

## Αιτία έλομένου: but who makes the choices? Reading Plato's *Republic* in the new OCT.

The edition of the *Republic* by John Burnet, first published in 1902, has held sway for a century. It was superseded by the new OCT edition by the late Simon Slings, which appeared in 2003. Slings' edition was the first to be based on a full evaluation of the tradition.

In this lecture, a bird's eye view will be presented of the work on the text of the *Republic*, carried out by Slings and by the present speaker, who wrote his thesis on the textual tradition of the *Republic* under Slings' guidance.

Next, attention is paid to the question of what can and cannot be expected from a new edition. A critical edition has two aspects which should be judged with different criteria. The first is the inventarisation and the presentation of the transmission, which is offered in the critical apparatus. In this respect Slings' edition differs widely from Burnet's. To all practical means and purposes, the apparatus of the new OCT can be regarded as definitive.

The case is different, however, with the other aspect of the new edition, namely the text itself. Although some nineteenth century scholars claimed that the constitution of the text could lead to results which are as watertight as those reached in the sciences, this view is clearly mistaken: no edition can ever claim to be definitive. This goes for the new text of the *Republic* as well. In many places Slings' text is demonstrably better than that of the preceding editions. On the other hand, there are passages which remain open to doubt.

The result of these considerations is that the user of the text should always consult both text and critical apparatus. The reader should never take the choices of the editor for granted. Critical editions require critical users.

This validity of this principle is demonstrated by means of the discussion of some selected passages in Slings' edition. After some passages where the new text can be regarded as practically certain, attention will be paid to places where other choices have an equal or even higher claim to authenticity.

Finally, it will be shown that in a number of passages the punctuation of the new OCT could be improved, especially with regard to the use of dashes, which are almost absent from Slings' edition.

The conclusion is that the phrase of the Messenger in the Myth of Er, *αἰτία έλομένου*, "the responsibility lies with the man who makes the choice", applies to the use of the new edition of the *Republic* as well.