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Romand Coles, Mark Reinhardt, and George Shulman, eds., *Radical Future Pasts: Untimely Political Theory*, University Press of Kentucky, 2014, 533 pp., \$30.00 US (pbk), ISBN 9780813145525.

The edited volume *Radical Future Pasts* is an intellectually challenging and stimulating book. The intellectual challenges do not come by any surprise if one keeps in mind that the substantial volume is a festschrift for Peter Euben that reflects on a variety of aspects and themes from his oeuvre that is not limited to Euben's published work, but also involves stimulations from his teaching. Thus, the variety of topics covered in the volume is substantial; it ranges from classic political philosophy, literature, race, and popular movements to Islamic political thought. With respect to the honored political theorist, this variety is more than appropriate. Yet, it confronts the reviewer with the (impossible) challenge of doing justice to the volume as a whole as well as to the individual contributions. So let me state at the outset that all contributions are of an extremely high quality.

Yet, despite the diversity of topics and issues discussed throughout the volume, one issue appears to be the underlying problem for at least half of the contributions: namely, as Robert A. Dahl has phrased it, "the problem of inclusion" that relates to the questions: "What properly constitutes the demos? Who must be included in a properly constituted demos, and who may or must be excluded from it?" The identification of the demos also relates to the problem of under what conditions the excluded—who are expected to obey the law—can make a reasonable claim for their inclusion.¹ Inclusion, however, is challenged by the tendency, as Enrique Dussel has argued, of "the victims who were once homeless [to] end up installing beautiful fences to protect their newly acquired comfort from others who are the new poor."² This tension between inclusion and the tendency of building beautiful fences that refers back to the *radix* or root problems of democracy runs through a number of contributions and will be discussed in the following section. The review's second part addresses briefly other issues discussed in the volume; it concludes with a brief assessment of the volume's relevance and most likely audience.

¹ Robert A. Dahl, "Procedural Democracy," in *Philosophy, Politics and Society, Fifth Series*, ed. Peter Laslett and James Fishkin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 109.

² Enrique Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation: In the Age of Globalization and Exclusion* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 427.

Inclusion versus Beautiful Fences

The crux of one essential problem for democracy is spelled out by Arlene Saxonhouse's contribution, "When the Corn Was Ripe...?: Thucydides, Athens, Pericles, and the 'Everlasting Possession,'" that explores the tension between Pericles's ambitions for an everlasting empire and Thucydides's critique thereof. Although Saxonhouse focuses primarily on the conception of time, her chapter explicates the conflict between Pericles and Thucydides over the nature of Athenian democracy. Does democracy mean that the many are taken care of (Pericles) or is democracy, as Thucydides sees it, "the many acting themselves, not letting themselves be ruled by the 'first man'"—a reference to the "conflict between oligarchies and democracies," the "persistent theme throughout the *History*" (73)? As Bonnie Honig notes in Chapter 14, "Antigone's Laments, Creon's Grief: Mourning, Membership, and the Politics of Exception," this conflict is especially pertinent when considering the tendency of contemporary readers "to think democracy is more a matter of procedure than substance" (402).

Yet, Honig's study of Athenian democracy reveals another tension that persists in contemporary political discourses and conflicts: "Creon wants to enlist sovereignty for his causes, and so he accommodates the polis's needs. Antigone, by contrast, will not work with the opposition." Some of the old "Athenian elites faced with the new democracy's establishment...resigned themselves to the new democratic values, whereas others stayed reactive to them and refused all compromise as complicity" (399). Essentially, this conflict between the old and the new is a conflict of inclusion and exclusion and is related to the underlying theoretical problem that Robert E. Goodin recently explored in the analytical tradition:³ the question of "settling" or compromise. We see this unresolved tension play out in contemporary American politics, for instance, in the ongoing divide between the Obama Administration's willingness to compromise and the Republican majority's or populist movements' (like the Tea Party's) entrenchment in so-called traditional values.

In Chapter 5, "The Virtual Patriot Syndrome: Tea Partyers and Others," Stephen White presents the unwillingness of a populist political movement to compromise with new political realities. According to White, "the Tea Party and the Minutemen vividly script their precariousness as emerging in relation to what they feel to be an invasion or colonization. They see themselves as patriots struggling to protect and preserve their way of life" (152). While a direct comparison with the Athenian elite's unwillingness to compromise with changing political realities might be somewhat far-fetched, the underlying problem remains the same, although played out through and expressed in twenty-first century means of communication and moods of expression. Here, three aspects are of particular significance. First, as White shows, such groups' "mode of argument allows the members...to stand heroically on the legitimate foundations of a liberal constitutional state, but it does so in a way that tacitly undermines the ideal of inclusive democracy" (157). Second, their own tactics may jeopardize the long-term success of such movements: "Members of the Tea Party put themselves into a fever-pitched state of alarm about impending national disaster and adopt a tense, largely defensive posture, punctuated by periodic and highly visible offensive strikes" (170). Third, and perhaps most importantly, White suggests that the movement's "narrow understanding of colonization" that targets primarily political power (the government) "largely misses the threat from unregulated global capitalism" (170).

³ Robert E. Goodin, *On Settling* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

Ironically, and by resembling much of Benjamin Barber's argument in *Fear's Empire*,⁴ Wendy Brown's chapter, "Untimeliness and Punctuality: Critical Theory in Dark Times," highlights the second issue of the permanent state of emergency in the context of empire's response to the actual or imagined threat of terrorism. She argues that it has led to the establishment of illegitimate empire. By "illegitimate empire" Brown means "that empire today can be justified only through fear, by declaring a perpetual state of emergency that would allow conventional democratic principles to be overridden" (50). Eventually, it undermines the possibility of democratic existence by putting the people into a state of "depressive anxiety": "you cannot move because of the bleakness, but you cannot rest because of anxiety; you can neither seize life nor escape it, neither live nor die" (50).

This sense of fear and the inability of movements like the Tea Party to identify the real threat to their current existence relate both to Melissa Orlie's contribution, "Tragic Realism and Credible Democratic Hopes: Practical Means for an Ecological Future," and William Connolly's analysis, "Steps Towards an Ecology of Late Capitalism." The phenomenon of "depressive anxiety" identified by Wendy Brown undermines our ability to tackle the real problems at hand. As Orlie argues, we have failed to "effectively fac[e] up to the ecological catastrophe unfolding before us." By "ecological catastrophe" she means "economic, social, and political ruin as well as the so-called environmental destruction" (459). It is important to note that by "we" Orlie does not refer to "political leaders or institutions, but we citizens and inhabitants" (460). In this sense, Orlie's radical democratic approach corresponds with Laura Grattan's argument in Chapter 6, "Populism and the Rebellious Cultures of Democracy," that populism and popular movements are essential for democracy because they "elevate modern democracy's legitimating ideal of popular sovereignty, the notion that the people are the fundamental source of power and authority in democratic politics" (180). The question here is, of course, whether a popular movement itself does not undermine fundamental democratic principles, as White implies with the Tea Party movement, and whether the movement's energy directs itself towards appropriate goals.

Both White and Orlie imply that the conditions of neoliberal capitalism may be the real threat to democratic existence. In Chapter 17 William Connolly continues to expand upon and deepens the implications of these insights by analyzing the conditions of neoliberal capitalism and its interconnectedness to other realities, which undermine the citizens' ability to understand and act upon the most pressing issues. As Connolly notes, "[n]eoliberalism, a selectively active state, a conservative brand of Christianity, and a nation of regulated individuals surrounded by marginalized minorities often hang together, even if points periodically arrive where they are at odds with one another" (490). They campaign "to make the state, the media, schools, families, science, churches, and the corporate estate be ordered around neoliberal principles of being" (491). After analyzing the nature of neoliberal capitalism, Connolly argues for the need of a "cross-state citizen" movement that generates "enough collective energy to launch a general strike simultaneously in several countries in the near future." It should aim at reducing "inequality and to reverse the deadly future created by established patterns of climate change by fomenting significant shifts in patterns of consumption, corporate policies, state law, and the priorities of interstate organizations" (505). It also requires, as Patchen Markell seeks to explore in "The Moment Has Passed: Power after Arendt," a genuine understanding of politics "in the age of consumer capitalism" (115).

⁴ Benjamin R. Barber, *Fear's Empire: War, Terrorism, and Democracy* (New York: Norton, 2003).

What appears to stand against Connolly's goal that can be realistically achieved seems to be our tendency to build "beautiful fences" (Dussel) around our privileges, which undermines the citizen's ability to join forces with other groups in society that suffer not only under the consequences of their unfulfilled inclusion, but also share the same threats to democratic values as discussed before. Three chapters in particular discuss this issue from the perspective of continuous exclusion based on race or simply skin color: Chapter 3 by P.J. Brendese, "Black Noise in White Time: Segregated Temporality and Mass Incarceration," Chapter 7 by Cristina Beltrán, "Distinguishing Racial Presence from Racial Justice: The Political Consequences of Thinking Aesthetically," and Chapter 8 by Melvin L. Rogers, "Race and Democratic Aesthetics: Jefferson, Whitman, and Holiday on the Hopeful and the Horrific"; all three give reason for hope as well as some cause for despair. The despair is nourished by political and social reality. As Brendese notes, "[f]or more than two decades, black men have been five to seven times more likely to be in prison than white men, are much more likely to receive decades-long sentences or life without parole, and are much likelier to be on the death row" (83). Thus, instead of fully including racial and other minorities we continue to witness that "whites derisively beat black African Americans they view as moving too fast by labeling them 'uppity'" (100). What is the likelihood of inter-state movements to address pressing global issues if full inclusion of minorities is still not realized?

Cristina Beltrán's essay refers back to the dispute between Thucydides and Pericles: is it possible to have one's (group) interests sufficiently represented by members of a different group? Is democracy about the individual's ability to act for herself or is it sufficient if somebody else acts in her assumed interest? She argues for a more appropriate racial representation based on the finding that, "Latino and African American representatives help encourage higher levels of attentiveness among voters from those same communities" (242). Yet, as Melvin Roger's example of Billie Holiday's performance of "Strange Fruits" shows, "[w]hen democracy and protestation are taken together, Holiday's performance presupposes that the citizenry is capable of being responsive to and accepting responsibility for ethical and political horrors" (252). Whether political theory has a similar potential as Holiday's performance of teaching ethical responsibility is a rather different issue. As Susan McWilliams puts it in her chapter, "Holding Up Mirrors in (and to) Political Theory," "political theory is a way that we learn—and teach others to learn—to look at ourselves more deeply by learning not to look at ourselves head-on" (388).

Achievements and Other Issues

What does the volume achieve? First, it provides the reader with an overview of significant debates within US discourses in political theory from a mainstream left perspective. With the exceptions of Roxanne Euben's chapter on Islamist thought and Elizabeth Wingrove's contribution on Aristophanes's reception in absolutist France, the book remains within the spectrum of ancient Greek political philosophy, including Jill Frank's "Circulating Authority: Plato, Politics, Political Theory," and American political thought from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century. One of its achievements is the integration of texts outside the traditional and narrowly understood canon of political theory and philosophy into these discourses, which also includes Peter Euben's defense of literature for the study of political theory. As he notes, "[l]iterature can reveal and explore aspects of a political culture that cannot be done with the same force and meaning in more analytical and 'empirical' ways" (324). Jason Frank's "Pathologies of Freedom in Melville's America"

masterfully puts the demand for studying literature as political theory into practice. Frank explores how Melville's literary analysis of nineteenth century American culture and the "messianic moral certitude" of American exceptionalism shows some drawback in recent American politics, including "George W. Bush's wars of freedom" (440). He identifies Melville's Ahab as paradigmatic because for Ahab "sovereign self-sufficiency is affirmed...at all costs, and Melville presents these costs as violent conquest or disappearance through violent conquest" (454).

Although Roxanne Euben warns the reader and political theorists particularly "to avoid universalizing Euro-American preoccupations without warrant" (287), many of the key issues addressed in the volume also concern people in the Islamic world—and beyond. While Western discourses on Islam often focus on "Islamism" and other extreme interpretations of religion, they overlook, as John L. Esposito notes, that a "majority of Americans want the Bible as a source of legislation" and "9 percent believe it should be the 'only' source of legislation."⁵ As illustrated in Stephen White's chapter on the Tea Party movement, the overlap does not end here. One constant feature in Islamist writings is the notion of colonization that is also reflected in the thinking of the religious Right in the US (a thorough comparison between Islamist thinking and the religious Right in the US would certainly reveal a number of similarities in their thinking, though that is beyond the scope of this review). The nature of the perceived colonizers, however, is different. Moreover, the collection of essays also reveals the existence of an increasing democracy deficit and identifies unrestrained neoliberal capitalism as a sincere threat to a self-determined life. This threat of exclusion through the anarchy of global capitalism, however, is as much a concern for people in the Middle East as it is for the excluded in the US.

In sum, the volume is a splendid introduction to contemporary and long lasting issues in political theory, particularly in the United States, although several of the problems discussed are of a much wider, if not to say global relevance. The book should be of interest for graduate students in political theory and political science more generally, but it may also serve as a stimulating source for political theorists outside the American discourse, who like to familiarize themselves with these discourses. The editors have done a splendid job in compiling a wide range of highly stimulating contributions to a unique volume.

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⁵ John L. Esposito, *The Future of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 41.

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