

BOOK REVIEWS

Comments from the Book Review Editor

Continuing a recent tradition, *COMMONWEALTH* presents several reviews of books either pertaining to Pennsylvania's history, government, and politics, or whose authors are Pennsylvania political scientists. Two books deal with African American history in the state. The first concerns Octavius Catto, a black civil-rights activist of the Civil War era; the second explores race relations in Pittsburgh after World War II. Two other books address environmental matters. One is a memoir by Franklin Kury, a former member of the Pennsylvania General Assembly and a renowned environmental activist. The other is a collection of essays tracing Philadelphia's advances in environmental preservation and sustainability. The remaining volume is an introductory textbook on political philosophy by Donald Tannenbaum of Gettysburg College. Readers are encouraged to recommend books for review and to submit proposals for reviews. Guidelines for doing so can be found in the back section of this volume.

— Thomas J. Baldino, Book Review Editor

Tasting Freedom: Octavius Catto and the Battle for Equality in Civil War America. By Daniel Biddle and Murray Dubin. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2010. 632p. \$32.95 cloth. ISBN: 1-59213-465-3

In their hefty biography of Octavius Catto, journalists Dan Biddle and Murray Dubin intended, in their own words, to spin “a good yarn.” They have succeeded. In fact, they have spun two yarns, for this is really two books in one. The book is first a delightful exploration of how a generation of young black activists came of age during the Civil War, how they saw their parents’ wildest dreams realized in that war, and how those dreams were dashed by the postwar outbreak of white violence just as, in the words of W.E.B. Du Bois, “they were first tasting freedom” (474). But the book is also a tribute to their more battle-worn parents, some of whom—like the Reverend William Catto, a self-made man not unlike Frederick Douglass—had escaped slavery, while others were veterans of the violence against blacks and abolitionists that plagued northern cities. After whites terrorized several of Philadelphia’s black neighborhoods in 1842 by attacking churches and schools, Robert Purvis remarked, “I am convinced of our utter and complete nothingness in public estimation” (57).

Despite these dark days, Catto, Purvis, James Forten, James Le Count, and Jacob White Sr. managed to raise children who expected to enjoy real racial equality. It was an inestimable gift that Octavius Catto, Harriet Purvis, Charlotte Forten, Caroline Le Count, and Jacob White, to name a few, received from their parents, and one that they did not waste. Indeed, a central tragedy of the book’s story is that William Catto managed to survive slavery and raise four free children only to have the youngest of them, Octavius, die before him—not on a distant Civil War battlefield but rather in a city that in William’s day had been a beacon of hope for the enslaved. Octavius Catto died in Election Day violence in the City of Brotherly Love in 1871.

Veteran newspapermen, Dubin and Biddle have done superb sleuth work here, excavating what little there is to know about Octavius Catto—even digging up an aging Catto ancestor, Leonard Garnet Smith, Catto’s great-grandnephew, who was stumping for presidential candidate Barack Obama when the authors made contact with him. Besides finding the biographer’s Holy Grail that provided them with the perfect closing anecdote, the authors discovered in period newspapers all sorts of surprises. For example, they tell the little known tale of a substantial slave auction held in 1859 by Philadelphia resident Pierce Butler, otherwise known as Fanny Kemble’s ex (the famous British actor had divorced her slave-owning husband years before). Although the auction took place near Butler’s Georgia plantation, a reporter covered the dramatic sale of hundreds of men, women, and children and the breakup of their families; and the story helped to fuel sectional sentiments in an otherwise very southern city. Readers might also find

interesting the story about the secession of a substantial number of the University of Pennsylvania's medical students in 1860. And scholars will want to examine a newspaper expose in which a reporter set out to get a feel for black life in the city. Like an early social worker, the reporter visited the homes of the rich and poor and described what he saw for white readers who were used to averting their eyes. This was a particularly wonderful find, considering that scholars usually date the first such study to 1896, when a young Harvard-trained sociologist named Du Bois set out to survey Philadelphia's Seventh Ward.

All this effort pays off, and the result is a lively biography of a little-known leader of the civil-rights movement in the years following the Civil War. Indeed, it might seem brash of the authors to offer up a 500-page biography of a young man who died at the sprightly age of thirty-two. But Catto's untimely death puts him squarely in the company of civil-rights leaders about whom volumes have been written; it pays to remember that Medgar Evers was thirty-seven when he died and Martin Luther King was thirty-nine. Of course, Evers's biographers have the best of all sources in his wife, Myrlie Evers-Williams, and the FBI thankfully kept close tabs on King. Catto left behind Caroline Le Count, a black educator and civil rights activist, but Le Count seems to have left no paper trail at all. Not deterred, Murray and Dubin fill in the substantial blanks by populating the book with Catto's friends and fellow travelers—and the ward bosses, corrupt politicians, and backroom dealers who ensured that Catto's killer, Frank Kelly, never faced justice.

Scholars will raise some quibbles about the book's structure. The endnote style was likely the publisher's choice; while keeping down the page count, it takes some getting used to. The narrative occasionally suffers from a strained transition, as the authors zealously piece together disparate events occurring in Boston, Cincinnati, and Charleston. The fast-paced narrative makes the book a quick read, but there are times when I found myself wanting to linger, as during the account of celebrations of the enactment of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870 when Catto, Purvis, Douglass, and other luminaries addressed crowds of black celebrants and then adjourned to enjoy an exclusive dinner, leaving the common celebrants to evade as best as they could white thugs in the streets. Here the disjuncture seemed to call for some discussion of class and the economics that separated the black elite from those who lived in city slums.

Ambitious book clubbers will look in vain for an appended list of short biographies of the major characters in the book, indicating their relationship to each other. Like most elites, Philadelphia's black Brahmins had a tendency to intermarry—when Harriet Forten Purvis and Frances (Fanny) Jackson Coppin married, they each joined two elite families—but even determined readers might puzzle over the entwined limbs of their family trees.

None of these problems detract from a book that brings Octavius Catto and his generation to life. More than that, *Tasting Freedom* offers readers a nuanced and multi-layered portrait of Philadelphia during the Reconstruction era.

—Judith Giesberg, *Villanova University*

Nature's Entrepôt—Philadelphia's Urban Sphere and Its Environmental Thresholds. Edited by Brian C. Black and Michael J. Chiarappa. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012. 304p. \$38.00 cloth. ISBN: 978-0-8229-4417-1

Nature's Entrepôt is a collection of essays documenting the environmental history of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—America's First City. The contributors track and discuss the many events that have influenced the navigation of Philadelphia's sustainability journey. The book is divided into four parts: "Ideal and Reality in the Early City," "Locating Patterns of Industry and Commerce in the Expanding City," "Landscape Transformation in the Growing City," and "Confronting the Ecologies." The chapters are organized to flow from Philadelphia before 1800 in Part I. Part II considers events in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Philadelphia. Part III continues the examination of ensuing developments from the nineteenth through the early twentieth century. Part IV reflects on the ramifications of these earlier activities and provides discussion points and action items for the future direction of Philadelphia, as well as any other city. Inspirational stories and case studies are used by knowledgeable contributors to explain successes; and important lessons are drawn from failures. The essays delve into significant environmental themes that provide insight into understanding Philadelphia's current environmental status.

For example, Apel's essay on yellow fever in Philadelphia between 1793 and 1805 provides perspective on environmental health and its connection to the labor system at the time. Sciotte reviews environmental justice and environmental racism between 1981 and 2001, highlighting the environmental hazards that have resulted since the 1970s because of decreased manufacturing in the Philadelphia metropolitan area. Vitiello discusses evolving trends and policy failures in local agriculture and food security initiatives. Greene's chronology of the history of deer in a city setting shows the challenges and important policy issues of dealing with urban wildlife and animal management. Rilling presents an interesting perspective on solid-waste management in her tale of Charles Cummings, the bone boiler. Milroy reviews the history, legacy, and current challenges of one of Philadelphia's jewels, the Fairmount Park System. The issues Milroy identifies and discusses will be important to all who are interested in protecting public parks and recreational facilities.

Philadelphia is known for its grid-based street system. Levine traces the history of the grid system and its continued impact on the city. Spirn uses the history and landscape of Mill Creek as a “living laboratory” to teach about water, landscape, and urban design. The approach and experiences serve as a valuable teaching and planning model. Adams considers the role of the suburbs and the potential benefits of a regional approach to address the city’s environmental, infrastructure, and employment issues. Mason reviews the challenges of urban sprawl in Philadelphia and the similarity of the city’s issues to those of other aging metropolitan areas.

Chiarappa discusses Philadelphia’s proximity to the Delaware Estuary and its relationship with this important ecosystem. Examining the role of the oyster trade in the environmental history of the Philadelphia area, he explains how effective management of the Estuary’s resources is crucial to the development of a sustainable future for the region. McMahon uses the story of Dock Creek to show how water resources and waste management were treated in evolving urban technological systems in eighteenth-century Philadelphia. His essay depicts the consequences of narrow values and short-term thinking. Zabel lays the groundwork for understanding the direction that Philadelphia’s environmental history has taken by reviewing William Penn’s Philadelphia. Vintage maps and photographs complement many of the essays.

This book is a valuable resource and belongs in the library of anyone interested in learning about and from Philadelphia’s rich record of environmental triumphs and tribulations. As Benjamin Franklin observed: “Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.” *Nature’s Entrepôt* provides needed direction and lessons learned on how to be involved in deploying effective environmental policy and urban planning.

— Marleen A. Troy, *Wilkes University*

Clean Politics, Clean Streams: A Legislative Autobiography and Reflections. By Franklin L. Kury. Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2011. 274p. \$80.00 cloth. ISBN: 9781611460742

One of the major downsides of the changing landscape of news media over the past few decades is declining coverage of state legislative politics. One source for a solid and rich understanding of state legislative process is the biographies and autobiographies of state political players. In his autobiography, Franklin Kury takes the reader on a journey through his time in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives (1966–1972) and the Pennsylvania Senate (1972–1980).

Kury divides his autobiography into four sections: “Getting There” (1952–1966), “The House of Representatives” (1966–1972), “The

State Senate” (1972–1980), and “Political Life after the Legislature and Reflections” (1981–2010). Kury opens his book by recounting the formative experience of greeting President Truman as he campaigned for Adlai Stevenson during a train stop in Northumberland in 1952. That event, combined with talking history and politics while working at Barney’s Shoe Service in Sunbury, the gentle persuasion of his family, and an employment history with the Attorney General’s Office and U.S. Representative George Rhodes, provided the motivation for Kury’s venture into Pennsylvania politics.

Kury’s political ambitions and success in running for the General Assembly need to be contextualized within the Republican Party machine of Northumberland County, led by county chairman Henry Lark. While the Lark machine “had discipline and a sense of direction” and “produced consistent electoral success” (p. 25), the organization was beginning to show cracks that Kury capitalized on. First, when running for the State House, Kury set out to create a grassroots, volunteer-only organization that would create its own energy and sense of direction. Second, Kury determined to make his race an issue-driven one, “with heavy emphasis on clean streams” and the Republican incumbent’s “no” vote on an important bill to bring coal companies within reach of the clean-streams bill (p. 27). Finally, the Kury campaign made every effort to acquire Republican votes and to make personal contact with as many voters as possible. The strategy worked, as Kury pulled off an upset victory by a slim margin of 939 votes.

In Part II, Kury recounts his experiences and accomplishments in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. Representative Kury hit the ground running and within two years worked with others to reform the absentee ballot, which had the effect of significantly reducing absentee-ballot controversies in Pennsylvania. Second, Kury’s chief legislative prize was a systematic reform of the state’s clean-streams law, which began in 1968 while Kury was in the House minority. The bill went nowhere until Democrats took control of the House after the 1968 election. The clean-streams bill catapulted to the top of the new legislative agenda. The bill, which became law when Governor Shafer signed it in 1970, expanded the definitions of key words in environmental law (e.g., “pollution” and “waters of the Commonwealth”), gave the Department of Health and the Sanitary Water Board wide authority to implement the statute, and prohibited any person from discharging any polluting substance into public waters.

Representative Kury’s dedication to the environment extended further with his objective of amending the Pennsylvania Constitution to give the natural environment some degree of constitutional protection. The result was Article I, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution, which states that “people have a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic, and esthetic values of the environment.” Although

this constitutional provision has been limited by subsequent litigation, its place in the Constitution is significant.

In 1972, Kury won a seat in the state senate, where he continued his reform efforts. During his eight years there, Kury helped shepherd changes to the senate's process of confirming gubernatorial appointments, the determination of a governor's disability, the rewriting of the utility law, and reform of the floodplain- and storm-water-management laws.

When Richard Thornburgh became Pennsylvania's governor in 1979, politics shifted in the state and Kury "increasingly realized that the good fortune [he] had of serving in the Senate while [his] party controlled all three branches of government was over" (p. 146). Kury left the senate in 1980 but remained active in politics, serving as a fundraiser for various Democratic politicians in Pennsylvania and working on Walter Mondale's 1984 presidential campaign.

Kury concludes his autobiography by offering some personal reflections on politics. For Kury, the keys to electoral and legislative success include having a set of dedicated volunteers, being a consistent leader, and "maintaining willingness to compromise" (p. 158). Another important variable for success—and one that is perhaps lacking in modern politics—is the commitment to "doing the 'homework' necessary to document and justify the proposed legislation" (p. 158).

At a time when public distrust of politicians and government institutions is high, Kury's book offers an endearing and welcome perspective on how politics once worked and could work again. While Kury does not offer any strong prescriptions for the systemic ills that plague Pennsylvania's politics, the reader is left with a mildly comforting feeling that Pennsylvania's problems are enduring ones that simply manifest themselves in different ways over time. For example, corruption and malfeasance were present in Kury's time in the General Assembly, but their presence did not automatically preclude Kury and other reformers from passing significant legislation. While it may be tempting to dismiss this book as one man's legislative stories, it is much more, because it provides valuable insights into what it takes to be an influential and respected politician able to help move our great Commonwealth forward.

— Kyle L. Kreider, *Wilkes University*

Inventors of Ideas: An Introduction to Western Political Philosophy. 3d ed. By Donald G. Tannenbaum. New York: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2012. 314p. \$97.00 paper. ISBN: 9780495908241

Political philosophy, one of the pillars of political science, has been under attack for more than four decades. This attack in the name of the modern scientific method led to the banishment of political philosophy from

the academy at various major universities. The past decade witnessed a new challenge in the form of a generation of web-browsing, text-messaging undergraduate students who admit that they do not enjoy reading, do not want to read, or ultimately refuse to read. These students are experts at finding data and isolated facts, but they have major difficulties with critical analysis and the formulation of logical argument (as opposed to personal opinion). These problems arise, in part, because the students have essentially no historical context in which to analyze the disparate facts they find electronically and no moral context within which to reflect upon personally or discuss publicly the fundamental questions of political philosophy: What is justice? Is there a common good? What is the best regime? More than most students in recent memory, today's students desperately need political philosophy as formulated by Plato and Aristotle and practiced by Machiavelli and Rousseau.

Thus Donald Tannenbaum's third edition of *Inventors of Ideas: Introduction to Western Political Philosophy* is a welcome counterweight and a valuable addition to the textbooks available for undergraduate courses in political philosophy. A balanced combination of breadth and brevity remains the hallmark of this textbook. The expanded edition is still only 300 pages long. Between an introduction and a conclusion setting out the author's analysis of political/societal crises and the role of political philosophers in addressing them, students will discover fifteen chapters, each devoted to a major political philosopher (or two). Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Marx are all covered. Neglected political philosophers—Cicero, Burke, Mill, and Mary Wollstonecraft—also receive individual chapters. Luther and Calvin are paired in one chapter, and Freud and Nietzsche are paired in the final substantive chapter. Professors of political philosophy will find that the chapters on Cicero, Luther and Calvin, Burke, and Freud and Nietzsche provide both historical and moral context for undergraduates not readily available elsewhere.

Inventors of Ideas differs from other textbooks that seek to explain one or two of each political philosopher's key texts, e.g., Plato's *Apology* or Machiavelli's *Prince*. Tannenbaum explicates key terms and concepts (human nature, forms of government, law and citizenship) in each philosopher's work as a whole without expecting students to have read the original. For example, his chapter on Aristotle addresses "Happiness, Values, and Human Nature," "Community," and "Political Change," (34–44), while the chapter on Rousseau variously treats "State of Nature and Human Nature," "The Social Contract," "Citizenship, Gender and Education," and "Forms of Government" (188–204).

Each chapter contains a variety of study aids, including a one- or two-page conclusion by Tannenbaum, "Notes to the Chapter," and

recommendations for “Additional Readings.” This edition for the first time also contains a wide range of useful charts and figures to illustrate graphically the author’s analysis, such as Figure 11.3, “Comparing the Contracts of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau” (194), and Figure 15.1, “Marx: The Stages of History” (267).

Another strength of this textbook is that from the beginning, the author asks students to reflect upon the methodologies of classical, medieval, and modern political philosophers and apply them to contemporary political problems. What if your regime allowed or compelled only one religion? What if you knew a friend was being convicted of a crime but was innocent? Is democracy the best regime under all conditions? If a law is unjust, must it be obeyed until it can be changed?

From Aristotle’s recognition that politics is choice of actions directed to ends, Tannenbaum wants students to find in the classical, medieval, and modern political philosophers not dried up, empty relics of fact or history but living choices that prevail today in many authoritarian and nominally democratic regimes. Interestingly, in her *Political Philosophy in the Twentieth Century: Authors and Arguments* (2011), Katherine Zuckert also sought to defend human agency and political choice by focusing upon the upwelling of political philosophy in the mid-twentieth century in the persons of Hannah Arendt, Leo Strauss, Eric Voegelin, Jurgen Habermas, and John Rawls, among others. In different ways, Zuckert and Tannenbaum each seek to advance “a rich and vibrant tradition of reflection and debate about the most fundamental issues of human existence” (Zuckert, 6).

Any two professors of political philosophy could disagree about the most reasonable interpretation of the key texts in political philosophy. Was Socrates describing an ideal state in *The Republic* or merely constructing a “city in speech”? Was Machiavelli a modern realist or a “teacher of evil”? Are Hobbes and Locke polar opposites or are they part of a common brotherhood of “possessive individualism”? Thus, I do not address the author’s interpretations of various political philosophers. Rather, disagreement about both “human nature” and the “best regime” may be indispensable to retaining the “tradition of reflection and debate” that both Tannenbaum and Zuckert seek.

I have two suggestions for the next edition. First, include a recommendation for the most literal and least expensive paperback translation of each philosopher’s major works for faculty who want students to confront the original texts while still using a basic textbook. Second, expand the list of “Additional Readings.” Arguably, two of the most significant political philosophers of the twentieth century are conspicuously underrepresented. Leo Strauss is mentioned only in passing, and Eric Voegelin is absent entirely. For example, in the chapters on Plato and Aristotle alone, none of the following are included: Voegelin, *The World of the Polis*; Voegelin, *Plato*

and Aristotle; Strauss, Socrates and Aristophanes; Strauss, On Tyranny; Zuckert, Plato's Philosophers: The Coherence of the Dialogues; Seth Benardete, Socrates' Second Sailing: On Plato's Republic; Joseph Cropsey, On Humanity's Intensive Introspection; Cropsey, Plato's World: Man's Place in the Cosmos; Michael Davis, The Soul of the Greeks; and Ronna Burger, Aristotle's Dialogue with Socrates: On the "Nicomachean Ethics."

— Michael R. Dillon, *La Salle University*

Race and Renaissance: African Americans in Pittsburgh since World War II. By Joe W. Trotter and Jared N. Day. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010. 304p. \$29.95 cloth. ISBN: 978-0822943914

Joe Trotter and Jared Day, two professors of history at Carnegie Mellon University, embarked on a daunting task with their newest book: to chronicle more than half a century of African American life in Pittsburgh. While many studies have been done of the African American experience in Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, and other American cities, this book is the first to examine Pittsburgh. Through interviews, oral histories, newspaper stories, and many other sources, the authors have created a fascinating and detailed overview of the last 60 (and more) years of the struggle of African Americans for equality and the obstacles they faced.

The authors believe that African American history in the United States cannot be fully understood without knowledge of the story of the black community in Pittsburgh. In writing this book, the authors provide a broad perspective on racial inequality in Pittsburgh since World War II. While reaching for improved conditions at work, school, and home, African Americans in the Steel City endured a deep and protracted struggle but eventually made great strides.

The book opens with a review of the turn of the twentieth century and the Great Migration of blacks to Pittsburgh. The authors discuss the difficulties experienced by the new arrivals in obtaining jobs and housing and the general discrimination they encountered. Blacks able to find work in the steel mills were usually employed as strike breakers or were subjected to constant layoffs. They were met with an attitude implying that they were not equipped to work in a non-farm environment. Pittsburgh's newly arrived Eastern European immigrants vehemently resisted the inclusion of blacks in the workforce. This pattern was repeated throughout the manufacturing sector. Most blacks were relegated to jobs at the lowest levels of the service industry. The Great Northern Migration of blacks between 1910 and 1930 brought more African Americans to Pittsburgh, thereby swelling the demand for housing and increasing the need for jobs.

Ever-increasing discriminatory practices forced newly arriving black families to live in areas of Pittsburgh that were already predominately black

and marked by substandard housing. These conditions led to the founding of a plethora of institutions to serve the black community. Fraternal organizations, churches, business groups, and music clubs flourished. A middle class grew in neighborhoods such as the Hill District. This was the beginning of civic engagement on a broader scale.

A presidential executive order prohibiting job discrimination in federal contracts, defense plants, and training programs improved opportunities for African Americans in employment. When World War II broke out and industries expanded their workforces, the new prosperity spread to the black community; and along with it came an increasing desire on the part of African Americans for greater participation in Pittsburgh's political life.

The steel industry plays an important role in this book, for it links many aspects of African American daily life in Pittsburgh. From the city's beginnings, steel brought people to Pittsburgh and steel is why people remained there. The industry's decline and the city's subsequent move to a service-oriented economy had a great impact on Pittsburgh's black residents, especially the latest wave of black migrants seeking opportunity in the postwar years. The black portion of Pittsburgh's population grew from 12% in 1950 to 20% in 1970. The book examines in great detail the engagement of the African American community in the processes of urban renewal, civil rights, politicization, and desegregation during this arduous period of deindustrialization.

The continued presence of inequality is not ignored by the authors. While conditions have improved, inequality of access to education, housing, employment, health care, housing, and education remains. Inequality increases poverty in the African American community. As the authors reflect on a country with an African American president, they ponder the impact of that monumental achievement on Pittsburgh.

Those interested in researching the City of Pittsburgh during the period examined in this book will find a treasure trove of source material and ideas. The appendix contains 25 pages of statistics and census data that illustrate what happened during this period. While the book is an informative beginning on many topics, the authors provide just enough to remind us that there is much more to be told. The book is also useful for teachers of African American studies, history, sociology, urban studies, and political science. Yet it is written in a manner accessible to a broad audience.

— Arthur M. Holst, *City of Philadelphia Water Department*