Hyperconnectivity and Its Discontents. By Rogers Brubaker. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2022. 288p. $69.95 cloth, $24.95 paper.

Political Theory of the Digital Age: Where Artificial Intelligence Might Take Us. By Mathias Risse. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023. 400p. $39.99 paper.
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Mis- and disinformation being peddled online; mass corporate and governmental surveillance; governments banning apps like TikTok; Chat GPT in the classroom; AI deepfakes of Obama, Trump, and Biden—we are in dire need of a political theory of technology that grapples with the impact that digital technology, data collection, artificial intelligence, and algorithms have on our society and our concepts of the political. Rogers Brubaker's *Hyperconnectivity and Its Discontents* and Mathias Risse's *Political Theory of the Digital Age* show both the immediate need and potential pitfalls that accompany such an endeavor. Together, they provide wide-ranging and stimulating looks at how our everyday engagement with technology shapes our society, our politics, and our place within it.

Risse uses the democratic liberal tradition, focusing on Rawls, to chart a new political theory for our digital age. Arguing that "public reason must be developed further in this era of technological innovation" (40), Risse presents 11 wide-ranging chapters, each examining a different dimension of what he terms our new "digital lifeworlds": the social and cultural contexts that are reformulated or created by technological progression. He contends that the use of Rawlsian public reason is necessary for navigating these new digital lifeworlds because it allows us to negotiate a deliberative space unhindered by specific truth claims. Public reason requires us to reach consensus through open reasoning, allowing us to grapple with a space where more traditional methods of evaluating truth claims no longer apply. This will become key in the future, Risse argues, when new forms of AI and other technologies may advance to a stage where they begin to demand a seat at the table, and public reason might be the only way to reach a productive and ultimately political consensus with these new technological forms (should such a demand ever arise.)

The most important contribution that Risse makes in his impressively wide-ranging book is his identification of the epistemic problems that lie at the heart of these new technologies. Risse pushes for the development of epistemic rights that focus on how we come to know and how we are known, both of which are being disrupted by new forms of technology. These would constitute a new, fourth generation of human rights—protecting our rights to participate in the design of technical systems, to receive data education, to embrace the "right to be forgotten" established by the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and to codify who can claim control over data. In doing this, Risse argues (in a way similar to Brubaker) that we should understand data not as property, labor, or the new oil, as others have claimed, but as a new type of "social fact," which are "phenomena that are not tied to actions of individuals but have a compelling interest on them" (163). He thereby resists the idea that data can and should be meaningfully owned or controlled by corporations; instead, they should be treated as general facts to be managed by society at large.

But it remains unclear whether Rawls's account of public reason can bear the weight of our modern technological problems. One element of this can be seen in the apparent incompatibility of public reason with Risse's own arguments about the determinism of technological progress. He contends that "technology shapes human life and delineates what possibilities of being human are available" (221). In multiple sections, Risse becomes preoccupied with the concept of Life 3.0, a hypothetical future where life itself is redefined by the model of a slow-developing general AI. (A fast-developing AI would be incentivized to wipe out humanity in a flash, or so he claims.) Within this new situation, in Life 3.0, we will have to contend with the recognition of AI as new coexisting beings that require full moral consideration. Risse argues this will be so disruptive as to reframe how we understand the concept of life itself.

This is quite a piece of technological determinism. If this advancement in AI technology is so disruptive to our collective psyche as to fundamentally reshape what we think about life, how can we imagine that public reason will be around or available to mitigate or corral these problems? Wouldn't the development of general AI and the creation of Life 3.0 itself upend our moral and political guardrails to such an extent that Rawlsian conceptions of justice and the methodologies for achieving a nominally just society will either no longer apply or (even worse) no longer be able to be conceptualized? Such a determinism posits that technological achievement proceeds along the immutable track of scientific progress and that society is not only unable to shape, guide, or prevent this progress but is also powerless to foresee or steer the ways in which these technical developments will change our interpersonal interactions. It is unclear how the application of public reason alone will stand as a breakwater to the tsunami of general AI.

Threading this needle between understanding the near-future promise and threat of technology, while also not losing our capacities to act and shape these futures or to recognize that we are both subject to and subjecting technology, will be key for those of us interested in the political theories of technology. Brubaker solves this problem by framing digital technology as a Foucauldian technology of the self. He argues that digital hyperconnectivity—or "the

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.
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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