argument here (though I have elsewhere). But what would Steinberger make of this passage from Max Weber: “Kant’s epistemology . . . proceeded from the assumption that ‘scientific truth exists and it is valid’ and then went on to inquire what intellectual assumptions are required for this to be (meaningfully) possible” (Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” The Vocation Lectures. David Owen and Tracy Strong, eds. Hackett. Indianapolis, IN, 2004), 28–29). The striking thing is the word “assumption.” Steinberger does not question this assumption.

Deleuze’s Political Vision. By Nicholas Tampio. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015. 182p. $75.00
doi:10.1017/S1537592716002243

— Char Miller, George Mason University

“A method of the rhizome type,” Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari explain in A Thousand Plateaus (1980), “can analyze language only by decentering it onto other dimensions and other registers” (p. 8). Nicholas Tampio’s Deleuze’s Political Vision decenters American liberal political theory into dimensions offered by the theoretical work of Deleuze. Liberal concepts such as human nature, social contract, and individual choice get repositioned in the light of Deleuzian terms like “war machine,” “body without organ” (BwO), and “rhizome,” allowing Tampio to introduce the writings of Deleuze to a new set of readers. As he suggests at one point, he means to reduce the entry costs associated with the language and methods of Deleuze, especially for those conversant in liberalism (p. 2). This repositioning highlights similarities and differences and also transforms the concepts under examination by bringing them to bear on new concerns.

Tampio is not the first liberal to turn to Deleuze in order to break some of the deadlocks of liberalism; authors such as William Connolly, Christina Beltrán, and Paul Patton have similarly looked to him for leverage against the legalisms and antipolitics of liberalism. More intently than most, Tampio’s stakes lie in persuading liberals of the value of Deleuze. He does so by engaging significant figures of contemporary liberalism, John Rawls and Hannah Arendt in particular. He also takes on some typical liberal interlocutors, such as Jürgen Habermas and Charles Taylor. After substantiating the resonance that Deleuze has with liberalism, including showing connections with John Stuart Mill, Tampio further develops his account of Deleuzian ethics in relation to versions of Islamic political thought, positing possible liberal alliances with Sufism.

According to Tampio, Deleuze provides insights into our political moment by expanding the possibilities of liberal pluralism, which makes his writing particularly useful for Tampio, in that the latter’s interests in liberalism are mostly focused on the defense of difference and the pluralization of identity. “The goal of Deleuzian liberalism is to protect the space of becoming,” Tampio asserts, “that is, to make possible the conditions of generating singular identities that can nourish one another in some ways, contest each other in others, and construct assemblages that promote common policies” (p. 110). Deleuze aids this project by challenging liberalism to go further in the production of difference and in the assemblage of those differences.

State assimilation presents one challenge to the cultivation of difference, a danger addressed, according to Tampio, by Deleuze’s concept of the war machine. The Deleuzian war machine crosses between the state of nature and the social contract, providing the means of transforming the social contract. This concept, more specifically, allows Tampio to address such problems as the assimilation of feminist critiques into the social contract, a problem posed by Tampio to address such problems as the assimilation of feminist critiques into the social contract, a problem posed by feminists like Carol Pateman. While generally agreeing with many of Pateman’s claims, in the end Tampio concludes that the social contract remains a viable and progressive concept (pp. 81–83). Deleuzian conceptions facilitate this conclusion by remaking the meaning of the social contract in broader terms, particularly holding out the possibilities of transformed biological distinctions and human natures.

Deleuze directs an eye to the unimagined, the underground, and the liminal in order to reimagine the coalescence of identities and communities. “We are tired of trees,” he famously proclaimed, provoking a shift from historical familial tree-based models of connection to underground rhizomatic connections. Liberalism tends to find and defend difference as preexisting (quasi-genetic) conditions. Deleuze, however, provides resources for cultivating mere hints and possibilities, the differences and perspectives of the future, if properly tended. Forces beyond the field of vision move and act on the world, forming and reforming new concerns and concepts with profound political consequences. Deleuze replaces arboREAL language (including family tree, descent, blood, and identity) with the language of mysteriously connected underground nodes, buds, and adventitious roots—less about trees and more about tubers.

Tampio’s adoption of this rhizomatic language does not mean, however, that he has given up on the language of natural connections. For example, he develops what he imagines Deleuze might have conceived of as “human nature,” involving a thoughtful examination of the Deleuzian distinction between abstract machines and concrete assemblages massed on a single immanent plane. Humans, in this case, are conceived with an ontological status more like the rest of the world. Tampio explains: “Deleuze differs from most political scientists by refusing to privilege human rational actors as the main or sole actants in the political realm and by attributing primary motivation to subrepreensational desires rather than self-conscious
Dionysus and the Power of Liberalism

Michael Tampio

Michael Tampio’s monograph, Dionysus and the Power of Liberalism, is an intriguing and challenging work. It explores the ways in which liberal theories and practices are rooted in and perpetuate a form of Dionysian sacrifice, which is both destructive and transformative. Tampio argues that the liberal tradition, especially liberalism’s reliance on the idea of the individual, is a form of sacrificial violence that results in a perpetual cycle of destruction and renewal.

Tampio’s book is a critical engagement with key figures in liberal political thought, such as Rawls and Habermas. He contends that these theorists have perpetuated a form of sacrificial violence by emphasizing the individual as the basis of political action, thereby excluding other forms of political engagement and cooperation. Tampio offers an alternative vision of politics that recognizes the importance of collectivity and community in the formation of political life.

Tampio’s analysis is grounded in the work of Deleuze, whom he sees as a radical critic of liberalism. Tampio argues that Deleuze’s thought offers a critical perspective on liberal political theory, and that his work can provide a new way of understanding the power of liberalism.

Tampio’s book is a thought-provoking work that challenges readers to consider the implications of liberal political thought. It offers a new perspective on the relationship between liberalism and sacrifice, and calls for a new understanding of political action that recognizes the importance of collectivity and community.

Lee Ward

Lee Ward’s book, Modern Democracy and the Theological-Political Problem in Spinoza, Rousseau, and Jefferson, is a detailed examination of the role of religion in democratic thought. Ward argues that modern democracies cannot simply reject the influence of religious ideas and practices, but must engage with them in a meaningful way.

Ward’s book is divided into three parts, each focusing on a different thinker: Spinoza, Rousseau, and Jefferson. Ward shows how each of these thinkers engaged with religious ideas in their political thought, and how their ideas continue to influence modern democratic theory.

Ward’s book is a valuable resource for anyone interested in the relationship between religion and democracy. It provides a detailed analysis of the role of religious ideas in modern democratic thought, and offers a new perspective on the role of religion in democratic life.

Megan Gallagher

Megan Gallagher

Megan Gallagher


Gallagher commends Ward for his careful analysis of the thinkers he examines, and for his ability to connect their ideas to contemporary political issues. She notes that Ward’s book is a thought-provoking work that challenges readers to consider the implications of modern democratic theory.

Overall, Gallagher’s review is a valuable contribution to the ongoing debate about the role of religion in modern democracy. It provides a thoughtful analysis of Lee Ward’s book, and offers a new perspective on the relationship between religion and politics.

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