

police officer hailing the subject of ideology with a “Hey You!” as Althusser presents it, Rancière sees the police officer saying, “Move along! There is nothing to see here!”—thus contributing to the reproduction of accustomed ways of seeing and sensing. Indeed, Panagia explains that “Rancière’s police officer guarantees the continuation of the organic correspondences that constitute our regimes of perception and the partitions of the sensible that make circulation possible” (p. 121). In contrast to such policing, Panagia is most interested in those sites where, and moments when, the ordinary circulation of the sensible is interrupted by a “sensation that disrupts our confidence in the correspondence between perception and signification” (p. 5), offering the possibility for reconfiguration.

In the first and most densely theoretical chapter, the author presents an intelligent reading of Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* to build his case for the democratic life of aesthetic sensation. Examining Kant’s analysis of how the “durational intensity of immediacy in [an] aesthetic experience” of beauty produces the “disinterested interest” of judgment (p. 28), Panagia concludes that “[t]aste is available, for Kant, regardless of privilege” (p. 31). The chapter goes on to offer “the triangulation of Kant on immediacy, Deleuze on indistinction, and Rancière on dissensus,” which together constitute “an exploration of sensation as a radical democratic moment in aesthetic judgment” (p. 17). This account serves to ground the author’s welcome and sophisticated challenge to much contemporary political theorizing, bringing deliberative democracy, the politics of recognition, and identity politics into his sights. The first chapter, moving from Kant to Rancière, does an excellent job of making the case for a democratic politics of interruptive sensation by democratizing aesthetic judgment.

Like Patchen Markell’s *Bound by Recognition* (2003), this book makes a worthy contribution to a growing body of scholarship in political theory that works to move beyond the limits of identity politics, the politics of recognition, and deliberative democracy. Incisively, Panagia contends that even though “multicultural politics is a politics of visibility,” both admirers and critics of multiculturalism pay little attention to “the regimes of perception that ensure the political valence of an image” or appearance (p. 6). Therefore, he argues, “One of the key challenges posted to contemporary democratic theory today is how to engage the image. The citizen subject is a viewing subject; but viewing is not limited to mere seeing” (p. 120). In this vein, and even more precisely and boldly, Panagia targets what he calls “narratocracy,” or “the privileging of narrative as a genre for the exposition of claims and ideas in contemporary political thought” (p. 12).

In the second chapter, entitled “The Piazza, the Edicola, and the Noise of the Utterance,” the author begins to cash out this critique of narratocracy as “the organization of a perceptual field according to the imperative of

rendering things readable” (p. 12) by means of an examination of the Italian piazza generally and the *edicola* specifically as a site for the “art of democratic noise.” By taking seriously the noisy political utterance, such as the Italian chocolatiers who offered “an impromptu chocolate taste test” to protest new European Commission regulations on the composition of chocolate, the author mounts a direct challenge to the narratocratic model of deliberation that “eschews the element of play in language games by grounding communication in a barter economy where the energy expended must, in the last resort, always be productive (i.e., ‘meaningful’)” (p. 54). Alternatively, Panagia wants us to bring “the regimes of perception that govern our postures of attention” (p. 47) up for inspection such that we are open to expanding our perception of political phenomena when sensation strikes.

While *The Political Life of Sensation* constitutes a sophisticated challenge and necessary addition to contemporary political theory, it has a couple of limitations. On the one hand, in an argument consonant with his choice of the Brillat-Savarin epigraph “The number of the senses is not fewer than six,” the author rightly notes that “it seems worthwhile to ask ourselves whether only one mode of address should be given priority in political communication” (p. 48). Indeed, throughout the book, he attends to all the senses, and yet nevertheless seems to privilege the visual without fully justifying such privilege. It seems a worthy and even necessary privileging, but the argument needs to be made more clear relative to the other senses in order to be fully persuasive. On the other hand, the author’s optimistic and critical attentiveness to the interruptive force of sensation suggests the need for an analysis that would also illuminate the ways in which power works to shore up existing regimes of perception. Perhaps emergent political theory needs to complement this work with the addition of some critical realism that would interrogate the cultural and aesthetic conditions and relations of power that contribute to the reproduction of existing regimes of perception. Nevertheless, this is a very important book that offers valuable ways to better comprehend the imbrications of politics, culture, and aesthetics in contemporary multicultural democracy.

Majority Rule versus Consensus: The Political

Thought of John C. Calhoun. By James H. Read. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009. 288p. \$34.95.
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— Thomas E. Schneider, *Emory University*

John C. Calhoun has been so closely associated with the defense of southern rights—including the right to hold slaves—that his political thought has seldom received an impartial examination. In a wide-ranging study, James H. Read makes a noteworthy contribution toward that end, avoiding the tendency either to play down Calhoun’s

defense of slavery or to reduce his political theory to an elaborate rationale for it. The title of Read's work indicates that he is principally concerned with Calhoun's posthumously published *Disquisition on Government*, in which Calhoun presents his critique of majoritarian democracy (government of the "numerical majority") and his alternative in the form of government by the "concurrent majority."

Read does not, however, give a systematic exposition of the *Disquisition* or its much longer (but less important) companion, *A Discourse on the Constitution and Government of the United States* (he shows that the basic idea of Calhoun's argument in the *Disquisition* was arrived at before the constitutional theory of the *Discourse*). His chapters are thematic in nature and reference a variety of sources, both primary and secondary. The final substantive chapter of the book is largely concerned with the version of Calhoun's theory put forward in recent decades by Arend Lijphart ("consociational democracy"). In the same chapter Read takes up the proposals, which are Calhounian in spirit, of Lani Guanier's *The Tyranny of the Majority* (1994).

The breadth of Read's treatment is testimony to the many avenues by which Calhoun's work can be approached. He considers the Carolinian's modification of the constitutional theories of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison (Chap. 2); his views on political economy, especially in connection with the tariff question (Chap. 3); his theory of the Union (Chap. 4); his defense of slavery (Chap. 5); his argument for government by consensus (Chap. 6); and the actual or proposed application of Calhounian ideas to deeply divided societies outside the United States—Northern Ireland, the former Yugoslavia, and South Africa—and to America's own racial divide (Chap. 7).

The principal argument of the book—highlighted in the introductory and concluding chapters, as well as in the title—is given in Chapters 6 and 7. Building on the earlier chapters, Read argues that the minority veto/consensus model of government (as he calls it) is seldom, if ever, a superior alternative to majoritarian democracy. The circumstances that would plausibly justify such a model are rare. They did not exist in South Africa, where a minority veto provision was considered for the country's post-apartheid constitution but ultimately rejected. Nor did they exist in Yugoslavia, where a consensus requirement among the republics failed to prevent secession and civil war. (Northern Ireland presents a more favorable but less conclusive example.) Although Calhoun cast his argument for the concurrent-majority principle in general terms in the *Disquisition*, he evidently wrote with the American South in mind. There, a common interest (or perceived interest) in maintaining slavery solved the troublesome question of *which* minorities are to have vetoes. All southern whites, Calhoun asserted in a speech to the Senate in 1848 (quoted on p. 145), "belong to the upper class," whether they own slaves or not. The slaveholding states

showed a sufficient degree of internal homogeneity (slaves excepted) to avoid the application of Calhoun's principle to their own minorities.

As the examples of Lijphart and Guanier demonstrate, the consensus model of government can be evaluated independently of Calhoun's views on slavery. Read declines to do so, in part because (as noted) it was the conditions that slavery produced in the South that made Calhoun's proposals arguably practicable there. But Read devotes much more attention to slavery than is necessary to establish this point. Why he does so is not altogether clear. Chapter 5 unsurprisingly concludes by dismissing the value of Calhoun's defense of slavery, "considered as straight political theory." But this dismissal is followed immediately by the paradoxical judgment that Calhoun's "contradictions on liberty"—that the liberty of some is dependent on the denial of liberty to others—"considered as a mirror on America and the modern world, are perhaps more valuable than anything else he said or did" (p. 159).

Because Calhoun rejected natural rights as a viable foundation for free governments in the *Disquisition*, he offered a different foundation in the form of a theory of human progress: Progress depends on the freedom of individuals to pursue their self-interest, though progress is retarded by extending freedom to those who are unprepared for exercising it. As Read points out, the implicit liberalism of this aspect of Calhoun's theory is difficult to reconcile with a commitment to slavery as a *permanent* institution in the United States (that Calhoun was so committed is not doubtful). Besides the intriguing but undeveloped suggestion that freedom somehow involves a "zero-sum logic" (pp. 157–58), Read argues that Calhoun must have believed in a racial hierarchy according to which liberal principles are simply inefficacious for blacks.

The problem with Read's argument here is not that it is unpersuasive or unimportant. The argument is well made and has obvious historical and biographical importance. The problem, rather, is one of relevance for a study of this kind. If the theory of the *Disquisition* can be made consistent with slavery only by the application of what Read calls an "ideological patch" (p. 138), that will hardly appear to most readers today as a defect in the theory. What, then, are political theorists to learn from Calhoun's inconsistency in this regard? More broadly, what of theoretical interest can be learned from studying those on the wrong side of the slavery question?

The obvious answer is that those who were wrong about slavery can be right about many other things. No doubt Read would concede this possibility in Calhoun's case (though it is harder to make such a concession in view of his treatment of Calhoun's views on slavery in Chapter 5 and elsewhere). The truth appears to be more complicated. Calhoun's defense of the institution as a "positive good" implies that if he had had the power to go back in time and prevent the introduction of slaves into North

America, he would not have done so. Can that be true? More plausibly, Calhoun's reference (in an 1838 speech that Read quotes on pp. 123–24) to a “mysterious Providence” that brought Europeans and Africans together in the southern states suggests that he began from the existing fact of slavery there, not from a theoretical conclusion in favor of slavery.

If my inference is correct, then the question that Calhoun's career presents is less a question of theory in the strictest sense than that of statesmanship. Calhoun was forced to deal with a well-established and profitable institution that, at least in some measure, contradicted his own principles. It is the same problem that confronted other politicians of the time, those of the North as well as the South. Regrettably, the author does not pursue this line of inquiry.

Still, Read's conclusion deserves to be emphasized: The shortcomings of majority rule are largely those of democracy itself. The bad effects of those shortcomings can be mitigated somewhat by constitutional means, but in the end there is no substitute for prudence and moderation on the part of political leaders and those who elect them.

The Cambridge Companion to Leo Strauss. Edited by Steven B. Smith. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. 324p. \$85.00 cloth, \$28.99 paper.
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The intellectual influence of Leo Strauss (1899–1973), a learned German-Jewish emigre and interpreter of religious, philosophical, and political traditions, has spread across the annals of theology and political philosophy both during his lifetime and after he died. This has occurred not only because of his charismatic teaching and many publications but also because of his ability to generate coterie of students and adherents who exercise significant power in the hallways of American academies and governments. Now, Cambridge University Press has decided to honor Strauss by devoting a volume of articles to him in their “Companions to Philosophy” series.

This collection of essays is learned, well argued, intelligent, and written by fine scholars from departments of philosophy and political science who are clearly independent thinkers. But all could be fairly called Straussians—and here I mean no more than the following: individuals whose intellectual bearings have been significantly shaped by Strauss, who see themselves as students of Strauss or adherents to his political philosophy. The essays typically elaborate themes raised in Strauss's writings and theoretical projects. They focus on relatively specialized questions of Strauss's interpretive worldviews—such as “modernity” and his interest in ancient Greek philosophy (Stanley Rosen, Catherine

Zuckert), the medieval Arabic sources of his thought (Joel Kraemer), esotericism (Laurence Lampert), German nihilism (Susan Shell), liberal education (Timothy Fuller), his opposition to positivist social science (Nasser Behnegar), philosophical differences among Straussians (Michael Zuckert), and “the theological-political predicament” (Steven B. Smith, Leora Batnitzky). The last theme, used by the editor to frame our reading of Strauss, derives from Spinoza's famous book *Theological-political Treatise*, about which Strauss wrote his own first book (published in German in 1930) and which Strauss himself said preoccupied him as a Jew in Weimar Germany during the 1920s. These essays do not seriously engage the relationship of his philosophy to politics, the form which the “theological-political predicament” took for Strauss after he emigrated to the United States in 1933. As a result, this volume may leave readers who are looking for a critical account of the many dimensions of his philosophy and its political relevance nonplused—which may be the point.

Given the importance of the relationship between philosophy and politics in Strauss's work, however, the significance of the relationship between intellectual discourse and political activity in the history of his metier—ancient and medieval political philosophy—and the role of Straussians in American public life, this omission is odd; it has the effect of limiting much of the value of the work to Straussian insiders. After all, the substance of Strauss's work raises questions about the relationship between Alcibiades and Socrates, Socrates and Plato, Aristotle and Alexander or Demetrios of Phaleron (the Macedonian regent who stripped the Athenians of their autonomous democracy in 323—after which Aristotle fled in order, so legend has it, to make sure that the Athenians did not sin against philosophy a second time)—not to mention between theoretical discourse and political culture, especially in the United States if not “the West.”

Moreover, one thing Strauss and Straussians have unquestionably achieved is recognition. But writers in this volume either ignore or contemptuously dismiss the three waves [*sic*] of controversy that have surrounded Strauss's writings and their political impact over the past half century—namely, 1) a barbed critique of Strauss by Berkeley political theorists Sheldon Wolin and John Schaar in the March 1963 issue of the *American Political Science Review*; followed more than 20 years later by 2) the whirlwind that attended the publication in the May 30, 1985, issue of the *New York Review of Books* of an incisively critical review of Strauss's work by the Cambridge classical philosopher Myles Burnyeat (letters to the editor about Burnyeat's review filled pages in two subsequent issues of the *NYRB*—October 10, 1985, and April 24, 1986, and culminating in 3) the public exposure of the influx of Straussians into the administration of George W. Bush and their role (since the 1990s) in advocating an American invasion of Iraq. In the May 12, 2003, issue of *The*