

into issues of self-determination, and it is this latter topic that carries the weight of the last part of the book. If political authority is important, then a key issue is sovereignty, which Hendrix discusses only briefly here. But he does contend that the social contract bequeaths to the state a “kind of partial ownership” (p. 63), where the elements of property ownership considered necessary to ensure political control are held by the state, and not by the primary landowner. This means that the state itself should directly own a limited amount of property. This conclusion is one that Hendrix is reluctant to endorse, partly because indigenous peoples would themselves be inclined to reject it, given their communal ownership structure. Hendrix suggests, however, that if indigenous peoples ground their land claims in the cloak of natural rights, then they may be forced by the logic of their argument to embrace this conclusion. Or, perhaps, they can take another route to justify their claims to land. It is this latter route that Hendrix pursues.

Hendrix, like many before him, ultimately finds consent to be unsatisfactory to ground political authority. He thus argues instead for a Kantian notion of natural duties, the idea that we have duties as human beings to care for others. Hendrix argues that such duties require that we “live under a well-designed regime of political authority” (p. 90), which means a democratic state, since such states treat their majorities well, and, more recently, have bestowed similar treatment on their minorities. Indeed, because minorities are now often well-treated, Hendrix contends that the idea of the “remedial right to secede”—that idea that badly treated minority groups have a right to establish their own state—has little force in democracies today.

So how might indigenous autonomy be justified? One possible justifying condition is when the psychological costs of living in a state one dislikes “are truly substantial and fully understandable,” for example, when the state was “responsible for horrific injustices to one’s ancestors” (p. 127), even if the state is now reformed. Of course, this argument cannot help but rely on history, and one wonders whether Hendrix could have done more to flesh out this argument. One result of a horrific history, for example, is the mistrust it engenders on the part of the minority group, which makes good governance harder to accomplish. It would have been good to see how Hendrix would deal with such complexities. Hendrix’s second argument is that some populations may want a different balance of rights and duties than the balance codified in the state in which they reside, and that this may justify secession. Hendrix rightly does not want to make secession easy, nor does he want it to be impossible. He argues too that the very threat of exit may make secession less likely, since it may induce the majority to satisfy the concerns of the minority. To ensure that secession is really the proper route, Hendrix argues for extensive deliberation about the matter among the parties involved, and two or three ref-

erenda, separated by several years. Hendrix also argues that partial autonomy for indigenous peoples may be appropriate at times.

Despite the book’s generic title, Hendrix’s subject is indigenous peoples. But one wonders whether his argument might inadvertently apply to other groups as well. Can a wealthy region secede from a region because it feels badly treated, for example? Can Utah secede because it has a different conception of rights and duties than many others in the U.S.? While these questions are left dangling, Hendrix’s policy suggestions relating to indigenous peoples are quite sensible and should be taken seriously by the relevant parties within liberal democracies and by scholars concerned with indigenous rights. This is an important and valuable book, and while it takes some time to get to Hendrix’s own constructive argument, this is time well spent, for his patient arguments are important and valuable.

**The Politics of Sincerity: Plato, Frank Speech and Democratic Judgment.** By Elizabeth Markovits. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008. 248p. \$45.00. doi:10.1017/S1537592709090367

— S. Sara Monoson, *Northwestern University*

Elizabeth Markovits begins *The Politics of Sincerity* with an observation. Americans, like the ancient Athenians of the classical period, worry about the measure of deception that characterizes their popular political discourse. While they recognize that democratic discourse must utilize rhetorical modes of communication (whether direct or mediated by technology) and enjoy the spectacle of political battles, they are anxious about manipulative orators, spin doctors, and crafty panderers. Not surprisingly, and again in her view, like the that of Athenians, this anxiety generates a political ideal that manages the shape of political deliberations and helps citizens develop confidence in the quality of their polity’s political discourse. That ideal, Markovits suggests, is “sincerity.” And she offers as evidence our veneration of “straight talk,” “plain speech,” “no spin,” and earnestness, all of which are, she proposes, “something like” the Athenian notion of *parrhesia* (frank speech) (p. 2). Witness, she says, the McCain campaign’s “Straight Talk Express,” the popularity of blunt talk radio shows and, as an indication of how long-standing this is in American politics, Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* (she does not comment on its anonymous publication).

The idealization of a “sincerity ethic” in practical politics today deeply troubles Markovits. In her view, it has led to the “taming of truthfulness” in public discourse because it has itself become a powerful rhetorical trope (p. 2). In particular, she finds that speakers who pose as practitioners of an “anti-rhetorical rhetoric” (that is, who mobilize the trope of “hyper-sincerity” [p. 41–46]) “denigrate critics and hamstring deliberation” (p. 3). Appeals to “sincerity” drag debate

out of the public realm of ideas, policies, common goals, and challenges and into the interior lives of others. Here again she finds a parallel with developments in Athenian history; specifically, invective becomes common in fourth-century-B.C.E. oratory. Her main aim is to expose the underside of a politics that revolves around invoking good intentions and raising suspicions regarding the motives of the participants, and to question a leading tradition of critical thinking about democratic deliberations—Habermasian discourse ethics. A Habermasian quest for communicative purity can bolster the disturbing trend in contemporary politics toward examining “the presumed interior [lives and moral qualities] of fellow citizens” (p. 182), rather than their public persons and views.

The main argument of this book is that “focus[ing] on the personal sincerity of a speaker perversely hinders our deliberative potentials” (p. 73). Markovits further argues that we can find in Plato’s use of irony and mythmaking in the *Gorgias* and *Republic* a critique of Athenian practices of *parrhesia* that illuminates just why this is so, and that we need to look to the Arendtian idea of an “ethic of trustworthiness,” not discourse ethics, for help imagining an alternative to the deleterious sincerity ethic and the development of practices that exercise judgment.

There is a lot to admire in Markovits’s book. She advances a bold thesis. Her critique of the ideal of Habermasian sincerity is strong. Her account of how “irony can be a vital component of a democratic civic education and deliberations” rings true in this era of influence for *The Daily Show*, *The Colbert Report* and Tina Fey’s appearances on *Saturday Night Live* (p. 84). And, although the discussions of *parrhesia* unfortunately display little familiarity with ancient sources beyond Plato and make far too little use of Arlene Saxonhouse’s splendid *Free Speech and Democracy in Ancient Athens* (2006), the author’s command of a wide range of scholarly studies rooted in various disciplinary traditions is apparent.

Nevertheless, one aspect of the work diminishes its power. Markovits often loses sight of how *unlike* are the contemporary sincerity ethic and *parrhesia* and thus also misses some of the critical purchase we can draw from this ancient ideal. She is right that they both inspire “anti-rhetorical” rhetorical posturing that may sometimes license personal abuse and excessive attention to motives. But practicing *parrhesia* cannot be reduced to a speaking strategy or effort to expose the morals of competing speakers. *Parrhesia* was a civic ideal that called upon democratic citizens not just to speak in a certain way (frankly) and with good will (meaning not only honestly but without seditious or treasonous intent) but, when necessary, to courageously utter a certain kind of *content*. As a civic ideal, *parrhesia* sanctioned dissenting and disquieting speech, speech that aimed to unsettle personal convictions and disrupt an orderly, fixed, established consensus. For example, if Thucydides represents Cleon in his speech

about Mytilene as posing as a *parrhesiastes*, as Markovits suggests (p. 74–75), it is likely because he presents Cleon daring the Athenians to shake off the delusion that their empire is anything but a “tyranny” and not simply because he has Cleon deploy, perversely, a “rhetoric of anti-rhetoric” and indulge in invective. The ideal of *parrhesia* required citizens not just to “engage in speech devoid of rhetorical ornament” (p. 74), but to speak out against persistent illusions and complacency after having first interrogated their own beliefs and assumptions. This is the meaning Socrates engages. It is also what Cornel West finds so compelling about *parrhesia* in *Democracy Matters* (2004). And it is this meaning that Markovits neglects when she contends that Plato’s demonstration of the enormous deliberative value of irony and mythmaking delivers not only a critique of some perversions of *parrhesia*, but a “subversion of *parrhesia*” (p. 91). Had she more carefully attended to *parrhesia*’s difference from the sincerity ethic, she might have recognized that Plato’s interest in irony and myth may be part of an engagement with *parrhesia*, that is, with the following question: What forms of discourse in what settings can deliver on the promise of *parrhesia*? Had Markovits considered Edward R. Murrow’s journalism, a whistleblower’s news conference, or Richard Pryor’s comedy contemporary analogs of *parrhesia*, rather than the televised rants of Bill O’Reilly and Keith Oberman, she might have considered enlisting *parrhesia* in the project of improving public deliberation instead of suggesting that its valorization gives aid and comfort to its slayer.

**Frederick Douglass: Race and the Rebirth of American Liberalism.** By Peter C. Myers. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008. 272p. \$34.95.  
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— Bill E. Lawson, *University of Memphis*

How could the United States Constitution be interpreted as an antislavery document? What made American chattel slavery inhumane? What should be done with the “Negro” after emancipation? Frederick Douglass thought about these questions, and his answers have been the subject of a great deal of scholarly debate. Some scholars have argued that while Douglass may have been perceptive in his understanding of the evils of slavery, he was nonetheless naive in his theory of constitutional interpretation and underestimated the depth of both white supremacist thought and racism in the United States. In this well-written, researched, and argued book, Peter C. Myers adeptly shows that there was a deep and profound understanding of legal theory, history, human nature, and philosophy underpinning Douglass’s reading of the Constitution, and that Douglass had a much better understanding of the future of race relations in the United States than many of his contemporaries and some current political pundits.