



(pp. 51–52). This, however, is an uncomfortable place to be in. If Phillips accepts the anti-essentialist account of culture, but wants to respect the fact that some people believe ‘their’ culture to have certain essential properties, then she appears to be reproducing the distinction she takes pains to criticize — namely, the idea that ‘we’ have values, while ‘they’ have culture. Third (and this is not so much a criticism as a request for more of the same), I would have liked to see further development of the democratic side of Phillips’ position. She summarizes her well-known argument for a ‘politics of presence’ that would increase the political representation of members of cultural groups (pp. 167–168), and she also makes various suggestions about how to enable democratic debate to take place *within* such groups (pp. 169, 177). But these suggestions are rather patchy and underdeveloped. More on this side of Phillips’s argument would help to show how a politics of presence and multiculturalism without culture could usefully come together in the interests of both individual autonomy and cultural equality.

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John Rawls

Catherine Audard

Acumen, London, 2006, 336pp.

ISBN: 1844650510

Contemporary Political Theory (2008) 7, 449–451. doi:10.1057/cpt.2008.9

The strength of Catherine Audard’s discussion of Rawls lies in its integration of Rawls’s earlier *A Theory of Justice* (1971) and his later works, primarily *Political Liberalism* (1993) and *The Law of Peoples* (1999). Although the book appears in *Acumen’s* ‘Philosophy Now’ series, which is intended to provide introductions to major contemporary philosophers, a reader coming to Rawls for the first time would struggle to grasp Audard’s argument. Nonetheless, she does provide a useful holistic interpretation of Rawls. As the translator into French of *A Theory of Justice* her work is informed by a sure — if controversial — grasp of Rawls, as well as a refreshingly non-Anglo-Saxon perspective.

Audard emphasizes the practical nature of Rawls’s enterprise: ‘the *reader* is at the centre of Rawls’ preoccupations, especially the reader as representative of fellow citizens’ (p. 10, her emphasis). She sees in Rawls a priority of democracy over philosophy, albeit a democratic culture informed by philosophical thought. There is implicit in a democratic culture a conception of justice and it is the task of ‘theory’ to clarify that conception, along with



citizens' corresponding sense of justice. Rawls's later preoccupation with 'stability' — the psychological and practical allegiance to principles of justice — and his attempt to ground principles in an overlapping rather than a comprehensive conception of justice is, she argues, implicit in *A Theory of Justice*. Many interpreters see a shift in Rawls's work from a partially comprehensive conception of justice, derived from the Kantian autonomous human subject, to a 'political' idea of justice in which citizens converge on a shared notion of justice from diverse, but reasonable, comprehensive conceptions of the good. Audard maintains that the political conception of justice was already there in Rawls's earlier work but was inadequately theorized in the third part of *A Theory of Justice*, which is devoted to the question of stability.

Audard's exegesis rests on a particular, rather underdeveloped, notion of autonomy, and a constant, but undertheorized, reference to the 'political'. Autonomy is not to be understood as an attribute primarily of individuals — it is not a description of the human subject's cognitive machinery — but is a philosophical method employed in the public sphere. Expressed negatively, to be autonomous is to be free of coercive relations; more positively, human beings are autonomous insofar as *together* they *construct* a conception of justice. Constructivism is contrasted with realism: as citizens we choose rather than discover principles of justice. The original position, with its various features, most important of which is the veil of ignorance, is a device intended to model this autonomy. Concepts introduced later, such as the two moral powers of citizens (rationality and reasonableness), the burdens of judgement, and the overlapping consensus are developments of, rather than departures from, this constructivist autonomy. However, it could be objected that rationality and reasonableness, while cultural achievements, also depend upon cognitive capacities, for otherwise we have no way of determining whether a particular conception of the good is reasonable.

Another important thread running through Audard's book is the idea of the political. Rawls, she suggests, breaks from the great traditions of political thought by offering a method for determining, or clarifying, what is just rather than prescribing principles or institutions. This is not evident from Rawls's literary style, which is both conservative and resistant to practical consumption. But more problematic is the substantive content of Rawls's theory. Even if we allow that the two principles of justice are but a specification of a more general conception — namely, priority to the worst-off — Rawls is prescribing principles and these principles cannot be detached from the underlying method. Indeed, Audard endorses them, arguing that they provide the conditions under which we, as citizens, autonomously construct principles of justice. Yet citizens who challenge them do not cease to be reasonable. It might, however, be argued that employing the original position method we would



indeed endorse the two principles, or at least priority to the worst-off. This is questionable: the considerable effort Rawls devotes to attacking utilitarianism is evidence that there is at least one reasonable alternative to the two principles derivable from the original position. Minor — and not unreasonable — changes to some of the assumptions of the original position would likely yield other conceptions of justice. It is paradoxical that Audard emphasizes tolerance of competing reasons for endorsing a particular conception of justice, but is much less tolerant in relation to the chosen conception.

Despite the huge secondary literature on Rawls there are still relatively few works that attempt a broad interpretation of his project. Exceptions are recent books by Thomas Pogge and Samuel Freeman. Audard offers an interesting and valuable addition to the list.

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Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance

Simon Critchley

Verso, London, 176pp.

ISBN: 978 1 84467 121 2.

Contemporary Political Theory (2008) 7, 451–456. doi:10.1057/cpt.2008.10

This short book is a bold attempt to construct a new ethics for the present based on a Levinasian framework. It begins by setting out a strong assertion of the basis of ethical action. In order to be effective, it is not enough for an ethical position to have justifications; it must also entail an emotional or psychological commitment to act (pp. 24–26). This is provided by the ‘ethical experience’. According to Critchley, the core of moral selfhood is this ‘ethical experience’, an experience of an encounter with radical otherness, an (unmeetable) demand by the other that is recognized by the self. It is this experience that binds the self to what it takes to be its good (pp. 8–9), a relation that is constitutive of the self (pp. 20–21). Hence, the self does not coincide with the body (p. 86). It is split between the self as such and the demand of the other, or ego and superego (p. 89). Ethical experience occurs as the approval of a demand, with the demand and its approval being mutually constitutive (pp. 16–18). Further, it is constitutive of the subject. There is something at the heart of the self that is opaque, incomprehensible and ‘external’ (pp. 61–62). The basis of ethical action is thus responsibility and ‘ethical outrage’, not freedom (p. 125). This conception is explicitly contrasted with the traditions of