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POLITICAL THINKERS AND IDEAS
PENSEURS ET IDÉES POLITIQUES


In his Social Contract Rousseau describes the institutional workings of the Roman Republic. The article argues it constituted an ideal model of Roman Republican institutions which Rousseau employed as a theoretical weapon in the constitutional debates of his time. By elaborating on the principles he found in ancient and early modern sources, Rousseau presented the Roman Republic as a form of government where sovereignty lay absolute and indivisible only with the people — while the government depended on the sovereign, and each power was held in balance by the tribunes of the plebs. Rousseau’s description of the Roman political system was part of his contribution to the contemporary controversy over the mixed constitution and the separation of powers, which assumed central stage in 1748 with the publication of Montesquieu’s Spirit of the Laws. [R, abr.] [First article of a thematic issue on “Rousseau’s imagined antiquity”, edited and introduced by Pol LIFTSCHITZ. See also Abstr. 67.1124, 1125, and Jared HOLLEY’s “In verba magistris? Assessing Rousseau’s classicism today”]


This paper takes a critical view of J. Rancière’s ideas on politics, subjectivity, and space, by building on the critical work of Badiou and by Alain Badiou. The author explores two series of critical exchanges between the two authors. The first part of the paper reviews the main points of difference between them, which centre around their different interpretations of what constitutes a political event, subjectivity, and the nature of radical politics. Later sections then develop these differences with respect to further issues concerning the nature of political spaces, the pre-evental, and political organization. [R]


This paper rethinks the “Jewish question”, in the context of religion’s secularization and the modern nation-state crisis, in H. Arendt’s political thought. She writes in and over the decline of modern nation-states that compel by denationalization both foreign citizens and their own. She also thinks as a Jew from birth who suffers persecutions and particularly theorizes on her Jewish condition and the future of Judaism before and after the creation of the State of Israel. We can identify these three issues all together, particularly in the Zionist experience: modern secularization, decline of the nation-state and the “Jewish question”. And it is from these intertwined elements that we can draw a critical thinking for a politics of pluralism. [R]


Kingdon’s multiple streams approach has recently been applied to study implementation across sectors or levels of government. Building on these contributions, we suggest that two streams are especially important in shaping implementation: organizational problem constructions and political pressure from the center. These variables produce a four-way typology of implementation, which we test the model by analyzing implementation of UK targets on asylum, defense and climate change, drawing on 54 semi-structured interviews with policy actors. The analysis shows how organizations can shift between modes of implementation over time, responding to changes in organizational problems and central political commitment to the policy. [R]


This article examines a novel line of argument in support of welfare-state capitalism proposed by G. Gaus. The novelty of Gaus’s argument lies in its contention that welfare-state capitalism can be justified on the basis of the contractualist mode of justification made famous by J. Rawls. Gaus argues that economic regimes, such as property-owning democracy, are more coercive than welfare-state capitalism insofar as they require a greater degree of tax-imposed redistribution among citizens. Given the degree of coercion needed by these regimes, he contends that parties to a contract would not agree to them, whereas they would agree to welfare-state capitalism by virtue of the lesser degree of coercion it needs. I argue that Gaus fails to show that welfare-state capitalism is less coercive than property-owning democracy. [R, abr.]


One of the most distinctive features of R. Dworkin’s egalitarian theory is its commitment to holding individuals responsible for the costs to others of their ambitions. This commitment has received much criticism. Drawing on Dworkin’s latest statement of his position in Justice for Hedgehogs (Cambridge, 2011), we suggest that it seems to be in tension with another crucial element of Dworkin’s own theory, namely, its endorsement of the importance of people leading authentic lives — lives that reflect their own values. We examine this tension between responsibility and authenticity, and some strategies Dworkin does and could deploy to defuse it, which we think are unsuccessful. [R, abr.] [See Abstr. 67.274]


G. Agamben accepts rather than redefines the terms of the paradoxical relation between fact and norm that is the very paradox and the fount of C. Schmitt’s disdain for liberalism. This acquiescence propels Agamben towards a regressive logic that afflicts his contribution to the task of answering “what does it mean to act politically?”. Agamben bolsters the view that valid political action emanates from the individual’s capacity to achieve a degree of pure autonomy. Because this level of autonomy requires that the individual assume bare life as a fact, the regressive logic germane to indistinguishability reveals itself as both a symptom and a solution. From H. Kelsen, to Schmitt, to Agamben, the Kantian currents that unite and distinguish each theorist can be laid bare. [First of a series of articles on “Post-Nietzschean critical theory". See also Abstr. 67.242, 286, 292]


The author explores several passages in Machiavelli’s Discourse, analyzing the term equalità, crucial to understand the Florentine Secretary’s political thought. The article clarifies the relationship between social conflicts, corruption and equalità, revealing the way in which Machiavelli crafted his argument about republicanism. Besides shedding new light on Machiavellian republicanism, the article highlights the particularity of the Roman constitution according to the Sommario delle cose della città di Lucca. Finally, the article examines the Discorsi florentinorum rerum. [R]


The Kantian anthropology contradicts the technical approach of rationality that has dominated the self-image of the Western world. Not the effectiveness of the means but the responsibility for final goals is decisive. The Kantian revolution of autonomy requires a teleological intelligibility and not an instrumental intelligibility of the human development of mankind. [R] [See Abstr. 67.310]


Kant’s Transcendental Doctrine of Elements performs a genuine “revolution in the way of thinking”. The power of human knowledge, which had been submitted to the despotism of the thing-in-itself, is from now on the author of experience. But how does Kant to face the subjectivist consequences of this epistemological revolution? Kant therefore endorses an equivocation on the phrase “existing outside me”, which wonderfully serves his double purpose of saving the doctrine of transcendental idealism and facing what he terms the “scandal of idealism”. [R] [See Abstr. 67.310]