

identity, or about the politics in coming to terms with any past, will recognize the dilemmas that his book both eloquently analyzes and inescapably embodies. In both regards, it really matters.

Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire. By Wendy Brown. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006. 282p. \$29.95.
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— Alfonso J. Damico, *University of Iowa*

Globalization, population migration, multiculturalism, identity politics, 9/11, and the war on terror—if one thinks of tolerance as an art for reconciling differences, then the need for it would seem to be greater than ever. However, tolerance, as T. M. Scanlon argues (*The Difficulty of Tolerance*, 2003), is never easy. At the very least, it means acknowledging that other people whom I dislike are entitled to the same legal protections as I am and should be equally free to decide how to live their lives. Asking me to avert my eyes or look away from those beliefs and ways of life that I find repugnant may mean that tolerance comes close to being an “impossible virtue” (Bernard Williams, “Toleration: An Impossible Virtue?” in David Heyd, ed., *Toleration: An Elusive Virtue*, 1996), but the alternative—intolerance—seems a nonstarter. So for many of us the choice between tolerance and intolerance seems easy. Indeed, many liberals assume that tolerance is a defining feature of any decent society.

Wendy Brown has written a smart, edgy, and provocative book that challenges almost every one of the preceding observations. *Regulating Aversion* opens with an indictment of tolerance as part of a complicated matrix of discourses that “articulate identity and difference, belonging and marginality, and civilization and barbarism” in ways that invariably serve “hegemonic social or political powers” (p. 10). Asking people to tolerate their differences, she clearly suggests, is much easier than confronting the question of how and why some identities are produced and marked as needing to be tolerated. Too often the effect is to substitute tolerance for equality in ways that transform a “justice project” into “sensitivity training,” a failing that she argues is especially egregious in the exhibits and programs housed in the Simon Wiesenthal Museum of Tolerance. Even though Brown is ready to grant that tolerance is better than intolerance, she has plenty of tough arguments about the ways in which tolerance discourse generates its own intolerant outlook. *Regulating Aversion* does not argue that less tolerance would make for a more decent society; however, it does argue that liberals are wrong to imagine that *more* tolerance always does so.

Brown is highly effective at asking obvious questions to which our first reaction is to notice that there is no obvious answer. For example, she asks why “popular political discourse treats heterosexual women as candidates for equal-

ity, while lesbian women are candidates for tolerance” (p. 75). In an interesting analysis of the byplay between tolerance and wider cultural norms, Brown highlights the extent to which heterosexual women can be incorporated into the public sphere as equals without disturbing the hegemony of the norms operative in the family and the economy that secure male advantages. In contrast, the recognition of lesbian women as equals would force a confrontation with those ruling norms. Tolerance avoids the confrontation. (One is reminded of the military policy of “don’t ask, don’t tell.”) Brown argues that this pattern repeats itself over and over. Political and civic tolerance is thought to matter most “when a group difference that poses a challenge to the definition of binding features of the whole must be incorporated but must also be sustained as a difference: regulated, managed, controlled” (p. 71). Tolerance then effectively forestalls any historical, political, or other analysis of how the very identities that are in need of management were produced in the first place. “When heterosexuals are urged to tolerate homosexuals, when schoolchildren are instructed to tolerate another’s race or ethnicity, the powers producing these ‘differences,’ marking them as significant and organizing them as sites of inequality, exclusion, deviance, or marginalization, are ideologically vanquished” (pp. 89–90).

Brown’s most disquieting and likely inflammatory argument comes in the last half of her book where quotations from President Bush are frequently paired with others from leading liberal political theorists. Tolerance discourse and liberalism more generally, she charges, are implicated in some of the government’s worst behavior in the war on terror. All too briefly and crudely put, the argument runs as follows: As a “civilizational discourse,” tolerance rests upon a Lockean-Kantian-Rawlsian image of individuals as rational, individuated, and autonomous. This liberal self creates its opposing Other in the form of those whose religion or culture trumps their individuality, making them incapable of rationality or autonomy. This naturalizing of difference encourages the belief that given *who they are* they are intolerable. “Tolerance in a liberal idiom . . . does not merely serve as the *sign* of the civilized and the free: it configures the *right* of the civilized against a barbaric opposite that is both internally oppressive and externally dangerous, neither tolerant nor tolerable” (p. 204). Though I am inclined to see President Bush’s more lawless actions as expressions of naked nationalism punctuated by hypocrisy, Brown here cashes out the value of tolerance as the “coin of liberal imperialism” (p. 204).

It has been over 40 years since Herbert Marcuse similarly argued that tolerance *is* repression and that true freedom requires intolerance of freedom’s enemies (“Repressive Tolerance,” in Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore, Jr., and Herbert Marcuse, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*, 1965). Brown acknowledges Marcuse’s essay but does not discuss whether or how much it informs her own work. It does

seem clear, however, that she agrees that tolerance too often is repression but she is clearly reluctant to follow Marcuse's suggestion that freedom's enemies should not be tolerated. Given that President Bush, as Brown points out, says pretty much the same thing, Brown's reluctance is understandable. Perhaps, one should not ask more of a book that already has done quite enough to demand a rethinking of tolerance and its place in a matrix of discourses about emancipation, equality, culture, and the state's legitimacy. I want, however, to suggest that the fact that Brown has relatively little to say about how to reposition and reconfigure tolerance within that matrix is a function of a different sort of reluctance on her part. *Regulating Aversion* is about the costs imposed by any complex political settlement. Membership in a tolerant society costs some more than others: Some identities are marginalized but not all; the norms of tolerance are more easily represented in some ways of life than in others. Nonetheless, choices still have to be made. *Regulating Aversion* makes clear that in privileging rationality, individuation, and autonomy, tolerance discourse costs us (or some of us) in other ways. However, because I cannot imagine a political settlement of which this is not always true, *Regulating Aversion* stings less than it might. It still stings enough.

To Restore American Democracy: Political Education and the Modern University. Edited by Robert E. Calvert. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006. 288p. \$75.00 cloth, \$28.95 paper.

Power to the People: Teaching Political Philosophy in Skeptical Times. By Avner de-Shalit. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006. 224p. \$85.00 cloth, \$29.95 paper.
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— Sigal Ben-Porath, *University of Pennsylvania*

The authors of these two books are concerned with a similar question, namely, how can scholars support their students in becoming engaged citizens? Political theorists and philosophers often wrestle with this question as a personal and professional quandary. Many researchers, particularly those whose scholarship is concerned with political questions, wonder to what extent their ideas relate to political reality in a practical way. Can ideas influence, even alter, the processes or norms of behavior in the actual political domain? If what we do is *political* theory or philosophy, what is political about it? Both books reviewed here grapple with these questions in the context of teaching in higher education institutions.

Calvert's book begins with a concern about the viability of American democracy. Its worrisome state of affairs is exemplified by the story of a student, Brian, who expresses in the local newspaper his disconnect from the world of politics. Brian is committed to ignoring the public life and advancing only his own narrowly construed interests. Calvert sets out to use the tools of political theory and

other related disciplines to address the charge Brian brings against political engagement and thus to respond to the pressing challenges of disengaged youth and an environment of declining civic participation.

De-Shalit begins his exploration with his own students: He is worried about the skepticism of his audience about political philosophy and the detachment between the texts he teaches and the students who study those texts. He sets out to search for a way of practicing and teaching political philosophy that would enlist his audience to become more engaged citizens as a result of their involvement with the philosophical texts and arguments. De-Shalit is troubled by the disconnect of theory from practice; he is concerned that the theories he believes in, develops, and teaches are rendered irrelevant by academic pseudoneutrality, students' indifference, and the detachment of theoretical argumentation from political activity. The question that motivates him is intensely political: "how should political philosophy be conducted if at least one of its goals is to change or reform our political institutions and politics . . . and another is to empower citizens. . . ?" (p. 76). After entertaining and rejecting a series of arguments regarding the desirable relations between political theory and political practice, de-Shalit proposes that it is critical self-knowledge that can best provide the basis for a fruitful political dialogue (p. 69).

Thus, political philosophers should use the knowledge at their disposal, their methods of argumentation, and their critical capacities to support the development of political aptitude in their students. He suggests that political philosophers should always begin their inquiries from real problems of real people, and that both philosophizing and pedagogy should be focused on a dialogic relation with students and with fellow citizens. De-Shalit criticizes academic neutrality as "morally wrong" (p. 43) and suggests that the escape to the inner fortress of one's true self, absent an attempt to reflect this truth on the world, "is an apolitical move" (p. 68) that should be condemned.

The second part of de-Shalit's book, focusing on the implications of his perspective for the preparation of citizens, is based on the suggestion that reason is a communicative rather than an abstract, solitary activity. It offers application of the deliberative democratic approach to the political philosophy classroom. "A deliberative democracy approach in teaching would therefore educate students to apply self-criticism in their reasoning, to be sensitive and open to the other's views, and . . . to improve their own arguments . . ." (p. 145). Going beyond deliberative democracy, de-Shalit's argument almost echoes Tolstoy's adoration of the "simple man" who is assumed to possess a greater knowledge of what is important in the political realm, a knowledge that "experts" such as political philosophers should tap into. This can happen through more dialogic classes at the college or university, but also through open public forums where discussion and deliberation