



of virtue politics” (386). He admitted that there could be no perfect prince but insisted that ideals remained important to humans due to their natural sense of benevolence.

In the last few chapters of the book, Hankins faults scholars who have wrongly represented Machiavelli as the epitome of Renaissance political thought. He sees Machiavelli’s new ‘political science’ as a rejection of the virtue politics of the preceding 150 years. By arguing that (a) institutions (laws, customs, etc.), not the formation of virtuous leaders, were the key to political reform; and (b) the goal of politics was to conserve and expand a leader’s power, not to secure the people’s ability to pursue the good life, Machiavelli destroyed the legacy of humanist reflection on politics that had been passed down to him.

Machiavelli’s new way of thinking inspired the legalist-institutionalist approach that resulted in seventeenth-century social contract theory and, in the West, the kind of modern representative regimes that followed. But in response to Machiavelli’s claim that virtue politics had failed, Hankins offers a comparison between Renaissance humanists and their Chinese Confucian contemporaries—both were engaged in a project to recover classical texts, believing that studying ancient wisdom would result in virtuous leadership. The fact that the Chinese project was successful (in his view) for 1800 years indicates that “virtue politics” is not as naïve as it might appear to readers today. Ultimately Hankins concludes that both institutions and morality are required for the maintenance of social order. This book introduces readers to Renaissance political thought from a new perspective while urgently reminding us how much we still have to learn from the ancients about political life.

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Yoram Hazony, *Conservatism: A Rediscovery*. Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 2022.

Israeli political philosopher Yoram Hazony’s accessible yet deep introduction to postliberal political philosophy offers the needed paradigm shift for the end days of liberalism. It should rank up there with Russell Kirk’s *The Conservative Mind* in the canon of classic texts of the conservative movement. Nevertheless, with its emphasis on nationalism it does not succeed in fully deconstructing the liberal paradigm.

Conservatism: A Rediscovery is organized into four sections covering history, philosophy, current affairs, and personal reflections of Hazony on his student years at Princeton and his intellectual trajectory. The last section is short but forms a poignant part of Hazony's case that conserving our heritage is a way of life, not a partisan argument applicable to a public realm that is separate from the private realm.

A strength of this approach is that it treats conservatism not as a party program, but rather a better descriptive paradigm of the way in which civilization propagates itself. The problem with liberalism is not that it pushes objectionable policies, but rather that the very way it conceptualizes political order itself is flawed. Enlightenment liberalism foreshortens the complexity of politics, reinterpreting the principles of order "painstakingly developed and inculcated over centuries" (32) as obvious, universal truths accessible to individuals.

By contrast, conservatism is not a universal theory; what counts as conservative in one country will be different from another, and Hazony is after *Anglo-American* conservatism, an interpretation of a particular political tradition, not principles applicable at all times and places. Liberalism's search for universal principles leads us to misinterpret political reality, as we are in the first place unable to make essential distinctions. Hazony points, for example, to the expansion of civil rights remedies indiscriminately to groups outside of blacks in the American South, even though they lacked an equivalent history of enduring hardships, into a single abstract idea of "discrimination on the basis of X."

More importantly, liberalism misses the nature of the human person in community. Building on his previous book *The Virtue of Nationalism*, which established Hazony as a leader of the national conservative movement, Hazony emphasizes the importance of *loyalty* in binding individuals together into community. A nation is not formed by a mass of individuals, but is constituted by loyalty groups that give it a form. The very work of politics is to cultivate ties of mutual loyalty between these groups. The anthropology of liberalism of individuals pursuing their own self-interest is false, because our self-interest is itself defined by the flourishing of the other people and groups to whom one is loyal. Loyalties should be fostered, not treated as suspect if they are directed to individuals and groups that are not the state. Hazony thus aims to disassociate conservatism from libertarianism. As opposed to the fusionism of the Cold War era, national conservatism for Hazony is the species of Anglo-American conservatism which places "an especial emphasis on national independence and on the loyalties that bind the nation's constitutive factions to one another" (xxi).

This juxtaposition of national independence and loyalty begs the question, however, why the nation should be the terminus of our attachments. If our loyalty should not be controlled by one entity, and if the promotion of multiple loyalties playing on different levels is good, then what is so special about the level of the nation? After all, one could read the liberal tradition of political thought as saying precisely first and foremost that the nation must monopolize our loyalty, whether that is the Leviathan state in Thomas Hobbes, the popular sovereignty of John Locke, or the general will of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

The answer has to do with the religious character of nationalism. In a chapter co-written by historian Ofir Haivry, who has authored a book on John Selden, Hazony shows how conservatism in England was linked to nationalism and emerged in opposition to Catholicism and Puritanism wanting to subject the nation to a religious authority in Rome or Geneva. For Hazony, a nation runs into trouble when it tries to suppress its natural connection to religion. The new, liberal constitution propagated after World War II that replaced republican government with liberal democracy, is pernicious in large part because it ended the influence of Christianity in public life and the teaching of the Bible in schools. The conservative tradition wants to maintain this linkage: Hazony points to Edmund Burke wanting the government to cultivate the national religion in England, and the Federalists at the Founding and early republic being keener to have an alliance of religion and the state than the Jeffersonian Republicans.

The problem is that the concept of “religion” itself plays within the liberal paradigm. As William Cavanaugh has decisively shown in *The Myth of Religious Violence*, the concept of religion cannot be defined and is fundamentally confused. The idea that there are many competing “religions” between which an individual must choose does not comport with the basic self-understanding of Christianity, namely that it is God’s search for man, not man’s search for God. At one point Hazony even elides the difference between religion and a “public philosophy” (251). Liberalism turns Christianity into a religion for political reasons, in order to fit it into its Procrustean anthropological categories. Religion is essentially connected to nationalism because it is nationalism, that is, it is the reason that our loyalties ought to find their ultimate source and summit in the nation. But the nation is not at the center of all our loyalties. Nations not only made up of lower-level loyalty groups, starting with the family, but they also have relations with other states and find their place among them in an international order. A full commitment to overcoming the liberal paradigm would recognize the primacy of loyalty over the nation, which is only one

instance of it, as well as the true nature of the Christian project, which is to harmonize all our loyalties in Christ, who is their real source and summit.

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Will Hoyt, *The Seven Ranges*. Eugene, Ore.: Front Porch Republic Books, 2021.

The “American Experiment” is an alien, or even offensive, notion outside of the United States of America (USA), but it should not be ignored by anyone interested in civilisation and its direction. The USA has served as the application of those ideas of society and polity distilled through that epoch of Western thought known by its supporters as the *Enlightenment*. The result was a genuine experiment and to some extent, all nations are now part of it.

Experiments are only partly thought-out things. They are risky tests of risky theories. Will Hoyt has written an evaluation of the American experiment from the point of view of an observer of that part of the US midwest sometimes called the “rust belt.” His observations are presented by immersing his reader in a journey that reads something like William Cobbett’s “Rural Rides,” or perhaps Persig’s “Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance.”

Cobbett rode through the England he loved and noted features, such as manor houses, that according to the history he had been taught should not exist. Persig used a motorcycle ride to explore philosophical ideas that he had been taught should not exist. Hoyt rode a river barge along the Ohio River to Steubenville to make sense of what does exist there, in contrast to what the designers of America predicted should exist in the so-called culture at the end of history.

Hoyt found rust, soot, and unemployment where bounty was supposed to be. The countryside about it is similar. Hoyt explains how the land to the west of the Ohio River was once a prosperous farming region, but that changed when coal mining rose to dominance about a century ago and the mining process began by stripping off the topsoil and the farms. The land was mined out after about sixty years, and what is left is jagged and infertile. Areas that were flourishing farming communities in 1920 are now ragged and poisonous.