relationship of the new concept to scientific realism and instrumentalism is
dealt with. Chapter 12 attempts in an original way to utilise Rawls' concept of
"reflective equilibrium", introduced elsewhere, for the relationship between
systematic philosophy of science and history of science. Chapter 13 is devoted
to the problem of induction. In the closing chapter, No. 14, it is shown that
the new concept of theory also has applications outside physics. Five different
theories are here outlined in accordance with the new concept: a theory of
literature and one of barter economy, a rational decision theory, Freud's
theory of neurosis and Marx's theory of capital and surplus value.
The book, which is much to be recommended, closes with two very useful
indexes.

Dr. Veit Pittioni, Innsbruck

SZLEZÁK, THOMAS ALEXANDER

Plato and the Written Quality of Philosophy. Interpretations of the Early
and Middle Dialogues

["Platon und die Schriftlichkeit der Philosophie. Interpretationen zu den
frühen und mittleren Dialogen"]


For years now the "Tübingen School", represented above all by Konrad
Gaiser and Hans Krämer, has had an important position, philologically and
philosophically speaking, in current research on Plato. Its richly documented
and constantly sophisticated "New Image of Plato" has resulted in a "para­
digm-change" in Plato-interpretation as well as developing many of its aspects.
It revises the basic attitude, which can be traced back to Schleiermacher, that
Plato's published dialogues are the one authentic source for any adequate and
complete comprehension of Platonic thought. By contrast it is especially
Krämer and Gaiser who in numerous publications have energetically - and to
great effect - drawn attention to what have since Aristotle come to be known
as the "unwritten doctrines" ("agrapha dogmata") and - taking up and
modifying specific intentions of L. Robin, J. Stenzel, P. Wilpert and others -
attempted to present them not only as a necessary supplement to the dialogues
of Plato but even more as the systematically conceived centre, the "essential"
in Platonic thought.¹ This hermeneutical maxim has made it possible to
reconstruct the basic features of a principles-theory for Plato² which not only

¹ To mention only the most recent publications ... Naples 1984 ... Milan 1982 (an enlarged
version of this book will shortly be appearing in the German language). G. Reale has taken the
reconstruction of Plato's oral philosophy as an opportunity and starting point for a new Plato

² Collection of sources on Plato's unwritten doctrines in K. Gaiser, Plato's Unwritten Doctrines,
Stuttgart 1968², 446 ff. and in H. Krämer, Platone (cf. Note 1) 358 ff.
constitutes the systematic fundament of the Platonic dialogues but has become
decisive for the basic conceptual and ontological structure of Neoplatonism
and the philosophical systems which are connected with it materially and
historically speaking. This has not meant suppressing the dialogues or demot-
ing them to a “quarry” for the real-authentic: thanks to the principles-theory
and the theorems connected with it, much which used to have to appear as a
break, as something enigmatic or giving rise to discrepancy or aporia, can now
be understood in a more thorough way, a way which is more intense in terms
of argumentation and even more complex in terms of substance, without that
which Plato considered it impossible to say being laid bare in a dull abstraction.
Thomas Alexander Szlezák’s book testifies to the degree to which taking
seriously those doctrines of Plato which he himself was very “serious” about
can be productive – precisely for a new interpretation of the dialogues
themselves. Amidst the virtually endless deluge of publications on Plato, a
deluge which continues to swell to worrying proportions because of superflu-
ous repetition, Szlezák’s book stands out very strikingly through the original-
ity of its perspective, through the consistent realization of a basic idea which is
highly instructive for the subject-matter at hand and through the thoroughness
of its examination of competing and above all of opposing ideas which are –
with greater or lesser reason – sceptical as regards the new Plato paradigm.
 Plato’s criticism – discussed in great detail by Szlezák – of the written
communicating of philosophical thought (Phaidros 274b – 278e) becomes for
him the key to the question as to the relationship of the oral pursuit of
philosophy and the written presentation (mimesis) of the living dialogue. In
accordance with Platonic writing-critique it is very much intrinsic to the
philosophical logos that it can defend itself, can help itself, that it is in a
position productively to continue the questions which are placed in it and
which it is asked and in so doing refer to “timiotera”, to “all that is more
valuable”, i.e. more extensively justified; not only must these “timiotera” not
be explicitly stated, but they ought consciously to be held back, to be omitted
and reserved for conversations with real friends who are capable of under-
standing a higher problem-level. Books, thus also dialogues published in
written form, are not inherently able to do this: they “are constantly saying the
same thing” and remind one at times of “the prolonged din of cymbals”
(Pol. 329 a 5). It follows from this that “he who has knowledge”, he who has
knowledge of “timiotera” and has a sensible attitude towards them, “Plato”
the author of philosophical book-dialogues, quite consciously and consistently
omits the “problems which are especially to do with principle”.
Taking this Platonic critique of writing as his guiding theme Szlezák now goes
on to pursue the question addressed to the individual dialogues, namely
whether and in what respect they are capable of and in need of supplementa-
tion and deepening. The superiority on principle of the “living” oral logos over against the written utterance consists in the above-mentioned capacity to help, in its “boetheia structure”. Seen from this perspective, it becomes understandable that Szlezák, guided by a very acute sensitivity for the Platonic language, tracks down precisely those places in the dialogue-process which break off specific thought-sequences, omit the discussion of a pertinent question in a calculated manner and – not least with a view to the capacity of the dialogue-partners – refer to philosophemes which could be said (as “timiotera”), but which should not be said in the present context. The testing of the “boetheia model” necessarily entails that the interpretation should not be oriented – “anti-esoterically” – only to the explicit results of the discussion, but rather that it should cast light on the complex development of ideas in the dialogue process, and this in scrupulous detail. Against the opinion of many a critic, Szlezák’s procedure does precisely demonstrate that a careful heeding of the reference-structure of the dialogues contributes to a more exact deciphering of their dramaturgical course; on the other hand, the consequence of such a comprehension-maxim is precisely that “The dialogues themselves force us to take the indirect Plato tradition seriously” (330) – thus dialogues and unwritten doctrines form with each other a hermeneutical circle which is precisely not a vicious circle, but rather extremely instructive and necessary in concrete terms. The present reviewer believes it will be justifiable to assert that Szlezák’s consistent application of the perspective which guides him to so-called omitting and referring places has resulted in the discovery of new aspects of the dialogues from “Euthydemus” to “Republic”, aspects which would also of necessity be evident to an “anti-esotericist”, while on the other hand also confronting him with arguments which he will have difficulties in evading. The sheer richness of the insights into the structure of the course of the conversation of the individual dialogues and into those characterizations of the dialogue partners – not least of Socrates – which are crucial for the actual thought, can hardly be rendered sufficiently plausible given the brief scope of a review aiming to provide provisional information. One should not, however, omit to point out that the superb knowledge of the research-situation that becomes apparent in the notes and the appendices and the patient and fair analysis of contrary positions only enhance the persuasiveness of Szlezák’s basic intentions and the results of his interpretation. The section on the modern theory of the dialogue form, modestly called “Appendix I”, should be read as the second centrepiece of the book. Here Szlezák reconstructs the essential elements of the dialogue theory previously hinted at, a theory which in its modern interpretation of Plato goes back to Schleiermacher. In ten theses criticizing this theory Szlezák develops arguments of penetrating insight against the, at bottom, naive mystification of the written dialogue as a “superbook” which is
made out to be an “active” text which despite its indirect form of communication must still say *everything* that was important to Plato, so that in the style of a “petitio principii” the historical existence of an oral philosophy of Plato can be denied. Szlezák points out the numerous aporias and discrepancies which result from such an absolutization of the dialogue in the form of a “dialogue-book” and thus consciously or unconsciously cover over Plato’s radical scepticism as regards *all* that is written. Szlezák is right in opposing the urge, bordering on the absurd, to understand Plato’s published texts as being *totally* ironical: the modern ironist, proceeding in a high-handed manner, consistently excludes from any understanding all readers who may possibly be capable of a more limited degree of irony: “The ironist is always right” (370).

It was obviously not Szlezák’s aim specifically to analyze in terms of its intrinsic philosophical value the material structure of the esoteric principles theory, which critics see as being especially abstract; still, his work on the dialogues – especially as regards this principles theory – gives reason to hope that the “hostile camps” of “esotericists” and “anti-esotericists” will be able to attain if not a reconciliation, then at least a new insight, in the light of which the “unwritten” in Plato’s thought may not be suppressed or reduced to supposedly insignificant, philosophically irrelevant trivialities without further ado.

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**TRAUGOTT, EDGAR**

**Certainty in Uncertainty**

[“Sicherheit im Ungewissen”]


Edgar Traugott, from 1963 to 1977 editor-in-chief of the *Nürnberger Zeitung*, is not only an outstanding diagnostician of the ills of his age and critic of civilization, but a significant philosophical writer. This became clear at the latest with the appearance of his book *Die magnetische Welt* (“The Magnetic World”, (Heroldsberg: Glock & Lutz 1983), whose call for a ‘revival of thinking’ is continued and intensified in the present volume. Traugott’s is an independent mind and a brooding one; he is a loner, meditating outside all the schools, ideologies and “isms”. But this is not to say that he does not attach himself – in a productive sense – to certain traditions, or that he does not revive and fructify much that has already been thought. He can be fitted in nowhere. Neither in what he says nor in the way he says it can he be subsumed under traditional labels. He does not proceed systematically, draws up no plans for