

unwilling to take the next steps of imagining, organizing, and creating another world” (p. 174).

As a theorist, I have a vocational interest in believing ideas play a role in constituting social movements. But is the absence of a potent left opposition to neoliberalism primarily a function of the failure of academic theory? The social basis for neoliberal hegemony may lie more with business mobilization against the welfare state, the decimation of the labor movement, and increasing Democratic Party reliance on corporate money. The right’s mobilization of working people’s hostility to means-tested social welfare programs helped get swing voters to think of themselves more as taxpayers than beneficiaries of public goods. While the reader might concur with Dean’s telling critiques of identity politics and cultural studies, the work of left political economists, such as David Harvey, may ultimately offer a more telling analysis of neoliberalism than does Lacanian social psychology. All the same, Dean is surely right that the hegemony of neoliberalism deserves much more attention from political theorists than it currently receives, and the conversations that her book will help to generate ought to be welcomed.

The Political Responsibilities of Everyday

Bystanders. By Stephen L. Esquith. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010. 256p. \$54.95.
doi:10.1017/S1537592711002477

— Colleen Murphy, *Texas A&M University*

In his book, Stephen Esquith defends the claim that political education can generate awareness among everyday bystanders to severe violence of their own complicity and can thus motivate bystanders to fulfill their subsequent political responsibilities. Part I defines the citizen-teacher, who plays a central role in democratic education. Part II examines obstacles to the recognition among everyday bystanders of their political responsibilities for severe violence and how critical reenactments counter these obstacles. Part III illustrates how citizen-teachers can cultivate a sense of political responsibility among everyday bystanders through their interpretation of critical reenactments. Discussions of severe violence often concentrate on the appropriate way to hold perpetrators responsible and address the needs and claims of victims. Esquith’s book makes an important contribution to our understanding of severe violence by considering a largely neglected group, the bystanders to severe violence, and the responsibilities such bystanders have to address the consequences of violence.

Paradigm examples of severe violence are poverty, famine, civil war, and genocide. According to Esquith, severe violence causes pain and is political in the sense that 1) political decisions influence whether it occurs and whether responsibility for such violence is evaded or acknowledged, and 2) there are characteristically political conse-

quences for victims of violence, namely, the loss of a political voice via geographical displacement or political disenfranchisement. Everyday bystanders are not causally responsible for severe violence nor are they its direct witnesses. Rather, bystanders “benefit unjustly from the suffering and oppression of others” (p. 13) and so are complicit in it. Bystanders benefit in virtue of the ways in which they “fill the once-filled jobs, hold the once-held offices, occupy the once-occupied homes, farm the once-farmed land, and even parent the once-parented orphans of the disappeared” (p. 16). In Esquith’s view, everyday bystanders to severe violence have political responsibility for it because their choices reinforce the political consequences of violence for victims. Everyday bystanders are not necessarily wealthy or fellow citizens. Moreover, there are both individual and corporate bystanders to violence. Examples of corporate bystanders are multinational corporations and universities.

Few everyday bystanders recognize their political responsibility for severe violence. Esquith maintains that this is partly a function of the dominant allegories we use to understand the role and responsibilities of bystanders to suffering. Such allegories present the bystander as entirely unrelated to the individual suffering, and arguments frame the discussion of the responsibilities of bystanders in terms of general moral duties to aid and rescue those in need. Peter Singer’s famous example of a bystander who is in a position to save a child drowning in a pond at little cost to himself is a paradigm case. These allegories influence arguments, for example, regarding the responsibilities of members of developed countries toward the members of developing countries. The problem, the author argues, is that such allegories abstract from the deep entanglement of individuals in developed and developing contexts through their shared participation in institutions and fail to address suffering in a long-term manner. In addition, the use of simulations to motivate individuals to address severe violence, such as in the video game *Darfur Is Dying*, generate sympathy, but they do not provide a real understanding of the position of victims of severe violence and implicitly suggest that the solution is “a click away.”

Political education is needed to create awareness of responsibility among everyday bystanders. This education must first be based on allegories that make explicit the social context in which bystanders act. Esquith presents two exemplary allegories in “Jim in the Grand Marche” and “Ousmane at the Crossroads.” Political education must also include critical reenactments of severe violence, instead of simulations. Critical reenactments are embodied performances or abstract representations that function to raise questions about the shared political responsibilities of everyday bystanders in a way that will change their understandings of their responsibilities. Modern dance, poetry, and plays can be forms of critical reenactment.

Citizen-teachers play a crucial role in such education. According to Esquith, citizen-teachers are intellectuals, such as academics, writers, and artists, who help a larger audience understand the meaning behind critical reenactments. Through their interpretation of critical reenactments, citizen-teachers cultivate empathy, an ability to “understand severe violence . . . without becoming either self-absorbed in their own moral status or oblivious to the differences that remain between themselves as bystanders and those who suffer most from severe violence” (p. 84). Citizen-teachers educate bystanders critically (helping both themselves and bystanders appreciate their own complicity in violence), responsibly (drawing attention to the responsibilities we share with other members of the groups of which we are a part), and democratically (stimulating discussion of what the political responsibilities of everyday bystanders are, rather than dictating how political responsibilities should be understood).

In my critical commentary, I want to draw attention to three issues that Esquith does not address but which impact the force of his argument. First, he is very explicit that his purpose is not to provide an account of what the political responsibilities of everyday bystanders are. He does not answer such questions as “Once everyday bystanders recognize their complicity in severe violence, what are they supposed to do? . . . Should everyday bystanders support reparations, reform immigration laws, or increase foreign aid and charitable giving?” (p. 210). The failure to address this question, in my view, diminishes his overall argument because it leaves unclear just how urgent it is to motivate bystanders to fulfill their responsibilities. If the moral demands on bystanders are quite robust, then this strengthens the imperative of countering the widespread denial of their existence. However, if what morality demands is relatively minor, then the urgency of recognizing our bystander status becomes more questionable.

Second, Esquith is, in my view, overly optimistic about the positive impact that democratic education, and citizen-teachers in particular, can have on everyday bystanders. Such optimism seems questionable if we situate the role of the citizen-teacher and political education within a broader social context. Structural or institutional factors may prevent the citizen-teacher’s voice from being heard or message taken seriously, as may the desire of those who benefit from severe violence to avoid confronting their complicity. The author does not consider these issues and how, relatedly, such factors may be mitigated.

Finally, Esquith does not clarify the relationship between political education and other kinds of political processes that may inform the way that individuals think about, and the degree to which they take seriously, their political responsibilities. Such a discussion is important both for formulating realistic expectations about the extent and kind of contribution that democratic education can make

and for appreciating the other actions that must be taken if everyday bystanders are to acknowledge and take political responsibility for severe violence.

At the same time, this is an important book because it takes seriously a seldom discussed, but critically important, question: How can we encourage bystanders to violence to recognize and take seriously their political responsibilities? Esquith draws on a wide range of sources, including personal stories, movies, poetry, novels, and plays. He provides a compelling diagnosis of some of the obstacles to recognition of political responsibility by bystanders and makes a persuasive case for the importance of citizen-teachers and critical reenactments in cultivating empathy and critical reflection.

John Dewey and the Habits of Ethical Life: The Aesthetics of Political Organizing in a Liquid World.

By Jason Kosnoski. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010. 272p. \$75.00.

doi:10.1017/S1537592711002489

— R. W. Hildreth, *Southern Illinois University-Carbondale*

According to Jason Kosnoski, modern social life is profoundly disorienting. We are unable to “locate ourselves” in the midst of increasing fragmentation, social acceleration, complexity, and interdependence. The temporal and spatial qualities of modernity are, in Zygmunt Bauman’s term, “liquid.” This liquidity undermines our ability to make moral and intellectual connections between our lived experiences and the social forces that structure our larger environments. How should we confront this challenge? Kosnoski develops an answer in his ambitious book *John Dewey and the Habits of Ethical Life: The Aesthetics of Political Organizing in a Liquid World*. By placing John Dewey’s aesthetic thought into conversation with neo-Habermasian political theory, Kosnoski’s goal is to theorize the discursive practices and strategies that can “constitute a concrete ethical life” (postconventional *Sittlichkeit*). Expanding these practices will help individuals “sustain a flexible, expansive, and democratic understanding of justice that could inspire a truly active, global public sphere” (p. 5). While the book has great promise, it is less successful in articulating political strategies to counteract the social liquidity that Kosnoski finds so troubling. The book is worth reading, however, both for its unique interpretation of Dewey’s social philosophy and its important contributions to deliberative theory.

The book begins with a diagnosis of our current predicament. The first chapter draws primarily on Jürgen Habermas and Zygmunt Bauman to document increasing social fragmentation and “social liquidity.” Kosnoski claims that such conditions have created a “crisis in *Sittlichkeit*.” Because we cannot form “trustworthy cognitive maps” that connect our lived experiences with larger environments, we cannot discern the “immediate ethical import of events”