means that voters in economically stagnant regions reward divisive messaging that targets their grievances. Talisse's account is so psychologically driven that he misses the importance of institutions. Citizens in his book instead come across as oddly free-floating, as if their behavior isn't also shaped by the structural circumstances in which they find themselves.

This oversight is especially unfortunate considering the short shrift given to deliberative innovations, such as citizens' assemblies and minipublics, despite some recent high-profile studies that confirm that—with the right scaffolding—polarization can indeed be reversed, contrary to Talisse's expectations (see, e.g., James Fishkin, Alice Siu, Larry Diamond, and Norman Bradburn, "Is Deliberation an Antidote to Extreme Partisan Polarization? Reflections on 'America in One Room,'" *American Political Science Review* 115, no. 4 [2021]: 1464–81). In my view, such experiments are a more viable path forward than Talisse's recommendation that an already highly polarized electorate do its best rendition of Plato's philosopher-king, keeping politics at arm's length while searching from within for answers. If Talisse is correct, and we are now so polarized that we see political opponents as an existential threat, why would asking us to occasionally pause and self-reflect from within our established bubbles not just produce more of the same? If anything, Talisse's commitment to virtues like civility and public-mindedness should place him squarely in the deliberative democracy camp, pushing for institutional reform.

In sum, Robert Talisse's *Sustaining Democracy* is a valuable examination of the psychological drivers of political polarization. As a diagnostic exercise, Talisse's efforts are sure to be welcomed by specialist and nonspecialist audiences alike. But given the precarious state of our democracies, and the pressing need for solutions, one hopes that *Sustaining Democracy* is the second installment of an eventual trilogy.

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Peter J. Ahrensdorf: *Homer and the Tradition of Political Philosophy: Encounters with Plato, Machiavelli, and Nietzsche*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022. Pp. x, 324.)

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Peter J. Ahrensdorf's *Homer and the Tradition of Political Philosophy: Encounters with Plato, Machiavelli, and Nietzsche* is an exciting yet careful reading of Homer's influence on political philosophy. Ahrensdorf's "catalogue of books," to speak Homerically, already contains a few about Greek literature

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(and one on Homer) and its relationship to politics, and this new volume is a solid addition to the lot. Like the earlier *Homer on the Gods and Human Virtue: Creating the Foundations of Classical Civilization*, this work reconstructs the ancient poet's criticism of the divine. The work is also a dialogue: it treats the interpretations and maybe misinterpretations of Homer's teaching in Plato, Machiavelli, and Nietzsche.

One of the central contentions of the book, and the upshot of a carefully argued first chapter, is that Homer is an educator. Homer offers, for those who have ears to hear, an education that is "humane" and impious relative to the pieties of the Greeks who would have been Homer's auditors. For at first glance, what the *Iliad* shows is a world in which the gods, the Olympian Pantheon, are "actively present" (29) and intervene in the lives of men, perhaps even for the best. But what Homer covertly demonstrates is that divine providence is rent by contradictions, and so what Ahrensdorf calls "human providence" (20, 53) is perhaps more trustworthy. Humans would be foolish to rely on gods like Zeus whose power is "limited" (47), not being able to change their own natures or make men immortal. It is this gap between their respective natures, mortal and immortal, that prevents the gods from showing authentic care for humans, whose sorrows are unintelligible to the carefree (80) and comic gods. If the true nature of the gods were understood, humans would instead prefer to trust each other and themselves rather than the gods.

In the second chapter, Ahrensdorf moves from Homer's destruction of conventional pieties to a discussion of the substance of the Homeric education. There are two "heroes" or figures to emulate, according to Ahrensdorf's interpretation of the Homeric education: one is Achilles, the other Homer himself. Achilles is exemplary within the Homeric education because he gives up trust in the gods in favor of self-reliance. This change is demonstrated in the climactic scene between Achilles and Priam, in which both men deviate from divine guidance and trust their own judgment, with the result that Priam's son Hector receives a proper burial. Not only does Achilles trust in human providence, but he also has a partially philosophical nature, as he questions the goodness of social honor and responsibility, notably in his famous remarks on death in book IX. But Achilles, the humane skeptic, "points" (102) beyond himself to Homer, whose skeptical judgments of the divine (102–7), scientific observation of the battlefield (107–7), and naturalistic similes (117–24) betray a truly philosophical temper, the only pure one in the poem. Homer, it turns out, is the real figure to emulate.

The remaining half of the book, roughly, is given over to a discussion of both Plato and Homer, their *agon*, and the fallout from this contest. The claim here is that Machiavelli and Nietzsche reject certain aspects of Plato's criticism of Homer, seeing as they do much of value in Homer's work that Plato's criticism may paper over. In Ahrensdorf's reconstruction, Plato's critique of Homer goes like this: Homer "overestimates" human reason's capacity to achieve its own good (143). Homer's critique of the gods and embrace of

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skepticism are just too radical. Achilles, the major figure in the Homeric education, is overly passionate and only comes to see "reason" after the bitter "experience" (169) of lamenting Patroclus' death, making him an unsuitable model for life. The final word of judgment Plato offers on Homer is that the poet "hid himself" too well. In effect, "we know Homer only through his mind" (178), not through any habits that he left to posterity via an image of himself in his own poems, an image that is unfortunately missing (182). What Plato's alternative education, founded in the image of a pious Socrates (191) in the dialogues, offers is habituation in the Socratic lifestyle, in which moderation and courage mutually support the exercise of reason.

The final two chapters in the book present Machiavelli and Nietzsche's rejection of the Platonic reforms to Homer's education. In chapter 4, Ahrensdorf argues that a singular influence on Machiavelli's thought is Homer's Achilles, the humane skeptic we encountered above. In Machiavelli's account, Achilles is said to show the political *virtuouso*'s need to use both the " 'the beast and the man' " (208). It is the active and political Achilles whom Machiavelli offers as a model for imitation rather than the "apolitically contemplative" type of the philosopher, like Socrates and Plato (198–99). Machiavelli's Achilles is thus slightly at odds with Homer's more philosophical Achilles, whose life points to a real "tragic conflict between virtue and happiness" (223) that Machiavelli seems to think is avoidable. Just as in Homer, however, Machiavelli's praise of action is subtly accompanied by world-weary contemplation, a philosophical streak "hidden" in Machiavelli (246).

Although it seems correct that Achilles is an important figure in Machiavelli's thought, one wonders whether Homer plays the same size role in Machiavelli's imagination. There does not seem to be definite evidence that Machiavelli read the *Iliad* (Ahrensdorf deals with this possibility at 194n2, suggesting that there is not "direct" but circumstantial evidence Machiavelli knew Homer's work). Ahrensdorf does take pains to show that Machiavelli's "Achilles" is based on the portrait of the warrior in Homer's *Iliad*, despite there being no direct reference to Homer in Machiavelli's work (209). Still, it is apparent that more work is needful on Homer's possible influence on Machiavelli, and this chapter ably advances such a project. (One also wonders if in a similar book a chapter on Thucydides would not be welcome, whose proximity to Plato and Homer is more obvious, and who also sees himself engaged in a contest with the great poet, putting himself in dialogue with Homer explicitly in the Archaeology and perhaps implicitly through Pericles in the Funeral Oration.)

Finally, Ahrensdorf scrutinizes Nietzsche's relation to both Plato and Homer. Ahrensdorf brings a fresh perspective on the well-known quarrel Nietzsche picks with Plato by showing that Nietzsche's criticism of Plato is more qualified than typically thought. Like Machiavelli, Nietzsche is disappointed with the incapacity of modern persons to do necessary evil, a symptom, he thinks, of Christianity and Plato, the latter the wind in the

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former's sails. But Ahrensdorf argues that this is only half the story: Nietzsche's relationship to Plato and Homer is "ambiguous" (253). While Nietzsche praises Homer for freeing the ancient Greeks from traditional belief in the gods and giving them the carefree Olympians, Nietzsche does not fully grant Homer the honor of being a "philosopher" (277–78) because he "hid himself." More, the revival of a Homeric culture that Nietzsche appears to hold up as an ideal is impossible, a fact Nietzsche understands well (286–89). And though Nietzsche frequently dresses down Plato, ultimately Nietzsche is "sympathetic" (293) in his critique of Plato, because Plato combines a skeptical, independent streak along with "a moral and religious face or mask" (301). It is this latter component, even if "rhetorical" (301), that Nietzsche finds distasteful in Plato, equivalent as it is to "dogmatism" (297), which suffocates the truly philosophical work of questioning. In the final analysis, however, it is Plato's "open praise" of philosophy (304) that Nietzsche affirms, rather than the hiddenness of "Homer, Thucydides, and Machiavelli" (304). Like the interpretations sketched above, this is a challenging reimagining of the relationships between key thinkers in the tradition of political thought. Taken together, these interpretations make for a very good volume and one that will likely be a valued contribution to the field of political theory and literature.

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Jean-Yves Frétigné: *To Live Is to Resist: The Life of Antonio Gramsci*. Translated by Laura Marris. Foreword by Nadia Urbinati. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021. Pp. xxii, 306.)

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Antonio Gramsci died over eighty years ago shortly after having been granted conditional release from Fascist Italy's prisons. In his influential *Prison Notebooks*, he notes that biography is a vital task, with particular difficulties when dealing with "a personality in whom theoretical and practical activity are indissolubly intertwined." This description obviously fits Gramsci himself.

The English translation of Jean-Yves Frétigné, *To Live Is to Resist: The Life of Antonio Gramsci*, originally published in French in 2017, is particularly timely as recent transformations in capitalism and the current wave of nationalist populism have many looking once again to Gramsci's insights. Of course, there have been many biographies of Gramsci over the decades, and I

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