Eros and Polis
Desire and Community in Greek Political Theory

Eros and Polis examines how and why Greek theorists treated political passions as erotic. Because of the tiny size of ancient Greek cities, contemporary theory and ideology could conceive of entire communities based on desire. A recurrent aspiration was to transform the polity into one great household that would bind the citizens together through ties of mutual affection. In this study, Paul Ludwig evaluates sexuality, love, and civic friendship as sources of political attachment and as bonds of political association.

Beyond the desire between persons, Greek erotic theory extended to abstract, impersonal objects of desire, such as imagined communities. Ambition, patriotism, and cosmopolitanism were all diagnosed as erotic wishes. The imperial temptation to transform the polity from a republic to a more “global” community was seen as the desire to partake of foreign customs, fashions, and the commodification of other cultures’ products.

Studying the ancient view of eros recovers a way of looking at political phenomena that provides a bridge, missing in modern thought, between the private and the public spheres, between erotic love and civic commitment. Ludwig’s study thus has important implications for the theoretical foundations of community.

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Eros and Polis

Desire and Community in Greek Political Theory

PAUL W. LUDWIG
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Paul W. Ludwig

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To my mother and father
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Rather than place a formidable list of abbreviations between the book and the general reader at the outset, I have chosen to abbreviate no names and titles of classical authors and texts but only a small number of scholarly sources likely to be of interest to classicists alone, deviating from this rule to include a few works cited so often that economy was called for. Titles of classical journals are cited in full to provide ease of reference for political theorists and other academic readers. A list of the few abbreviations that remain will be found at the back of the book.

Since multiple editions of the same classical texts are sometimes cited for their editors’ commentaries, a word about which editions are referred to in my quotations of texts and citations of passages is in order. For the plethora of classical sources cited once or only a few times, the reader is referred to any standard edition of the Greek text; I have tried to note and include in the references sources for which the line numbers are not sufficiently standardized or places in dramas (for example) where scholarly disagreement over the attributions of lines might cause confusion. As for often-used sources, citations of Plato’s Symposium refer to Dover’s Cambridge edition, and citations of the Republic refer to the Loeb edition (Shorey). Thucydides citations refer to the Loeb edition of C. F. Smith. Citations of the works of Aristophanes refer to Sommerstein’s Aris and Phillips editions (with
Acknowledgments and a Note on Citations

the exceptions of Clouds, for which I used Dover’s Clarendon edition, and
Knights, for which I used Hall and Geldart’s Oxford Classical Text). Cita-
tions of Aristotle’s Politics refer to the Oxford Classical Text of W. D. Ross.
I have sometimes consulted translations, but the reader should be advised
that the translations given are my own renderings. The list of works cited
is not, needless to say, a bibliography. I have followed the style generally
accepted among classicists: for Plato, Stephanus pages are followed by a–d
and the line numbers, which differ only slightly from edition to edition;
arabic numerals separated by periods refer to book, chapter, sentence or line
number, or other relevant subdivisions for several other classical authors
(for Aristotle two styles are used simultaneously: the book and chapter
numbers found in various editions and translations and favored by political
theorists, followed by the Bekker pages, columns, and line numbers used
by classicists). “P.” and “pp.” distinguish the arabic numerals referring to
pages in modern works.