Alexander Kaufman's book is more tightly focused on the adequacy of Sen's CA and is dominated by contributions by philosophers. The first part of this volume focuses on Nussbaum's elaboration of Sen's approach. Her chapter here, which is very close in content to her contribution to the Grusky-Kanbur volume, reprises her list of fundamental human capabilities and her view that "a society that does not guarantee these to all its citizens, at some appropriate threshold level, falls short of being a fully just society" (p. 51). Richard Arneson argues against the threshold view, saying that the moral importance of keeping each individual at a "good enough" level, regardless of other concerns, is not clear. The section ends with Kaufman responding to Arneson, arguing that the CA extends beyond a threshold view. But this debate remains inconclusive, with Kaufman concluding, "it is a question that deserves further examination" (p. 76). Part II addresses the relation of the CA to other types of egalitarian theory. In a subtle chapter, Peter Vallentyne argues that the CA is close to, though not the same as, an approach that gives priority to opportunity for well-being. Timothy Hinton considers the relation of Nussbaum's analysis (based on unequal economic and social circumstances) to a feminist analysis emphasizing relations of domination and subordination, arguing that each approach enriches the other. Kaufman closes this section by arguing for the distinctiveness of the CA from the opportunities account of G. A. Cohen. He argues convincingly not only that Sen's focus on achievement as well as freedom to achieve is coherent but also that it enriches egalitarian thought.

Part III moves from conceptual issues to those of implementation. In separate chapters, Victoria Kamsler and David Wasserman consider attempts to expand the CA to focus on environmental and disability issues, respectively. A reason Sen has hesitated to provide a list of important human capabilities is his view that such a list should be the outcome of democratic deliberation. Sabina Alkire and David Crocker, in complementary chapters, address this issue. Alkire reports on and evaluates interesting field work on participatory discussions that elicit common values and priorities, even in highly unequal communities. Crocker, in another substantial contribution, argues that the CA to international development can and should draw on aspects of thinking on deliberative democracy. Together, these chapters encourage a different way of arriving at capabilities than by listing them a priori.

Kaufman's volume is more demanding on the reader than the Grusky-Kanbur collection since it deals with unresolved and intricate recent debates. It is also more specialized, although the excellent introduction by Kaufman helps the reader who is new to the area. It should be valuable to those who are interested in exploring how the CA intersects with different areas of egalitarian and democratic thought.

Split Decisions: How and Why to Take a Break from Feminism. By Janet Halley. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006. 418p. $29.95.

Simone de Beauvoir's Political Thinking. Edited by Lori Jo Marso and Patricia Moynagh. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2006. 136p. $50.00 cloth, $18.00 paper.

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— Mary Hawkesworth, *Rutgers University*

Dispelling the myth of the given, probing the tacit presuppositions of dominant discourses, challenging the naturalization of oppressive relations, investigating processes that produce invisibility, demonstrating the deficiencies of reductive arguments, and engaging difference and plurality have been hallmarks of feminist scholarship in general and of feminist theory in particular. Through sustained engagement with canonical texts, disciplinary discourses, and historical and contemporary events, feminist theorists have enabled new ways of seeing and thinking. Has feminist theory exhausted its potential, or worse, become an impediment to emancipatory projects? These two works provide markedly different responses to these questions.

In *Simone de Beauvoir's Political Thinking,* six talented feminist theorists offer new interpretations of Beauvoir, making the case that a brand of antifoundationalist feminist theorizing, attuned to ambiguity and complexity and committed to an ethics of freedom, affords a "radical approach to political thinking" that is particularly useful in a world confronting dilemmas posed by war, torture, and neocolonialism. By contrast, in *Split Decisions,* Janet Halley argues that feminism, an evolving historical practice informed by theories that fuel its will to power, has become "a governance project [which] has a dark side. . . . That dark side includes its vanquished, its prisoners of war, the interests that pay the taxes it has levied and owe the rents it has imposed. Feminism with blood on its hands" (pp. 32–33). Indeed, feminism has become so mired in "paranoid structuralism" and a "moralized mandate to converge" that the world is well advised to take a break from feminism.

Such bold and opposing claims call out for adjudication. Despite Halley's embrace of a version of noncognitivism, which suggests that no rational grounds can be adduced to conclusively defend her "preferences" as a "sex–positive postmodernist" (p. 15), Beauvoir's ethics of ambiguity afford far richer possibilities for reflective judgment even while recognizing the challenges posed by finitude, contingency, and indeterminacy. Beauvoir's conception of ethical action requires judgment in the face of uncertainty, lest our "strivings for freedom be crushed by the dark weight of other things" (*The Ethics of Ambiguity,* 1947, 7).

Halley's construal of and allegations against feminism are dark, but they are also remarkably idiosyncratic. Rather than conceiving feminism as a rich and diverse field of

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contestation, with manifold historically and culturally specific manifestations over the past two centuries, Halley reduces feminist theory to a handful of texts that engage issues central to the "sex wars" within feminism that emerged 25 years ago at the Barnard Conference. Issues pertaining to sexuality, sexual representation, pornography, sadomasochism, butch-femme, transgender, and transsexuals have been the subject of important and productive debates within feminist theory and practice, but she is quite mistaken in suggesting that these debates exhaust feminist theory. Moreover, by reading selective works of Catharine Mackinnon, Robin West, Carol Gilligan, the Combahee River Collective, Gayle Rubin, Gayatri Spivak, Judith Butler, Joan Scott, Seyla Benhabib, Nancy Fraser, and Drucilla Cornell exclusively in relation to these issues, Halley decontextualizes their arguments and constructs a caricature of feminism, which is the target of her attack.

Halley grants that her book is a polemic; indeed she revels in the bombastic. Trying "to understand feminism as capaciously as possible," she insists that feminism can be compressed into a concise formula: "m/f, m > f, and carrying a brief for f" (p. 17). At "absolute minimum," all feminists agree that there is a distinction between m (males, men, masculinity) and f (females, women, femininity), that women are subordinated to men, and that justice requires the elimination of that subordination (p. 18). Subsuming all versions of feminism under these defining properties, Halley dispenses with careful distinctions. Instead, she advances quite totalizing claims: "Liberalism (as opposed to feudalism or communism) being the mode in which all our politics are waged, every currently articulated feminist position is liberal in some way" (p. 79). To the extent that "'hybrid' feminisms—socialist, antiracist, and postcolonial feminisms . . . depart from these three essential characteristics . . . they do so only by diverging from and thus suspending their feminism" (p. 20).

The defects that Halley ascribes to feminism are multiple: It fails to affirm male (or female) masculinity; it ignores women's capacity to injure men; it indulges in women's supremacist thinking; it is moralistic (easily offended, schoolmarmish, judgmental, self-righteous (p. 78); and it tends toward totalitarian regulatory projects (p. 79). Rather than acknowledging its power and its involvement in contemporary modes of governance, feminism wallows in claims of victimization, insisting that it is being elided, erased, refused, repudiated, denied, foreclosed (pp. 250–53). In addition, feminist critiques of male domination "assist in producing the very social formation they purport to critique and dismantle" (p. 124). In seeking to "switch all the rules to generate feminist outcomes," feminists fail to heed the costs "their rules would inflict on many women, on men, and on myriad social interests that can't be spelled out in the alphabet of m/f" (p. 343).

To this litany of abuses, Halley adds an offense against theory itself. Denouncing the hegemonic tendencies of feminists, she claims that feminists deploy theory prescriptively, "seeking to control the study of all sexual subjectivities, all sexual minorities, all sexual practices . . . antiracism, postcolonial thought and the like" (p. 252). To escape these dangerous proclivities, she recommends that everyone (feminists included) take a break from feminism, a step that can be accomplished in part by rejecting normative theory and embracing a notion of theory as an instrument for generating hypotheses about the world: "When theory is hypothetical, and also when it is critical, it is less hostile to the existence of inconsistent theories operating at top speed 'over there'. It is more capable of apprehending these theories as possible competitors, as producing different worlds, as articulating different social goods and bads, and as driving divergent political desires. It is more capable of splitting decisions" (p. 273).

Halley provides several examples of her own use of the hypothetical—the development of "thought experiments" or counterfactuals—to consider possible costs of "feminist" legal decisions, such as *Oncale v. Sundowner Offshore Services,* the U.S. Supreme Court decision that recognized same-sex sexual harassment and made it actionable under sex discrimination law. To illuminate the harms created by this ruling, she begins with the counterfactual that the behavior that the Court recognized as sexual harassment was "not unwanted" (p. 295), which of course would exempt it from the provisions of sexual harassment law altogether. In this hypothetical frame, Joseph Oncale welcomed the sexual attentions of his co-workers, but later regretted these encounters, succumbed to "homosexual panic," and filed a false charge of sexual harassment. Thus, Halley links the hypothetical *Oncale* case to false allegations of rape and to a larger issue of "the problematic of wantedness of sex" or the indeterminacy of consent. She argues that "workplace discrimination rights to bring problematicness panic suits" turns "Title VII into a vanilla-sex regime," but it will not make the problematic of wantedness go away; it will make it only more covert (p. 301). Failing to recognize that "the edgy experience of unwantedness in sex is probably cherished by more people than are willing to say so" (p. 302), feminists promote oppressive regulatory regimes while constituting themselves as the "guarantors of sexual purity." Halley's virulent condemnation appears to depend upon a hypothetical feminism judged in the context of a counterfactual Supreme Court case on the basis of facts not in evidence, a troubling mode of theorizing, to say the least.

The version of feminism that Lori Marso, Pat Moynagh, Emily Zakin, Sonia Kruks, Karen Shelby, and Mary Caputi extract from Beauvoir is precisely the kind that Halley claims does not exist. It does not posit essential gender opposition nor invariant modes of domination and subordination, but rather attends to the specificity

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of particular situations: "Sure a woman is like a man, a human being; but such a declaration is abstract. The fact is that every concrete human being is always singularly situated. To decline to accept such notions as the eternal feminine, the black soul, the Jewish character, is not to deny that Jews, Negroes, women exist today—this denial does not represent a liberation for those concerned but a flight from reality" (Beauvoir, *The Second Sex,* 1949, xvi–xvii). As Moynagh points out, Beauvoir offers an analysis of the intricacy of the situation, in which sexed existence plays a part (but only a part), which enables her "to make some concrete claims about human groups without enslaving them to a timeless and deterministic pattern" (p. 12). Troubling both false universals and confining stereotypes, Beauvoir tracks operations of power that work through binary opposition itself. To unmask the problematic conflation of masculinity, whiteness, or Christianity with humanity does not presuppose ineradicable binaries: men/women, white/black, Christian/Jew. On the contrary, by identifying the dehumanizing dynamics of othering, Beauvoir diagnoses binary opposition itself as part of the problem.

Contrary to Halley's claim that feminism insists on an unrelenting politics of gender equality, Zakin demonstrates that Beauvoir's feminism is better understood in relation to an ethics of openness to the other, alterity and ambiguity, and an erotics of generosity (p. 32). Elaborating a conception of subjectivity as nonidentity, Beauvoir develops an ethical and political theory that is nontotalizing. Her feminism is neither a project for women only nor an imposition of an invariant rule on all social movements. Taking freedom as her project, she envisions "a situation of equal possibilities" (p. 5), and encourages individuals to transcend fixed status restrictions imposed on bodies and to make of themselves what they will. The resulting "differences cannot be taken as essential oppositions or ossified identities, but as the dissemination of one's bodily situation in to the world, the way in which one's particularity develops in and through mediation of each subject's finite context and relations" (p. 39).

Marso and Moynagh characterize Beauvoir's theoretical method in terms completely consonant with Halley's preferred values. Beauvoir engages multivocal perspectives as a means "to think against oneself" (p. 4). Her critical analyses of distinct social and political phenomena resist overgeneralization. Exploring the phenomenological, she begins with particulars, attends to specificity, and pays tribute to the singularity of each event and each life, while investigating possible resonance with others. Rather than seeking certitudes, Beauvoir's model of political thinking offers reflective judgments that illuminate dynamics of social existence and categories that structure perception and action. Embracing an ethics that invites scrutiny of intended and unintended effects of action in order to assume responsibility, Beauvoir's conception of freedom challenges individuals to risk action with and for others and to resist oppression as individually and collectively experienced. In excavating this vibrant version of feminist theory, the contributors to *Simone de Beauvoir's Political Thinking* provide ample justification for rejecting Halley's caricatures and for pressing on with sophisticated and nuanced feminist theorizing.

Party/Politics: Horizons in Black Political Thought.
By Michael Hanchard. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. 352p. $35.00.
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— Lawrie Balfour, *University of Virginia*

"What does contemporary political and social theory look like when viewed from a vantage point of a black lifeworld?" (p. 8). Crucial though this question is—particularly at a moment when U.S. citizens are deeply divided across racial lines on a wide array of political issues—it remains largely neglected by political scientists. Michael Hanchard responds to this inattention by presenting a dazzling, learned tour of the contours of contemporary black political thought. Moving fluently from the local to the national to the hemispheric to the global and traversing disciplinary lines at the same time, *Party/Politics* has much to offer scholars in multiple fields, both within political science and beyond. At the risk of understating this larger contribution, this review will focus on the example it sets for the practice of political theory.

The central axis around which the book turns is the vexed question of the relationship between politics and culture. If the boundaries of the political are always in question, always connected to cultural practices in complex ways, this has been especially so for black political subjects, whose experiences have been marked by uneven patterns of cultural and political representation and power. Hanchard deftly carves out a middle ground between political science literatures that largely ignore questions of culture and cultural studies arguments that treat cultural practices as inherently political. Through a series of intellectual excursions, he mines pop culture, literature, individual acts of resistance, and a wide array of practices to assess their political character.

The argument proceeds in three sections. In the first, "Politics and Form," Hanchard inquires how people of African descent have responded to the everyday experience of inequality and asks when and how those responses have translated into collective action. The second section, "Politics in Fact and Fiction," situates recent controversies over the status of "black intellectuals" within a hemispheric American context and considers how fiction enables us to interpret the "not-quite-collective acts of black politics" (p. 180). The final section on "Hemispheric Perspectives/Black Internationalism" builds on Henry Highland Garnet's nineteenth-century

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