merchants), to the development of practices such as keeping written records or using notaries as witnesses to transactions. All in all, the goal was to protect the buyer, who was always at a disadvantage in this environment, by providing some kind of standardization in an era before the standardization of goods existed.

In the end, Romano revives Jacob Burckhardt's old thesis about the Renaissance being responsible for a new birth of self-consciousness and individualism, but with a slightly different nuance. For Romano, this self-consciousness and individualism was due less to self-reflection than it was to the ongoing efforts of merchants both to do business themselves and to judge the character and trustworthiness of those with whom they were trading. Sadly for history, many of the public and artistic admonitions toward honesty and transparency in the marketplace became less prevalent in Italy after the 1440s, due in part to the rise of Renaissance princes (many of whose rises to power could not have borne much honesty or close scrutiny). Still, a morally confused age as ours cannot but benefit by a look back at a time and place when it was agreed that there was such a thing as the common good, and where, in the words of the medieval Italian preacher Bernardino da Siena, "è il bene comune nel mercatare" ("the common good resides in trade").

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Rationalism, Pluralism, & Freedom

Jacob T. Levy

Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2015 (322 pages)

Contemporary political debates on social policies are growing increasingly bitter. Political observers see the different policy positions but often fail to notice the similar language. For example, LGBT activists want the federal government to protect individual LGBT "rights" from local school and associational limitations. Similarly, traditionally minded individuals expect their associational "rights" to be respected. In *Rationalism, Pluralism, & Freedom*, Jacob Levy argues that this dichotomous definition of liberty can be seen throughout the liberal tradition and is destined to remain with us.

Levy posits a fundamental dichotomy within the classical liberal tradition. On one side are thinkers who stress the importance of freedom of association and are comfortable with the resulting societal pluralism. On the other side are those who expect a "congruence" between associations and the state. These thinkers stress the state's importance in legitimating the associations that fulfill politically approved roles. The first section of the book nicely lays out the benefits and costs that flow from each of these perspectives.

The second section provides a helpful historical overview. Levy argues that thinkers could only talk about modern liberalism once the modern state had developed. Therefore, he reads political philosophers in light of then-contemporary political events. Prior to

the modern state, politics was typically local. For example, the Germanic legal norm understood law in personal, as opposed to territorial, terms. Customs were also local, which resulted in a fundamental tension between the local community on one hand and the Church's universal canon law and the monarch on the other.

Levy discusses the "ancient constitution," which was simply the political methods of medieval or early modern Europe. Since early monarchs typically required local help in obtaining revenues, these early political models constrained monarchs. As epitomized by Henry VIII's confiscation of Church property, monarchs began appropriating wealth and power from intermediary associations. Appeals to the ancient constitution were appeals for the prior language of consensus between the monarchs and intermediary institutions.

The theoretical core of Levy's book is found in his contrast between Montesquieu and Voltaire. Levy argues that Montesquieu was not a hidden republican theorist. Montesquieu actually thought that England was not replicable. Instead, French parlements were a better method of protecting local associational liberty against a central government's desire for uniformity. In contradistinction, Voltaire believed that French parlements allowed localized tyranny, necessitating a strong centralized government capable of freeing individuals.

Levy argues that Adam Smith brilliantly exemplified Montesquieu's approach to politics. Smith understood that a "man of system" could enforce uniformity on a local as well as on a broader scale. Similarly, Smith understood that an absolute monarch's centralization could be replicated by democracies.

John Stuart Mill followed in the Voltaire tradition. Mill believed that the state freed weaker individuals from local despotism, which famously included the family structure. Mill believed that progress was more important than democracy, which is why he was comfortable with nondemocratic government that would enforce individual liberties against the cultural wishes of the broader community.

Levy discusses a remarkable number of thinkers as fitting into either of these broad traditions. A partial list of these thinkers includes Burke, Paine, Tracy, Constant, Tocqueville, Lord Acton, and the British pluralists. Levy explicitly notes that he is writing from a European perspective, but he does not ignore relevant American thinkers. For example, Tracy was an important French thinker who was one of the most famous rationalist radical liberals. He argued that the French provinces had willingly given up their liberties in order to obtain greater centralization. Tracy consistently attacked Montesquieu's preference for complexity, diversity, intermediate bodies, and balance of power. Levy notes that Jefferson translated Tracy's book, replaced Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* with it in his reading list, and used Tracy's division of the disciplines when discussing his plans for the University of Virginia.

Levy reflects on the underlying "liberty" dichotomy in the third section of the book. He notes the dangers that flow from thinking from only one of these two perspectives. The classic example of this is Lord Acton. Acton understood the importance of religious freedom and the dangers of state centralization. However, that blinded him when he looked at the American Civil War. His "almost-fawning" letters to Robert E. Lee reveal

a commitment to local government that was so strong as to ignore the evils of slavery. Levy notes that "those same insights led him to analyses of the US Civil War that were not merely wrong, but carefully and thoughtfully wickedly wrong.… I suspect that the lenses through which we look at the social world let us focus on some features especially sharply but at the cost of blurring others."

Charles Taylor has described a fundamental split between thinkers who follow Locke's social contract model and thinkers who were influenced by Montesquieu's historical and sociological model. Levy explicitly falls on Montesquieu's side of the divide. This explains why he argues that liberalism can only be understood by post-Lockean thinkers. Levy shows a careful reading of Locke, but by using this interpretive technique, he avoids the debate over whether Locke understood the future results of his theory in a manner that might help explain the crisis of modern liberalism. Put another way, Levy prefers the historical "contracts" of early European cities to "social contract" theories.

Levy correctly distinguishes between Locke's appreciation of associations and Hobbes' complete disregard of associations. Levy largely agrees with Charles Taylor's description of Locke as leading directly to later social-contract thinkers who distrust societal pluralism. "The Montesquieuian rests on group life and is social rather than political. The long march toward uniformity is a kind of Lockeanization of Montesquieuian civil society. The norms of thick group life are gradually hollowed out and replaced by the thin, egalitarian, and juridical norms associated at least in principle with the liberal state." However, if Locke does not necessarily lead to this thinning of civil society, then America's application of Lockean theory might be at least one way of harmonizing what Levy believes cannot be harmonized.

Contemporary American political thought is clearly undergoing substantial changes. Americans seem to be moving beyond their Lockean tradition. I wonder if Americans are increasingly adopting a more European understanding of politics. If so, they will increasingly see politics in light of the dichotomy Levy describes. From a political standpoint, any potential Lockean answers may be irrelevant if Americans are no longer interested in studying America's attempt to implement Locke (and Montesquieu!). Reading Locke as allowing precontractual nature to influence postcontractual politics will only be relevant for Americans who find early American political thought to be appealing. Levy's book is an important addition to the literature. His historical summary will be enlightening, particularly to those of us who have spent too much time in the theoretical ivory tower. Moreover, he specifically interacts with contemporary debates in political philosophy. This is particularly helpful for those who are being introduced to many of these debates. For example, Levy's interpretive disagreement with Paul Rahe on how to read Montesquieu would make for an outstanding class topic.

Western politicians often call for increased diversity, but those same politicians typically fail to describe what they mean. What kind of diversity is desired and what kind of individual rights should be connected to that diversity? Will there be room for orthodox Christians in this newly "pluralistic" world? Levy nicely shows two different approaches to

this question and suggests that there can be no synthesis between them. The contemporary debate over LGBT policies indicates that increasing numbers of Americans agree with him. Particularly for those of us who understand our faith in corporate terms, Levy's book is a wakeup call. Failure to understand both of Levy's theoretical perspectives on liberty might well result in our being "liberated" from the practice of our faith.

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Bourgeois Equality: How Ideas, Not Capital or Institutions, Enriched the World

Deirdre Nansen McCloskey

Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2016 (787 pages)

Deirdre McCloskey's latest tome represents a massive and wide-ranging but coherent defense of a simple, but not always self-evident, idea: "trade-tested betterment" (as she calls successful free markets leading to a mind-numbing increase in well-being) was initiated by a shift in "rhetoric," by which she means an idea. The idea was that bourgeois individuals, men of commerce, ought to receive respect for what they do. This change in attitude in turn led to a more general "Great Revaluation." Free markets, free trade, commerce, profit, making money, and doing business, could be both "prudent" and virtuous.

McCloskey's other two books in this trilogy, *Bourgeois Virtues* (2007) and *Bourgeois Dignity* (2011), laid the groundwork for this final volume, though in reality each one can stand on its own. All three are massive in terms of drawing from many current or recent works on economics, economic history, or economic thought. This last one runs 787 pages including endnotes, bibliography, and index. Through all three run the themes of a Great Revaluation of what McCloskey calls the *bourgeois*—a historically rooted term for businesspeople and innovators as distinct from aristocrats or nobility.

McCloskey's historical argument is actually more complex than it first appears. She argues, first, that trade and commerce have been taking place for thousands of years. Those who argue that *capitalism* (a term she dislikes) began late, sometime between 1300 and 1700 or so, are therefore mistaken. What changed was not trade but the general attitude toward it. It happened in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, according to McCloskey; not because Europeans were innately better, more virtuous, or more creative, but because certain other features were also present in parts (not all) of Europe that were not present elsewhere. These features included a greater commitment to freedom, to individualism, and to what the title of the book alludes—*equality* (in this case not only of trade but also of legal and political equality that grounded other equalities). Leaving people to fashion their own lives as they saw fit was not completely new but became a more widespread idea and practice in places such as England, Scotland, and the Netherlands. In partial (but not complete) opposition to other scholars, for McCloskey the results of trade-tested betterment were not caused primarily by producing more things