BOOK REVIEW

Plato's Symposium. A Critical Guide. By PIERRE DESTRÉE and ZINA GIANNOPOULOU, eds. Cambridge, UK and New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2017. Pp. ix + 268. Hardback, $99.99. ISBN 978-1-107-11005-2.

Destrée and Giannopoulou have provided scholars with thirteen exegetically rich and philosophically sophisticated chapters on Plato's *Symposium*, written for the most part by scholars with numerous publications (in several cases, numerous books) on Plato, classical Greek moral psychology, and ancient Greek philosophy. Many of the chapters warrant discussion at least to the length that I am allotted for my review of the entire volume, which alas I cannot provide here. In lieu of that:

First, an overview: Since the editors' introduction ably summarizes the main insights and methodological approaches of each individual chapter, I will refrain from duplicating such effort and instead offer an overview of the volume's organization. Running through the volume is a commitment to understanding Plato's *Symposium* through the interrelations of the dialogue's various *encomia* of Erôs and their anticipations of Diotima's account. The first two chapters consider the "place-settings," as it were, to the *encomia* of Erôs in the *Symposium*: Zina Giannopoulou examines how the dialogue's outer frame and prologue anticipate aspects of temporality raised by Diotima's speech, while Jeremy Reid looks at intertextual connections between the positive depictions of Erôs in the first three speeches of the *Symposium* and the account of potential guardians in the *Republic*. The second part of the book analyses the three "pre-Socratic" speeches of the dialogue: Franco Trivigno devotes a chapter to the speech of Eryximachus, Suzanne Obdrzalek and David Sedley each devote a chapter to Aristophanes' speech, and Francisco Gonzalez provides a chapter on Agathon's speech. In the third part of the book, Frisbee Sheffield, Andrea Nightingale, Christopher Shields and Anthony Price devote individual chapters primarily to philosophical aspects of Diotima's speech, such as its implications for understanding Platonic "forms" (Sheffield), finitude, permanence and immortality (Nightingale and Shields) and human psychology (Price). The chapters by Radcliffe Edmonds and Pierre

Destrée, which both focus on Alcibiades' speech at the drinking party, comprise the fourth part of the book, and Richard Kraut's final chapter, which is on whether Plato's *Symposium* grounds a doctrine of eudaimonism, steps back from the dialogue as a whole and provides a philosophical epilogue of sorts.

Second, a general reflection on hermeneutical methods on display in this volume: The editors have provided exemplary evidence of the rich plurality of challenging, thoughtful approaches that co-exist in contemporary Plato scholarship. Oldsters will recall the days when questions about Plato's development or non-contextual examinations of the logical validity of Socrates' arguments predominated in the scholarship. People who are not so old will recall the days when "analytical" (or anglophone) interpretations of Plato were seen at odds with "dramatic" (or "continental") interpretations. The hermeneutical richness of this volume both makes clear the sterility of such former approaches in isolation and (one may hope) marks their scholarly demise.

Instead, in a single, unified volume we find the following: Chapters devoted to intertextual analyses that largely eschew developmental frameworks (*Republic* and *Symposium* for Reid, *Timaeus* and *Symposium* for Sedley). A chapter devoted to the historical or institutional context of a Platonic dialogue (Edmonds on the relevance of the historical Eleusinian Mysteries). Chapters focused on resolving scholarly chestnuts in Plato interpretation (Trivigno on whether Eryximachus' speech is serious or satirical and Gonzalez on whether Agathon's speech is superficial or profound). Chapters on the interrelations between the philosophies of Aristotle and Plato (Sheffield on Erôs in Aristotle and Plato and Destrée on happiness and contemplation in their works. "Intra-textual" chapters, as it were, that seek to put together the various pieces of the *Symposium* (Giannopoulou on temporality in the dialogue's outer frame and in Diotima's speech; Price on the notion of "generating in beauty"). Finally, there are some chapters that I think are best characterized as "philosophizing" with the *Symposium* (Shields on the nature of permanence and Kraut on eudaimonism).

To my mind, the only missed opportunity in the volume concerns what one might call the politics of the *Symposium*. It seems uncontroversial to assert that although Plato sets the drinking party in February 416 BCE, the framing conversation between Apollodorus and Glaucon appears to take place in the aftermath of the Athenian defeat in the Peloponnesian War (Debra Nails dates it more or less to 400 BCE). By the time Apollodorus recounts his second-hand report of the drinking party, Alcibiades has been exiled and subsequently assassinated (among other things!); Phaedrus and Eryximachus have both been exiled follow-

ing the mutilation of the Herms; Athenian attitudes towards Socrates had already been compromised by Aristophanes' production of the *Clouds* in 423 BCE; and both Agathon and Pausanias had left Athens for the Macedonian court of Archelaus. The chapters by Giannopoulou and Edmonds discuss some of these details, but there seems to me something profoundly tragic about the setting of a dialogue during the Peace of Nicias, with participants like Alcibiades, Aristophanes, and Agathon approaching or at the zenith of their success; but then recounted (to Plato's brother, no less), in the aftermath of Athens' defeat and subsequent revolution under the rule of the Thirty. It is hard to imagine that Plato, writing in the 4th century about events that took place during his own upbringing, incorporates all these political details into the work without purpose and I think the volume could have used a chapter which explores this issue.

Scholars working on Plato's *Symposium* will find this volume indispensable and I strongly suspect it will establish several "landmarks" that will orient subsequent scholarship on the dialogue. I also suspect that several of the chapters could easily be incorporated into an undergraduate course on the dialogue without worrying that the material would be unintelligible to students only familiar with the *Symposium*. But I think any scholar in philosophy or Classics working on ancient philosophy will find much here to ponder and indeed contemplate.

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