

view, conflicts arising among the above-mentioned principles should be resolved by appealing to the procedural ideals of 'reciprocity', 'equality' and 'mutual respect' (pp. 299–305). Brown's conclusion is persuasive and profound, although his failure to engage with the contemporary literature on public justification is surprising, given his emphasis on 'justificatory neutrality' (p. 301) as a key element of the ideal of reciprocity.

In summary, this is a well-written book, rich in analytical insights and thought-provoking. It will be of interest to legal and political theorists, philosophers, political scientists, and general readers.

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Politics of Empathy: Ethics, Solidarity, Recognition by **Anthony M. Clohesy**.

Abingdon: Routledge, 2013. 150pp, £80.00 (h/b), ISBN 9780415570091

The contemporary world, it appears, is characterised by a widespread absence of empathy. When confronted with egotistical hedonism, commodification and culture, appeals for a more empathic world seem destined to remain a purely normative enterprise. Claims that we can actually form empathic relationships with distant and even previously despised others seem particularly illusory.

In *Politics of Empathy: Ethics, Solidarity, Recognition*, Anthony Clohesy offers a somewhat more sanguine (but not naïve) normative and prescriptive account of how a more empathic and ethical world might be formed. The author contends that 'the tending of the ground on which empathy can flourish is the most important political and ethical task of our age' (p. 6).

Forming empathic relationships, according to the author, requires us to imagine ourselves in the position of different others. Furthermore, leaving the comfort of our own bounded reality (what the author calls being home) compels us to interrogate the values and assumptions underpinning our unified communities. We will then come to realise that our identity claims are contingent.

It is only when we experience The Event (empathic and lived experience of a different other) that we can become ethical subjects bound by duties to these different and equal (including distant) others. The Event crucially makes us aware that we have committed violence to these others 'in order to sustain the unity of our own identities and in order to resist the spectre of finitude that haunts us' (p. 3).

The author systematically considers the obstacles and potential pathways to the creation of a more empathic and ethical world under the headings of culture, nature, religion and politics. A particular strength of this book is that it contains provocative insights such as 'it is *only* the Left that that can articulate an ethically sustainable vision of the good life' (p. 103). Similarly, religion in its mythical guise is deemed an empathic resource.

Ultimately, it is for readers to decide whether empathy can become an ethical ingredient which shapes actually existing political and social reality. Clohesy does not disguise the reality that this task is an onerous one. He acknowledges that an ethics of empathy might justifiably be categorised as 'poetic politics' (p. 126). However, he insists that we cannot give up hope.

What is clear, however, is that the author presents a compelling, rigorous and sophisticated case. Readers will benefit from Clohesy's easy command of a diverse interdisciplinary literature. This book should prove particularly useful for scholars whose research focuses on empathy and recognition. It deserves a wide audience.

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Levinas and the Postcolonial: Race, Nation, Other by **John E. Drabinski**. Edinburgh:

Edinburgh University Press, 2013. 206pp., £19.99 (p/b), ISBN 9780748677283

In this rather intricate book, John Drabinski sets out 'to explore the limits and possibilities of Levinas's work on the ethical and companion issues' (p. xi) against the currents of post-colonial/transnational thinking and politics.

For Drabinski, this task assumes significance in that it opens up Levinas' Eurocentric thought to the entangled history and identity with empire. The resulting move towards decolonising Levinas' thought entails addressing the problematic nature of his conception of the Other and the ethical which otherwise remains crucial in fracturing the totality and centrality of the knowing subject.

The central problem, according to Drabinski, is this: Levinas' conception is enmeshed in Eurocentric and transcendental moulds such that it forecloses meaningful engagement with 'the other Other' (p. xiii), that is, the empirical life-world (involving history, culture and politics) across postcolonial/transnational contexts. Drabinski therefore employs the method of '*A Levinasian thinking*' or 'thinking with, yet beyond, Levinas's texts', (p. 21) devised in chapter 1, and eruditely engages with paradigmatic cases of postcolonial/transnational politics in the subsequent chapters which are nicely schematised, with each signifying a successive progression in the reconfiguration of Levinas' work.

Gayatri Spivak's account of the subaltern further radicalises Levinas' critique of epistemology by conceiving the Other not as a relationally disruptive term but as a prior limit to the epistemic structuring of identity/sameness (chapter 2). The neglected question of how to think subjectivity after radical difference in Levinas is addressed by drawing upon Homi Bhabha's notion of hybridity that harps on generative mixing of identities and cultures borne out through the migratory movement across borders (chapter 3). In conjunction, Levinas' sense of fecundity after catastrophe is problematised through Edouard Glissant's rhizomatic reconstruction in the Caribbean context marked by discontinuity with the past on account of the historical experience of forced migration (chapter 4). And finally, the theoretical exploration of Glissant is given practical rendering in the form of the Zapatista movement in Mexico, which engages in grassroot political activism by way of cultivating an ethical relation with the Other, in the meantime demonstrating the inadequacy of Levinas' understanding of politics as necessarily antithetical to the ethical (chapter 5). In all these cases, the intersection between

Levinasian thinking and postcolonial/transnational politics and how they enrich one another is skilfully explored and underlined.

Across the chapters, Drabinski frequently plays on the shift in Levinas' work – between *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise Than Being* – depending on which one suits his own charted line of enquiry. This cannot but raise the issue of whether we can talk about 'Levinasian thinking' in unproblematic fashion. Nonetheless, the book provides a refreshing and inventive reading, especially for those interested in probing the ethical underpinning to the politics of postcolonial critique.

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Capitalist Alternatives: Models, Taxonomies, Scenarios by Paul Dragos Aligica and Vlad Tarko. Abingdon: Routledge, 2014. 228pp., £85.00 (h/b), ISBN 9781138789845

Capitalist Alternatives is an ambitious and thoroughgoing examination of the comparative study of capitalism. In their two-part study, the authors argue that researchers need to be modest in their pronouncements about what capitalism 'is', how it is manifest and where it is going. This modesty is necessary because, they show in Part I, many processes within capitalist economies are deceptively simple. Public choice analysis, for instance, demonstrates that at the microeconomic, structural and ideological level, all of the post-Cold War forms of economic management can be explained by various interplays between political and corporate interests. Yet, while compelling, this set of explanations is merely one of many plausible sets. As the authors show in Part II, interpretations of the economy necessarily rely upon 'implicit, and often hidden, taxonomical, theoretical and epistemic framework[s]' (p.114) which will inevitably prefigure the results of their applications to varying extents. Just as their own theory prioritises specific mechanisms and processes in order to uncover new analytical possibilities (such as the likelihood of even the most Schumpeterian economies drifting towards regulation), any conception of

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