

斑斓阅读 · 外研社英汉双语百科书系

解读柏拉图

Plato

A Very Short Introduction

Julia Annas 著

高峰枫 译

外语教学与研究出版社

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译者序

这部正文不足百页的小书是英国古典学者朱莉娅·安娜斯（Julia Annas）为一般读者撰写的柏拉图导读。安娜斯是牛津出身，在牛津执教多年，现任美国亚利桑那大学讲座教授。她专治古代哲学，对柏拉图、亚里士多德以及古代怀疑派均有专门研究。我曾读过她《理想国导读》一书和其他论柏拉图的单篇论文，感觉安娜斯虽称不上是开宗立派的思想巨擘，但确是一位淳谨笃实的优秀学者。这本小书以凝缩的方式、简明的语言向读者介绍了柏拉图思想的方方面面，不尚新奇，却又吸收了西方柏拉图研究的一些新成果，作为一本入门书，可算是一时之选。目前国内研究柏拉图的风气渐浓，但有些学者过分倚重列奥·施特劳斯（Leo Strauss），而且对施特劳斯的理解简单机械，食而不化，以致于谈玄说妙，光怪陆离，几堕魔障。希望此书能有助于普通读者更全面地了解柏拉图思想，特别是传统研究所关注的哲学问题。至于矫正目前凌空蹈虚的研究风气，则非译者所敢想。

在译书过程中，我对各章的题目和个别小标题作了较大改动，力求醒目。另外，原书无脚注，考虑到读者的需要，我加了六十余条注释。这些注释中，有一类涉及文史知识，尤其是较偏僻的作家，我尽量简单予以解释。主要参考了《牛津古典辞书》（*The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2nd edition. Edited by N. G.

L. Hammond and H. H. Scullard. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970)。另一类是柏拉图著作的引证。除作者随文注出的对话出处之外，作者没有注出的，我尽量找出标准页码，这样读者若有兴趣查证，自可按图索骥。但受学力所限，我注出较多的是本人熟悉的一些对话，还有一些段落仓促之间未能查询到准确出处，望读者体谅。

书中柏拉图著作的中译文，我尽量引用老一代学者，主要是严群和王太庆两家的翻译。一来，两位先生都是从希腊文原文翻译，二来也借此表达对前辈学人的敬意。译文中与现今语言习惯不合的词句，一般不作改动。《理想国》我用的是上世纪20年代吴献书的译本，主要因为这一译本现在大家谈论较少，故特意表而出之。以上三家没有翻译的对话，我大多据作者书中自己的英译文来翻译，偶有不明之处，便查对洛布古典丛书的译文。

在编写注释过程中，社科院哲学所高山杉先生帮我查对了很多材料，并通读了译稿，指出语言上的一些疏漏。第七章有两个日文问题，我请教了北京大学日语系的彭广陆教授，在此一并致谢。最后要感谢外研社的编辑高耿松先生，是他促成了本书的翻译。

译文中凡有不当之处，望读者指出。在此先行谢过。

译者谨识

2007年5月

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Chapter 1

Arguing with Plato

The jury's problem

Imagine that you are on a jury, listening to Smith describe how he was set upon and robbed. The details are striking, the account hangs together, and you are completely convinced; you believe that Smith was the victim of a violent crime. This is a true belief; Smith was, in fact, attacked.

Do you *know* that Smith was attacked? This might at first seem like an odd thing to worry about. What better evidence could you have? But you might reflect that this is, after all, a courtroom, and that Smith is making a case which his alleged attacker will then try to counter. Can you be sure that you are convinced because Smith is telling the truth, or might it be the way the case is being presented that is persuading you? If it is the latter, then you might be worried; for then you might have been convinced even if Smith had not been telling the truth. Besides, even if he is telling the truth, is his evidence conclusive as to his being attacked? For all you know, he might have been part of a set-up, and it's not as though you had been there and seen it for yourself. And so it can seem quite natural to conclude that you don't actually *know* that Smith was attacked, though you have a belief about it which is true, and no actual reason to doubt its truth.

The *Theaetetus*

The *Theaetetus* is one of Plato's most appealing dialogues, but also one of his most puzzling. In it, Socrates says that he is a midwife like his mother: he draws ideas out of people, before testing them to see whether they hold up to reasoned examination.^a Refusing to put forward his own ideas about what knowledge is (though displaying sophisticated awareness of the work of other philosophers), he shows faults in all of the accounts of knowledge suggested by young Theaetetus. Pursuing the thought that if you *know* something, you can't be wrong, Theaetetus suggests that knowing might be perceiving; then having a true belief; then, having a true belief and being able to defend or 'give an account of' it. All these suggestions fail, and the dialogue leaves us better off only in awareness of our own inability to sustain an account of knowing. Socrates' insistence on arguing only against the positions of others, not for any position of his own, made the dialogue a key one for the Platonic tradition which took Plato's inheritance to be one of seeking truth by questioning those who claim to have it (as Socrates often does in the dialogues) rather than by making his own philosophical claims. Others, noting that in other dialogues we find positive, ambitious claims about the nature of knowledge, thought of the *Theaetetus* as clearing away only accounts of knowledge that Plato took to be mistaken. Socrates here, the midwife of others' ideas who has no 'children' of his own, seems very different from the Socrates of other dialogues such as the *Republic*, who puts forward positive ideas quite confidently. Readers have to come to their own conclusions about this (some ancient and modern solutions are discussed in Chapter 3).

In his dialogue *Theaetetus* Plato raises this issue. What can knowledge be, young Theaetetus asks, other than true belief? After all, if you have a true belief you are not making any mistakes. But Theaetetus is talking to Socrates (of whom more in Chapter 2) and, as often, the older man finds a problem. For persuading people in public is something that can be skilfully done. He means the skill of what we would call lawyers, although he is talking about a system in which there are no professional lawyers. The victim had to present his own case, though many people hired professional speech-writers, especially since they had to convince a jury of not 12 but 501 members.

How we refer to Plato's works

In 1578 the publisher Henri Etienne, the Latin form of whose surname is Stephanus, produced the first printed edition of Plato's works in Paris. The new technology enabled a much greater number of people than hitherto to read Plato. And for the first time it became possible to refer precisely to passages within dialogues, since readers were for the first time using the same pagination. We still refer to the page on which the passage appeared in Stephanus's edition (for example, 200), together with one of the letters a to e, which served to divide the page into five areas from top to bottom. 'Stephanus numbers' are printed in the margins of most Plato texts and translations, and a reference such as '200e' enables readers to find a passage no matter what the pagination of the book they are using.

Socrates continues:

SOCRATES: These men, at any rate, persuaded by means of their expertise, and they don't teach people, but get them to have

whatever beliefs they wish. Or do you think that there are any teachers so clever as to teach the truth about what happened adequately, in the short time allowed, to people who weren't there when others were robbed of their property or violently attacked?

THEAETETUS: No, I don't think they could at all, but I think they could persuade them.

SOCRATES: And by persuading them don't you mean getting them to have a belief?

THEAETETUS: Of course.

SOCRATES: Well, when a jury has been persuaded fairly about something about which you could only have knowledge if you were an eyewitness, not otherwise, while they judge from what they've heard and get a true belief, haven't they then judged without knowledge, though they were persuaded of what's correct, since they made a good judgement?

THEAETETUS: Absolutely.

SOCRATES: But look, if true belief and knowledge were the same thing, then an excellent jurymen wouldn't have a correct belief without knowledge. As it is, the two appear to be distinct.

(*Theaetetus* 201a-c)

This sounds convincing, indeed perhaps blindingly obvious. But, like the jury, we can raise the question of whether we should be convinced. Why *don't* the jury know that Smith was robbed?

What is required for knowledge?

One reason put forward by Plato for the claim that the jury lack knowledge is that they have been persuaded, by someone whose main aim it is to get them to believe what he wants them to believe. In this case he has persuaded them of the truth, but we may think that he would have been able to persuade them even if his story hadn't been true. At first this worry may seem far-fetched: if you have acquired a true belief in a certain

way, why worry that you *might have been* persuaded of something false in that same way? How can what didn't happen cast doubt on what did? But, in fact, this worry about the power of persuasion is serious, because it casts doubt on the route by which the belief is acquired. If it is a route by which I can acquire false beliefs as readily as true ones, then it cannot guarantee me only true beliefs. And this does raise a doubt in most people's minds that a belief that I have acquired by that route could amount to knowledge.

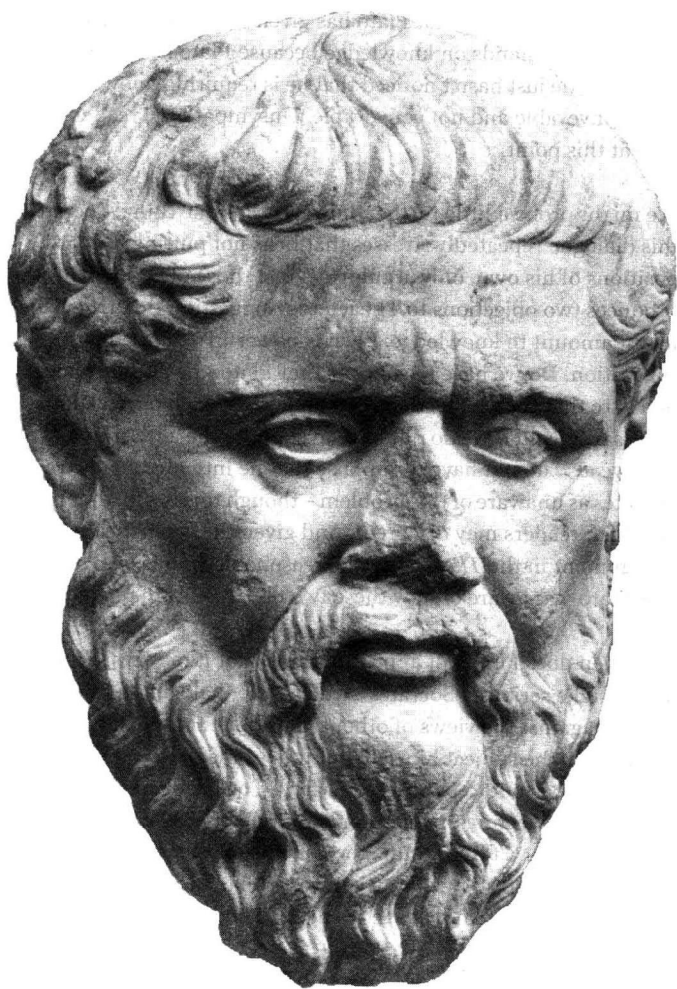
Another reason put forward in the passage is that the sort of fact the jury have been persuaded of, namely that Smith was attacked, is not the sort of fact that you could have knowledge of anyway unless you had been there and seen it for yourself. However convinced we are that Smith is telling the truth, all we are getting is a version that is second-hand, and conveyed by an entirely different kind of route from Smith's own. He experienced and saw the robbery; we are only being told about it. However vivid the telling, it's still just a telling; only somebody who was there and saw it can have knowledge of it. Again, this may at first seem far-fetched. If we limit knowledge to what we can actually experience first-hand for ourselves, then there won't be much that we can know; nothing that we read or hear second-hand will count. Yet there is a powerful thought being appealed to here, one that can be expressed by saying that nobody else can know things for you or on your behalf. Knowledge requires that you acquire the relevant belief for yourself. What it is to acquire a belief for yourself will differ depending on the kind of belief it is, but with the belief that Smith was robbed the only way you can acquire it for yourself with no intermediary is, it seems, to be there yourself and actually see it.

A problem for us

Plato has given us two kinds of reason for rejecting the idea that the jury's true belief could amount to knowledge. Both are strong, but how well do they go together? The problem with persuasion was that it turned out to be a route that could not guarantee that the beliefs we acquired from someone else would be true. But for this to be a problem with *persuasion* there has to be the possibility of a route of this kind that did have such a guarantee. Socrates complains that the victim has to convince the jury in too short a time, and in circumstances that are too emotional and fraught, for their acquisition of beliefs to be the right kind for knowledge. This complaint is pointless unless there could be a way of acquiring beliefs that didn't have these disadvantages – say, one where there were no time constraints, and each member of the jury could examine witnesses and victim as much as they required to satisfy every last scruple. So it looks as though we are assuming that there is a way of conveying beliefs that could amount to knowledge, though it isn't persuasion.

The second point, however, suggested that *no* way of conveying beliefs, however careful and scrupulous, could amount to knowledge, since any belief conveyed to you from another will be second-hand, and thus something that you cannot know, because you cannot know it for yourself. Relying on someone else's testimony, however sound, is never the same as experiencing the fact for yourself.

The problem now is that the second objection seems to conflict with the first. The second supposes that knowledge cannot be conveyed, but must be acquired by each person in their own case; but the first found fault with persuasion in a way suggesting that there *could* be a way of acquiring a belief from someone else which would amount to knowledge, so that knowledge *is* conveyable.



1. Bust of Plato.