

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.

—Paul Gunn
Goldsmiths, University of London



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).

doi:10.1017/S0034670520000534

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

nation state, the assimilation of Muslims into French society, the origins of modernity, and the role of Christian faith in a secular world. Despite his reputation as a formidable Catholic conservative, Manent is actually quite balanced and moderate in his views, a reflection of his intellectual heroes Alexis de Tocqueville, Raymond Aron, and, as we learn here, Thomas Aquinas. In this book, Manent takes on the daunting task of formulating a Thomistic conception of natural law in order to provide an antidote to the moral confusion that he finds in contemporary human rights.

The book is an expansion of lectures delivered in 2017 for the Etienne Gilson Chair at the Institut Catholique in Paris, translated into elegant English by Ralph Hancock and lucidly introduced by Daniel Mahoney. Chapters 1–5 explain the problem of limitless freedom inherent in human rights, which Manent traces to Hobbes and, interestingly, to Luther and Machiavelli, culminating in recent phenomena such as the gender revolutions, multiculturalism, and the cultural shocks of the “1968 moment” in France. The sixth chapter, along with an appendix entitled “Recovering Law’s Intelligence,” presents a possible solution by reformulating Thomistic natural law as a notion of “practical reason.” The conclusion is a sober Tocquevillian appeal to “divine providence” and human wisdom for a recovery of virtuous liberty under law (130). Whether Manent’s analysis and proposal are sufficient is a question I shall address at the end.

Manent begins by explaining the problem of natural rights, later known as human rights, with an account of liberalism that is both familiar and novel. He argues that the concept of rights arose as a rejection of the classical Aristotelian and Christian notions of government based on an authoritative law that established an objective idea of the good life. By disavowing such a law, the modern state deprived itself of a legitimate claim to command citizens beyond the satisfaction of selfish passions such as self-preservation and material comfort or the protection of personal autonomy. The theoretical premise of the modern position, expressed by Hobbes, is the state of nature where human beings are viewed abstractly as free and equal individuals without a specific nature that ties them to families, social groups, and nations. Manent calls this process “denaturalization” (11) and argues that it causes the erosion of authoritative institutions, while paradoxically increasing the power of the sovereign state as it takes on the role of liberating individuals from traditional restraints. The influence of abstract individualism over centuries has made the classical ideal of liberty under law in a virtuous republic increasingly difficult to achieve, leaving instead arbitrary freedom and an overbearing state—a situation that Manent refers to literally as “anarchic,” meaning, without an *arche* or ruling principle to command obedience (64–74, 97). This critique is familiar to us from the writings of Burke and Tocqueville and, more recently, from Patrick Deneen’s *Why Liberalism Failed* (Yale University Press, 2018).

The novel part of Manent’s analysis lies in the subtle way that he traces the process of “denaturalization” not only to Hobbes but also to Machiavelli and

Luther. Machiavelli diminished human nature by reducing political prudence to amoral necessity and by rejecting the sacred limits of conscience. Luther's devotion to salvation by "faith alone" had a similar effect in undermining responsible Christian citizenship by denying the "practical conscience" that recognizes both the realism of the way "we are" and the nobility of the way "we ought" to be (34–41). Thus, a complex blend of Machiavelli's realism, Luther's apolitical faith, and Hobbes's state of nature undermined the practical basis of natural law in the lower and higher impulses of human nature. In reflecting on Manent's account of denaturalization, I am puzzled by his omission of German philosophy from Kant to Nietzsche and Heidegger for its role in diminishing the grounds of natural law and driving freedom toward personal autonomy and moral relativism. Denaturalization also has more recent sources, such as French existentialism, which contributed to the 1960s cultural revolution that Manent believes dealt a mortal blow to France's cultural heritage (75–76). One of its aftershocks was the sexual revolution, which Manent sharply criticizes for denying the natural differences of men and women and promoting "marriage for all"; these new norms have been imposed with such zeal that they sound like "nature crying out that there is no natural law" (16–17).

This striking formulation is paradoxical, of course, yet it contains the seeds of hope because it implies that natural law persists even for modern ideologues, if we look to "practical reason" rather than to metaphysics or cosmology for signs of our true nature. This appeal to practical reason is decisive for Manent, but it is not easy to grasp. Although he says that "Thomas Aquinas is certainly the author who can best help us" (119) and Christian Aristotelianism is most useful, his principal claim is that natural law must be found in "the acting person"—in the motives and goods inherent in practical choices, which Manent identifies as "the pleasant, the useful, and the noble" (101). He presents these three motives as "objective components of human nature" which can be detected in diverse cultures and in all forms of moral deliberation. Without systematically proving this universal proposition, Manent indicates that it can be vindicated by the negative experiences of distorted ideologies, such as communism, which tried but failed to abolish the natural attachment to private property and religion; he also predicts that the attempt to redefine marriage as separated from its natural end of procreation will fail (108–9). In other words, Manent's case for recovering natural law rests mainly on what I would call the "push back" of human nature in practical experience which shows that ideologies of limitless rights or communism eventually fail because they defy the permanent structure of human nature that real people perceive, however dimly, as the natural basis of the good society. Manent concludes that such experiences reflect the Thomistic idea of natural law as a participation of the eternal law in rational creatures and the providential ordering of the world (129).

After reading Manent's challenging book, however, one feels a certain dissatisfaction with the brevity and thinness of his sketch of natural law. Manent

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).

—Robert P. Kraynak
Colgate University



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

doi:10.1017/S0034670520000546

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