



mutually exclusive alignment of authenticity with death and inauthenticity with birth, which seems wholly alien to Heidegger's conception of *Dasein* as always already both thrown and projecting; authenticity may never be pure, but that is not because our natality pulls against our fatedness to death — both are surely complementary aspects of our mortality. He also gives insufficient weight to Heidegger's explicit recognition of the threat death poses to the intelligibility of our being, and so of Being. Division two of *Being and Time* begins with the acknowledgement that death is an impossible possibility; the challenge of how phenomenology might make good on that acknowledgement informs the rest of that division, and so the whole of the project of fundamental ontology. It is therefore hard to agree that *Being and Time* is hamstrung from the outset by its restriction of Being to the domain of human intelligibility. After all, Heidegger begins that book by emphasising that *Dasein*'s openness to beings, and so to Being, is essentially enigmatic.

Stephen Mulhall
New College, Oxford, UK.

Bound by Recognition

Patchen Markell

Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2006, xii + 284pp.

ISBN: 0-691-11382-3.

Contemporary Political Theory (2006) **5**, 494–496. doi:10.1057/palgrave.cpt.9300285

This is one case where a rather less emblematic title would be helpful to give the reader some clues, though it would necessarily be rather long and clumsy. Markell has an ambitious project, namely arguing (in subtly qualified ways) against the liberal paradigm and its relentless encouragement of 'exchanges' of recognition. According to Markell, these are modelled on an ancient paradigm of distributive justice but updated in contemporary theories of multiculturalism and contemporary practices of multicultural politics, including by extension, recent debates and issues in feminist politics and the politics of sexuality. The book is flawlessly written, not overlong, and transgressively engaged with intellectual figures and stock ideas that need just his kind of shake-up. The author's tenacious modesty in defending his downbeat conclusions is thoroughly admirable, and not very much the norm in the literatures through which the book's ideas are developed.

Many readers will enjoy Patchen's very delicate handling of Arendt, Taylor, Aristotle and Hegel, his up-to-date engagement with current scholarship, and



his determination to take some time to explicate concepts of recognition, acknowledgement, sovereignty, tragedy, justice and other topics that he needs to get where he is going. Also there are good discussions of rather less familiar figures, such as Herder, whose shadow still hangs over contemporary accounts of culture and contrasting accounts of agency, according to Markell. When he got to Marx and 'On the Jewish Question', I was thrilled by his discussion of that text *in context*, namely the history of political emancipation for 'the Jews' in Prussia and more widely in liberalizing regimes of the revolutionary era. He presents this not only from the side of 'German' (i.e. Christian) liberalizers, but from Jewish voices engaged from various positions in the debate and struggle. In some ways, though, I found the weaknesses in the Marx section symptomatic of weaknesses in the project as a whole, impressive as it is.

Markell's project comes together very persuasively in his chapter on Kymlicka, multicultural politics in Canada, and liberal theories and practices of multiculturalism more generally, for example he touches on the French 'headscarves' fracas. His target is a liberal fantasy of putting the world to rights through brokered schemes of mutual recognition leading to soluble questions of resource distribution negotiated on the basis of understanding and respect. While in no way belittling the gains that have been made with this model, he finds it ultimately unsatisfactory, arguing that the model itself promotes concepts of sovereign agency and (even) historical redemption that reinscribe the dilemmas and patterns of subjection. Rationalist liberals, he says, need to wake up to realities such as authority, tradition, culture, coercion, passion and emotion, and in doing so, acknowledge their own limitations, and in particular the human finitude, openness, contingency and 'space to move' inherent in the language games of life (pp. 166,183–184). In particular, he says, these fantasies about individual interaction have been projected onto the 'liberal' state, on which subject he could have provided us with some further critical thoughts and examples to do with the current disastrous politics of the 'single hegemon'. Canadian multiculturalism seems a little tame by comparison.

As with other theorists in his mode (e.g. Butler, Laclau, Mouffe, Norval, Brown), Markell calls for pluralization and resistance. Without meaning to detract from his excellent and innovative critical work on Greek tragedy, the master–slave dialectic, Arendtian concepts of action and natality, among others, I am eventually looking in this kind of work for the magical kernel in the (somewhat) mystical shell. In his conclusion, Markell punches out a couple of clear instances of 'acknowledgement' as he sees it. These are (1) reducing the privileges of Christianity in western 'liberal' (and supposedly secular, would-be multicultural) states, and (2) reducing the privileges of heterosexuality (presumably everywhere) — rather than merely going through the motions of 'recognition' in both cases. Doing only that would leave prior issues of



privileged identities and cultures untouched and thus promote fantasies of sovereign decision-making rooted in fixation and control (pp. 2, 181).

What then was my problem with Markell's treatment of Marx, and what does this say about his project? On the one hand, this is not a very big problem, given that Markell writes within a liberal democratic paradigm, and his contact with Marx comes therefore with a text in which Marx engages with that paradigm from his own particular — and particularly dismissive — position. On the other hand, there is a very large problem here that cannot be dismissed by Markell merely by referring to Marx's supposed economic reductionism and 'sovereign' tendency to root political experience in the economic aspects of 'civil society'. Markell fails to register that Marx makes his point — to understandable rage and irritation today — by *quoting* (not just using) anti-Semitic tropes that are projections of what everyone already knew to be distasteful about capitalism onto an outgroup (and then of course helping them 'to live up to this' in their subjection) (p. 127). Also, Markell notes but does not really address, Marx's other major contention in this piece (and throughout his work), namely his claim that religion of any sort is inconsistent with human emancipation because it is inherently irrational. Markell seems to suggest that Marx is simply wrong about this or just on the wrong track (pp. 130–131, 151).

Putting my own problem here in yet another nutshell, economic privilege really does not figure very much in Markell's account (only in a passing reference to 'women's work' as supposedly extra-economic, or in rather vague comments about 'resources'), nor does an argument that economic privilege and subjection *need not* figure directly in his project (p. 179). Given the current state of religiously identified illiberalism today, his silence on that aspect of human language games is also telling. While neither Markell nor anyone else can do all one wants in a work of theory, I think that some acknowledgement of subjection and identity in those terms is due us. Or to put it the other way, liberal literatures characteristically bracket off both capitalism and religion as basically rational or at least controllable aspects of social life — surely an oversight that Markell should be catching, given his project of getting us to expand our tragic horizons and climb down from our control fantasies.

Terrell Carver
University of Bristol, UK.