unsuccessful. Opting out is easier; it secures self-interest and enables a type of control that is impossible in collective action. The psychoanalytic approach adds depth and complexity, allowing us to see how public things may be both desired and destroyed.

Visionary Pragmatism: Radical and Ecological Democracy in Neoliberal Times. By Romand Coles. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016. 240p. $84.95 cloth, $23.95 paper.
doi:10.1017/S153759271700384X

— John M. Meyer, *Humboldt State University*

This work brings together theory and practice in fruitful and evocative ways. Romand Coles argues for, and outlines practices that cultivate, an ethos he terms "receptive generosity." He identifies this as integral to the cultivation of "game-transformative practices" that advance radical forms of democracy (p. 12). While *Visionary Pragmatism* ranges widely across literatures and ideas, at its core are theoretical reflections upon Coles's experience creating and facilitating an ambitious set of student-led "Action Research Teams" (ARTs) at Northern Arizona University (NAU). These ARTs paired undergraduate and graduate students with K-12 students in pedagogical projects that pursued a diversity of goals, ranging from the creation of community gardens to campaigns for better playground equipment to addressing the struggles of undocumented immigrants. Yet this is not a "how-to" manual; it is more of a "why-to" book that provides palpable evidence for the varied ways in which these democratic experiments nourished his theoretical vision and hope. It is a distinctive mode of theorizing that others rarely pursue, and the book provides encouragement for those who seek to do so.

It is no accident that ARTs projects might remind some readers of Saul Alinsky-style community organizing. Yet Coles's theorizing also draws eclectically upon the neuroscience of mirror neurons, the complex autocatalytic systems theory of Stuart Kaufmann, the "polyface" farming practices of Joel Salatin, and a democratic reinterpretation of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Central to it all is Coles's conviction that democratic sensibilities are not fostered by mere talk or deliberation, but through the interaction of "bodies, places, and things" (p. 50). While tying thinking and perception to corporeal relations has led others to conclude that freedom is impossible, Coles makes a clear case that it instead orients us toward a new terrain of power and struggle and allows us to identify new possibilities for receptivity, reflection, and engagement (p. 36).

There are three substantive chapters, each of which develops one element of the author's theoretical argument. The first chapter follows William Connolly and others in exploring the insights of neuroscience for political theorizing, focusing on the role of mirror neurons—operating beneath the level of conscious awareness—in enabling receptivity between people and opening opportunities for mutually reinforcing, affective resonance. Coles finds this receptive resonance among participants in his ARTs projects, and argues that it can create a bottom-up, democratic counter to what Connolly terms the "evangelical-capitalist resonance machine" (p.39).

The second chapter again contrasts a top-down and bottom-up approach. In it, Coles counterposes the circulatory power of massive flows of food, energy, and other materials through the global economy (Michael Pollan's account in *The Omnivore's Dilemma* [2006] of "rivers of corn" as an industrialized component of wildly divergent foodstuff in modern societies is paradigmatic, here) to emergent, materialist, alternatives. The latter build new circulatory flows—via decentralized energy systems, farmers' markets and community-supported agriculture, and food policy councils, for example—while cultivating different affective desires.

Chapter 3 navigates between grand, dichotomous narratives of reform versus revolution by sketching opportunities for "co-opting" dominant systems of ideology and power to advance radically democratic alternatives, drawing upon Kaufmann's account of autocatalytic systems as a "heuristic" for this strategy.

Finally, in his concluding chapter, Coles builds on these strategic insights and rethinkings to argue for a form of democratic movement building that regards the "shock" politics of protests, marches, and shutdowns as an "alternating current" that provides a necessary complement to the more quotidian politics and movements that were privileged earlier in the analysis. In this way, he seeks to advance a vision of hope that relies upon seeing the resonances of activism and ideas across—and through—long periods. While the shock can provoke visionary alternatives, the everyday requires a pragmatic response, and together they offer the possibility for the "visionary pragmatism" that he pursues in the book.

This is a deeply personal work. As a reader, I came away with a clear sense of—and respect for—Coles's struggle to orient his own life and career in a way that is consistent with his convictions about what political theory can be, and with the need to ground his theorizing in forms of activism and everyday life that will both nourish and inform it. He embeds his call for receptive generosity, and account of the possibilities for poetic experience in the everyday, deeply within writing characterized by its openness, enthusiasm, and sincerity.

The author makes his case well that this sort of receptive generosity can be a starting point for the cultivation of democratic movements for change and that attention to the vast material flows of matter and energy in contemporary society is key. His explicit desire to burrow between the antinomy of reform and revolution is equally compelling. That said, and despite this latter aim, there are important points where his analysis reifies a prevailing monolithic power that thereby seems to reinforce such antinomies.

Consider, for example, Coles's discussion of Connolly's evangelical-capitalist resonance machine, in which "resonance refers *both* to amplificatory affinities of affect, bodily comportment, and spiritual sensibility among multiple sectors *and* to the resonant audiovisual technologies that fold them together and proliferate their presence" (pp. 38–39; emphasis in the original). Connolly and Coles imagine the components of this machine all resonating along the same wavelength, making intensification—rather than cacophony—the result. In the face of such a "machine," Coles strives to envision a new, countermachine that might rise to comparable proportions. But what if we set aside this imaginary of discrete, clashing machines? In this case, it might become easier to notice some of the existing affects, sensibilities, and technologies that do not readily reinforce one another, making the machine metaphor less apt. In this case, we might conclude that amplification of some of these strands, and receptivity to them, does not require a new, countermachine, but that there are possibilities always already present "to reimagine resonance *in radically receptive democratic terms*" (p. 39).

Similarly, Coles argues that his ARTs experience at NAU offers a model of "how these dynamics might powerfully interface—in trickster ways—with the dynamics of a neoliberalizing university" (p. 149). He frames the strategy as co-optation: They "sought to co-opt some neoliberal dynamics into radical democratic dynamics," by framing ARTs as means, for example, to boost student retention, engagement, and graduation rates (p. 150). Here again, he seems to reinforce the dichotomy he aims to challenge. Rather than the language of co-optation, it seems more insightful to note that neoliberal and radical democratic projects might *converge upon* goals such as student retention and engagement. ARTs might then *leverage* this point of convergence to foster a new vision of democratic engagement. It might do so precisely because student retention and engagement is not *simply* a neoliberal agenda that must be co-opted.

This, it seems to me, is essential to what Coles rightly terms game-transformative practices, but at points like these I found it easy to lose sight of this powerful thread of his argument. Nonetheless, if such strategies are to succeed, they might do so precisely because of the attentiveness and receptive resonances that Coles cultivates in this thought—and action—provoking book.

Redefining the Muslim Community: Ethnicity, Religion and Politics in the Thought of Alfarabi. By Alexander Orwin. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017. 264p. $59.95 cloth.
doi:10.1017/S1537592717004017

— Yasmeen Daifallah, *University of Southern California*

The purpose of this book is to examine the medieval Muslim philosopher Alfarabi's (AD 870–950) conception of the Umma, which he understood as the particular ethnic as well as the broader religious (Islamic) community. The central argument of the book is that contra contemporary claims that the Muslim community is a homogenous entity that should be ruled by a single political authority, one of the earliest and most notable Islamic philosophers thought otherwise. Through a careful and lively examination of Alfarabi's various writings, Alexander Orwin shows that the philosopher acknowledged and affirmed the continued existence of specific national communities (what Orwin refers to as ethnic or civilizational Ummas) under the aegis of the broader Islamic Umma.

While Alfarabi advocates virtuous rule based on philosophy and true religion, Orwin illustrates that he recognizes that neither the universality of the Islamic message nor of philosophy could quell the diversity of languages, customs, literatures, and arts of the communities comprising the multinational Islamic Umma. Ultimately and most importantly, Orwin shows that Alfarabi can be compellingly read as suggesting that Islamic rule *ought* to accommodate and adapt itself to the particularities of the ethnic Ummas comprising its broader political community. He reads into the nuances of Alfarabi's works to offer a few directives to this end, including the use of visual arts and poetry to "establish effective and unique ways of instilling the opinions of the religion in every ethnic Umma" (p. 129), and the continuous exercise of prudence on a case-by-case, or umma-by-umma, basis.

The significance of this project is twofold. First, it enriches the extant literature on Alfarabi's political thought, and through him, the study of medieval Islamic political thought more generally. It does this by offering the first sustained examination of Alfarabi's understanding of the ethnic and religious Ummas and his theorization of their origin, development, and relationship to philosophy, as well as to one another. Notably, Orwin's approach is distinct for the way its shifts the focus from Alfarabi as a "transmitter of Greek thought," which was characteristic of earlier treatments of this philosopher (the author cites signature examples of this trend, such as Franz Rosenthal and Richard Walzer's *Philosophy of Plato*, 1943, and Leo Strauss, "Farabi's Plato," in *Louis Ginzberg: Jubilee Volume*, 1945, pp. 357–393) to Alfarabi as a philosopher who "wrote primarily for Muslims and minorities living under Islamic rule" (p. 11). Orwin substantiates this claim by showing how Alfarabi develops the notion of the ethnic community beyond Plato and Aristotle's understandings of this concept (pp. 45–65). In addition to putting Alfarabi in conversation with his avowed Greek teachers, Orwin puts him in conversation with various successors, such as Rousseau and the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Islamic reformists Jamal Ad-din Al-Afghani and Mohammad Iqbal (pp. 187–99). In doing so, this book also contributes to the budding field of comparative political theory.