for future debates on the nature of modernity, freedom, justice, and the social world.

–Arto Laitinen
University of Tampere

Giuseppe di Palma: *The Modern State Subverted: Risk and the Deconstruction of Solidarity.* (Colchester: ECPR Press, 2014. Pp. 126.)

doi:10.1017/S0034670515000212

Shelves in shops, libraries, and homes are groaning under the weight of books about neoliberalism. No doubt the global financial crisis (GFC) has proved a fillip to critics of free-market thinking everywhere. If arguments were won on the basis of tonnage, free-market philosophies would have fallen long ago under a weight of words. Academics, newspaper columnists, and leftist activists everywhere grapple with the vexing question of how neoliberalism survived and prospered as capitalism seemingly collapses around it. My answer to this question, admittedly only one voice among many far more astute commentators, is that (perhaps) we have misunderstood this thing we call neoliberalism. Maybe we have misunderstood what its advocates were going on about. And maybe in our misunderstanding we have been left sorely wrong-footed.

Now, this is not where Giuseppe di Palma starts with his argument in *The Modern State Subverted*. Di Palma takes the reader through his own critique of neoliberalism which, as would be expected of a political science professor, starts and ends with the state. He traces his analytical lineages back to Max Weber and to Michel Foucault, whose 1978–79 lectures *The Birth of Biopolitics* provide the grounding for the rest of his arguments. Bringing in Pierre Bourdieu for good measure, di Palma argues that neoliberalism has achieved the "'creative destruction' of the politics and collective life of advanced democracies" (2). It is, in this sense, not really an "economic doctrine," rather it is "a way of governing a country and a way for upright citizens" (3). He spells out this perspective across nine short chapters that cover an array of topics from the rise of the modern state, responsibility and societal risks, attacks on the welfare state, criminalization of populations, the precautionary principle, and challenges to neoliberalism.

I want to highlight several salient arguments throughout the book's various chapters, and then consider their relevance to ongoing debates about neoliberalism. For most of the book di Palma focuses on the neoliberal transformation of social risk into individual risk, and from class to global risks. In chaps.

2 and 3 he outlines what he means by social risk and its relation to the emergence of the modern welfare state. Social rights in post–World War II states were derived from a "precautionary" solidarity in which responsibility for social risks (e.g., unemployment, ill health, etc.) was naturalized as a societal responsibility rather than individual one; in contrast, neoliberalism has eroded this form of governing, inserting individual responsibility as the core principle of social life. For di Palma, this "reproblematization" of risk is the heart of neoliberalism since all that is bad about neoliberalism flows from this. Di Palma outlines this erosion of societal responsibility in chap. 4 by exploring Ulrich Beck's concept of "risk society," especially by differentiating between class risks (i.e., social) and new, global risks (e.g., climate change). The transformation of responsibility has meant that social risks have been privatized, individuals have replaced societal classes or groups as the center of epistemic calculation. Yet, as di Palma notes, few individuals can actually bear these risks alone (e.g., healthcare costs in the United States are a leading cause of bankruptcy). Consequently, and as discussed in chap. 5, neoliberalism also entails a coercive emphasis on blaming individuals and criminalizing individual failure (e.g., unemployment, crime, etc.), as well as a shift from "the impersonality of law" to "a sort of case-by-case contractualism" (72–73), which he discusses in chap. 6. At this point, in chap. 7, di Palma moves into discussing new ecological and biological risks (or global risks) associated with climate change and biotechnologies. This chapter does not sit as well with the overall argument but sets up chap. 8 where di Palma critiques what he calls the "[Nikolas] Rose conjecture"—the idea that neoliberalism opens up space to create new forms of self-governance that challenge neoliberalism. Di Palma is much more pessimistic about the emergence of spontaneous liberation from (supposedly) horizontal social relations (e.g., markets).

While this run through probably does a horrific injustice to di Palma's ideas, it opens up a series of questions that keep coming back to me when reading books on neoliberalism. It is not always clear in di Palma's narrative whether neoliberalism actually has causative or explanatory power. For one, it is not clear whether or how neoliberalism is *the (main) cause* of societal transformations like the end of Fordism (41–42), or whether it is merely one explanation for this restructuring that is then translated into performative policies. Moreover, I am always left with the question, if neoliberalism is so bad, then why did and do the majority of people in liberal democracies like the United States, the UK, and Canada accept, even vote for, neoliberalism? Why do they not revolt, like Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, and elsewhere? The only answer, to me at least, is that most people in these countries have pretty comfortable lives, at least those of a certain age (mine and above). They have had jobs (from free education, a hangover of the welfare state), they have had mortgages (from monetary stability), they have had newer, cheaper gadgets each year (from offshoring), they have (seemingly) paid lower taxes, they have been doing fine to all intents and

purposes. This is not likely to last, however. The dearth of societal alternatives, of political options even, is already creating a rage among younger generations who will not benefit from the cosy complicity of their elders, in which I now find myself.

Overall I was left only partially satisfied with this book, for two main reasons: first, it seems somewhat out of date, even old-fashioned. It draws mostly from grand figures in the field—Weber, Foucault, Bourdieu, Beck, Rose, Harvey—and does not delve into the bounty of recent research and literature on neoliberalism. In particular, there were places that lacked detail or depth, being overly reliant on one theorist or another to make broad points without engaging with others. Second, di Palma almost presents the modern state as a monolithic (real and analytical) entity which has changed little in the intervening centuries between the end of absolutism and the rise of neoliberalism. I got only a limited sense of the origins of the modern state—mainly limited to the twentieth century—from reading this book, which seemed odd considering the focus on its subversion. I would take the view that it is the state, modern and otherwise, *and* society, economy, culture, and so on that are in a constant process of change, meaning that they are always being subverted, never coming to rest on one thing or another, always layered and never pristine. It is the subverting and subversive *process*, therefore, that requires our attention, and not the state as an outcome of that process.

–Kean Birch
York University, Canada

Archie Brown: *The Myth of the Strong Leader: Political Leadership in the Modern Age*. (London: Bodley Head and New York: Basic Books, 2014. Pp. x, 466.)

doi:10.1017/S0034670515000224

Informed by a long and successful career notable for consideration of politics across regime type and country, Archie Brown, professor of politics *emeritus* of St. Antony's College, Oxford, has written a provocative account of leadership as actually practiced. *The Myth of the Strong Leader* is both magisterial in scope, featuring accounts of dozens of politicians in action, and sharply focused in its contention that modern publics and parties assess strong leadership in ways detrimental to its exercise. This is a rare scholarly book written from the scrum of the game, and in support of the belief that a concept as fundamental as leadership has been misunderstood. And it benefits from wit and fresh insight throughout.