



The Tragedy of Political Theory: The Road Not taken

J. Peter Euben

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In this book J. Peter Euben argues that Greek tragedy was the context for classical political theory and that such theory read in terms of tragedy provides a ground for contemporary theorizing alert to the concerns of post-modernism, such as normalization, the dominance of humanism, and the status of theory. Euben shows how ancient Greek theater offered a place and occasion for reflection on the democratic culture it helped constitute, in part by confronting the audience with the otherwise unacknowledged principles of social exclusion that sustained its community.

Euben makes his argument through a series of comparisons between three dramas (Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannos*, and Euripides' *Bacchae*) and three works of classical political theory (Thucydides' *History* and Plato's *Apology of Socrates* and *Republic*) on the issues of justice, identity, and corruption. He brings his discussion to a contemporary American setting in a concluding chapter on Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* in which the road from Argos to Athens, built to differentiate a human domain from the undefined outside, has become a Los Angeles freeway desecrating the land and its people in a predatory urban sprawl.

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