of them, so as to see whether Oakeshott was more balanced in his account of the conversation between 'practical' and 'historical' individuals.

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Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox, 2nd edition
William E. Connolly
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Originally published in 1991, William Connolly's *Identity/Difference* is frequently cited, together with Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, as a seminal work in agonistic democracy. Influenced by thinkers such as Nietzsche, Foucault, Schmitt and Arendt, theorists of agonistic democracy understand democracy in *political* rather than juridical terms and so aim to provide an account of democracy as ethos or practice rather than institution. Following from this, they emphasize the paradoxical articulation of liberal reason and democratic will, the centrality of conflict to democratic politics, the contingency of identities that are the outcome of this agonistic interaction and the assimilatory tendency inherent in the ideal of consensus.

The explication of these themes in *Identity/Difference* is somewhat oblique since the book begins with what Connolly calls the 'second problem' of evil. The first problem of evil has preoccupied theologians since St Augustine: 'if a god is omnipotent and good, who or what is responsible for evil?' (p. 1). The second problem of evil is inherent to attempts to deal with the first. The presupposition that there must be an agent that is responsible for evil feeds a politics of resentment that seeks to secure identity by 'defining the other that exposes sore spots in one's identity as evil or irrational' (p. 8).

The 'political paradox' that arises from the identity/difference relation, then, is that 'you need identity to act and to be ethical, but there is a drive to diminish difference to complete itself inside the pursuit of identity' (p. xv). While the constitution of identity is dependent on that from which it differs, there is a temptation within the logic of identification to normalize identity and construe difference in negative terms as other.

In the first chapter, Connolly describes this paradox as ethical rather than political. Our ability to distinguish right from wrong necessarily presupposes a 'set of standards of identity and responsibility' but in relying on these we are unavoidably implicated in doing violence to those to whom they are applied (p. 12). Connolly argues that it is impossible to resolve the paradox. But against the temptation to deny it by treating our standards as universal, we should invoke a 'second order ethicality' to sustain an awareness of the paradox (p. 12).

The two paradigmatic strategies through which the paradox is denied are 'conquest' (exclusion) and 'conversion' (assimilation). Both strategies 'erase the threat that difference presents to the surety of self-identity' by construing the political distinction between self and other in ethical terms as that between good and evil (p. 43). The paradox with which Connolly is concerned is 'political', then, in the sense that what is at stake in its negotiation are the terms of inclusion/exclusion of a political community.

However, it is not politics *per se* that gives rise to the paradox but a juridical political morality that obfuscates its political effects by moralising the order it relies on. By contrast, the 'second-order ethicality' Connolly invokes is fundamentally political: it is the capacity to examine those identities that appear as given in terms of how they might otherwise be. While we necessarily presuppose a set of norms in order to act and think in the world, we should not mistake these norms for universal truths but rather politicize them by keeping in view their contingent nature (p. 93).

This politicization of identity is central to the 'democratic negotiation' that Connolly endorses. Against normalization, Connolly argues for a democratic agonism that will 'expose and redress the politics of resentment' (p. 192). In an agonistic democracy, the 'terms of contestation enlarge opportunities for participants to engage the relational and contingent character of the identities that constitute them' (p. 211). Like Mouffe, Connolly understands the practice of democracy as the effort to realise commonality by converting 'an antagonism of identity into an agonism of difference, in which each opposes the other (and the other's presumptive beliefs) while respecting the adversary at another level as one whose contingent orientations also rest on shaky epistemic grounds' (p. 178).

The extent to which this political negotiation of the paradox of identity/difference is to be *democratic* relies ultimately on adversaries' commitment to

what Connolly calls 'agonistic respect' (pp. 166–167). This respect is not predicated on a common source such as the dignity of persons but rather a shared awareness of the contingency of identity. As such, it entails an appreciation of difference as the precondition for the constitution of one's own identity.

The problem for Connolly is that the cultivation of agonistic respect does not appear to provide a basis for overcoming the generalized resentment that drives the strategies of conquest and conversion. Connolly celebrates democratic politics because it conditions awareness of the contingency of our identities. However, when this contingency is related to economic deprivation and political exclusion, the risk of democratic politics is that it can 'intensify the reactive demand to redogmatize conventional identities' (p. 211).

Consequently, Connolly concludes that a reduction in economic inequalities is a precondition for agonistic democracy (p. 212). Yet, as Anne Phillips (1996, p. 144) points out, this begs the question since the politics of identity is most often motivated by a sense of injustice based on the experience of exclusion and deprivation. It is precisely such politics that Connolly wants to avoid.

If a theory of agonistic democracy is to fulfil its promise to revitalize modern politics, it must be able to account for how injustice can be redressed *through* an agonistic politics. Such an account would have to acknowledge the experience of injustice as an important animating force for politics that carries with it *both* the promise of emancipation *and* the risk of fundamentalism.

To my mind, the most promising way to theorize the relation between justice and an agonistic democratic politics is not to base respect entirely on an awareness of the contingency of identities, since this may easily lead to a solipsistic politics. Rather, we should recover the ideal of solidarity — predicated on an awareness of the fragility of the polity or the 'fugitive' moment of democracy, as Sheldon Wolin puts it — as the basis for an intersubjective politics. In this way, we might imagine how to pursue justice through a democratic politics rather than making justice a pre-condition for democratic politics as Connolly (along with the juridical democrats he criticizes) ultimately does.

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The Principle of Fairness and Political Obligation
George Klosko
Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, MD, 2004, xxvii + 204pp.
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George Klosko's well-known book on political obligation, first published in 1992, now appears in a 'new edition' with a new Introduction. The text is otherwise unchanged. I think this is a pity, for, while Klosko's main ideas are quite persuasive, his exposition of them suffers from a number of confusions and contradictions that could have been addressed.

Political obligation, roughly speaking, is the moral obligation of individuals (and other private agents) to obey political authority — to obey the laws of the state, to pay taxes, and so on. Corresponding to this obligation is the right of state agencies to demand and if necessary enforce such obedience — this is the authority of the state. Anarchists, of course, deny that either political obligation or state authority (in the moral sense) exist, so Klosko naturally gives some attention to their views — more specifically, those of so-called 'philosophical anarchists' such as Robert P. Wolff and A. John Simmons. Unlike classical anarchists, 'philosophical' ones don't want to abolish the state, but they do reject political obligation and state authority.

Does 'philosophical' anarchism make sense? The question arises because philosophical anarchists accept (even want) law, and do not assert any unlimited right to break it. That is, individuals should obey the law, if but only if they judge it right to do so. On the other hand, Klosko, as a believer in political obligation, need not and does not assert an absolute obligation to obey. Our political obligation may be outweighed by a stronger conflicting obligation — if, for example, a law violates a fundamental right (p. 66). As Klosko puts it, political obligations are *prima facie*, not 'conclusive'. The difference between Klosko and the philosophical anarchist, presumably, is this: while both will weigh up the moral case for and against obeying a particular law, Klosko, unlike the philosophical anarchist, will give *some* weight to political obligation. The political anarchist in the end acts just as he would if the law didn't exist (though one wonders, then, why he wants it to exist), or at most treats it as an opinion like any other opinion, not as a law.

Another complicating issue for the philosophical anarchist is the fact that the existence of the state can radically alter the moral situation of the individual. This is obvious from what lawyers call *mala prohibita* (contrasted with *mala in se*), that is, actions that would not be wrong were they not so declared by law — for example, driving on the right in the UK, or driving the wrong way in a one-way street, or failing to pay one's due taxes. Presumably the philosophical