ROUTLEDGE INNOVATIONS IN POLITICAL THEORY

Michael A. Weinstein

Action, Contemplation, Vitalism

Edited by
Robert L. Oprisko and Diane Rubenstein

Michael A. Weinstein

This book is a major reassessment of Michael Weinstein's political philosophy. It situates his singular contribution, designated as "critical vitalism," in the context of both canonical American and contemporary continental theory. Weinstein is presented as a philosopher of life and as an American Nietzsche. Yet the contributors also persuasively argue for this form of thinking as a prescient prophecy addressing contemporary society's concern over the management of life as well as the technological changes that both threaten and sustain intimacy. This is the first full scale study of Weinstein's work which reveals surprising aspects of a philosophic journey that has encompassed most of the major American (pragmatic or vitalist) or Continental (phenomenological or existential) traditions. Weinstein is read as a comparative political theorist, a precursor to post-structuralism, and as a post-colonial border theorist. A different aspect of his *oeuvre* is highlighted in each of the book's three sections. The opening essays comprising the "Action" diptych contrasts meditative versus extrapolative approaches; "Contemplation" stages a series of encounters between Weinstein and his philosophic interlocutors; "Vitalism" presents Weinstein as a teacher, media analyst, musician, and performance artist. The book contains an epilogue written by Weinstein in response to the contributors.

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
NEW YORK AND LONDON

First published 2015
by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

and by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record for this book has been requested.

ISBN: 978-1-138-01308-7 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-315-79546-1 (ebk)

Typeset in Sabon
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

To our “beloved colleagues,” Maureen and Philip.

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Foreword

Deena Weinstein

I will not break the semipermeable membrane of privacy that surrounds our intimacy of more than a half century of shared life. Discussing Michael Weinstein's cooking, lovemaking, driving, companionship, and sweet temperament is beyond the scope of this book. Relevant and most importantly, we have shared an intellectual life from the beginning. Our coauthored books and articles are outcroppings of that intellectual life, which has been a major focus of our constant conversations. Michael often tells me that we are a "theory collective," among other things. In that regard, I want to highlight a couple of features of his philosophical practice.

Michael is a living philosopedia. There is no need for books or the Internet when he is around. How does he do it? The answer is by intensive work. I've seen him read 400-page books and be satisfied coming out with but one insight buried on one page. I've seen him copy in his illegible handwriting whole chapters of books. He spent one entire summer copying Whitehead's *Process and Reality* word for word and writing glosses on each paragraph, self-consciously imitating a medieval commentator—and he never turned that work into his own public writing. He is not satisfied until and unless he understands as fully as he possibly can the text he is addressing and makes it his own—part of what he calls his "home discourse." That is why he never forgets writers' names and their ideas and arguments. "Love Piracy" is very hard work, but Michael loves doing it. He is the most perceptive reader I have ever met; he has learned how to separate the textual gold from the dross.

Related to his distinctive hermeneutics, Michael is everybody's homie. I see supermarket clerks look thrilled when they see him; he always finds some way to have philosophical conversations with them. He does that with everyone, no matter what their background or station, from the underclass to the most educated intellectuals and everyone between. He takes their point of view and then works to engage them in dialogues of joy and fresh insight. He is the model of the aristo-democrat.

As a philosopher, Michael never writes or says anything he hasn't first lived. I have witnessed him form, live, and keep developing his philosophy—and that has been a most privileged experience.

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Acknowledgments

It is entirely in keeping with the appreciative philosophy that is the subject of this book that we offer our acknowledgments to those people and institutions that have contributed to its realization. Michael Weinstein, the subject in so many senses of this book, has inspired and sustained this project with his philosophic friendship. Deena Weinstein cheerfully contributed whatever needed to be tracked down—whether photographically, bibliographically, or biographically—with her distinctive wit and insight.

This book was developed out of a short course, "Critical Vitalism: Inspirations and Innovations from Michael A. Weinstein," held at the 2013 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in Chicago, Illinois. We thank APSA for facilitating the congenial meeting of the contributors. Some participants would like to acknowledge Iwan Ries for their conference hospitality and forbearance for philosophic banter.

Further thanks go to Routledge and our editor Natalja Mortensen, whose early enthusiasm for the project and continual support greatly contributed to its actualization. We also thank Deepti Agarwal.

Purdue University Press granted permission to use the cover art from *Meaning and Appreciation: Time and Modern Political Life* (1978). *Garowe Online* and *Theoria and Praxis* extended similar generosity in granting permission explicitly or via the Creative Commons attributions license to use excerpts from previously published material authored by Michael or by other commentators on his work.

This book would not have been possible were it not for Purdue University and its Department of Political Science. Several of the book's contributors comment on the paradoxical propinquity of radical thought in such a "hotbed of student rest." As all of the contributors have shared a collective history at Purdue, whether as undergraduates, graduates, or colleagues, we acknowledge teachers, mentors, and friends: Berenice Carroll, Rosalee Clawson, Robert Melson, Louis Rene Beres, Harry Targ, William McBride, and Traci Emerson and those transdisciplinary supports in the departments of American Studies and English and the program in Philosophy and Literature.

However, this book would not be *thinkable* were it not for the generations of Weinstein students whose creativity, generosity, and infinite kindness

are the best commentary one could offer on the vitality of Michael's life philosophy.

The development of this book benefitted from institutional support from Butler University, with special thanks to Jay Howard, Pam Crea, Manish Gupta, Steve Prothero, Victoria Rose, and Kathy Mallon for their personal support and to Luke Perez, Michael DiGregorio, Murray Bessette, Alexander Wendt, and Sergei Prozorov for their inspiration. Thanks go as well to the Yale Club of New York City for providing spaces for quiet reflection and writing, and to Cary Howie and Marine Baudrillard for their scintillating conversation. We hope that this book will, in turn, provide a structure of intellectual and academic support for those who represent the next generation of Weinstein scholars, including Kirstie Dobbs, Kathryn Cleary, Robert Fenton, Emma Meyer, and Aviral Pathak.

We would not be honoring the embodied pleasures of finite existence if we did not thank our life companions: Maureen Yann and Philip and Rachel Protter.

1 Michael Weinstein's Posthumous Thought for Our Times
An Introduction

Robert L. Oprisko and Diane Rubenstein

> . . . there can be no encounter with Weinstein's political thought that is not at the same time a larger encounter with the historical trajectories of twentieth century experience, and by approximation, with the quickly enfolding futures of the twenty-first century.
>
> Arthur Kroker, "Nietzsche for Our Times"[1]

This book is a critical affirmation of the work of Michael Weinstein. It has multiple purposes: the proximate project of tracing a line through a philosophic itinerary, sharpening our sense of his distinctive contribution to American political thought. But we also seek to resituate him as a comparative political theorist, engaged with non-Western thought and nations such as Somalia, as a border theorist *avant la lettre*, and as a homegrown critic of governmentality. This would be the *rhizomatic* acknowledgment of his nomadic thought as it traverses geographic, temporal, and disciplinary boundaries. Weinstein's *oeuvre*, a term capacious enough to include his published writings in all their venues—books, print and electronic articles, weekly photography criticism for *New City*, art catalogues—as well as performance art, music, and teaching, enacted or, more accurately, *fleshed out* the philosophic personae: border savage, a "Latin in Saxon skin" or the "civil savage as monkey playing in the culture jungle." Weinstein is a political theorist of the body, first singing it as "electric," now rapping its digital modalities. These were all manners of reformulating finalist ontology capable of addressing the hatred of existence or *ressentiment*, all too often the default form of being under neoliberal rule.[2] The intellectual portraits drawn by the contributors to this volume, former students from the late sixties through to the present, who have not ceased drawing upon his teachings, argue for a reading or rereading of Weinstein as avowed avatar of posthuman/postcivilized thought, a postcursor to Nietzsche's adage that "We are fully posthumous beings." As all such posthumous beings, his time has only just arrived, quickened with renewed interest in vitalism/philosophies of life, anarchism, new materialisms calling for attentiveness and care

to all aspects of the material world, speculative realisms, thing theory, transhumanism, and the search for new political ontologies.

Weinstein's conceptual contribution can be designated as *critical vitalism*. Critical vitalism is an evolution of classical vitalism, concurring in its partisanship for life and lived experience. However, he blends Sartrean and Bergsonian traditions, engaging with the structure of being from the body/self of the individual. The critical element of Weinstein's vitalist ontology is in his focus on proceptive drive(s) in lieu of propulsive *élan vital*, as Justin Mueller will detail in Chapter 4.

Critical vitalism embraces life as tragedy. Weinstein details the torment that individuals experience as unified beings often of two or more minds. Weinstein believes man to be trapped in agonic contradiction, seeking both the logical structure of the Cartesian *cogito* and the freedom brought by rejecting simple narratives and singular structures of Pascal. He writes,

> And who am I? I am a contingent being . . . I know who I am! I am a dependent being, independent of neither organizations nor other human beings . . . I am relative . . . My circumstances can only be saved by eliminating them . . . my own theory of history tells me that the person is more significant than any theory of history. . . . Agony is not a choice, but the element that defines personality.[3]

This philosophy emphasizes the contingent nature of the individual and the groups, societies, and relationships that are formed by collectives of individuals. For Weinstein, everything is situated and positioned in time and space. Nothing is meaningful without context, without seeing how it is experienced relationally. This is the vital element—the requirement that life cannot be understood as such but must be lived. As Camus asserts in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, life's meaning must be constructed through constant and continuous confrontation and revolt.[4] Critical vitalism embraces the passion for life, freedom from devotion to singular abstract narratives, and revolt against philosophical suicide while embracing the failure (as real lived experience) to achieve and maintain ideal situations. Its foundation in historical and temporal contingency reinforces the finitude of perfection.

The book is divided into three sections. The first, "Action," pairs two essays from students framing Weinstein's career at Purdue University: Arthur Kroker (from the Vietnam War era) and Robert Oprisko, a post–9/11 student of the most recent cohort. To remain within the Nietzschean parameters of Arthur Kroker's essay, there is only one sense in which Weinstein is a "last man." Weinstein is the last remaining political theorist in the political science department. Upon the graduation of his last student, Justin Mueller, there will be no more graduate program in that subfield. There is a disquieting if perverse irony that it is Weinstein's own ruthless examination of the *failed* project of American's founding logics of political subjectivication that best explains this trend in American political science departments. It will

thus be in the spirit of Nietzsche that we designate the essays that follow the "Purdue School."[5]

These two essays that comprise this part are poised as a polarity representing two dissymmetrical ways of approaching the Weinstein corpus. The first is an inward meditation, effectively translating Arendtian "negative being," Nietzschean "suicidal nihilism," and Heideggerian "fully completed nihilism" into the quintessentially American philosopher (Weinstein) in his most American of books, *The Wilderness and the City*. As such, this chapter presents a narrative of the death of life philosophy in American modernity. Oprisko's chapter, while equally attentive to the nuances and theoretical challenges of Weinstein's work, is an example of what Fredric Jameson would call "cognitive mapping," detailing affinities as well as tensions with theorists working from a Bohrian epistemology such as Karen Barad, Slavoj Zizek, Alain Badiou, and Gilles Deleuze. What both introductory essays share is an appreciation of Weinstein's revolutionary approach to metaphysics and ontology.

The second section of the book, "Contemplation," stages a series of theoretical encounters between Weinstein and other theorists, American, European, and Mexican, who have proved critical interlocutors in the formulation of his life philosophy. These essays demonstrate Weinstein's methodology of "love piracy": extracting the precious bits that can be useful to his project without subjecting himself to the superegotic injunctive to take everything else that went along with it. This practice is congruent with what Barthes and other French theorists have referred to as "*bricolage*": it is what Guattari calls "being an ideas-thief" and what Deleuze, borrowing from Guattari, references as theory as a "tool kit.[6]" What emerges from these engagements occasioned by writings such as *Wilderness and the City*, *The Polarity of Mexican Thought, Finite Perfection, Culture/Flesh*, or a dedication found at the beginning of the 2006 book on Oliver Wendell Holmes is a singular *American* philosopher who is also a thinker of the border.

The third section, "Vitalism," comprises essays that address pedagogy in the larger sense of institutional practices. This takes the form of an extended meditation on a concept, "defensive life," found in *Culture/Flesh* remotivated in relation to the political and classroom realities of the nineties. There is, in addition, a collective portrait and appreciation by one of Weinstein's earliest undergraduate students. Two essays further demonstrate Weinstein's pedagogic role as public intellectual as they take up different media (use of the Web, blog posts, his band performances and lyrics) in the context of non-Western societies (Somalia, Islam). A concluding essay reflects upon the Weinstein seminar experience as an instance of Guattarian transversality.

Arthur Kroker, in "Nietzsche for Our Times: Three Meditations," specifies the singularity of Weinstein's intellectual contribution: *at once*, a *political philosopher* charting modern individualism's ambivalent trajectory, an *existentialist* on questions of human autonomy and freedom, a *finalist ontologist* on matters of social justice, a *tragic thinker* attendant to melancholy,

and finally, a *passionate dissident* advocating for the marginalized, invisible, and excluded. This would make Weinstein's deconstruction of the individual in its American philosophic vernacular a contribution to the history of ideas as well as metaphysics. But Kroker—and, by extension the authors in this volume—argues that its import is neither past nor present, but in a Nietzschean futural mode, it is a stunning truly American account of the death of the social, as American society swerves between anhedonia/cultural fatigue/*acedia* and war fever. Rather than the creative cultivation of either Jamesian "inner tolerance" or "unillusioned individualism" (which might be one of the modern gifts of Freudian psychoanalysis), American society is a site of unrelenting hostility, anger, appeals to injury, and forms of *ressentiment*. Kroker brilliantly heralds Weinstein as the interpreter of "backlash," whatever its ideological tendency, as reposing upon what is disavowed concerning the form of American life philosophy: the necessary tropological foundation of USA power. And he situates this "prophetic" thought beyond the two death drives of "transhumanism and anger politics."

Weinstein does not only stage and enact the philosophic eclipse of the modern individual; for he embodies his finalist ontology, as expressed by Kroker's testimony from 1967 antiwar politics that allow interlocutors to fully experience "the life of the mind, how that is, two thousand years of metaphysics—in depth, patient, critical, necessarily undermining, often synoptic, philosophic thought—could be summed up in the grain of a voice and in the political vision that that voice urged its intently listening audience to consider, and once considered, to begin to act on the fateful results of that consideration."[7] Other students from this time such as Kathy Ferguson will note that this activated passionate engagement ironically began at an engineering school more known for its instrumental use of reason.

Robert Oprisko dives into Weinstein's tragic finalist ontology in his essay "Strings: A Political Theory of Multidimensional Reality." Oprisko's "unfaithful interpretation"[8] of Weinstein's oeuvre from the late 1960s through the early 1990s peers into the void of finalist ontology and finds, within that nothing, everything. Using Weinstein's methodologies of love-piracy, agonic doubting from *Tragic Sense of Political Life*, and aspectival totalization from *(Post)modernized Simmel*, Oprisko argues that international relations theory, political philosophy, and ontology are intimately and irrevocably intertwined. Buried deep within all of them is the Heideggerian *mitsein*, the being with, which presupposes Nancy's being singular plural. In an effort to showcase critical vitalism, Oprisko weaves Weinstein's tragic interpretation of sociopolitical structure with Karen Barad's Bohrian epistemology, Alain Badiou's set theory, and Slavoj Zizek's philosophy of failure to produce a unified theory of politics that links the individual to the international, the finite with the infinite, and the particular to the universal. Oprisko's focus on processes and action provides a glimpse of Weinstein's dialectic between the ontological and the ontic, the agonic contradiction that provides the motivation for much of his work.

The next section of the book, "Contemplation," shifts from the synoptic evaluations of a life philosophy to microreadings of specific interlocutors. Justin Mueller's essay, "This Flesh Belongs to me: Michael Weinstein and Max Stirner," presents the existentialist-phenomenological underpinnings of Weinstein's "critical vitalism": a "process-oriented" theory for "concrete durational human beings." Drawing upon some well-known figures such as Henri Bergson, Miguel de Unamuno, and William James as well as some lesser-known ones such as Samuel Alexander and Josiah Royce, Weinstein also critically engages with a "minor" figure of nineteenth-century continental thought, Max Stirner, familiar to most through Karl Marx's line-by-line critique of his masterwork, *The Ego and Its Own*, in *The German Ideology*. Mueller honors Weinstein's deep theoretical debts to both Bergson (intuition) and Unamuno (agonic doubting) in the elaboration of a new methodology that could account for our polemical nature as desirous and finite beings. Max Stirner's concept of "radical self-possession" or "Ownness," which replaces most if not all of the transcendental signifieds—"God, Law, Morality, Rights, Mankind, Society, the State, Freedom"—is built upon a notion of the Unique, *der Einzige*, that has been misunderstood by twentieth-century theorists as either a new regulatory ideal or a negative liberty. Nor is it the self-possession of contract theory. "Ownness" concerns the attempt to free oneself from what is alien to it, ghosts or residues or "spooks." Mueller demonstrates how Weinstein has translated Stirner's ideas into a Nietzschean idiom that can at times be read as a critique of Stirner. However, by reading Weinstein against Weinstein, using his work on Justis Buchler's "proception" (as the "composite, directed activity of the individual") and on love ("sacrifice in the service of love"), Mueller aligns Stirner's with Weinstein's larger project.[9]

Stirner frames the "post-ontological role for pleasure"[10] in Jonathan McKenzie's "Weinstein's American Philosophy: Intimacy and the Construction of the Self." "Ownness" is that which the philosophic self must hold on to in erotic life. McKenzie offers a rereading of Weinstein centered on the concept of intimacy as "a privatist philosophical concept."[11] This is in part a rescue operation from the standpoint of the American philosophic tradition that opposes freedom and commitment (Thoreau), presupposes a burden of "choice" (James), or overgeneralizes eros (Whitman). Weinstein's 2006 book on Oliver Wendell Holmes—its dedication to "his beloved colleague"—as the initial incitement—provides an alternative concept of "disordered volition" that targets individualism's double bind: "in order to strategize one's own inwardness, one has to make demands upon love that intimacy can not supply or keep. In order to sustain one's intimacy, one must sacrifice intimacy."[12] It also addresses the aporetic relation between the condition for public philosophizing/philosophy ("the fact that my life is open to that which differs from myself makes communicable . . . that act of free valuation . . . ") and its private counterpart ("whereas the closure of my life, its intimacy, makes that act personal and unique"[13]). The "positive"

virtue of intimacy here is always deconstructively linked to the possibility of its failure. McKenzie finds within two of Weinstein's most openly Nietzschean books, *Finite Perfection* and *Culture/Flesh* (in which the former text attempts to "rescue the self's capacity for love while maintaining one's integrity" and the latter "transforms the intimacy of availability into the war for pleasure"[14]), the care for the self/self-construction and self-relating that are at the heart of American traditions of thought in ways not imagined by either transcendentalists or early pragmatists.

If McKenzie demonstrates how Weinstein's affirmation of finite life is performed in a spirit of "optimistic pessimism," Melba Hoffer's "Irreducible Ends: Michael Weinstein and the Value of Agony and Happy Pessimism" furthers the discussion of "*pesimismo* alegre" by shifting to other grounds (i.e., ethics) and thinkers—Søren Kierkegaard, Miguel de Unamuno, Jose Vasconcelos, and Antonio Caso—that pose a different American problem of dissent. Weinstein and Kierkegaard share the following affinities: the tension between *eros* and *agape*; the positive valuation of anxiety; and the centrality of agonistic doubting to authentic existence, a "vital self-contradiction." This implies a virtue approach to ethics as opposed to a consequentialist or deontological one. A combination of agonistic doubting from Unamuno and an ethical grounding in virtue finds its logical expression in a "fringe" area of thought, the Mexican "finalists" Vasconcelos and Caso. Finalism is closely related to vitalism, replacing vitalism's *élan vital* (a creative life force) with specific ends that promote "charitable actions, appreciation of others and aesthetic concerns."[15] It is an antipositivist worldview combatting the positivist one that was prevalent in the early twentieth century in Latin America. Hoffer tracks its historical instantiations in Mexico, Brazil, and Cuba, its intellectual trajectory from Bergsonism to Kierkegaard to Vasconcelos (and the Mexican finalists). They share Weinstein's desire to remain "open to others while pursuing one's projects."[16] This is not done by "consensus" but by "coordination," which works on a principle of comparison or analogy: "Once the analogies have been comprehended, the appreciator would inspect his experience of social relations and determine whether the world-view made it more coherent. Did it make him more aware of new dimensions to his relations, such as subtle forms of exploitation? Did it disclose new values to him, or present new projects?"[17] Weinstein found in finalism concepts such as "*zozobra*" that describe the endless vacillation of anxious and discordant life, both an invitation to welcome in but also uncertainty as to who to trust.

Ramón Soto-Crespo's "Unpacking My Weinstein: Border Thinking and Classical American Philosophy" also examines Mexican finalist philosophy through a close reading of Weinstein's *The Polarity of Mexican Thought*. If Hoffer reads the antipositivist project against Western cultural imperialism, Soto-Crespo situates it *at* and *as* "border thinking": "At the border, finalist thought affirmed vital life and critiqued positivism as an instrumentalization of living experience . . . Border thinking uses finalist insights in its

politico-philosophical stance against the biopolitical management of life in modern societies."[18] Weinstein is shown to be a border thinker of "biopower from below,"[19] a critic of positivism whose texts, read from *Polarity* on through to *Data Trash*, meticulously detail the growing instrumentalization of life, what Deleuze referred to as despotic forms of power. Soto-Crespo covers some of the same historical ground in the account of finalism as Hoffer, but he focuses on the importance of Latin American philosophy as a method for thinking, which also left its trace on now-canonical authors of postcolonial thought: Octavio Paz, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Walter Mignolo. As we have seen with Mueller and McKenzie's expositions of American philosophy, Weinstein's embrace of life without reconciling or sacrificing one of its contraries did not find a counterpart. However, in finalist philosophy and in border thinking, Weinstein could find concepts adequate to "a critical examination and defense of our being as it is lived from within."[20] One of these was *zozobra*: "an attempt to 'burn the candle at both ends,' to coordinate heterogeneous elements in their totalities."[21] Soto-Crespo likens Weinstein's understanding of this concept to a kind of Deleuzian nomadic thought that dances or plays between "high and low intensities" as a kind of rhizome. Inspired by Vasconcelos and proleptically channeling Deleuze, Weinstein wanders into the persona of the "border savage," realizing/living contradictory desires simultaneously within a racial masquerade, "a 'Latin' in spirit masked by a Saxon skin."[22] It is from the position of border savage that Soto-Crespo performs a genealogy of Weinstein's work on American political thought starting with George Santayana through Jamesian and later Rorty's pragmatism. The civil savage of *Culture/Flesh* takes off from the necessary absence within finalist thought of a philosophy of conduct. What happens to one of finalism's central tenets—the cultivation of inwardness—in postcivilization? Happy pessimism is one way to apprehend the futurity of postcivilization.

The third section of the book, "Vitalism," contains essays that concur with Simon Critchley's adage that "teaching" is "the institutional form of thinking" in the university: "It is teaching people to have an orientation toward truth."[23] Julie Webber, in "I Am the Radical Reality: Weinstein's 'Defensive Life' as a Political Response in Postcivilization," presents a finalist life philosopher's practice of teaching that is, in Kroker's words, one of "critical appreciation, self-restraint and intellectual generosity."[24] It is one that she characterizes as "well knit." Webber's point of departure is the man she encountered as an undergraduate at University Hall in 1992, who was later to cochair her dissertation. Her chapter navigates between the Purdue University lecture rooms and seminars from 1992 to 1996 and the key text of that period, *Culture/Flesh* and its avatar, the civil savage. She offers a smartly condensed reading of that book's central insight concerning life's adversity and its force in constituting our disposition towards others, enlivened by reference to actual class notes (!), classroom vignettes, and contemporaneous political examples.

In several senses, the reading presented here of *Culture/Flesh* arcs back to that of Kroker's revisiting of *Wilderness and the City*. One might see it as a nineties time travel version; it serves a diagnostic function, offering a snapshot of a period in the nineties when the modernist project of the individual was relinquished. She similarly adumbrates Weinstein's peculiarly (and perhaps oxymoronic) "Yankee" or specifically American form of existentialism and offers a critique of pragmatism as a failed response to the challenges of postcivilized American life. If Kroker had demonstrated the difficulty of extricating Weinstein's thought from the historical mo(ve)ments that generate it, Webber supplements these genealogical insights with what she learned in Weinstein's classroom concerning periodization. Webber focuses specifically on the many forms defensive life can take, from anhedonia to war to romantic or religious idealizations. Yet by concentrating upon strategies of self-defense, her essay reads less as a future projection than as a Foucauldian history of the present, both of the present state of theory as well as the turn to ideologies of "care" and "health" as forms of neoliberal power. Weinstein is aligned here with Arendt and Foucault as overwritten by Agamben. Webber provocatively queries, might the "*homo sacer*" be the "uncivil savage?" The attention to self-defense also extends the austerity of Weinstein's presentation of *ressentiment* into a more feminist, sardonic idiom. "The civil savage" may be a masculine persona, as Weinstein states, but his women students are picking up some survivalist tips.

The opening chapter of *Culture/Flesh*, "Civilization," begins with a world tour, not only of the familiar Western Christian or Athenian antecedents to modernity but also of East Asian, Indian, and Islamic ones. It demonstrates Weinstein's engagement as a *comparative* political theorist. In "Weinstein's Methodology for Political Analysis," Robert Oprisko examines Weinstein's decade-long project on Somalia, implicitly underlining previous theoretical issues raised by Soto-Crespo concerning border theory and Webber on Agamben's *homo sacer*. Somalia can be read as a condensation of several Weinsteinian *topoi*. Among the most salient points of Weinstein's selection criteria is the fact that it is a *failed* state, again indicating the centrality of failure for his epistemological project. As a *homo sacer* or abject remainder existing on the fringe of the international relations, Somalia/the Somalian highlights the ethical dimension of his thought. When we turn to the rhetorical unconscious generated by the Somalia-sign and spectacularized in film, we find the figure of the *pirate*, the methodological self-image cultivated by Weinstein. Oprisko explicitly presents Weinstein's method for political analysis, in all its rigorous simplicity, as a model for future scholarship and covertly as an academic defense for seeing normative political theory as rigorous in method. But he is also attentive to the alternative media that Weinstein uses to disseminate his research. The electronic article in this reading becomes a defense of the fringe in academic writing, providing a "concrete durational being" of intellectual production for others to emulate

and appreciate. The chapter's emphasis on the interior reduplication of content on the level of form beautifully concretizes Weinstein's pedagogy.

Joseph Kaminiski's chapter, " 'I Am the God of My Own Tribe': Weinstein and Islam," reveals Weinstein's pedagogy in another critical dimension: as lead vocalist and as lyricist for Vortis, a Chicago-based punk group. This chapter is an aspectival assemblage of biography—Weinstein's secular Jewish post–World War II childhood in New York, differing visual modalities (Arabic script and photographs of Weinstein performing in his band) that punctuate the narrative investigation of an enigmatic religious identification. Why would a self-declared "atheist Jew" such as Weinstein declare the deepest affinity for Islam among all the monotheisms? Kaminski argues that Weinstein is attracted to Islam because it mirrors his own personal agonic contradiction in its dialectical foundation that balances communal brotherhood and individual mystic contemplation. He finds further support in their shared ethos: a militant inclination to fight for truth and justice as well as an inclusivity and acceptance of diversity of background. Further, Kaminski suggests that it is Islam as a religion that has not yet been coopted by the dominant Anglo-European thought that attracts Weinstein; the perpetual underdog and defender of other underdogs, Weinstein celebrates his affinity for a religion that stands up against a bullying West. This has been a theme in some continental theorists such as Jean Baudrillard and Slavoj Zizek. Kaminski concludes that Weinstein's attraction to Islam does not convert him so much as it reflects his personal goal of self-control and provides the civility to his savage nature.

While pedagogy is not the central animating thread of Kaminski's chapter, it nonetheless discloses many aspects of the professor that is the subject of Kathy Ferguson's "A Remarkable Teacher." Like others in this book such as Hoffer, Webber, and Kaminski, she lauds his "creative improvisation" and demonstrates how a hatred of bullies is translated into mundane practices. She interrogates a seeming inconsistency within Weinstein's teaching tactics—a split between absolute flexibility (not having a pregiven syllabus, student-generated reading and discussion) and absolute inflexibility (not accepting late work, giving little to no direction on assignments). Ferguson argues that in comparison with the current discursive trend heralding student-centric learning, Weinstein's classroom of forty years ago was exemplary. She is able to convey how that experience—the responsibility or ownership one takes on for one's knowledge and pleasure—was both overwhelming and seductive for an undergraduate student. Weinstein is recalled as an "iconoclastic, intense, opinionated professor [who] effortlessly thought about politics and life, and simultaneously thought about his thinking on politics and life."[25] His self-reflexivity illuminates his humanity within the classroom and reinforces personal philosophy to be a process of continual renegotiation and amendment.

Ferguson recalls that Weinstein's classroom is one that was "where outsiders could flourish." Individuals, texts, and ideas that did not conform

to established hierarchy and order were given a time and space to shine and challenge the status quo. This educational experience was transformative for Weinstein's students, who find themselves with depth of knowledge outside the established canon of political theory. His pedagogical method combines "comprehensive vitalism" with "ontological wonder," seeking to strengthen a philosophical position to the best ability before systematically critiquing it. Praxis and dialectical synthesis lay at the core of Weinstein in his professional role as professor and led him to undermine institutional authority, providing "a counter-mentoring that cherishes intellectual independence and honesty over everything else." It prefigured her future engagements with Foucault's political theory concerning truth and power. But Ferguson recounts the ambivalent legacy of this teaching; she arrived in graduate school with little knowledge of canonical authors but familiarity with figures that few of her peers had encountered. Yet it opened her to nonfoundationalist thought and poststructuralism, which felt like a "home discourse" to her.

Many of the facets of Kathy Ferguson's portrait of Weinsteinian pedagogy are echoed in Diane Rubenstein's "Michael Weinstein and Félix Guattari: A Militancy of 'Vivacious Despair.'" Rubenstein's framing of Weinstein's pedagogy by Guattari's institutional practice at the La Borde clinic elicits the free-form nature of each seminar—drawn up "from scratch," the empowerment of a previously subaltern population now included in tasks formerly relegated to the teacher/doctor and the invitation toward the "outsider" to come into sharper relief. Rubenstein extends Ferguson's analysis of transformative institutional practices by transposing the site of therapeutic or educational breakthrough (La Borde hospital, Purdue University) with the creative elaboration of concepts (transversality, civil savage) and practices (the grid or *grille*/the seminar). Both Guattari and Weinstein share a central focus on the subjectivication process, whether expressed as singularization or as individualization. They each affirm the necessity of what Weinstein calls "fundamental arts"—local, quotidian practices such as cooking, doing the laundry, and, in America, driving. The undoing of what is repressive within even militant subjectivity—what Weinstein might diagnose as backlash—is targeted by their institutional innovations. While Guattari's theoretical achievement—the concept of transversality (which is the rhizome's underpinning, if its underacknowledged precedent)—is an outgrowth of a prior reform, called the grid, it required a "mediating third object." Rubenstein exemplifies such an object with the Weinsteinian seminar, now read as a Barthesian space of love. The purpose of such a space and teaching relation is to displace conventional notions of transference and the dyadic Socratic (master–student) relation to one of the transversal production of differences, understood in the sense of making each relation "original." Rubenstein self-analyzes her experience of a Weinstein seminar in the mid-nineties while his colleague at Purdue. She witnesses the dispersive proliferation of home-grown Hoosier subjectivities—including her own—as the master teacher desupposes himself.

Weinstein's response that serves as epilogue is a performative enactment of a seminar among the contributors to this book. He introduces a new philosophic persona derived from NASCAR: G7, a simulation of G6. It is in part imagined colloquy, in part settling of accounts, at all times an outbidding of Alfred Jarry's surreal uphill bicycle race.[26] We leave the last words to him.

There are two appendices to the book: Appendix I is an intellectual (auto)biography of Michael by his "beloved colleague," Deena Weinstein. Appendix II is a condensed bibliography of Weinstein's writings and performances. The full bibliography will appear in an online version record at the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research.

NOTES

1. Arthur Kroker, "Nietzsche for Our Times: Three Meditations," in *Michael A. Weinstein: Action, Contemplation, Vitalism*, ed. Robert L. Oprisko and Diane Rubenstein, Routledge Innovations in Political Theory (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 21–2.
2. "Neoliberal rule, for Franco Berardi, designates the irreversible historical mutation formed by the intermingling of global capital with 'recombinant technologies.'" *After the Future, An Interview with Bifo*, ed. Gary Genosko and Nicholas Thoburn (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2011), 177.
3. Michael A. Weinstein, *The Tragic Sense of Political Life* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1977), 175–6.
4. Albert Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus, " in *The Plague, the Fall, Exile and the Kingdom, and Selected Essays* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004).
5. This moniker tropes off of other constructions/fabrications of theoretical schools, however heteroclite such as the "Yale School theory," denoted by place, or "Chicago" for its economists and their ideological commitments. One could call the network comprising Weinstein a different "Chicago" school, drawing upon his art-critical and musical/performance practices there as well as the weekly shuttles between Lafayette and Lincoln Park. This would argue equally for the "I-65 school," affirming the "vicissitudes" of Weinstein's *drive* and his love of the car. Weinstein is also *the* theorist of NASCAR. We have chosen the Purdue School for its Nietzschean resonances and its asignifying semiotics.
6. Félix Guattari, "I Am an Idea-Thief," *Chaosophy* (New York, NY: Semiotext(e), 1995), 37–40; "A theory is exactly like a box of tools." Gilles Deleuze, "Intellectuals and Power," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 208.
7. Kroker, "Nietzsche for Our Times: Three Meditations," Oprisko and Rubenstein, *op cit*. 31.
8. Sergei Prozorov, *Foucault, Freedom, and Sovereignty* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 14.
9. Justin Mueller, in Oprisko and Rubenstein, *op. cit*., 98.
10. See Jonathan McKenzie, in Oprisko and Rubenstein, *op. cit*., 126.
11. *Ibid*., 111.
12. *Ibid*., 110.
13. Michael A. Weinstein, *Finite Perfection: Reflections on Virtue* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985), 13.