

development, it evinces a distinctive appreciation of how Socrates' interest in natural science not only leads to his turn, but also shapes what follows. Socrates does not begin with abstract questions. Rather he turns to natural science out of a desire to know how to live; natural science does not satisfy these inquiries and indeed shows itself as presupposing certain unreflective answers to them. Hence Socrates must sail again, this time pulled by his own oars rather than the winds of the contemporary scientific movement around him. This second sailing marks the beginning of political philosophy, yet the inquiry into causes and forms persists. Sebell suggests how separating political philosophy from political science fails to recognize the primacy of the former for negotiating political life itself.

Whether or not one finds this argument convincing will depend on a set of commitments that Sebell does not directly address. First, Sebell assumes that Socrates is a "philosopher" dedicated to imparting "teachings" to his benighted interlocutors. Second, Sebell assumes that a contemporary reader can understand these teachings through a "close reading" of Plato's dialogues, one that foregrounds the text and relegates issues of language, dramatic situation, the place of the dialogue within Plato's corpus, debates about the historical Socrates, genre, and audience to the footnotes or oblivion. Third, Sebell assumes an essential continuity between Socrates' project of "political philosophy" and political theory as practiced today. Not defending (or even elaborating) these commitments means Sebell ignores many vital and interesting discussions in ancient political thought. I have serious questions about each one of these assumptions, but for the sake of space let me briefly address the final one.

Sebell begins his book with the provocative promise that political theorists can learn something important about their projects by examining the Socratic Turn. Sebell never states directly how his analysis would translate to the work of political theory today, but I would argue that Socrates' importance lies less in his intellectual autobiography than in the *practice* of philosophy that he carried out among his fellow citizens and non-citizens—a practice best characterized not in terms of teachings or doctrines but rather as an aggressive and collaborative inquiry animated by erotic desire for wisdom that most Athenians found deeply disturbing of collective life. Sebell seems to think political scientists would best follow Socrates by accounting for the intellectual foundations of our research, but given that Socrates denied instructing anyone and never wrote anything down, I would counter that the most Socratic figures today pursue philosophy elsewhere—not among academic political theorists, but on street corners and in chat rooms, raising fundamental questions in disruptive and radical ways that studies such as this one have yet to attend.

**The Politics of Objectivity. An Essay on the Foundations of Political Conflict.** By Peter J. Steinberger. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 2015. 275p.  
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— Tracy B. Strong, *University of Southampton*

There is much to be learned from this book and a short review cannot do it justice. Both the range of scholarship and the intelligence of critique are very strong. If I raise objections, it is not from lack of admiration.

What is the political importance of objectivity? For Steinberger it derives from the "actual significance of the thousands upon thousands of rules that ultimately constitute the essence of the state" (p. 74). It is not irrelevant that Steinberger is the author of a fine book on Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* as well as one on judgment. Thus, he continues, "the customs of my community and the exigencies of my language establish constraints that that regularly and routinely shape and direct the kinds of actions I take and the kinds of thoughts that I think" (p. 75).

In this context, what then is objectivity? In reviewing the (mainly philosophical) literature, Steinberger usefully distinguishes three kinds. Objectivity can be understood as "evidence based," that is resting on what is recognized as evidence by the community. The problem here is of course that there are different epistemological communities. (pp. 18–19). Or objectivity can be "formal-procedural," proceeding from a "standpoint that is neutral, impartial, and disinterested insofar as it is governed by a 'mechanical rule' . . . which bypasses the weaknesses of the mind" (p. 40; this occurs in a fine discussion of Bacon). The problem here is the tendency for procedure to assume precedence of the "sheer evidence of the particular thing" (p. 43). Lastly, objectivity can be understood as "structural-coherentist." This understanding is derived mostly from Kant and will be developed favorably by Steinberger throughout the last part of the book. Here "the activity of thought is anchored by *structures of coherence that are both internal to thinking itself and that are shared by all thinkers*, hence are independent of and external to the distinctive, idiosyncratic features of this or that individual" (p. 32; italics are Steinberger's).

The argument for the superiority of the third understanding is consequent to "our own shared understanding of political society." The original move (the subject of a long Chapter Two) he makes here is to claim that this can only be made intelligible by considering the "sense in which modern political conflict is merely an instance of the inherent logic of political conflict per se" (p. 61). Importantly, in this sense, "the essence of any institution [recall the point about rules] . . . is nothing other than an intellectual structure, . . . a structure of truth-claims" (p. 78, 82). Political conflict is . . . in the last analysis, a matter of ideas" (p. 194).

The book is thus an attempt to find in the political realm an instantiation of the philosophical argument that one associates with Robert Brandom, Martin Heidegger, Wilfrid Sellars, W. V. O. Quine, Hilary Putnam, and many others (all listed on p. 142). (He criticizes scholars like Wendy Brown, Linda Zerilli, William Connolly, and others). His originality consists in exploring this understanding not in relation to the subject of agreement but to the subject of conflict.

Thus Steinberger turns in Chapter Three to an exploration of conflict. It is most generally “the attempt to engage and resolve serious disagreement about how things in the world really are” (p. 143). He does not duck the obvious problem: suppose a “culture . . . is fundamentally . . . at odds with itself?” (p. 144). Steinberger here holds to his guns, as it were, weapons that are now explicitly recognized as philosophical rather than social scientific. “The conceptual analysis of the logic of political conflict is one thing, the causal analysis of who wins something entirely different” (p. 193)—in other words, the *logic* of political conflict is towards agreement and truth and “the tyranny of truth is no tyranny at all” (p. 192).

Thus disagreement is an essential and defining quality of social life (the word ‘dialectic’ does not appear but might), Disagreement is the ground of conversation (internal to a “universe of discourse”) and when it is about “authoritative expressions” (the preceding chapter gave a fine discussion of Max Weber) we are engaged in political conflict, the “underlying intention [of which] is always the same, namely to pursue the overall coherence of the legal structure understood as the effective instantiation of the state itself” (p. 196). Conflict is necessary for objectivity.

There are important practical political consequences to the differing notions of objectivity, and Steinberger spends much of the last chapter drawing them. Consider, for instance, the debate as presented in most media as to the tax cuts proposed by then candidate Romney. They would have greatly benefited the rich and necessarily lead to extensive benefit cuts for the others. Procedurally this is presented as “Republicans say . . . whereas Democrats say . . .” Such discourse is grounded on the notion that objectivity means to be impartial and give all points of view. An objectivity grounded in truth—the third kind—would do no such thing. Steinberger tellingly also instantiates the structure of Presidential debates in the United States as compared to the “detailed and highly substantive exchange of ideas, theories and criticisms . . . governed by little other than the principles of civilized discourse” in France (p. 263). Political conflict is, or should be, “a struggle for truth . . . one form . . . of the larger human project to which we are all committed, whether explicitly or otherwise.” Politics and philosophy are “two sides of the same coin, inseparable, mutually sustaining, integral parts of a single organic whole” (p. 270).

The structure and pedagogy of this book are, I think, Hegelian. The book builds on its conversation with itself and with the everyday world. Like any Hegelian, the book assumes that the reader will recognize himself in the ‘we’ who gives the book its common applicability. Steinberger presumes—our hope against hope—that the sharing of a common logic is not lost. If that capacity were lost, then there is no account to be given.

Steinberger’s argument is not meant to deal with monsters, nor should it be required to do so. So, how could one possibly object to what he says? A response would come, I believe on two grounds, the one political and the second philosophical (which, they too, come together).

Take the argument for the immanence of truth. Politically, it seems to me that there are several possible actualities.

First, would be that that some simply do not care for truth when it is a matter of power and conflict. This is the stuff of empires. “Of the gods we believe, and of men we know, that by a necessary law of their nature they rule wherever they can,” say the Athenians to the Melians, and they go on to indicate that such has always been and always will be the law for those with power.

A second is a kind of debased Platonic “noble lie”—the fact that a political body feels that something not being true is less important than the good that it allows. This is a political move such that actions should *appear* as founded in and on truth, that it is politically useful that people at least believe that the government is telling the truth when it gives reasons for its actions. This raises the question of the relation between truth and the appearance of truth.

Third, there is the question of what the actors themselves believe. It is conceivable (and I indeed think it the case) that Bush/Cheney/Rumsfeld actually believed that they were bringing or trying to bring democracy and social justice to a realm in which it had notably been lacking. Here the problem is not so much a contempt for the truth, but the fact that claims to truth are not necessarily checked by the world. The stance is something like what Theodor Adorno in *Minima Moralia* said about the Germans, that they never tell a lie that they don’t believe to be true.

I think that Steinberger’s arguments meet the first objection, can be argued to deal with the second, but do not meet the third unless over time. Do consequences come to change minds? (Rumsfeld has shown no sign of this.) After all, Hannah Arendt once noted that it was no longer clear that people would say that Germany invaded Belgium at the start of World War I. Over time we are all dead—and philosophical correctness is of little use.

These are political objections. The strongest philosophical one comes from Nietzsche and to some degree from Max Weber. It is to ask, with Nietzsche, precisely as to what the value of truth is. I cannot elaborate this

argument here (though I have elsewhere). But what would Steinberger make of this passage from Max Weber: “Kant’s epistemology . . . proceeded from the assumption that ‘scientific truth exists and it is *valid*’ and then went on to inquire what intellectual assumptions are required for this to be (meaningfully) possible” (Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” *The Vocation Lectures*. David Owen and Tracy Strong, eds. Hackett. Indianapolis, IN, 2004), 28–29). The striking thing is the word “assumption.” Steinberger does not question this assumption.

**Deleuze’s Political Vision.** By Nicholas Tampio. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015. 182p. \$75.00  
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— Char Miller, *George Mason University*

“A method of the rhizome type,” Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari explain in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), “can analyze language only by decentering it onto other dimensions and other registers” (p. 8). Nicholas Tampio’s *Deleuze’s Political Vision* decenters American liberal political theory into dimensions offered by the theoretical work of Deleuze. Liberal concepts such as human nature, social contract, and individual choice get repositioned in the light of Deleuzian terms like “war machine,” “body without organ” (BwO), and “rhizome,” allowing Tampio to introduce the writings of Deleuze to a new set of readers. As he suggests at one point, he means to reduce the entry costs associated with the language and methods of Deleuze, especially for those conversant in liberalism (p. 2). This repositioning highlights similarities and differences and also transforms the concepts under examination by bringing them to bear on new concerns.

Tampio is not the first liberal to turn to Deleuze in order to break some of the deadlocks of liberalism; authors such as William Connolly, Christina Beltrán, and Paul Patton have similarly looked to him for leverage against the legalisms and antipolitics of liberalism. More intently than most, Tampio’s stakes lie in persuading liberals of the value of Deleuze. He does so by engaging significant figures of contemporary liberalism, John Rawls and Hannah Arendt in particular. He also takes on some typical liberal interlocutors, such as Jürgen Habermas and Charles Taylor. After substantiating the resonance that Deleuze has with liberalism, including showing connections with John Stuart Mill, Tampio further develops his account of Deleuzian ethics in relation to versions of Islamic political thought, positing possible liberal alliances with Sufism.

According to Tampio, Deleuze provides insights into our political moment by expanding the possibilities of liberal pluralism, which makes his writing particularly useful for Tampio, in that the latter’s interests in liberalism are mostly focused on the defense of difference

and the pluralization of identity. “The goal of Deleuzian liberalism is to protect the space of becoming,” Tampio asserts, “that is, to make possible the conditions of generating singular identities that can nourish one another in some ways, contest each other in others, and construct assemblages that promote common policies” (p. 110). Deleuze aids this project by challenging liberalism to go further in the production of difference and in the assemblage of those differences.

State assimilation presents one challenge to the cultivation of difference, a danger addressed, according to Tampio, by Deleuze’s concept of the war machine. The Deleuzian war machine crosses between the state of nature and the social contract, providing the means of transforming the social contract. This concept, more specifically, allows Tampio to address such problems as the assimilation of feminist critiques into the social contract, a problem posed by feminists like Carol Pateman. While generally agreeing with many of Pateman’s claims, in the end Tampio concludes that the social contract remains a viable and progressive concept (pp. 81–83). Deleuzian conceptions facilitate this conclusion by remaking the meaning of the social contract in broader terms, particularly holding out the possibilities of transformed biological distinctions and human natures.

Deleuze directs an eye to the unimagined, the underground, and the liminal in order to reimagine the coalescence of identities and communities. “We are tired of trees,” he famously proclaimed, provoking a shift from historical familial tree-based models of connection to underground rhizomatic connections. Liberalism tends to find and defend difference as preexisting (quasi-genetic) conditions. Deleuze, however, provides resources for cultivating mere hints and possibilities, the differences and perspectives of the future, if properly tended. Forces beyond the field of vision move and act on the world, forming and reforming new concerns and concepts with profound political consequences. Deleuze replaces arboreal language (including family tree, descent, blood, and identity) with the language of mysteriously connected underground nodes, buds, and adventitious roots—less about trees and more about tubers.

Tampio’s adoption of this rhizomatic language does not mean, however, that he has given up on the language of natural connections. For example, he develops what he imagines Deleuze might have conceived of as “human nature,” involving a thoughtful examination of the Deleuzian distinction between abstract machines and concrete assemblages massed on a single immanent plane. Humans, in this case, are conceived with an ontological status more like the rest of the world. Tampio explains: “Deleuze differs from most political scientists by refusing to privilege human rational actors as the main or sole actants in the political realm and by attributing primary motivation to subrepresentational desires rather than self-conscious