
Alternatives

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Abstracts

On the Aporetic Borderlines of Forgiveness: Bereavement as a Political Form

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This article focuses on representations of forgiveness as adopted or assumed by processes of collective amelioration experienced in the aftermath of mass atrocity. It seeks to demonstrate how each representative approach to forgiveness captures some of the torment, pain, and suffering of survivor and successor generations, but also that each fails to accommodate the depths and complexities of personal grief and collective mourning. Too often transnational justice in the aftermath of political evil becomes grounded in assumptions of justice, truth, and apology that are severely delimited. Such strategic and theoretical perspectives are insufficiently attuned to the needs of bereavement as a political form because they fail to promote social solace by means of collective atonement on the part of survivor and successor generations who inherit the legacies of sorrow. If political bereavement conducive to collective amelioration is to occur in any one polity, it should be legitimated by a transnational system of “transnational legacy sites,” exclusively devoted to the designation, protection, and intercultural connection of all the many places where political evil may be said to have occurred. **KEYWORDS:** Forgiveness, bereavement, grief, mourning, atonement, borderlines.

The Limits of Liberal-Democracy Promotion

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One of the few unambiguously positive outcomes of the George W. Bush years is a greater interest in the practice of democracy promotion. However, the expansion of scholarship in this area has not been matched by an equal expansion in its scope. There continues to be an overwhelming tendency to focus exclusively on empirical case studies and policy prescriptions, usually informed by a set of unstated liberal assumptions. Nothing is necessarily wrong with this per se. The problem stems from the lack of attention directed toward the larger theoretical and conceptual frameworks that inform and shape these practices. Responding to this state of affairs, this article examines the way certain theoretical tendencies and commitments have helped give rise to many problematic aspects of liberal democracy promotion. It is necessary to challenge the restrictive framework that currently dominates. It is argued that to do so entails rethinking, extending, and pluralizing the way democracy itself is conceived. **KEYWORDS:** democracy, liberalism, democracy promotion, democratization.

Homo Sacer vs. Homo Soccer Mom: Reading Agamben and Foucault in the War on Terror

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In the past decade there have been efforts to understand the war on terror through the writings of Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben. Some analyses reify certain concepts employed by Foucault and Agamben. Others do not accurately represent the actual occurrence of violence at ground level. Without claiming to present a sovereign gaze on the literature and the reading of sovereign violence in places such as Guántanamo, this article argues that there are at least three central elements that philosophers and theorists might want to reconsider in connection with sovereignty, biopower, and subjectivity: that there is a Derridean logic at play between sovereignty and biopower; that there is a connection between sovereignty and subjectivity informed by a “dangerous connection” between power and knowledge; and that sovereignty is informed by a classifying and hierarchizing regime characteristic of a regime of truth. Although Agamben claims to correct Foucault, he betrays important methodological and epistemological elements of Foucault’s work. Nevertheless, there are elements in Agamben’s work that can shape our understanding of a “biopolitical reading” of our contemporary era. **KEYWORDS:** Foucault, Agamben, Biopower, Sovereignty, Guántanamo

Understanding the Histories of Peoples on the Margins: A Critique of “Northeast India’s Durable Disorder”

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This article examines the often misconceived problem of insurgency and various political, social, and law and order problems of northeast India, which Sanjib Baruah calls “Northeast India’s Durable Disorder.” The region has been stereotyped by the post-colonial state of India as a “disturbed area” infested with insurgents and militants. In its attempts to resolve this “durable disorder,” India fails to engage with its underlying causes in the construction of new political boundaries in both the colonial and postcolonial eras. **KEYWORDS:** Insurgency, counterinsurgency, frontiers, borders, cartographic surgery, *Nagalim*, *Zomia*

Negativity and Open-Endedness in the Dialectic of World Politics

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This article illustrates the importance of negativity within the dialectical method, aiming to bring clarity to what has been rendered unnecessarily mystical within recent revisions of dialectics, particular in the conception of “meta-dialectics.” The negative element in dialectics, where in the movement of sublation the subject remains undetermined and nonidentical, is argued to be the productive moment in the dialectical movement that leads to open-ended and ongoing processes of change. The article argues that considerable conceptual difficulties arise if one attempts to counterpose negative dialectics to positive dialectics and particularly in interpretations of Hegel’s *Logic* and Adorno’s *Negative Dialectics* that attempt to do so. The two moments of positivity and negativity are shown to be mutually related. If conceived in this manner, dialectical analysis can provide radical insights into processes of social change in world politics that are, and remain, open ended. **KEYWORDS:** dialectics, world politics, negativity, narrative, Hegel, Adorno
