of any of the specifically *theological* virtues of faith, hope, and charity (the greatest of all: see 1 Corinthians 13), and fails to explain how the virtues are perfective *of* the human being (other than by bringing their will into accordance with God's law) in a way discernible by *reason*.

The full argument of the remainder of the book cannot be summarized in the limits of a short review. However, the efforts of Boyle, Locke, and others to articulate the relationship of God's will and law to the mundane physical and chemical laws of the sublunar world, and to the strictures of conscience, is meticulously and informatively observed: all falling under distinct yet perhaps related senses of necessity (see, e.g., 221–27, 234, and 238). For Locke, meanwhile, "a conscience informed by reason—and in this sense subjected to reason—was no longer the watchdog and guardian of reason cherished by Christian tradition" (253). The "necessary" remedies of social problems, created by public officials, were severed from the private remedies necessary for salvation. Locke is thus the precursor of legal positivists who believed that legal thought had to be removed from the stream of moral thought defined by its complexity and unendingness, and instead given incontestable authority.

Chapters 9–12 explore the above themes in the contexts of medicine and the *oeconomy* of needs, the significance and problems of money, and the invention of economics as a science of money. The final chapter is perhaps the most important: the question of the public good.

In summary, this is a rich and engaging book which will repay close study across a number of related fields, a key merit of the book being its timely reminder that those fields are in fact related.

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Benjamin P. Davis: *Simone Weil's Political Philosophy: Field Notes from the Margins*. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2023. Pp. xv, 151.)

doi:10.1017/S0034670524000408

In recent years, the twentieth-century Parisian philosopher Simone Weil has been experiencing an unprecedented popularity and Benjamin P. Davis's book on her political philosophy adroitly illustrates why Weil is so desirable and relevant to the political thought of our contemporary world. Davis's book is structured with five chapters, the first four of which unpack Weilian critiques of major political concepts (revolution, colonialism, the neoliberal self, and human rights), and the fifth, which offers a Weilian construction

of a "rooted" community for post–World War II France and which Davis applies to the social political unrest of our own age.

In critiquing revolution, the first chapter sets out Weil's method as a way of engaging thoughtfully in the world. For Davis, Weilian pedagogy theorizes or inquires and then practices or essays those theories in the world. Understanding and then action are thus necessary for Weil's work. Enacting her theories meant an increased pessimism for Weil about the feasibility of a worker's revolution. Her fieldwork revealed that to one degree or another, all people are held captive by the collectives in which they live. These collectives totalize and obfuscate human knowledge but also hinder the human ability to think. A worker's revolution thus has the troubling potential to simply invert the power structure rather than make meaningful changes to the system as a whole.

In the second chapter, employing Judith Butler's concept of the political "frame," Davis unpacks Weil's critique of colonialism. The framing of a particular life allows society to assert that life as either grievable or expendable. Following critical phenomenology, Davis seeks new political practices aimed at changing the problematic structures keeping some people in the nongrievable category. Here, Davis parts with Weil's reformist decolonialism, noting that she does not go far enough in her critique and suggesting a stronger abolitionist approach. Despite moving in a different direction than Weil, Davis cautions against discarding her insights altogether. Indeed, Davis notes that Weil demonstrates how to both join in and remain self-critical, how to struggle and grieve towards a new political liberty.

The (neoliberal) self, with its implied ethics of resilience and self-improvement, is the third Weilian critique that Davis brings forward. Counter to this facile conception of self, Weil's self is a multifaceted tarrying with absence, pain, and the contradictions of existence. Interestingly, it is not through politics but through art and literature that Davis enters into the possibilities of the Weilian self as one oriented towards the Good while staying with the trouble of earthly existence. Notably, his engagement with Mark Rothko is particularly compelling in this section as he carefully draws out the similarities (a complex self that finds possibility in attunement to the world and embracing the void) as well as their myriad differences (one can be certain that Weil would not have called Rothko's art genius or even good). Indeed, the differences make Davis's point that a work of art can draw us not toward the Good (as in Weilian concepts of artistic genius) but toward the realities of the realm of appearances in which Weil was interested in thinking and acting. Here we encounter a complex embodied concept of the self.

The final critique Davis raises on behalf of Weil is that of human rights. Weil notes that human rights are reliant on force and as such can be used to advance or disguise power, and to inhibit solidarity in organizing against power. Davis takes up these objections alongside contemporary political critiques of human rights and considers how ethical concepts can be adapted into practice. This implies a call to link practice and theory in such a way

that encourages solidarity. According to Davis, Weil has unique contributions to human rights theories today in that she calls attention to the weakness of the concept "human rights" in the presence of violence, she closes the gap between theory and practice that one must overcome to have any real effect in and through political thought, and she suggests a rethinking of the very concept of the "human" so that we can make space for the other and the new.

Davis' fifth and final chapter, which offers a Weilian construction of the community, is perhaps the highlight of an extremely strong book in that he unpacks a solid case for how and why Weilian political thought is crucial in the strange divisive political landscape in which we find ourselves in the 2020s. Weil's exploration of the human need for community in the wake of occupation has incredible relevance to the world today. The human need to belong, combining spiritual depth and social justice, is at the heart of this discourse for Davis and offers us potential paths forward toward new political communities. Such inroads are not mere inversions of power dynamics or meaning derived from the life of the mind alone, but rather embodied practices that exist here in the world, among other people, and are born through listening and waiting to discover new political possibilities.

As at home detailing the colorful biographical twists and turns of Weil's short life as he is with clearly explaining her sometimes difficult and contradictory political theories and critiques, Davis manages to seamlessly bring Weil into conversation with contemporary political theorists and reveal how Weil can help us not just to critique the neoliberal colonial capitalist structures under which we live, but further to imagine new possibilities as we move forward. Davis adapts Weil's aesthetic experience of the void and her refusal to solve humanity's agonistic state of contradiction in order to think through contemporary political possibilities. Applied to his own encounters with art and politics, Davis explores how we can creatively grow roots by embracing these moments of absence and contradiction.

Refreshingly, for Davis, Weil is neither a saint nor a martyr, but a political philosopher tarrying with the agonism of human existence both within ourselves and in our relations to the surrounding world. Drawing out Weil's often contradictory lines of thinking, with which every scholar of Weil must grapple, Davis suggests a purposeful philosophy of plurality and a way of thinking across various perspectives that does not fear contradiction but rather embraces containing multitudes. Weil engages with the strengths and weaknesses of each argument in such depth that she must be held as either overly contradictory or as viewing and engaging with the whole. Davis suggests the latter and notes that this is not a flaw, but a style of inquiry that requires courage and breadth.

Perhaps Davis's most vital contribution to scholarship on Weil's political thought is his emphasis on her call to move beyond mere scholarship and think with those living on and beyond the margins of possible political protection. Referencing the murders of black Americans by the police and the alienation still emanating through our "post-COVID" world, Davis makes a

compelling case for practicing or rather essaying theories in the world. This call is more vital now than it has ever been, and Davis articulates it in clear and convincing terms, calling on his readers to inquire further into Weil's work and essay it themselves in the contemporary social political world.

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Kody W. Cooper and Justin Buckley Dyer: *The Classical and Christian Origins of American Politics: Political Theology, Natural Law, and the American Founding*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. Pp. xii, 238.)

doi:10.1017/S0034670524000378

Scholars and statesmen regularly quote George Washington's famous admonition to the budding nation that "religion and morality" are "indispensable supports" to political prosperity. But how solidly were those supports constructed in the Founding era? As America becomes increasingly secular, scholars continually debate whether this trajectory towards a post-Christian America is a fulfillment of or a departure from the true principles of the Founding. In their outstanding contribution to this debate, *The Classical and Christian Origins of American Politics: Political Theology, Natural Law, and the American Founding*, Kody Cooper and Justin Dyer present one of the most comprehensive treatments of the classically informed Christian ideas that shaped the early republic. Without denying the unorthodox theology of Founders such as Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and John Adams, Cooper and Dyer highlight the many ways in which these and other Founding statesmen, as well as the American public, embraced a politics shaped by Christian theology and anthropology. In doing so, Cooper and Dyer provide invaluable insights on the interaction between ideas and politics.

An increasingly dominant narrative of the American Founding is that it entailed a dramatic break from the classical and medieval world, ushering in modern ideas such as the supremacy of reason over revelation, individual autonomy, and a morally neutral state. On this view, America's Founders and their philosophical forefather John Locke undermined Christian principles. In *Why Liberalism Failed* (Yale University Press, 2018), Patrick Deneen argues that the Founding era's dramatic break from classical and Christian anthropology has led to atomization and the demise of social structures that inculcate virtue. Some students of Leo Strauss go further in arguing that the Founders' rhetoric furthered a subversive theology. For example, Thomas Pangle suggests that the Founders sought to "exploit and transform Christianity in the direction of a liberal rationalism" (*The Spirit of Modern*