

Society's Books of Note

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Jeremy Beer, *The Philanthropic Revolution: An Alternative History of American Charity*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015. \$19.95. 134pp.

Beer, a founding partner of American Philanthropic and president of the American Ideas Institute argues that the historical displacement of charity by philanthropy represents a radical transformation of voluntary giving into a practice primarily intended to bring about social change. His alternative history discloses that charity is uniquely associated with personalist goods that philanthropy largely excludes. He proposes a new "philanthrolocalism".

John Dombrink, *The Twilight of Social Conservatism: American Culture Wars in the Obama Era*. New York: New York University Press, 2015. \$27.00. 250pp.

Dombrink, Professor of Criminology, Law, and Society at the University of California, Irvine, draws on demographic research, political polls, contemporary media, and internet commentary to argue that the vitality of major conservative ideas from the culture war have faded. He claims that it is unlikely that social conservative forces will ever regain the power they once held.

Daniel A. Bell, *The China Model: Political Meritocracy and the Limits of Democracy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015. \$29.95. 336pp.

Westerners tend to divide the political world into "good" democracies and "bad" authoritarian regimes. But the Chinese political model does not fit neatly in either category. Over the past three decades, China has evolved a political system that can best be described as "political meritocracy." *The China Model* seeks to understand the

ideals and the reality of this unique political system. How do the ideals of political meritocracy set the standard for evaluating political progress (and regress) in China? How can China avoid the disadvantages of political meritocracy? And how can political meritocracy best be combined with democracy? Daniel Bell answers these questions and more.

Lani Guinier, *The Tyranny of the Meritocracy: Democratizing Higher Education in America*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2015. \$24.95. 160pp.

In a provocative argument, Guinier, Harvard Law School, contends that institutions of higher education must focus on admitting and educating a class of students who will be critical thinkers, active citizens, and publicly spirited leaders. She presents a plan for considering "democratic merit," a system that measures the success of higher education not by the personal qualities of the students who enter but the work and service performed by the graduates who leave.

Larry Siedentop, *Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014. \$35.00. 434pp.

Siedentop, Emeritus Fellow of Keble College, Oxford, offers a grand narrative, spanning 1,800 years of European history, taking issue with the general consensus that Western liberalism arose in its opposition to religion in the early modern era. He argues that liberal thought is the offspring of the Church, tracing its origins to Christianity and its early notions of equality and human agency and calling secularism one of Christianity's gifts to the West.