

views on pride and its relation to “self-love” and “self-liking,” his term for our relentless need for the esteem of others. Douglass describes Mandeville’s moral psychology as “pride-centered” (p. 3) but by no means reducible to pride alone; he thus pushes back against both modern interpreters who overemphasize the late turn to “self-liking” and eighteenth-century critics who accused Mandeville of reducing all human behavior to self-love. The most well-known of these critics is Smith, who argues, contra Mandeville, that we are capable of acting from love of virtue and not merely from love of praise. Douglass’s approach allows Mandeville to respond that, although it may be *possible* for the truly virtuous to act from love of virtue alone, the opposite nonetheless remains far more common (pp. 51–52). A naturalistic moral psychology requires something sturdier than the behavior of the rare and virtuous few to explain complex social systems, and Mandeville’s seems well suited for the task.

Chapter 2 contains the claim that will perhaps prove most controversial for specialists: that Mandeville consistently and earnestly held that pride was a “vice” (p. 58). Despite the fact that Mandeville emphasizes the role of pride in the development of civil society, he consistently describes it as a vice and counts it among our frailties. Pride is both *bad* and *necessary*, the low stuff on which finer things are built. Douglass cuts a path between these views by noting that pride, like all passions, can be indulged in excessively and that Mandeville—following Hobbes most notably—worryes that displays of prideful excess have a “propensity to antagonise” (p. 90). As Douglass discusses in the subsequent chapter on sociability, the dangers of pride are made all the more obvious when we consider what great pains we take to hide its presence. His analysis here is commendably clear and careful, but some doubts remain. Mandeville does describe pride as a vice, but he also finds it “incredible” in “how many strange and widely different Miracles” it can perform, and he considers pride, when “artfully rouze[d]” (Mandeville, *Fable II*, pp. 64, 78) as fundamental to the education of gentlemen. More than this, Douglass seems to rescue Mandeville at the cost of some of his potency as a theorist of paradox. The fecundity of pride—its “miraculous” power—and the more general ambivalence with which Mandeville treats virtue and vice seem here to dissipate.

Part II, “Historical Narratives,” examines the several speculative histories Mandeville developed over the course of his later writing. They are indeed “several”: as Douglass explains, Mandeville develops separate and distinct histories of political authority, politeness, virtue, early modern European notions of honor, and even language. Mandeville’s interpreters sometimes run these accounts together; the concepts themselves are similar, and Mandeville wants to attribute their development to similar features of human nature, such as pride or self-regard. Douglass’s contributions here are likewise several. These two chapters carefully untangle these accounts and identify the ways they evolve

(or fail to evolve) over the course of Mandeville’s writing. They are for this reason very useful treatments of Mandeville’s “historical turn” (p. 150) that occupies so much of his late work. In sharply distinguishing the *Fable II* account of the origin of political authority from the earlier *Fable I* treatment of virtue, Douglass recenters what he calls “*the* most important passion” in Mandeville’s account of the origin of society: our “desire of superiority,” our “instinct of sovereignty” (p. 137). This instinct plays a curious and dynamic role in the movement from families to disjointed bands and finally to something like society: it both generates the unruliness that calls out for government and simultaneously provides the motive according to which potential leaders and sovereigns might strive to order and discipline an unruly people. The instinct of sovereignty, in other words, creates both the demand for and the supply of government. These insights bear on whether Mandeville locates the origins of civilization in an enterprising caste of cunning lawgivers and moralists—what Douglass calls the “conspiratorial” view (p. 138)—or in bottom-up processes of trial and error (the “evolutionary” account) that have long endeared Mandeville to theorists of “spontaneous order.” Douglass’s Mandeville has it both ways: order is not designed “*ex nihilo*,” but it nevertheless results from “certain individuals trying...to formulate rules” for governing others (p. 177).

This is a work of serious scholarship. Douglass writes with exceptional clarity and reconstructs arguments with precision and great care. The secondary literature on Mandeville and adjacent subjects appears in full. Of particular interest to specialists is Douglass’s facility with Mandeville’s critics—not just Francis Hutcheson, Hume, and Smith but also lesser-known respondents to the *Fable* like William Temple, Richard Fiddes, and William Law. Mandeville gives very few explicit indications of which critics and texts he took seriously, but *Mandeville’s Fable* gives us a better sense of the development of his ideas in exchange with his contemporaries. For specialists and nonspecialists alike, Douglass provides a clear and compelling account of Mandeville’s moral and social thought, one that establishes its subject as a serious thinker whose provocative and “unsettling” (p. xi) ideas retain today their power to provoke and unsettle.

**Aesthetics of Equality.** Michael J. Shapiro. New York: Oxford University Press, 2023. 240p. \$110.00 cloth, \$32.99 paper.  
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Michael J. Shapiro’s book *Aesthetics of Equality* is another rewarding contribution to an ever-growing and exciting body of work in political theory that takes culture, and the many forms and scenes of culture, seriously. At this point, we may in fact call it a veritable tradition, one whose early

touchstones include Michael Rogin's *Ronald Reagan, the Movie* (1987), Anne Norton's *Republic of Signs* (1993), and Jodi Dean's edited volume *Political Theory and Cultural Studies* (2000). Readers familiar with Shapiro's work will know that he has long been attentive to culture, especially cinema, as not only a site of but also a resource for politics and political theory. This latest book not only confirms his work as a cornerstone in the tradition but also shows him turning his penetrating eye toward an impressive range of aesthetic objects and genres—principally fiction, music (classical and jazz), films, television, and architecture, with attention to art history, photography, and more. Refreshingly, Shapiro's structuring attention to the politics of “compositional form” is a welcome shift from inquiries focused mainly on political meaning and messages.

*Aesthetics of Equality* brings a “focus on textual form” and “an attentiveness to persons and voices that tend to be civically invisible and unheard” (p. 6) to bear in its five chapters analyzing specific aesthetic objects and contextualizing them in creative ways. The first chapter examines Thomas Mann's four connected *Joseph and His Brothers* novels, drawing out his musically inspired compositional forms and concluding that “the main political effect of what Mann's text does is owed to the compositional, grammatical and rhetorical structures with which it unsettles hierarchies and instills an equal eligibility for moral solicitude for all of humanity” (p. 30). The second chapter studies Toni Morrison's novel *Jazz*, arguing that “her writing mimics a jazz performance as it animates Black voices, moving them from the margins of a white-dominated social order to give them a vocalized civic presence in American urban life” (p. 58). The third chapter, perhaps the strongest, looks closely at Michael Haneke's film *Caché*, which Shapiro argues is “a nuanced treatment of what Haneke refers to as ‘the primal legacy of colonialism,’ expressed through a cinematic form that looks at the way the past registers itself in psyches that have closed themselves off from that legacy” (p. 116). The fourth chapter reads the Turkish Netflix series *Ethos*, whose “main theme is a juxtaposition of Western European psychoanalysis and traditional Islamic spiritual therapy” (p. 13), by situating its “cinematic portraiture within a historical trajectory of portraiture that has moved on from historical preoccupation with elites to allow ordinary people to rise above the threshold of recognition” (p. 14). The very strong final chapter on “the Latinx experience in historical and contemporary California and Texas” is constructed via “an architectural narrative thread” that sees Shapiro insightfully knitting together analyses of two films, a novel, and the politics of public memory centered on the Alamo.

Additionally, several of the chapters in *Aesthetics of Equality* make productive use of Henri Lefebvre's concept of “the right to the city” to thematize the ways in which

diverse ethnic groups in cities like New York, Paris, Istanbul, and Los Angeles struggle for “recognition of a multiplicity of lifestyles and voices” to counter “the incessant urban (re)designs of urban planning agencies” (p. 7). Across all these analyses, Shapiro “works to unsettle the interpretive practices that obscure a pervasive discontinuity, that between egalitarian pretensions and the realities of structures of domination and exclusion... emphasiz[ing] how those texts make visible and audible—in short, enfranchise—politically disqualified persons and assemblages in order to lend them civically relevant recognition” (p. 17).

A striking, but mostly implicit, aspect distinguishing Shapiro's work here is the signal influence of Jacques Rancière, someone whom Shapiro is comfortable “thinking with” (to borrow Deleuze and Parnet's phrase, as he does). Key insights from Rancière, such as the axiomatic premise of equality and the configuration of the distribution of the sensible, are essential if underthematized in the analysis. Even the title *Aesthetics of Equality* fittingly suggests the book's intervention into the broad and significant field of the “politics of aesthetics” (p. 17), a field that owes much to Rancière and his own book of that title. Yet that title, *Aesthetics of Equality*, belies the specificity and novelty of the approach Shapiro adopts in concentrating on the form and not merely the meaning of the aesthetic texts and contexts he analyzes. By “being attentive to aesthetic form in a variety of artistic genres that challenge institutionalized accounts of history” (p. 6), Shapiro charts a fresh course through a thicket of problems continually confronting work in political science and political theory (as well as American studies and cultural studies) that takes film, literature, and other cultural texts as objects of analysis. It is the problem of how to establish and draw links between (a) the specific texts, the particular narratives, and the singular characters in these texts and (b) the larger social, political, cultural, and economic issues and contexts that political theorists address.

Shapiro's attention to “compositional form” is quite consistent with Rancière's elemental concept of the partition of the sensible, the visible, and the sayable. One telling insight into the question of method and stakes appears at the conclusion to the introduction, where Shapiro quotes Rancière: “Literary fiction—or avowed fiction in general—is not so much the object that social science has to analyze as it is the laboratory where fictional forms are experimented as such and which, for that reason, helps us understand the functioning of the forms of unavowed fiction at work in politics, social science or other theoretical discourses” (quoted on p. 17, from Jacques Rancière, “Fictions of Time,” in *Rancière and Literature*, ed. Grace Hwellyer and Julian Murphet, 2017). This is a remarkably fecund statement about the significance of fictional form(s) for the study of politics and social science. More contextualization and argumentation, perhaps in a conclusion, about the significance of this

framing would have been most welcome and provided a good addition to this otherwise excellent contribution.

In terms of tradition (or perhaps even counter-tradition), Shapiro's work supplies an instructive contrast to dominant approaches in the field of cultural studies focused on content and reception. Although there is much work in cultural studies and elsewhere focused on content and meaning, this book's attention to form provides a studied and useful contrast. Shapiro's close attention to the structuring significance of form leads him to the essential insight that "what [an aesthetic object] contributes is less its 'meaning' than the unsettling impact of the way it constructs a micro-world of associations" (p. 6). The centrality of this attention to the politics of compositional form, together with the nimble deployment of Rancière's insights into equality and disruption, allows *Aesthetics of Equality* to delineate an alternative and productive trajectory for the political study of culture.

### **A Commonwealth of Hope: Augustine's Political**

**Thought.** By Michael Lamb. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2022. 448p. \$39.95 cloth.

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In *A Commonwealth of Hope: Augustine's Political Thought*, Michael Lamb offers a compelling and timely defense of the virtue of hope, presenting Augustine as a significant resource for those who seek to foster political community today. Joining a set of political theorists who seek to push back against Augustine's otherworldly, antipolitical reputation, Lamb makes a strong case that Augustine held a far more nuanced attitude toward political life than is often assumed. By engaging with Augustinian realists, Augustinian communitarians, and democratic critics of Augustine, Lamb offers a major contribution to the work of rehabilitating Augustine as a vital interlocutor for those seeking to promote good citizenship today.

Given how damaging the modern binary of optimism and pessimism has been to civic life, Lamb's central argument is that Augustine's conception of virtuous hope can enrich our political imaginations and help us avoid cycling between presumptuous optimism and despairing pessimism. What is more, by focusing on the aspirations that members of a political community can share, he offers a way through the tensions that constrict political collaboration today. Although Lamb's argument is squarely rooted in Augustine's texts, his vision is also inspired by contemporary concerns. Deeply interested in fostering civic collaboration across differences, Lamb presents an Augustinian vision that encourages "convergence around common goods without assuming neutrality or requiring citizens to deny their religious commitment," citing Jeffrey Stout as a particular inspiration in this effort (pp. 270,

258). Like Eric Gregory, he makes the case that Augustine's posture toward politics has more resonances with contemporary thinkers than is often assumed, drawing connections, for example, between Augustine's "default and challenge structure of reasoning" (p. 75) and Cass Sunstein's model of "incompletely theorized agreements" (p. 186). For Lamb, Augustine's theory of virtuous hope offers a viable alternative to a Rawlsian public reason model. If citizens cannot share dominant ends, they can perhaps share civic hope—and work together to foster a culture imbued with that virtue.

Lamb's argument proceeds carefully and incorporates an impressive swath of Augustinian texts. He begins by making the astute observation that too much of the twentieth-century tradition of interpreting Augustine's politics has been read through Luther. It also has been insensitive to Augustine's rhetoric and focused on a too-narrow set of texts. By addressing these deficiencies to a political science audience, Lamb provides a real service to the field.

*A Commonwealth of Hope* proceeds in three parts. The first focuses on hope as a virtue that counters both presumption and despair. In it, Lamb lays out Augustine's theology of hope, anticipating his later application of its scaffolding to the civic virtue. Notably, by fleshing out hope's position as the middle term between faith and love, he foreshadows his later contention that civic hope can be the most fruitful meeting point for citizens with ostensibly different faiths and loves; shared hopes can perhaps make apparent loves that diverse citizens did not know they shared. Significantly, Lamb also pivots from an understanding of Augustinian faith as propositional to what he calls relational faith, as more to do with trust in persons than assent to dogma. Although I am not sure Augustine would separate or oppose these, Lamb's distinction will become important to his argument later, when he applies the structure of Augustine's theory of hope to politics: if faith is about trusting in one's fellow citizens, and faith is the source of hope, then civic trust is a necessary foundation for civic hope.

In the second part, Lamb turns to the rhetoric of hope. Here, Lamb appeals to Pierre Hadot's insight that ancient philosophical texts cannot be read as if they were communicating "abstract propositions" because they were designed to shape, lead, and eventually transform their readers (p. 119). Showing the diverse rhetorical methods that Augustine uses to "instruct, delight, and move" (p. 122) his audience, Lamb provides strong evidence that the *City of God* is not an antipolitical treatise. Perhaps the most significant aspect of Lamb's intervention here is his focus on *City of God's* book 22. Showing how major interpreters of Augustine have plucked one of its most negative passages out of context, he places the passage within what he calls Augustine's "structure of encouragement" (p. 148). By revealing the arc of Augustine's rhetoric, which is designed to challenge both presumption and despair, Lamb helps