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The Dialogues Of Plato, Volume 2: The Symposium



Synopsis

"The unexamined life is not worth living." Socrates's ancient words are still true, and the ideas sounded in Plato's "Dialogues" still form the foundation of a thinking person's education. This superb collection contains excellent contemporary translations selected for their clarity and accessibility to today's reader, as well as an incisive introduction by Erich Segal, which reveals Plato's life and clarifies the philosophical issues examined in each dialogue. The first four dialogues recount the trial execution of Socrates--the extraordinary tragedy that changed Plato's life and so altered the course of Western thought. Other dialogues create a rich tableau of intellectual life in Athens in the fourth century B.C., and examine the nature of virtue and love, knowledge and truth, society and the individual. Resounding with the humor and astounding brilliance of Socrates, the immortal iconoclast, these great works remain powerful, probing, and essential.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In this review I will compare 5 translations of Plato's Symposium: 1. Alexander Nehamas & Paul Woodruff (Hackett Pub Co, 1989). 2. Benardete (University of Chicago Press, 2001). 3. R.E. Allen (Yale University Press, 1993). 4. Shelley's Translation (St Augustine Press, 2002) 5. Sharon (Focus Publishing/R. Pullins Co, 1997) I have given all translations 5 stars for their own unique perspectives. Each of these editions has its own strengths and weaknesses, and because of this, none of this edition is complete in itself. Inevitably, if you are serious in undertaking this work, you need to pick

up more than one edition. I will give a recommendation on which one to use, at the end of this review. Symposium consists of a series of speeches on love (Eros), culminating in Socrates' and then Alcibiades'. What I am looking for is, first, ease of understanding the central concept of the book, this is obtained through different types of translations. My bias is toward a translation that is fluid, natural, and conveys the concept in a straight forward way. Second, I am also looking for helpful insights and philosophical explanations of some key thoughts. You get this from the quality of commentary/notes as part of the book. Both Sharon's and Nehamas' editions are similar in their lucid, straightforward, and current translations. I find that these 2 editions to be the best and easiest in understanding the text. On the translation side, I give these 5 stars. However, the commentaries in both editions are basic, and unsatisfying in my mind. For this, I give 4 stars. Benardete's edition has a superb commentaries both written by him and another (which is the gem here) written by Allan Bloom.

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