

I

Ancient Philosophy for the Twenty-First Century

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It may sound peculiar to suggest that ancient philosophy can develop in a way appropriate to the twenty-first century. After all, it consists in the study of a body of texts which, apart from occasional new discoveries, remains fairly constant. Moreover, some among these texts have been studied for so long, and so intensively, that we might question whether there are any genuinely new developments to be made in their interpretation. Ancient philosophy, however, is a philosophical way of engaging with these texts; that is what distinguishes it from other ways of studying them. And philosophy develops differently at different times, so we would reasonably expect the state of ancient philosophy to reflect its engagement with philosophy.

In the twentieth century the discipline of ancient philosophy has undergone two major changes. Firstly, there was a radical shift as it joined the mainstream of analytical philosophy. Then there has been a series of developments peculiar to it, which though varied hang together and have in fact produced a more coherent situation at the beginning of the twenty-first century than has existed for some time. The future of ancient philosophy in the twenty-first century is an exciting one in large part because of its eventful history in the twentieth.

There are, of course, strands of the study of ancient philosophy which have escaped or ignored its engagement with analytical philosophy. In what follows I shall concentrate on analytical philosophy simply because it has been the main force in the field, and its effects have been felt in all areas of philosophy.

In the second half of the twentieth century ancient philosophy came to be emphatically present in philosophy departments. Before that, although philosophers taught and studied history of philosophy (with more or less enthusiasm) specialists even in Plato or Aristotle were quite likely to think of their professional home as being that of classics. (The conception of 'classics' or 'classical studies' as a subject has since become more problematic, and I shall return to this.) The scholarly skills needed to engage with ancient philosophers, even when accompanied by skills in argument, were likely to be developed in a context of historical and literary study of the ancient Graeco-Roman world.¹ Then in the late 1950s and 1960s, there was a great change. Hallowed works by Plato and Aristotle began to be treated as equal partners in philosophical debate, rather than revered authorities. A very 1960s

¹ So it is not surprising that in the twentieth century so many prominent figures in ancient philosophy have come from Oxford, where by historical accident philosophy was taught in a classics degree.

excitement developed as it became possible to argue on level ground with ancient thinkers, an excitement which, like much about the 1960s, can seem exaggerated in retrospect because its results have become part of our ordinary ways of thinking, but is still recalled by older scholars as the indication that something really different was happening. This excitement was increased by a surprisingly strong resentment aroused in some of the stuffer classicists by the new analytical approach to figures who *were*, for some of them, revered authorities.

For some time it has been taken for granted, in the major philosophy departments, that ancient philosophy is part of philosophy. Apart from a few eccentrics, philosophers recognize that their colleagues should include someone who teaches ancient philosophy. And those who teach ancient philosophy assume that the ancient texts are to be studied philosophically. However, the general demand that we study Plato on the parts of the soul, or Aristotle on the categories ‘philosophically’, raises some questions. These were not raised in the 1950s and 1960s when philosophers began reclaiming Plato and Aristotle as philosophers with arguments worth examining, rather than as historical figures important only for the influence of their conclusions. At the time, just what was most exciting was the new ability to focus on the argumentative content of an ancient text, asking directly, What exactly is the argument, and is it valid? What are the premises, and are they true?

This is unsurprising when we bear in mind that the impetus to treat Plato and Aristotle as fellow philosophers came from analytical philosophy, and is best seen simply as the application to ancient texts of the methods of analytical philosophy. Analytical philosophy, however, has as a movement been notoriously ahistorical, and on the whole hostile to the idea that the history of philosophy is relevant to it, so we might wonder how well it works to apply its methodology and techniques directly to ancient texts. Examining this issue is illuminating not just about ancient philosophy but also about the characterization of analytical philosophy itself.

Treating ancient texts philosophically can be, and in the 1950s and 1960s certainly was, regarded as methodologically quite straightforward. You read ancient texts looking for the arguments which support the philosophical positions put forward. You identify the premises and ask whether they are true; you identify the argument and find whether it is valid. If what you find fails to amount to a sound argument, you indicate which premises need to be added, or which argumentative steps need to be corrected, or both. This has appeared to many to be a neutral, transparent approach, in which every step is accountable simply to the canons of good argument. Just for this reason, it seemed for some time the only *philosophical* way to read ancient texts, the only way to treat Plato and Aristotle with respect as philosophical partners, rather than historical relics.

The excitement of discussing philosophy directly with Plato and Aristotle in this way can prevent us from being aware of just how much of our own interests we are bringing to the table, how strong our own assumptions are as to what is and what is not worth discussing. If we think that the only philosophical way to read Plato, say, is to extract an argument in the above way, and thus to get dialogue going between us as directly as possible, taking no account of any wider background

presuppositions that either of us is bringing along, then we are likely to drift into thinking that these wider considerations are irrelevant, because we are simply discussing the timelessly relevant issues of philosophy. Asking why just this problem seemed to require an answer in the fourth century BC, or seems to do so at the end of the second millennium, comes to seem optional at best, or even a distraction from what is philosophically relevant.

There are dangers in an excessively ahistorical approach, dangers of which those of us working in ancient philosophy have become more aware. It is working in reaction to these dangers that has produced the best work in the field in the last half-century, and the future of ancient philosophy lies in promoting these directions. In this respect the development of ancient philosophy has been rather unlike that of non-historical analytical philosophy, which on the whole has proceeded more placidly along unquestioned lines.² The development of ancient philosophy, on the other hand, can best be seen as a complicated and difficult attempt to retain ancient texts as subjects of philosophical discussion in their own right, while keeping aware of the influence of our own philosophical concerns. In particular we have learned to avoid the dead-ends that have been all too thoroughly explored in excessively direct and ahistorical engagement with the ancients.

The idea that we can just ignore differences between us and Plato, and can discuss one of his arguments in a way that concedes nothing to the historical distance between us, leads to a very selective approach to the ancient tradition. In practice, only issues and problems will be discussed which contemporary philosophers can already find relevant. So it is no accident that ancient philosophy as first practiced in the philosophical mainstream centred on a handful of texts, mainly in Plato and Aristotle, in which issues were discussed that lent themselves to treatment in terms of 1950s and 1960s assumptions, in particular assumptions about language and meaning, and the centrality of these themes for the rest of philosophy. Philosophers' concern with the ancients was for some time very unbalanced, with great over-emphasis on Plato and Aristotle, and on those few of their texts which lent themselves to focus on linguistic issues.

One feature of the impetus to treat ancient philosophers as contemporary partners was, and to some extent remains, an anxiety to show that ancient authors are worth contemporary attention, rather than being archaic blunderers. This anxiety can lead to a rather odd attitude in interpretation, in which no effort is spared to show that an argument which might appear weak or fallacious really contains hidden riches which are worth our time to explore. I once heard a leading analytical interpreter of Plato defend the position that, where an argument in Plato's text emerges as feeble or lacking premises, it is the interpreter's job to supply the missing elements, bringing them in from neighbouring parts of the text or from other dialogues. At what point, he was asked, do you call a halt to this improving cooperation with the text? When I get a sound argument, he retorted without

² I don't mean, of course, that there have been no disputes, rather that there has been less pressure to challenge basic methodological assumptions. Non-historical analytical philosophy, however, has changed its self-conception to some extent; see below, pp. 40–1.

missing a beat. As a result of this attitude some arguments, particularly in Plato, have received from analytical philosophers more loving and respectful attention than they have from anyone since the ancient Platonist commentators. Even when the aim has been to disagree with Plato, there has been little hesitation to fortify sometimes sketchy and informal argument with modernized equipment.³

The irony here is just one application of a more general irony, namely that ancient philosophy got taken up into the mainstream of analytical philosophy at the latter's most ahistorical point; seldom can a tradition have been less interested in anybody's past, including its own, than at just the time that articles began to appear in analytical philosophy journals on Aristotle's principle of individuation and Plato's Third Man Argument (a notorious problem to which we will return). Only gradually, over a period of years, did it become apparent that an understanding of the structure and motivation of Plato's theory of forms, say, is unlikely to come from the format of short, snappy exchanges of journal articles arguing about the exact structure of a short piece of argument in a particular dialogue.⁴

Taking ancient philosophy up into the mainstream of analytical philosophy was a tremendous catalyst. It produced brilliant work like the articles of Gwylm Owen.⁵ It made specialists in ancient philosophy realize that our training should be as rigorous as that of specialists in non-historical philosophy. And the task of explaining Plato to audiences with no background forced us to face philosophical issues in the text plainly and without compromise. It also made philosophers who had assumed that history of philosophy was just history of ideas realize that, to take one example, Aristotle's subtle and difficult account of the soul could provide real philosophical illumination in the context of modern philosophy of mind, and was worth serious, uncondescending discussion.⁶

Ancient philosophy's entry into the analytical mainstream has irreversibly altered the way ancient philosophy is studied and taught. Nonetheless, progress in ancient philosophy has taken us away from the straightforward idea that ancient texts can and should be discussed as though they were modern articles. I shall set out four

³ It is also true, though, that the early years of analytical argument with ancient philosophers saw a lot of now fortunately forgotten journal articles in which Plato and Aristotle were dismissed in a couple of pages for having committed the 'naturalistic fallacy' or the like.

⁴ From the start, there were complaints, particularly where Plato was concerned, that the analytical approach to ancient texts ignored the literary and historical context of the arguments. These complaints, however, tended to issue from sources uninterested in or contemptuous of analytical philosophy, and so it is not surprising that analytical philosophers found little in them to engage with. In recent years there has been a greater tendency (discussed below, pp. 31–2) to appreciate the significance for philosophical interpretation of literary and formal aspects of philosophical writing, Plato's in particular.

⁵ Owen's work, difficult and densely argumentative, has not survived as well as has that of easier and more accessible authors. Owen always had less concern for his publications than for his practice of teaching ancient texts in a rigorously philosophical way, and he would have been happy to think of his real legacy as being his students.

⁶ A good selection of articles and relevant bibliography can be found in M. C. Nussbaum and A. O. Rorty (eds.), *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima* (Oxford University Press, 1992); also useful is the section 'Psychology' by Stephen Everson in J. Barnes (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle* (Cambridge University Press, 1995). Substantial contributions are David Charles, *Aristotle's Philosophy of Action* (Duckworth, 1984) and Stephen Everson, *Aristotle on Perception* (Oxford University Press, 1997).

ways in which I take this to be so. Those who are suspicious of the idea of progress can make their own judgement as to whether the scene I depict is progress or regress; it is certainly different from what I just called the straightforward idea.

Ahistoricity

In recent years we have seen a rejection of the plain ahistorical approach. This of course forces us to be more specific in defining what is meant by 'ahistorical' here. There has never been a shortage of ancient historians and literary scholars chastising the study of ancient philosophers as 'ahistorical' where by this they mean that it is done without situating the works historically and culturally in a non-philosophical context. This kind of complaint refuses to take seriously the idea of studying philosophical argument in its own right, and students of ancient philosophy just have to face the fact that it is a professional hazard and will probably always be with us.

It is true that with ancient philosophers, particularly before Aristotle, we should not underestimate the possibility of important cultural factors which make the philosophical argument difficult for us to engage with. Parmenides and Empedocles, for example, write in Homeric hexameter verse, a style rather different, to put it mildly, from contemporary professional ways of writing philosophy. This introduces problems of vocabulary, style, and syntax which complicate our interpretation of the arguments, as well as issues of audience and reception. So sometimes, indeed, we do need to be reminded that there is non-philosophical background to be mastered before we can confidently proceed to discuss the philosophy. But this is not universally true; Hellenistic and later philosophy is frequently quite near in style to modern ways of producing philosophical writing. In any case, this is only one way in which study of ancient philosophy can be 'ahistorical', and surely not the most relevant one.

[I]t is a commonplace of modern criticism that every text is to be located within a complex network of cultural practices and material.⁷ What is the relevance of this to the study of ancient philosophy? We are just not in a position, with ancient philosophers, to contextualize their work in terms of contemporary history and culture; we know too little about the background in most cases, the biographical traditions have been thoroughly contaminated by philosophical polemic and hagiography, and some authors, notably Plato, write in ways which seem designed to frustrate explanation in terms of contemporary background.⁸ Moreover, many

⁷ Kathryn A. Morgan, 'Socrates and Gorgias at Delphi and Olympia: *Phaedrus* 235d6–236b4', *Classical Quarterly* 44(ii), (1994), 375–86, 375. I am not criticizing Morgan, who does not claim to be reading the text philosophically. She points out that a reference in Plato's *Phaedrus* to the dedication of statues at Delphi probably has a historic reference to the sophist Gorgias, picturesquely underlining Plato's already evident contempt in the dialogue for famous practitioners of rhetoric. Morgan is also quite aware of the point that 'Students of the ancient world may sometimes feel at a disadvantage; we simply do not have as much information as we would like in order to contextualize thoroughly. This has been especially true in the study of the Platonic dialogues' (375).

⁸ Some of Plato's dialogues have a thickly described background, and their vividness can lead us to forget that they are set at least one generation in the past. Plato further complicates things by his use of deliberate historical anachronisms.

ancient philosophers write in a way to which historical background is utterly irrelevant. The Middle Platonist Alcinous' *Handbook of Platonism*, for example, was written at some time between the first century BC and the second century AD, but nothing dates it within that period, so nothing in it can be explained by the large cultural and political changes in that period. Quite a few philosophical texts exist in this kind of multi-century limbo. But in any case added knowledge about cultural and historical background may not be helpful for a philosophical understanding of the texts. At most such background can position someone to focus on the philosophy; sometimes it can even be a distraction.

Yet the study of ancient philosophy has definitely become 'less ahistorical' in the last thirty years, so the texts are in some way being contextualized rather than being treated by contemporary philosophical analysis in a completely unmediated way. In part this naturally comes from disappointment at the results of focusing on individual arguments in isolation from their intellectual context, a disappointment which has led to the demand for more intellectual contextualization of such arguments. A case study in this kind of shift is to be found in the changing fortunes of the so-called 'Third Man' argument.

In Plato's dialogue *Parmenides* young Socrates puts forward what certainly looks like a position we find in other dialogues about what are called 'forms'. Parmenides, an older philosopher, raises against this position six objections, none of which Socrates is able to meet. The second one, a rather short passage of less than half a page, raises a problem about forms using the example of the form of *large*. Socrates' claim that there is a form of large leads, apparently, to an infinite regress. This has long been recognized as a significant argument, often referred to as the 'Third Man' argument, rather than the 'Third Large', because 'The Third Man' is Aristotle's name for an argument which looks relevantly similar to this one.

The argument itself is deceptively simple to state. When we consider a number of large things, we notice that they all share a common feature, that of being large, and we take this to be the form; the form is the one item in virtue of which all the large things are large. But then we go on to consider a second group of large things: the original large things and the form itself. And now it seems that they share a common feature, requiring a form in turn to be the one item in virtue of which they are all large. But once introduced, this line of thought leads to the conclusion that if we have even one form, we have infinitely many.

An article by Gregory Vlastos, one of the most influential figures in twentieth-century ancient philosophy, began a spurt of philosophical investigation of the argument. Vlastos suggested that the problem with the argument lies in Plato's holding a position that contains two assumptions which are not explicit in the text. The first is that the form of F is itself F. The second is that whatever is F cannot be F by virtue of itself. Suppose we say that there is a form of large but it is not itself large; or that it is large, but is large by virtue of itself; in neither case do we get the infinite regress.

Why should this particular point be crucial to Plato's interpretation, generating a flood of articles, often disagreeing very intemperately? To understand this we have to bear in mind that the background was seen as one in which Plato holds a 'Theory

of Forms', that is, has a position about forms which is organized in an explanatorily ambitious way comparable to that of a modern philosophical theory. Such a theory is vulnerable to a successful counter-argument; if it depends on assumptions which, when made explicit, lead to infinite regress, then it has obviously failed as a theory. Hence the 'Third Man' was seen as the crucial counter-argument to the 'Theory of Forms'. Argument swirled for decades round the issues of whether the argument destroys the theory, or the theory withstands the argument, and of whether Plato was aware, or not, of the assumptions he was making and their implications. Vlastos held that the argument is a record of 'honest perplexity': Plato could see that there was a fundamental problem, but couldn't identify what it was. Some classicists of the old school argued that the theory withstands the argument, since the argument depends on a misconstrual of what forms are. Some argued that Plato recognized the upshot of the argument and changed his theory of forms to avoid it.

Each of these views has implications for what is often called 'the development of Plato's thought'. If the argument rests on a misunderstanding of the theory, then it gives us no reason to think that the theory ever changed. If the argument damages the theory, and Plato recognized this, then we would expect works written after the *Parmenides* to reflect this. If Plato realizes that something is wrong, but cannot identify what, we would still expect a less confident use of the 'theory of forms' than before. So a large part of the controversy involved the issue of whether Plato's thought developed in a way marked by either abandoning or modifying the 'theory of forms'. Study focused on dialogues generally considered to be later than the arguments in the *Parmenides*, but this proved inconclusive; because Plato never develops a technical terminology there can be dispute as to whether various passages do in fact constitute a reference to forms, and what appears to be the main example of a 'late' dialogue containing an account of forms vulnerable to the 'Third Man', the *Timaeus*, may well not be later than the argument.

All of this presumes that the 'theory of forms' is a defining part of Plato's thought, and that the issue of whether it can be held despite the 'Third Man' argument is one the answer to which is going to determine central issues about Plato's philosophy. This explains the ongoing activity, for over two decades, of books and articles containing ever more refined and ingenious approaches to the argument and its attendant issues, especially that of the form F being itself F (so-called 'self-predication').⁹ This activity eventually died down out of exhaustion, as the relevant moves and counter-moves became clear; there was no definite winner.

Yet the 'Third Man' does not remain as a pressing unsolved problem. Rather, we can now see that a great deal of the time and fuss was off the point, and that the argument yields far better philosophical understanding if instead of plucking it out of its context and treating it as though it were straightforwardly a modern argument attacking a modern kind of theory, we try to put it into its broader philosophical context.

⁹ A very thorough analysis, with references to the modern literature, is to be found in Gail Fine, *On Ideas* (Oxford University Press, 1993). Fine deals with Aristotle's criticisms of Plato's theory of forms, in a way sensitive to all the evidence, and to the differences in methodology between the two philosophers.

This involves, firstly, recognizing that the *Parmenides* is a dialogue, not a philosophical treatise. So much writing about the dialogue form in Plato has in the twentieth century come from literary and non-analytical sources, and it has frequently been so hostile to philosophy, that analytical philosophers have been understandably reluctant to give it a serious role. Only relatively recently has it become clear that the dialogue form has an important *epistemological* role for Plato. It distances him from what is said, even when it is said by Socrates, in a way which should inhibit the reader from simple-mindedly accepting what Socrates says as being what Plato thinks. This does not imply that Plato rejects, or is dubious about, its truth; the point is rather one about the way the reader receives it. If we accept what we find in Plato on his authority, then, even if what we have acquired is true, we have acquired it in a non-philosophical and unreflective manner. Plato presents us with arguments in a way designed to encourage us to pursue them *as arguments*. Only if we think about the conclusions, and the way they are reached, for ourselves are we making headway towards philosophical understanding. This is the most likely explanation of why we never find a ‘theory of forms’ laid out in the manner of a treatise; instead, we find forms in various passages and various argumentative roles which we have to pursue for ourselves. Of course, these passages are part of a larger position, but there is no writing of Plato’s where the work is done for us, and all the parts of such a position are brought together for us and presented as a theory in the modern manner.

The first part of the *Parmenides*, moreover, is not just a dialogue, but is very like the Socratic dialogues where Socrates confronts someone who claims to be an expert, but is shown up as lacking understanding when he cannot answer Socrates’ questions about the nature of his subject. In the *Parmenides* it is Socrates who is the overconfident purveyor of a position which Parmenides’ questions show that he doesn’t really understand. If we take this point seriously, we can appreciate that the result of Socrates’ failed answers is the same as the result for others in the Socratic dialogues—*aporia*, puzzlement, the state you are in when you realize that you don’t understand something that you thought you did. This is not the straightforward destruction of a theory, because failure to answer probing questions adequately doesn’t prove that you are wrong. You might be right, but you still have a lot of work to do before you really understand your position. Once we take this point seriously, we can see why the result in the dialogue is not that Parmenides tells Socrates that his forms are no good, but rather that he tells him that his commitment to the idea has been premature: he must train himself further in various kinds of positive and negative abstract argument before he can claim to have understanding of it. Finally, once we take *this* point seriously we can see why the *Parmenides*’ first part is followed by a long second part consisting of just this—argument for and against a number of highly abstract theses. Moreover, it is through looking carefully in the second part that philosophers have found arguments and themes that are highly illuminating about the arguments in the first part, including the ‘Third Man’.¹⁰

¹⁰ See M. Schofield, ‘Likeness and Likenesses in the *Parmenides*’, in C. Gill and M. N. McCabe (eds.), *Form and Argument in Late Plato* (Oxford University Press 1996). M. L. Gill, in her introduction to the Hackett translation of *Parmenides* by M. L. Gill and P. Ryan (1996) gives a clear account of the options, with reference to previous work.

The fate of the copious literature on the ‘Third Man’ gives us a cautionary tale as to what happens when an ancient text is seized upon too unreflectively and treated as though we had a confrontation of theory with counter-argument like those in analytical philosophy journals. Once the argument is taken out of its argumentative context and intellectual background, its significance becomes misunderstood and its importance overblown—and so are supposed implications about the development of Plato’s thought. We gain much more understanding when our engagement with it is mediated by consideration of Plato’s methodology, particularly his philosophical use of dialogue.

It is obvious, however, that our improvement in understanding both the argument and its role does not represent a falling-off from standards of analytical rigour in argument. It just makes it clear that carefulness and precision in dealing with arguments do not have to bring with them further, more locally modern assumptions, such as that a philosophical position must take the form of a theory which can in principle fall to a single counter-argument. It also shows how precision in arguing is actually increased once we bear in mind that for ancient philosophers there is nothing methodologically odd about putting forward a theory in a way which explicitly recognizes that it has problems and is not fully understood.

This kind of contextualizing obviously requires historical knowledge of, for example, much of Plato’s work and not just this dialogue, as well as awareness of differences between ancient and modern methodology where theory and argument are concerned. In a perfectly good sense it is a less ‘ahistorical’ approach than the one visible in previous focus on the ‘Third Man’. But none of this is historical in a sense opposed to philosophical rigour, implying that Plato is being treated as history of ideas. Indeed, it is only when we contextualize the argument in this kind of way that we achieve a precise philosophical understanding of it.

Broader Scope

The philosophers who made the first and strongest appeal to people wanting to treat ancient texts in an analytical way were Plato and Aristotle. This was only natural: their texts were accessible without source-criticism, they were already prominent in the teaching tradition, and various themes in them were already familiar to non-specialists. Treatment even of Plato and Aristotle, however, was at first constrained by the analytical tradition’s focus on issues of meaning and language: a few of Plato’s dialogues, such as the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist*, were heavily emphasized because of issues about meaning and reference that were discovered there, and interest in Aristotle focused greatly on themes of language and reality found in the *Categories* and the central books of the *Metaphysics*. Interest in philosophy of mind also led to intensive study of Aristotle’s works on the ‘soul’. None of these topics, it is worth mentioning, were regarded as central in ancient philosophical debate.

Once again, philosophical interest in a limited circle of topics, intensively worked on, became exhausted. From the late 1970s, however, a huge widening of concerns developed among ancient philosophers, spreading interests both within Plato and

Aristotle studies and outside it. Once again, there was no shedding of analytical exactness and rigour in argument. It was just parochial twentieth-century limitations of interest which one by one were overcome. One striking example is the renewed interest in Plato's accounts of love and philosophy, and Aristotle's books on friendship, texts which had hitherto been skirted for the most part with nervousness or embarrassment. That texts like these could be treated in philosophically rewarding ways did a great deal to bring these themes into the mainstream even of non-historical analytical philosophy itself.¹¹

Another limitation that got shed fast was limitation of interest to Plato and Aristotle. Groups of ancient philosophers, both locally and internationally, focused philosophically on post-Aristotelian philosophy in particular, an area that had been thought of as the preserve of specialists: many of the major texts were available only in the original languages, and the tradition of discussion had been mainly limited to classicists. In the last two decades, however, there has been a stream of translations of later texts and philosophical debates bringing them into the mainstream of ancient philosophy teaching and research. Later ancient philosophy is now available at all teaching levels, and as a result the field has broadened in a strikingly rapid way. Stoic logic, Epicurean ethics, and Sceptical self-refutation arguments are now just as much a part of the field, as that is defined by teaching, publications, and conferences, as Plato and Aristotle. The result has been a redefining of the whole field. Not only are more ancient philosophers included, but our conception of ancient philosophy is now much less focused on large dominating figures, such as Plato and Aristotle had become, and more on continuing debates and themes. And we see Plato and Aristotle themselves more as the ancients did: not as isolated giants, but as philosophers among others, with a broad range of philosophical interests and arguments.

Unsurprisingly, the non-historical mainstream of analytical philosophy did not keep up with this expansion of historical horizons. One result of this growing divergence was the birth of a number of new philosophy periodicals devoted to ancient philosophy, and a corresponding decrease of such articles published in journals belonging to non-historical analytical philosophy. The new ancient philosophy journals, born in the late 1970s and early 1980s, are still going strong, and their content illustrates very nicely the way in which ancient philosophy has and has not moved away from analytical philosophy. In their interests the articles do not defer to the current fashions in non-analytical journals, their agenda being given by debates arising within the field. They are, however, as rigorous and exact as articles in non-historical analytical journals. Unlike pre-1950s articles on the same topics they are unlikely to contain large amounts of untranslated Greek and Latin, or to focus on philological points unless these are crucial to an argument.

¹¹ Here much is owed to the work of Martha Nussbaum on Platonic dialogues like the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, which had been skirted not just because of their content but because of their rich literary style, alien to contemporary analytical philosophers. Nussbaum's work on ancient moral philosophy has been of landmark importance because it benefited from consideration of the rich moral psychology involved, and this has in turn enriched her work on modern ethical and political thought.

Many of the conferences and meetings which sparked off the huge new interest in later Greek philosophy were international ones, and another result of ancient philosophy's becoming more independent of the analytical mainstream in anglophone countries was that it became more international in outlook. There was increasing cooperation with ancient philosophers working in Europe, the results of which can be seen in the increasingly internationalized ancient philosophy journals. In continental Europe, ancient philosophy has a rather different relation to analytical philosophy, which it encountered somewhat later than did the anglophones. In the European traditions, especially the French, philology had never become as atheoretical a study as it had in Britain, and it had more reserves ready for its encounter with analytical philosophy. Also, analytical philosophy was never the powerful presence in continental Europe that it was in anglophone countries, and so it was never able to impose its own sense of philosophical priorities as it first did in those countries. It is not so surprising, then, that from the first the impact of analytical ways of doing philosophy in European countries was to focus attention in a more rigorous and exact way on the ancient philosophers' arguments. This was in sharp contrast to competing philosophical ways of reading ancient texts in these countries, which often treated them in broad and sweeping ways. It fitted in well, however, with a tradition which insisted on philological erudition, and had never been interested in taking over the philosophical interests and dogmas of anglophone non-historical analytical philosophers.¹²

Methodology

As we have investigated ever more theories and arguments over the area of ancient philosophy, one thing that we have come to understand a great deal better is ancient philosophical methodology. It was philosophically exciting, in the 1960s, to replace the classicists' view of Plato as a grand sweeping synthesizer, more interested in vision than in argument, by a Plato with whom we could simply argue, laying out his arguments and debating with them. But, as the case of the 'Third Man' vividly shows, this could lead to an attitude which missed Plato's own methodology because of blindly imposing our own.

It has been a gradual process over time for philosophers to come to understand ancient philosophical arguments in terms of ancient philosophical methodology. As this has happened, it has inevitably led to increased self-awareness about our own methodology, and hence to a weakening of the ahistorical viewpoint implicit in

¹² In France, Jacques Brunschwig and André Laks should be mentioned as leading figures in this continental approach to ancient texts. See A. Laks, 'Herméneutique et argumentation' 146–54 of *Débat* 72 (1992), Gallimard. In Germany, the influence and pupils of Guenther Patzig have been notable. In a study of this scope, I cannot do more than mention a few highlights of traditions which deserve fuller investigation, but I should not pass over the vigorous Dutch contributions, particularly Jaap Mansfeld's doxographical studies at Utrecht, and the notable flourishing of ancient philosophy in Italy, particularly under the influence of the late Gabriele Giannantoni at Rome and Marcello Gigante at Naples, the latter having revitalized study of the Epicurean writings from Herculaneum. Many Italian ancient philosophers have become better-known in the anglophone world, such as Anna Maria Ioppolo and Carlo Natali.

taking ancient philosophers to be our partners in some timeless argument. Far from leading to a weakening of the philosophical impulse in discussing these texts, this has led to a deepened philosophical engagement with them, one that can have implications for modern philosophy as well as for our understanding of the ancients.

One example of this is the issue of teleology. Aristotle in particular has been the target of various criticisms to the effect that his biology depends on unacceptable 'metaphysical' ideas, such as teleology. What exactly, though, is teleology? When little attempt was made to explore Aristotle's biology, it was often assumed that teleology must imply a grossly anthropomorphic view of the natural world, in which natural things and processes were thought of as though they had desires, plans, and so on. Increased attention to the biology, and to its relations with Aristotle's epistemology of science and the rest of his science, has resulted in clarification of the whole idea of teleology. It is now clear that Aristotle's teleology is not anthropomorphic and in no way depends, as some later theories do, on the notion of divine plan in the world. It is an immanent teleology, recognizing that in the natural world there are many things and processes such that we cannot understand their nature until we recognize the role they play 'for the sake of some larger system'. The increase in sophistication in our understanding of teleology has had an impact on both ancient and modern studies of the topic.¹³

The really dramatic results, however, have come in the areas of epistemology and of ethics. The contrast between the way in which Plato's epistemology was regarded, for example, in the 1960s and the way it is studied now is astounding. When Plato began to be discussed in the terms of analytical philosophy, his claims about knowledge were simply interpreted in familiar terms, and the result was distinctly odd. Forms were taken to be abstract objects which we know by a peculiar kind of mental seeing;¹⁴ not surprisingly, this appeared to be, as an account of knowledge, both mysterious and extravagant.

Since then, careful work has shown us that Plato's concern with knowledge is complex. In the 'Socratic' dialogues the model of knowledge is that of skill or expertise; the expert is the person who has understanding of their subject-matter, and hence, according to Plato, should be able to 'give an account' of it—that is, explain and justify what it is about the subject which they understand which grounds their successful practice of it. In the case of people who fail to meet this

¹³ Understanding of Aristotle's biology has enormously increased in sophistication in the last half-century. The work of David Balme has received increased recognition; see the collection of articles in his honour edited by Allan Gotthelf, *Aristotle on Nature and Living Things* (Mathesis Publications/Bristol Classical Press, 1985). *Philosophical Issues in Aristotle's Biology*, edited by Allan Gotthelf and James Lennox, is another influential collection of pioneering articles. Also important are Pierre Pellegrin's *Aristotle's Classification of Animals*, translated by A. Preus (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1986), and *Aristotle's Philosophy of Biology*, Cambridge Studies in Philosophy and Biology (Cambridge University Press, 2001), James Lennox's collected papers.

¹⁴ Plato was taken to 'posit . . . the existence of Ideas as real abiding entities visible to the mind, and therefore [sic] qualified to be objects of knowledge in the fullest sense' (R. M. Hare, *Plato* (Oxford University Press 1982, 37)). Hare regards this position as ridiculous, but instead of seeking a more sympathetic understanding he accuses Plato of various muddles about language and reference supposedly leading to the absurd position.

standard for understanding virtue, piety, justice, and the like we can discern what grounds Plato's requirements for knowledge of what he calls a form—the object of understanding which grounds successful practice in the ethical realm. The demand comes from the same source as the everyday demand we make on an expert to be able to articulate and communicate to us the basis of her understanding, and hence the knowledge in question, far from being a passive gaze on an abstract object, is thought of as essentially a kind of *practical* knowledge—a knowledge of how to act which is like that of the everyday expert in practical matters.¹⁵

In dialogues like the *Republic* we can also see the influence of mathematics as a model for knowledge in general—something which in its turn has implications for the way forms are regarded. It is from the *Republic* that we get most of the imagery for knowledge of forms (particularly in the famous passage of Sun, Line and Cave). Both of these models are influential in a great deal of Plato's work, but we also find a third in the *Meno* and *Theaetetus*, one closer to modern epistemology in its focus on the individual knower's relation to a particular fact, and on the idea that knowledge might be some kind of improvement on true belief. Great progress has been made in disentangling these different strands in Plato's thinking about knowledge, and this has not just improved our interpretation of Plato, but has produced more thought about different conceptions of knowledge, and the very varied character of ancient epistemology. Especial interest has been raised by the model of practical expertise, with its implicit challenge to the twentieth-century philosophical dogma that thought about values cannot be in its nature practical.¹⁶ And there has been much reflection on the notion of understanding, something which does not correspond readily to any modern epistemological notion, but appears in the ancient texts as a prominent and powerful idea.¹⁷

Work on ancient scepticism, pioneered by Myles Burnyeat and a number of other scholars,¹⁸ has in effect rediscovered a whole ancient methodology which had

¹⁵ The classic article showing the importance of skill or expertise for Plato's account of knowledge in the Socratic dialogues is Paul Woodruff's 'Plato's early theory of knowledge' in Stephen Everson (ed.), *Epistemology* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), ch. 4, ('Companions to Ancient Thought' 1—the volume also contains extensive relevant bibliography).

¹⁶ My article, 'Moral Knowledge as Practical Knowledge' in Paul, Miller, and Paul (eds.), *Moral Epistemology* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 236–56, explicitly points up the contrast between ancient and modern demands on moral epistemology.

¹⁷ Here the work of Myles Burnyeat has been important, notably in reference to the famously difficult claims of Aristotle about *nous* (often translated 'understanding' or 'comprehension'). See Burnyeat's 'Aristotle on Understanding Knowledge', in E. Berti (ed.), *Aristotle on Science: the Posterior Analytics* (Editrice Antenore, Padua, 1981), 97–139. Christopher Taylor, in his study 'Aristotle's epistemology', in Stephen Everson (ed.), *Epistemology* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 116–42, refers to other work on the issue by James Lesher, Aryeh Kosman, and Charles Kahn.

¹⁸ Seminal and much discussed articles by Jonathan Barnes, Myles Burnyeat, and Michael Frede are reprinted in M. Burnyeat and M. Frede (eds.), *The Original Sceptics: A Controversy* (Hackett, 1997). Important sceptical arguments are translated and commented in *The Modes of Scepticism: Ancient Texts and Modern Interpretations*, Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes (Cambridge University Press, 1985), and there is a recent translation of Sextus Empiricus' *Outlines of Scepticism* by Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes in the Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy series (Cambridge University Press, 2000). There has been a spate of recent articles and books on many aspects of ancient scepticism, of which some of the most

remained misunderstood for some time. As developed in modern analytical philosophy, scepticism is generally understood as a claim about the possibility of knowledge, either in general or in some specific area. If this assumption is brought to the ancient texts, an obviously inadequate interpretation results. Careful study of a wide range of ancient texts has recovered a proper understanding of ancient scepticism, which is an attitude leading to the investigation of any disputable claim, and is as concerned with beliefs as with knowledge. Unlike modern scepticism, which with few exceptions assumes the viability of a philosophical position insulated from practical effect, ancient scepticism takes seriously the thought that our attitude to our beliefs will be changed if we find that they lack rational support which we previously took them to have.

In turn, as the difference between ancient and modern conceptions of scepticism became clearer, we have recovered the sense of the ancient conflict between interpretations of Plato as a sceptic and interpretations taking his work ‘dogmatically’, that is, as a system of doctrines. In the modern understanding of scepticism, it is bizarre to think of Plato as a sceptic; when we recover the ancient understanding of scepticism, we can see that this is a subtle and powerful interpretation, which has many attractions. This recovery of the ancient options has done a great deal to loosen the hold of contemporary preconceptions about interpreting Plato, and to lead to a more open-minded attitude as to how to read—and to teach—this most elusive of ancient philosophers.

Most dramatic, though, is the case of ethical theory. Ancient ethics has been studied throughout the twentieth century, mostly in Aristotle’s version, but has generally been regarded as an object of purely historical interest. The resurgence of philosophical interest in ancient texts at first merely added to this view: various ancient arguments were convicted of ‘deriving values from facts’, or similar sins, and Aristotle’s supposed ‘function’ argument was plucked out of context, given an overblown significance and mostly misunderstood. Study of ethics, however, benefited greatly from the expansion of interest into a wider range of ancient philosophy, since Aristotle’s theory is only one of many ancient theories produced within the same tradition, that in which happiness and virtue are the basic concepts.

Ancient ethics begins from reflection on my life as a whole, and my attempts to live a good life, rather than one whose form is given by unreflective adherence to norms and priorities. Different ethical theories are seen as giving different answers to the question of how I can, in fact, live a good life, and ethics is thus seen as a struggle to come up with the right specification of my final end, the goal I am seeking in my life as a whole. Because this end is in ancient thought characterized as *eudaimonia* or happiness, this type of ethical theory is rightly called eudaimonist. Until the last decades, theories of this kind had been seen as being of very limited contemporary relevance, mainly because of crude and uncriticized conceptions of happiness. Aristotle’s theory, for example, was frequently dismissed as egoistic, the assumption being that happiness

noteworthy are Jonathan Barnes, *The Toils of Scepticism* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), Richard Bett, *Pyrrho, His Antecedents and His Legacy* (Oxford University Press, 2000), and Charles Brittain, *Philo of Larissa: the Last of the Academic Sceptics* (Oxford University Press, 2001).

is enjoyment or some other desirable state of yourself which you are trying to bring about. Related problems of interpretation afflicted understanding of virtue in this kind of theory. It is clear just from looking at Aristotle's theory, for example, that virtue, the activity of being a certain kind of good person, is a complex and multi-faceted thing. Yet it has persistently been mistaken for a crude kind of causal build-up of tendencies to behaviour, a state somehow brought about in you.

Progress in understanding the ancient ideas better has been greatly helped by the widening of interest from Aristotle to other ancient theories. The ethical theories of Epicurus and the Stoics, for example, had traditionally been treated mostly within these theories as wholes, obscuring the point that their ethical framework is the same as Aristotle's, much though they disagree on other points. Comparative study of these and other theories enabled their common eudaimonistic framework to be seen more clearly, and in this case illumination went rather strikingly in both directions: we can now see that ancient debates about ethics to a great extent took the form of comparing and criticizing different options within a shared framework,¹⁹ and we have a better understanding from our own side of rich and ethically promising conceptions of virtue and happiness.²⁰

And so, study of virtue and happiness over a wide range of theories has had two mutually supporting results. On the one hand, we now have a far better understanding of theories like those of Epicurus and the Stoics. Epicurus had been seen simply as a hedonist, and the Stoics as implausibly high-minded about virtue. Interpreting them in a rigorously philosophical way, and seeing their theories as attempts to produce differing defensible conceptions of living a good life, has revealed these theories to be far richer and more philosophically applicable.²¹ On the other hand, our improved understanding of virtue and happiness in the ancient theories has fed into the modern revival of so-called 'virtue ethics'. For some time virtue has become a prominent concept in ethical theory, but modern assumptions have limited the illumination that this can bring. Exploration of different kinds of ancient theory that base themselves on virtue and happiness has opened up the many different ways these concepts might figure in a modern ethical theory.

¹⁹ Hence there has been renewed interest in Cicero's work of ethical philosophy, *De Finibus*, which takes precisely the form of debates for and against current ethical theories. There is now a new translation of it into modern English by Raphael Woolf: *Cicero On Moral Ends*, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

²⁰ My own *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford University Press, 1993), deals with the structure of ancient eudaimonism and analyses the theories of Aristotle, Epicurus, the Stoics, and later hybrid Aristotelian/Stoic theories as options within the eudaimonistic framework. This allows the concepts of virtue and happiness in ancient ethics to emerge in some detail, in a way which minimizes the interfering factors of modern assumptions about ethical theory.

²¹ As well as *The Morality of Happiness* (see last note) there has been a great deal of work on Epicurean hedonism, beginning with Phillip Mitsis, *Epicurus' Ethical Theory* (Cornell University Press, 1988) and continuing vigorously in the journals, and on Stoic ethics, beginning especially with Brad Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism* (Oxford University Press, 1985). Discussion of these theories tends to remain more at the specialist level because of the nature of our sources, but recent more widely available works are Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: from Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford University Press, 2000), and Lawrence Becker, *A New Stoicism* (Princeton University Press, 1998).

Ethics always had the most to gain from a progressive detachment from the substantial priorities of analytical philosophy. Although there have been exceptions, which over the past half-century have become increasingly prominent,²² ethical philosophy in the analytical tradition has until recently been greatly handicapped by metaphysical assumptions of an empiricist kind which, apart from their own problems, made it hard to do justice to the ancient theories, and particularly hard to get a proper understanding of the role of virtue and happiness in those theories. The recent growing prominence of ‘virtue ethics’ of various varieties owes much to the way ancient theories have been better understood. This is a strikingly clear example of the way ancient philosophy can feed back into the mainstream, and also of the way that analytical philosophy’s own priorities and assumptions can be discarded without losing concern for clarity of argument and precision of meaning. Work on ancient ethics has become ever more ‘analytical’ in the sense of caring for rigour in our understanding of the ancient debates.

What Matters for Ancient Philosophy

Those of us working in ancient philosophy no longer feel called upon to show that Plato is already of interest to people uninterested in the history of philosophy (never a sensible endeavour in the first place). The project of showing that Plato is (despite appearances) interesting because he has a problem that would be solved by introducing the distinction between transparent and opaque reference, or the project of showing that Aristotle is interesting because he has some kind of functionalist theory of mind, are projects that for some time have had no future.

Ancient philosophy has increased in self-confidence and (yes) in self-esteem. We no longer defer to the interests of ahistorically minded philosophers, or take the concerns of late twentieth-century analytical philosophy to be unquestioned presuppositions of any properly philosophical enquiry. What we do do, is to apply to ancient texts the concern, associated with analytical philosophy, for precision and rigour in argument.

This result may seem meagre, and also ironic. Meagre because ancient philosophy by now shares so little of the assumptions and priorities of non-historical analytical philosophy; ironic because the influence of such an ahistorical movement seems to have produced a trend in historical philosophy whose vigour increases with its historical awareness.²³ Yet properly understood, the debt of ancient philosophy as presently practised to analytical philosophy is far from meagre. Ancient philosophy has been relocated into philosophy in a definitive way. And the irony is lessened once we reflect that the result has been to restore an interest in ancient philosophy as the practice of philosophical argument—and indeed to revive interest in periods of ancient philosophy where this took a particularly specialized and sophisticated form. And so the study of

²² E.g. Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot, John McDowell, Bernard Williams, and Rosalind Hursthouse—philosophers whose own views are very diverse.

²³ Something similar is true, I think, of the history of early modern philosophy; but the case will have to be made independently.

ancient philosophy has ended up doing what the ancient philosophers were doing, namely argue and debate about a huge range of philosophical topics. The surprising thing now is not that we can enter into ancient philosophical debates. What is surprising is rather that in the early part of this century our tradition could have become so narrowed and so isolated from the activity of philosophers arguing in non-historical mode. Engagement with analytical philosophy restored the study of ancient philosophy to philosophical vigour. It has been so successfully invigorated that it is now clear that study of ancient philosophy, far from needing non-historical philosophy to grant it a list of interesting topics, has much to teach some strands of modern philosophy, particularly epistemology and ethics.

If philosophical study of ancient philosophers now shares few priorities and assumptions with non-historical analytical philosophy, should it be said to have parted company with it? A comparison of the latest issue of an ancient philosophy journal with one from a journal in the analytical mainstream might lead to this thought, for it is unlikely to turn up much overlap of topics or methodology. However, the very point of whether this matters raises the consideration that the self-definition of analytical philosophy has not remained static either. It is arguable that by the late twentieth century analytical philosophy has become essentially characterized as a concern for precision and rigour in argument, less tied to particular assumptions about meaning and the role of science than earlier analytical philosophers.²⁴ If this is taken to be the case, then ancient philosophy is still firmly in the analytical fold. Only if analytical philosophy is taken to include substantial philosophical assumptions has the study of ancient philosophy distanced itself. I take it that this is not an issue that can be easily or rapidly settled, and if the implications are understood there is no strong need to settle it.²⁵

What of the relation of ancient philosophy to classics? This has been much complicated by the massive refocusing of classics as a subject. Forty years ago classics, particularly the study of the classical languages, was sufficiently entrenched in schools, in both Europe and America, that anyone going on to specialize in ancient philosophy was likely already to have a solid linguistic and cultural background. This is no longer the case; graduates wishing to specialize in ancient philosophy often learn Greek and Latin as research tools, and thus inevitably lack a wider classical background; their interest in ancient philosophy may well be unaccompanied by independent interest in ancient literature or history.²⁶ Further, given the pressures for publication, especially in North America, it is often difficult for aspirants to gain sufficient mastery of the material to make worthwhile contributions early enough for career advancement. As a result, classicists can find some ancient philosophers to be underequipped or insufficiently interested in textual and literary issues which can determine local points of philosophical importance.

²⁴ These assumptions are predominantly of an empiricist kind, and in the past some of them have led to bad misunderstandings of philosophers like Plato.

²⁵ I am grateful to Brian Leiter for suggestions on this issue.

²⁶ There has been an analogous trend with ancient history, which is now often to be found in history departments, taught by people with historians' training, rather than in classics departments.

Meanwhile, departments of classics have themselves developed in a much less specialized and philological direction, and have become more assimilated to the model of modern literary departments, with stress on gender and ethnic perspectives, and with the pedagogy influenced by currently fashionable literary theory. This has sometimes produced a distancing from, even hostility to, ancient philosophy analytically practised, since the literary theory involved is often derived from very different philosophical traditions. Also, and with a certain amount of irony, classicists are often unwilling to accept ancient philosophy on its own terms because of a theory-driven insistence on interpreting texts in terms of their non-philosophical background. One particularly strange example of this is the new *Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*, which is preoccupied with the original productions of ancient dramas, and contains no discussion of Aristotle's *Poetics*, nor of any of the theoretical issues which Aristotle raises. As a result, something of a disciplinary divide has developed between ancient philosophy analytically practised, and the methodology employed by younger classicists. This is not universal (it is more pronounced in North America than in other anglophone countries) and there can be attempts to bridge the gap, successful mainly with Plato, the only philosopher with substantial appeal to both parties.²⁷

Conclusion

In an interesting way, the impact of analytical philosophy on the study of ancient philosophy has been to rejuvenate it, precisely by means of the recognition that this study is not a timeless activity without substantial philosophical presuppositions. Rather, it is a study of ancient texts which brings to them the same rigour in argument and concern for well-based understanding that motivated their original authors. Like those authors, we have philosophical assumptions and methodological preferences of our own, which we do well to be aware of.

The future for ancient philosophy thus lies in carrying on what we are already doing: engaging with the ancient texts with analytical rigour, but without necessarily taking on the specific modern assumptions and concerns of non-historical analytical philosophy. How does doing this differ from doing what the ancient philosophers themselves were doing? Not much, if at all (allowing, of course, for different styles and methods). So what we should be doing is new and old at the same time. This is unsurprising if we reflect, as some in the first flush of analytical excitement forgot to do, that history of philosophy is of its nature a hybrid and impure activity. We are not doing 'pure' analytical philosophy, but we are not just doing history either. (Hence we can always expect imperceptive criticism from both sides.) We argue with the ancients, but always keeping aware of our assumptions, and of theirs. If we forget to take account of our own philosophical assumptions,

²⁷ Some examples of successful interdisciplinary collections on Plato are: J. C. Klagge and N. Smith (eds.), *Methods of Interpreting Plato and His Dialogues* (*Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, supplementary vol. 1992), Charles Griswold (ed.), *Platonic Readings, Platonic Writings* (Routledge, 1988), and Julia Annas and Christopher Rowe (eds.), *New Perspectives on Plato, Modern and Ancient* (Harvard University Press, 2002).

we shall get the ancients wrong. If we forget to take account of theirs, we shall also get them wrong. It is a difficult project, with, as is clear, a huge and continuing risk of getting things wrong. The future of ancient philosophy lies with a clear-headed acceptance of this and the complexity it brings. We should avoid either an attempt to retreat to a supposed purity of contextless and timeless philosophical debate, or a fallback to doing history of ideas.

I should emphasize in conclusion the already obvious point that this has not, despite its inevitably historical focus, been a survey of work done in ancient philosophy in the last decades, and makes no predictions as to which particular areas will be the winners in the research stakes. Work in ancient philosophy has never been more lively or spread over a wider area; progress and achievement lie in very diverse directions. Moreover, a survey doing justice to the wide range of excellent work done in Europe, Britain, and North America in the last decades would be a completely different kind of undertaking.^{28,29,30,31}

²⁸ I give a survey of work in the UK, up to the 1990s, in 'Royaume-Uni: III:La philosophie antique', in *La philosophie en Europe*, sous la direction de Raymond Klibansky et David Pears (Gallimard, 1993), 398–404.

²⁹ The best recent introduction to ancient philosophy as a subject is *Philosophie grecque*, sous la direction de Monique Canto-Sperber, en collaboration avec Jonathan Barnes, Luc Brisson, Jacques Brunschwig et Gregory Vlastos (Presses Universitaires de France, 1997). The subject has been greatly helped by a recent increase in research tools. We have large numbers of good new translations. Translations of the Presocratics can be found both in the scholarly Cambridge presentation of Kirk, Raven, and Schofield and in more popular translations by Barnes and Waterfield. Numerous recent translations of Plato can be found in Penguin, Oxford World's Classics, and the new Hackett complete works. The older Oxford translation of the complete works of Aristotle has been revised, and numerous recent translations of individual works are available. Post-Hellenistic philosophy is available in a number of new translations of individual authors (notably Cicero and Sextus) and in anthologies by Inwood and Gerson and Long and Sedley. Philosophical commentaries can be found in the Oxford series of Clarendon Plato, Clarendon Aristotle, and Clarendon Later Ancient Philosophy translations. Cambridge has produced useful Companions to Plato, Aristotle, Stoicism, and Early Greek Philosophy, containing topical articles and bibliography. There is a new *Encyclopaedia of Classical Philosophy* from Greenwood, a revised *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, and new histories of ancient philosophy from Blackwells, Routledge, and Harvard (taken over from Flammarion). There are recent Cambridge histories of ancient political thought and Hellenistic philosophy, as well as the Cambridge series of texts (translated with notes) in the history of philosophy and history of political thought, and Cambridge topical Companions to Ancient Thought. Electronic resources are also expanding: the whole of Greek and Latin literature is now available on CD-ROM, the Perseus Project database is available to help learners (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>), and Project Archélogos, an argument analysis of philosophical texts, is developing on the web (<http://www.archelogos.com>). This list is far from exhaustive. The field has never been easier to approach or more lively and varied.

³⁰ Christopher Gill, 'The Impact of Greek Philosophy on Contemporary Ethical Philosophy', forthcoming in an International Plato Society volume in honour of Thomas Robinson, is a valuable survey which also provides details on prominent figures such as Terence Irwin and Nicholas White, which my narrow focus here has omitted.

³¹ I would like to thank the many people with whom I have discussed these ideas, especially Brian Leiter, Christopher Rowe, Myles Burnyeat, and André Laks. Needless to say, I am solely responsible for the result, with which I do not expect everyone in the field to agree (a healthy sign, I think).