

enables us to be privy to the discussion and thereby the wisdom of the past, inviting us to become interlocutors with thinkers of former epochs, and thus to engage them as dialogical partners in our own philosophic thinking. Students and scholars alike should be grateful to Sonenscher for making the past so vividly present.

**Democracy for Busy People.** By Kevin J. Elliott. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2023. 256p. \$35.00 paper.  
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When I first saw the title of Kevin J. Elliott's new book, I thought that it might be a handbook or instruction manual for harried American citizens who need all the help they can get in navigating contemporary politics. Rather than a primer for busy people, the book is instead a deep examination of a key challenge faced by Americans (and really, citizens of any democracy): their busyness. The book then argues that we should take seriously the busyness of its citizenry when making institutional choices.

It is altogether too easy for engaged citizens, especially those with specialized training in the field of political science, to ignore the costs in time and attention that are needed to be truly informed. Or, perhaps worse, for those who are highly engaged to dismiss our fellow citizens as simply being unwilling to partake of understanding.

But, of course, the reality is that even the most highly engaged of citizens often find themselves inadequately informed given the finite time that even political professions can devote to understanding government and politics at all levels in the United States. How many of even the most focused political scientists can truly say they are sufficiently knowledgeable about every office or candidate on America's often very, very long ballots? As *Democracy for Busy People* notes, we are all making choices about how much of our time and attention we are willing to allocate to the moral economy of democratic citizenship.

At a bare minimum, Elliott's work is to be commended for making a very strong case for taking into consideration the costs just in time alone associated with being an engaged citizen. And, more importantly, drawing attention to the notion that these costs ought to be part of the conversation about when institutional design choices are made.

Key to his position is that he views "democratic citizenship...as an office—an institutional position with formal and informal powers, burdens, demands, and expectations" (17). He differentiates this from seeing citizenships simply as a status. If busyness can detract from the ability of ordinary citizens to adequately fulfill their

obligations as citizens, then the system should be reformed to better allow for such participation.

The book is divided into two parts. The first makes a series of arguments about democratic citizenship. This section makes an important contribution to the democratic theory literature by raising the issue of time and attention and noting that "busyness is often the *currency* of disadvantage" (5). Some of us have more time than others to be engaged with politics, and that fact needs to be taken seriously when evaluating the quality of democracy. Inherent in this observation is the acknowledgment that the distribution of time and attention is not equal, and therefore addressing these inequities is a matter of justice.

The second part moves to institutional questions, looking specifically at term length and the role of political parties. It also directly addresses the deliberative democracy literature.

If, as the first section of the book argues, it is true that the system ought to take seriously the unequal distribution of time and attention, the design of the system ought to take this into account. For example, automatic or same-day voter registration would be two ways that would diminish time costs. Likewise, being mindful of the timing and number of elections.

Elliott's most controversial recommendation in this area is one-year terms of office, so as to induce more interest in the population. "Shorter terms make representatives more dependent upon their constituents by cutting down the slack that can grow within the representative relationship" (145). On the one hand, the notion of a more consistent feedback loop makes sense in terms of incentivizing citizens to pay attention. On the other, it does raise questions about the demands of time of constant campaigns and elections.

Elliott is quite correct in suggesting that political parties could do more to act as signaling devices to help busy citizens make choices. As he notes, parties provide a signaling device that helps busy citizens make better choices. Parties enable "citizens to both efficiently and effectively monitor what is happening in politics and to step in when they understand their interests are at stake, or when political need requires it" (169). Parties are, therefore, a time-saving device in representative democracy because they link candidates, issues, and interests with identifiable labels that make it quicker and easier for voters to make choices.

The comparative look at multiparty versus two-party democracy is a timely one given US polarization at the moment. Elliott notes that empirically citizens in multiparty democracies have both higher turnout and higher political knowledge. So while having two parties might seem efficient because there are only two choices, the differentiation of politics into multiple parties provides for better signaling to citizens and increases engagement.

I do think one of the underdeveloped opportunities in the book is a more explicit examination of the long ballot

in the United States and our arguable overabundance of elections. Certainly, this is a true challenge to busy people.

The piece is in dialogue with a number of ongoing conversations with the broad literature on democratic theory.

For example, by taking seriously the notion of the mundane reality that most people are busy, and therefore have finite resources to commit to democratic citizenship, Elliot addresses some long-standing views on apathy. Specifically, he notes that many theorists, like Dahl and Huntington (among others), have argued that lack of participation, or even apathy, on the part of citizens is either a legitimate choice or even a method by which demands on the systems are kept at manageable levels. Elliot argues that apathy means citizens are not fulfilling their basic obligations in a democratic system so argues for ways to make democracy more accessible for the busy instead of endorsing apathy and non-participation.

The discussions of how apathy can lead to instability (such as in support of non-democratic government) is certainly a warning in this present moment in American politics (indeed, globally, as we see a rising tide of illiberalism).

The work also directly engages the literature on deliberative democracy that emerged in 1980s and 1990s (such as the work of Fishkin). Elliot argues, persuasively in my view, that the time demands of the deliberative framework as such that they diminish the chances of citizens broadly engaging in their citizenship.

Overall, the book engages in a deeply theoretical discussion of the role of citizenry, and some of the institutional barriers that stand in the way of those citizens being engaged in democracy. It is also a highly accessible text and an easy read. I believe it is a worthy addition to the current broader discourse on American democracy and is a contribution to the democratic theory literature.

**Hegel's World Revolutions.** By Richard Bourke. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023. 344p. \$29.95 cloth.  
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After Benedetto Croce's landmark 1907 book, *What is Living and What is Dead of the Philosophy of Hegel*, just about every book on Hegel could also have had that title. Richard Bourke's book is the latest in that line. Like many others, he more or less ignores Hegel's speculative logic in favor of looking to Hegel for insight into some pressing problems in political theory. Although it is more typical for scholars in the Marxist tradition in political theory to look to Hegel for guidance, Bourke looks instead to Hegel's "contextualist" and developmental approach to political theory. Moreover, unlike those influenced by Heidegger and by Quentin Skinner's late views about the

goodness of the idea of "Roman freedom," we should follow Hegel's lead and seek to understand why "among other things, political theory is a study in how values become superannuated," (p. 193) and thus "instead of inviting the ancients to speak for us, we need to understand why their patterns of thought became impossible" (p. 280).

To show that, Bourke puts his strengths as a historian and political theorist to good use. Hegel's great theme of history was that of freedom and how, via a very zigzag path, we had arrived at a moment when freedom had turned into the formula for the modern world. In the shorthand Hegel provided for his students, the world and not just Europe had progressed from the idea that one (e.g., the emperor) was free, to some (aristocratic males) were free, all the way to the modern principle that all are free. In the process, societies had developed institutions and practices that made this abstraction into something real in the lives of those living in its shadows. Bourke in effect vouches for this grand view and, among other things, seeks to show how this should provide the proper counterweight to certain contemporary trends in political thought that can only see hidden practices of domination and exploitation behind the modern institutions that Hegel thought made freedom real. To demonstrate this, he gives us an account of Hegel's world revolutions, of the history of the reception of Hegel's thought, and of Hegel's own development, offering a kind of "Hegelian" critique of the various contemporary attempts to come to terms with history in political theory found in the Cambridge School (John Dunn, J.G.A. Pocock, Skinner) and the Frankfurt School (Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Jürgen Habermas).

Against the obvious charge that any such a view nowadays is absurdly optimistic, Bourke retorts that "despite his reputation for premature optimism, Hegel's verdict was a product of profound scepticism" (p. xv), and that the actualization of freedom in the modern world was hard fought and remains fragile. This requires us to take Hegel in a reduced form which keeps the limitations of Hegel's own circumstances in full view. Although Marx is not his specific guide to those views, Bourke nonetheless takes Marx's basic question—"How do we stand as regards the Hegelian dialectic?"—as having to do with "the overarching Hegelian vision rather than just Hegel's method of proceeding" (p. 193). By and large, having that "vision" means looking to the big view of history as the slow and incremental development of the world ever so gradually moving to the position of the freedom and equality of all. (Marx himself, of course, thought it was about revolution and its necessary concomitant violence.)

It is not clear just how Hegelian this "overall vision" Bourke defends really is. Along with two other great nineteenth century thinkers—J. S. Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville—Hegel worried about how and whether freedom could be actualized, and all of them shared certain worries about the character of the new citizens of that