In producing *Plato’s Philosophers*, Catherine Zuckert has undertaken a herculean task which is every bit deserving of praise. The work has been twelve years in the making and, as such, is representative of a degree of scholarly depth and breadth hardly imaginable in this era. In *Plato’s Philosophers*, Zuckert has examined the dialogues of Plato with especial emphasis on the philosophical figures represented in them. Philosophy, as she writes, ‘is not an activity undertaken by a solitary individual in his or her study’. ² It is rather a mutual activity involving a variety of individuals, philosophers and non-philosophers, engaged in an ongoing and living dialogue — as Plato himself well understood. In this book, Zuckert investigates these complex interactions, as presented in Plato’s dialogues, in order to apprehend his own understanding of philosophy.

In keeping with the scholarly tradition established by Leo Strauss, though derived in part from the work of Heidegger and Husserl, Zuckert focuses on the argument and the action entailed within a given Platonic dialogue as well as across the Platonic corpus as a whole. Each chapter of Zuckert’s book deals with one or more dialogues, focusing on the key philosophical figures and their arguments (and actions). These may be considered interpretations as well as expositions of Platonic texts, again in keeping with the style and manner of Leo Strauss. The interpretations are complex and subtle, with recourse to the vast spectrum of Platonic scholarship. As the subtitle suggests, this book presupposes that there exists a unified cohesion of thought within the dialogues of Plato.

It would be impossible for me, in the role of reviewer, to render a fair assessment of this book chapter by chapter. The monograph is 888 pages long and, in that respect, is itself comparable to the complete works of Plato. Instead, I will focus on key sections of it that should be of some interest to the reader, leaving the text itself for other scholars to ponder over and/or criticize at their leisure, no doubt for some time to come. In particular, I shall consider her reading of the *Laws*, which is pivotal to the entire discussion, as well as

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deriving the underlying theme of Socratic argument and action. It is worth stating at the outset that, whether one agrees with all of Zuckert’s views on Plato or not, this book is a profoundly well-written and in-depth, critical analysis of the Corpus Platonicum in its entirety and, as such, is an invaluable tool for any student of Plato or of Philosophy in general. Catherine Zuckert has done a tremendous and meticulous job in researching and writing Plato’s Philosophers. It is a sine qua non for any academic who takes the study of Plato seriously and represents a level of scholarship that is so rare to locate in contemporary times with its often misplaced emphasis on the quantity of publication over its quality. I offer these words of praise with absolute sincerity, along with more than a little envious awe at such an accomplishment, even though I am presently to disagree with Zuckert over a major issue of her thesis. The author curiously posits that Plato’s Laws was the first, or amongst the first, of his dialogues, prefaced perhaps only by the Minos. As Zuckert correctly points out, there is still much uncertainty about the precise ordering of the dialogues and there is room for many theories on the subject. The reader will have to decide for him/herself.

There is a long and well-established historical tradition on the organization of Plato’s dialogues from antiquity onwards.³ They have been divided into trilogies by the likes of Aristophanes of Byzantium (c.257–c.180), though he was probably not the first nor by any means the only one to do so, and into tetralogies by Thrasyllus of Alexandria (1st AD) and Dercylides (mid–1st AD).⁴ Diogenes Laertius (3rd AD), from whom we derive most of our information on the ordering of the Platonic dialogues, indicates that Plato himself published his dialogues in tetralogies (III.56) and also that others in antiquity, beyond those whom he names, had their own system for arranging the dialogues (III.61).⁵ The grammarians, such as Aristophanes of Byzantium, Diogenes the Thracian and Asclepiades of Myrleia, preferred the trilogical system which was a common method up to the first century BC. Tyrannion of Amisos (sometimes called Tyrannion of Pontus — c.70 BC), one of the most renowned grammarians of his time, appears to have chosen the tetralogical arrangement following certain Stoic views on the nature of the cosmos.⁶ It is from his methodology that later arrangements of the Platonic corpus into tetralogies derive.

Diogenes Laertius writes (III.60–61) that the ninth tetralogy of Plato’s own arrangement, ‘starts with Minos or On Law, a political dialogue, which is

⁴ Ibid., p. 5.
⁵ Unless otherwise specified, all ancient sources are taken from the Loeb Classical Library (Harvard, 2002), and the translations are my own.