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NEDERMAN, Cary J. and LAURSEN, John Christian. *Difference and Dissent: Theories of Tolerance in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997. ix + 240 pp. Cloth, \$62.50; paper, \$23.95—Western liberal democracies praise themselves for protecting a full range of differences among individuals and groups. The origin of this ongoing process is thought to be Locke's *Epistola de Tolerantia*. Before the Reformation, it is assumed, "a multiplicity of beliefs was deemed to be dangerous, as well as evil; diversity was, so to speak, the devil's work, and where it existed it was to be stamped out" (p. 1). Yet, although flattering to liberalism, the conceit of a modern liberal discovery of liberty of conscience is both conceptually simplistic and historically misleading. The main virtue of this volume is to challenge this tale of Western political history. The essays presented seek (1) to demonstrate that premodern thinkers generated alternative theories of toleration; and (2) to contribute to a philosophical analysis of tolerance.

A number of contributors successfully challenge the claim according to which the only valid point of departure for a strong theoretical defense of legitimate differences must be some conception of subjective human rights. Contrasting John of Salisbury and Marsiglio of Padua, Nederman argues that "Medieval understanding of rights tended to be subsumed under issues of group identity and functional status . . . Consequently, individual liberty was often filtered through intermediary identities organized according to particular tasks and duties performed within the context of the communal community" (p. 19). Thus, toleration is not a "privilege" granted at the whim of some superior authority but a "necessity" built into the very terms of social interaction. Kate Forhan, in a convincing analysis of Christine de Pizan, establishes that a "theory of toleration can be based on primarily functional grounds" (p. 79). Gary Remer shows that Bodin's theory of toleration is grounded on a positive conception of divine truth rather than on the underlying skepticism of modern liberal arguments. Stephen Lahey's essay on John Wycliff shows how the demands of a theology of Grace and a metaphysical realism can entail the promotion of systematic tolerance.

Yet beyond the question of historical accuracy, this book offers important reformulations of tolerance. Several studies suggest that Turchetti's opposition between "toleration" (which implies the ineliminability of religious diversity) and "concordance" (which implies temporary forbearance but never approval of, or resignation to difference) needs to be revised.

One might wonder, however, whether functionalism can really account for differences, or whether it reduces the other to its particular function within the whole of the social body. Tolerance is limited to those forms of actions and beliefs that do not impinge on the intercommunication of functions among the parts of the community. As Forhan puts it, the discourse of tolerance demonstrates a "willingness to accept otherness *in spite* of itself rather than *because* of difference" (p. 71). Glenn Burgess's essay illustrates this point by showing that the narrow toleration allowed by Hobbes concerns the "duty" of the sovereign rather than the "right" of individuals. There lies a fundamental *aporia*. One cannot call for unlimited toleration without contradiction. Should

we tolerate the intolerants? If one is to answer no, then one is not fully tolerant, if one answers yes, then one's tolerance contributes to intolerance. Thus, tolerance either requires or promotes intolerance. Eventually, it is not clear whether a functionalist account has a better answer to this riddle than a liberal one. Nevertheless, by demonstrating the broad array of theories of tolerance, this book opens promising paths of inquiry for political philosophy.—Pascal Massie, *Vanderbilt University*.

PASSERIN D'ENTRÈVES, Maurizio, and BENHABIB, Seyla, eds. *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity: Critical Essays on The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought. Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1997. 305 pp. Cloth, \$35.00; paper, \$17.00—This collection of ten essays “by a team of leading philosophers, social scientists, intellectual historians and literary critics” (p. 2) aims to critically engage Jürgen Habermas's critique of postmodernism in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Polity Press, 1987). Five of the essays have been previously published, and Habermas's essay, “Modernity: An Unfinished Project,” is also reprinted here. The book also contains a very helpful introduction by Passerin d'Entrèves, and an index.

Among Habermas's criticisms of postmodernism, we find two powerful and familiar points, which apply especially to the thought of Derrida, Foucault, and Lyotard. First, on one reading, postmodernist thought reduces all meaning and truth to the “free play” of signification, and therefore plunges us into a kind of irrational chaos. This epistemological relativism also inevitably leads to the collapse of the distinction between philosophy and literature, a distinction which Habermas wishes to retain. Second, on another reading, perhaps these thinkers are subtly introducing *their own* theory of truth (or set of metaphysical claims) and are thereby contradicting themselves, because (officially) each is opposed to “oppressive, monological reason . . . the belief in transcendental arguments, truth claims . . . a discourse premised on false ideas of theoretical mastery and power” (Christopher Norris, p. 98). In short, Habermas rejects postmodernism as either relativistic, or self-contradictory, and also because it provides no serious analysis of key concepts, namely, language, speech, meaning, and so forth.

All of the essays attempt to deal with these criticisms in one way or another. Fred Dallmayr defends Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger from Habermas's critique, and then offers a critical assessment of Habermas's theory of communicative rationality. Christopher Norris and David Couzens Hoy attempt to defend Derrida, in particular, from Habermas's attack. In an interesting and detailed essay, which includes a fine summary of Foucault's ideas, James Schmidt argues that Foucault can escape the many criticisms of Habermas. On Habermas's charge that Foucault's work condemns us to relativism, Schmidt apparently agrees (p.