(p. 69). Philpott tries to counter such impressions by framing ideas as one group of forces among many that shape political interests. His point is that particular historical or institutional circumstances provide moments for individuals and groups to rethink who and what they are with respect to both themselves and others. For example, the lack of a political solution at the end of the Thirty Years' War forced post-Westphalian states to confront issues of constitutional authority; and European colonial powers found it economically and militarily necessary to find alternatives to direct colonial control for the exploitation of non-European peoples and lands.

Philpott does not take a deterministic view here. Rather, he avers that changes in circumstances provoke occasions for reflection—this, in turn, provokes innovation in ideas regarding social and political life. If those ideas gain popularity, they may form the basis for the conception of new cultural realities. He then argues that certain persons, institutions, or discourses may provide vehicles for the normalization of such new points of view through their own activism, interests, or rhetoric. However, it remains quite unclear how it is that specific ideas form the revolutions in sovereignty Philpott describes, and why other ideas fail to hold sway. One is tempted to ask questions that would probe vulnerabilities in his thesis: Do certain ideas become necessary forces of change, given other conditions at work in the same circumstances? Are some ideas simply more persuasive than others?

Philpott's position is that revolutions in ideas were necessary for the modern revolutions in the structure of international order to take place as they have. He provides, however, a tremendous amount of evidence to show that there was no one fundamental cause in the development of the modern system of sovereign states to which we could assign such necessity. Variously, Philpott shows that the concepts supporting this system, such as nation, freedom, autonomy, and equality, arose within material and structural conditions that cannot themselves be reduced to ideas, and he demonstrates that material contexts and structures are transformed by humans in terms of the limits to their thinking provided by concepts and definitions. Thus Philpott's analysis is less helpful in championing the importance of ideas in the development of sovereignty than it is in illustrating the great difficulty in tracing this development in terms of ideas and material structures as distinct categories. In an unintended fashion, he prompts us to rethink from the start tendencies to abstract social and political forces into the realm of either "ideas" or "matter."

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Republic.com, Cass R. Sunstein (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 240 pp., $29.95 cloth, $12.95 paper, $9.95 e-book.

The Future of Ideas: The Fate of the Commons in a Connected World, Lawrence Lessig (New York: Random House, 2001), 352 pp., $30 cloth, $15 paper, $24 e-book.

In the wake of dot-com busts, recession, and the decline of techno-utopianism, it is reasonable to ask what optimism is still warranted concerning the novel forms of communication and cohabitation the Internet once promised. Sunstein and Lessig make the case for keeping the faith in the idea of a digital commons, but both warn that there is cause for concern regarding its health and integrity.

How will new media affect the capacity of citizens to govern themselves? What are the social preconditions of a well-functioning system of democratic deliberation, or of individual freedom itself? These are the basic concerns of Sunstein, a leading constitutional expert and specialist in freedom of expression. He argues that a well-functioning system of free expression—key to a republic with a deliberative process—must meet two requirements. First, people should be exposed to materials that they would not necessarily have chosen. Second, many or most citizens should have a range of common experiences. But the increased ability for advanced filtering of information (Sunstein's ideal-type is the "perfect information filter") by individuals on the one hand, and the expansion of the media industry allowing additional choice and market fragmentation on the other, leads Sunstein to question the viability of our democracies. With the specificity of filtering we may lose sight of opposing views, and with media diversity we lose our common experiences.

Sunstein proposes a number of prescriptions to counter this double bind. We might, for example, require that opposing viewpoints be presented on the most popular and most partisan Web sites. Or, we might try to maintain the "general interest intermediaries" that exist in other media, such as the evening news, which expose people to a range of topics and views at the same time that they provide shared experiences for a diverse public. Failing this, we will find ourselves within "echo chambers" that lead to social fragmentation: we will only learn from and interact with those who already agree with us.

Sunstein's view of the potentially antidemocratic tendencies of digital media is pessimistic—and not supported by empirical research, as he later notes in his "Afterwards." His concept of a general-interest intermediary that promotes shared experiences is as unrealistic as his fear of the perfect information filter and echo chambers. A general-interest intermediary is never neutral; it necessarily has its own interests and concerns. And even a perfect filter on the Internet cannot by itself prevent individuals from seeking or receiving information from other media. Sunstein falls into the same trap, though with a different twist, as the techno-utopians in abstracting technology from the world of which it is necessarily part. People will still meet and talk to strangers, walk on sidewalks and see public protests, go to grocery stores and see headlines from other news sources—and they will interpret these experiences differently.

To be fair, Sunstein does provide a lot of engaging food for thought. He implicitly, and perhaps unknowingly, demands a reconceptualization of the Internet as a social phenomenon. Instead of a "global information village" full of self-indulging communities of echo chambers, we should seek to create a "global information metropolis," whose poor zoning laws would foster disorganized desegregation and cross-fertilization. Through mismanagement, rather than better management, we may create a space for common experience of disorder and exposure to different views. In fact, we should be wary of attempts at order and closure, promoting openness and decentralization instead.

Lessig pursues these ideas in greater detail. He shows how various private and government interests are damaging the commons, a space where resources are shared by the many. Borrowing from institutional economists, he warns of the potential for tragedy if the commons are poorly managed. Lessig's argument hinges on the idea that free use of resources is crucial to innovation and creativity. "Free" does not mean "without cost." Rather, it refers to a resource that may be used either without the permission of anyone else, or, if needed, with permission that is granted neutrally, through open access and nondiscriminatory criteria. Lessig believes that legal and technological changes are rebuilding the very

barriers that the Internet originally removed in order to protect older business models.

The proposed solution to this problem is as intriguing as the diagnosis. Lessig argues that we must maintain free commons where they support the creation of ideas and innovation. First, at the technological level, there must be open access to network resources. Communications protocols must not discriminate and must be open for analysis and use. Meanwhile, the regulation of access must not protect industry players unfairly, as he argues the current rules do. Second, we must not restrict the innovation of software, which is the code that runs our digital worlds. Copyright laws and closed source code restrict our ability to innovate. Moreover, open source code is consistent with an open society where the algorithms and instructions that regulate our lives are available for us to see and alter.

Copyright, patents, and licensing must be reconsidered and renegotiated, says Lessig. He is not advocating anarchy; he too is an expert in constitutional law and believes in some role for government. Government regulation can support the commons while supporting the creation of intellectual property and networks. But Lessig thinks we have gone too far in protecting the already overprotected industries of telecommunications, content providers, and content developers.

The thread binding these otherwise quite different books together is the role of regulation: both Sunstein and Lessig believe that it is an inherent part of democratic society. Lessig argues that control has long been exerted, either by governments or by old private actors in markets; Sunstein believes that we should not see regulation as the anathema to free speech, but as the means through which such speech is protected and practiced. They would both agree that we need effective deliberation through which to decide upon the regulations that protect an open society and its free commons. But while one sees ideal regulation and technology as positive promoters of disorder and heterogeneity, the other sees regulation as creating spaces of order and cleanliness, the precursors to homogeneity. Whether diversity of ideas is in fact best fostered or enforced by order or disorder remains to be seen—and in today's legal environment that increasingly favors the protection of industry, it is doubtful that we will have the opportunity to test either strategy.

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