

(p. 128). In similar passages on Tunisia, Buehler hints at an ongoing development of a common vision of political liberation—which he does not discard as mere strategic rhetoric—and that enabled oppositional alliances at the local level, in trade unions and city politics, to turn down “short-term gains to secure meaningful reforms” in favor of good governance and democracy (p. 158). These stories of positive politics, which Buehler unearths from the larger themes of cooptation and alliance failure, have important implications for the habits of everyday political life in the region, the transformation of religiously-inspired political movements, and the courses of action all that makes possible for opposition parties facing authoritarian regimes. In other words, while it offers a convincing theory of cooptation, *Why Alliances Fail* also offers new analytical lenses to think about opposition parties beyond these logics alone, and to contemplate the limits of contemporary authoritarianism in North African politics.

***Facing the Planetary: Entangled Humanism and the Politics of Swarming.* By William Connolly. Duke University Press, 2017**

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Facing the Planetary: Entangled Humanism and the Politics of Swarming is William Connolly’s eighth monograph, another master class on the intersections of political theory, democratic systems, and the moral challenges of late modernity. Given its tremendous scope and its theoretical density, is difficult to pin down the book’s precise topic: it broadly engages “the Anthropocene” as this term provokes questions about established concepts in social and political theory. The Anthropocene is a term used by many scientists and social theorists to indicate that the current geologic period is characterized by the dominance of human beings as the primary drivers of change in the Earth’s systems. Attempting to see the planetary crisis from outside the “dominant stories” that typically guide public debates and political institutions, Connolly scrutinizes

inherited assumptions about human agency, political subjectivity, temporality, and scientific objectivity.

The book's prelude takes up the story of Job, who suffered travails not unimaginable in our era, as a parable appropriate to the troubled times sometimes called "the Anthropocene." Against Job's friends, who gave what might be called the neoliberal response of blaming Job for his own suffering, Connolly pontificates on the verse "where were you when I created the whirlwind?," wondering whether and what might be the horizon of human ethical imagination. The Anthropocene may mark an era of human environmental devastation, but might it be at the same time, a whirlwind in which we become spellbound with the moral transcendence of the world as something that can never be merely human. It is this question that Connolly designates as "facing the planetary." Cryptically, he asks: what are the "lingering effects of theological and secular doctrines against the idea of culture shaping nature in such a massive way" (vi)?

In chapter one, Connolly takes a Foucauldian approach, attending to the ways that knowledge about the Anthropocene is disciplined, conscribed within the imaginary limits of humanity as the lone agent of history. Taking as objects of critique four key expressions of what he calls "socio-centrism"—Rousseau, Berlin, Hayek, and Marx—Connolly works to lay bare the conceptual architecture that must be undone if we are to grasp planetary ecological crisis as something more than merely social. He deftly situates the grand ideas of Western political philosophy (e.g. freedom, individualism, belonging, etc.) against the backdrop of climate change, asking how to move beyond the insufficiencies such terms, which even now remind us that human history was a "bumpy ride" even before the Great Acceleration.

Connolly turns his gaze in chapter two to the matter of science, tracking the exchanges between culture and empirically grounded theories about nature. In a move that is revolutionary in political science, but perhaps rather ordinary in religious studies, he finds that many theological and cultural concepts pass through the membrane of the scientific method, imbuing our purportedly secular view of the world with all manner of theocentric, anthropocentric concepts, not to mention a strong dose of racism. The world must be more than merely a reflection of the human eye, and Connolly explores work in the philosophy of science intended to provide an account of human being that does not reify our nature—Nagel's physicalism, Margulis' symbiogenesis, "drive" theories presented by Nietzsche and others, etc.

Chapter three develops another perspective on the same cluster of questions, examining creativity as it is constructed in the western intellectual tradition. Working to circumvent ideas that essentialize humans as a singular, unambiguous agents, Connolly begins by surveying several theories about mimesis and the porosity of human consciousness (e.g. Marcuse and Rizzolatti) to develop his argument that human agency is “entangled.” This raises questions of motion: what is the source of dynamism, if not the willful subject of modern political theory? Connolly here looks to “scars”—ideas that locate creativity as an effect of disruption or the uncanny—as a way to suggest the perpetual, uncontrollable forces of alterity that characterize human agency.

The gradualist paradigm in the natural sciences reigned for several centuries, but there are new questions in the natural sciences about time scales on which natural systems operate. In chapter four, Connolly links process philosophy and the temporality of the planetary crisis, arguing that the disruption of deep biogeophysical patterns can be linked to neoliberal capitalism, a socio-political structure radically out of sync with the natural systems in which humans participate. Here Connolly explores the resonances of Whiteheadian process philosophy with contemporary theories of “perspectivism” and “panexperientialism” (i.e. Vivieros de Castro). His search in this chapter is for an appropriate balance “between findings in a specific science and attention to the most reflective readings of human cultural experience” (107).

In chapter five Connolly shifts from a critical to a constructive mode, imagining the political forms appropriate to meet the challenges of “neoliberal capitalism...conceptions of freedom locked into markets,...socio-centrism, agency confined to human beings, and assumptions of a world either predisposed to human mastery or organically disposed to us” (121). In one sense, his answer is basic and pragmatic: “it is wise to scale back on utopian images of human perfection while simultaneously upping the ante of militancy against extractive capitalism” (122). But in another sense, he is proposing a more radical reformulation of non-violent resistance that attends to the disjunctures in temporality and scale that attend the Anthropocene. This is “the politics of swarming,” by which Connolly intends a networked model of political mobilization that involves “a host of loosely coordinated constituencies acting within and upon several regimes at the same time” (147).

Chapter six is something between a conclusion and a final chapter. In it, Connolly situates his approach in relationship with postcolonial studies, touching on the work of Rob Nixon, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Anna Tsing,

and Edward Said. Here, his aim is to draw a parallel between, on the one hand, the epistemological divisions between the sciences and humanities, and, on the other hand, the breach between techno-environmentalism and (post-colonial) lived expressions of human ecological possibility.

Facing the Planetary demonstrates an almost unrivaled mastery of the canon of high theory, and is enjoyably playful about the things that matter most. At times, however, it also feels like Connolly is flexing his knowledge to show his command of the full pantheon of 'very important thinkers.' As a critique of Western political tradition that relies heavily on previous critique from within that tradition, Connolly misses opportunities to engage highly relevant bodies of literature. The most glaring oversight is his exclusion of indigenous thinkers, whose work critically underpins contemporary academic fascination with other-than-human agents (e.g. Zoe Todd, Gregory Cajete, Kim TallBear, Kyle Powys White, etc.). Another, perhaps related issue is Connolly's reproduction of secular hierarchies of knowledge: anthropologists, political theorists, philosophers, and literary critics figure prominently, while scholars of religion and theologians are not deeply integrated in his analysis. Substantive engagement with Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* aside, Connolly overlooks the fact that an entire field—religious studies—is dedicated to "taking seriously" culturally grounded claims about transcendence and the human. The passages on "theology" and "spirituality" (e.g. pp. 44–51 and 138–144) are thinly sourced.

Despite Connolly's occasional temptation to jargon, *Facing the Planetary* offers one of the more clear-eyed, legible, and sustained discussions about how the humanities generally and political theory specifically ought be rethought in light of global ecological crises. For scholars working at these intersections, which might be considered the epicenter of the humanities today, this book is a useful and important contribution.

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