

whether these broad strokes do not end up reinforcing the sort of “binary concepts” (p. 267 in *Western-Centrism*) and infelicitous distinctions that the authors purport to leave behind. Which part of Asia, and what about its “legacy,” do authors have in mind when, for instance, they talk about “the rise of East Asia” or the “East Asian civilization”? Confucianism? Buddhism? What about them? Can one treat them as if they somehow constitute a coherent whole? Operating with this sort of appellation might just be unavoidable, but one would have to be more careful so as not to feel too comfortable with them.

That said, both works certainly offer a wealth of provocative ideas and arguments well worth exploring. By the end of both, the reader is greatly informed about and intrigued by the intellectual, political, and economic influences from the outside and how they have played out and been refracted and appropriated by Koreans as they struggled to define their political and cultural identity. For this reason alone, these two works should be considered primary sources for those who are interested in, but not necessarily conversant with, the political and intellectual development of the Korean society. In the monograph, a comparison between “Western-centrism” and “Sinocentrism” (Chap. 3) and the analysis on the features of Korean conservatism (Chap. 8) and the democratization of Korea (Chap. 9) should be of particular interest. Among chapters in the edited volume, essays by Kim Dong-Choon (Chap. 2), Moon Jiyong (Chap. 3), and Kim Sungmoon (Chap. 7) stand out in their rigor and freshness as they offer a synoptic view of the development of modern Korean political history and political ideologies.

The deep, multilayered transformation of Korean society over the last several decades and centuries defies easy generalization. And this will be the case with any other societies that have experienced such rapid social, economic, and cultural changes in a relatively short period of time. This, of course, presents formidable challenges to researchers. And the paucity of attempts at reconstructing the intellectual and theoretical landscape of the Korean experience becomes quite salient when compared with the amount of attention that the economic development and democratization process of the Korean society has thus far garnered from social scientists around the world. But works like these are important not just because they begin to fill such a thematic void but because they show how the discursive frameworks originally developed in the West have interacted and competed with local practices in shaping the complex political experiences on the ground, and how these concepts and ideologies themselves have undergone significant changes and redactions during the same process.

The dynamics of these interactions and competitions, which are still unfolding to a great extent, cannot be explained away by simply “applying” the conceptual tools originated from outside. For example, Kim Sungmoon

explains how the liberal and democratic ideals brought in from the West have themselves been reformulated by the strong tradition of “civil passion” in Korean culture to create what the author calls “civil patriotism” and “liberal collectivism.” To take another example, readers realize from the interesting essay by Lee Seung-Hwan (Chap. 11) that the concepts of “the public” and “the private” in a Korean context do not necessarily mirror the public/private distinction that has been much talked about in recent years. Obviously, Koreans will benefit from their critical self-reflection of these attempts at theorizing Korean political life from a comparative perspective. Equally important, however, is the initiation of an enlightening dialogue among the wider circle of readers in the East and West alike as they struggle to enrich and further sensitize their conceptual tools in order to better understand and theorize the multifaceted political and social experiences in this globalized world.

Changing Referents: Learning Across Space and Time in China and the West. By Leigh Jenco. New York: Oxford

University Press, 2015. 283p. \$29.94.

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— Loubna El Amine, *Northwestern University*

Leigh Jenco’s new book is motivated by a hugely important and difficult question: How can the West learn from the East without imposing its own epistemological categories in the process? “Rather than offering new slants on existing ideas,” how can this process of learning, in Jenco’s words (p. 23), “trouble the very terms through which we understand what it is we are doing”? The author offers a solution to this challenge that is remarkably faithful to the concern about parochialism motivating it: She turns not to a Western theorist for a solution, but rather to a group of Chinese thinkers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries involved in “Western learning” (*Xixue*). What these thinkers were able to do, according to Jenco, is to “transform indigenous contexts of knowledge along foreign lines,” thus ensuring the “transmission of ideas and practices across the (historical and cultural) boundaries thought to contain them” (p. 66). It is this achievement, this ability to extricate themselves from “the very contexts that support and shape the production of knowledge” (p. 217), that she calls on her fellow political theorists to emulate.

Changing Referents is refreshingly ambitious and thought provoking. It builds on a major line of argumentation that Jenco has advocated for persistently in her other work, pushing the emerging field of comparative political theory (CPT) towards a more thoroughgoing reckoning with what the move beyond the Western canon should involve. Yet the central argument of the book, that the West should learn from the East just like the East learned from the West, is not entirely persuasive. In fact, the

book's major strength lies not in the prescriptive angle that is used to frame the interpretation of the Chinese debates, but rather in the against-the-grain interpretation of the debates themselves, for the logic of the prescriptive argument suffers from a conspicuous omission: the lack of a full-fledged account of power.

Indeed, the book discusses power relationships mostly in the introduction (pp. 18–22) and only cursorily afterwards (pp. 24, 186 n. 54, 238–39), all the while consistently appealing to the idea of discipline (that foreign knowledge should “discipline [political theorists’] own knowledge”; p. 82). Yet disciplining requires power. The Chinese thinkers surveyed in the book embraced the process of being “disciplined” by foreign (Western) knowledge not primarily out of an intellectual commitment to cross-cultural learning; they did so because they were faced with the prospect of their country’s weakness vis-à-vis the West. Indeed, the intellectual debates that Jenco discusses took place at a time of great political, economic, military, and technological transformations in China in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, all aimed, in one way or another, at catching up with the West. Moreover, the decision to emulate the West was a familiar decision around the globe at the time. Jenco briefly mentions “Japan, Russia, and Thailand” (p. 17); one could also mention countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America that witnessed similar transformations and similar debates. Given the benefit of hindsight, we know that these transformations and debates all concluded in the same (albeit general) direction: the adoption of European and American institutions, from constitutions to language unification measures to public education systems to modern industries.

The ways in which global economic and political pressures bore upon their thinking need not empty the Chinese intellectuals’ ideas “of broader theoretical significance” (p. 19), but it should have a bearing on one’s account of their significance. For example, it should caution against exaggerating their “agency in resisting and mediating such global phenomena” (p. 2). Indeed, Jenco’s conception of agency suggests not only a completely free choice as to whether or not to adopt Western institutions, but also the thinkers’ ability to change “institutions, personal relationships, material conditions of economic and social production, and actual as well as imagined communities that legitimate knowledge, along with their standards of adequacy and terms of reference” (p. 94).

Jenco uses this voluntarist view of agency to critique what she describes as the “particularist” account of culture, which she attributes to theorists like Charles Taylor, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Will Kymlicka (p. 8), but also to CPT scholars like Fred Dallmayr, Roxanne Euben, Farah Godrej, and Lydia Liu (pp. 43–44). This particularist position, according to Jenco, “elides the

extent to which many cultural practices, particularly those associated with knowledge-production, are not automatically historically or sociologically imparted, but rather are deliberately acquired by individuals and groups over time” (p. 9). But the “particularists” do not deny that social change is possible; they simply deny that it is easy. What Kymlicka, for example, calls a “societal culture” comprises public and private institutions, including the media, schools, and the family. These indeed transform gradually (“over time”) except in crisis situations, epitomized by general breakdowns of authority (witnessed in China in the period between the Opium Wars and the communist takeover). Moreover, major changes in such institutions are not simply the product of intellectual arguments, and the intellectual arguments motivating them are hardly abstract calls to learn from the other.

What Jenco’s normative argument needed, therefore, was an account of the existence and nature of a present crisis in the West, and of the ways in which learning from the East would help remedy it. More importantly, what one wanted to know is exactly what the West should learn from China (especially since the Chinese intellectuals to be taken as a model did call for the adoption of specific Western institutions, such as “social equality, public accessibility to matters of national and social concern, and Western-style parliaments with elected members” [p. 104]). In the concluding chapter, the author discusses such measures as encouraging language learning, facilitating study abroad, and forming study societies concerned with foreign knowledge (pp. 229–32). But these all fall short of the radical insistence on being disciplined, and are reminiscent of CPT scholars’ call for openness or sensitivity to foreign knowledge that she criticizes (p. 43). More pointedly, if China has been so deeply transformed by Western learning as recently as the last century, then one would have wanted to hear of the ways in which Chinese culture remains (or has reverted to being) distinctive (for example, whether there is such a thing today as distinctively Chinese “evidentiary rules” [p. 100]), so as to get a sense of what the called-for disciplining would involve.

As it turns out, there is in fact a distinctive element in the Chinese intellectuals’ response that Jenco’s analysis nicely brings out. The thread that runs through the Chinese debates, as she presents them, is a concern with “historical narratives” that can be traced back to Confucius, for whom the construction of a historical lineage for a present community was paramount (p. 57). She first explores this search for genealogy with the case of the nineteenth-century reformers who posited “Chinese origins for Western Learning” (p. 67) and traces them into the early twentieth century with the New Culture and May Fourth movements. Instead of classifying the various participants in these debates as conservative or progressive, “traditionalist” or “radical” (p. 182), for or against the past, she reads these debates as being about “in what, or

whose, history can China be said to belong” (p. 182). Jenco argues that what was at stake in the debates was not so much “the existence of a particular kind of past” but, rather, “the way the past could be interpreted in the present—and how that interpretation enabled or constrained certain kinds of future potential” (p. 205).

This reading of the Chinese debates, seeing them as centrally concerned with maintaining historical continuity, is very insightful. It does exactly the work of showing, through a careful and unconventional reading of a number of modern Chinese thinkers, the normative issues that worried them, and the ways they attended to these issues while at the same time embracing Western learning. This would have been enough to show that while they did in fact face “historical forces beyond their control,” the Chinese thinkers were not mere “passive reactionaries” (p. 21). Their response to Western modernity was thus different from, say, Islamic thinkers, who were arguably more concerned with the question of the nature of political authority—whether it is secular or divine—than with the question of genealogy. Indeed, it is precisely by recognizing the constraints within which the Chinese debates operated that their creativity and distinctiveness can properly be identified. And it is, similarly, only by recognizing the political, economic, and epistemological constraints within which the West and the East interact that we can chart out future possibilities for East–West learning.

Sovereignty: Reconstructing Liberal Individualism. By Sharon Krause, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2015. 249p.

Rationalism, Pluralism and Freedom. By Jacob T. Levy, New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. 322p.
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The literature of liberty has two abiding concerns: to explain how freedom is best defined and to account for how it might be secured. The two works under review here address both these topics, though Sharon Krause’s engagement with the institutional issue is more deeply grounded in the conceptual question, while Jacob Levy’s work reaches into the history of European thought to find the guidance he needs. What these authors share is a conviction that freedom can be understood in a variety of ways and given expression in a plurality of traditions, practices, and forms of governance. Out of this comes a broader conclusion about the political (and more generally, human) condition—that it is one in which certain deep tensions between ways of living, thinking, and governing can never ultimately be resolved, so we had better get used to it, and perhaps also start setting our theoretical sights a little more realistically. Since I consider their conclusions to be sound, I am inclined to think them very fine works. But my assessment is also based on the

quality of the arguments developed, and these are worth a closer look.

Krause’s purpose is to take our liberal theorizing about freedom away from its focus upon (or obsession with) the agency of the sovereign individual. Those who have thought most deeply about liberal freedom have tended to fall into one of three camps: defenders of positive liberty; defenders of negative liberty, who see freedom as the product of non-interference; and advocates of conceptions of freedom as non-domination. The focus of all these understandings, in her view, is the protection of agency—with agency conceived of as an inner faculty of the individual. Krause’s aim is to show that “liberal individualism is not only compatible with a non-sovereign, socially distributed account of human agency but that liberal individualism, properly conceived, requires such an account” (p. 13). A focus on the ideal of sovereign agency under-appreciates the informal ways that power interacts with human agency to compromise justice and constrain freedom (p. 10). It also fails to recognize the way in which the marginalized and oppressed fight back against those who would take away their freedom: “The world is replete with transgressive responses to power” (p. 17). A better form of theorizing about freedom, Krause argues, would be one that forswears the reductionist temptation to supply a uni-dimensional account of freedom and recognizes that the pluralism of forms that freedom takes requires a theory that appreciates the impossibility of perfecting the art of freedom, and the foolishness of attempting to impose it on everyone in the world (p. 19).

Among the implications of conceiving agency as “a relational experience rather than an inner faculty” (p. 61) is that it becomes unnecessary to consider the idea of the social construction of identity as a threat to agency. It opens up the way to thinking about freedom not simply in terms of the operations of an autonomous self but to considering the various aspects under which we understand ourselves to be free or unfree. Freedom from interference is one such aspect; autonomy or self-determination is another; and so too is living without domination or oppression (which Krause insists is a very different thing to domination—pp. 149–158) important if one is to live freely. These various dimensions of freedom cannot be reduced to a single one—by suggesting, for example, that one acts freely only when one acts under the guidance of an undominated, rational will. Contra Philip Pettit, Krause argues that we need to rid ourselves of the idea that freedom is somehow equated with a kind of control that is seen as the key to agency (pp. 80–82); for we are never really in control, either of our actions or of our identities. We are often free, if only to some degree, even when we are marginalized or oppressed.

We are free, Sharon Krause would persuade us, when we are not interfered with, when we are not dominated, when we are not oppressed, and when we can engage