deflect, I wonder whether there would be so much room left for heroism. In this way, Walker's solution points to a more political, less virtue-oriented, alternative.

It is interesting to note that asking "disciplined vulnerability" of citizens strikes me as a masculine-gendered construction of virtue. The message is similar to the command to "be a man" by checking emotions. Feminists might criticize such a view by drawing an analogy with some criticisms of "toleration." Since the citizen knows his or her views are better anyway, then there is no reason not to be "disciplined" in letting those others protest or organize as they wish.

In the end, then, Mongoven has made a spectacular case against all of the existing resolutions of the "impartiality" debate in the discussions of civic virtue. It is only fitting that her own positive solutions for reframing civic virtue will provoke wider debate about what should constitute civic virtue.

Liberalism, Neoliberalism, Social Democracy: Thin Communitarian Perspectives on Political Philosophy and Education. By Mark Olssen. New York: Routledge, 2009. 294p. $95.00.
doi:10.1017/S1537592710000769

— Sigal Ben-Porath, *University of Pennsylvania*

As is evident from his title, Mark Olssen aims to encompass many topics within this book. It begins with the credit crunch of 2008 and ends with global warming and the interdependence of life. In between, Olssen critically analyzes a number of contemporary approaches and theories, including classical liberalism, the capabilities approach, and libertarianism, while maintaining a focus on the communitarian form of social democracy for which he advocates.

The book surveys the origins and current state of neoliberalism, examining its foundational arguments as well as its effects on contemporary Western societies. To some extent it sets out straw positions to attack, as when Olssen argues for the need to critique "the market as a self-regulating . . . mechanism for the production and guarantee of ethical outcome" (p. 11). Does anyone still believe in or argue for such a market? The critique he develops is necessary for achieving a number of goals, he says, in particular "for educationalists, academics, and public service workers to seek to reassert their professionalism . . . to articulate the new shared concerns that face humanity . . . reconstruct educational and governance structures to adequately represent the diverse interests and forms that constitute life's varied forms and types . . . that can serve as a critical grounding for living in an unpredictable and uncertain world" (p. 22).

This ambitious set of goals is pursued through a detailed critique of the foundational theories of neoliberalism and liberalism, including those of Frederick von Hayek, Karl Popper, and Isaiah Berlin. Developing a conception of solidarity and social cohesion while criticizing totalitarian as well as liberal approaches is no easy task, and Olssen presents in detail the shortcomings of some previous attempts to accomplish this. He critically considers some contemporary views of liberalism, and joins in debates on autonomy versus group rights and also the discussion between supporters of universal capabilities, in particular Martha Nussbaum, and those who espouse cultural difference. He criticizes many of the main features of classical and contemporary liberalism, including the notions of autonomy, multiculturalism, and capabilities.

In response to the limitations he discerns in the theories he surveys, Olssen develops a thin communitarian approach based on a Foucauldian view of the state, and in particular its organizing, collective role in social planning. Michel Foucault's theory is described as offering a sounder methodological and epistemological grounding of an anti-totalitarian theory of the state, one that rejects autonomy but maintains rights and democracy. Olssen aims to salvage commonality and the idea of public good from both the privatized forces of the market and the individualizing forces of liberal theory and governance, along the way dispensing with autonomy, which he depicts as an individualizing principle that is unrealistic as well as morally and socially damaging.

The Foucauldian framework, and in particular Foucault's focus on dependency and uncertainty, grounds this book's normative vision of society. Olssen attempts to construct this normative vision by extending Foucault's critique of the state to the normative realm of governance, suggesting desirable directions for the reemergence of common practices and forms of equality and collaboration. He thus develops a "complexity approach" (p. 71), which emphasizes contingent combinations and effects within what the author calls a "philosophy of life" (p. 149). State regulation and a robust conception of the common good (p. 70) are suggested as prerequisites for freedom, rather than as impediments to freedom; "soft" forms of paternalism (p. 229) are suggested to enhance liberty by providing the conditions necessary for its realization. When autonomy is moved out of the theoretical way, and thus ceases to obscure our sense of interdependency and mutual responsibility, a new theory of the person and the state seems possible, in which individuals are described as rights holders but not as atomistic individuals, and in which the state is obligated to support them and to help them evolve into more complete persons (and members of communities). When the social and historical processes that create our current human condition are understood and appreciated, more space for freedom is cleared, and Olssen suggests that this space expands through the learned appreciation of the rules of the game and how they can be opposed: "[T]he good that thin communitarianism seeks to establish is . . . based on

written constitutions, where the state must articulate and represent the will of the people." If this does not sound significantly Foucauldian, the next optimistic lines seem to be even farther removed from Foucault's grim view of the state: "Structural action, including interventions by governments, and global organizations, is necessary for addressing inequalities in relation to gender, class, race, environmental, financial and resource issues" (p. 202).

To complement Foucault, Olssen thus suggests considering arguments made by "a group of philosophers, sociologists, economists and journalists" who systematically adapted liberal arguments to the context of capitalism; he updates their arguments for the twenty-first century context as "grounds for justifying social democracy . . . from developments that have occurred in science and philosophy" as well as "complexity theory, within both the physical and social sciences" (p. 203).

At times, this broad and encompassing foundation for a new theory of social communitarian democracy feels disjointed. For example, Olssen suggests extending Keynesian principles of economic uncertainty and risk, as well as complexity frameworks of interdependence, to many areas of social policy (p. 228), regarding them as a basis for an argument in favor of "soft paternalism" (p. 229). This argument in turn is discussed mostly through Cass Sunstein and Richard Thaler's now-ubiquitous theory of "nudging." However, their approach is built on libertarian principles, as discussed in their article "Libertarian Paternalism is not an Oxymoron" (*University of Chicago Law Review* 70 (4): 1159–1202). Yet it is not fully clear from Olssen's discussion of this theme how well it fits with the thin communitarian approach the book takes, nor is it clear why he endorses this idea after rejecting a significant part of the theoretical foundations of both liberalism and libertarianism. Of course, soft paternalism can be endorsed from a variety of perspectives, and libertarianism is not necessarily the first among them. This type of policy surely fits with the idea of interconnectedness, mutual responsibility, and vulnerability as discussed in this book. At the same time, it remains unclear how this argument for an "architecture of choice" is based on the theoretical foundations Olssen delineates. It is also unclear why some authors—such as Nussbaum—receive extended if critical treatment, while others—such as Michael Sandel—are barely mentioned.

Overall, this book joins a growing body of literature that breaks from both classical and contemporary arguments for liberalism. It does so in search of a theory of government and social policy that would take into account a more complex, and viable, portrayal of human psychology and its functions within a democratic polity. While some of its arguments seem too sweeping, the book offers a fresh look at numerous debates in contemporary political theory, and will be of interest to many scholars working on topics ranging from critiques of Nietzsche to philosophy of education to contemporary theories of communitarianism.

The Political Life of Sensation. By Davide Panagia. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009. 232p. $74.95 cloth, $21.95 paper.
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— Robert E. Watkins, *Columbia College Chicago*

This smart and ambitious book contributes to a growing body of work in political theory that attempts to illuminate the connections among politics, culture, theory, and aesthetics, thereby broadening our understanding of the kinds of phenomena that count as political in contemporary multicultural politics. The book offers "a genealogy of political reflection" (p. 10) that attends not just to the "regimes of perception" that inform common sense but also, crucially, to the interruptive force of sensation that can "puncture our received wisdoms and common modes of sensing" (p. 2). As a political theorist and cultural analyst of sensation in democratic politics, Davide Panagia "consider[s] sensation to be an experience of unrepresentability in that a sensation occurs without having to rely on a recognizable shape, outline, or identity to determine its value." He argues that "such moments of interruption . . . are political moments because they invite occasions for reconfiguring our associational lives" (pp. 2–3).

In addition to exegetical chapters that draw out the insights of canonical political thinkers on sensation, perception, and judgment, the book includes fascinating chapters on contemporary aesthetico-political phenomena, including Italian piazza newsstands (or *edicolas*), practices of viewing in the film *The Ring,* and the Slow Food movement, with smart uses of Cézanne, Kandinsky, Caravaggio, and Bacon layered in as well. *The Political Life of Sensation* will be of great interest to political theorists and others intent on thinking beyond the ordinary politics of recognition, representation, and signification in order to explore the interruptive and democratic potential that percolates through popular culture and everyday practice.

Inspired by Jacques Rancière's thinking on the relationship between politics and aesthetics, the book starts from the assumption that "the first political act is also an aesthetic one" (p. 9). Panagia's studied deployment of Rancière's thought—including the central notion of politics as what Rancière called, in an interview with Panagia, "an activity of reconfiguration of that which is given to the sensible" (2000, quoted on p. 6)—should prove insightful to the Rancière specialist as well as the novice for the way that it blends sharp theoretical exposition with concrete analysis of aesthetic and cultural examples. More specifically, the author sets his focus on the interruptive force of sensation in the context of Rancière's ingenious rereading of Louis Althusser's famous scene of interpellation in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (1970, in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays,* 1971). Instead of the