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Thesis, Antithesis, Synthesis

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culminates in Aristotle's best or ideal regime of books 7 and 8 and in his effort to understand "how this inquiry into the ideal, and how political philosophy in general, could be practical" (172).

Garver's interpretation of the *Politics* makes for dense reading, but his study captures the complexity of the relations among political philosophy, practical wisdom, and political action in Aristotle's own thought. The book concludes with an epilogue that focuses on what is central to this thought: the claim that human beings are political animals. In drawing out five different senses in which we can understand this claim, and especially by showing how the *Politics* itself informs enduring political questions, Garver thinks through the ways in which philosophy can be practical without being subsumed by practical ends. Garver's fine study is clearly the fruit of deep reflection on this very problem.

—Susan D. Collins
University of Notre Dame

THESIS, ANTITHESIS, SYNTHESIS

Jeffrey Reiman: *As Free and as Just as Possible: The Theory of Marxian Liberalism*. (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. Pp. vii, 241.)

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Liberal theorists have good reasons to fear socialism. Socialist remedies for capitalism's ills have underwritten a dramatic expansion of state power with its consequent dangers for liberty and prosperity. Does liberalism—the tradition of political thinking originating in Locke's writings—still have anything to learn from socialism, and specifically from Marx's thought? Reiman's book offers a positive answer. His central thesis is that liberalism's commitment to individual liberty will be vindicated only if it incorporates critical Marxian insights. The resulting synthesis—Marxian Liberalism—secures the fullest possible principles of justice and the widest scope for liberty that historical circumstances permit.

The central Marxian insight missing from the liberal core is the claim that capitalist property is coercive. Liberal theorists have provided persuasive defenses of the critical role private property and markets play in protecting liberty: property in one's labor eliminated premodern forms of personal dependence; property in things and enforceable contracts allow individuals to realize their purposes; markets define one of the principal boundaries between public and private domains of activity, limiting the state's reach; decentralized forms of ownership allow for multiple points of independent economic decision-making; capital markets underwrite economic prosperity,

creating a richer material culture and freeing people from drudgery. In Reiman's view, however, liberal theorists suffer from a recurring blindness: they normally equate coercion with political oppression and physical violence, failing to recognize that capitalist property is also coercive, frustrating the liberal promise.

Reiman rightly points out that Marx's *Capital* develops a theory of private property's distinctive threat to liberty. The liberal state is charged with ensuring that contracts are voluntary and bilaterally informed, ensuring that the exchange of commodities remains a realm of individual choice. But Marx claimed, persuasively, that markets also legitimize and obscure a realm of coercion involving the sale and purchase of a peculiar commodity—labor power. The defining characteristic of capitalist labor relations—the wage contract—is predicated on a double freedom: workers are free in the sense that they own their persons and thus voluntarily enter into exchange relations, and in the ironic sense that they are shorn of all productive property, and thus have no choice but to work *for* capitalists. Reiman generalizes Marx's insight: capitalism's property relations create a system of "social subjugation" whereby a majority of individuals are forced by their material circumstances to work for others in unequal amounts (162).

On this view, Marx's critique of property can be safely accommodated within liberal theory. Reiman calls his contribution Marxian Liberalism, and not Liberal Marxism, to highlight its commitment to protecting and promoting liberty. He offers a version of liberalism, not a new interpretation of Marx. Other than a short discussion of the dispute over whether Marx offered a meaningful theory of justice (Reiman thinks he did), this book makes no mention of the various debates over Marx's social and political thought. Nor is there any mention of recent theories of market socialism. Reiman accepts private ownership of the means of production, at least for the foreseeable future. He fears, for good liberal reasons, that state control is dangerous. But property must be subject to the requirements of justice to eradicate its coercive aspects. Reiman's liberalism is essentially Rawls's: he adopts the original position, the veil of ignorance, the principles of justice and the lexical order governing them, and a property-owning democracy as the most practicable just society.

The most innovative chapter of this book (chapter 5) deploys Marx's theory of exploitation to shore up a widely perceived weakness in Rawls's difference principle. Critics have underscored that Rawls's theory of distributive justice is unfair in that it demands greater sacrifices from the more advantaged than from the less advantaged groups. Reiman argues that a moral version of Marx's theory of value provides the necessary support missing from Rawls's difference principle. Marx's labor theory shows that underlying the exchange of commodities in the marketplace is the exchange of labor. Society in its economic dimension is a system of cooperation whereby people labor to provide one another with their daily recurring wants. Reiman adopts a sharply egalitarian standard of justice. The benchmark of

a just economic transaction is one where individuals exchange roughly equal quantities of labor. Exploitation, or social subjugation, refers to a situation in which capitalist property relations require disadvantaged workers to enter into unequal labor exchanges with the owners of productive assets—that is, to “agree” to turn over unpaid labor to capitalists as a condition of employment. Now, as Reiman points out, it may be rational for wage workers to consent to their exploitation, but if and only if, under current economic circumstances, an unequal exchange of labor offers society’s more talented people the incentive to maximize productivity, improving workers’ standard of living and freeing them from unwanted toil (what Reiman calls their material subjugation). Any greater economic inequality, beyond the degree necessary to increase productivity, is a product of property relations that empower owners of productive property to coerce nonowners to work for them without providing any reciprocal benefit. Owners may not justly claim a greater share of other people’s labor than that necessary as an incentive to maximize productivity. Nor, therefore, is it unfair to redistribute this share of unpaid labor—in the form of wealth—to the least advantaged. To be sure, the precise tipping point at which redistribution hampers productivity can only be worked out in practice, as different societies experiment with various ways to implement the requirements of the difference principle. Reiman also argues that technological improvement and the material abundance it produces will in the distant future reduce the need for incentives and thus eliminate the need for economic inequality. It will then be possible to move from a liberal to a communist standard of justice: from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.

Reiman’s book repays careful reading. But there are also significant gaps in its argument. The most serious is the claim, made repeatedly, that liberal theorists largely focus on political oppression and physical coercion, evincing a characteristic blindness to the structural coercion inherent in capitalist property relations that only an appeal to Marx can correct (see 5, 11, 23–25, 31–32, 94, 161–62, 210–11). To be sure, Reiman often qualifies his critique of liberalism by indicating that he is referring to “traditional liberalism” or to “libertarianism,” and he recognizes that twentieth-century liberals turned their attention to the need to protect people from poverty (12). But there is nevertheless no serious engagement with the history of liberal thought. Thus, for example, in chapter 4, devoted to a discussion of liberal theory, Reiman jumps from Locke and Kant to Nozick and Narveson, bypassing the liberal innovations of (to name a few) J. S. Mill, L. T. Hobhouse, John A. Hobson, John Dewey, Robert Hale, and C. B. Macpherson. These authors show that liberals have been engaged in the task of incorporating the insight that capitalist property is coercive for over a century. Liberalism is far richer than Reiman suggests. His book is the latest contribution to a very long tradition.

—Claudio J. Katz
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