
Francis J. Beckwith’s introduction to this collection of essays states that it has two primary purposes. The first is to provide modern conservative students who “seem unaware of the philosophic roots of their own point of view” with a “readable articulation of conservative ideas on a variety of issues and questions.” The second, related to the first, is to honor the conservative Catholic political philosopher Hadley Arkes as a teacher. The fifteen contributions by renowned scholars and friends of Arkes contained in this volume accomplish these purposes and offer a valuable resource for students and teachers alike. Indeed, most of the essays are written at a level that is both useful to scholars and accessible to undergraduates.

The essays contribute to the first purpose not simply by laying out an intellectual defense of conservatism against its critics, but also by presenting a variety of strains of conservatism that are, at times, in tension with one another. In doing so, this collection does modern conservatism a service by demonstrating that it has a rich tradition and dynamic internal debates. This becomes clear in the first essay, “What is Political Conservatism?” by Larry Arnn. Arnn discusses the libertarian, traditionalist or socially conservative, and constitutionalist strains in American conservatism. While Arnn states that “conservatism, when it functions as a whole, is a union of these key ideas,” later essays draw out the tensions between these strains. For example, those familiar with the work of Hadley Arkes know that one of his main targets within American conservatism is what he calls the judicial positivism held by constitutional originalists like Robert Bork and Justice Antonin Scalia. He laments their unwillingness to turn to natural law as a guide for constitutional interpretation. In the essay “The Morality of Positive Law,” David Forte characterizes Arkes’s position, stating, “The argument of all natural lawyers is that legal positivism is inadequate to explain the normative validity of law.” The collection contains a number of essays that focus on the importance of natural law including Christopher Wolfe’s “Natural Law and Contemporary Liberalism” and J. Budziszewski’s “Why the Natural Law Suggests a Divine Source.” However, Forte takes up the cause of positivists arguing that positivism, at least its American variety, is not the amoral philosophy that Arkes claims it is.

The collection treats another significant conservative theme, the relationship between religion and politics, particularly in the American
regime. Here again, certain tensions are brought to light through the essays. Michael Novak’s “Freedom Under God” argues for a certain unity of thought concerning this relationship, not only between American founders Jefferson and Madison, but also between them and the views expressed in the Vatican II document *Dignitatis humanae*. According to Novak, both the founders and the encyclical hold a position that is “not properly described as the ‘separation’ of church and state. Its actual practice is more like an ‘accommodation,’ each treating the other to public acts of exposure and mutual respect.” Thus, American conservatives’ reverence for the founders can be reconciled with orthodox Catholicism. The preceding essay, “The Place of Religion Among the American Founders,” by Vincent Phillip Muñoz, implicitly calls Novak’s claims into question. Muñoz argues that modern scholars and judges “have failed to understand that the leading founding Fathers disagreed about how to best protect religious liberty. In the rush to claim the framers for their own side, scholars and litigators have overlooked or downplayed the fact that there is not one uniform founding position regarding how church and state should be related.” In the remainder of the essay, Muñoz compares the religious thought and political actions of three founders, labeling Madison a “libertarian,” Washington a “conservative,” and Jefferson a “progressive liberal.” According to Muñoz’s descriptions of the three, only Washington would fit into Novak’s characterization of being an “accommodationist.” According to Muñoz, there would be a tension not only between the positions of *Dignitatis humanae* and some of the American Founders, but also among the Founders themselves. Here the collection forces readers to put the traditionalist and constitutionalist strains of conservatism into dialogue.

The essay “*Veritatis Splendor*: Exceptionless Moral Norms, Human Rights, and The Common Good,” by Gerard Bradley, examines some of the debates among conservative Catholics. Bradley, relying on the encyclicals of Pope John Paul II, takes aim at certain “traditional” Catholics who object to developments in the Church that have incorporated modern “rights-talk” and prohibited capital punishment unless society must use it as a means of “legitimate defense.” Bradley summarizes the debate over the latter:

Now one permissive account of capital punishment within the Catholic tradition held that the condemned party forfeited by his heinous acts his right to life. Some commentators more colorfully said that the malefactor had descended to the status of “beast.”

The traditional image is stripped of any validity by contemporary Church teaching: “*Not even a murderer loses his personal dignity,*” Pope John Paul II said in EV 96.
Again, the volume does not shy away from examining issues that might divide those who describe themselves as conservatives.

Two essays should be mentioned in relation to the second purpose of the collection. Both acknowledge Hadley Arkes’s ability to teach through humor and stories. The first, “On ‘Eating the Last Pizza’: The Wit of Hadley Arkes,” by James Schall, S.J., is a worthy tribute to Arkes’s rhetorical ability. Second, “Moral Education and the Art of Storytelling,” by Arkes’s student Susan McWilliams explores two reasons that stories are such effective means of moral education. First, by forcing their audience to consider a narrative other than their own, stories are “a vehicle for intellectual and imaginative expansion.” Second, by getting their audience to consider particulars, they help serve as “a means of intellectual and imaginative temperance.” I highly recommend this essay for teachers, students, parents, and anyone who loves stories.

Overall, this collection makes a valuable contribution to both scholarship and teaching, and it vindicates modern conservatism against its critics who hold that it is anti-intellectual. It is thus a fitting tribute to Hadley Arkes.

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Should Christians eat meat? This is the topic of an excellent little book recently published (appropriately) by Franciscan Media, called *For Love of Animals: Christian Ethics, Consistent Action* by Charles Camosy. In doing so, Camosy joins a coterie of Christian thinkers who have recently written in advocacy of vegetarianism, including Mary Eberstadt and Matthew Scully.

Beneath this first question though is a deeper and more critical one: why is vegetarianism common among the secular left, whereas conservative Christians, champions of justice for vulnerable populations—the unborn, the poor, the oppressed—generally kill and eat animals. Is this a failing on the part of Christians to be consistently just? Or is there a compelling argument in Christianity for man’s unchecked dominion over animals?

First, some background. Christian and secular animal ethics were severed for good in mainstream philosophical discourse several decades back. You can see the basic arguments in the writings of Princeton ethicist Peter Singer, the father of modern animal ethics. The impetus for the separation