

It is this notion of commensality, and the idea that dining (and usually dining in company) might provide the impetus to philosophical reflection that drives this volume. In this sense, David Roochnik offers not only a survey of how ancient thinkers thought about food (or more particularly how they thought about consumption and denial, as it is this tension between 'being' and 'not being' that lies at the heart of the work) but also a work of active philosophizing. Each section is punctuated by a food diary in which the author recites a litany of his own food experiences, both pleasurable and otherwise, that intersperse his own daily life. Although it is initially not clear why he has included these dietary musings, it soon becomes apparent that these personal reflections mirror some of the key philosophical concerns that he raises. The ever-present need for the ingestion of food to continue corporeal existence, the anxieties around bodily pleasure and the renunciation/repudiation/formation of self-identity are some of the themes explored and are both the concerns of the ancient thinker and also of the scholar who writes about them.

The work is divided into four sections. The first is about what food in ancient Greek epic, in particular Homer's *Odyssey*, can tell us about the ways in which the Greeks may have thought about concepts of self-identity and perceptions of the 'other'. Roochnik is less concerned with the meals that Homer describes than with the opportunity they give Odysseus for the weaving of truths and untruths, constructing and remoulding his own identity as narrative performance. As a man cast adrift from the social constructs that make him (husband, father, son, king), he is free to create his own version of himself, and eating together with strangers allows him the performance space to construct these evolving narratives. He also sees such occasions as a way of establishing rituals that serve to give structure and form to a transient mortal existence, as well as laying down (or perhaps reaffirming) rules of etiquette and behaviour. Whether the law of *xenia* (hospitality) constituted a tangible legal code or an aspirational ideal, the space of the communal meal allows this code to weave itself into the pattern of social norms.

Later chapters consider the influence of Dionysus, most particularly in opposition to the Apollo in the Nietzschean conception of this binary polarity and the tension between the Dionysian impulse to excess and abandonment in pure emotion and the way of restraint that lies in the Apollonian. This theme is continued in the chapters on Socrates and Aristotle.

This work combines the virtues of readability and accessibility. It succeeds by limiting itself to a series of core texts and themes (existence, commensality, identity) and even though the work is relatively short, it does not stint on tackling its themes in some depth. It will appeal equally to classicist and philosopher and will make for good preliminary reading for those seeking to further explore the subject. I would like to see the author explore these themes further, perhaps in the way that food themes were used in the Greek comic poets (it strikes me that students wishing for a way into study of Athenaeus would be well-served in reading this work). As a scholarly work, it shares the qualities of the good meals that Roochnik eulogizes: varied and satisfying but leaving one with the desire for future pleasures in the same vein.

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YOUNT (D.J.) **Plato and Plotinus on Mysticism, Epistemology, and Ethics**. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018. Pp. 311. £99. 9781474298421.
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This is a work of impressive scholarship and argumentative power, from a scholar who has made a number of previous contributions to our understanding of Socrates, Plato and

Plotinus, most notably his 2014 book *Plotinus the Platonist*, also with Bloomsbury. It is divided into three large chapters, one for each of the topics listed in the title, with a short introduction and conclusion, and fully 60 pages of notes.

What Yount wishes to establish, and in my view succeeds in doing, is the principle that Plato and Plotinus actually differ in no essential respect on a series of basic issues in philosophy, namely their acceptance of a First Principle, the Good, or the One, which generates the realm of Forms (which latter is the proper object of knowledge), but which is itself strictly 'beyond knowledge', and which can only be accessed, if at all, by a supra-rational contact that may be denominated 'the ultimate experience' (and this is accordingly the title of the first chapter of the book). Yount meticulously details, with copious quotation, both the key passages of both authors and illustrative passages from their main opponents, both those who deny that Plato is a 'mystic', because he is a champion of reason, and those who tend to denigrate Plotinus as a mystic, implying that he abandons reason. Yount shows convincingly, I think, that they are both 'rational mystics', that is, philosophers who have indeed had supra-rational visions of an ultimate reality, but who are concerned to fit such visions into a rational philosophical framework.

The second chapter concerns epistemology and sets out to show that both thinkers hold to a strong distinction between knowledge, which is of the Forms, and opinion (*doxa, pistis*), which is of sensible particulars, once again with copious quotation of key passages from both thinkers. Yount divides this chapter into sections on 'Wisdom', 'Knowledge', 'The doctrine of recollection', 'Prayer' and 'Opinion', each buttressed with the quotation of key passages from the two authors. The only detail on which I would diverge from him is the question of Plotinus' belief in a 'non-descended' rational element of the soul, itself a product of his 'mystical' experience, which he himself accepts is not properly Platonic, and of which there is no real sign in Plato. But this hardly interferes with the validity of his overall thesis, which I think is amply proven.

The third and longest chapter concerns ethics, though this relates fairly closely to the second, since it is a basic Platonic and Plotinian principle that wisdom produces happiness. It is divided into the following sections, all amply illustrated by key passages and commentary: (1) On happiness; (2) On love; (3) On purification and reverence; (4) How to live; (5) How not to live: the ways in which the soul errs; (6) Music and musicians; (7) Arts and artisans; (8) Desire for the Good; (9) That no one errs willingly; (10) Pleasure and pain. What may seem a somewhat eclectic series of headings actually covers more or less the totality of the philosophical positions of both men, together with a fairly comprehensive conspectus of the history of criticism of both thinkers over the last 150 years or so, from such figures as Eduard Zeller, Dean W. R. Inge, A.E. Taylor and Paul Shorey, through Léon Robin, John Findlay, A.H. Armstrong, John Rist, Lloyd Gerson and Richard Wallis, to a host of contemporary authorities.

This is, then, a formidable effort on the part of David Yount. I think he proves his point very adequately. He will inevitably not please everyone, nor put a permanent end to the argument, but the basic concordance of Plato and Plotinus has now in my view been placed on a firm footing. They were doubtless very different in character (though, since we have no biography of Plato from a devoted disciple, we really do not know how different) but they had very much the same outlook on life, and Plotinus is largely justified in his claim to be expounding the philosophy of Plato.

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