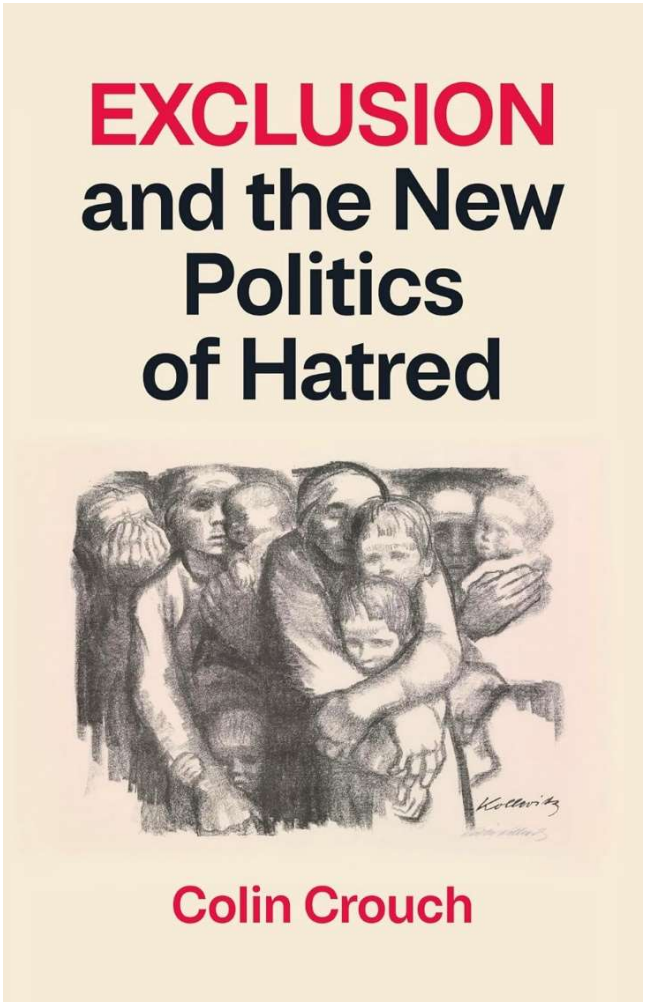
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‘Exclusion and the New Politics of Hatred’ examines modern political divide

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“Exclusion and the New Politics of Hatred” by Colin Crouch. Hoboken, NJ: Polity Press, 2026, 192 pages, $25.00 (hardcover).



“While one might broadly align the political ‘left’ with inclusionary politics and the ‘right’ with exclusion, the situation is considerably more complex,” Colin Crouch asserts near the beginning of “Exclusion and the New Politics of Hatred,” one of several recent releases attempting to make sense of the world in which we currently find ourselves. “Left and right have become confused and confusing, and one of my purposes in this book is to dislodge them and urge people to assess parties, policies and general political positions in terms of conflicts around inclusion and exclusion. A recent detailed study of changing political identities in France, Germany, Switzerland and the UK uses the ideas of universalism versus particularism with very similar meaning.”

“At their simplest, the ideas of inclusion and exclusion can be expressed as a series of pronouns expressing a speaker’s attitudes towards various groups,” he continues a little further in the narrative. “These become general tropes that can move across different issues, expressing a basic elective affinity among them. For example, today’s central political strategy of exclusion, based mainly on rejection of immigrants, can morph easily – though not necessarily – into misogyny. I make considerable use of these pairs throughout the book.”

So begins one of the more intellectually demanding expeditions I have had occasion to submerge myself within for quite some time. It’s not that Crouch’s approach to the subject matter is inherently challenging to decipher. The admission is more a reflection of my lack of experience in the more nuanced philosophical realm in which he operates. I was able to keep up, so to speak, but this one required me to re-read several passages and spend more time than usual consulting some of the primary sources he references throughout the text. A solid grounding in the history that liberally populates this release would also have made the excursion a little less exacting.

Structurally, the book consists of a prologue, six relatively concise yet deceptively sophisticated chapters, and an epilogue. Each installment of this well-conceived and executed treatise supports and reinforces the overarching themes that form the architecture of the manuscript. The literary style is consistent and forceful. You come away from this one feeling both the author’s intellect and passion. To be fair, the book is not as research based as some of the other entries in the genre (at

least in terms of the number of citations), but then again that wasn't the intent. "Exclusion" is an assault on the heart as much as the mind. Moreover, concepts you thought you understood implicitly slowly shapeshift into something barely recognizable after a while – but somehow innately more definitive.

Reflect on the following from "Assessing the relative strengths of exclusion and inclusion," the fourth chapter, which I found especially cogent:

"Defining characteristics of nearly all exclusionist movements is that they require constitutional order to bow to the 'will of the people' as expressed through a leader who guarantees the higher good of national unity. They also make a virtue of rough, ugly, uncompromising speech. It would be no use adopting exclusionist positions while staying within the codes of traditional conservatism. The nationalist temptation therefore presents conservatives and Christian democrats with a severe dilemma."

"Resolution of it in favor of nationalism is seen most clearly in the trajectory of the British Conservative party, a founder of the ECHR {European Convention on Human Rights}, but with many leading members who now advocate British withdrawal from the Court: partly to complete the process of national withdrawal from European institutions that began with leaving the European Union in 2016, and partly to return to a more nationalist idea of 'British' rights. Such a position, insisting that nations are wholes that share little with foreigners, enables a conservative party to make common cause with more extreme exclusionist movements."

An external scientific member of the Max Planck Institute for Social Research at Cologne, Crouch is Professor Emeritus of the University of Warwick. He has a BA from the London School of Economics and Political Science and a doctorate from Nuffield College, one of the constituent colleges of the University of Oxford in England. From 2005 until 2011 he was Professor of Governance and Public Management at Warwick Business School. In 2005, he was elected fellow of the British Academy. His previous books include "Trade Unions: The Logic of Collective Action" (1982), "Post-Democracy" (2005), "The Strange Non-death of Neo-liberalism (2011), and "Making Capitalism Fit for Society" (2013).

As is often the case with these kinds of literary quests, Crouch spends an extraordinary number of pages defining and clarifying the core issues around which the book revolves. Much of the first five chapters are spent explaining how we got to the present moment, primarily within an historical context. Honestly, I learned as much about the political movements in other countries as I did about anything, together with how those movements are connected both directly as well as indirectly to the current situation in the United States. So I was somewhat excited when I got to the final chapter, "Finding grounds for hope." I was not disappointed. He spends the final 30 pages or so providing a detailed roadmap out of the imbroglio in which we find ourselves.

I was also impressed with the realism he injects into his argument:

"Immigration is a positive thing for economies and societies, but it can have negative consequences that need to be addressed," he accurately – I think - observes. "Those who recognize that dual reality have a duty both to proclaim its benefits, and to acknowledge its problems. The tragedy today is that nearly all political forces find it opportune to express the situation the other way around: that the presence of immigrants is an evil that must be reduced as much as possible, with a small number of exceptions for geniuses and billionaires. For so many people, that line of thinking is leading logically to the idea that therefore the presence of all foreigners and ethnic minorities must be in principle an evil unless it can be demonstrated otherwise."

"And if people are an evil, they are legitimate objects of hatred," he adds. "That is the slippery slope on which so many parties have now embarked."

In the final analysis, I tend to agree with Henry Farrell, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Agora Institute Professor of International Affairs at Johns Hopkins University:

“The political divide that structures national politics is shifting from the traditional fight between left and right to a battle between inclusion and exclusion. As national societies and global politics change, should our obligation to others change too? In this powerful, deeply reasoned book, Colin Crouch explains what is happening to politics and society, and suggests how we ought to respond.”

Well-said. “Exclusion” is highly recommended for anyone seriously interested in rising above the dark and dire circumstances that seem to permeate every aspect of our collective discourse these days. Highly recommended.

Reviewed by Aaron W. Hughey, University Distinguished Professor, Department of Counseling and Student Affairs, WKU.

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