

approach also rescues Plato from those inclined to dismiss him for his “idealism.” She insists on a “realist” Plato, a Plato who “always already” thought of *telos* and *taxis* together (41), who was not simply dreaming about high-falutin’ soulcraft but was creatively and pragmatically working through the “who, whom” of Lenin (quoted by Lane, 142).

In this respect, André Laks’s *Plato’s Second Republic: An Essay on the Laws* offers a complementary argument through its exploration of Plato’s *Laws* as a “legislative utopia” (62). The power of Plato’s *Laws*, according to Laks, comes from “the cluster of four basic principles at its core: that without accountability power corrupts, that law should rule, that a constitution that can be somewhat misleadingly characterized as ‘mixed’ is the best human beings can achieve, and that laws require preambles” (3). His main claim is that this cluster of principles conveys the *Laws*’ “meta-legislative” message about the tension between “the normative character of law and the conditions of its acceptance” (5). Rather than being idealistic, Plato’s *Laws*, according to Laks, explores how law plays a mediating role between the norms that law embodies (which may or may not be idealistic) and the need for law to shape political action, which law must do to fulfill its function qua law.

Laks organizes his study around what he calls the “paradigmatism” that joins both the *Republic* and the *Laws*. “Paradigmatism” describes a philosophical approach of naming normative ideal-types—of dealing with paradigms—that inform political action. Yet the language of “ideal-types” that Laks uses (38) slightly obscures his meaning, because these paradigms are less ideal than regulative; they aim to control or orient, rather than inspire. Paradigms provide horizons but these are reachable horizons according to Laks. The continuity between the *Republic* and the *Laws* lies in how both consider the possibility of their respective utopias: both seek to orient political action with their paradigms, to instruct readers, and to alter political worlds with their texts. What distinguishes them—and what draws Laks more to the *Laws* than to the *Republic*—is that the former foregrounds an “anthropology” concerned with education as an ongoing project, pursued not just in childhood but “through the whole of human life” (72). The *Laws*’ sense of what it means to be human generates “a notion of possibility” about its own proposals that the *Republic* lacks. The *Laws*, moreover, “goes beyond the *Republic*” by not simply formulating “guidelines to be followed, among all poets” but by offering itself as “the finest and also the best tragedy,” thus “replacing the very foundations of Greek culture” (150).

Here Laks’s love of the *Laws* may lead him to overstate its differences from the *Republic*. Both texts, I would argue, seek to intervene in Greek culture to shape political action. The key difference for Laks would seem to be the explicit

discussion of law’s need for preambles in the *Laws*: this opens the sense of possibility he discerns. Such a sense of possibility is then amplified by the interlocutors’ own “hubristic” self-assessment of their work as “the best tragedy” (150). Yet in the *Republic*, Socrates’s description of a pattern (*paradeigma*, 529b2) that one might use to found a city within oneself seems quite close to Laks’s argument about the *Laws*.

Although complementary in argument, Laks’s approach to Plato differs from Lane’s. Laks offers “a mode of reading that is sensitive to the promptings that emerge from the text itself in the absence of explicit statements or clarifications” (8). In this way, he views “philology as a springboard for philosophical reflection” (8). Where Lane’s work offers abundant philosophical reflection while staying close to the ground of Plato’s text, Laks, by contrast, models a freer spirit; he ventures into conflicts between human law and divine law—“the theologico-political problem”—and touches on Spinoza, Rousseau, Kant, Goethe, and Adorno (among others) across his book. Laks’s approach to reading, however, complements Lane’s with his attention to what Lane calls “discursive legislation” (77)—namely, how the text presents itself as forming political action through its practical paradigms.

Even if Plato’s discursive legislation fails to persuade twenty-first-century readers, Lane provides institutional examples to seed constitutional innovation. Lane and Laks also point to the insufficiency of narrowly institutional responses when it comes to ensuring that officeholders rule for the benefit of the ruled. The US Supreme Court’s ethics code ostensibly was intended to enforce accountability for those at the apex of the nation’s judiciary, yet its toothlessness provides just one example of why the question, “Who will guard the guardians?” remains of vital importance today. What would Lane’s “Daily Meeting” look like in this situation? How could Laks’s true tragedy inspire us to bring into being a culture of continual and ongoing political education?

Dreaming of Justice, Waking to Wisdom: Rousseau’s Philosophic Life.

Laurence D. Cooper. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2023. 272p. \$99.00 cloth, \$35.00 paper.

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One of Rousseau’s best interpreters, Laurence Cooper has an established record of close engagement, careful analysis, and deep insight in his detailed studies of Rousseau. In *Dreaming of Justice, Waking to Wisdom*, he trains his attention on one book, Rousseau’s *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*. Unsurprisingly, the result is a thorough and original study of the text, replete with insights that will

surely be of interest to Rousseau scholars and to anyone interested in what Cooper calls in his subtitle and throughout the book the “philosophic life.” More surprisingly, perhaps, is the extent to which Cooper reads Rousseau as an esoteric writer who “may not believe all that he says he believes” (110). This is particularly important with respect to Rousseau’s apparent critique of philosophy in favor of reverie. Rousseau, Cooper writes, “makes the case for philosophy even while seeming to make the case against it” (21).

If this is beginning to sound familiar, it is because Cooper is drawing on the tradition of esoteric reading associated with Leo Strauss, although Cooper does not explicitly position himself this way. He follows Strauss in distinguishing between two audiences, the general and the philosophic, or, as Cooper terms them, the “casual” and the “careful.” And, like Strauss, he interprets Rousseau in a manner that draws heavily on Plato’s *Republic*. In his 1979 translation of *Emile*, Allan Bloom characterized the work as “a book comparable to Plato’s *Republic*.” Cooper offers a similar assessment, this time of the *Reveries*. By coincidence, another monograph written in the Straussian spirit appeared almost concurrently with Cooper’s study: Thomas Pangle’s (2023) *The Life of Wisdom in Rousseau’s “Reveries of the Solitary Walker.”* Both Cooper and Pangle place the *Reveries* in the Socratic tradition of the philosophic life, but whereas Cooper reads Rousseau as a Socratic figure, Pangle calls the *Reveries* “profoundly un-Socratic.” Unfortunately, the timing of the publications has prevented these authors from engaging with each other’s arguments. It is testimony to the protean nature of Rousseau’s writings that two scholars, working from a similar intellectual framework, can arrive at seemingly opposite conclusions. That said, readers of *Dreaming of Justice, Waking to Wisdom* will become accustomed to drilling down into the text of the *Reveries* to find Socratic resonances where Rousseau may seem to be suggesting otherwise.

Cooper reads Rousseau against the grain. What Cooper calls a “careful” reading reveals Rousseau to be doing something different from what a “casual” reading may suggest. Whereas Rousseau characterizes the *Reveries* as a “shapeless diary,” Cooper argues it contains a hidden structure, one that closely parallels Plato’s *Republic*. Whereas Rousseau says he wrote his reveries “only for myself,” Cooper argues he wrote them “to promote wholesome activities and even a new and wholesome orientation to life” (16). Whereas Rousseau criticizes philosophy, even to the point of extolling ignorance in the Third Walk, Cooper characterizes Rousseau as “at one with the classical philosophers” (xii). Whereas Rousseau claims to prefer reverie to reflection—“reverie relaxes and amuses me; reflection tires and saddens me”—Cooper sees Rousseau “elegantly communicating” just the opposite through “sleight of hand” (96).

Reflection, Cooper writes, “is more central and integral to [Rousseau’s] life, to the philosophic life, than is reverie” (96). Whereas Rousseau seems to prefer ordinary, simple men and women to refined and learned ones, Cooper reads Rousseau as an evangelist for a philosophical “journey” that “few of us are likely to complete” (39). And whereas Rousseau describes fits and starts—progress and regress—with respect to his stated goal of freeing himself from *amour propre*, Cooper describes an “ascent toward philosophy” (96). In the *Reveries*, Cooper writes, “Rousseau depicts the ongoing development or perfection of the philosophic life by one who is already living it” (2). Showing this, Cooper claims, “may be the chief contribution” of his book.

Cooper invites his readers to approach the *Reveries* as the story of a philosophic life with a “plot” (42). The plot traces Rousseau’s transformation of the experience of solitude from a punishment to a blessing. It turns out there is a world of difference between the “melodramatic self-centeredness” of the First Walk’s “*me voici donc*” and the “more capacious, decentered perspective on the self” of the Seventh Walk’s “*me voila donc*,” which appears when Rousseau has achieved what Cooper calls the peak of his “clarity and happiness” (185). In the space between the early *voici* and the late *voila*, Cooper traces Rousseau’s path “to achieving internal justice or health of soul,” which turns out to be “the overcoming of *amour propre*” (47). This, for me, is the chief contribution of the book, and it is no small one at that.

Cooper is successful in reading the *Reveries* against the grain not only because the text is susceptible to being read this way but also because Rousseau’s writings are generally susceptible to many interpretations. He did not write treatises, nor did he write in any philosophical tradition, preferring to forge his own original path. Nowhere is this more clearly on display than in the *Reveries*. Appropriated by the Left and Right, by revolutionaries and restorationists, read as a liberal, a republican, and a romantic; and as a Platonist, an Augustinian, an Epicurean, and a Stoic, Rousseau’s method allows for a multiplicity of interpretations. Cooper’s is one. No matter one’s perspective, the book will reward the reader with deep insight into the *Reveries*. But Cooper is after something more than that, something that he believes will help the reader see more than just Rousseau’s path away from the lures of *amour propre*: he hopes to convince readers that Rousseau led a *philosophic* life.

Cooper reads the *Reveries* as a Socratic quest for enlightenment: “Rousseau’s end was the same as Plato’s—the same end for the same reasons.” The only difference is “the terrain to be navigated” (xv–xvi), by which Cooper means the modern context of “Christian and post-Christian universalism” (xvi). Other than the difference of terrain that, importantly for Cooper’s

argument, allows Rousseau to deepen and extend Plato's teaching, Cooper sees only "deep affinities and...no contradictions between Rousseau's and Plato's respective articulations of the philosophic life" (51). Although readers will be familiar with Rousseau's praise for Socrates, that praise has been typically associated with Socrates's elevation of virtue above all else, including philosophy. For Cooper, Rousseau's disposition toward reason and toward philosophy is far more nuanced than such a reading would suggest.

Although "casual" readers of Rousseau may read him as a critic of reason, a "careful" reading—of the kind Cooper offers in part II of *Dreaming of Justice, Waking to*

Wisdom—reveals that Rousseau has not disparaged reason but rather "veil[ed]" its "potential efficacy" to redeem it from its misuse at the hands of his contemporaries (210). What seems to be an elevation of reverie above philosophy and of sentiment above reason is in fact Rousseau's ambitious and, in Cooper's view, successful aspiration to "revivify the philosophic life properly understood"; that is to say, "Socratically understood, though with distinctively Rousseauian revisions and additions" (16). Some readers will surely want to contest Cooper's assimilation of Rousseau to the Socratic tradition. But all will benefit from his close and, yes, careful engagement with Rousseau's *Reveries*.

AMERICAN POLITICS

The Struggle for the People's King: How Politics Transforms the Memory of the Civil Rights Movement.

By Hajar Yazdiha. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2023. 286p. \$95.00 cloth, \$29.95 paper.

After Black Lives Matter: Policing and Anti-Capitalist Struggle.

By Cedric Johnson. New York: Verso Books, 2023. 416p. \$34.95 cloth.

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Two recent releases, *The Struggle for the People's King: How Politics Transforms the Memory of the Civil Rights Movement* by sociologist Hajar Yazdiha and *After Black Lives Matter: Policing and Anti-Capitalist Struggle* by political scientist Cedric Johnson, assess the nature of contemporary racial inequality in the United States and recent efforts to combat it (each emphasizing the current Black Lives Matter movement as a means to that end) while also identifying what they view as the primary roadblocks to eliminating inequality. Although it is clear that both authors maintain a steadfast intellectual commitment to ameliorating racial inequality and the policies that uphold those inequalities, they each bring to bear contrasting conceptual and theoretical frameworks in their diagnoses of their root causes today—differences that underscore the difficulty in cultivating the political solidarity (and power) needed to dismantle the very inequalities each rightfully laments.

James Baldwin famously stated, "Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced." The causes of racial inequality are complex, overdetermined, and, in many respects, difficult if not entirely impossible to identify. Across numerous domains—education, policing, housing, the workplace, and so forth—"race" continues to be predictive of unequal material outcomes; in other words, racial disparities are

commonplace, despite the passage of myriad laws that sought to create a more racially egalitarian society. For Yazdiha, the reason for the persistence of racial inequality is our inability to reckon with the violent, oppressive history of "race" in the United States because of the perpetuation of a sanitized "collective memory" about the nation's past. This sanitized memory downplays the United States' settler-colonial and racist nation-building project (whose effects, Yazdiha argues, still reverberates throughout American politics today) while simultaneously embracing a framing of the United States as a "color-blind" post-racial society. Until we face our racist sins, Yazdiha contends, racial equality will remain little more than a pipe dream.

Thus, for Yazdiha, the road to racial equality begins with a critical assessment of this faulty collective memory, which leads many Americans—particularly white Americans—to believe that any efforts to address racial inequality are, at best, an affront to the nation's purported egalitarian, color-blind ideals and, at worst, a form of so-called reverse racism, bettering the social position of racial minorities and other marginalized populations at the expense of white Americans. As Yazdiha convincingly argues, trying to construct an egalitarian political movement atop these egregious myths ultimately opens the door for reactionary forces to both dismiss these radical movements as threatening to the existing social order while also allowing them to position themselves as the true arbiters of the American ethos, which they claim means treating everyone precisely the same, regardless of previous injustices.

Yazdiha begins her analysis with the designation of Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday as a federal holiday—which was signed into law by conservative president Ronald Reagan in 1983—to demonstrate the Right's co-optation of the public's collective memory, distorting in the process the true nature of racial inequality while treating it as a blemish on the nation's otherwise sterling record. Over the past four decades, Yazdiha argues, many