

Von Heyking argues that “the *Laws* represents Plato’s agreement with Aristotle” (133), leaving us to wonder whether the *Republic* represents Plato’s disagreement with Aristotle (and Socrates’ disagreement with the Athenian Stranger). Moreover, does not von Heyking’s organization of his book as an ascent from “Aristotelian sobriety” to “Platonic daimonism” indicate Plato’s divergence from Aristotle, one that has implications for their understanding of festivity? How authoritative is Aristotle’s virtue friendship, for example, which serves throughout von Heyking’s book as a standard for civic friendship, if Plato’s “dramatic dialogues are better suited to communicate the liminal mystery of personhood and otherness” (87; see also 48)?

During his voyage home, Homer’s Odysseus is entertained by the Phaikians’ sumptuous banquet and a bard who sings about the conquest of Troy. This is “the best that life has to offer,” Odysseus claims (*Odyssey* IX 1–12). Von Heyking says that this passage directed him to the connection between civic friendship and festivity. Aristotle, he notes, quotes this passage as evidence that the ancients regarded such festivity as the “pastime of free persons” (*Politics* 1338a14). Although Aristotle “does not fully agree with... ‘those of earlier times,’” he “sees enough truth in the statement to use it to advance his own view of political friendship” (13 and 62–64). Given the fissures von Heyking suggests but leaves in the backdrop of his sweeping vision of cosmic and political unity, a skeptical reader might suspect that he describes himself. That is, he exaggerates agreement among the ancients he treats, finding enough truth in their work to advance his own view of political friendship. Such skepticism does not diminish admiration for von Heyking’s effort, not only because it is needed in times of political cynicism and by “democratic individualists” who “dance alone” (164), but also because of the beauty of its humane vision.

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Hugh Liebert: *Plutarch’s Politics: Between City and Empire*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. Pp. xvii, 264.)

doi:10.1017/S0034670517000468

It is a nearly impossible task to articulate the basic orienting principles of Plutarch’s political philosophy in any brief scope. A master of rhetorical subtlety and indirect illumination through the significant detail, Plutarch has left one of the largest and most varied bodies of work extant from any

classical author. Each of the forty-six paired *Lives* offers a perspective so largely favorable to its subject statesman that any general statement one tries to offer even on the basis of the most careful interpretation of one text is subject to revision: first, in light of the parallel *Life* and, yet again, in light of the comparison Plutarch usually provides, but also in light of all the other *Lives*, especially (but not exclusively) those from the same city or in conflict with the original figure. Further, the multiple genres and voices of the various works of the *Moralia* shed different lights on many of the relevant questions. The interpretive challenges are myriad and massive.

Hugh Liebert is well aware of this challenge and makes the only feasible choice, opting for depth over breadth and acknowledging that “the interpretation that follows from this choice is necessarily partial” (3). Nonetheless, *Plutarch’s Politics* provides the most illuminating path yet offered into its subject.

Liebert accurately summarizes the principal originality of his approach: his study is “the first to recognize Lycurgus as Plutarch’s literary alter ego” (8). Just as Plutarch’s Lycurgus, in his travels preparatory to giving Sparta new laws, considers the lives of the rough Cretans and the polished Ionians alongside one another to contemplate “the difference in their lives and in their regimes” (200), so also Plutarch himself portrays the lives of Greek and Roman statesmen viewed in parallel, in such a way that both he and his reader can contemplate (through a wealth of particulars and analogies) the relationships between the lives of statesman and the lives of their civic regimes. Thus while Plutarch acknowledges the city/soul analogy explored by his master Plato, he approaches it from the opposite direction, using an intimate and judicious portrait of the statesman’s soul to reopen a synoptic and lively understanding of the city within which he acts.

Plutarch’s time and place require this approach and the parallel-lives genre he invents to deploy it, because the fully self-governing polis about which he writes, and on the basis of which the classical political philosophers articulated their analyses, no longer exists, either in Rome (now an empire) or in Greece (a province within it). One of Liebert’s signal accomplishments is the interpretive framework he elaborates both for comprehending the significance of Plutarch’s situation for his project and for relating his concerns to our own. He focuses on *philotimia* (love of honor) as the political passion most consistently engaged by Plutarch’s *Lives* and most modified by the subordination of the polis to the empire. Consideration of the ways in which *philotimia* seeks satisfaction, moreover, enables him to formulate a compelling connection with Pierre Manent’s analysis of Western political forms: city, nation, and empire.

Thus, Plutarch’s time is one in which the polis, where *philotimia* seeks honor from a particular community in conditions of immediate visibility, has given way to the empire, in which one (and above all the one emperor) seeks honor from as universal a community as possible, a community apprehended only through imagination. The shadow of the intermediate alternative, the nation

in which *philotimia* orients itself within a particular but imagined community, makes itself felt in the background—not only in the various characters in the *Lives* who promote Panhellenic visions with Plutarch's endorsement, but in the very structure of the *Lives*, in which the overall parallel is between Romans and "Greeks," comprised of Athenians, Spartans, Thebans, and even Macedonians.

Liebert offers a sophisticated and illuminating analysis of similar concerns about the fate of honor in our contemporary liberal order. He puts forward the fascinating thesis that the connection between the early empire and modern liberal principles is not only analogical but also genetic. Commenting on the interest Hobbes took in the figure of Augustus in works thought to be among his earliest, Liebert sees Augustus as a template for the tamping down of honor and the centrality of fear and protections characteristic of sovereign power in *Leviathan*. As Liebert sees it, Plutarch's imaginative enterprise teaches and conditions the reader's soul to give their proper due to the possibilities for satisfaction offered by local, national, and universal politics by exercising and educating *philotimia*, the passion liberal theory has struggled to accommodate after initially sidelining it.

Lycurgus provides the model for educating *philotimia* because this was the primary aim his lawgiving pursued, with remarkable thoroughness and success. The fact that Plutarch directly and explicitly defends the Lycurgan regime against the criticisms of Plato and Aristotle makes this text *prima facie* a promising point of entry for understanding Plutarch's place in the conversation. While his predecessors argued that a timocracy, the regime devoted to honor, was in principle inferior to a regime ruled by the wise, Plutarch shows how "Lycurgus intends to address timocracy's fatal flaws with timocratic remedies" (118). Those remedies rely on the political visibility peculiar to the city-form. To balance the oscillation between kings and people, Lycurgus institutes the Gerousia, composed of men "committed to public service in the public eye" (114). More important than its constitutional ballasting effect is the tone it sets for the city; but Lycurgus renders the effects of that tone absolute by eliminating the sphere of private or invisible conduct, remaking all the citizens in the image of the best. In every facet of life, Spartans are under Spartan eyes, being compared to exemplars of virtue and constantly judged. This is the "philosophy" Plutarch attributes to Lycurgus's city, which is also the one he practices in the *Lives*.

Liebert provides a cursory but penetrating reading of the four other Spartan *Lives*, showing that they revolve around the efficacy and inherent limitations of this Lycurgan order. Within the overall arc of the book, the most interesting argument is that the integrity of the Spartan polity encounters its crisis when Greek affairs propel Sparta to preeminence and drive its leading men to seek honor not only within their own city but also from the other Greeks. The groping of Greece toward the political form of the nation begins to undermine the regime that makes the most of the dynamics inherent to the polis.

Circling back to Lycurgus's parallel, Numa, Liebert argues that the story of Rome's lawgiver offers a foil in terms of both the traditional celebration of the rule of wisdom and the reflection on political forms. To cement his own wise rule and to civilize the nascent Roman people, Numa uses institutions of worship to direct admiration to the invisible, thereby gaining admiration for the less visible virtues of the orderly philosophic soul. By thus opening the city onto the cosmos, and also successfully incorporating Romans and Sabines into one people, Numa sets the course for Rome to leap directly from self-enclosed city to universal empire—especially since the moderating effects of his wisdom and virtue only last as long as the example of his life sets the tone for the city. The wisdom that can rule the polis as polis would seem to be the one confined to the polis, the one instituted by timocratic laws.

This is a marvelous guide for reading the *Lives* as a genre of political philosophy. It is no criticism to point out the many paths not taken, such as reflection on *philotimia* as one form of eros, or development of the points of contact with Tocquevillian concerns. Internal to the plan of the work, though, one might wish that the chapter on parallelism had brought the same exemplary textual attention to the comparison Plutarch provides for Lycurgus and Numa—by far the longest of his extant comparisons. Given that there Plutarch criticizes the inhumanity of Lycurgus's treatment of the Helots compared to Numa's "more Hellenic" treatment of Roman slaves, one might detect some qualification of Plutarch's admiration for Lycurgus brought into focus precisely by the regard for something universally human (*philanthrōpia*) exemplified by the philosophic Numa. It is, however, precisely the guidance Liebert provides that makes it easy to see the potential ramifications of this question. In true Spartan fashion, he has faced up to impossible odds and acquitted himself manfully.

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Iain Hampsher-Monk: *Concepts and Reason in Political Theory*. (ECPR, 2015. Pp. 254.)

doi:10.1017/S0034670517000559

Those interested in the generation-long dispute over how to write the history of political thought and how this history bears on doing political philosophy might well consider Iain Hampsher-Monk's *Concepts and Reasons in Political Theory*. The notes alone constitute a sure-footed survey of these fields. The author, who is the long-time coeditor of *History of Political Thought*, introduces