

philanthropy in a democracy and devote more attention to the present-day context of philanthropy. Saunders-Hastings shows how existing limitations on philanthropic influence are quite inadequate for protecting democratic values. She suggests minimizing paternalism in giving, but this seems to rely on the willingness of individual and institutional donors to curtail giving, as well as the recipients to refuse paternalistic donor gifts. As Saunders-Hastings notes, even small donors can behave paternalistically. Yet donors are afforded wide latitude and autonomy in our present context. An entire profession—known as “development”—exists to curate donors for nonprofit institutions and win them over as long-term patrons. Universities, hospitals, religious institutions, and much of the sprawling nonprofit sector are fueled by large doses of paternalistic giving. Saunders-Hastings raises troubling questions, but unfortunately, it is difficult to discern a path forward once we consider the practical implications of her argument. Challenging the norms of paternalism among donors is a tall order in societies that widely cultivate and celebrate philanthropic giving. The practical implications are even more alarming once we consider rising wealth inequality, both in the United States and globally, which widens the gulf between donors and recipients.

Perhaps, even though Saunders-Hastings does not offer us a neat and tidy path forward, it is these troubling implications that underscore the importance of this book. *Private Virtues, Public Vices* is essential reading for navigating our present-day collision course between widespread economic inequality and democratic governance.

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David A. Eisenberg: *Nietzsche and Tocqueville on the Democratization of Humanity*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2022. Pp. 324.)

doi:10.1017/S0034670523000566

Self-knowledge in a democratic age requires a study of Tocqueville and Nietzsche. Few other thinkers can better illuminate the promise and perils of modern democratic life. Owing to the precarious position liberal democracy finds itself in, this book is timely—and yet, it is fundamentally untimely, because its author challenges the reigning values of contemporary society. The contrarian nature of this book will prevent it from garnering universal acclaim in the academy. This failure, however, may be what makes it a success in the eyes of a few. Many will be compelled to disagree with parts of Eisenberg’s book (myself included), but one cannot help but admire his

desire to make a last stand, to “go down with guns blazing and flag flying.” An infamous philosopher once said that such efforts may remind future generations of what mankind has lost and may serve as a beacon of light for those who seek to keep alive “the works of humanity” in dark and dangerous times. We therefore owe a debt of gratitude to Eisenberg for provoking us to think—to think differently—even when such actions may be unpopular and controversial.

The first chapter begins with a genealogical account of the democratization of humanity. It is a somewhat familiar tale of how Machiavelli inaugurated a radical break with ancient thinkers. The novelty of Eisenberg’s retelling, however, is his focus is on how modern philosophic ideas effaced genuine human variation and led to democracy. The moderns are blamed for having a “reductive approach” that oversimplifies human nature. They unduly neglect the virtue of aristocratic man and present a “one-sided exaltation of democratic man” (63). Tocqueville and Nietzsche are exceptions—they understood what was lost in the democratic revolution. Eisenberg’s account of the democratization of humanity is noticeably different from Tocqueville’s more sociological narrative regarding the providential march of democracy, as well as Nietzsche’s more anti-Christian genealogy of modern democracy. Eisenberg pays greater attention to philosophic ideas, particularly the seeds sown by modern political philosophers.

After an illuminating account of how the human soul has been reoriented and degraded by modern political philosophy, one arrives at what every Tocqueville and Nietzsche enthusiast was waiting for—a thoughtful comparative study of these thinkers on the question of democracy (63). Eisenberg aptly notes that Tocqueville sought to moderate the democratic spirit and Nietzsche sought radically to overcome it. Tocqueville believed there was no returning to aristocracy, that justice and providence make this impossible and undesirable, while Nietzsche sought to prepare the ground for a new aristocracy (69, 291–93). Rather than reproduce the common, albeit important, condemnation of Nietzsche’s irresponsible call for a new aristocracy, Eisenberg calls on us to check our democratic prejudices against aristocracy and to reexamine the human type that has been displaced.

One of the leitmotifs of the book is that liberal democratic multiculturalism celebrates diversity but ironically leads to conformism. Eisenberg provocatively states that while multiculturalism appears to yield “a tremendous amount of diversity,” it in fact produces “a homogeneity rooted in the acceptance that there is no higher or lower” (12, 95). Eisenberg admits that in past societies homogeneity was often brutally enforced, but he maintains that in the aristocratic world “diversity was much more far reaching and genuine” (12). The hierarchical ordering of different aristocratic societies, as well as the contrasting tables of good and bad of each society, produced highly varied communities. The Spartans and Athenians belonged to a similar Greek culture, but they were very different political communities. The spirit animating modern liberal democratic life is that there is no

hierarchical ordering of human beings, no fundamentally different set of values (92–95). The obvious advantage of the liberal democratic hegemony is that slavery and other forms of inequality are seen as fundamentally unjust. Nevertheless, Eisenberg is at pains to show that something is lost in our liberal democratic reorientation. Our virtues of toleration and cosmopolitanism surreptitiously lead to a world where everyone is the same. Although there are cultural and culinary differences among countries, at bottom all are simply equal bourgeois consumers. There is no Sparta or Athens—all the world is becoming America. One may vehemently disagree with Eisenberg's narrative, and challenge his claims, but his perspective is worth consideration. If we genuinely care about human plurality, we must think through some of these inconvenient claims.

The Chestertonian quality of this book, its desire to speak truth to power, so to speak, is both a virtue and a vice. It is a virtue because it is a provocative attempt to thoroughly think through important topics facing us today. Eisenberg is willing to play the *advocatus diaboli*, to argue against the canonization of prevailing ideas. Nevertheless, as La Rochefoucauld reminds us, our virtues can often be disguised vices. Reading Eisenberg reminds one of Beaumont's complaint of Tocqueville—that he always took a gloomy view of things. Although Eisenberg's pessimism is a refreshing alternative to the reigning faith in progress, one wonders if he is too quick to bemoan our modern age. Moreover, Eisenberg criticizes democratic relativism and non-judgmentalism and yet he himself refrains from providing us with a definitive ranking between Tocqueville and Nietzsche. Eisenberg leaves us with a "seemingly hopeless alternative" between Tocqueville and Nietzsche: "either the apparently futile task of moderating democracy or the ostensibly impossible task of overcoming it." Eisenberg is right to remind us that "the solution to any problem presupposes an awareness of the problem" (293), but one is left wanting answers: Who is the superior thinker—Tocqueville or Nietzsche? Whose analysis and prescriptions should we follow? Is liberal democracy worth saving? Perhaps the reader's desire for answers is an immoderate democratic demand and Eisenberg's unwillingness to rank Tocqueville and Nietzsche is an aristocratic propriety reminiscent of Montesquieu's wise words: "one must not always so exhaust a subject that one leaves nothing for the reader to do. It is not a question of making him read but of making him think." Thus, one may forgive Eisenberg's pessimism and balanced nonjudgmentalism because it wakes us from our slumber and provokes us to think.

In sum, Eisenberg's heterodox study is bold, unflinching, arresting, and, most of all, refreshing. His thoughtful and well-written book will serve as a provocative challenge to our democratic faith. As Pierre Manent has reminded us, if we want to love democracy well, we must love it moderately. Eisenberg's book helps us moderate our excessive love of democracy. This book is not simply edifying, however. It deals with philosophy and thus with dangerous ideas. In a time when liberal democracy is vulnerable and

the talk of postliberal “regime change” is growing, some may want to discourage—perhaps even ban—the reading of this contrarian book. Libraries, therefore, would do well to add it to the now popular “forbidden books” display.

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Paul Franco: *Rousseau, Nietzsche, and the Image of the Human*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021. Pp. ix, 169.)

doi:10.1017/S0034670523000633

Ambitious in scope, Paul Franco’s *Rousseau, Nietzsche, and the Image of the Human* argues that “in order to understand ourselves as modern human beings, we must engage with Rousseau’s and Nietzsche’s profound analysis of the discontents of modernity and their attempts to create a new, psychologically richer, and more spiritually nourishing image of the human” (8). Franco’s reading demonstrates that Rousseau and Nietzsche were not simply two of the most trenchant critics of modernity but also that they were profound theorists of the modern self who developed constructive, reformist projects. While Franco is not the first scholar to consider these two thinkers in tandem, his wide-ranging thematic approach advances our understanding of where they converge and diverge in their critical and constructive projects. Franco concludes that, of the two, Nietzsche’s vision proves to be more profound as well as more salient to our contemporary concerns.

Following an introductory chapter that provides an overview of the book’s aims, chapter 2 delves into Rousseau’s and Nietzsche’s genealogies of modernity and their opposing ideas about what, exactly, went wrong along the way. Franco focuses particularly on the role that morality plays in each argument. For Rousseau, declining morals and escalating vice, especially vices stemming from *amour-propre*, are to blame for the decadence of modern culture, whereas Nietzsche sees morality itself as a primary culprit. This chapter also delineates how the ideal of nature functions in each critical vision. While both thinkers measure the corruption of modern human beings against a standard of nature, they have quite different understandings of that standard and how humanity ought to relate to it, and Franco provides an instructive explanation of how these conceptions of nature inform their respective critical genealogies.

In his third chapter, titled “The Modern Self,” Franco discusses the ideas of authenticity and self-overcoming deployed by each thinker. Franco’s Rousseau is concerned almost exclusively with the achievement of moral virtue. His reading of Rousseau’s view of the self strongly emphasizes “the