

solely to the edition of the German *Gesammelte Schriften*, rather than more assiduously to the individual texts from which they arise, an omission not really made good in any sound bibliographic fashion by the meagre References section. The newcomer to Adorno, though, will come away with a reasonable conviction of the multivalent complexity of his thinking, and not just the obligatory caution about its intemperance.

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PLATO'S EXCEPTIONAL CITY, LOVE, AND PHILOSOPHER. By Nickolas Pappas. London & NY: Routledge, 2020. 302 pp.

As timely as it is intellectually earnest, the complex of ideas that occupies Nickolas Pappas' recent monograph *Plato's Exceptional City, Love, and Philosopher* elucidates the relationship between several distinct appearances of what he calls the "exceptional items" in the dialogues of Plato. Though this nuanced project is fundamentally intended for specialists, Pappas offers the general reader a handful of industriously woven guiding threads in his introductory chapter, situating his notion of the exceptional within the philosophical and historical contexts of its appearance and relating these components back to Plato's reception by later figures of the Western philosophical tradition. With Kant, for instance, Pappas recalls the metaphorical summary of the former's criticisms of Plato through the image of the ever-rising bird. What makes the example useful to the reader is his subsequent justification for the reference, adding to this that in spite of the temptation to view his own project on comparably lofty terms, there lies a marked difference between his itinerary and Plato's: "Because they are found among ordinary samples of their kind, exceptional phenomena can engage with the objects of experience, not just through empty metaphors. The philosopher spoken of in the *Phaedo* who manifests courage unmixed with fear appears among other people and their adulterated courage, often facing the same dangers they do" (10). Far beyond this dialogue, in which the exceptional presents itself as courage, Pappas' comprehensive approach is fittingly broad in scope, explicating the instantiations of the exceptional in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* as erotic desire, in the *Republic* as the good city and as the person of the philosopher in the *Ion*, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, and *Statesman*.

Though depicting his accounts of each appearance, and doing so with fidelity, would require much more detail than what has thus far been offered, what lies in common to the approach of each chapter can be briefly clarified by outlining his discussion of tyranny in the book's third chapter. The chapter, "Speaking of tyrants: Gyges and the *Republic's* city," further triangulates the ties between eros, incest and wisdom — a triad that proves highly significant in previous chapters concerning the exceptional form of eros tacit in the speeches given by Diotima and Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium*. While much of the chapter takes its direction from an analysis of the difference between the accounts of Gyges given by Glaucon in Book I of the *Republic* and in Herodotus's *Histories*, Pappas carefully situates his reading of the former's speech downstream from his interpretation of Cephalus's opening remarks. Pappas' claim here is not simply that "old age brings calm and freedom," but by extension, "that a life governed by sexual desire is a mad one; more broadly that sexual desire resembles political despotism" (120). Though the commendable development of Pappas' argument certainly owes to his scholarly rigor, it is additionally the product of his ability to continually write in the shadow of his initial premises at later points in the chapter. Novel as the reading might be, its conclusions are not drawn from his intentions but rather from employing the historical conventions of his source material as the parameters of his approach. As Pappas reminds his readers,

“the ancient popular mind...puts tyranny outside normal politics and outside legitimate sexuality. The force of this assumption causes even the stories of tyrants’ innocence to have to claim that innocence” (111). This historical point here substantiates the subtle philosophical one. More specifically, it highlights the multiple levels at work in the exceptionalism that is characteristic of the tyrant’s soul: “what a soul unlawfully desires in its dreams can include *théria* ‘beasts.’...the tyrannical soul lets itself indulge those dreams. The erotic tendency in the tyrant finally expresses itself in bestiality” (113). This moment in the text is one of several that both furthers Pappas’s intervention and demonstrates his ability to connection between the various levels on which Plato’s dialogues simultaneously operate. In this manner, *Plato’s Exceptional City, Love, and Philosopher* echoes Glaucon’s attempt to simultaneously persuade his audience of the dangers of lust, moderate the explicit content of his own speech and highlight its metaphorical link to the soul and city. Like Glaucon, Pappas’s work is similarly an accomplishment in the balance it strikes between his shrewdness as a reader of Plato and the illustration of his insights through the clarity of his prose.

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AESTHETIC DIMENSIONS OF MODERN PHILOSOPHY. By Andrew Bowie. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. 296 pp.

In the opening chapter of the *Aesthetic Dimensions of Modern Philosophy*, Andrew Bowie puts forth a novel reading of Descartes that begins to adumbrate the division between cognitive and aesthetic judgements which in modernity, Bowie claims, proves to navigate the latter’s trajectory as a discipline. For Bowie, the process of Cartesian doubt lies and, in fact, demarcates the intersection between the arts and sciences; on the one hand, these “sceptical reflections follow from the emergence of modern scientific method, which puts the wisdom of the Bible and the Greeks into doubt by showing that many received explanations of natural phenomena are untenable” (30). Bowie finds in the *Meditations* attempt to mold an ontological foundation for the burgeoning natural sciences — “a grounding which turns out, though, to be elusive” — an elusiveness both symptomatic of modernity’s broader currents and pliable to the thesis of his project (29). On the other hand, he writes, “It is this elusiveness that I want to connect to aesthetics, which, rather than seeking to establish a stable subject–object relationship that can ground knowledge, responds to the shifting ways in which subjective and objective relate” (30). The passage instantiates a twofold claim of *Aesthetic Dimensions* that, firstly, a dynamism has characterized the nature of the relationship between subject and object and, secondly, why this relationship subsequently takes on its various guises as described by Bowie. To Bowie’s credit, locating this rift between a scientific sense of precision and a capacity of the work of art to preclude hermeneutic closure in Descartes indirectly reframes the divide between continental and analytic philosophy as a gradual, rather than recent, fissure. Such a perspective brings with it an additionally welcomed understanding of this divide from the vantage point of the objects of study relevant to each. “If maths is one form in which modern philosophy seeks transcendence,” Bowie remarks, “the other form, as various varieties of Romanticism and aestheticism suggest, is art. This is evident in the often radically differing understandings of language that have predominated in these approaches” — a difference he rightly sees manifest between Frege on the one hand and continental approaches to hermeneutics, on the other (9).

However, one consequence of describing and explaining disciplinary focus in terms of these objects is that such an approach threatens to attribute the second order effects downstream from each object of study to its respective discipline. This is occasionally hinted at by Bowie’s treatment of the