dream of connecting everyone and everything to everyone and everything else, everywhere and all the time" (1)—has turned the self into "a sociotechnical phenomenon" (20), thus seeing technology and society as a cocreative set of processes. Although hyperconnectivity might have its discontents, these might be partially mollified by our ability to act and shape the technological forms in meaningful ways. Brubaker draws out how today's technologically mediated communication is both all encompassing (hyperconnective) and profoundly limited by the individual corporate platforms whose profit motives structure our interactions. These platforms are not designed for human flourishing but for the extraction of data and corporate profits; they reshape our interpersonal interactions and reframe how we relate to our family, friends, employers, potential romantic partners, and society as a whole (mostly for the worse; hence, "discontents"). For Brubaker, it is the corporations that cause the problems here, not necessarily the advancement of technology.

Brubaker is much more concerned than Risse is with the discontent of the present, with the specific problems and ills that befall society because of this hyperconnectivity. He traces the impact of such ubiquitous connectivity on the self, our interactions, culture, the economy, and politics. He keeps a similar focus throughout, examining the impacts of such connectivity in broad terms and focusing on how these digital platforms both embrace and simultaneously undermine the often utopian promises of such hyperconnectivity. Overall, Brubaker presents a convincing and concise analysis of the perils of this new technologically mediated hyperconnectivity and its potential for broad impacts on society.

In one poignant example, hyperconnectivity is held up as a new, democratic model of culture—allowing anyone to access the whole range of humanistic cultural production while also being able to create and disseminate cultural products without going through the traditional gatekeepers of high society, film studios, or record labels. However, Brubaker shows how this initial promise is undercut, as nearly all the emancipatory aims of hyperconnectivity are. Although the old gatekeepers may have become much diminished, if not irrelevant, new, more subtle, algorithmic gatekeepers have risen to take their place. Although we may have access to the vast stores of humanistic culture, we instead rely on recommender algorithms to tell us what song to listen to next or what show we might enjoy. This undercuts our ability to make real choices while also denying us the opportunity to grow and change our own preferences as a result of coming into contact with a challenging piece of art or culture. Similarly, although the promise of cultural creation is technically open to all, the ability to profit and dedicate one's life to such work is still heavily gate-kept, with digital platforms and their faceless algorithms replacing the villainous men in suits of old.

In a way, these two books, when taken together, represent the need, the promise, and the challenge of developing a political theory of technology for our digital age. The wide-ranging scope and detailed explication of today's technological shortcomings only serve to reinforce the urgency of such projects. Political theory has kept its toes out of the digital waters for too long. Whether through hyperconnectivity or the broader digital age, the impact of technology on our political futures is becoming more obvious by the day. The promise of a political theory of technology is to help us understand the changing world we live in and to work toward a future where these technological forms are used not for domination, but for liberation.

But the challenges of attempting to articulate such a political theory are twofold. First, the technological landscape shifts so quickly as to render many objects of inquiry irrelevant. For example, both authors engage with the concept of the metaverse, as described by Mark Zuckerberg and Meta. However, in the short time between writing and publishing, the metaverse has nearly completely collapsed and proven to be nothing more than an ill-advised money pit. Second, in the sphere of technology, one must be constantly wary of bad actors: those working not to engage with a topic or deal truthfully with journalists and interviewers but to prop up their stock prices or IPO valuations. All proclamations by those inside the tech industry must be treated with a large degree of skepticism. This is doubly true with the promise of artificial intelligence, where promises of future general AI as world changing or destroying are pitched not as good-faith extrapolations of the future but as distractions or speculative marketing, obscuring the issues we confront in the present. Regardless, political theory must navigate these choppy waters, and Brubaker and Risse have boldly led us out of the harbor.

Confucian Constitutionalism: Dignity, Rights, and Democracy. By Sungmoon Kim. New York: Oxford University Press, 2023. 296p. $83.00 cloth.

— Loubna El Amine [ID], *Northwestern University*
loubna.elamine@northwestern.edu

Sungmoon Kim cares deeply about democracy, especially in East Asia, the part of the world he is from and writes about. *Confucian Constitutionalism: Dignity, Rights, and Democracy* is the fifth of the books he has published in the last 10 years to make the case, from different angles, for Confucian democracy.

The new book lays out an account of what Kim describes as "Confucian Constitutionalism," by which he means the Confucian-inflected design of political institutions, including the public sphere of deliberation, the

legislature, and the judiciary. Kim also sets himself the task of answering critics of Confucian democracy, whom he categorizes as either Confucian-meritocratic or liberal (2). Although he offers arguments specific to each, one line of argumentation that permeates the book concerns the idea of Confucianism as an "evolving political tradition" (250). Kim's distinctive contribution in the book, as in previous work, is indeed to study Confucianism as a "societal culture," rather than just as a "philosophical tradition" (2)—with its evolving nature tied to the social and political transformations witnessed in East Asia, especially in recent decades. Kim thus presents his own Confucian Constitutionalism as a continuation and revival of the project of early twentieth-century Chinese intellectuals who sought "a new model of benevolent government" based on "the people's self-government," "the discourse of rights (and responsibilities)," and "the intricate institutional structure of the separation of powers" (251).

The idea here is that Confucianism has developed not only to meet the challenge of modernization but also that this challenge is distinctive in East Asia. For example, "societal pluralism" in East Asia is still "*unfolding*" (emphasis in the original), in contrast with its fully developed nature in the West, as embodied in John Rawls's use of the "fact of pluralism" to describe Europe after the Reformation and the wars of religion (1). Put differently, pluralism in East Asia has not erased the "syncretism" characteristic of the region in which Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism could be espoused simultaneously (89). Kim also attributes the relative dearth of religious conflict in East Asian history to the fact that "political, legal, and social institutions were generally predicated on Confucianism, which prizes harmony over conflict" (90).

This historical account is meant as evidence for the distinctiveness of Confucianism, in at least some of its variations, as a "comprehensive doctrine." Kim contends that Rawls, who developed the concept in *Political Liberalism* (1993, 13), was not actually interested in the content of comprehensive doctrines. But content matters, according to Kim. More specifically, he argues that some comprehensive doctrines are less encompassing of various aspects of life than others; indeed, he suggests that this is implicit in Rawls's own—underexplored—distinction between partial and full comprehensive doctrines (77). Because it is less encompassing in this way—it is "partial" rather than "full"—"civic Confucianism" can provide the normative basis for state institutions without impinging on the freedom of citizens to uphold other comprehensive doctrines, especially given East Asia's syncretism.

But what is civic Confucianism? Kim writes that it is characterized by "benevolence, valuable relationships, trust, filial piety, ritual propriety, respect for elders and harmony" (86); he adds, "Its kernel lies not necessarily in specific beliefs and doctrines but in social practices such as ancestor worship and ritual propriety" (91). It is "difficult

… to imagine individuals in East Asian societies of the Confucian heritage who completely reject such Confucian values" (121). But even were such people to exist, he wonders, would it be "politically overbearing if a democratic state encourages [them] to cultivate Confucian values that are widely cherished in society" (121)? The argument here relates to Kim's distinction between "oppression" and "offense," which he uses to suggest that the cultivation of Confucian values might be offensive to some—an inevitability in a free society—but that it does not equate to oppression, given the civic nature of these values and the constitutional mechanisms that otherwise constrain the government (83–88).

Yet some areas of government policy, like taxation, frustrate the offense/oppression distinction Kim poses. Imagine a Confucian government taxing its citizens to subsidize practices of ancestor worship, which Kim mentions as characteristic of civic Confucianism. Although this is not oppression, it does constitute more than mere offense. It amounts to coercion. Would it be permissible for the Confucian constitutional state to undertake such taxation, on Kim's view? If he allows for it, he runs afoul of what he describes as the "pluralist" demand: the meaningful accommodation of group difference (70). If he does not allow for it, then he runs afoul of what he terms the "Confucian demand," namely the privileging of Confucianism over other comprehensive doctrines (70). Thus, the tension between Confucianism and pluralism has not actually been resolved.

Here Kim might suggest that this is where the use of public reason in general democratic deliberation comes in, allowing citizens to collectively agree about what is and is not acceptable government policy. But the qualifier "Confucian" rears its head again: after all, Kim's account of public reason is called "public reason Confucianism," and what makes it "Confucian" is the practice of ritual enabling a "shared cultural semiotics that prizes the virtue of respectfulness (*jing* 敬) over the agonal expression of the self or personal and group interests" (113). We are back to wondering about those citizens who reject ritual, of the ancestor worship form or otherwise, and the centrality of the value of respectfulness; can their participation in public reason Confucianism be anything but coerced?

Kim's response to such worries over the tension between pluralism and Confucianism is that this dilemma is not specific to this issue or to his own proposal. He notes at various points that liberalism cannot be perfectly neutral vis-à-vis, for example, the religious subjects of a liberal state (121). The assumption here, which runs throughout the book, is that Confucianism holds the same place in East Asian societies that liberalism holds in Western democratic societies. Liberalism, at least in its Rawlsian variation, is embodied in various institutions of Western democratic states: what Rawls identifies as the "public political culture" of liberal

democracies. To ground Kim's argument for the correspondence between liberalism and Confucianism, some account of the lingering, even if embattled, influence of Confucianism on the sociopolitical institutions of contemporary East Asian societies is thus needed. Here, one would expect important differences between the South Korean and Chinese states' relationships to Confucianism. This also brings us back to the historical argument about the relationship between Confucianism and the absence of religious conflict in East Asia: In what ways were the relevant social and political institutions Confucian? And is Kim's proposed Confucian Constitutionalism "Confucian" in the same way as these older institutions? If not, how can we identify it as Confucian, despite the historical change?

It is ultimately a virtue of Kim's book to raise these big and important questions and compel us to consider the historical trajectory and social composition of non-Western societies without taking Western history as the default model. Add to this the comprehensiveness of the work—which covers the basis and goals of Confucian government, centered on ideals like human dignity and well-being, the rule of law and the place of rights, deliberation in the public sphere, and the design of institutions like the legislature and the judiciary—and you get a highly ambitious and powerful case for thinking about democracy in East Asia in its own right.

The Classical and Christian Origins of American Politics: Political Theology, Natural Law, and the American Founding. By Kody W. Cooper and Justin Buckley Dyer. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022. 225p. $99.99 cloth, $34.99 paper.
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— Vincent Phillip Muñoz ⓘ, *University of Notre Dame*
vmunoz@nd.edu

In his best-selling and much-discussed book *Why Liberalism Failed* (2018), Notre Dame political theorist Patrick Deneen traced liberalism's failures to its rejection of the idea of a standard of morality above human willfulness. Echoing Leo Strauss's quip that Locke and the politics of modern natural rights amount to a "joyless quest for joy" (*Natural Right and History,* 1953, 251), Deneen took the "East Coast Straussian" (see Steven Smith's characterization in chapter 7 of *Reading Leo Strauss*, 2006) "low but solid" interpretation of the American founding and modified it to "low and degenerate." He argued, at least implicitly, that faithful Christians and others holding traditional moral beliefs ought not to admire the United States or its founding principles.

In *The Classical and Christian Origins of American Politics*, Kody W. Cooper and Justin Buckley Dyer offer a spirited rejoinder to Deneen's pessimism, contending that a more careful examination of the founders' thought and practices reveals their alignment with classical and Christian natural law principles. According to Cooper and Dyer, the precepts animating the founding include the following: a divine Creator exists and the Creator's will is inseparable from His reason and goodness; the Creator is the author of a prescriptive natural law that imposes moral duties and obligations on individuals and on nations; a rightly ordered political community is modeled after divine sovereignty in which power and goodness are unified and will is tethered to reason; power alone does not confer sovereignty; sovereigns, including the people themselves, are bound by a higher moral law; nature, including human nature, is teleological; and the natural law and the foregoing precepts are knowable via reason, which is epistemologically distinct from, but not contrary to, revelation.

In their especially clear and helpful introductory chapter, Cooper and Dyer explain that the founders understood human happiness to be found not in the mere satisfaction of our own wills but in living according to our rational nature, including our nature as political animals. The founders' Christianity builds on this classical foundation by adding the idea of the Creator as the author of nature and as a lawgiver who is neither arbitrary nor capricious but rather is bound by His own goodness and reason. The founders' Creator is not Hobbes's sovereign, whose will is obeyed on account of his superior power, but rather the Creator God who governs the world through His sustaining and intervening Providence. The natural law consists of those aspects of divine governance discernible through human reason that direct men to the ends proper to their nature. Although the founders differed on ecclesiastical and soteriological questions, Cooper and Dyer argue that they shared—and grounded their politics in—a natural theology that emerged from the Christian engagement with classical philosophy.

The authors present their natural law interpretation of the founding in six substantive, chronologically organized chapters, bookended by excellent introductory and concluding chapters. Four chapters focus on the period before and through the Revolutionary War, discussing the pamphlet debates starting in the 1760s, the political theology of the Declaration of Independence, just war and natural law justifications for revolution and independence, and how notions of providentialism and natural law guided American counterintelligence and diplomacy during the war itself. Two chapters focus on the founders' constitutionalism: one on how the founders, in contradistinction to Rousseau, understood natural law as a limit on popular sovereignty, and the other on how James Wilson's *Lectures on Law* (1789–91) reflect the founders' Christian engagement with the natural law tradition.

Common to all the chapters are a few key points: the founders held liberty in the state of nature to be limited by the moral law; their understanding of human beings as