

Book Review

Plato's Trilogy: Theaetetus, Sophist, and The Statesman by J. Klein (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977. 200 pp.)

Reviewed by W. B. Allen

The late Jacob Klein's important book is, remarkably, a lucid presentation of esoteric argument (cf. the "counting" of ἀμφοτερός as it occurs in the *Sophist*, pp. 60-64). Dealing with the famed Platonic triad, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, and *The Statesman* (vide sophist, statesman, and philosopher), Klein settles the dispute about the missing dialogue, "The Philosopher," by first denying that it is missing and second showing that it is unnecessary. He argues, in short, that the triad is a dyad. That argument is reinforced by the distinction Klein strongly implies between the Socratic *Theaetetus* and the Eleatic *Sophist* and *Statesman*. "We can now understand why the conversations of the 'trilogy' occur in two, not three, days and why the *Sophist*, the *Statesman*, and the *Philosopher* are dealt with in two, not three, dialogues" (p. 61).

The analysis of the three dialogues itself proceeds via such dyadic trios. Of many, three examples seem most important: (1) change—being—rest; (2) the more—the measured—the less; and (3) the sophist—the statesman—the philosopher. These are mediated by the dyadic trio of characteristic errors: contradiction, error in general, and tautology. What characterizes all of these arguments is that they apparently serve the end of the primary and substantive argument of Klein's study, that is, the ultimate identity of statesmanship and philosophy. The argument first becomes manifest in chapter 2 (p. 46), where a necessary connection between deed and speech is the foundation of a discovery of the necessity of rest amidst the ceaseless change of being. While intimated as early as p. 4, the argument is made explicit only in the final sentence of the book: ". . . whether the *Sophist*, the *Statesman*, and *Philosopher* constitute a triad, may be considered as answered: They are but two." Teasingly, perhaps smilingly, he did not repeat that the statesman and the philosopher are one (cf. p. 177). That is, perhaps, because in each of the other important triads the middle term is implicated in each of the other terms. It is the same as each of the other terms, although neither is itself the same as the other.

An analogous reflection may suggest the point of this pre-Aristotelian science. The Galilean revolution turned on the *petit principe* that the cosmos was *either* change or rest. This could be admitted only insofar as some change could resemble rest—hence, saving the φαινόμενα. There follows the Newtonian revolution—gravitation and the conception of an exact counterbalance of forces. That, however, could not account for growth or becoming as such, that is, a certain manner of motion or change. Accordingly, these revolutions of modern science necessitated a distinct and incomprehensible biological science. This was a science to explain things—changes—which share but indirectly in the new properties (principles) of *matter*. On this *petit principe* depends the entire reversal of Aristotelian cosmology.

The pre-Aristotelian qualification of Aristotelian cosmology bears no like defect, although it abounds in what takes the appearance of paradoxes. It may be that the actual, though not apparent, paradox of an independent and incomprehensible biological science, as that of an analogously independent and incomprehensible political science, is a greater barrier to understanding than the apparent but not actual paradox of change, rest and being, being two and not three.—W. B. A.