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ION

PLATO

ION

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

by

J. M. MACGREGOR

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PREFACE

FOR the matter contained in the first two sections of the Introduction acknowledgment is due to the various histories of Greek philosophy, in particular to those of Ritter and Preller and of Zeller, and to the monograph on Plato by the late Professor D. G. Ritchie. The section on the MSS. is based upon the writings of Schanz and Professor J. Burnet, to whom I am also indebted for information concerning the sources from which the various readings are derived. Especial thanks are due to Professor Henry Jackson, who read the Introduction and Notes in the manuscript and added to former kindnesses by forwarding a number of valuable and suggestive comments.

Something should perhaps be added concerning the references given in the Notes to Rutherford's School Greek Grammar. In the criticism of Classical Education during the past few years not a little has been said concerning the futility of the *abstract* teaching of Greek and Latin grammar. Experience has shown a tendency on the part of students

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to interpret this criticism as absolving them from the necessity of using, or even possessing, a text-book on the grammar of the language which they profess to be studying. It therefore seemed desirable, especially in the case of young students, such as those for whom this edition is intended, to indicate the vital connection between a formal Greek Grammar and the writings of Greek authors.

J. M. M.

LISCARD,
September, 1912.

INTRODUCTION

LIFE OF PLATO.

SEVERAL accounts of the life of Plato have come down to us[1]. These accounts however are all of late date; the statements which they make do not always agree; and they contain much which is obviously fabulous and not a little which appears to be based upon erroneous inferences from Plato's own works[2]. With such material to work upon it is impossible to arrive at certainty. It is true that we have some incidental references which rest upon a better authority, *e.g.* the statement of Aristotle (*Metaphysics*, I. 6) as to the philosophic doctrines which exercised an influence upon Plato. It is possible also to draw some conclusions with certainty from the philosopher's own writings, *e.g.* his interest in statesmanship, as evidenced by the *Republic* and the *Laws*. But in the main we have to depend for our knowledge of Plato's life on uncritical and unreliable authorities.

Plato came of an aristocratic family. His father's name is given as Ariston and through his mother, Perictione, he could claim kinship with the great Athenian law-giver, Solon. He was born in the year 427 B.C. at Athens, or, as another account has it, in Aegina, where his father had had land assigned to him under the Athenian military

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[1] See Appendix I.

[2] *e.g.* Plato is said by some to have met the Magi, by others to have failed to do so; he is described as the son of Apollo; his visit to the Magi was perhaps inferred from the mention of Zoroaster in the *First Alcibiades* (121 E, 122 A).

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occupation of the island[1]. According to tradition Plato[2] was trained in music by Dracon, a pupil of the famous Damon, in letters by Dionysius and in gymnastics by Ariston of Argos. His prowess, we are told, was exhibited at the great athletic festivals of Greece, at Olympia, Delphi, Nemea and the Isthmus, but the accounts vary and there is probably much exaggeration. As a young man Plato would naturally serve in the army in the last period of the Peloponnesian war. The names of contests, in which he bore a part, are given, but it is chronologically impossible for him to have fought in the well-known battles at Tanagra (456 B.C.) and Delium (424 B.C.). The mention of these engagements would seem to be due to some confusion in the minds of our authorities[3].

In his early days Plato is said to have devoted himself to painting and to poetry. Some verses ascribed to him have come down to us. But later, abandoning these pursuits, he gave himself up entirely to philosophy and burned, so the story runs, a tragedy with which he was about to compete. From Aristotle (*Metaphysics* I. 6) we learn that Plato as a young man came under the influence of the doctrines of Heracleitus—an influence which is strongly marked in some of the Platonic writings. Afterwards he turned his attention to the Pythagorean and Eleatic Schools, while, most important of all, he fell under the spell of the personality and teaching of Socrates. The intimacy between the two philosophers is attested by a passage in Xenophon (*Memorabilia*,

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[1] The Athenians expelled the Aeginetans from their island and occupied it with cleruchs in 431 B.C.

[2] He is said to have been called after his grandfather Aristocles, but to have received the name Plato because of his broad (πλατύς) shoulders or forehead or, according to others, on account of the breadth of his style.

[3] Antisthenes the Cynic is said, in Diog. Laert. VI. i. 1, to have been present at the battle of Tanagra, and Socrates fought at Delium (Plato, *Symposium*, 221 A).

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III. 6. 1), where we are told that Socrates was favourably inclined towards Glaucon, the son of Ariston, for the sake of Charmides, the son of Glaucon, and for the sake of Plato. At the final scene, when Socrates was compelled to drink the hemlock, Plato was not present. But in the *Phaedo* he has described the fortitude and magnanimity of his great teacher on that occasion and has paid tribute to his master in one of the noblest passages in all literature.

The writers of Plato's life all agree in stating that he travelled widely. The desire to bring the Greek thinker into contact with the wisdom of the ancient civilizations of Egypt and the East seems to have led Plato's biographers to infer from passages in his works that he had consorted with the Magi in Phoenicia and the priests in Egypt[1]. Similarly the occurrence of the name of Theodorus of Cyrene, the mathematician, in the *Theaetetus* has perhaps given rise to the statement that Plato himself visited that country. It would appear that after the death of Socrates in 399 B.C. Plato withdrew for a time to Megara. That he visited Sicily on more than one occasion, and probably South Italy as well, seems certain.

According to the tradition Plato first went to Sicily to view the island and witness an eruption of Mount Etna. While there he came in contact with Dionysius, tyrant of Syracuse, who displeased with the philosopher's political views caused him to be sold as a slave. His friends, however, procured his release and a garden was bought for him in the Academy, where he taught his doctrines. When the elder Dionysius died, Plato returned to Sicily hoping to secure from Dionysius, the late tyrant's son and successor, land and citizens wherewith to establish his ideal commonwealth. Failing to obtain these he returned to Athens, but later visited Sicily a third time in order to make peace

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[1] For the Magi, cf. *sup.* p. ix. n. 2. Plato's biographer treats Socrates' oath in the *Gorgias* (482 B), 'By the dog, the god of the Egyptians,' as evidence of a visit to Egypt.

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between his friend, the statesman Dion, and the younger Dionysius. He did not succeed, however, in effecting a reconciliation and coming back to Athens continued his teachings, until he died at an advanced age and was buried in the grove of Academus.

PLATO'S WRITINGS.

In addition to the verses mentioned above there have been handed down as Plato's a collection of letters, a will, and a number of prose works. Of the letters some were rightly regarded as spurious by the Alexandrian critics and modern scholars have been disposed to doubt the genuineness of the rest. The will has perhaps a better title to be considered authentic. It has been observed that it contains no reference to the philosopher's books—a point not likely to be omitted by a forger in a later age. Among the prose works attributed to Plato several of minor importance were clearly not written by him. The spuriousness of some of these was recognized by the scholars of Alexandria.

Almost all the works of Plato are written in the form of dialogues or conversations between several speakers. Among a people of lively intellect and social instincts, who enjoyed moreover a large amount of leisure, it was not unnatural that enquiry should take the form of a discussion and that instruction should be imparted through the medium of conversation. That this was the practice of philosophers in Sicily and Southern Italy in the early years of the fifth century B.C. may be seen from the fragments of the comic poet Epicharmus (flor. circ. 480 B.C.). In more than one passage[1] this writer presents to us in verse, apparently by way of burlesque, philosophic and quasi-philosophic arguments in a manner strongly resembling that afterwards employed in prose by Plato. In particular at Athens Socrates sought for truth rather by questioning individuals and examining their answers than by listening to the formal discourses of professing teachers. By his interrogations Socrates aimed at convicting his interlocutors of obscure and inconsistent thinking and at stimulating them to better methods and renewed effort in the pursuit of knowledge. It was with the same objects in view and in imitation of the conversations of Socrates that the dialogues of Plato were written.

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[1] See Appendix II.

The choice of the dialogue in preference to other literary forms was doubtless due also in great measure to that dramatic instinct which to a very marked degree Plato possessed. A reader of the dialogues can scarcely fail to be struck by the combination of strength and delicacy which the writer exhibits in his powers of characterization[1]. If we may trust the tradition, Plato had in this regard an excellent model. So great, we are told, was the esteem in which he held the mimes of the Sicilian writer Sophron that he slept with them under his pillow. Sophron's writings have unfortunately not been preserved. But if we may judge from Theocritus' fifteenth idyll ('The women at the festival of Adonis'), which is said to be based upon one of Sophron's mimes, his work was marked by an insight into character and by a skill and vigour in its portrayal which may well have excited the admiration of Plato.

Apart from the dramatic interest with which it enables a writer to invest a subject, the use of dialogue possesses several advantages. A literary form which professes to reproduce the conversations of actual life cannot fairly employ, at any rate without explanation, a technical phraseology unintelligible to all but a few special students of a particular science. There is further no need to have recourse again and again to stereotyped formulae in order to introduce objections to the argument or to furnish additional explanations. The natural pauses and lively interruptions which are used in Plato's dialogues to signalize points of transition compare favourably with such expressions as the *ἀπορήσειε δ' ἄν τις* of Aristotle (*Nic. Eth.* II. 4). Another advantage of dialogue has been pointed out by Plato himself (*Rep.* 348 A). If, he says, we have a mass of arguments on the one side arrayed against a mass of arguments on the other, we require a jury to decide between them. But if we proceed step by step, testing and establishing each point in the argument before advancing to the next one, we arrive at a conclusion based on a solid foundation and avoid the necessity of having to strike a balance between conflicting opinions.

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[1] On the delineation of character in the *Ion*, vide pp. xix—xxi.

On the other hand the dialogue may at times become merely formal and the interlocutor pass into little more than a personified *πάνυ μὲν οὖν* or *πῶς γὰρ οὔ;* In such passages the dramatic interest naturally tends to disappear. It may also be urged with some force that the language of everyday life cannot provide an adequate medium for the expression of philosophic truth. Thoughts which transcend the range of those which our usual words express require a special, technical terminology. Further, scientific accuracy can ill tolerate the looseness with which our vocabulary is ordinarily employed. Thus it is that Plato finds himself compelled to limit and define the meaning of certain terms which he employs. It must be remembered too that in dialogue it is the author who both asks and answers the questions. He can therefore frame his query in a special manner so as to suggest a particular reply. Thus he has an opportunity, if he so desires, of evading difficulties or at least of passing over them in a plausible fashion.

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ANALYSIS OF THE *ION*[1].

The *Ion* is a brief dialogue between Socrates and the rhapsode Ion. The main lesson to be drawn from it is that a mere unreflecting appreciation of poetry must not be confounded with an intelligent and reasoned criticism of it. The argument may be analysed as follows:—

(i) *Introduction* (530 A—D). Ion of Ephesus, a rhapsode, arrives at Athens from Epidaurus where he has secured the first prize at the festival of Asclepius. Socrates meeting him and learning of his success expresses the hope that he may be similarly fortunate at the Panathenaea. He remarks upon the enviable position of the rhapsode who wears a fine costume and occupies himself with the study of the poets generally and Homer in particular in regard both to their language and meaning. For the rhapsode must be acquainted with the poet's meaning, if he is to interpret him to an audience. Ion agrees, declaring that this part of the art is his peculiar excellence; in fact he deserves to be crowned by admirers of Homer for his services in it.

(ii) *The critic must understand poetry as a whole* (530 D—532 B). Socrates will take an opportunity of hearing Ion some day. At present he will only enquire if Ion confines himself to Homer. Ion replies that this is so, but that he can expound other poets equally well when they say the same things about a subject as Homer. Homer and Hesiod both speak about the art of the seer and Ion confesses that a seer would expound their meaning better than he could, whether what the poets said concerning the art was the same or different[2]. Socrates asks if poets have not a general

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[1] In the ancient classification of Plato's writings the *Ion* is ranked as a λόγος πειραστικός, *i.e.* a tentative discussion.

[2] This line of argument is developed later in the dialogue, 537 A—540 D.

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subject-matter; Ion admits this is so, but says they treat it differently. By 'differently,' he explains, he means 'better and worse.' Socrates enquires if the man who knows when a man speaks well about numbers is the same as he who knows when a man speaks ill. Ion answers that he is the same man, the arithmetician. Similarly it is the same man, the physician, who knows both good food and bad. Knowledge of the 'good' and the 'bad' is found in the same person. Hence the critic of good poetry must also know bad poetry, and we shall not be wrong in declaring Ion's skill to apply to other poets as well as to Homer.

(iii) *The argument is supported by the analogy of other arts* (532 B—533 C). What is the reason then, asks Ion, of his apathy and inattention when other poets are the subject of discussion, and his eagerness and enthusiasm about Homer? Socrates thinks he can guess the reason. He is sure that Ion cannot speak about Homer from art and knowledge. Has Ion ever seen a painter who could only explain the works of Polygnotus and treated all others with indifference? Or a sculptor devoted solely to Theodorus the Samian? Has he ever found a man who could tell what was good and what was bad only in the performance of a single artist, be he a player on the flute or lyre, a singer to the guitar or a rhapsode?

(iv) *The nature of Ion's appreciation of Homer is explained*[1] (533 C—536 D). Ion allows his inability to dispute the argument but reiterates that upon Homer he speaks better than anyone, is never at a loss and receives universal approbation. Socrates replies that this is because he is filled with inspiration by the god. The god's influence is like that of the magnet, which not only attracts iron rings itself but infuses into them a similar power. Like the bacchant, the poet is no longer his own master when he composes, but simply the mouthpiece of the god. This is

[1] The explanation is of course tinged throughout with irony.

shewn by the fact that the several poets compose in several different styles. If a poet knew the art of poetry as a whole, he would be able to write in each and every style. The poet is filled with enthusiasm by the god, the rhapsode by the poet, the audience by the rhapsode, just as an iron ring is endowed with the power of attraction by a magnet, a second ring by the first, a third by the second. One poet is inspired by one Muse, another by another. One rhapsode is fired by one poet, another by another. As worshippers indulge in ecstasies of dance and song only when they hear the strain of the god who possesses them, so it is only when mention is made of Homer that Ion's eloquence finds utterance.

(v) *The application of certain arts to the Homeric poems is indicated* (536 D—539 E). Ion is still doubtful if his praise of Homer springs from inspiration and not from knowledge. Socrates, he thinks, would agree with him, if he were to hear him speaking. Socrates declares he would willingly do so, but asks first which is the part of Homer's subject-matter upon which Ion speaks best. All of it, replies Ion. Homer in many places speaks of special arts, *e.g.* chariot-driving (*Il.* XXIII. 335). Ion admits that here the chariot-driver will judge Homer better than he. Each particular art understands a particular subject-matter and one art differs from another when it deals with a different subject-matter. To understand the same subject-matter we must use the same art, but a different art for a different subject-matter. Therefore a rhapsode cannot understand a passage where Homer speaks of chariot-driving, of mixing a potion (*Il.* XI. 639), of casting a line into the sea (*Il.* XXIV. 80), or of the prophetic art (*Od.* XX. 351 ; *Il.* XII. 200). For these we require the chariot-driver, the physician, the fisherman and the prophet.

(vi) *Where does Ion's art apply?* (539 E—541 D). Which portions then of Homer's writings belong to the rhapsode? All of them, asserts Ion. But he has forgotten his former admission that the art of the rhapsode has a separate

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subject-matter (537 D) and is therefore a separate art (538 B). Ion then cannot claim the parts of the poems which belong to other arts. Accordingly he qualifies his former 'all' by the addition of 'except what belongs to other arts.' This, he explains, includes 'what it befits a man or woman, a slave or free man, a ruler or subject to say.' But Socrates points out that this becomes the subject-matter of different arts according to the circumstances in which the speaker is placed. It is the sea-captain who knows what a man in command ought to say in a storm, the neatherd who is aware of the proper language for a slave to use when his kine grow restive. Ion maintains that the rhapsode knows how a general should address his troops, and that he knows this in virtue of being a rhapsode, since there is no difference between the arts of the rhapsode and the general. Ion, says Socrates, is the best rhapsode in Greece ; therefore he must be the best general. It is strange then that the Greeks do not employ him. Athens has made other foreigners her generals.

(vii) *Conclusion* (541 E—542 B). Socrates declares that Ion is not acting fairly, if he really can praise Homer from art and knowledge. Ion promised to shew him many fine things which he knew about Homer and has not even explained how his skill applies to the poems, but has evaded the question and turned out at last a general. Yet if Ion's appreciation of Homer is due not to knowledge but to the inspiration of the god, Socrates allows that he has not been treated unjustly. Ion must choose between being considered unjust and being regarded as inspired. He prefers the latter alternative.

THE CHARACTERS OF THE DIALOGUE.

Slight as the dialogue is, the characters of the speakers are vividly presented to the reader by a few graphic touches. Ion's natural vanity has been exaggerated by his recent victory at Epidaurus and he regards with self-satisfaction the coming contest at the Panathenaea[1]. He is flattered by Socrates' reference to the splendid dress and lofty calling of the rhapsode and boastfully maintains his superiority to all other critics and his great services to the study of Homer[2]. So proud is he of his art that he twice makes an attempt to display it to Socrates[3], seizing eagerly on the opportunity for recitation afforded by the other's defective memory[4], and shewing apparently a disinclination to stop once he has begun[5]. He no doubt trusted to produce as powerful an effect as that which usually attended his efforts[6].

But Ion's ignorance is equal to his vanity. In reply to Socrates' questions he at once reveals his inability to conceive the true scope of the art of criticism, imagining that the work of one poet may be studied in complete isolation from that of all others[7]. He cannot clearly distinguish what it is in the poems that forms his peculiar subject-matter but becomes confused and ridiculous when interrogated upon this point[8]. He is an artist unable to indicate his material. Thus in reality he is not a critic at all, but, as Socrates declares, a man inspired with an ecstatic enthusiasm by the genius of Homer, one whose admiration for the poet's work is unbounded, but at the same time unreflecting and unintelligent[9]. And in default of being able to shew where the knowledge to which he lays claim is applicable to Homer, Ion at last, characteristically enough, consents to be regarded as filled with a divine inspiration[1].

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[1] 530 A.
[2] 530 C, D.
[3] 530 D: 536 D.
[4] 537 A.
[5] cf. ἀρκεῖ, 537 B.
[6] 535 E.
[7] 531 A.
[8] 539 E.
[9] 533 D—536 D.

Yet this concession is not made without a struggle, for in Ion vanity and ignorance are, as is usually the case, allied with obstinacy. While attracted by the idea of being considered inspired he is yet unwilling to admit his lack of art and knowledge[2]. We find him taking refuge in idle and unfruitful distinctions[3], in an appeal to personal feeling[4], or in simple reiteration of a previous statement[5], when he realizes that he can no longer resist the weight of his opponent's argument. Finally he does not hesitate to set facts at defiance and to fly in the face of all experience[6], in order to avoid the necessity of allowing himself to be mistaken. Yet on the whole Ion was probably not an unpleasant man to meet. He seems to have been a grown-up child; with the vanity, unreflectiveness and mutinous spirit of childhood; but with its enthusiasm also and no doubt something of its attractiveness.

To Ion Socrates affords an effective foil. His modesty is in striking contrast to the rhapsode's boastfulness and he disclaims for himself the title σοφός[7]. While acknowledging the other's accomplishments and professing his readiness some day to listen to a display of them he endeavours by questioning Ion to discover exactly what they are[8]. He would be convinced by reason rather than stirred by an appeal to feeling. Accordingly he more than once politely evades Ion's attempt to indulge in quotation, and when at length the rhapsode, not to be denied, avails himself of the opportunity offered of declaiming a passage, he brings the performance to a close.

So too Ion's ignorance serves to throw into relief Socrates'

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[1] 542 A.
[2] 536 D.
[3] 531 D: 540 A.
[4] 533 C: 536 D.
[5] 539 E: cf. 536 E.
[6] 540 D: 541 C.
[7] 532 D.
[8] 531 A.

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superior powers of dialectic. The philosopher's persistency in argument is more than a match for the rhapsode's obstinacy. Socrates indeed seems actually to find a pleasure in throwing his opponent into confusion[1]. The distinctions drawn by Ion are submitted to scrutiny and proved invalid. His reiterations and denials are met unfailingly by a further examination of the facts. Whereas Ion appeals to feeling, Socrates relies upon the facts of experience[2]. In short, he stands forth in the dialogue as a type of matured and reflecting reason, seeking ever after truth, and seasoned with a humanity and a humour, a little cynical perhaps, but never morose or unkindly.

THE DRAMATIC DATE OF THE DIALOGUE.

The date at which the conversation between Socrates and Ion is supposed to have taken place is not a point of great importance nor is it possible accurately to determine it. The mention in 541 D of the appointment of Phanosthenes the Andrian to a command in the Athenian service, taken in conjunction with the statement in Xenophon, *Hellenica*, I. 5. 18, that Phanosthenes was sent in 407–6 B.C. to succeed Conon as general at Andros, might seem to suggest that the dialogue took place later than that date. But Phanosthenes may have been employed as general on a former occasion or Plato may have been guilty of an anachronistic reference to his appointment in 407–6 B.C. On the whole, however, although certainty is impossible, there seems to be no objection to placing the encounter between the philosopher and the rhapsode about 405 B.C. during the concluding stage of the Peloponnesian war.

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[1] *e.g.* 540 E.

[2] 541 C, D.

THE MANUSCRIPTS.

The writings of Plato were arranged by Thrasyllus (1st cent. A.D.) in groups of four, styled tetralogies, the *Ion* being the third member of the seventh tetralogy. These tetralogies appear subsequently to have been distributed between two volumes, the first volume including tetralogies I—VII. The two leading manuscripts of Plato, the one in the Bodleian Library at Oxford (Cod. Bodleianus, MS. E. D. Clarke 39) and the other at Paris (Cod. Parisinus 1807), have each suffered the loss of one volume, the Paris manuscript presenting only the second of the two, and the Bodleian the first. In addition the Bodleian manuscript has been deprived of the last, the seventh, tetralogy of the first volume.

For the text of the *Ion* therefore we have to seek the aid of other manuscripts. The most important of these is in the Library of St Mark at Venice (Cod. Venetus Append. Class. 4 cod. 1) and is denoted by the letter T. This manuscript, which belongs perhaps to the tenth century, was copied from a good original; there are very few omissions and practically nowhere is the text presented wholly unintelligible. In several places this MS. alone appears to preserve the genuine reading. Indications of change in the order of words are inserted by the writer, as well as corrections and variant readings in the margin. The scribe appears to have been a man of some education.

There are also two Vienna manuscripts, Cod. Vindobonensis 54 supp. phil. Gr. 7 denoted by the letter W and Cod. Vindobonensis 55 supp. phil. Gr. 39 denoted by the letter F. The first of these W which was brought to Vienna from Florence approximates in some places to the Bodleian MS., but in others to the Venetian T. In other places again it preserves a reading apparently old but differing from those of both the Bodleian and the Venetian. It contains in the margin a very large number of variant readings. The second MS. F is derived from a source differing from those of both T and W. It has suffered from interpolations at the hands of a Byzantine scholar, but it is noteworthy that the quotations from Homer in the *Ion* have not been corrected to agree with the text of the poet.

In addition there is a second Venetian manuscript, Cod. Venetus Marcianus 189 denoted by the letter S. So far as the text of the *Ion* is concerned this manuscript seems to be derived from the same source as the Vienna manuscript F.

Later writers such as the makers of anthologies like Stobaeus (date uncertain) occasionally quote passages from Plato. The evidence for the text afforded by such quotations, made possibly from memory, cannot be regarded as very weighty, but it is interesting and may at times prove of service in supporting the reading of one MS. against another.

The present edition follows in the main the tradition of the Codex Venetus (T). Variations from the readings of that MS. will be found indicated in the notes at the foot of the text.