

**Men in Political Theory**

Terrell Carver

*Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 2004, vii + 263pp.**ISBN: 0 7190 5913 5/0 7190 5914 3**Contemporary Political Theory* (2006) **5**, 350–351. doi:10.1057/palgrave.cpt.9300243

This book is ‘focused on how male theorists present men in political theory *as men*’ (2). Carver’s aim is to bring insights generated by feminist work, and most importantly by masculinity studies, to bear on canonic texts and authors in Western political thought. His purpose is to demonstrate that thinking about *men* in political theory adds an important dimension to feminist readings of the significance of gender within Western political thought. The book surveys a (more and less familiar) range of thinkers, from Plato to Marx, including many of the usual suspects (Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau) but also one or two who tend to be given less attention in the standard undergraduate compulsory political theory course (Jesus, Augustine, Engels). The book devotes separate chapters to the thinkers and texts in question, and each of the chapters can be read as a stand alone essay. Carver employs the masculinity ‘gender lens’, but also a variety of other interpretive techniques in his readings of the various thinkers and some of their contemporary commentators. The book is written in a lively and discursive style, which seeks to engage directly with the reader, often through the use of rhetorical questions. So, does the book live up to its promise?

As so often with ambitious projects, the answer to the above question is ‘yes and no’. The book lives up to its promise in that it provides substantiation for the claim that thinking about *men* in political theory does generate valuable insights into texts and arguments. In particular, Carver demonstrates that the marginalization of different men and masculinities is as essential to the arguments of, for example, Machiavelli and Rousseau as is the marginalization of women and femininities. Moreover, there are some interesting aspects to Carver’s argument in relation to how to read texts, for instance in the preliminary remarks in the chapters on Plato and Aristotle. He also has thought provoking things to say about the role of animal and machine metaphors in the arguments of various thinkers, and how these intersect with gendered values. More substantively, some of the chapters offer useful revisionist readings of thinkers which challenge standard feminist interpretations, for instance of Locke and Marx. Nevertheless, although there is much that is interesting and informative in the book there are respects in which it doesn’t deliver on its promise.

My reservations about the book are two-fold. First, the book lacks overall coherence. It reads like a collection of essays, some more substantial than others, and with quite diverse concerns, especially when it comes to the essays



on Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and Jesus. It isn't really until we reach the early modern thought of Machiavelli that a clear set of themes begins to work through the succeeding chapters. However, the question of coherence wouldn't really matter so much if the book hadn't made very strong claims for itself in the Introduction. This brings me to my second reservation, although the Introduction to the book raises certain key questions which the book as a whole sets out to answer, it isn't wholly clear either how some of the chapters relate to these questions at all, or how the arguments of the different chapters taken together provide a response. In particular I was disappointed not to have a better sense of Carver's answers to two of his initial questions: how does consideration of political theory contribute to contemporary gender studies and feminist political and social theory? And, what does the distinction between apparently de-gendered and overtly gendered discourse in classic theoretical texts contribute to political theory? (4) In addition, there are two other questions which haunt the text but which are not addressed by Carver: what is the relation between feminist theory and critical masculinity theory? And, how should gender, in particular the concepts of masculinity and femininity, be theorized? It is of course always easy to chastise authors for not doing what you want them to do, but given the concerns of Carver's book, and the plethora of work from feminist scholarship on gender, it seems odd that these questions did not receive more direct consideration.

Overall, Carver's book is to be welcomed. I suspect it will be one of the first in a growing literature which brings together masculinity studies and political theory. It may even help to make *gender* something that political theorists cease to identify with *women*. The questions this book raises are crucial ones, and even if they do not get answered, Carver's discussion certainly highlights their significance and offers a great deal of lively and provocative discussion on the way.

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Homelessness, Citizenship, and Identity: The Uncanniness of Late Modernity

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Homelessness, Citizenship, and Identity is an ambitious and multi-layered account of political inclusion in late modern societies, focusing especially on