

In memoriam

Ian Mueller
(1938-2010)

Ian Mueller died on August 6, 2010, in Hyde Park, the University of Chicago neighborhood where he had spent the last more than forty years of his career. He had been struck down by a mysterious illness, apparently a massive viral infection, only two days before; he had been enjoying a healthy and energetic and very productive retirement. His wife and colleague Janel Mueller, his constant companion since their first month in graduate school 51 years before, was with him to the end. He is survived by Janel, their daughters Maria and Monica, and two grandchildren. His death is a heavy blow to his past students, and to the whole scholarly community in Greek philosophy and Greek mathematics. (We had a very bad year: we had already lost Steven Strange, Vianney Décarie, David Furley, Jacques Brunschwig and Pierre Hadot in the previous twelve months, and Bob Sharples died a few days after Ian.) Ian first made his name with contributions in Greek logic, on the logical structure of Greek mathematical texts, and on Greek philosophy of mathematics. But for many years much of his interest had been on how Greek thinkers, especially in late antiquity, interpreted earlier philosophers (and mathematicians and so on). Some topics which are now fashionable, for instance in doxography and heresiography, or late neo-Platonic strategies of reading Aristotle and the *Timaeus*, were not at all fashionable when Ian got into them; he often worked in isolation at the beginning, and I think and hope it was a source of satisfaction to him when the scholarly community belatedly realized that these topics were interesting, and realized that Ian had been there first. Ian played an important role in the revival of the serious study of neo-Platonism in the English-speaking world, and in particular in the project, led by Richard Sorabji, of translating the Greek commentators on Aristotle into English: he translated ten volumes and a half-volume in the series, and also made generous and very useful critical comments on other translators' drafts. But Ian was also important in the study of Greek philosophy more broadly, outside these particular specializations. He was what Diogenes Laertius calls a sporadic, being self-educated in ancient philosophy and a follower of no individual or school, and certainly he founded no school himself, and imposed no orthodoxy on his students. This was in itself unusual in a field dominated by charismatic teachers who generally produced students in their own image: Gregory Vlastos, G.E.L. Owen, Harold Cherniss, Joseph Owens, Michael Frede, Terry Penner, not to mention Leo Strauss and his students, and the Tübingen esotericists. Ian never bought into the programs of Owen and Vlastos in particular, which for decades dominated English-language ancient philosophy outside of sectarian enclaves. He was nonetheless tolerated and respected by the establishment, perhaps mainly because he was so much better at the mathematics and logic than they were. (Many of his papers were written for conferences on some Greek philosophical text or issue where they needed someone to explain the mathematical background.) He shared Owen's and Vlastos' goal of logically precise reconstruction of ancient philosophers' theses and arguments, but was deeply suspicious of their tendency to impose modern concerns, and often specific then-fashionable modern theories, on the ancient texts. He had too much awareness of the multiple possibilities of reception and interpretation ever to believe with Vlastos that Plato's early dialogues give a transparent window onto the historical Socrates. He rejected the view of Ryle and Owen and Vlastos that Plato's late dialogues pursue issues of philosophical logic while abstaining from, or outright rejecting, any otherworldly metaphysics of Forms. Ian kept doing his

own thing, and by his independence and courage and even stubbornness he showed his students and other admirers that we too could do something different, while at the same time he held us to standards of rigor as strict as, and stricter than, the "analytic" school. He was also very aware, and kept us aware, both of older traditions of interpreting ancient philosophy, and of contemporary non-Anglophone traditions. And he lived to see the old orthodoxy collapse.

Ian was an undergraduate at Princeton (where he studied with the young Hilary Putnam, and also took a class with the visiting William Faulkner), graduating in 1959, and then did his graduate work at Harvard, at the time the dominant philosophy department in the US. I am not sure how much he studied Greek philosophy, if at all; he did not learn Greek. His dissertation was on "The relationship of the generalized continuum hypothesis and the axiom of choice to the von Neumann-Bernays-Gödel axioms for set theory"; he took his Ph.D. in 1964. (A generous traveling fellowship from Harvard allowed him to spend some time in Zürich with the already retired Paul Bernays.) In theory his first advisor was Burton Dreben, but Dreben did nothing, and really Ian worked with Hao Wang. (There is a good picture of the Harvard department around this time, and of the often amazing inattention of dissertation supervisors toward their students, in Robert Paul Wolff's memoirs, available on his website.)¹ Ian was, I think, rather traumatized by Dreben's behavior, and certainly his own sense of responsibility toward his graduate students was very different. Also traumatic were Paul Cohen's articles "The Independence of the Continuum Hypothesis."² When Ian did most of his dissertation research, it was known that the axiom of choice and the generalized continuum hypothesis are relatively consistent, i.e. that if set theory (in the Zermelo-Fraenkel or some similar axiomatization) is consistent, then set theory together with the axiom of choice and the generalized continuum hypothesis is also consistent; but it was not yet known that these axioms are also independent of set theory, i.e. that if set theory is consistent, then set theory together with the negation of the axiom of choice is also consistent, and set theory together with the axiom of choice and the negation of the generalized continuum hypothesis is also consistent. When Cohen proved these results, by a very technical and completely unexpected method, Ian felt, first, that he would never be able to understand the proof; then, when he did master the proof, that he would never himself be able to come up with anything like that (most of us would not). Ian said (in an autobiographical talk he gave to the undergraduate philosophy society at the University of Chicago, which I heard probably in the late 80's) that he was so discouraged that he almost gave up philosophy, and might have if he had not had a family to support. Instead he gave up working on the philosophy of contemporary mathematics. (Ian would never have adopted the solution of many philosophers, of continuing to philosophize about mathematics without understanding the technical results.) Ian felt that he had an analytic method to apply, but now no subject-matter to apply it to. Then he discovered Greek philosophy, and Greek mathematics. As Ian told the story--and I suppose it is true, although it could scarcely happen nowadays--when he was appointed at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the philosophy department announced that they needed someone to teach Greek philosophy, and Ian volunteered to do it, on condition that they give him a year off to learn Greek. They did, and he never looked back.

¹Wolff's memoirs can be found at <http://robertpaulwolff.blogspot.com/>, in postings in June 2009 and April-August 2010. For the dissertation supervisors see <http://people.umass.edu/rwolff/memoirchapterfour.pdf>.

²Paul J. Cohen, "The Independence of the Continuum Hypothesis," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 50 (6): 1143-8 (December 1963) and "The Independence of the Continuum Hypothesis, II," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 51 (1): 105-10 (January 1964); later developed in his book *Set Theory and the Continuum Hypothesis* (New York: Benjamin, 1966).

After teaching as an Instructor at Harvard from 1963 to 1965, Ian was Assistant Professor at Urbana-Champaign from 1965 to 1967, and then moved to the University of Chicago, where he was promoted to tenure in 1970, and to full Professor in 1979, retiring in 1999, but remaining for a while heavily involved in the university's Master of Arts Program in the Humanities, at the special request of the dean. The dean had particular persuasive power with Ian because she was his wife. Janel was hired at Chicago at the same time Ian was, but to a non-tenure-track position, and Ian was bluntly told that, while she was well qualified, a woman would not get a tenure-track slot. But Janel prevailed; she became a distinguished scholar of 16th- and 17th-century English literature, chair of the English department, holder of a named chair, and dean. Ian later credited Janel's experiences with awakening in him an awareness of, and horror at, all forms of discrimination and exclusion. Ian and Janel designed, and for many years jointly taught, a humanities core course on Greek thought and literature; Ian's handout translations and notes on the pre-Socratics and sophists were, at the time, hard to match and very useful.

Several of Ian's early publications came out of an invitation to an APA symposium on Stoic logic in spring 1968. They are characteristic of his work in two ways. First, they combine control over the fragmentary source-material with technical logical and mathematical skill--"On the Completeness of Stoic Propositional Logic" uses the Gentzen sequent-calculus to prove a completeness theorem for one particular modern reconstruction of Stoic logic. But, second, they show a deep scepticism about the evidence for any such modern reconstruction, and an awareness that the Stoics are unlikely to have been interested in anything like completeness in a modern technical sense (since, for instance, they reject the inference "the first, therefore the first"). Given Ian's sceptical approach, probably Stoic logic could never have become a major research direction for him, any more than the pre-Socratics could. But Ian was turning, in the late 60's and the 70's, to areas which would remain central to his work: the argument-structure of Euclid's Elements, and also of Greek mathematical treatises outside of geometry and arithmetic (on astronomy, harmonics, and optics); the role of mathematics in Plato's philosophical program; Aristotle's understanding of mathematical epistemology and of mathematical objects; and the Greek commentators, especially the later (post-Iamblichus) neo-Platonists, and their interpretations of earlier philosophy and mathematics.

Ian's work on Euclid, culminating in Philosophy of Mathematics and Deductive Structure in Euclid's Elements, was guided mainly by careful attention to the logical structure of Euclid's arguments, in individual propositions and in whole books. So far as he had a grand interpretive thesis, it is what might seem an obvious one: that Euclid very often proves some proposition (either proves a theorem, or shows how to construct a solution to some problem) because he is going to use it in proving something else later in the Elements, so that the significance of the individual proposition will emerge from seeing its place in the larger deductive structure, not only what it rests on but what it will be used for. Again, this may seem obvious, at least as a general program. But it led Ian to argue against what were then two very widespread tendencies in the scholarship on Euclid. One was the tendency to modernize Euclid, and in particular what Ian called the "algebraic interpretation" of Euclid, going back to Zeuthen and famously exemplified by B.L. van der Waerden, according to which notably Elements II and the "application of areas" constructions in VI,26-30 would be interpreted as exercises in manipulating and solving quadratic equations. The other was the amazingly broad willingness to treat Euclid as a "blundering schoolmaster" (as Ian put it in the title of one article), whose Elements would be a compilation like Diodorus Siculus' Library of History, which modern scholars could exploit to reconstruct the work of lost geniuses like Eudoxus: any merits would be

attributed to the lost source, any faults to Euclid, and the present context of the propositions in the larger structure of the Elements would be used only to look for incongruities which could give a clue to the original context. Against this, Ian wanted to interpret Euclid out of Euclid. Thus Elements II is not an independent "geometrical algebra" but is securing what is needed for later geometrical constructions, notably the construction of the regular pentagon: here, as with the "Pythagorean theorem" and squaring the rectangle (and thus squaring any rectilinear figure), Euclid wants to show how much can be done without using proportion theory, just as, in Elements I, he wants to determine how much can and cannot be done without using the fifth postulate. Again, in Elements VI, elliptic and hyperbolic application of areas are not ways of solving quadratic equations, but arose from the proportion-theoretic analysis of the regular pentagon, and Euclid is stating the construction in as general a form as he can. Likewise in Euclid's arithmetical books Ian stressed their service to the theory of irrationals in Elements X (one might also look at their service to mathematical harmonics, and Ian of course recognized that they also contain independent things such as the theory of perfect numbers). And Elements X itself, clever in technique but degenerating into a long boring catalogue of kinds of irrational lines not redeemed by any overall theory, makes sense as an attempt to locate the edge-length of the icosahedron in Elements XIII and distinguish it from more readily constructed kinds of irrational lines. Ian was of course also interested in the logical structure of Euclid's proportion theory (or his two proportion theories in Elements V and VII) and the method of exhaustion, and in the status of the postulates and of construction. He argued against Oscar Becker's attempts to assimilate Euclid (or a hypothetical smarter predecessor) to modern intuitionism/constructivism: a construction-postulate is a license to perform (or to be agreed to have performed) a certain activity, and we cannot identify it, as Becker wanted, with an existential (or $\forall\exists$) proposition. I will return below to some more surprising things that Ian said about Euclid's postulates.

Ian was always interested in the relationship between the understanding of mathematics that emerges from mathematical writers themselves, and the understanding that we find in the philosophers, starting with Plato and Aristotle. He did not try to harmonize them. The mathematics that Plato and Aristotle were talking about may be importantly different from the mathematics that Euclid was doing perhaps a century later, and the programmatic descriptions that Plato and Aristotle give of mathematics may not map well onto any kind of real mathematics. Ian treated Plato as an enthusiast for mathematics among the philosophers, encouraging the philosophers to study mathematics and to imitate the mathematicians' methods (Meno, Phaedo) or even to surpass them (Republic); and perhaps later ancient sources are right that Plato gave problems as challenges for the mathematicians to solve. Ian did not assume that Plato himself had any great technical mastery of mathematics (in fact he thought the less enthusiastic Aristotle probably knew more math), or that there was a way to make coherent sense of everything Plato says about mathematics and its significance for philosophy: rather Plato gave a series of tantalizing incomplete and probably incompletable programs.³ He thought Aristotle was probably right that Plato thought mathematics was about special "mathematics," e.g. mathematical squares, which would be like the Form of square and unlike sensible squares in being perfectly square, but would be like sensible squares and unlike the Form of square in that there would be many of them: for the Pythagorean theorem to be precisely true, it must be precisely true about something, and it cannot just be making an assertion about the unique Form of square, since it mentions three squares. Aristotle argues that the same reasoning should lead

³See particularly Ian's papers "Mathematics and education: notes on the Platonist program," "Mathematical method and philosophical truth," and "Mathematics and the Divine in Plato," besides others discussed below.

Plato, absurdly, to admit intermediate astronomicals and harmonicals and opticals, and Ian in "Ascending to Problems: Astronomy and Harmonics in Republic VII" bit the bullet and tried to make sense of this "absurd" result: making use not only of Republic VII but also of texts like Autolycus' On a Moving Sphere and On Risings and Settings, he showed how someone might treat "pure" and "mixed" mathematical disciplines equally as idealizing, proving theorems about hypothesized rather than observed objects.

Ian thought Aristotle shared Plato's realist assumption that if mathematical statements are precisely true, there must be something they are precisely true of. But, as Aristotle argues notably at Metaphysics B2 997b34-998a6, they are not precisely true of sensible things (except perhaps in the heavens--but not even there, if, as in Autolycus, astronomy assumes that stars are points); and yet Aristotle is unwilling to accept the Platonic positing of a separate mathematical realm. (Myles Burnyeat in "Platonism and Mathematics: A Prelude to Discussion" said that Ian was failing to see the Platonist character of Aristotle's argument at 997b34-998a6.⁴ Ian asked me what I thought about that, and I said "well, I thought, 'if Ian didn't see that it was Platonist, Ian was being pretty foolish'; but then Myles seemed to take that to mean 'Platonist and not also Aristotelian,' and that's something else again." Ian smiled and nodded.) In one of his earliest and most famous articles, "Aristotle on Geometrical Objects" (1970), Ian argued against the standard view that for Aristotle solid geometry (say) treats natural substances but not quâ natural substances, abstracting away from their matter, weight, natural powers and so on, and considering only their geometrical attributes. In the first place, Aristotle is clear that geometrical objects do have matter, although a special kind of matter, "intelligible matter": Aristotle does speak of mathematical objects as arising from "abstraction," without properly explaining what that means, but this must be abstracting from natural attributes, not abstracting from matter so as to yield a universal. (In fact Aristotle never speaks of "abstraction" of universals, only of mathematics; it was Alexander of Aphrodisias who combined universals and mathematics into a single theory of the agent intellect's operation in abstracting from phantasmata.) Mathematics is about universals only in the sense in which physics is also about universals; for Aristotle, as for Plato, since the Pythagorean theorem says that one square is equal to two others, it must be making an assertion about three squares, not the single universal square but three things that fall under it. Furthermore, abstracting from natural attributes will not be enough to turn natural substances into geometrical objects: no natural substance is, say, a perfect tetrahedron, and abstracting from its weight and color will not turn it into one. If we turn it into a perfect tetrahedron by "abstracting" from its bumps and cavities, that is not abstracting anymore: the tetrahedron would not be this substance, under any description, but would rather be most but not all of this substance together with some parts of neighboring substances.

For these reasons Ian proposed, not that geometrical objects are natural substances with their natural attributes disregarded, but that geometrical matter is natural matter with its natural attributes disregarded, so that all that is left is three-dimensional extension; geometrical objects arise when particular shapes are "imposed" on this geometrical matter. This seems to me to be clearly right as an interpretation of Aristotle, and it is puzzling that, while Ian's paper is constantly cited, the lesson does not really seem to have sunk in. The least satisfactory part of the article is the talk of "imposing" shapes on matter: it is not clear how this is supposed to happen, but it sounds as if the imposition were purely mental, and this seems in tension with the realism

⁴Myles Burnyeat, "Platonism and Mathematics: A Prelude to Discussion," in Mathematics and Metaphysics in Aristotle/Mathematik und Metaphysik bei Aristoteles, ed. Andreas Graeser (Bern and Stuttgart: Haupt, 1987), pp.213-40 at p.222 with n24.

that Ian attributes to Aristotle. But I think the right answer to the difficulty--and I think this was Ian's view, but am no longer sure--turns on what Aristotle says at Metaphysics M3 1078a28-31, that geometers are talking about real beings "because being is twofold, [what exists] in actuality and [what exists] materially." This must mean that geometrical objects do not actually exist, but exist potentially within geometrical matter, because the matter can be divided along, say, the face-planes of a perfect tetrahedron. Aristotle in general thinks that when some whole body actually exists, the various internal surfaces on which it could be divided potentially exist, and so do the various part-bodies into which these surfaces would divide it. Even if the actual bounding surfaces of bodies are never perfect planes or spheres, and the actual bodies are never perfect geometrical solids, it seems Aristotelian to say that they have a potentiality for being divided along perfect planes and spheres into perfect geometrical solids: like the potentialities for infinity and the void, discussed in Metaphysics Θ6 1048b9-17, this potentiality is never entirely actualized, but can come progressively closer and closer to being entirely actualized. So the geometers' theorems are not about what actually exists in sensible things, but about what could exist, what could be carved out of the matter of sensible things; and this is enough to make the theorems true and scientific.

Ian compared Plato and Aristotle with Euclid on mathematics, on demonstrative method rather than on ontology, in his early paper "Greek Mathematics and Greek Logic" (1974) and then, building on that, in his later paper "On the Notion of a Mathematical Starting Point in Plato, Aristotle and Euclid" (1991), which drew or at least conjectured some strong and surprising conclusions. The main claims of the earlier paper were that Greek mathematics was not detectably influenced by either Aristotelian or Stoic logic, and conversely that neither Aristotle nor Chrysippus were seriously influenced by examples of mathematical argument in formulating their syllogistics. Obviously Aristotle gives mathematical examples, especially in the Posterior Analytics, but if he had ever tried regimenting geometry in any systematic way according to his syllogistic, he would have seen that it would not work: individual arguments might be shoehorned in, but not whole chains of arguments. Later Greek logicians do try harder to give an account of actual mathematical arguments: post-Chrysippean Stoics speak of "unsystematically concluding arguments" e.g. from the transitivity of equality, and Galen redescribes at least some such arguments as "relational syllogisms." The Epicurean Zeno of Sidon had attacked arguments in Euclid, and Posidonius had tried in response to patch up Euclid's arguments by supplying the missing premisses, such as the transitivity of equality; Ian suggests that the discussion of "unsystematically concluding arguments" and "relational syllogisms" arises from Posidonius' reply to Zeno, and that some of the dubious "common notions" found in manuscripts of Euclid also arise from this later ancient attempt to plug logical gaps. But, as usual, Ian also intended a negative lesson, that this later ancient logical discussion was a series of patches with no systematic theory, and that Galen's talk of the inadequacy of Aristotelian and Stoic syllogistic to the geometers' practice should not fool us into thinking that his own theory of "relational syllogism" was anything remotely like the modern predicate calculus.

"On the Notion of a Mathematical Starting Point in Plato, Aristotle and Euclid" continues the work of pulling Euclid's practice apart from (especially) Aristotle's theory of science. According to the Posterior Analytics, a science has three kinds of starting points: hypotheses, by which Aristotle means especially the hypothesis of the existence of some domain of objects which the science will study; definitions, both of simple things like point (which are on a standard modern theory undefinable) and of complex things like triangle; and axioms, by which Aristotle means topic-neutral generalizations such as the law of non-contradiction and apparently also "equals

added to equals are equal" and the like. Euclid's Elements I also gives us three kinds of starting-points: definitions, postulates, and common notions (further definitions are added in later books of the Elements, but no further postulates or common notions). It is tempting to try to match the two lists of three: it seems clear enough that Euclid's definitions correspond to Aristotle's definitions, and Euclid's common notions (such as "equals added to equals are equal") to Aristotle's axioms, so by process of elimination Euclid's postulates should correspond to Aristotle's hypotheses. Most but not all of Euclid's postulates are verbally postulating some activity, e.g. "from any point to any point to draw a straight line": if postulates like this were current in the geometry of Aristotle's time, and if Aristotle is trying to reflect them in his class of "hypotheses," he must be deliberately disregarding their constructional aspect. He would, then, be analyzing their scientific contribution as equivalent to an $\forall\exists$ proposition "between any two points there is a straight line"--or rather, since he gives no sign of recognizing the logical difference between an $\forall\exists$ proposition and a purely existential proposition, just as "there is a straight line between any two points," or even "there are [enough] straight lines." Aristotle would thus be trying to analyze what is accomplished in a geometer's constructions as well as in his arguments, but trying to analyze it purely in terms of argument, without mentioning anything distinctive that could be accomplished only by a construction.

Ian, however, thought that this kind of harmonization of Aristotle and Euclid was all a mistake. He noted that, in the Elements beyond Book I, all the explicitly posited starting points are definitions. We might think that this is because the common notions listed at the beginning of Elements I are supposed to hold of all types of quantity, and thus to be starting-points for all of mathematics: Euclid might have the program of reducing his starting points to definitions, topic-neutral theoretical propositions (the common notions), and topic-specific practical propositions, construction-postulates, which would occur only in geometry because constructions occur only in geometry. Ian rejected this, pointing out that the fourth postulate ("for all right angles to be equal") is a theoretical proposition, and that Euclid's postulates are not in fact sufficient for domains beyond plane geometry (e.g. for constructing a plane through three points, or even for adding two numbers). He proposed instead that writers before Euclid made definitions (and perhaps common notions) their only explicit starting points, that explicit postulates are Euclid's innovation, and that he did not carry out his project of making the postulates explicit systematically, but only for Book I. Furthermore, if earlier writers explicitly laid down definitions as starting points, they may well have done so, not to use them as premisses for demonstrations, but (as Phaedrus 237b7-d3 seems to recommend) to fix the references of terms, to ensure that speaker and hearers are thinking of the same object. Of course mathematicians would sometimes lay down a hypothesis on which something can be proved or constructed (Plato testifies that they did), but this would be a hypothesis assumed for a particular proposition, not something laid down before the exposition of a whole mathematical discipline.

Ian also insisted on the difference between construction-postulates and $\forall\exists$ propositions: a construction-postulate is a license to construct something, as an inference rule is a license to infer something, and we can no more replace all construction-postulates with $\forall\exists$ propositions than we can replace all inference rules with axioms. We might still think that Aristotle disregarded this difference, that for purposes of his analysis of the logical structure of geometry he treated construction-postulates as equivalent to $\forall\exists$, or just existential, propositions. But Ian thought, on the contrary, that Aristotle thought of construction as lying outside of the logical structure of geometry, that he intended his analysis of demonstration to apply only to the demonstration-in-the-narrow-sense of a geometrical proposition--to the argument that takes place after the

construction is completed. If this is what Aristotle was trying to analyze, then he might reasonably think that the only premisses used in the demonstration would be common notions ("things equal to the same thing are equal," "equals added to equals are equal" and the like). Ian thought this was in fact Aristotle's view--that only common notions are basic premisses in mathematics, that definitions function just to fix the meanings of terms and existence-hypotheses just to ensure that the terms do indeed refer. There are obvious objections to this interpretation (for instance, Aristotle says that we prove the existence of triangles, but "triangle" cannot be in the conclusion of a valid argument if it is not in one of the premisses, and "triangle" is not in the common notions or existence-hypotheses, so it seems that it must be in a definition that is taken as a premiss), and in the end I think that something like the Euclid-Aristotle harmonization that Ian was attacking is more likely to be right. Ian did not claim to have proved that it was impossible. But he wanted to force those who maintained it to acknowledge that it is a historical construction, not something explicit in the texts or forced on us by the texts, but a choice that we must take responsibility for, conscious of our fallibility as interpreters. And something like this was the goal of many of his papers.

A striking feature of "Aristotle on Geometrical Objects" is that it is constantly in dialogue with the Greek commentators, Alexander of Aphrodisias but also the neo-Platonists, as much as with modern scholars. Ian was introduced to the Greek commentators when (as one of the few competent readers who could be found) he was asked to referee Glenn Morrow's translation of Proclus' commentary on Euclid's Elements I, published in 1970 by Princeton University Press. Morrow found Ian's comments so helpful that (as he explained in the preface) he quoted many of them in his footnotes, with the initials "I.M." attached.⁵ Twenty years later, when the Press reprinted the translation after Morrow's death, they would ask Ian to write a new foreword, which remains an excellent way into Proclus on mathematics. Morrow had been almost alone in America, along with L.G. Westerink, in his interest in the Greek commentators. (E.R. Dodds was for many years almost as isolated in England; the situation was better in France.) But from this time on, thus for forty years, Ian's work on Plato and Aristotle, as well as on Euclid, was regularly in dialogue with late ancient commentators. He did not value them chiefly as sources of historical information that might be traced back to the days of Plato and Aristotle (undeniably Proclus' commentary on Euclid contains much information that goes back to the History of Geometry of Aristotle's student Eudemus--but Ian enjoyed poking holes in this "information"), but rather for their engagement as interpreters of the primary texts. Sometimes he found them preferable to modern interpreters: certainly they knew the classical texts better than any of us do, had deeply internalized the question of how Plato or Aristotle would respond to any challenge, and were very sensitive to all the places where one text of Plato or Aristotle was in tension with another, or a text of Plato with a text of Aristotle; although, more than one of us would, they saw such tensions as problems to be solved by better interpretation. But he appreciated them especially because they asked different questions, and approached the texts with different presuppositions, than we do; from across the centuries, their presuppositions are pretty obvious, and they help us to become aware of what we ourselves are often unconsciously presupposing, and where our assumptions might be questionable. And he found the act of interpreting, of trying to make systematic sense of a text, to extract from it answers to our questions, intrinsically interesting and worth studying.

⁵As Morrow explains in his preface, Proclus, A Commentary on the First Book of Euclid's Elements, translated with introduction and notes by Glenn R. Morrow (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p.xxxv.

For these reasons, when Richard Sorabji began the enormous project of translating the Ancient Commentators on Aristotle, and began trying to badger a crew of scholars (mostly experts on Aristotle and not on late ancient philosophy) into contributing a translation, Ian got increasingly involved: he made an outsized contribution to the effort, as translator (he translated more than any other contributor, 10½ volumes) and as vetter and improver of others' translations. He started with Alexander's attempts to interpret Aristotle's modal syllogistic: both the Aristotle and the Alexander are technically demanding enough that most other scholars would shy away from such a translation-assignment, but probably a particular source of interest for Ian was that Alexander was attempting the impossible, since Aristotle's modal syllogistic simply cannot all be coherently interpreted. But Ian's biggest contribution to the project was on Simplicius' commentary on the De caelo. Perhaps Ian initially seemed a plausible person to ask to help translate the De caelo commentary because of the technical astronomical and cosmological material (e.g. the history of measurements of the circumference of the earth) in Simplicius' commentary on De caelo II. But Ian was also interested in the larger issues, about creation in time or from eternity, about the status of the heavens and of the meteorological domain, about the relation of a providential god with the world; and also issues about the relation between physics and mathematics, raised especially for Simplicius by Aristotle's criticism of the Timaeus' reduction of the physical "elements" to polyhedra and ultimately to triangles. And while Sorabji's translation project was limited to the commentaries on Aristotle (a few texts of other kinds got slipped in later), Ian was interested in the whole late neo-Platonic project of making sense of earlier philosophy and mathematics, not separating commentaries on Aristotle from commentaries on Plato or Euclid or Ptolemy. Simplicius' commentary on the De caelo was called forth by Proclus' commentary on the Timaeus, which defended Plato against Aristotle's criticisms, in part by arguing that Plato did not hold the "extremist" Platonist views which Aristotle attributed to him and which some later Platonists did indeed hold (e.g. that the world was created in time or that the heavens are made of the same kind of fire that exists in the sublunar realm), and in part by defending "moderate" Platonist views against Aristotle's arguments. Once Plato has been "saved" in this way, there is an obvious question whether Aristotle too can be saved: does he hold the "extremist" Aristotelian views held by later Peripatetics, e.g. that God causes only motion and not being to the world, or that God is only a final and not an efficient cause, or does he hold only "moderate" Aristotelian views that can be reconciled with moderate Platonism, and are his apparent criticisms of Plato themselves savable as criticisms only of Plato's extremist followers? These issues are especially urgent for Simplicius because John Philoponus, for Christian reasons, had recently attacked Aristotle and defended "extremist" Platonist theses, and Simplicius wants to defend a united front of moderate Platonism and moderate Aristotelianism, in part to defend a united pagan philosophical heritage against the Christians. While Simplicius' project can be described as a "harmonization" of Plato and Aristotle, Ian was very cautious about attributing to the late neo-Platonists in general a thesis of the harmony of Plato and Aristotle, and especially critical of attributing to them the simple solution that Plato is the authority on the intelligible world and Aristotle is the authority on the sensible world. On the contrary, Ian was very interested, especially in the last years of his life, in Proclus' and Simplicius' attempts to defend what he called the "mathematical chemistry" of the Timaeus against Aristotle's objections.

Ian did not, in general, go into the study of late ancient interpretations with the expectation that they would be right as interpretations. He and Catherine Osborne got interested about the same time in Hippolytus' Refutation of all Heresies, an important source for the pre-Socratics and various other thinkers, where Hippolytus tries to discredit each Christian heresy by showing

that it has taken its ideas not from divine revelation but from some Greek philosopher. Both Ian and Osborne wanted to study Hippolytus' interpretations of those Greek philosophers, not just as sources for earlier thinkers, but as interpretations. But, as Ian said in his review-essay on Osborne's Rethinking Early Greek Philosophy: Hippolytus of Rome and the Presocratics, Osborne sometimes seemed to speak as if we could not hope to interpret the pre-Socratics better than Hippolytus did, or as if all interpretations were equally valid. By contrast, Ian pointed out that when Hippolytus argued that the Naassenes, who worshiped the snake from the Garden of Eden and apparently associated it with life-giving moisture, had taken their ideas from Thales, it is just possible that Hippolytus' interpretive comparison might help us understand the Naassenes, but extremely unlikely that it will give any new insight into Thales.⁶ But Ian could be very sympathetic to late ancient interpreters. He wrote at the end of his foreword to the second edition of Morrow's translation of Proclus' commentary on Euclid, "To understand a philosophical or scientific text is to make sense of it, and what makes sense is relative to an outlook. Proclus' own outlook and the understanding of Plato on which it is based are not ours. So naturally his understanding of Euclid is not always ours. But his attempt to read Euclid in the light of his own philosophical outlook is not importantly different from a modern philosopher/teacher reading an ancient text in terms of his or her own philosophical perspective. Nor are Proclus' methods of teaching the text of Euclid fundamentally different from the methods we use: he pursues a general line of interpretation, a reading, while presenting a great deal of material about the history of his subject and of interpretations of his text and related matters Proclus taught as a preserver of a noble intellectual heritage in a society increasingly indifferent and even hostile to that heritage. Many members of today's academy see themselves in a similar position. It is unlikely that this similarity of structure has no reflection in content. About eight hundred years separate Proclus from Socrates, Plato and Aristotle; only about two hundred years separate our 'postmodern' world from the Enlightenment. Proclus is not a postmodernist, but reflection on his ways of thinking and their relation to his time may shed light on the intellectual turmoil of our own."⁷ Ian also wrote with evident sympathy that Proclus in this commentary was trying to persuade sometimes resistant philosophy students that it really is important for a philosopher to study at least elementary mathematics.

A particular fruit of Ian's study of the neo-Platonists was his paper "Aristotle's doctrine of abstraction in the commentators," in the collection edited by Richard Sorabji, Aristotle Transformed. This built on "Aristotle on Geometrical Objects" and explored further some of its themes: the difference between abstracting from matter and abstracting from irrelevant predicates, the status of mathematical matter, the way shapes are imposed on mathematical matter, how far mathematical objects are mind-dependent. But Ian was not expecting the ancient commentators to agree with his own interpretation of Aristotle: both Alexander and the neo-Platonic commentators, in different ways, make mathematical objects more mind-dependent than any of the most likely modern contenders do. Alexander takes mathematics, like universals, to exist only in the soul, as a result of the agent intellect's act of abstraction: in both cases, the way we understand the things does not match the way they exist outside the soul, but this does not

⁶"Hippolytus *Retractatus*," p.237. For Ian's own approach to Hippolytus see also his "Heterodoxy and Doxography in Hippolytus' *Refutation of All Heresies*," "Hippolytus, Aristotle, Basilides," and the apparently still not published "The Author of the *Refutation of All Heresies* and his Writings."

⁷Foreword to Proclus, A Commentary on the First Book of Euclid's Elements, translated with introduction and notes by Glenn R. Morrow, with a new foreword by Ian Mueller (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp.xxx-xxxi.

involve falsehood, since we are not adding to the things anything that is not there, but only abstracting, i.e. taking away from the things something that is there. As Ian shows, Alexander's account is taken up by neo-Platonists including Porphyry and Ammonius, but is rejected by more radical Platonists beginning with Syrianus: all neo-Platonists think that mathematics serves as a bridge leading us up from the sensible to the intelligible world, but if the abstractionist account is correct, how can it do so? This worry leads Syrianus to work out the alternative account which Ian calls "projectionism": mathematical objects exist, not outside the soul in a world intermediate between sensibles and Forms, but only in the soul's imagination. But rather than coming up from sensation, by the imagination's recombining images taken from sensible things, they come down from the rational soul, by the soul's "projecting" some concept, creating an illustrative image of it in the imagination. This is the only way that mathematical objects can be e.g. precisely tetrahedra, when sensible objects are not (if the soul can correct the imperfections of what it takes in from the senses, it must be looking at an intelligible paradigm and must be able to reproduce this paradigm in imagination). Projectionism allows Syrianus, and Proclus following him, to reinterpret both Aristotle's reports of Plato on intermediate mathematical objects (they are "intermediate" because soul is intermediate between the intelligible and sensible worlds), and also what Plato says about mathematical thought in the Divided Line: the mathematician might not be dependent on external diagrams, as a straightforward reading of the Republic would suggest, but he is still dependent on "diagrams" in the imagination, in order to set out his propositions in an individual instance and thus to demonstrate them. Although Ian does not work out all the historical connections here, he knew that, in rediscovering and clarifying projectionism, he had found something with a historical influence far beyond the philosophy of mathematics. Projectionism must somehow have arisen from Plotinus' description of the creative activity of the lower world-soul or nature at III,8,4 (nature is represented as saying that its contemplation produces bodies as a kind of diagram, "as the geometers draw when they contemplate, except that I don't draw, but only contemplate, and the outlines of bodies are spontaneously produced"), which Coleridge was to cite and to try to syncretize with post-Kantian idealism.⁸ And projectionism must also somehow be the source of ideas in Avicenna and Ibn 'Arabî about a "world of images," generated by the soul in accordance with its character and midway between the sensible world and the separate intelligences (or the divine attributes), in which the Qur'anic events of the Last Day take place. Ian thought that Syrianus was probably using the projectionist account of mathematical things only to interpret Pythagorean "symbolic" statements about numbers, rather than real mathematics, but that Proclus turned it to good use as a philosophy of geometry; here as elsewhere Ian showed deep respect for Proclus as someone who valued and tried to make sense of the real discipline of mathematics, while too many other philosophers just tried to exploit the prestige of mathematics without interest in its content.⁹

I want finally to talk about two further highly reflective papers of Ian's, devoted to analyzing the current impasses of Plato scholarship and assaying the prospects for emerging from them: "Joan Kung's Reading of Plato's Timaeus" (1989) and "The Esoteric Plato and the Analytic Tradition [i.e. of Plato-scholarship]" (1993). Both papers should be read much more widely than

⁸See Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, vol.1 (London: Rest Fenner, 1817), Chapter 12, p.254.

⁹Ian's conclusions about the contrast between Proclus and the Iamblichean tradition were close to those drawn more or less simultaneously by Dominic O'Meara in his Pythagoras Revived: Mathematics and Philosophy in Late Antiquity (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). See also Ian's "Iamblichus and Proclus' Euclid commentary," besides his foreword to the second edition of Morrow's translation and his "Mathematics and philosophy in Proclus' Euclid commentary."

they have been (the "Esoteric Plato" paper was published in Méthexis, in Buenos Aires; searches on Google Scholar and Google Book suggest that it has been cited only twice in English, more often in other languages). The Joan Kung paper arose from a sad personal circumstance. Joan taught Greek philosophy at Marquette University in Wisconsin, and was an enthusiastic participant in Chicago events in Greek philosophy and a friend of Ian's and of many others in Chicago; she fell mysteriously ill in late fall 1986, was diagnosed with liver cancer, and died only six weeks after her diagnosis, aged 48, leaving an unfinished book-manuscript, "Nature, Knowledge and Virtue in Plato's Timaeus." Her friends held a memorial conference on her work, and the different papers were published as a special number of Apeiron, with almost the same title as Joan's manuscript, Nature, Knowledge, and Virtue.¹⁰ The organizers gave Ian Joan's computer and told him to figure out what she was trying to do with the Timaeus. Joan's manuscript was not as far along as had been hoped, and Ian could not fully reconstruct an argument that Joan had not yet finished making. But he took the occasion to reflect on the challenges that Joan was trying to overcome in her reading of the Timaeus, and this led him to reflect more broadly on the deadlock over the Timaeus (represented in the exchange between Owen and Cherniss), and more broadly still on the problems of interpreting Plato in the second half of the twentieth century.

Ian saw the problems as arising fundamentally from the breakdown of an older commonplace interpretation of the theory of Forms as a theory of concepts or meanings motivated by the conviction that there is no satisfactory referent in the sensible world for the terms that Socrates was trying to define. That older interpretation has trouble making sense of, for instance, the Phaedo on Forms as causes, the Republic on the Form of the Good as the source of being and intelligibility, or the Symposium on the Form of Beauty as the highest object of desire. (As Ian puts it, "such views can be and have been accommodated to the interpretation of the Theory of Forms as a theory of meaning by arguing that, for example, Plato is given to hyperbole and uses terms like 'cause' and 'being' in ways broader than we do; but such moves do not completely allay one's misgivings.")¹¹ Scholars might allow Plato to find such heavy metaphysical implications in his solution to the problem of meaning "as long as [they] were willing to be fairly easy-going in their expectations concerning the reasonableness and intelligibility (to us) of a philosopher of antiquity," but the development of analytic philosophy raised the standards, and the old solutions were no longer convincing.¹² The most popular solution was to hold that the full metaphysical theory of Forms was an excess of Plato's middle period, from which he had recovered by the time of what Owen called "the profoundly important late dialogues." Unfortunately, this is untenable if the Timaeus is a dialogue of Plato's last period--which it is. Since at the time of Ian's paper many Plato scholars in the analytic tradition still believed, or tried to believe, that Owen had won the argument against Cherniss or at least that he had held him off to a standstill, Ian added a long digression on the evidence for dating, which involved Ian in an enormous amount of technical work, and which remains the best available broad introduction to the uses of stylometry in dating Plato's dialogues.¹³ While Owen had of course mainly content-based reasons for putting the Timaeus in the middle period, he also tried to show that the stylometric evidence supported this dating or that, at a minimum, it pointed both ways

¹⁰Terry Penner and Richard Kraut, eds., Nature, Knowledge, and Virtue (Edmonton: Academic Press, 1989) = Apeiron 24 (1989), n.4.

¹¹"Joan Kung's Reading of Plato's Timaeus," p.6.

¹²"Joan Kung's Reading of Plato's Timaeus," pp.6-7.

¹³"Joan Kung's Reading of Plato's Timaeus," pp.8-20.

and allowed us a choice. Ian completely exploded these claims and exposed Owen's manipulations of the evidence. Then he got back to his and Joan's problem: how do we make sense of the Forms, and of the receptacle, the mathematically described human and cosmic souls, and the polyhedra associated with the physical elements, which we find alongside the Forms in the Timaeus?

Joan's basic thought, which Ian endorsed, was that Plato was positing the Forms, and these other entities, not as meanings but as causes, as part of a would-be reductionist theory of the world and of human beings. That is, it would be reductionist in trying to reduce the phenomenal entities to posited abstract entities (what we call fire is just lots of little tetrahedra), not in trying to ground phenomenal laws, since any phenomenal laws we can formulate are probably just misleading approximations. (The Forms are "real properties of things," causally explanatory properties, which may be quite different from the phenomenal properties captured by our language. Joan, influenced by Quine, contrasted Plato's approach with Aristotelian essentialism, but David Charles' interpretation of Aristotle's essences, as causes rather than meanings, brings Aristotle closer to Joan's Plato.)¹⁴ Joan thought Plato's positings of abstract entities and his reductionist project were aiming at a unified theory not just of the physical world but also of the soul (the cause of motion and order in the physical world), including both its cognitions and its virtues--hence her title "Nature, Knowledge and Virtue in Plato's Timaeus." Ian agreed with all this, but unlike Joan he stressed the failure of Plato's explanatory and unifying projects. (As he wrote elsewhere, "Subsequent history has shown that Plato was in a certain sense uncannily right about the scientific power of number. It has not, alas, confirmed his view of the connection between scientific and moral understanding.")¹⁵ Ian thought that Plato's approach to mathematical science was reactionary even for his own time--geometers had moved on from Plato's almost-Pythagorean obsession with numbers (i.e. integers)--and that what Plato was laying out was not, as Joan thought, a scientific theory, but a poetic amateur sketch of what a worldview based on science might look like.

The deadlocks about the theory of Forms, and about the Timaeus, are connected with the even deeper deadlock in the scholarship about Plato's "unwritten teachings," which Ian analyzed in "The Esoteric Plato and the Analytic Tradition." The analytic Plato-scholars of the time tried their best never to mention the topic. Sometimes they said Cherniss had shown that Aristotle's reports of Plato's teaching arose from projecting Aristotle's own concepts back onto the dialogues (although, for the theories of numbers and their principles, Cherniss was supposed to show this in the unwritten, and unwriteable, volume 2 of Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy). Sometimes they tried to show that the subject was not worth studying (so Vlastos and Burnyeat, in passages Ian cites at the beginning of his paper). But the impasse was worse than that: Ian cited not just analytic scholars' contemptuous dismissals of the Tübingen school, but each school's contemptuous dismissals of the others (including Krämer's quite amazing denunciation of all his opponents, and Gadamer's comparison of the Tübingers' doctrinal results to 18th-century school-metaphysics), and he asks what is to be done. As he says, "the problems here are not simply intellectual or 'scientific.' Enormous personal commitments are involved, commitments which are reinforced by institutions of historical scholarship based on distinct schools of interpretation each of which pushes its 'line' as far as it can be pushed."¹⁶ The Platonic

¹⁴See David Charles, Aristotle on Meaning and Essence (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Ian developed his thoughts about Forms as causes in his 1998 paper "Platonism and the study of nature (Phaedo 95e ff.)."

¹⁵"Mathematics and Education: Some Notes on the Platonic Program," p.104.

¹⁶"The Esoteric Plato and the Analytic Tradition," p.116.

data simply underdetermine interpretation, and Ian saw no alternative to "personal commitments" guiding our interpretation; but he thought that if we were conscious of our own and others' presuppositions we could secure agreement on some issues, and at least understand other scholars' reasons for disagreeing with us on disputed points. Ian thought the discussion had led, or should have led, to the agreed results that "Plato placed a higher value on oral than on written communication"; that "the agrapha dogmata to which Aristotle refers at Physics 209b14-15 are ideas which Plato expressed orally," including an account of first principles, lying behind many of Aristotle's (correct or incorrect) extended descriptions of Plato's views; and, furthermore, that although there were unwritten teachings there were no secret teachings.¹⁷

The importance of the unwritten teachings for the larger interpretation of Plato remains, of course, very much in dispute. The different schools' justifications of their positions on this tend, perhaps surprisingly, to turn on chronology, as in the case of the Timaeus. The standard view seems to be that Plato worked out (or tried out) the unwritten doctrines only late in life; and this seems to make them irrelevant to the interpretation at least of most of the dialogues. Krämer tried to find allusions to the unwritten teachings even in early dialogues, and to conclude that they were an unvarying underpinning of all the dialogues; while several leading analytic scholars, connecting the Lecture on the Good with Republic VI-VII on mathematics and the good-itself, argued that the unwritten teachings were part of the excesses of Plato's middle period, which he later abandoned--and so they would be irrelevant to the interpretation of "the profoundly important late dialogues." Ian argued, building on what he had done in the Joan Kung paper, that the Timaeus has "clear references to an unstated theory of principles" in 48b3-d1 and 53d4-7,¹⁸ and therefore that this whole attempt at chronological damage-limitation collapses if the Timaeus is a late dialogue, which, of course, it is. But if the unwritten teachings and at least the middle-through-late dialogues are going on at the same time, how are they related? The analytic school and the Tübingen school should be able to agree that the dialogues present partial and tentative results from an ongoing series of live dialectical discussions, and that this incompleteness means that the interpreter has to "come to the aid" of the written statements (the phrase is from Phaedrus 278c4-6). But how? For the Tübingen esotericist, by showing how they flow from the unwritten teachings. For the analytic scholar, the reason that Plato has not said anything clear in the dialogues about the theory of principles is that he has not worked it out to his satisfaction and has decided to make his arguments without it, and the interpreter too should "come to the aid" of the proposals in the dialogues by filling in arguments from plausible premisses that do not depend on grand metaphysical hypotheses.

The esotericists, at their best, do not think of the unwritten teachings as a set of formulae immune to dialectical debate, which would explain the dialogues and not be explained by them. Gaiser is clear in "Plato's Enigmatic Lecture on the Good"¹⁹ that while the unwritten teachings could be expressed in a few short formulae, those formulae would be uninteresting and meaningless when detached from any ongoing dialectical investigation: Plato refuses to put them in writing, not because he is keeping something valuable from us, but because we can find value in them only if we reach them starting from the dialogues. Nonetheless, for Gaiser, the goal of interpreting the dialogues remains "an all-encompassing theoretical vision which cannot in any

¹⁷"The Esoteric Plato and the Analytic Tradition," p.119.

¹⁸"The Esoteric Plato and the Analytic Tradition," p.121-2.

¹⁹In Phronesis 25 (1980), pp.5-37--probably the most sympathetic introduction to the Tübingen approach for non-sympathizers.

real sense be articulated,"²⁰ resulting from lifelong dialectical investigation and at least symbolically represented by the unwritten teachings: this belief in an intellectual intuition as the Platonic goal fundamentally differentiates the Tübingen school from the analytic tradition and even from Gadamer. Ian thought Gaiser was probably right that Plato was aiming at some such vision, and that this fact is important in interpreting the dialogues. But, as in the Joan Kung paper, Ian stressed that the project is a failure. Gaiser was surprisingly credulous about the scientific character of the Timaeus as filled out by the unwritten teachings (citing e.g. Heisenberg's warm words about the Timaeus). But the "reductions" of the soul and the physical elements to mathematical principles, which both Kung and Gaiser laid great hopes on, cannot be turned into anything like science, not even 4th-century BC science: Plato "was at best a naïve enthusiast for science," and not only the "scientific" details but also the general "scientific" picture they are supposed to illustrate are, Ian says, ultimately empty. "Although reference to the dogmata gives us a proper historical perspective on Plato, it does not deepen our philosophical understanding of his physics or metaphysics. On the contrary, it enables us to see that we were probably wrong to be looking for a deep understanding of at least his treatment of the simple bodies That may be an unwelcome result, but gains in historical understanding need not always be pleasant."²¹

I think Ian's article is an excellent example of the progress that can be made by sympathetically understanding the work of radically different scholarly traditions and forcing them into discussion with each other. But it also raises the question why he cared so much--why devote so much effort to interpreting Plato, if what Ian says about him is true? Ian clearly had a deep lifelong love for Plato, and for some aspects of neo-Platonism, in a way that he did not for Aristotle or Euclid, despite all his contributions to understanding them. Friends of his that I have talked to have said that they too thought Ian was somehow a natural Platonist. But Ian thought that we moderns were, or at least he personally was, barred from simply appropriating the language of soul and God, or the conflation of mathematical and value-language, as describing objective features of reality. His unpublished paper "From 'Know thyself' to 'I think, therefore I am': self-knowledge and self-consciousness" shows that he thought the Platonists were in some way existentially sensitive to depths of the self that were flattened out by Descartes' theories, and apparently also by the Stoic theories that the neo-Platonists attacked. (I tried to get him to insert the Stoics into the story of philosophers on self-knowledge, but he would not. He told another of his students, "Epictetus is not a philosopher with whom I conjure.") But he also showed his Platonism by holding all formulations of these "depths" to high standards of precision, finding them all wanting, and concluding in *aporia*.²²

This was also Ian's teaching method. His student Eric Schliesser wrote, on the memorial blog set up by the University of Chicago philosophy department, "His graduate teaching style can be best described as follows: you take a canonical text. You go through it line by line with your students, eliciting from them the now standard/canonical (often very dull) reading (sometimes you assign that, too). You then carefully show with them how it cannot possibly be right. Then

²⁰The phrase is Ian's, "The Esoteric Plato and the Analytic Tradition," p.128.

²¹"The Esoteric Plato and the Analytic Tradition," p.131.

²²Eric Brown and Zena Hitz recall Ian reading out in class, with evident identification, a passage from Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed II,24: "The extreme predilection that I have for investigating the truth is evidenced by the fact that I have explicitly stated and reported my perplexity regarding these matters as well as by the fact that I have not heard nor do I know a demonstration as to anything concerning them" (Moses Maimonides, The Guide of the Perplexed, translated with an introduction and notes by Shlomo Pines, with an introductory essay by Leo Strauss [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963], v.2 p.327).

you draw attention to an exciting, non-standard reading. Just before the end of class you show it, too, has fatal objections. Class ends (like a Platonic dialogue) in aporia. Repeat exercise at next class."²³ This teaching style was not good at telling students who needed to be told what Plato or Aristotle were about, nor at motivating students who came in needing to be motivated--there were several students who left in disillusion. But it was very good for those of us who came in full of enthusiasm and certainty about what the texts were about, and who needed to be shown the difficulties that any interpretation must confront. If he was convinced that we understood the responsibilities, he was respectful of our "personal commitments" in interpretation (as in his "Esoteric Plato" paper), even when he could not share them: he did not try to shape us either into his own model or into the model of the analytic school, although he warned us that when we got out into the wider world we would need to deal with it. (I remember that when I asked him what literature to look at for one paper I was writing, he told me to write it first, look at the literature later, and stick in footnotes if necessary. And when I gave him a draft of what became my first published paper, he sent back several pages of comments, with some comments marked "IM," others marked "OX," and others marked "OX, IM." I figured that "IM" were his initials, but had to ask him what "OX" meant; he said, "oh, I figured that's what they'd say at Oxford." The comments marked "OX, IM" were things they would say at Oxford that he agreed with too.)

Students who worked with Ian on their dissertation (not necessarily as first reader) included Michael Wedin, Deborah Modrak, Stephen Menn, Rachana Kamtekar, Eric Brown, Wes Sandel, David Rehm, Scott Schreiber, Eric Schliesser, Erik Curiel, James Wilberding, Brian Johnson, and Zena Hitz (who finished her Ph.D. at Princeton but remained close to Ian); I am sure I am missing other names. Many of us came back to Chicago to speak at a lovely conference for Ian on the occasion of his retirement in 2002. (Some more senior figures were also there: Myles Burnyeat gave his paper "Eikôs Muthos," a remarkable change from the old analytic dismissal of the Timaeus.)²⁴ It was certainly easy enough to pick up a tone of pessimism from Ian. But he had a career of accomplishments in research and teaching that he could be justifiably proud of, he had helped to transform the profession of ancient philosophy, and he seemed deeply gratified by the conference. He took his teaching and supervisory responsibilities very seriously, and we must have caused him much annoyance and anxiety. He was also not happy with the direction that the Chicago philosophy department was going in. But after he retired, he seemed to all of us to have become a much happier person. He kept working long hours in his little study in Regenstein library with his computer and the Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca, as before, and he and Janel were happy together, as before; and he threw himself with amazing productivity into his work for Richard Sorabji's translation series which, without the anxieties of monograph-writing, allowed him to make excellent use of his erudition, his familiarity with the language and thought of the commentators, his knowledge of the permanent difficulties of the texts they were commenting on, and his constant effort for conceptual and linguistic exactness. He was also able to travel, for scholarly and other purposes; he and Janel had been just about to start splitting their time regularly between Chicago and London. He should have had more years for all this, but it was a happy ending.

Stephen Menn

²³<http://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/mueller/2010/08/24/guest-book/#comment-5>

²⁴The paper has since been published twice, in Rhizai 2 (2005), pp.143-65 and in Catalin Partenie, ed., Plato's Myths (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2008, pp.167-86.

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²⁵I would like to thank, for their comments and conversations about Ian: Alan Bowen, Eric Brown, Zena Hitz, Rachana Kamtekar, Alison Laywine, Henry Mendell, Richard Sorabji, Bill Tait, James Wilberding, and especially Janel Mueller.

²⁶This list is based on a CV of Ian's and should be fairly complete through about 2006; I have supplemented the list from various sources and added things that were published later or are still forthcoming, but I may well be missing some recent publications, and perhaps especially book reviews (where Ian had listed only one piece after 2000). I would appreciate hearing about anything I have missed.

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