

Mary F. Scudder and Stephen K. White. *The Two Faces of Democracy: Decentering Agonism and Deliberation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. 210. \$99.00 (cloth); \$27.95 (paper).

American history is a seesaw between moments of consolidating and contesting power. Patriots dumped tea into Boston Harbor and declared their independence from Great Britain. Americans subsequently debated and ratified the Constitution in 1789. In the 1950s and 1960s, the civil rights movement staged boycotts and marches to protest institutional and cultural racism. Then, the civil rights movement started winning victories in the Supreme Court and Congress. According to Scudder and White, these two kinds of actions represent the two faces of democracy, and they write their book to help late modern democratic citizens decide when to emphasize one or the other. The primary target of their book is citizens and theorists who imagine that political life can rely only on deliberation or agonism: a thoughtful democratic political actor will decide at each juncture how best to advocate for the moral equality of voice.

The book sets itself the ambitious task of articulating a democratic ethos that knows when to deliberate and when to fight. To describe the deliberative face of democracy, Scudder and White primarily explicate Jürgen Habermas's philosophy and the subsequent critiques and emendations of it. Habermas articulated the importance of citizens forming a collective will through communicative procedures that are reflected in public policy. Deliberative democracy evaluates the democratic tenor of a political system by "the extent to which people have had a meaningful say in the laws to which they are held" (61). The deliberative face of democracy recognizes that democracy is not simple majoritarian rule; it hinges on reasoning, deliberating, and striving to reach consensus with other citizens. A deliberative democratic politics retains legitimacy even among those who lose a particular battle because the "losers" know that they received a fair hearing.

To describe the agonistic face of democracy, Scudder and White discuss the insights and weaknesses of political theorists such as Chantal Mouffe, William E. Connolly, and Bonnie Honig. Agonistic democrats recognize that the powerful can use the tactic of inclusion to silence minority perspectives. The powerful in a certain milieu can claim too quickly that they have heard what the weak have said, when the truth is that the weak may have spoken but they have not been heard. Chantal Mouffe criticizes deliberative democrats "for obscuring oppression through their overemphasis on reason, consensus, and ideals of justice" (73). Mouffe draws on Carl Schmitt to highlight the importance of the friend-enemy distinction in politics. Connolly and Honig espouse a tempered agonism that draws on Nietzsche rather than Schmitt and

that appreciates a “healthy struggle of leaders for greater eminence” (93). The problem for the agonists, according to Scudder and White, is that they protest injustice but cannot adequately explain why. The agonists are good at challenging power, but they cannot fully articulate the normative vision that undergirds democracy. One consequence is that the agonists are “not able to disqualify some undemocratic ways of cashing out agonistic respect” (98).

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 provide a masterful overview of the debate between and among deliberative and agonistic democrats. In the last three chapters, Scudder and White reconcile the two schools, or, maybe more accurately, reconstruct Habermas’s theory to better account for agonistic critiques, the post-foundational turn in political theory, and recent work on the importance of affect, corporeality, imagination, and aesthetics in thinking and democratic life. If the first half of the book will be a boon for graduate students making sense of the political theory landscape, the second half of the book will intrigue critical theorists wondering how to recuperate Habermas’s insights when much of his earlier work seems too rationalistic and metaphysical for contemporary sensibilities.

The purpose of the book is to imagine how a democratic citizen proceeds in a particular political moment. The two faces of democratic politics are, in a way, the orientation of a single democratic actor deciding whether to collaborate with others on articulating and building a just society or to fight alongside others against others who do not exhibit a democratic disposition. To help organize our intuitions, Scudder and White present “an exemplary scene of moral equality of voice” (title of chap. 6). The scene is like Habermas’s ideal speech situation insofar as the goal is to imagine the conditions and outcomes of a conversation among equals where the outcome shapes public policy in the real world. The scene is unlike Habermas’s original formulation of the ideal speech situation insofar as it does not posit a *telos* infusing all human communication. Rather, Scudder and White build on Habermas’s later work that explains that the ideal speech situation organizes the intuitions of modern citizens: it is a “weak ontology.” And the exemplary speech situation does not presume that citizens have reached or will easily reach agreement; it presumes that the conversation will continue as citizens protest their exclusion from or misrepresentation in the situation. In this way, the exemplary speech situation has within it a deliberative and an agonistic moment, and both express the underlying belief in individual autonomy, democratic autonomy, and the moral equality of voice. Rather than call this theory deliberative democracy, Scudder and White follow Iris Marion Young and call it “communicative democracy” to signal that people can communicate in ways that might not appear reasonable such as rhetoric or storytelling (31).

*The Two Faces of Democracy* calls for what it exemplifies: a careful consideration of multiple viewpoints when deciding how to act at a critical moment

in a democratic society. I am attracted to the democratic character described in the book, and I hope to be a good listener and speaker with fellow democratic citizens. As somebody who was trained in the agonistic school, however, I feel that I should protest the identification of a single camp of agonistic political theory that includes Chantal Mouffe and William E. Connolly. Mouffe may have rooted her theory in Carl Schmitt's friend-enemy distinction, but Connolly was drawn to Nietzsche's notion of the "spiritualization of enmity." What is the importance of this distinction? For Schmitt, politics means trying to destroy one's enemy, and though Mouffe thinks that political institutions can defuse hostilities, Scudder and White doubt her thesis (83–84). But for Connolly, democratic politics involves an ethos of agonistic respect; you admire your opponent for bringing out the best in you. Connolly reflected on the relationship between identity and difference precisely to envision a democratic pluralism that does not require punishing citizens who are different.

*The Two Faces of Democracy* has a recurring distinction between contemporary political movements that exemplify and threaten democracy. The exemplary movement is the Black Lives Matter movement that arose in the aftermath of police killings of young black men. This movement articulates a new democratic mythic in such work as Kehinde Wiley's sculpture of a young black man astride a horse in the place where a sculpture of a Confederate general used to be (137–41). The threatening movement is right-wing populism associated with the presidency of Donald J. Trump. The agonistic view of politics "could not have been more vividly displayed than in the multidimensional crescendo of Trump-supporter efforts to overturn the 2020 election results in the U.S. based on a willful denial of facts" (6n). Throughout the book, the exemplary democrats are on the political left, and the threats to democracy are primarily from the populist right. But it is telling, to me, that the book does not appear to cite any primary sources from the right, nor do the authors share any stories of talking with conservatives. Scudder and White do not seem to exhibit agonistic respect for conservative white working-class Trump supporters. A democratic ethos, I believe, means meeting face-to-face with people you disagree with ethically and politically and being slow to condemn (which may need to happen sometimes).

As I write these words, I realize that my perspective may not disrupt their theory so much as enact an agonistic moment in a theory that has room for such disruptions. Perhaps, then, I will end the review with a line of questioning. How important is it for communicative democrats to listen to right-wing voices? Do communicative democracies have room for cultural conservatives? May right-wing disruption ever be deserving of respect, and what would be an example? Is there a world in which you could march alongside the Tea Party or tell the ruling party, "Don't tread on me"? It is a testament to the book that it presses

readers to think about how best to enact a democratic disposition in the conflict-ridden time in which we live.

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Samuel Moyn. *Liberalism against Itself: Cold War Intellectuals and the Making of Our Times*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2023. Pp. 240. \$27.50 (cloth).

In *Liberalism against Itself: Cold War Intellectuals and the Making of Our Times*, Samuel Moyn offers a clever and provocative reappraisal of the nervous defense of liberty born out of the twentieth century's greatest horrors. Cold War liberalism, he argues, was a "catastrophe" for liberalism and a "betrayal" of its early commitments to "perfectionism" and "progressivism" (1–3). Whereas before the Cold War liberalism defended the welfare state, believed in the transformative power of history, and upheld the universalistic values of the Enlightenment, its midcentury form insisted on "strict limits to human possibility" and counseled an "anxious, minimalist approach to the preservation of freedom in a perilous world" (3, 7). By separating liberal theory from emancipatory ambitions, Cold War liberals disfigured the liberal tradition almost beyond recognition, leaving us all worse off. As Moyn laments, nearly all recent liberal self-defenses—especially following the election of Donald Trump—have been presented in Cold War terms, reanimating fears of an encroaching tyranny as "the liberal tradition devolved into a torrent of frightened tweets and doomscrolling terror" (174). Shouldn't today's liberalism adopt a more confident and constructive vision of the future?

Moyn certainly thinks so, and his book offers the case against the continual enthronement of Cold War liberalism by walking the reader through "a portrait gallery" of "a few exemplary figures in the Anglo-American construction of Cold War liberalism between the 1930s and 1950s" (7–8). The exhibition includes chapter sketches of the lives and works of Judith Shklar, Isaiah Berlin, Karl Popper, Gertrude Himmelfarb, Hannah Arendt, and Lionel Trilling—alongside their "generational companions"—to offer a "composite portrait and general reassessment" (8). The most interesting part of Moyn's gallery tour "dramatizes" the reimagination of the canon of political thought during the Cold War when the history of Continental philosophy became "the tinderbox of the entire conflict" (18, 63). By reconstructing the decisions made over what writers and ideas could be worshiped in the liberal pantheon, Moyn charts how Jean-Jacques Rousseau, G. W. F. Hegel, and Karl Marx became blamed for