



Plato's Progeny: How Plato and Socrates Still Captivate the Modern Mind (Classical Inter/Faces)

Melissa Lane

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Socrates wrote nothing; Plato's accounts of Socrates helped to establish western politics, ethics, and metaphysics. Both have played crucial and dramatically changing roles in western culture. In the last two centuries, the triumph of democracy has led many to side with the Athenians against a Socrates whom they were right to kill. Meanwhile, the Cold War gave us polar images of Plato as both a dangerous totalitarian and an escapist intellectual. This book is framed by accounts of modern responses to the trials of Socrates and the ironies of Socratic inquiry. At its centre are two chapters exploring the idea of Platonic 'origins' in philosophy, and of Platonic 'foundations' for philosophical politics, as these have been read by Coleridge, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Popper, and Murdoch among others. Melissa Lane argues that the search for Platonic origins is an artefact of post-modern literalism. Yet images of Socratic inquiry can still invigorate our ethics and politics.

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