d) is the centerpiece of the dialogue, to which we should return after reading through the arduous dialectics concerning the greatest kinds, up to 259e (fn. 7, p. 205). The relations between the greatest kinds are not those of genus to species, and Gill concludes that "circularity seems unavoidable in the case of structural kinds, since these kinds go through everything and therefore through one another" (p. 235). We should not understand being as something external to the other kinds but as a structural feature inside their natures (p. 211). Not only I am sympathetic to the above views, I share them.¹⁰ To show how we come from a view of beings and forms as "external" to one another toward an internalized *dunamis*, there is no other way than to interpret the whole passage and argumentation up to *Soph.* 259 step by step and without interruption. As for Plato's "serious mistake" of regarding motion and rest as categorical opposites and not all-pervasive kinds like being, or sameness and difference, here is a suggestion in the spirit of the *Sophist*: Plato wants too many things at once when working on his chosen five greatest kinds. He is not sketching a project on transcendentia exclusively, but he intends to speak about the relations of all forms. Thus he lets motion and rest enter the game in the way that they do.

Gill is indebted to Lesley Brown and Michael Frede, which she acknowledges — who isn't, when it comes to the *Sophist*? Here she takes "the first steps toward an alternative interpretation of being" with the aim to "preserve the virtues of their different proposals without the shortcomings" (p. 176). In these initial

steps, I would have liked more argument for Gill's thesis — *pace* Brown — that forms can be affected in relation to one another (which she just mentions on p. 239). Some pinches of salt for Frede, and more of an attempt to follow and sharpen some of Brown's critical points, would certainly have corroborated Gill's interpretations more strongly. For instance, her own critique of Meinwald's interpretation would have been more well-founded had Gill seen a fundamental shortcoming in Frede's seminal interpretation. For, 255c13-14 is certainly a key passage in the context of the *Sophist* (Gill, fn. 61, p. 164), but it is not *the* key that opens all doors in the *Sophist*, as Frede wished to show, and even less with regard to other dialogues.

In Chapter six, Gill devotes herself to the *Statesman* and manifests charming diligence and fine labour. No one wants to be (called) a sophist, but a lot of different types wish to participate in statesmanship and even more people wish to share, if not usurp, the title of philosopher. Gill draws attention to the difference between the division in the *Phaedrus* and the *Statesman* (fn. 17, p. 183), and offers paradigmatic analysis of models, refining some previous work (p. 141, here correcting Melissa Lane's view that models are merely examples falling under some general kind; also compare Gill's fn. 29, p. 189). She disappointingly — but not unexpectedly — undervalues the *Statesman's* cosmological myth, based on the Guest's negative characterization of the myth's oversized model. "The myth does not confront *the real issue*, the difference between the statesman and his rivals, who also profess to look after humans in the city" (p. 194). Gill is right to complain about the shortcomings of the myth. It is not my task here to show how the myth fulfills another "real issue" and important goal in the quest of statesmanship — an undertaking which would definitely go beyond

what Gill intended to do and even against her own interpretive line. Nevertheless I would like to highlight “the real issue”, as Gills terms it, because it reveals her general tendency to detect a singular goal and a single target (see also section V). In comparison, I favor the direction Gill takes regarding the method of division. It would have strengthened her undertaking, I feel, to analyze more systematically the relation between method and object in the *Statesman*. One of the crucial problems of this dialogue, and one of the most important topics for Gill’s agenda, is how different methods apply to particular objects and how intimately connected these methods are with their objects.

In chapter Seven, Gill finally releases the suspense and completes the puzzle of the *Philosophos*. The chapter made me quite giddy, although Gill had patiently trained me to move smoothly from dialogue to dialogue and from puzzle to puzzle, while respecting differences and drawing significant similarities. She begins with the “aporia about being” (*Soph.* 250a8-c5). After the Guest’s declaration about the children’s plea, we face a kind of setback, according to Gill’s diagnosis: Being is neither motion nor rest. She then moves to a description of dialectic (*Soph.* 253d5-e2), but interrupts the analysis to “make an expedition into the *Philebus*’s notion of dialectic” and “holistic conception of knowledge” (*Phil.* up to 18d), before working her way back to the *Sophist* and its cryptic lines about dialectic. Finally, she moves back to the *dunamis* proposal with the aid of which the Guest improved the materialists’ thesis. Gill’s philosopher emerges in the vicinity of the children’s plea. Gill does not make the mistake of detecting in one passage or other any exhaustive analysis of dialectics (p. 225), and nor does she identify dialectics with the method of division. But she endangers her analysis by moving too quickly from one problematic

text to another, and from obscure constellation to obscure constellation.

IV. SOME CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM IN THE SPIRIT OF GILL’S TEXT: ON PLATO’S DIALOGUE’S FORM, HIS “MUNDANE” LATER STAGE, AND HIS MULTI-LAYERED RIDDLES

Plato prompts us to search out our own philosophical tendencies and directions, and find ourselves as philosophers. The wish to return to “the historical Plato himself” amounts to one of the greatest hermeneutical illusions, as Hans-Georg Gadamer has argued, notwithstanding all the beneficial and fruitful historical reconstructions we have seen so far. According to Gill, the dialogue form is not “merely an external trapping”, and Plato could not have “presented the *Sophist* as a dogmatic speech”, *pace* Stenzel and many others (fn. 3, p. 139). Gill maintains instead that “the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*, like the *Theaetetus* (and the *Parmenides*), are philosophical exercises designed to stimulate Plato’s audience (including us modern readers) to do a lot of work”; “The interlocutor is vital to the exercise.” I agree with this claim, as well as with most of Gill’s subtle hermeneutics concerning the dialogue’s dramatic character and characters, found in both the main text and footnotes. Yet I wish Gill had confronted the crucial point, among both parties to the debate: Essential and not coincidental to Plato’s purposes as it may be to write dialogues, the form of monologue should not be necessarily condemned as “dogmatic”, as the case of Plato’s *Timaeus* manifests.

Gill seems to be in absolute agreement with Lloyd Gerson on at least one point, surprising as this is because of their numerous

disagreements: Plato was a Platonist, on the basis of the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* (see pp. 31f. and 168; Gill speaks occasionally of Plato's "later Platonism"). For my part, I have not yet been able and remain unwilling to force myself to regard Plato as a Platonist, despite going back and forth between Plato and various Platonists. Furthermore, one way to put Plato's development, as Gill does, is that Plato became more down-to-earth as he got older, and as such turned from the forms to mundane knowledge and truths about concrete particulars in his later dialogues. Similar statements may mislead us and popularize Plato's philosophy. So I would rather describe Plato's development differently: Plato worked on the relation between the General and the Particular from the very beginning of his career. Delving into the nature of the Forms necessarily led him "back" anew to the Particulars' nature. For anything concerning the relation between the General and the Particular — let me call this Plato's fundamental philosophical interest — is dressed up in new content and integrated again, anew and afresh, into new literary environments.

Further, Gill often speaks of the "layers of the puzzle" and the "inner core of the puzzle[s]" (pp. 146 and 148), and tries to show us that she knows *how* to deal with them. I am confident that showing that Gill also knows *that* there are different levels of riddles and aporias, and also knows how they are connected with one another, will add more philosophical shades of color to her portrait, and ultimately support her project. We can untangle puzzles, solve fundamental aporias, perhaps about not-being (p. 138), and never cease to be fascinated by even deeper *aporia* and *atopia* in Plato's philosophers.

V. SOME CRITICAL POINTS GOING BEYOND GILL'S PROJECT

Having availed myself of excellent German and Anglo-American discussions and contexts, and also because I regard the dialogue between continental and analytic philosophy to be necessary for the sake of ancient philosophy, I wish to make some further remarks. Gill cites German authors like Paul Friedländer, Julius Stenzel, and Jan Szaif. Martin Heidegger is not discussed, although he is as elucidating as G.E.L. Owen on the "parity assumption" passage (Soph. 250e5-251a3). This is perhaps a minor negligence, since Heidegger's lecture on the *Sophist* should be studied for the sake of his own philosophy and is no "pure" Plato scholarship, we may argue. What I regard as a deficit in such a thorough undertaking is Gill's leaving unmentioned Hans Joachim Krämer's and Nicolai Hartmann's contributions, at least when it comes to the digression on the two measurements in the *Statesman*. Karl Bärtlein and Peter Kolb would, additionally, assist Gill's aims — to mention just two German figures.

Astonishing as it may be, theology is missing from Gill's book, which I find to be the most crucial gap in her *Philosophos*. I was dumbfounded not to find the term in the appendix, though we must acknowledge that this is a book devoted to Plato's concept and nature of philosophy, and his type of philosopher(s). I looked for hints throughout the book, but to no avail. Gill often appeals to Aristotle as having provided a "more fully worked-out" theory with regard to many topics, which is correct when we focus on Plato's paving the way for Aristotle. Nonetheless, she is not willing to regard Plato as preparing the Aristotelian bent on this point, which we might regard as metaphysics as the question of being *qua* being (general ontology)

and of the divine being(s) (theology). Gill detects the former in Plato (p. 241, the term pops up at the very end without much discussion), but remains silent on the latter. If one Aristotelian character of metaphysics is of relevance to Plato, then why the former and not the latter? Once more, the crucial passage for building the argument and pleading for the case for general ontology is the mediation between the Giants and the Friends of Forms in the *Sophist*.¹¹

There is a very interesting tension in Gill's book, which helps us to understand her undertaking. On one hand, she understands Platonic philosophy not to be "a storehouse full of all-purpose tools ready for use regardless of topic" (p. 226). In this way, Gill is right to admit a rich and irreducible variety in the Platonic corpus. On the other hand, and with great intuitive insight, she manifests a rare feature of Anglo-American Plato research: Though she doesn't show any affinity with Neoplatonic strategies and agendas, Gill often thinks she exposes the "one and single goal" (e.g. p. 149 *et passim*) and detects a single pattern, which is repeated in different contexts of the Platonic corpus. It is here that Plato gets in her way. He wants so many things at once, and he compels us to be precise about both the differences and similarities of the contexts we wish to relate, and not only to detect and reconstruct models, "to make headway"¹² on various issues, and find the key that will solve all problems, but also to make a stop at each and very step and turn, while applying our philosophical method. After all, Plato has set up a model for replacing smooth headway with reflective digressions and digressive reflections in his *Statesman*. Whichever our choice, the ground remains slippery, but it is highly rewarding to prove Plato a philosopher and describe the type of philosophy he represents between the Presocratics and Aristotle, and also to show how he speaks to modern

philosophers after centuries of developments, which go far beyond Plato — be they Ryleans, New-Kantians or Hegelians. Gill has her own method and style, and sets out her interpretation in the midst of a not particularly "pattern-governed"¹³ Anglo-American Plato landscape.

VI. CONCLUSION: GILL'S BOOK AS A MODEL FOR CRITICAL INTERLOCUTORS

In Plato scholarship we rarely encounter anything new. Through diligently following her leads, reconstructing her "strategy patterns" (p. 16f.), and detecting their repetitions, Gill offers us a fresh undertaking, and she shows that she knows how to lead us through the crucial questions. She even dares to end with a question. Her book deserves serious consideration and sets up a new model in Plato scholarship. As with every good paradigm, it motivates each of us not to passively imitate it, but to create our own well-thought and well-grounded model in dialogue with it. As such, I urge scholars and students of ancient philosophy to read this book. It is in the spirit of the text that they should exercise their philosophical muscles by improving on Gill's account where possible. Students should not be overwhelmed by Gill's combining so many bits and pieces of the dialogues in one picture. My advice, addressed mostly to students — since we scholars hopefully have more reliable compasses at our disposal — is that they should often pause, and, inspired by Schleiermacher or some of his followers, take a dialogue, read and re-read it, both forwards and backwards, many times — until their own insights come up. And when these insights do emerge, they have but to give a thorough account of all their details, with and beyond Plato. The greater and more valuable the context we choose, the more precise our ac-

count must become. And what is greater than the nature of the philosopher in Plato? Gill's book is therefore an exceptional model not only for grand visions, beautiful perspectives, and bold and provocative proposals, but also for their adequate demonstration.

Plato scholarship will never cease in its progress. Not interested in persuading believers but aiming to educate critical interlocutors, Gill continues a fruitful dialogue which will help this scholarship to flourish.

THE WORKS TO WHOSE AUTHORS I REFER IN MY DISCUSSION:

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END NOTES

1 The italics in the above citations are my own. To the first quotation: Gill is cautious regarding resemblances. To the second: I wish that she were more critical of the Anglo-American research. To the third: Sie ist noch kaum wieder bei Platon angelangt so wie wir alle.

2 According to Gill, Plato may block us (p. 205f.), fuel illusions (p. 227), make serious mistakes (p. 158) and even fail (p. 156). For example, when he doesn't depict the kinds of motion and rest as pervasive, and when he virtually ignores sameness in the dialectics of the greatest kinds. He frequently misleads his interlocutors and does not guide them to the right destination (p. 242). As I see it, every digression and every step toward a different direction is part of Plato's educational project. Things that seem a little "a trial and error" at first glance (see Gill, fn. 27, p. 188) prove to have been necessary as we progress.

3 The connection between madness and bringing things "upside down" (ἄνω καὶ κάτω) explains why philosophers may sometimes give the impression they are mad. Gill misses this connection in her fn. 3, p. 203, but she is right, of course, to draw a parallel with the *Phaedrus*' divine madness.

4 Some less benevolent readers might misread Gill in this way (p. 203). I grasp the opportunity to draw the readers' attention to what we might call a Platonic trait in Gill's writing. The reader must know that Gill reveals her thought and argument step by step. Thus we should not halt and criticize her for not formulating her thought as precisely as she should have done at the beginning, but instead read the chapter or book to the end. The following are two examples of this. 1. "The form of being" as the philosopher's object, for instance, can be misleading, if identified with the greatest kind of being, which is not what Gill does, of course. 2. Gill introduces the ideals of the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* as "other-worldly" (pp. 86f.), before differentiating them (p. 89). This way of progressing requires well-trained readers, and exposes Gill's familiarity with the Platonic corpus. Needless to say, we should deal with Plato's writing in exactly the same way. Gill does so, most of the time at least.

5 See fn. 38, in Gill's Introduction. That Gill does not situate her interpretation between the Tübingen School and Sayre has to do with her aversion to the former, I feel. When she is more objective and benevolent, she makes more accurate judgments. In her *Sophist* interpretation, for example, she accordingly depicts her line as mediating between Michael Frede's and Lesley Brown's (see fn. 64, p. 165).

6 The *Timaeus* is a thorn in Gill's side with regard to immanent forms and her strong thesis that forms are not apart from sensible objects in our dialogues. In this later dialogue, Gill manages to avoid the regressive arguments of the *Parmenides* with the help of the Receptacle (see fn. 53, p. 38).

7 It would surprise me if Plato would accept Aristotle's definition of motion as Gill thinks he would (p. 235).

8 Gill does not distance herself from Ryle's scorn of the *Statesman*'s divisions (fn. 16, p. 182). Ryle raises false expectations of Plato in the *Statesman*. In this respect, he is as incorrect as Stenzel, who represents the opposite extreme thesis and apotheosizes the method of division.

9 Gill does not wish to understand *Parm.* 135b5-c3 in the stronger way. For my part, I think Plato is radical here, as radical as in *Phdr.* 266b. In any case, *Phl.* 57e6f. does not provide sufficient evidence for Gill's reading of ἡ τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι δύναμις in *Prm.* 135c1f.

10 I have argued for these theses in my *Sophist* chapter, in: *Die Metapher der Mischung in den platonischen Dialogen the Sophist and the Philebus*.

11 I am confident that by a thorough analysis of the Dialogue with the Giants at an initial stage of her book Gill would have had the opportunity to depict Plato's ambiguities, systematically delve into scholarship (by distinguishing the parties: Gerson and Politis on the one hand and Keyt and Brown on the other), and find argument for the parallel to Aristotle's general ontology of being *qua* being and against the connection to his theology. I have found and argued for both aspects in Plato's endeavor, but I cannot develop my views further here.

12 For an expression that characterizes Gill's manner, see Gill, p. 149.

13 This term stems from Sellars. Gill is happy to apply it to Plato's model of learning language (p. 136, fn. 82). Here I have detached it from its original context and used it to characterize Gill's undertaking in general.