Jeffrey Friedman: *Power without Knowledge: A Critique of Technocracy*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. Pp. x, 373.)

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Eschewing the traditional boundaries between normative and empirical research, *Power without Knowledge* paints a highly original picture of modern societies that will be challenging to political theorists even as it greatly enriches their understanding of what is going on in the polities we are inclined to call "democratic." Friedman's most striking contention is that these societies are, in large part, technocratic—not because technocrats have silently seized control, but because the project in which they are engaged is both endorsed by the general public and engaged in, oftentimes, by ordinary voters themselves. According to Friedman, the joint project in which the general public and technocratic elites (epistocrats) are engaged is a modern continuation of what Foucault called, in reference to the sixteenth-century "art of government," the attempt to attend to "the welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health, etc." (348). Friedman convincingly demonstrates that this attempt is what is going on all around us, and in so doing he asks whether what is going on all around us is legitimate.

Thus, *Power without Knowledge* is as much a work of description as prescription, and this affects the nature of the critique of modern politics that Friedman develops. This description would be unnecessary if Friedman were to have criticized technocracy according to external standards, such as those that have preoccupied political theorists until now: standards of distributive justice, for example, or standards of democracy. The internal logic of technocracy, Friedman shows, is utilitarian (although others might be tempted to say "neoliberal"). As such, while technocracy can easily be criticized from external perspectives, such critiques would spare the critics the need to understand how technocracy actually works, as opposed to what its workings are attempting to accomplish. Friedman points, for example, to two approaches to justifying minimum wages. They can be justified a priori, as a nonnegotiable general requirement of justice; or they can be justified technocratically, for their ability to boost workers' income without causing unemployment. The second type of justification, in which the policy is justified only if its benefits (higher wages) overbalance its costs (higher unemployment), requires technocrats to produce accurate estimates of the costs and benefits. Such estimates are necessarily *social scientific* estimates, in that they depend on predictions of the behavioral responses to the prospective policy. If the technocratic approach is to be criticized internally, then, one approach (Friedman's) is to critically scrutinize not the goal the social scientists are trying to achieve, but whether they have the means to achieve it.

Friedman provides this scrutiny in two pathbreaking chapters on the "epistemic pathologies" widespread in neoclassical economic theory, behavioral economics, econometrics, and positivist social science (chap. 4), and among

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social scientists in general (chap. 5). One important implication of these chapters is that ordinary citizens may have a *better* chance of making sound technocratic judgments than epistocrats do, because the former are not subject to the epistemic pathologies characteristic of the latter. However, Friedman also describes pathologies characteristic of the former in a long chapter (chap. 6), which moves from a demolition of the rational-choice theory of voting into a reinterpretation of a vast slew of public-opinion research, seen here as describing the beliefs of "citizen-technocrats": ordinary citizens attempting to solve social and economic problems with their votes. Friedman shows that by understanding citizens this way, we can explain some of the key findings of opinion research without accusing voters of irrationality, as empiricists are wont to do. What may seem irrational is quite logical for a citizen-technocrat.

This would not be apparent, or even visible, in a technocracy critique grounded in democratic theory. Although Friedman's extensive discussion of the Lippmann-Dewey debate shows that technocracy does display a logical slide toward elitism—the target of most democratic theorists' discussions of technocracy—this logic needs to be explained internally if it is to be explained at all. Friedman's explanation points to two common presuppositions in technocratic thinking: that human behavior can be reliably predicted, and that this predictive knowledge is too esoteric to be available to citizen-technocrats, in contrast to epistocratic social scientists. Friedman's innovative critique of these two assumptions forms the heart of the book, as it requires him to redescribe not just the political world we inhabit but our inner lives as its inhabitants. Thus, he attempts to describe human life as a "judicious social scientist" might; that is to say, a social scientist free of the pathologies described in chaps. 4 and 5.

How would such a social scientist try to engage in the prediction of human behavior? First, he would have to understand it, and this, according to Friedman, would require a form of interpretivism that fully attends to the "ideational determination" of conscious human behavior. All social science entails some type of determinism, but Friedman's account of the ideational variety shows, to my mind, that theorists are well advised to eschew a different type of *internal* technocracy critique, one predicated on the existence of free will—an arbitrary factor that, a technocracy critic might suggest, is sure to foul up the predictions of social scientists. Friedman, however, persuasively suggests that human agency is better seen as being determined by our webs of belief than by a random will acting as an uncaused cause. His crucial claim is that, under modern conditions, the ideas that comprise our different webs of beliefs are likely to be heterogeneous and, for that reason, at least partly mysterious to observers. The judicious social scientist, then, must be a humanist of a new sort, who attempts to bridge the gap between self and other by trying to *understand* the other's web of beliefs. Intellectual historians come close to realizing this ideal, but, Friedman argues, their task is so difficult that their efforts are ultimately unreliable, even though any given intellectual historian may succeed. Judicious technocrats face an even more difficult

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task, as they must deal with anonymous others—the faceless abstractions generated by statistics or theoretical modeling, whose future behavior is the subject of technocratic prediction.

Given this fundamental problem, a judicious technocracy—one that takes account of human beings as heterogeneous, ideationally determined creatures—seems unlikely, although Friedman allows that it is not impossible and, indeed, he cultivates hope for it. What *is* impossible, in Friedman's view, is an escape from technocracy. In the final chapter, he shows that even a regime which, by prioritizing exit over voice, economizes on our need to predict anonymous others' behavior would necessarily be a technocratic regime, not least because the exit option could not provide many public goods that would have to be provided by traditional policy means. Friedman's critique of technocracy, then, is less institutional—a call for a new political regime—than it is cultural. We see this most clearly in the book's afterword, in which Friedman suggests that the Left has unwittingly fallen into the arms of technocracy, as it has failed to challenge the anti-ideational assumptions that have come down to us from the Progressive Era—which, in turn, stem from the Cameralist ideas that Foucault associated with the "art of government." Friedman views this failure as tantamount to a sacrifice of humanity on the altar of science—or, rather, pseudoscience—and as a betrayal of humanistic ideals.

All told, *Power without Knowledge* gives us a provocative and moving evocation of how those ideals undercut technocracy from within. Friedman does not reject the technocratic dedication to the relief of human suffering. But he shows that we should not assume that those who suffer are so homogeneous that they must succumb to positivist methods of behavioral prediction. Until this message is received, the Left—the logical home for a critique of technocratic culture—will be locked in its embrace.

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Pierre Manent: *Natural Law and Human Rights: Toward a Recovery of Practical Reason*. Translated by Ralph C. Hancock with a foreword by Daniel J. Mahoney. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2020. Pp. xxvi, 137).

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Pierre Manent is one of France's leading public intellectuals and the author of numerous works of political philosophy on vital topics such as the European

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