

men. Yet the second shift is work, not leisure. By conflating work with paid work, Shippen's dichotomy between work and leisure forces her to conflate housework with leisure, and thus to deny that housework is work.

This direction of the argument is particularly surprising given the attention Shippen gives throughout the book to the feminist arguments that housework is work that deserves recognition, work whose distribution is a matter of justice. For instance, one particularly interesting part of the book, her argument, in chapter 4, that the commodification of leisure actually created more work for women in spite of its promise to save time, is itself such an argument that housework is itself work, work made invisible by ideologies of work and time as well as by the gender division of labor. The reader is left wondering if the author is entitled to draw on these arguments given her repeated return to the assumption that the demand for freedom is exclusively a demand for leisure understood as time away from employment.

The problem of the gender division of labor is also central to the discussion of chapter 6, which develops the author's vision of the politics of time. Here the author speaks of housework as drudgery and casts the problem with the gender division of labor as one of the distribution of repetitive, boring, meaningless work, thus falling in the other extreme. Not only does this reinforce ideas about housework that contribute to its devaluation. It also fails to put into question the legitimacy of the division between paid and unpaid work itself, and to discuss the ways in which the division itself is a product of capitalism and a modern mode of production.

Decolonizing Time. Work, Leisure, and Freedom is nevertheless an important and ambitious book. By showing the importance of a political theory of time rooted in political economy, it breaks new ground in political theory. It should start a much-needed conversation about our current condition.

Breaking Democracy's Spell, by John Dunn. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014.

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In political theory, we do not read merely ideas and arguments, but authors. A book of political theory promises a kind of political knowledge that, far from being cleansed of its subjective element, will come to us in the singular vessel of a unique human voice. The authority of an author of political theory need

not rest therefore exclusively on the quality of the scholarship provided in a given work (its extent, accuracy, cogency, and salience), but can also inhere in our belief in the special quality of the author's voice (its originality, trustworthiness, prior accomplishment, or connection to historical events). Whereas young political theorists will win readers almost exclusively through the former form of authority, established voices often appeal to us also—if not primarily—on the basis of who they are.

The difference between these two grounds of authority comes into view in John Dunn's *Breaking Democracy's Spell*. It is not just that many readers of the book surely will have been drawn to it because of the identity of its author, who is unquestionably one of the world's leading political theorists and someone who has contributed mightily over his long career with works in the history of political thought, the methodology of its study, and as in the work here, democratic theory. What is also relevant is that Dunn himself implicitly appeals to these two forms of authority and, surprisingly, suggests that they can conflict. In the preface, Dunn hints that the book may not satisfy the highest standards of scholarship, as he admits he has not heeded the advice of an editor that "I should write instead a more comprehensive and carefully reasoned treatment of the very large topic I try to address." What justifies this decision, in Dunn's view, is his belief that the clarity and force of his voice would somehow thereby be attenuated: "I decided not to attempt this, because I thought it would blur the focus and diminish the impact of the message I most wish to convey."

Now what is this message? As the book's title indicates, it is nothing other than breaking democracy's spell—a project, as Dunn defines it, that has to do with overcoming an inflated sense of what democracy means and, with it, the excessive self-satisfaction of countries, like the United States, that understand themselves to be the standard-bearers of world democratization. The precise nature of this spell might have been more fully spelled out—and less hampered by Dunn's sometimes prolix prose—but four of its central elements nonetheless are clear enough. It is, first of all, the false belief that democracy can mean the overcoming of domination, such that the addressees of the law might also understand themselves as the law's authors. Provocatively rehabilitating the contemporary relevance of English monarch Charles I's insistence, uttered from the scaffold, that "a subject and a sovereign are clean different things," Dunn asserts that even the most well-ordered democracy always empowers a political leadership with the capacity to transgress the rights and interests of its citizens. While democracy does importantly include the ability to reject leadership, Dunn follows (without explicitly referencing) the long-standing Schumpeterian view that it cannot reliably be taken to mean that ordinary voters get to shape governmental decisionmaking in

accordance with their will. Second, breaking democracy's spell means recognizing the fundamental indeterminacy besetting democracy: the fact that it can plausibly be realized in highly divergent forms (liberal, socialist, and even Chinese models); that advocating democratization as a solution to a failed state like Somalia or Libya provides no guidance about who should rule or where the borders of the polity should lie; and that even in more stable democracies, the commitment to democratic values provides very little direction in terms of concrete policies. Third, democracy's spell includes the incorrect identification of democracy with good government. Against this, Dunn insists that democratic procedures can produce disadvantageous social outcomes—a point that is generally persuasive, but would have been strengthened if Dunn developed the all-too-implicit conception of utilitarianism upon which it rests. Finally, democracy's spell involves the misplaced faith in the ultimate reconciliability of liberal rights and majoritarian procedures. For Dunn, democracy's commitment to the latter in no way guarantees the former, so that democracy cannot be equated with the rule of law.

Of course, Dunn is hardly the first to put forward a disenchanting conception of democracy. For over a century, a distinguished array of thinkers whom Dunn simply does not examine—Pareto, Mosca, Michels, Weber, Schumpeter, Dahl, Lefort, Rancière, Rosanvallon, and Mouffe—have also insisted on a more chastened and limited, tension-filled understanding of democracy. But what makes Dunn's analysis different is that for him the problem with an overblown, spell-ridden conception of democracy is not simply that it is false, but that it is dangerous and invites injustice. Dunn's political venture, which seems his deepest concern, is that a new appreciation for what democracy does *not* mean (i.e., the lack of domination, concrete policy choices, good government, and the rule of law) will stop holders of power in democratic societies—above all the United States—from using democratic ideology to falsely legitimate laws and policies that too often in the twenty-first century have been irresponsible and destructive.

And yet it is just this political aspiration that remains the book's least convincing feature. For one thing, Dunn does not adequately show that there are concrete individuals who actually subscribe to the grandiose conception of democracy he critiques. He laments that the "faith in the vindicatory and directive force of our conception of democracy is utterly misplaced" (5), without telling us just who these believers are. And even if Dunn could name names in this regard, his ultimate polemical target—those who, because of an inflated understanding of democracy, are able to misuse power—remains under-documented. Even what is perhaps Dunn's best example—the US-led 2003 invasion of Iraq—is not fully convincing, since one could locate so many other causes for irresponsibility (such as misleading the public on the basis of

faulty intelligence, the military-industrial complex, the failure to rely on global institutions like the United Nations, and simple incompetence in the war effort) besides a misplaced zeal about democracy's all-encompassing goodness and alleged ineluctable appeal.¹ Dunn thinks that the United States of the twenty-first century, afflicted by various forms of dysfunction, is itself evidence of the dangers of democracy's spell. But as Dunn himself sometimes intimates, it is just as possible to understand America's injustice in terms of a deficit of democratization—insufficiently protected voting rights, excessively onerous voter registration, a welfare system that does not adequately provide underlying economic security let alone fair equality of political and educational opportunity—as it is in terms of American overconfidence about its democratic status and the false legitimacy this would bring. Indeed, if the point is to expose the dangers of believing oneself a perfect democracy in a world where democracy itself is misunderstood, Dunn ought to have treated the Nordic countries—which routinely score the highest on democracy measures—and demonstrated how these polities, on the basis of their misconceptions about democracy, threaten abuse of power and various other ills.

Part of the challenge of Dunn's disenchanting mission is that it knows it cannot be complete: that democracy rightly retains a special status. As Dunn himself explains, democracy is especially valuable in providing a ground for challenging regimes that clearly do not serve the interests of their citizens. Further, even if Dunn is right that the representative function of voting is too often exaggerated, he still recognizes that it is a meaningful institution that enables some capacity to hold leaders accountable. And although Dunn sometimes wonders how it is that democracy came to be viewed as uniquely moral in the modern world, his analysis clearly points to why this is so: for example, the fact that other forms of legitimacy—divinity, nature, tradition, and transcendental rationality—recede under conditions of modernity, thereby giving the immanent rationality generated by democratic procedures, however imperfect, a unique capacity to legitimate social norms. How to reconcile what democracy cannot do (the spell Dunn aims to break) with its genuine status as a morally superior form of politics is a challenge Dunn's book raises but does not really solve. In this regard, one wishes that Dunn had elaborated his treatment of India's democracy, which unlike the United States Dunn describes in mostly approving terms. What is it that the Indians do right? Outside of the fact that the Indian regime is in its very being "a single giant political achievement" for successfully bringing democracy to a vast, pluralistic, largely impoverished state, Dunn suggests that in India there is a better recognition of the more chastened kind of democracy he advocates. Dunn appears to argue that in India's pluralistic and immense democracy, it is more common for groups that claim to be acting in the People's name to be

contested by others who deny either the fact or the relevance of the democratic provenance of those groups' democratic authority. About this circumstance, Dunn writes: "you cannot reasonably deny that the category of democracy is open to both interpretations, and that something of normative and political significance is captured in each" (114). Unfortunately, neither this passage nor the larger point it aims to disclose is sufficiently clear. And this contributes to the sense that *Breaking Democracy's Spell* does not go far enough in developing Dunn's incipient ideas about how an appreciation of democracy's limits might contribute to a more enlightened democratic future.

Dunn's ultimate focus is on the word democracy, which he describes as "the most potent political term there has ever been" (61). And Dunn's immense learning, both in this work and in previous ones, buttresses his contention that "there is no single word in the entire history of human speech to and through which more has happened than the word democracy, not even the word *God*" (5). But what this linguistic focus sometimes obscures is that what arguably is regnant today is not merely the word democracy but the specific *liberal-democratic regime*: that is, a regime aiming to marry democratic procedures with liberal rights. Dunn insists that there is no necessary relationship between liberalism and democracy. Outside of the problem that Dunn is far too quick in this regard—he does not at all examine thinkers like Ely, Habermas, Mouffe, or Brettschneider, who have made the case for the ultimate interconnection between these two commitments²—there is simply the fact that it is precisely this amalgam of liberalism and democracy, however well or poorly its elements can be harmonized, that has triumphed, for now at least, as the authentic form of democracy. Recognizing the liberal-democratic moment of the present would have dampened Dunn's focus on the almost infinite malleability of the term democracy, but it also would have suggested that, in some areas, democracy is not as dangerously mystifying as Dunn finds it. If we take liberal democracy as the regime to be analyzed, then the rule of law is in fact part of what democracy means, the illiberal Chinese model can no longer be seen as a credible democratic alternative (though it may deserve our utilitarian admiration for the economic development it has overseen, if Dunn is correct about its success), and the commitment to democracy would in fact give more direction for policies than Dunn thinks (e.g., policies creating greater political and educational opportunities for all citizens, understood to be free and equal). In any case, to throw cold water on democracy without singling out the liberal-democratic regime is to fail to appreciate that in which so many true believers of democracy in the world today actually believe.³

At its best, Dunn's analysis recalls the ancient Greek tradition of democratic theory—in which the theorist of democracy was hardly if ever an unambiguous celebrant of it—and where analysis of the democratic regime meant a sober

appreciation for its limits. To be sure, Dunn is much more sympathetic to democracy than Plato, Aristotle, or other ancient authors, but given the current climate where democratic theory is so closely connected to unabashed support for democracy, Dunn's message is likely to be experienced as a stinging and perhaps healthy critique of democratic idealism. Still, the book does not substantiate the premise that one's message is aided by declining to pursue a "more comprehensive and carefully reasoned treatment" of its subject matter.

Notes

1. It is worth pointing out in this regard that British Prime Minister Tony Blair repeatedly insisted that the war was not about democratizing Iraq. See, e.g., his statement in September 2002: "Regime change in Iraq would be a wonderful thing. That is not the purpose of our action; our purpose is to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction." Even if comments like these are not fully forthright, they suggest, *pace* Dunn, a hesitance to rely on the idea of democracy as a justification for aggression.
2. Even if Mouffe shares Dunn's view that democracy and liberalism are two distinct commitments, for her they still must be pursued together, however imperfectly, by any actual liberal-democratic regime. See my essay "On the Co-Originality of Liberalism and Democracy," *Law, Culture and the Humanities* 11, no. 2 (2015): 198–217.
3. To take one example, the *Economist's* Democracy Index, which ranks the world's nations based on how democratic they are, requires that the highest group—the so-called "Full Democracies"—guarantee various civil liberties.

Agonistic Democracy: Constituent Power in the Era of Globalization, by Mark Wenman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

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Mark Wenman's *Agonistic Democracy* is the first book to provide a comprehensive overview of agonism as "a distinctive tradition within contemporary political theory" (4). Its aims are both interpretative and critical. Wenman ultimately intends to radicalize agonism by incorporating within it a commitment to revolutionary politics.

We learn in Part 1 that three core features distinguish agonistic democracy from competing approaches: pluralism, tragedy, and conflict. For agonists, plurality is not merely a contingent fact that modern societies must accommodate, but a constitutive condition of political life that should be