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### Plutarch's Politics: Between City and Empire

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should inspire more inquiries into the international dimension of the conflict. It challenges us to think first of Vergennes and Floridablanca, who thought in terms of grand strategy, rather than of soldiers and sailors with whom we are familiar.

KEVIN J. DELAMER



*Plutarch's Politics: Between City and Empire*, by Hugh Liebert. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2016. 264 pages. \$104.

Although the price of this volume may discourage individual ownership, unfortunately, do not let it deter you from seeking it out. The author, a professor of political science at West Point, has produced a tour de force of scholarship and analysis of an underrated, if not neglected, classical writer. Plutarch, a Greek of the first century AD, who thus lived under the Roman Empire, was one of the most consequential ancient authors in his impact on later European culture; not least, he is *the* authority for the history forming the backdrop of Shakespeare's Roman plays. His massive work *Parallel Lives* paired biographical accounts of one Greek and one Roman statesman or military commander from the period of the ascendancy of the independent state system of Greece and the Roman Republic. The focus therefore is on political-military leadership in the context of republican political orders. Representative pairings include Numa and Lycurgus, the founders of Rome and Sparta; Fabius and Pericles; Alcibiades and Coriolanus; Crassus and Nicias; and Demosthenes and Cicero.

Liebert's overriding intention is to disprove a widely held view that Plutarch's writing is superficial, merely a form of hero worship. The author shows

convincingly that neither Plutarch's choice nor his treatment of the men about whom he writes suggests a hagiographical purpose. Some of his statesmen are exemplars of severely flawed greatness. In all cases, he provides information supporting a negative as well as a positive interpretation of them. In an interesting and original discussion, Liebert suggests that the unusual format of the *Lives* is intended to set up an agonistic confrontation between the paired Greeks and Romans, one whose fundamental purpose is to make his readers reflect deeply on human personality and leadership styles. (Apparently, Augustus, the founder of the Roman Empire, used to enjoy watching boxing matches between a Greek and a Roman—perhaps the source of Plutarch's inspiration.)

The other central thrust of Liebert's argument is that Plutarch deserves to be regarded not just as a chronicler of political and military deeds but as a political philosopher, one intent on exploring and preserving an understanding of the workings of the political order of the classical polis, or city-state, prior to the advent of universal Roman rule at the beginning of the millennium. Plutarch was not in any sense a revolutionary. He was a prominent citizen in his hometown of Chaeronea in central Greece and well connected with the ruling Roman elites of the day. But he seems to have been concerned to nourish a recollection of the time of polis independence, as a way to encourage local patriotism and civic engagement in the circumstances facing him.

Liebert's book is far from a comprehensive study; rather, it focuses primarily on two of the lives, those of Numa and Lycurgus. This allows the author to develop a richly detailed portrait of the

polities that are in many ways the most important and instructive of Graeco-Roman antiquity, as revealed especially in their foundings. Sparta is the quintessential Greek polis in its self-contained and parochial nature; Rome, by contrast, is the city destined to become an empire and put an end to the classical world.

CARNES LORD



*World War II Infographics*, by Jean Lopez, Nicolas Aubin, Vincent Bernard, and Nicolas Guillerat. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2019. 192 pages. \$40.

The magnitude of World War II is difficult to comprehend fully. The scope, course, and details of the war are such that gaining a useful working knowledge of it can be challenging. The authors have assisted such endeavors greatly with the present volume. They come to the project with significant knowledge of the war and expertise in writing and editing military history. Additionally, Guillerat was trained as a data designer and graphic artist. The result is an informative, enjoyable, and aesthetically pleasing volume that is easy to use. The authors go far beyond simply presenting chronology, statistics, and lists.

Containing hundreds of easy-to-read and visually appealing color charts and graphics, the volume divides its subject matter into fifty-three areas, grouped in four sections: “The Context of the War,” “Arms and Armed Forces,” “Battles and Campaigns,” and “Aftermath and Consequences.” Among the areas of particular naval interest are the infographics labeled “Combat Fleets,” “A Carrier Battle Group in 1942,” “A Tidal Wave from Japan,” “The Battle of the Atlantic,” “The Battle for Midway,”

“War in the Mediterranean,” and “Japan: The Final Days.” Economic, demographic, and military information is presented visually in a manner that moves beyond names and numbers and provides the reader with useful and memorable information. For example, of the 2.2 billion people alive in 1939 when the war erupted, 130 million of them, from thirty nations, were mobilized for military service (p. 23).

The volume’s inclusion of coverage of areas not always presented in others works, such as the Manhattan Project and the Holocaust, is extremely helpful. Also of interest are infographics on troop mobilization, armaments production, civilian displacements, military collaboration and resistance, and Operation BAGRATION. The work provides information on major battles but not a graphic portrayal of every battle, so some users may desire more details on specific battles and campaigns. This should not be viewed as a defect, however, since supplying the latter is not the purpose of the work.

The authors have managed to organize and portray visually, using state-of-the-art graphic design, the scope and course of the war. The only thing lacking in the book is a CD of the work, which would allow the infographics to be used in the classroom or elsewhere. Its 9½” × 11¾” size makes it very readable and functional as a research volume. The book does not have an index.

Each of the volume’s fifty-three areas of study is introduced with a well-written narrative overview of the section that is contextualized historically. What one finds in this volume that sometimes is lacking in other, similar works is references and sources for all the data presented. For historians and students, this is necessary and extremely helpful.