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Book Review: Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought by Sheldon S. Wolin

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of an "ethical identity." Like Berlin, Appiah appeals to communication as a fact about humans across time, space and culture. Communication in real time and space, and through history and literature, allows us to find points of contact. Like Berlin (who appeals to pluralism, not cosmopolitanism) Appiah argues against both the "ruthlessly utopian" and the relativist. Neither can properly converse because neither sees the identity of others as both something worthwhile in its own right and understandable from the perspective of one's own identity. "We can learn from each other's stories only if we share both human capacities and a single world: relativism about either is a reason not to converse but to fall silent" (257).

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We are reminded with the new edition of Politics and Vision of the considerable influence Wolin's first edition had for those determined to pursue political theory and philosophy in the face of the burgeoning dominance of the social sciences and the resulting cleavage between facts and values which drew sustenance from logical positivism and analytic philosophy. Wolin's grand tour through the tradition of political thought brought to the forefront its continuity as the necessary framework for comprehending change within the social and political realms.

The sweep of Wolin's expanded edition repeats Part One, beginning with Plato, and continues through postmodernism, with particular emphasis in Part Two on Marx, Nietzsche, Popper,
Dewey, Rawls and the question concerning “Postmodern Democracy.” Wolin rejects the essentialism which is the heritage of Plato and Aristotle, and embraces the flux of reality, characterizing the tendency to impose universals on the realm of the “political” as the necessary recourse to a network of concepts that finds its origin not in the a priorism of the rationalists or Kantians, but rather as grounded in the “social.” It is the dimension of the social and culture which in turn propels Wolin’s profound scope of reflection into the often neglected realm of the “political.” Wolin’s work seeks the surpassing of “liberalism” by recourse to a radical democracy, participatory in nature, unbounded by a rigid ontology, yet aiming at fulfilling the common interest, resulting in a unity that is permeable and even requires a pluralism and multiplicity, which itself reflects the flux of phenomena. And the role of the political thinker is to select a “particular net” of “concepts and categories” by which to capture political phenomena (21). This is not a capricious choice, for the net chosen will highlight and illuminate aspects of political phenomena that may be especially problematic for one’s own society. This is true for Plato, for Hobbes, Locke, Marx and the tradition of political thought.

Pivotal to Wolin’s theorizing is his internal dialogue with a selection of the major political philosophers in the tradition. His account of Hobbes brings to light trenchant aspects of human nature and political authority, but Hobbes fails to account sufficiently for “the interconnections between social and political factors” (257). Locke, on the other hand, does make a “connection between property and the supportive role of society,” a connection generally overlooked by Lockean scholars (277). Since private property resulting from human labor preceded civil society, it follows that the social recognition of one’s property established property as a “right.” What emerges is not the destruction of social solidarity by restless individualism; instead, social con-
formity and the opinion of others supplant individual conscience. Conformity becomes a significant component of the political theory of liberalism. This in turn leads to the establishment of authority conceived by the community—hence regarding the individual: “his act is our act.”

Major sections of Part Two are devoted to Marx and Nietzsche, the former as revolutionary, treating culture as the epiphenomenon of economy, the latter as subversive, unsystematic and anti-political, emphasizing culture over economy, yet both being theorists of “modern power” (406). The problematic for Marx lies in “underestimating the capitalist” (452). Marx’s almost singular emphasis upon the egoistic, self-interested behavior of the capitalist as ultimately leading to capitalism’s demise fails to recognize the “suppleness” of the capitalist in times of crisis. Capital is able to utilize technology and ideology to foist upon the people illusions of emancipation, including the virtual abolition of the proletariat, concentrating power in corporations and the bureaucracy of the state. In Nietzsche we discover the consummate anti-theorist, who removes all foundations for thought, offering a politics “obsessed with singularity, with heroic actions,” which “takes the form of thought-deeds that expose, attack, and subvert the establishment’s modes of thought (e.g., philosophy and theology), as well as its forms of social morality and aesthetics” (460-61). That Nietzsche’s thought implies totalitarianism is reflected in his nihilistic vision of an imploded decadent culture, overthrowing “mass society” leading to the higher individuals. Totalitarianism is a dynamic totality, seeking continually to traverse boundaries, without limit, yet within the compass of the same “totality.”

Wolin’s tour continues in conversations with Popper, Dewey and Rawls, resulting in a virtual dialectic that serves to further unveil Wolin’s own partial vision. In Rawls’s attempt to revive liberalism we find society saturated with “public reason,” yet
administered by an elite capable of adjusting the political structures to secure the necessary threshold of liberty and equality. Thus, Rawls rejects "civic humanism," the equivalent of participatory democracy, while he "sides with the more elitist classical republicanism" (p. 549).

In the latter part of Politics and Vision, Wolin considers the "political actuality of Superpower Democracy." The rise of post-political and postmodern politics is accompanied by the emergence of "uncollapsed capitalism," which is "centralized yet quick to react, essentially economic, founded on corporate capital, global, and best understood in terms of development over time." True, "democracy" is its watchword as "Superpower," with its manifestation being America, and capitalizing on the "technologicization" of politics through manipulation of public opinion, the extension of corporate power into politics and the supportive role of popular culture (560). The "ideal-type" of "Superpower" refers not to a "command regime" of domination through the conquest of other states/societies, but an ever expanding economy of power through the dominance of the state in concert with corporate power and modern science/technology. Wolin typifies this as "inverted totalitarianism," where the powers and control of the state over its citizens are continually enhanced even when it enfranchises previously unempowered groups through measures against racism, gender bias, ethnicity and sexual orientation (xvi). Paradoxically, such measures contribute ultimately to the increased power of the state by "splintering and fragmenting opposition." One wonders, is this Marcuse's repressive de-sublimation redux?

Wolin's call for "fugitive and discordant democracy" serves to encourage a variety of pluralisms while longing for a "true generality" which lingers in the realm of the imaginary as a vapid vision, lacking content, forcing itself upon the intellect as a rhetorical utopianism, which, while robust, learned and bold in
its scope, suffers from the lack of a "social ontology." Such a social ontology one can find in Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, or Sandel's and Taylor's communitarianism, or the compelling critique of totality in Levinas's "metaphysics of the face." How are groups forged, sustained, and legitimated without violence and a pledged oath, unless one allows for a break with totality through the acknowledgment of Infinity, itself a call for authentic solidarity? Does not Wolin succumb ultimately to an "angelism," aspiring for a non-historical, unrealizable perfect equality and freedom, woven into a "true generality"?

Notwithstanding this critical assessment, it must be said that Wolin's reading of the history of political thought is vast, his erudition is compelling, his depth of understanding the canon is remarkable, and his articulation of his own vision of citizenship and participatory democracy demands to be addressed by serious students of political philosophy. For this achievement we are indeed in the debt of Sheldon Wolin's monumental tome.

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The debate about international trade and globalization is timely. While the proponents of globalization argue that free trade is contributing to rapid economic prosperity, reduction of poverty and improvement of lives of the vast majority, the opponents contend that current international trade is accentuating social injustice, economic hardship, and environmental degradation to small economies. In *The Promise and Peril of International*