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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history, a commentary on the sexual mores of fifth-century Athenian aristocracy, and as a combination of all these things and others, such is Plato's sophistication as an author and his unwillingness simply to tell us what he thinks. What T. claims to be doing is allowing us to see the corpus through ancient, especially Middle Platonist, eyes, by establishing the manifold interpretative strategies employed by philosophers and scholars as they attempted to get to grips with such an elusive body of work. We may find new ways of reading the texts, or even be reassured that the problems that confront the modern reader have been confronting readers almost ever since Plato wrote. We may also realize that ancient interpreters had their own ideas of what Plato was saying, or what they wanted him to be saying, and that their methods seem very peculiar indeed. On the other hand, this might serve as a warning to us, since, although we are at least relatively free from the inter-school trench warfare, we are separated by a far larger number of centuries of social, cultural, philosophical, ideological, religious, and linguistic change than were those who first interpreted and commented on Plato.

The book is divided into three parts. The first deals with the more general questions of why Plato chose to write in the mode he did, scepticism, dogmatism, Socratic irony, and whether and where doctrines might be found. Such questions have been asked before, and are naturally asked by any reader of Plato, but T. introduces pieces of ancient interpretation in order to show that these questions are not new. The second is a brief overview of the history of Platonic interpretation in the Graeco-Roman world, ranging more or less 900 years in fifty-six pages. The cast of characters introduced will be bewilderingly large to those not already acquainted with them, and the chapter itself flies in the face of what T. says in his preface: 'I have tried to avoid an excessively historical approach, as I believe that it is the options that were available that is interesting, not who introduced each new reading and when'. Given the nature of some of the evidence, it is not possible to establish 'who introduced each new reading and when', but how the 'options' interrelate, in terms of chronology, school-affiliation and even geography, must have some bearing on the nature of those options. The third part is longer than the other two put together, deals with issues of the interpretation of individual, or groups of, dialogues, and is where T. seems happiest. He avoids discussing in detail ancient methods of reading what he calls 'the high profile dialogues' (they are treated briefly in the last chapter) and concentrates in particular on the *Gorgias* and *Theaetetus*, each of which has one of the six chapters of this part devoted to them. This will be heavy going for a student and seems more to belong to the ongoing debate on what exactly texts such as the fragmentary Anonymous *Theaetetus Commentary* are saying.

This brings me to my principal question: at whom is this book aimed? The sleeve notes ('its ultimate object is to reveal a fresh, almost primitive reading of Plato himself') and the first part imply that students of ancient philosophy and/or of Plato are the intended audience and that the volume will take its place besides others in this series (e.g. J. M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* [London, 1996^{2}]; A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy* [London, 1974]) as a useful introduction to a complicated but rewarding topic; but as the book goes on it becomes increasingly more specialized and so less accessible. There is nothing wrong with this *per se*, but T. gives no warning that this will be the course his book takes: there is even next to no help in the chapter titles. The fact that the interpretation of the interpreters is still a hotly contested area, largely due to the lack of facts known about identity, dates, and agendas, makes T.'s approach in the last part largely unavoidable, but a reader wanting something friendlier will be disappointed. A specialist, on the other hand, will have to wait until this last part for

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anything (and, as one would expect from T., there is plenty that is stimulating and provocative) that will interest them. Perhaps it is simply too early for the book that this sets out to be to have been written, and what is needed is a sourcebook which will make the primary material more readily available (e.g. G. Boys-Stones and C. Brittain, *Post-Hellenistic Philosophers* [Cambridge, forthcoming], which will concentrate on Platonists). Another potentially misleading aspect is that the 'ancient attempts to wrestle with Plato's writings' with which T. is concerned, at least in the last part, are nearly solely those within the Platonist tradition. Plato was a fundamentally important author for Peripateticism and Stoicism in particular, yet how they went about reading his corpus is largely neglected. This may have been down to the confines of space, but a wider overview including the approaches of other schools, whether friendly or hostile or both, and less detailed exegesis might have given the book more overall coherence and provided it with a more easily identifiable target readership.

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THE OLD ACADEMY

J. DILLON: *The Heirs of Plato. A Study of the Old Academy (347–274 B.C.)*. Pp. x + 252. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003. Cased, £40. ISBN: 0-19-823766-9.

In this compact book Dillon studies the meagerly attested philosophers who transmitted the Academic tradition from the year of Plato's death down to the accession of Arcesilaus as scholarch. Starting with an excellent account of 'the physical structure of the Academy' and 'Plato's intellectual legacy', D. devotes the next three chapters to the main figures Speusippus, Xenocrates, and Polemo, and concludes with a chapter on 'minor figures' (Philip of Opus, Hermodorus of Syracuse, Heraclides Ponticus, and Crantor) and an epilogue entitled 'Arcesilaus and the turn to scepticism'. It is not his first publication on this material. As early as 1977 he began his now classic book *The Middle Platonists* with a forty-page survey of these same thinkers. The new book more or less repeats his previous treatment of the themes Plato transmitted to his successors, and it also draws on several articles he has published in the years between. Major work in the 1970s and 1980s by Isnardi Parente, Tarán, and Krämer has done much to illuminate what, in effect, is the beginning of Platonism, and D. draws constructively, though sometimes critically, on their studies.

It is a handy volume to use because D. translates the principal evidence for each of his main figures, discussing it under such headings as physics, logic, and ethics. Apart from this useful sourcebook feature, there is a certain resonance of Diogenes Laertius in the way the main chapters divide their material between a chatty 'life and works' section and one on 'philosophy'. The biographical details on Speusippus and company help to enliven a book whose doctrinal material is often dry and obscure. Clear though its organization is, the arrangement by individuals comes at some cost, especially in the treatment of basic principles and metaphysics. It would have been possible to present the ideas of Speusippus, Xenocrates, Philip, and Polemo as relatively concerted

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