chiefly to those written in English during the past forty years or so [p. 8]) represents a dangerous scholarly *non sequitur*, especially in the absence of any attempt to justify the rationale of the criterion adopted.

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PLATO BEYOND THE *REPUBLIC*

J.-F. PRADEAU: *Plato and the City. A New Introduction to Plato's Political Thought.* Translated by J. Lloyd with a foreword by C. Gill. Pp. xviii + 181. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002 (first published as *Platon et la cité*, 1997). Paper, £14.99 (Cased, £45). ISBN: 0-85989-654-4 (0-85989-653-6 hbk).

Pradeau's book is a brief and stimulating overview of Plato's political philosophy. For the most part, it covers the dialogues that one would expect of such a work: there is one chapter on *Republic*, one on *Statesman*, and one on *Laws*. But some aspects of this book might surprise readers. In particular, more attention is paid than is often the case (among American and British scholars, at any rate) to *Menexenus*, and to the political implications of *Timaeus* and *Critias* (a topic to which an entire chapter is devoted). There is less discussion than one would expect of *Gorgias*, and *Crito* is entirely neglected. P. covers the main territory, but he does not strive for comprehensiveness. Nor does he spoon-feed the reader; advanced students and even specialists have a lot to learn from him, but beginners who seek a bare summary of Plato's political ideas should look elsewhere.

P. conceives of Plato's political philosophy as a coherent whole. He finds in the dialogues a gradual evolution of a theory of politics, but no major reversals. One of Plato's organizing and unchanging ideas, according to P., is that since politics is a realm about which it is possible to acquire specialized knowledge, those who have such knowledge should play a leading rôle in the life of the city. That thesis, according to P., is present in Plato's earliest works, and continues to animate his thinking through the late period as well. He does not see any conflict between the Socrates of the early dialogues and the Socrates of *Republic*; nor any major break between the latter and *Laws*.

Furthermore, he holds that Plato's goal, throughout the dialogues, is to find a way in which the city can be unified. The city is an individual that has a life of its own; it is a living thing, with body and soul. Politics is the study of how to achieve the unification in which civic flourishing consists: 'the city is a collection, a unit created by a heterogeneous multiplicity, which exists simply in order to hold those multiple elements together and to allow them to live in a uniform way. The unity of the city, which is the constant purpose of the system, gives politics its function' (p. 88).

If I understand P. correctly, the excellence of a political system is not to be measured by asking how well off it makes all of the citizens who compose it, but by asking how well it unifies these citizens He says: 'Adopting the unity of the city as his hypothesis and point of departure, he [Plato] considers the individual citizen, whoever he may be, purely as *a function of the city*' (p. 60, his emphasis). The individual exists in order to fit well into the whole of which he is a part: a greater departure from the

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liberal individualism that permeates contemporary Western political thought cannot be imagined.

P. offers neither a defense nor a critique of Plato's brand of organicism and communitarianism. His goal is to understand Plato, not to sit in judgement of him. However, at one point, he urges us to see Plato's anti-individualism as a product of his time and culture: 'the Greeks were seldom inclined to allow individuals the fulfillment and autonomy that they are granted in modern times' (p. 61). And yet Aristotle, who is hardly indifferent to the problem of unifying a city, insists that constitutions be judged in terms of their effects on the well-being of their citizens. Hellenistic political thought is similarly centered around the 'fulfillment and autonomy' of individuals.

One might also challenge P.'s reading of Plato by keeping in mind that *Republic* begins with a question about individual happiness, and engages in political inquiry in order to show that it is good for each individual to order his soul in the proper way. On the surface, at least, it looks as though Plato thinks the city is worth understanding because individual well-being is a matter that everyone justifiably seeks. It would be surprising, then, if he expects each individual to care above all about a superorganism to which he is subordinate. What P. needs is a theory about how, for Plato, the unification of the individual soul is related to the unification of a city.

P. holds that, according to Plato, it is only in a city that an individual can flourish: 'the city is the sole domain and, in the last analysis, the sole subject of human excellence' (p. 165). It is 'the *only* place of truth' (p. 166, emphasis added). Many of Plato's readers, by contrast, find in his works a longing to escape the realm of embodied human interaction, and to live a life of pure thought, unburdened by the cares of civic administration.

What is most distinctive, attractive, and provocative in P.'s approach to Plato is his refusal to regard the post-*Republic* political writings as less successful or worthy of our attention than *Republic*. On the contrary, he sees Plato's political philosophy as becoming increasingly astute, systematic, and comprehensive. This is because he treats *Statesman*, *Timaeus*, *Critias*, and *Laws* as a single all-embracing system of cosmological–political thought—the sort of structure at which Plato is merely gesturing in *Republic*.

P.'s writing style is complex, his thought is at times difficult and elusive, and Janet's Lloyd's translation leaves these linguistic and conceptual tangles as she finds them. But sophisticated students of Plato would do well to persevere, and even seasoned scholars will learn a great deal from Plato and the City. P. is never trite or uninteresting. His ideas about how to read Plato as a political thinker deserve a wide audience, and we should be grateful to Janet Lloyd for making him accessible to many new readers.

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INTERPRETING PLATO'S INTERPRETERS

H. TARRANT: *Plato's First Interpreters*. Pp. viii + 263. London: Duckworth, 2000. Cased, £40. ISBN: 0-7156-2929-8.

As T. says in his preface, 'Platonic interpretation is today at a crossroads'. A particularly complicated motorway junction might be a more appropriate description. One can read, say, Plato's *Symposium* as philosophy, drama, social

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