



Review

Reviewed Work(s): An Introduction to Plato's Laws by R. F. Stalley

Review by: George Klosko

Source: *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 78, No. 3 (Sep., 1984), pp. 885-886

Published by: American Political Science Association

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1961950>

Accessed: 16-09-2018 22:22 UTC

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Wolin's "On Reading Marx Politically," the thesis of which is that "Marx developed a theory that furnished strong grounds for the perpetuation rather than the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism" (p. 84). Marx's "theoretic failure" consists in the fact that he remained wedded to an outmoded faith in revolutionary praxis and struggle that was at odds with his deeper insights into the tendency of modern capitalism to reproduce its conditions of existence. The prediction of revolution, then, becomes a kind of "solace" in the face of the overwhelming power of the modern forces of science and technology (p. 107). This reading is attacked first by Stephen Holmes, who accuses Wolin of indulging a penchant for a "romantic" identification of virtue with poverty, and later by Alan Gilbert, who regards Marx's life-long revolutionary commitments as evidence against Wolin's severance of Marx's theory from his political practice.

In the discussion of Marxism and law Mark Tushnet finds it difficult to conceive a theory of law that is both true and "distinctively Marxist." His conclusion is that Marxism is more a "statement of affiliation" than a distinct theoretical position (p. 185). Leon Lipson counters with the claim that the "fundamental characteristic" of Marx's legal theory is its attempt to examine law from the "outside," namely from the standpoint of politics and economics. And Tom Gerety argues that the lawyerly practices of fair dealing and due process are incompatible with the Marxist commitment to revolutionary struggle.

In the concluding section of the volume G.A. Cohen expresses certain reservations about the truth of historical materialism. He now believes that while his previous "defense" of Marxism was correct as an interpretation, that Marxism may still be false. Marx, he argues, went too far in a "materialist direction," giving too much explanatory weight to the activity of production and not enough to forces like religion and nationalism (pp. 238-240). Also, Marx's concern to abolish "social roles" and the division of labor fails to take account of how the constraints imposed by these institutions may help to foster a "satisfying community" (p. 236). Peter Stillman offers a fine commentary on the meaning of "critique" in Marx's enterprise and along the way offers convincing reasons why Marxism should be regarded as an "interpretive" rather than a reifying or positivistic theory. Finally, Jon Elster reflects on the meaning of exploitation and economic injustice in Marxism. Elster argues against Marx that workers are not coerced into selling or "alienating" their labor power and against liberals that free market transactions may yet generate exploitative social relations.

With the possible exception of Elster's chapter,

the most conspicuous absence in this volume is any discussion of Marxism and economics. Marxism for the scholars represented here has become almost exclusively a theory of "superstructures" with no clear account of how these are related to the economic "base" of society. An essay attempting to explain how Marxism has arrived at this curious state of affairs might have served as a useful introduction or conclusion. These reservations notwithstanding, *Marxism: Nomos XXVI* is a welcome addition to recent critical studies of Marx and Marxism. Only its prohibitive cost will prevent it from reaching the audience it deserves.

STEVEN B. SMITH

Yale University

An Introduction to Plato's Laws. By R.F. Stalley.
(Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1983. Pp. x + 208. \$18.50.)

In recent years much of the best work in classical scholarship has been done by philosophers applying sophisticated analytical techniques and publishing their results in philosophy journals. In the study of Plato, progress has been especially apparent in metaphysics and epistemology, but significant advances have also been made in moral and political philosophy. The need to transmit these results to a wider audience has become apparent, and so R. F. Stalley's philosophical introduction to the *Laws* is a welcome addition to the literature.

Stalley, Lecturer on Moral Philosophy at the University of Glasgow, concentrates on "those aspects of the *Laws* that have most significance for the problems of philosophy as we now understand them" (p. ix). He is also concerned with elucidating the overall structure of the work (p. 4) and with calling greater attention to the *Laws*: "if we are interested in Plato's political theory—that is, in his answers to what we now understand as political problems—it makes sense to regard the *Laws* as the primary source while treating the *Republic* as a kind of prolegomenon designed to set out the underlying principles" (p. 22).

Stalley provides general background in two brief introductory chapters. Subsequent discussion is organized according to topics, although it roughly parallels the order of exposition in the *Laws* itself. Some representative topics are: "The Nature of Law," "Pleasure and the Good Life," "Society," "The System of Government," "Education and the Arts," "Punishment," "Responsibility," and "Religion." Each chapter is headed by a useful list of the passages in the *Laws* and some other Platonic works most relevant to the discussion.

The book's greatest strength is that it largely accomplishes its aim. The important topics in the *Laws* are analyzed lucidly, and the overall coherence of the work is brought out. Stalley combines high standards of scholarship, philosophical argument, and judiciousness. This is clearly exhibited in his discussion of moral responsibility (chap. 14). In Book IX of the *Laws* (859c-64b), Plato presents a difficult and obscure attempt to reconcile the Socratic doctrine that all wrongdoing is involuntary, to which he still adheres, and the obvious need to hold wrongdoers accountable before the law. Stalley lays out the central difficulties, presents and criticizes the major attempts to deal with them in the scholarly literature, and then concludes that satisfactory solutions are not readily forthcoming. Stalley should be commended for elucidating what is actually in Plato's text, for not attempting to make the *Laws* more coherent than it is.

We can probably credit Stalley's philosophical bent for his book's most serious shortcoming, his failure to discuss various matters of political theory adequately. Stalley's valuable accounts of such topics as punishment and moral responsibility receive 14 and 15 pages respectively. Plato's system of government receives 11, and this includes discussion of the nature of the mixed constitution and the extent to which the political system is democratic. Stalley includes a useful six-page appendix on the constitutional structure of the state, but important political questions receive scant attention. For example, Stalley presents some suggestive remarks connecting the development of Plato's political thought from the *Republic* to the *Laws* with other changes in his philosophical system. But these are only remarks, receiving roughly two paragraphs (pp. 21-22). The multitudinous puzzles and anomalies in the *Laws* system of government are almost undiscussed. Thus, the vexing question of reconciling the nocturnal council and the auditors introduced in Book XII with the bodies of officials described in the earlier Books receives essentially a single paragraph. Stalley's lack of attention to these and other political topics is surprising. Had he discussed them in more detail, he would have written a more valuable introduction to the *Laws* for readers interested in Plato's political theory.

GEORGE KLOSKO

University of Virginia

Alternative America: Henry George, Edward Bellamy, Henry Demarest Lloyd and the Adversary Tradition. By John L. Thomas. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983. Pp. vii + 391. \$25.00.)

This book is about the lives of three authors of great importance to the period in which they wrote between the end of Reconstruction and the rise of Progressivism, the "adversary tradition" which they shared in shaping, and what is common to their visions of an "alternative America." As such, this book must be applauded as a sterling contribution to our understanding of what is particularly American about our political ideas as they express our perceptions and inform our reactions to what we see in the social world about us.

With respect to the men of this book's title, they are remembered best for the popular classic each wrote in response to the modernization crisis of the times. The order of their names is given by the order in which their great American books were published: *Progress and Poverty*, *Looking Backward*, and *Wealth against Commonwealth*. In three deftly interwoven strands of lucid and thoughtful biographical narrative, Thomas examines how each book came to be written and its subsequent significance not only for the political currents of the times but also for each author's own gravitation toward, and final commitment to, a life of redemptive political advocacy. Although Thomas gives us three lively portraits of sons of ardent churchmen finding their way into American politics through journalism and public speaking, he also pays careful attention to their ideas. Thus, at appropriate points in the narrative, a full chapter is devoted to a consideration of the structure and key ideas of the major work of each author-activist. In these chapters, Thomas shows that these men were not opposed to development as much as they were opposed to uneven development.

At the same time that this book may be read with profit as intellectual and political biography illuminating the relationship between writing and acting, it also contributes to our understanding of a distinctly American (New World-liberal) variety of oppositional politics that Thomas calls "the adversary tradition." Notwithstanding the great differences that distinguish their respective political nostrums, Thomas shows how George, Bellamy, and Lloyd contributed to a pietist expression of political protest that looked to a national change of heart in preference to class war as the solution to what ailed the new industrial capitalism. Thomas delineates the essential characteristics of this "adversary tradition" that sought to defend the providential republic of The Founders against Marxism on the Left and