A book that focuses on the principle of non-contradiction (PNC) in Plato is an event in itself. Although many scholars have recognised that the first formulation of this important principle can be found in Plato (Republic 4.436b8-9 and 436e8-437a2, Sophist 230b4-d4, Euthydemus 293c8-9), few of them have ever studied the evidence with the attentive care required for the task. Indeed, the studies devoted to the PNC have concentrated mainly on Aristotle and only rarely have articles (or short sections of books on the history of philosophy) actually addressed the topic in Plato. The publication of a book that dedicates almost 300 pages to Plato’s formulation of the PNC is thus remarkable and will be warmly welcomed by ancient philosophy scholars who are particularly interested in metaphysics and epistemology.

As the title of the book explicitly indicates, Bloom’s study concentrates on Plato’s formulation of the PNC in one particular dialogue: the Republic. From the beginning, the author acknowledges that his use of other Platonic dialogues will be limited. Such a methodological choice is favourable as it allows the author to examine in great depth and with considerable insight the many philosophical problems contained in the Republic (mostly in Republic 4 and 10) and, consequently, to provide a thorough analysis of difficult passages that have been rarely, if at all, ignored by most scholars. Despite the book’s notable merits, it does contain certain drawbacks, however. In choosing not to venture too much outside the Republic (with the exception of the Phaedo), the author avoids discussing issues that could have informed the reader of the genesis of the PNC and, thus, on its history. For instance, the link between Republic 4.436b8-9/436e8-437a2 and Sophist 230b4-d4 is not discussed by the author, regardless of the fact that this last passage contains similar terminology to that employed in the Republic and had a clear influence on Aristotle, more precisely on his conception of ‘logical contradiction’ (SE 5.167a23-27). Additionally, the author never discusses other implicit formulations of the PNC found prior to Plato, for example in Parmenides’ Poem (fr. 7) or Gorgias’ On the Nature or What-is-not, formulations that could have had an influence on Plato’s own formulation of the PNC in the Republic. Moreover, the author barely touches upon the thorny question of the naming of the principle. More precisely, he does not address the important fact that Plato, when talking about what is now called ‘contradiction’, used the plural word enantia (‘contraries’) and not antiphasis (‘contradiction’). This terminological choice must have been important as Plato used the word enantia both in Republic 4.436b9 (where he formulates the PNC) and the Sophist 230b8 (where he describes the elenchus as characterised by ‘logical contradiction’). Lastly, the comparison of the Republic with other Platonic dialogues containing passages related to ‘contradiction’ would have allowed the author to underscore the context in which Plato conceived the PNC, namely a context in which different clans of competing intellectuals, especially the ‘eristics’ or ‘antilogicians’, were

1 The principle according to which ‘it is impossible for the same thing to belong and not to belong at the same time to the same thing and in the same respect’ (Aristotle, Metaphysics IV.3.1005b19-20).
disregarding the PNC in order to refute their interlocutors (as described in Plato's *Euthydemus*) as well as promote their own brand of *philosophia*, which was in opposition to Plato's vision of 'true' philosophy. For these reasons (among others), Bloom's book will be of less interest to scholars who favour a historical or philological approach in the study of philosophy, or to researchers who are looking for a thorough analysis of the history of the PNC in Plato's entire work.

It should, however, be borne in mind that it was evidently not Bloom's intention to write a book about the history of the PNC with the *Republic* as the starting point, nor to discuss terminological issues that are of particular interest to philologists. In fact, the author's primary concern was to analyse the *Republic* in itself and to 'wrestle with a set of philosophical problems' (p. xlvii). In doing so, the author has been more than successful. Indeed, Bloom's book is a remarkable philosophical inquiry into Plato's *Republic*, one that offers an original and unorthodox interpretation that will surely revitalise the way in which this important text of Western philosophy is interpreted. Approaching the text in a spirit of inquiry (a Platonic imperative according to Bloom himself) and, hence, rejecting dogmas of interpretation too often used in the scholarly field, the author elucidates how the inconsistency between *Republic* 4 and *Republic* 10 regarding Plato's description of the soul is apparent and was even intentional on Plato's part. In a most original and convincing way, Bloom demonstrates how the distinction between *dianoia* and *nous*, which is at the heart of the metaphor of the divided line in *Republic* 6, can be used as a criterion to interpret the text itself and to shed new light on the PNC. In illustrating how the divided soul described in *Republic* 4 is the object of dianoetic reasoning, the author highlights in an insightful manner the hypothetical nature of the PNC. The possibility of the division of the soul, however, presupposes a unity that is the undivided soul itself, namely the soul as a noetic object as described in *Republic* 10. This unity can be identified with the form. The PNC, as a principle of discursive thought, can thus be apprehended for what it is, not as a first principle but as a component of discursive or dianoetic reasoning that can lead to a first principle and can be applied to both thoughts and beings.

The book is separated into six chapters. The introduction, very expansive, synthesises the author's main arguments and presents his objectives and goals. Such a lengthy introduction is more than welcome as it allows the reader to better navigate the difficult discussions that will follow. Chapter 1 ('Kinds of Knowing and Kinds of Being', pp. 1-30) studies the link between the PNC and *dianoia*, and suggests that *dianoia* is grounded in *nous*. It also highlights the self-reflexivity of Plato's account: in addition to being a hypothesis, the PNC is itself implicit in the method of hypothesising. Chapter 2 ('The Unity of the Soul in *Republic* IV', pp. 31-79) focuses on the argument for the division of the soul in *Republic* 4, which is an example of a dianoetic account that implies a noetic one. Chapter 3 ('The Insubstantiality of Sensible Things', pp. 81-134) focuses on 'things', namely on the objects of the soul's faculties and discusses the generally accepted claim according to which sensible things are contradictory, whereas Chapter 4 ('The Soul as Good in Itself in *Republic* X', pp. 135-172) goes beyond what was discussed in Chapter 2 and argues that the soul's rational part constitutes its unity. Lastly, in the conclusion, the author focuses on the PNC itself and, thus, offers a thorough definition of it.

Bloom offers his readers an original interpretation of Plato's account of the soul in *Republic* 4 and 10, one that clearly differs from past readings. His book will be of much interest to scholars who favour an analytical approach in the study of philosophy or to researchers who are mostly concerned with the *Republic*. His interpretation will also shed new light on the PNC and contribute in its own way to the history of this important principle. It will however be the readers' responsibility to compare this new and novel interpretation with other Platonic descriptions of contradiction or the PNC and, thereby, continue the search in the same spirit of openness and inquiry as the one in which this
book was written. In fact, Bloom fully recognises that his 'book puts a lot, perhaps too much, on the reader' (p. xxx). He admits that he does not always draw all possible conclusions or philosophical consequences from his theses and invites the reader to attempt to resolve some of the difficulties on her or his own. Bloom's book is without doubt a difficult book. As a result, it requires a certain amount of experience in the use of philosophical arguments, combined with a considerable knowledge of metaphysical notions. Moreover, mention should be made of the fact that it is not intended for readers who are unfamiliar with Plato's philosophy, or, more precisely, with the numerous scholarly discussions surrounding the argument for the division of the soul in the Republic. In fact, the author has openly decided to avoid discussing these issues to better concentrate on his own account. The reader must accordingly be already familiar with the scholarly debates surrounding such discussions as the author rarely engages directly with them (as the succinct bibliography indicates). The additional effort that the author requests the reader to make is nonetheless worthwhile as The Principle of Non-Contradiction in Plato's Republic: An Argument for Form represents a remarkable invitation to philosophical inquiry.

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