

deserve a hardworking Thomistic retrieval, in my view. But for the present purpose, I am grateful that Boettke's reading of Hayek brings out clearly the insight that our rationality (and perhaps also practical rationality and not merely speculative rationality) is very much dependent on delicate institutional contexts. And once these are dismantled, thinking human beings are left wandering down an awry path toward unthinking, and human beings will be left without the possibility of thinking themselves out of a pickle.

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What Is Classical Liberal History?

Michael J. Douma and Phillip W. Magness (Editors)

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This collection of essays explores classical liberal historiography and attempts to chart various paths forward for historians working in the fields of intellectual, social, political, and economic history. In the introduction to the book Douma argues that classical liberal history has as its methodological starting points an acknowledgment of human dignity and libertarian free will in the individual. Classical liberal historians study the contingent choices of human individuals in the past as they have sought to improve themselves in their economic, social, political, and cultural contexts over time. Classical liberal historians place stress on historical empathy, intellectual humility, and evidence in inquiries concerning negative liberty. In Douma's words, "classical liberal history is a record of the attempts to define and encourage individuals' freedom from ... outside threats, and to understand the economic, political, social, and cultural limitations to complete, unlimited freedom" (xi). Classical liberal history, as Douma articulates it, offers something of value to conservative and progressive historians, even though it is to be distinguished from both traditions. Despite liberalism's critique of conservatives' stress on order, conservatives will appreciate classical liberal history's emphasis on "methodological individualism" and aversion to "central planning" (xiii). Progressives will find resonance with liberals' affinity for human rights and their tracing of human improvement over time, even if liberals critique progressives for placing too much confidence in the inevitability of progress and for being too strident in their repudiation of Western civilization. The work gathers eleven essays that attempt to define classical liberal history and cast prescriptive visions for how it ought to advance.

Scott Shubitz critiques the coherence of the idea of classical liberal history, further arguing that liberalism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries changed over time. He writes that historians of liberalism should be more critical of how earlier historians sought to shape liberalism to fit a particular ideology, and that more stress should be laid on the influence of religion along with economics in history. Phillip Magness suggests liberal historians take up the role as historical interlocutors through the joint tools of economic reasoning and evidentiary empiricism. In effect, this would turn away from

broad-based theories to discerning patterns of human choice in conditions of scarcity. This might result in the search for some metanarrative, but a classical historian cannot flat-footedly be pro- or anticapitalist. Instead, the historian can only seek to understand the movement empirically by examining causal mechanisms of human exchange.

Anthony Gregory sees civil liberties as constructed over time, and by tracing the genealogy historians can vindicate them after modernity. Burke is an example of one who did so. Classical liberalism would benefit society by providing analysis of depredation without assumptions that romanticize the past as a golden era. Lenore Ealy writes that historians can see society in collective terms and interpret past actions of people by taking seriously Tocqueville's call to study the science of associations. By paying closer attention to the associations of people, the historian can navigate accounts of human actions and the associated institutions.

David Beito argues that nothing is inevitable and that historians need to carefully identify counterfactuals in an effort to underscore the importance of historical contingency. Jonathan Bean notes that the academic left dominates the study of American history, which makes them largely ignorant of traditions beyond their own. Moreover, the left's failure to appreciate the role of religion in the civil rights movement lacks depth of description: it divided and provided for liberation. Bean suggests an interpretive framework for the civil rights movement that accounts for complexity. For example, classical liberals fought slavery, lynching, segregation, imperialism, and racial discrimination in the law by pointing to individual freedom, religious convictions, the Constitution, and more.

Hans Eicholz suggests that the initial promise of social history was to eliminate the pretension of the elites and produce an "objective" history, but what it means for it to be a science has "quietly and steadily merged into subjectivist channels where ideas, meanings, and discourse predominate," which is very similar to the intellectual histories from a century ago (138). The problem, however, is that the spirit of social history's original aim has not left, and scholars are still inclined to raise claims related to class when the theoretical foundations no longer support their materialistic interpretations. Classical liberals, by contrast, have the tools to argue for what social historians aim for, specifically, context. Liberals hold that one must get into the mind-set of an individual to understand and explain an actor's particular action.

Sarah Skwire contends that progressivist feminist history runs the risk of ignoring voices outside the ranks of power and privilege. Given that some women do not track political power as the defining point of a woman's influence, this may make women who are "skeptical of the state seem somewhat out of the loop of modern feminism and somewhat divorced from the concerns of more traditional feminist historians" (160). Classically liberal feminism contributes uniquely to the historical project by featuring ignored female religious and political voices.

Leonid Krasnozhon and Mykola Bunyk write that Eastern Europe had a history of liberalism, but it has been largely ignored by Western Europeans. Easterners' writings support gradual social change, reject Marxist socialism, are skeptical of big government, and oppose imperialism. Their main concern was to adapt Western liberalism to Eastern

circumstances before Marxism won over the revolutionary population. In the next essay Matthew Brown says that Adam Smith's 1776 inquiry was about the nation, which situates Smith in contemporary discussions that use the nation-state as a relevant unit for discussion, but critics assert that use of the nation-state in this way leads to a limited scope for analysis. Establishing different units of account can broaden the available data and allow for a more equal footing for analysis, but Smith's original point still holds for Brown: "nations made stuff with the stuff they had and from that stuff they made more stuff" (203). Finally, Alberto Garín argues that liberal history does not impose an ideology upon its scientific inquiry into the past. Other forms of history serve the function and end of the state. Liberal historians "study history to better understand ourselves, and to understand how to promote freedom in our time" (210).

This volume is a sophisticated consideration of a method of thinking historically in the best traditions of Western thought, realistically taking into account human freedom and dignity with the recognition of inherent limitations. Students of history ought to seriously engage with these essays, no matter their ideological persuasion.

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Aquinas and the Market: Toward a Humane Economy

Mary L. Hirschfeld

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2018 (288 pages)

Mary L. Hirschfeld's studies and interests make her especially apt to adequately perform the task of developing a "Thomistic economics." She holds a BA, MA, and PhD in economics (Harvard University, 1989); she had been a professor of economics for fifteen years before receiving her PhD in theology (University of Notre Dame, 2013). Today, she teaches economics and theology in the department of humanities at Villanova University.

As I see it, a key factor for a good interdisciplinary study, such as the one conducted by Hirschfeld, is to avoid starting with particular topics such as just price or usury or themes that would naturally crop up when looking for an intersection between Aquinas and economics. Instead, Hirschfeld goes to the root of economics and its underlying anthropological conception and compares it with Aquinas's notion. Economic agents look for their preferences. For both economists and Aquinas, Hirschfeld notes, "human desires cannot be satiated by finite goods" (xv). However, while economics' underlying anthropology is limited, Aquinas's conception of human nature is broader and comprises the former as a part of it. This part, however, is not the best: the often immoderate human behavior. For Aquinas, God is the infinite, true good, and our desire of finite goods is limited, while for economists, the infinite good is an unending desire of finite goods, which is a mistake even from a metaphysical point of view. Aquinas's anthropology can explain why economics' rational choice theory works, but it can also explain why