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Scarre, Geoffrey. *Utilitarianism.*
New York: Routledge, 1996. Pp. 225. $55.00 (cloth); $17.95 (paper).

Scarre sympathizes with utilitarianism but doubts it is “wholly satisfactory” (p. 1). He devotes a chapter to J. S. Mill and sections to Mo Tzu, Jesus, Aristotle, Epicurus, Hutcheson, Hume, Godwin, and Bentham, but insufficiently integrates historical views into contemporary debates and insufficiently documents claims (e.g., p. 35).

Scarre rightly doubts the consequentialist/deontology dichotomy, since deontologists can exclusively advocate forward-looking goals (e.g., prevent injustice, minimize inequality) and utilitarian emphasis on intended results looks backward to intent (p. 11). He generally supports David Lyons in undermining the act/rule utilitarianism dichotomy.

Utilitarianism seems wrong, since it intrinsically values happiness in Schadenfreude, sadism, racism, sexism, and so forth. Scarre spiritedly defends utilitarianism, claiming such harmful debasing of others precludes happiness by undermining self-respect; for example, sadistic spectators cannot distinguish themselves from criminals seen punished (p. 159). But sadists and criminals are distinct, glee from an enemy’s cancer seems harmlessly evil, and hardened criminals seem happy (e.g., rationalization, self-deception, intoxication) unless punished. Scarre calls killing “that ultimate utility-destroying act” but thrill-killing mercy-killers maximize utility (pp. 132 and 210).

Is utilitarianism too demanding? Scarre convincingly rebuts utilitarian defenses from David Brink and Peter Railton as promoting self-deception, elitism, and underestimation of how intensely satisfying altruism normally is (pp. 194–95).

I recommend utilizing this clear, comprehensive introduction. Its bibliography lists 250 works.

S. V. H.


Loewy offers a sustained critique of libertarianism, especially H. T. Engelhardt’s version, as callous and as failing to realize the full possibilities for human solidarity. More (too?) quickly he also critiques the ethics of care as being unrealistic, paternalistic, and anti-intellectual. Integrating ideas of Rousseau, Kant, and Darwin, he sets forth an engaging view of ethics as motivated by natural compassion and socially constructed within democracies. Much of the book is an impassioned plea for greater moral concern for others.

The book is rich in ideas, such as compassionate rationality and social homeostasis. Yet it suffers from an unresolved tension between two theses: (1) ethics (including rights) are entirely social constructs whose content is decided by democracies, and (2) ethics has a natural basis in compassion together with the worth of all creatures capable of suffering. A related ambiguity is in two conceptions of a general will as (a) “nothing more than a capacity to communicate” (p. 83), and (b) common interests (p. 80). Statement (1) plus (a) seem in-
sufficient to overthrow libertarianism in democracies that choose to embrace it; (2) seems to refute (1), at least if "compassion" carries as much normative force as Loewy needs to reach his conclusions.

M. W. M.


Taylor advances four principal (and related) theses: (1) that "some people are better as human beings than others" (p.15); (2) that the best life involves creative activity; (3) that it also involves treating others considerately; and (4) that one's primary obligation is to oneself. The book is exhortatory throughout, with Taylor continually urging the reader to lead a creative life.

He defends the first two theses along Aristotelian lines. Happiness, like virtue (or excellence), consists in personal fulfillment, which entails the exercise of the uniquely human function of reasoning, which is best manifested through any activity involving creative intelligence. Such activity is the exclusive basis for personal excellence and thus for pride, that is, for self-love and for the belief in one's superiority to "ordinary people" (p. 30). He defends the third thesis along egoist lines: a fulfilling life requires not only achievements but also satisfactory relationships with others; hence one cannot afford to treat them inconsiderately.

The book is not without its flaws. He does not defend the fourth thesis. He both maintains (p. 60) and denies (p. 47) that all of us can lead creative lives. Again, he both maintains (p. 192) and denies (p. 160) that it is essential to the pride of the virtuous that they treat others considerately. His egoist stance that if "you are proud you love yourself . . . above everything else" (p. 94), and that self-fulfillment "is the only thing . . . worth struggling for" (p. 207), clearly undermines his claim that his view of human nature "implies nothing whatever concerning [traditional, i.e., beneficent or altruistic] morality" (p. 112). Finally, he appears to be mistaken in treating pride not merely as a state dependent upon the possession of virtue, but in addition as a virtue in its own right. These problems notwithstanding, the book has much to recommend it, both to the general reader and, in an introductory ethics course, as a lucid, distinctive (because exhortatory), and provocative companion to Aristotle.

N. P. L.


This solid and very useful volume brings together twenty-one essays on exploitation. Many of the essays are recent, and most of them are by well-known writers, such as Allen Wood, Jon Elster, and David Schweickart, Anwar Shaikh, Nancy Holmstrom, G. A. Cohen, John Roemer, and Nancy Folbre. Although all but one of the essays were previously published, some of them are difficult to find, and the editors have done a good job of selecting and organizing them. To those familiar with the subject, it should come as no surprise that so-called analytical