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Jed Kroncke*

Foreword: Symposium on Jean-Philippe Robé, *Property, Power and Politics: Why We Need to Rethink the World Power System*

The *Journal of Law and Political Economy* has been fortunate to have many remarkable inaugural moments in its early years, and today we are able to celebrate another. For the first time, we are publishing a book review symposium to highlight a novel and stimulating work: French lawyer and legal scholar Jean-Philippe Robé's 2020 monograph *Property, Power and Politics: Why We Need to Rethink the World Power System*. We are doubly fortunate to have a range of rich contributions by scholars motivated by concerns central to the Law and Political Economy movement, and employing diverse methodological and theoretical perspectives.

Property, Power and Politics reflects LPE's multi- and interdisciplinary ethos, and in so doing confronts its core conundrum: how to redemocratize modern economies and legal institutions. Robé's wide-ranging analysis outlines what he calls the "World Power System," which in his view has both integrated and transcended the bounds of the traditional nation-state. Focusing on the intersection of corporate and property law, *Property, Power and Politics* tries to map out how economic power is constituted in late capitalism, and argues that the systemic concentration of this power in private hands has bypassed extant forms of democratic accountability and now operates without any corresponding sense of larger social duty. Focusing on the climate change crisis, Robé proposes a reform of corporate accounting as a first step in addressing this existential threat, whose impact is and will be felt unevenly across every social asymmetry LPE tracks.

This symposium on *Property, Power and Politics* emerged out of a conference held at Utrecht University in late 2021 and organized by Rutger Claassen and Tully Rector. Claassen and Rector provide the Introduction to the symposium, in which they explore the genesis of the conference, the importance of Robé's work, and the themes that bind the commentators together. Like Robé, the commentators engage with law from multiple disciplines and with similarly diverse sociolegal and comparative legal backgrounds. They interrogate Robé's interrelated concerns about corporate and property law, as well as examining notions of democratic sovereignty, constitutionalism, and economic globalization. And, as is recurrent in LPE debates today, they all ask whether Robé's proposals are either too radical or not radical enough to tackle the challenges of redemocratization.

In addition to confronting these shared concerns among LPE scholars, the symposium stands out as part of a larger effort to internationalize LPE and to network LPE perspectives globally. Its contributors, at various stages of their academic careers, are largely drawn from the Northern European academy (with one Canadian exception). As such, they develop their

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insights, as does Robé, beyond the common-law frame familiar to many North American LPE scholars.

Thus, while broad themes of economic democracy abound, the symposium also provides a window into how LPE concerns translate into domestic arenas—most notably property law—with predominantly civil law framings. In doing so, these contributors explore international scholarly traditions consonant with modern LPE—such as those developed by Robé’s own pioneering mentors, German legal sociologist Gunther Teubner and British international political economist Susan Strange. The comparative law aspect of LPE is perhaps one of its most challenging intellectual and organizational frontiers (much like any global movement today), and these contributors’ efforts to help build these bridges are sincerely appreciated.

Five comments and Robé’s reply follow. We believe they set a high standard for future symposia exploring bold synthetic work that can help broaden and deepen the growing international character of the LPE movement.