

hardly engages the texts of Aquinas's "Treatise on Law" in the *Summa Theologiae*, and he substitutes his three motives for Aquinas's teleological framework, which expresses natural law in terms of natural inclinations to the natural ends of self-preservation, procreation, and rational perfection (129). Thomist scholars have debated extensively whether Aquinas's presentation is based on self-evident practical principles or theoretical claims about man's essential nature as a rational and social animal. It would be valuable to know if Manent is influenced by the New Natural Law of Finnis and Grisez, which emphasizes practical reason as the source of self-evident basic human goods. Manent might also have compared his approach with *The Splendor of Truth* (1993) by John Paul II, which formulates natural law in terms of "the acting person" by combining traditional Thomism, modern biology, and Christian personalism. There is also Martin Rhonheimer's lengthy treatise *Natural Law and Practical Reason: A Thomistic View of Moral Autonomy* (Fordham University Press, 2000), which prefigures Manent's argument in important respects. I conclude, therefore, that Manent's book is a powerful diagnosis of the problem of limitless human rights with an admittedly modest proposal to preserve "minimal humanity against the assaults of . . . disordered desire" (127).

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Sungmoon Kim: *Theorizing Confucian Virtue Politics: The Political Philosophy of Mencius and Xunzi*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. xiv, 237.)

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The conventional view is that the two great Confucian thinkers who followed Confucius in China's Warring States period—Mencius (371–289 BCE) and Xunzi (300–230 BCE)—developed the Confucian tradition in radically different directions. Mencius was an idealist whereas Xunzi was a political realist who trained Han Feizi, the synthesizer of China's harsh "Legalist" tradition. Mencius thought human nature is good, while Xunzi had the opposite view that humans are born bad.

Sungmoon Kim argues against the conventional view. His book is a rigorous and largely successful effort to show that the two thinkers had much in common. First, Mencius and Xunzi share a commitment to moral self-improvement, with the Confucian moral ideal of the sage as the final

destination. Second, they are committed to improving the ruler's virtuous character. Third, they are committed to the moral education of the people. Fourth, they both argue that the state has an obligation to provide decent material conditions since most people cannot flourish morally if they are poor and starving. I would add that they are both committed to the idea that rulers often need to rely on *junzi* (exemplary persons) to formulate good policies. Both Mencius and Xunzi tried to serve as rulers' advisers, though they did not have much political success.

Kim argues that both Mencius and Xunzi advocated Confucian political ideals while remaining committed to realistic political theorizing. The book is divided into two parts. The first part is mainly about domestic politics. Chapter 1 shows how Mencius and Xunzi, notwithstanding different starting points about human nature, were both concerned with transforming the ruler's motivation so it serves the public interest. Chapter 2 shows how Mencius advocated "virtue constitutionalism"—virtuous ministers acting as a countervailing force against the monarch—whereas Xunzi emphasizes ritual institutions (this difference may be overstated: Xunzi devotes a whole chapter to ministers). Chapter 3 shows that Mencius did not clearly differentiate between moral and civic virtues, whereas Xunzi's more pessimistic account of human nature led him to emphasize civic virtues that are conducive to political order.

The second part of the book shifts to interstate relations. Both Mencius and Xunzi developed normative theories meant to inform relations between states. In chapter 4, Kim shows that Mencius differentiated between benevolent rulers motivated by *ren* (compassion and humaneness) and tyrants motivated by selfishness and cruelty. In chapter 5, Kim shows that Xunzi argued for a middle ground between benevolent kings and tyrants: the morally flawed hegemon (*ba*) who is partly good because he is consistent and can gain the trust of his people and his allies. In chapter 6, Kim shows that both Mencius and Xunzi defended the idea of "punitive expeditions," which approximates the modern idea of humanitarian intervention to liberate people who are oppressed by tyrants.

Kim does not explicitly say so, but he seems to agree with Xunzi's sophisticated and systematic reformulation of Confucian political ideas. The implication of this reformulation is that Confucianism took a wrong turn in the Song dynasty when the tradition sided with Mencius and marginalized Xunzi for the next nine hundred years or so. Fortunately, Xunzi's political theory is being revived in China and elsewhere.

Kim is a reliable guide to the political theories of Mencius and Xunzi and it is hard to find fault with the substance of his arguments. Nevertheless, I question Kim's methodology. He tries to combine the "contextual" method, which seeks to make systematic sense of the arguments of Mencius and Xunzi in their historical context, and the "normative" method, which aims to reconstruct arguments in a way that is appealing to contemporary moral sensibilities. But the two methods often pull in different directions.

To give an example of the normative method: Kim praises Xunzi's discussion of ritual institutions because these institutions have the power to transform self-interest into a civil order beneficial to all. However, since concern for the oppression of women was not part of Xunzi's agenda, Kim adds it. Speaking of the principle of *yi*, Kim observes, "Not only can it prevent the strong, the wise, the young (and, I add, men) from oppressing or taking advantage of the weak, the stupid, the old (and women), but it can further remove poverty and bring about productive economy that ensures material sufficiency for all" (50). Such a claim is unobjectionable, if Kim's aim is to draw insights from Xunzi's argument to develop a political theory appropriate for modern times rather than faithfully interpret Xunzi's theory. Kim's normative method would also explain why he uses contemporary terminology such as constitutionalism to make sense of the arguments of ancient political thinkers.

If Kim's aim is normative, however, he need not spend so much time trying to make sense of Mencius's defense of the abdication of sage-kings. Other than North Koreans, perhaps, nobody believes in sage-kings today. Nor need Kim worry about Mencius's division of a king's subjects into "passive subjects consisting of laypeople who are beneficiaries of a benevolent government, and active subjects such as feudal lords (of the whole kingdom) or the ministers of noble families (within the feudal state)" (68). This distinction sheds light on Mencius's theory in its own context, but nobody in the West (or China) would try to revive and reinstitutionalize that distinction today.

To avoid such conflation of methodologies, Kim could have stuck to contextual interpretation in the main text and concluded with an explicitly normative chapter specifying what is living and what is dead in classical Confucian virtue politics.

I also question Kim's use of sources. Kim's erudition is impressive. He seems to have read almost everything on the subject, and his detailed footnotes explain areas of disagreement with other interpretations. But he largely confines himself to English-language works. Had he made more use of Chinese sources that explore the historical and intellectual background of Mencius and Xunzi, he could have engaged with the political context of their thought in greater depth. More surprisingly, Kim omits reference to important works by Yan Xuetong on Xunzi's theory, some of which have been translated into English. Like Kim, Yan explains Xunzi's view that hegemons can be partly good because they earn the trust of allies. But Yan shows how Xunzi defended a "just hierarchy" between states, in contrast to Kim's dubious claim that Xunzi advocated a relatively egalitarian view of interstate relations (172). Yan also draws implications for a "just hierarchy" between states in the contemporary world and translates Xunzi's language in terms more appealing to contemporary sensibilities; for example, he translates *wangdao* as "humane authority" rather than the archaic sounding "Kingly Way," the former of which is more helpful for Kim's normative project.

Kim values clarity of expression. But the sentences are often long and clunky and the book would have benefited from a tough copyeditor. There

are minor typos that could be corrected for the paperback edition. For example, the pinyin transliteration of the word for “sage” is *shengren*, not *shenren* (5). On page 44, it should be “Donald Munro” not “Monro.” On page 132, it should be “Mencian” not “Menciain.” On page 168, “flatly” should presumably be “flatly.”

These misgivings aside, I highly recommend this book to specialists in Chinese political thought and all those curious about political theorizing in the Chinese world.

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Andrew F. March: *The Caliphate of Man*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019. Pp. 328.)

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Andrew March’s *The Caliphate of Man* challenges the common but somewhat facile opinion that Islam’s emphasis on divine sovereignty and *sharī‘a* renders it inhospitable to democracy. March does so by means of a thorough, thematic analysis of a number of important modern Muslim thinkers, drawing on a Muslim political tradition that goes back to the Quran itself.

Beginning in the preface, March situates his subject in the context of the Arab Spring, and the burgeoning, mostly unfulfilled desire for democracy in the Muslim world. He argues that a potential germ of democracy in Islam may be found in the traditional Muslim notion that the Muslim community (*umma*) should confirm the selection of the caliph, God’s representative and vicegerent on earth (11–12). This teaching has been interpreted in various ways according to historical conditions. In classical times, absolute rulers managed to hold any effective notion of popular authority in abeyance. As March puts it, “the people figure very modestly in this tradition” (29), which relegated popular consensus to a “founding myth of lost paradise” (31). Yet the “sleeping *Umma*,” to use March’s helpful metaphor, was waiting to be aroused, and given its due opportunity in modern times. In particular, the fall of the last great Muslim empire and crisis of the caliphate in the 1920s forced Muslims to reconsider their political system, giving rise to a number of polemics about the political future of Islam (38ff.).

March proceeds to interpret the development of the concept of popular sovereignty in five important twentieth-century Muslim thinkers: Rashīd