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Reviews

Interpreting the Personal: Expression and the Formation of Feelings, by Sue Campbell

Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997. $39.94 (cloth); $15.95 (paper). 92 pp.

This exemplary work of feminist philosophy tackles the subject of the affective life of human beings and its import for the political realm of interactions with others. Treating a subject of interest to persons of both genders but with special significance for women, Campbell, a professor of philosophy and women's studies at Dalhousie University, argues that the subject has been inadequately understood by past thinkers, and proposes her own corrective perspective on "interpreting the personal." She has read widely and thought deeply on the issues involved, and she writes with clarity and precision, keeping a clear focus on why the issues matter. Her practical concerns are clearly expressed in the title of the sixth and final chapter, "Being Dismissed: The Politics of Emotional Expression." That women have often been dismissed on grounds of being overemotional or sentimental is a commonplace that Campbell wishes to make less common by her careful and persuasive rethinking of the affective life of persons.

Campbell states the general framework of her critique of influential theorists of emotion such as Darwin, James, Ryle, and Alston in the following way. "My study begins from the conviction that any adequate theory of emotions should account for the value of the variety of feelings that give meaning to people's lives. To be politically adequate, such a theory must further address how what of most significance to us, as expressed through our feelings, can be either successfully communicated to others or can be subject to suppression, distortion, and manipulation. I will argue that traditional philosophical theories fail on both counts" (3–4). On the first issue, our understanding of emotion, Campbell makes two major points. First, previous thinkers have concentrated on a small group of well-known emotions (love, hate, jealously, fear, and so forth) and assumed that generalizations that might apply to this familiar core group characterize the whole of our emotional life. But she adduces examples from poetry and autobiographical literature to show that we have many nuanced feelings that do not fit those general categories, and that therefore go unnoticed by

traditional theories. She is very concerned to broaden our understanding of emotion to include what she often refers to as "free-form feelings" that constitute the great majority of affective occasions, and for which we have no preestablished labels or language.

The second criticism is that traditional theorists do not allow any explanatory function for emotions. We "have" emotions and feelings, perhaps, as in Darwin, as hangovers from our evolutionary past when they might have served a useful purpose, but they are now not directly connected with rational personal agency. Emotions and feelings are thus inherently irrational and often disrupt rational agency and need to be controlled and managed. Subsequent theorists have not, in Campbell's judgment, brought affect back to the "map of the mind" in any constructive way. Her task is to do just that.

Campbell's own theory of affect makes the following claims. First, feeling is a response to something in our actual environment. She is avowedly "externalist" as opposed to internalists who claim that feelings are a heritage of biological traits or personal habits that tend to emerge regardless of their current appropriateness. True, we may respond inappropriately, and learned habitual responses may serve as a guide, but we are responding to some triggering feature of our world. Second, the feeling is not fully formed until it is expressed. The expression itself is part of the process of the "formation of feeling." Campbell is aware that the phenomena of "concealment" of feelings seems to argue against this claim. In the final chapter she tries to show that the recognition of a feeling prior to its expression is dependent on previous expressive experience with the feeling, and with "some continuing history of expressive success" (183). Curiously, she does not appeal to the possibility of expression to oneself, as in internal dialogue, which would uphold her claim that expression is a necessary part of the formation of feeling, but still allow concealment as a strategic choice in some circumstances.

Third, meaningful expression occurs in a situation of "triangulation" (following Davidson), in which two people have differential responses to the same phenomena. Here, each person interprets the other's response and can note its similarity to or dissimilarity from one's own emotional response. Triangulation allows feeling to serve its appropriate epistemic function, to express the personal significance that the expressor feels in response to the phenomena. So the expression is personal, and, crucially important for Campbell's main point, should be interpreted personally, that is, as the expression of felt significance by a person. But the expression of personal significance is not the completion of the experience. The expression must be

"taken up" by an interpreter whose response is itself often a part of the experience of expression. Naturally, if one's expressions of personal significance are generally ignored or misunderstood, one might have doubts about the veracity and value of one's own feelings.

Campbell argues that her account of the dynamics of affective expression opens up the sphere of the personal and exposes the inadequacies of the social constructivist account, which limits personal expression to meanings that are already socially established in an interpretive community. "The importance of interpretive communities to affective meanings varies greatly, however, with the sorts of significance people might want to express and who can respond to this significance, and the existence of an interpretive community where meaning is shared cannot, in general, underwrite a theory of affective meaning" (163). Personalists will find in Campbell a strong ally in their claim that society is a function of the interpersonal, not vice versa.

In the course of expositing her theory of affective life, Campbell produces some brilliant philosophical analysis to which I can allude only briefly. One is her discussion of "bitterness," "sentimentality," and "emotionality" as strategies of dismissal of affective expression. Her analysis shows that these are indeed "diseases of the emotions," but that they have their root in distorted interpretive practices, not in inherent defects of the feminine gender. Another is her delineation of four levels of meaning (public = accessible to others; social = determined by shared rules, conventions, and so on; private = inaccessible to others; personal = not determined by shared rules, conventions, and so on). While she finds these distinctions in Davidson, her analysis of affect as the expression of personal significance lends strong support to this corrective to the common tendency to lump together personal and private on the one hand, and public and social on the other. Social constructivists, she argues, encourage this oversight of the distinction between personal and private.

In Campbell's philosophically deft hands, the feminist cudgel yields more light than heat. But because the light illumines the world of persons, a certain warmth nevertheless breaks through, generated by the prospect that we can now understand and practice the interpretation of the personal more adroitly than before because of her incisive and clarifying work.

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Confessions of a Philosopher: A Journey through Western Theism, by Bryan Magee

New York: Random House, 1997. $25.95 (cloth). 480 pp.

This book portrays Bryan Magee's intellectual odyssey through Western thought. Unlike autobiographies by other philosophers, such as A. J. Ayer's *Part of My Life* or Bertrand Russell's *Autobiography,* and more like J. S. Mill's *Autobiography* and Russell's *My Philosophical Development,* Magee presents an autobiography of ideas. We learn in "Scenes of Childhood" (chapter 1) that from the age of five onwards he was precociously puzzled by such classical philosophical topics as the nature of infinity, freedom of the will, the nature of consciousness, and the existence of material objects, among other issues. From those reflections emerged a lifelong passion for plausible answers to the basic questions concerning our understanding of the world.

Bryan Magee is not content to be a mere academic philosopher. He is best known as a commentator, director, and producer in British radio and television, in which capacity he also hosted conversations with prominent philosophers about their own and their predecessors' ideas. The edited version of those programs can be found in three of his books: *Modern British Philosophy* (1971); *Men of Ideas* (1978); and *The Great Philosophers* (1987). Incidentally, some ideas discussed in *Confessions* were adumbrated in an earlier book, *On Blindness* (1995), his correspondence with a blind philosopher, Martin Milligan, on the contrast of experiences between a blind and a sighted person.

Magee graduated from Oxford University with a concentration in linguistic philosophy. Although he admires the linguistic philosophers from whom he says he learned much, he rejects their way of doing philosophy. His lasting enthusiasm for philosophy, rivaled only by his love of the arts, led him to conclude that there are only about two dozen philosophers worth studying—several of whom he observes are not even required reading in many departments of philosophy. The trinity of Plato, Aristotle, and Kant he would give top billing. Incidentally, Magee's chapter on Kant (9) is outstanding for its clarity and style—well worth the price of the book itself! In addition, the chapters on Popper (11), Russell (12), plus two on Schopenhauer (20 and 21), reveal, in excellent prose, Magee's mastery of their works and the absorption of their ideas into his own intellectual experience.

It is Magee's judgment that the two main divisions of modern philosophy have significant failings. On the one hand, his evaluation of linguistic

philosophy is scathing (chapters 4 and 5). He believes that linguistic philosophers falsely presuppose that all knowledge is propositional knowledge. As a consequence, he claims they neglect the contribution nonlinguistic experiences, especially expression in the arts, can make to philosophical inquiry. Apparently for this reason, Magee found Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* to be the product of a great philosopher, but his later *Philosophical Investigations* Magee judges to be a rejection of philosophy itself (117ff.). On the other hand, Magee has little use for much of Continental philosophy. Although Continental philosophers ask many questions similar to his own, he nonetheless says their works are infected with overblown generalities, empty rhetoric, and obfuscating jargon, all of which oftentimes hides a vacuity of genuine philosophical thought (chapter 15). He makes at least one exception, viz. Heidegger, but Jean-Paul Sartre's philosophy (though not his literary works) Magee considers worthless (260–61). His candor is refreshing!

What Magee finds missing in much of contemporary philosophy is the dominating concern of classical philosophy with understanding reality and our place in it. He would like philosophers to address such important questions as: What is the significance or meaning of our existence? Or, as Russell wondered, whether "man is merely a kind of machine endowed, unhappily for himself, with consciousness?" Are our lives simply intermittent flashes of consciousness over an abyss of senseless energy? What, indeed, is consciousness itself? And the great question of metaphysics since the time of the classical Greek philosophers, what is the nature of reality and how can we know it? Magee deplores the fact that linguistic philosophers dismiss these sorts of questions as "unphilosophical"; preferring, he believes, to continue their preoccupation with the mundane uses of language.

All the above questions and reflections plunged Magee into a "Search for Meaning" (chapter 14) during a "Mid-Life Crisis" (chapter 15) whose severity was eased somewhat by a return to the works of Hume, Kant, and Schopenhauer. Only then did he find, with the guidance of his teacher and mentor, Karl Popper, some "peace of soul."

Philosophy is for Magee a quest for the noumenal, a search that may lead to an extension of the bounds of our experience and knowledge of the real. At this point, the reader may wonder whether Magee's quest will be fulfilled in the same manner as was St. Augustine's. Will the noumenal realm transcending space and time turn out to be the abode of God? Like Schopenhauer, Magee thinks not. He summarily dismisses all theological claims as worthless; a poor substitute for clear, critical thought. If, as Tillich would have it, religion provides the answers to the basic questions concerning the

meaning of being and the human condition, Magee might agree with the theologian on what the questions are but rejects outright any proffer of theological answers (161).

Although individuals are the best judges of their own beliefs, this does not mean that what they say is incorrigible. Magee's understanding of the history of Western philosophy, like anyone else's, may be liable to error. As Stuart Hampshire reminds us, self-deception, rationalization, unexamined desires, hopes, and expectations may prejudice a person's reading of the history of ideas. This may be especially so when philosophical ideas take on a vital personal interest, as they have for Magee. Accordingly, there is much to argue about in his evaluation of the history of Western philosophy: the sweeping denunciation of linguistic philosophy, his negative appraisal of Continental philosophy, and the omission of any discussion of the religious life and experience as expressed in philosophical theology. This latter lacuna, incidentally, is all the more striking given the nature of Magee's quest in philosophy. Readers may be "Left Wondering" (chapter 24) how his journey will end; they soon learn that Magee commits himself, as did his guide Karl Popper, simply to a lifelong quest for a better understanding of the world.

There is a one more caveat, however. Magee overemphasizes the point that in our reading of the great philosophers we should, by and large, ignore their commentators. He rightly points out that many commentators misunderstand their subjects. But that should not encourage a neglect, say, of studies such as Harry A. Wolfson's *Spinoza* or Raphael Demos's *Plato.* And the student of Schopenhauer would be well-advised to pay attention to Magee's own excellent commentary, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer* (1997).

Magee's style of writing is enjoyable throughout. His radio and television experience has undoubtedly contributed to his talent for expression without recourse to jargon or pretense. Another welcome feature of this book is a very detailed index.

Finally, perhaps Magee may take some small satisfaction that this reader, for one, found it a pleasure—though at times disquieting—to read the varied story of his journey. Indeed, his passion for philosophy is infectious, giving one the urge to reflect on the perennial issues of classical philosophy as they are presented by the great philosophers. If that was his intention, he has succeeded admirably.

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Welfare in the Kantian State, by Alexander Kaufman

Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1999. £40.00 (cloth). 179 pp.

In examining Kant and social welfare, Alex Kaufman's text focuses primarily on Kant's normative theory, placing, in Kaufman's words, "a particular emphasis on issues relating to poverty and inequality" and pursuing "the implications of Kantian theory for the state's responsibility to assist the least advantaged" (1). The book consists of a short, accessible introduction and six chapters. The chapters are articulate, well-argued, and support the arguments laid out by the author.

Kaufman's background as a former attorney comes through in his style of presentation, use of language, and argument structure. Indeed this is perhaps one of the most appealing aspects of his text. That is, he dispenses with the one-sided presentation philosophers often employ and presents the relevant evidence for and against the points under consideration. While he certainly has a viewpoint of his own to argue, he does so without any apparent bias or glossing-over of opposing viewpoints in favor of his own perspective.

Chapter 1 ("Kant and Welfare") serves as an outline of Kaufman's perspective on a possible Kantian theory of social welfare. He argues that "Kant's account of public right appears to require a substantial theory of social welfare . . . to eliminate inherently coercive economic conditions," suggesting that "Kant's account of right is sufficiently determinate to constitute a basis for policy" (34). Kaufman notes that "a traditional interpretation limits Kant's political theory to a variant of classical liberalism, thus undermining the plausibility of a Kantian theory of social welfare" (36), and he uses this first chapter to discuss three arguments favoring this interpretation. Subsequent chapters expand these arguments into full-fledged perspectives.

Chapter 2 ("Happiness and Welfare") examines a fourth argument favoring the traditional interpretation that Kaufman criticizes. This argument, he notes, "is grounded in Kant's explicit rejection of a principle of 'welfare' as a basis for legislation . . . because it appears to *require* a libertarian conception of the state" (36). The chapter examines happiness and practical legislation, and Kant's critique of cameralism. The discussion of cameralism is clear and proves to be a very informative section. Kaufman's principle argument is that in providing a critique of hedonic principles, Kant's critique is neither "categorical" nor "directed against social welfare legislation," nor is it "intended to establish a criterion of or individual acts of legislation" (60). Instead, Kaufman notes Kant's intention "to criticize the notion that a principle of happiness might structure the relations of the

sovereign and subjects, generally" (60). Kaufman offers a second argument, that Kant would object to such a principle's materiality, but not to its contingency. His arguments here serve to support his essential claim that "Kant does not wish to eliminate the possibility of welfare legislation, but rather to limit the set of principles which may legitimately ground such legislation" (61).

Chapter 3 ("Teleology, Rational Faith, and Context Dependence") provides a discussion of cognition. The discussions of active and passive cognitions are especially interesting, but they could have benefitted from bringing Aristotle's work in the same area to bear upon the present discussion. This is particularly evident as Kaufman moves to his discussions of teleological argumentation. In his first two chapters Kaufman argued against the traditional interpretations of Kant, and here we find developing the first strains of his own arguments. Chapters 4 through 6 explore the methodology of political judgment, while chapters 4 and 5 constitute a political model.

In Chapter 4 ("Systematicity and Political Salience"), Kaufman initiates a move from the historical account of the first three chapters to a more thoroughgoing critique of Kant's conception of reflective judgment. The critique brings the perspective of a number of contemporary theorists, including Arendt and Beiner, to bear upon the discussion as Kaufman seeks to show that "Kant's argument for systematicity in empirical knowledge, in the *Critique of Judgment,* grounds an account of the moral salience of relations in experience" (86). This chapter, like the third chapter, would benefit from a consideration of Aristotle's work. Plato's work regarding the issue of culture is also relevant to Kaufman's analysis.

Chapter 5 ("Political Judgment") presents an interesting account of agents and the idea of purposive agency, and contains what are arguably some of Kaufman's most eloquent and well-worded passages. Here he examines teleological judgment in closer detail, explaining Kant's methodology in light of both symbol and purpose. He concludes that a Kantian theory "requires an account of a faculty of political judgment that links Kant's account of systematicity to normative conclusions arising from the relations of objects within that system," an account that "must clarify the role of the principles of natural law in influencing and constraining the context of positive legislation" (133–34).

Chapter 6 ("A Kantian Model for Social Welfare Theory") summarizes and closes Kaufman's project, bringing together the threads of the arguments developed throughout the text. The problem here is that Kaufman's closing remarks seem rushed, and the implications of his viewpoints are not as fleshed out as one would have hoped for given the level of detail found in

earlier chapters.

Although Kaufman's text is at times highly technical, and contains references that might be best appreciated by "insiders" of Kantian scholarship, the book presents a generally approachable and thoughtful assessment of a Kantian conception of welfare. Despite its rushed conclusion, *Welfare in the Kantian State* is a thorough and well-researched text. I recommend this book to anyone with an interest in Kantian scholarship, but it is most appropriate for advanced readers in law, philosophy, and political science.

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The Bluffton Charge: One Preacher's Struggle for Civil Rights, by Stephen S. Howie

DuBois, Penn.: Mammoth Books, 2000. $14.95 (paper). 237 pp.

This is a work of creative nonfiction that chronicles a chapter in the lives of John and Beverly Howie. It will be of keen interest to the readers of the *Personalist Forum* for a number of reasons. First, many readers will be aware that John Howie (hereafter "Howie") is a founding member of the editorial board of *PF* and has been, since the journal's inception, its strong supporter. He has been a great advocate of personalism and personal idealism throughout his long career, particularly contributing to the body of interpretative literature on William Ernest Hocking's personal idealism. It is extremely fortunate for personalists that something of Howie's life has been permanently recorded.

But beyond this internecine attraction, there is a further draw for those interested in personalism. This book by Howie's son, Stephen Howie (hereafter "Stephen"), documents his father's life, viewpoint, and struggles from before the time that Boston personalism had become a decisive influence upon him. The book records the years from 1955 to 1958, when John Howie had completed seminary work at Emory and entered the Methodist ministry, but before he had gone to Boston to study with L. Harold DeWolf, Walter Muelder, and the other personalists who remained at Boston University following the death of Brightman. Howie, then, was not yet trained as a personalist, but we may see in this record of his struggle a nascent hint of a philosophical viewpoint that was to find fuller expression

after doctoral studies took Howie to Boston. Martin Luther King Jr. had only recently left Boston and been drawn into the leadership of the Montgomery Improvement Association when the story begins, and Howie was only dimly aware of King's activities. And this points out one of the greatest contributions of this book to our general understanding of the American civil rights movement. Many who, like me, were only children during the firestorm of the 1960s, often fail to grasp that the civil rights movement was not a "one-man show," since Dr. King's amazing charisma is what still rings in our ears, sometimes drowning out the chorus, nay, the symphony of other voices whose messages were indispensable to the movement's success. Yet Howie's story was one repeated in a thousand variations all over the South.

Stephen's book demonstrates how the momentum of the civil rights locomotive was already gaining steam, and indeed was well on the move, before it found a conductor in King. There is a very real sense that the movement made its leader just as truly as the leader made the movement. But it is hard for many of us to imagine the movement and the leader separately. This book will help its readers do so. In this book, King is in the periphery while the *issues* come to the fore in very concrete fashion. Stephen really succeeds in capturing the atmosphere of the time. I can myself only vaguely remember what the atmosphere was like in the South during the time of the civil rights movement, and like the author, I was not yet born when the events in this book took place, but, if only in my imagination, it seems that the time has been recreated. The technique Stephen uses to accomplish this is a masterful mix of documentary and concrete imaginative history. Reminiscent of the method of imaginative history advocated by R. G. Collingwood, Stephen has treated the larger events of the time as a macrocosm within which the microcosm of the concrete events in Bluffton, South Carolina, find their context. But what is so unusual about Stephen's technique is that he succeeds in using the (seemingly insignificant) events in this tiny, low-country town as the grain of sand in which the reader may then see the world. Indeed, this is why the book works, and undoubtedly why it won the 1998 Mammoth Book Award for Nonfiction—the award that led to its publication. Upon the face of it, the events recounted in Stephen's book are not astonishing or terribly out of the ordinary—no one dies, no one becomes famous, no one does anything very brash. This book is about ordinary people with conflicting views and traditions who come into contact and must find ways to live together in spite of their deep differences. But this brings to our consciousness what might be called "the real civil rights movement." The changes brought about in the American South between 1954 and 1974 are merely *symbolized* by the publicly visible activities of the

great leaders of that era. King, Ralph David Abernathy, John Lewis, Andrew Young, and the others could raise our consciousness, but they could do little to change the daily lives of ordinary people. That change could come about only by the efforts of tens of thousands of ordinary people making up their minds that a significant change was needed, and by altering their views and their lives one at a time. In this process there was much struggle, much heartbreak, much frustration. And *that* is what *The Bluffton Charge* is about. These ordinary events that bring people into conflict during an extraordinary time become for us a reminder of how resistant to change mass society can be—how those who run out ahead of the changes are made to suffer in a thousand little ways for seeing a bit further into the way things will be.

And in this sense *The Bluffton Charge* is not a book for people who seek the sensational. It is a book for people who seek perspective. The book does not lack drama, but it finds drama in the ordinary pressures and tensions of the time and the setting and sets these events against a backdrop of a great change that is underway.

The story line itself is simple. John and Beverly Howie, fresh out of school and fully intending to devote their lives to the service of the church, accept a three-point charge in the remote low country of South Carolina. Howie had decided from the time of his early youth, when he witnessed a lynching in the Mississippi Delta where he was raised, that he is committed to the ideal of racial equality. Beverly, raised in Nashville, shares his sentiments, although she has come to these views by more mundane experiences with "colored people." They arrive in a place where the Civil War has still not been won, for practical purposes, and where the line between the races is not only clear, it is cast in iron. Howie begins to engage in small acts of transgression—visiting the "colored" school as well as the white school during open house, courting the friendship of some of the leaders of the "colored" community, and working out a strategy to begin the long process of integration. Howie's activities gradually attract the notice of some of the white community leaders, and as they do, the pressure on John and Beverly increases. Their parishioners and neighbors become cold and silent, and finally a bit hostile. As these events unfold, John and Beverly begin to doubt themselves, if not their convictions. The moment of triumph comes when Howie is invited to speak at a clandestine gathering of the "colored" community in a remote church. Here Howie is finally able to preach the sermon on racial equality he has always wanted to preach. No one in the white community ever finds out about this, which is fortunate for the Howies. The climax of the book comes when Howie's activities and the hints about equality he has been embedding in his sermons finally become so suspicious

to his parishioners that they call a special meeting of all three churches to decide whether to allow Howie to remain as their preacher. Howie is grilled about whether he might be a member of the NAACP (an organization widely believed to be communist by his parishioners) and what his views about racial equality really are. Howie states frankly his views about equality, but as he happens not to be a member of the NAACP (in spite of his clear sympathy with all its goals), he is able to alleviate this worry. After much painful debate, the churches amazingly vote to keep the Howies. But it is too late. The Howies have already decided to leave, having made preparations for the opposite outcome—anticipated since they lacked the support of the district superintendent and bishop within the South Carolina Conference of the Methodist Church. In the fall of 1958, the Howies depart for Boston University. And Howie never again served a church, although he retains his orders, and went on to a successful career as a philosophy professor at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, while Beverly became a leader in children's services for the state of Illinois.

The value of the book, then, aside from its historical value, is in providing readers with a perspective most of us will lack. It leads us to ask anew, "what *was* the civil rights movement?" We are led away from and then back to the familiar public events that we associate with this great change, as in a series of images in juxtaposed mirrors. Ultimately, Howie's effect upon the South Carolina low country was negligible—nothing compared to the effects that would soon result from the development of Hilton Head Island. Yet Howie's was indeed the voice of one crying in the wilderness, and the change came as he knew it must.

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Just Results: Ethical Foundations for Policy Analysis, by Ralph D. Ellis

Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1998. $48.95 (cloth); $21.95 (paper). 215 pp.

This book addresses one of the most significant problems in the field of public policy: how to incorporate qualitative social values into the traditional quantitative models used in policy making. Ellis's practical argument that

qualitative social value—what Ellis calls "the justice factor" (171)—can be meaningfully incorporated into cost-benefit models is ambitious and innovative. He delivers admirably on his promise to provide "quantitative methods of measuring justice, so that it can become commensurable with utility in a coherent and rationally defensible decision principle" (2).

The argument of the book is tightly organized and clearly presented as befits its relative brevity. Chapters 1 and 2 set up the problem of the incommensurablity of utility, justice, and procedural legitimacy. In the process, Ellis provides a succinct, articulate, and critical account of five "values systems" (ethical theories) that could easily be used in an introductory ethics class without obscuring the nuances of current debates well-known to philosophers. Ellis shows that at heart of the utility-justice debate there is an underexamined assumption of philosophers and policy analysts that values are incommensurate, which gives by default the field of policy formation to various forms of quantified utilitarianism. Because "happiness" is desired by all people (without prejudging what makes anyone happy), and since happiness can be quantified by reference to willingness to pay for what makes one happy, utilitarianism has commended itself as the only reliable way the adjudicate among values in the pluralistic public sphere. However, this view is not without problems because there are cases where relatively trivial economic values trump more substantive, though admittedly qualitative, human values such as the right to life, access to basic goods to maintain life, and a reasonably salubrious environment.

Ellis carefully examines the arguments for moral subjectivism upon which claims of incommensurability are based. He finds they are not sustainable because it can be demonstrated by rational argument and empirical evidence that there are objectively true value statements and a core of common intrinsic value claims regardless of value system that do not conflict. Thus, there is no incommensurable pluralism of value systems because the divergent extrinsic values of different systems are meant to promote similar intrinsic values (55–56). So the meaningful conflict among value systems is not about *what* should be valued but *how* the things people do value are to be equitably distributed. This debate is not intractable but in fact what debate about policy is about. Whether or not a policy achieves an equitable distribution of value is a social outcome, so what is needed is a means of combining claims for justice with a justifiable and practical means of measuring the outcomes of justice achieved.

Chapters 3 and 4 lay out in more detail the problems already set up and provide a method for addressing them. Ellis takes a standard "problems" approach to deal with utilitarianism and rights-based decision-making

principles. These chapters, however, are rich because of the extensive literature and concrete cases that Ellis draws on. Ellis's argument does not head toward an either-or choice between utility or justice as do some accounts. Consistent with his setup, he argues for the methodological possibility of weighing conflicting values against each other by giving utility and distributive justice their "appropriate place" in a comprehensive decision principle that he sketches out in chapter 5.

The remaining two chapters elaborate this unified theory in detail and culminate in a well-defended argument for "nonutilitarian consequentalism." This view, on Ellis's account, affirms one can derive legal rights and obligations from a coherent concept of distributive justice conceived as a social outcome that is quantifiable and commensurable with a consequentialist approach of maximizing beneficial social outcomes.

Ellis's work in these latter chapters is highly technical, especially in chapter 6, a substantial detour into econometrics. However, in the context of the whole argument they are easily understood. He argues that cost-benefit utilitarianism makes a crucial mistake because costs and benefits are calculated on the basis of value as determined by undifferentiated exchange transactions. On this view, a unit of quantified value, usually expressed in dollars, is the same as (equal to) any other unit. It does not matter what the value is exchanged for, only that it is exchanged in some transaction of value. Thus, there is no difference between $100 to purchase food, a basic necessity, to maintain a family for a week or $100 exchanged to buy alcohol for a Christmas party. One has $100 of value that expresses a preference for food or alcohol. The relative value of food for a family and alcohol for a party is determined by comparing aggregated exchanges. So exchange value merely quantifies the relative value of goods and services in aggregate undifferentiated exchanges. This view was exploited by William Baxter in his classic essay "Penguins and Plastic Trees" where he argued that measured by the market principle of willingness to pay, there is no intrinsic difference between saving penguins or manufacturing plastic trees. It is a matter of what most people prefer measured in some neutral notion of utility. Intuitively, there seems to be something wrong with this kind of argument. However, to date it has been hard to "get at" why in a rationally defensibly way because deontic theories slip on the step of utilitarian quantification.

Ellis's counterargument is based on differentiating types of exchanges. It is agreed that there is a qualitative difference between food used to preserve life and alcohol used for a party. While the exchange value of the transactions is the same ($100), the value-in-use is different. Ellis argues, based on sound empirical evidence, that one can objectively differentiate use

value and exchange value. Doing so allows one to rise above the common-sense bias that a dollar is a dollar no matter how is it spent. In fact, quantified units of values used to secure basic or necessary goods have a greater value than quantified values used to obtain nonnecessary goods because they have greater necessity. If these weighed values were compared to votes, then in calculating the relative value of outcomes, basic necessities have a "higher" value than nonnecessities. By failing to separate necessary from nonnecessary goods and services in cost-benefit calculations, all exchanges receive equal weight, when in fact necessary goods and services ought to be and can be given greater weight since basic necessities uncontroversially trump nonnecessary luxuries. The problem, of course, has always been how to measure or weigh claims of necessity.

The intuition of deontic theories of justice is precisely the insight that some values are sufficiently universal and nonnegotiable and that some exchanges are inherently unjust. However, applied to concrete decision-making situations, the theories have been unable to provide a method to negotiate the assumed subjectivism of the pluralistic public sphere. Ellis thinks, however, that studies of people's willingness to take job-related risks provides important evidence that (1) the use value does in fact permit an objective means of differentiating relative differences in quantified values, that is, aggregate value transactions can be disaggregated, and (2) a method for measuring the degree of necessity is necessary to develop a formula for giving greater weight to the value of necessary use than nonnecessary use.

Ellis's contribution toward reconciling the impasse between cost-benefit utilitarianism and rights-based theory is to challenge the subjectivist assumptions of liberalism in favor of an objective account of value and to show how one can quantify degrees of necessity for inclusion in social benefit calculation to achieve a philosophically defensible and methodologically operative theory of justice. His use of risk studies to show the insufficiency of an exchange theory of value is innovative and deserves a closer inspection by economists. His work in technical economics is sound. His mathematical modeling is elegant. In short, this is not an account that can be dismissed as a philosopher trespassing on fields not his own.

Ellis's work is to be admired for its humanism. He manages to invest the discussion of justice and public policy with passion without merely engaging in rhetoric. The work is solidly philosophical but always done with an eye to its relevance to real world policy formation.

Ellis's book is rich in concrete examples that show how his philosophical account has pragmatic value and use and that policy analysts can account for the use value—or practical measurable utility—of universally acknowl-

edged social values like life, health and safety, and environmental preservation when calculating outcomes. His arguments are carefully constructed and accessible to professionals in many fields. His conclusions are applicable to many different fields. One hopes this book gets the multidisciplinary audience it deserves.

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Act Like You Know: African-American Autobiography and White Identity, by Crispin Sartwell

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998. $43 (cloth); $17 (paper). 212 pp.

While doing research on African-American ethical theory, I came across a web site that called for the abolition of the white race. Race Traitor, the organization that created the website, claims that social problems in America will be solved only when persons who have white privileges agree to give them up. The members of Race Traitor argue that because race is a historically constructed concept, the white race does not have to exist. We can abolish it. Their website claims, "The existence of the white race depends on the willingness of those assigned to it to place their racial interests above class, gender, or any other interests they hold. The defection of enough of its members to make it unreliable as a predictor of behavior will lead to its collapse."[1] The central claim seems to be that whites expect certain actions from blacks and certain actions from other whites. If we do not see these actions performed as expected, we will be forced to stop thinking that race is an indicator of behavior. So if whites want to abolish the white race, they must stop accepting the privileges which come with white skin.

As I read Sartwell's book, I could not help thinking about that web site. It had the same profound effect on me as did *Act Like You Know.* The book has an autobiographical tone that I will adopt because I agree with Sartwell when he says that all theory is ultimately autobiographical. As a white

1. See the Race Traitor home page, http://www.postfun.com/racetraitor/ (accessed March 25, 2001).

woman reading texts that focus on white persons rather than on black persons, I feel the same self-loathing Sartwell describes throughout his book. And this feeling intensifies when I remember that some of my ancestors owned slaves. The descendants of these slaves walk around the town in which I was raised. It took me a long time to figure out why some of the Handys in my town were black and some of them were white.

Sartwell could really appreciate that website. He makes similar statements. In chapter 5, which is a discussion of the subversive nature of rap, Sartwell says: "The historical irony is that the figure of the black, violent thug threatens white people and white culture as the result of our own conceptual elaborations and the oppressions we have used them to impose. . . . It is a position we manufactured, a composite of our ejections and oppressions, and it is beginning to speak in its own voice, and use the very power we have ascribed to it" (188). This passage certainly sounds similar to some of the thoughts on Race Traitor's website. A brief look at the rest of the book will help bring out the message in this passage.

Throughout the book, Sartwell points out the ways whites have seen and still see African Americans. From the slaveholder's view, the slave was illiterate, uncultured, and all body. These assumptions, along with others, still exist regarding African Americans. Whites still see blacks as violent, sexual, dirty, and lawbreaking. Whites suspect that African Americans are not capable of adopting the objective Western "view from nowhere." Blacks are expected to speak from a particular set of experiences rather than abstractly about experience in general. All in all, whites see blacks as naturally embodied. Sartwell goes on to claim that the white's image of himself is much different. He thinks of himself as objective, rational, pure, and certainly law-abiding. He casually adopts a god's eye view and uses religion to back it up. One of the main tasks of the book is to explain the existence of these radically different images of black and white.

Sartwell claims that one of the characteristics of Western thought is that whites loathe their embodied selves to such an extreme that they eject the traits of the body from themselves. And, since everything needs a home, the "savages" from Africa who were at whites' disposal became the home of the ejected traits. Whites then created a social structure that values mind-ful things and rejects body-ful things. Whites think they have entitled themselves to reject blacks reasonably and so they create a racist structure that only rewards Western white behavior. But sometimes, as in the practice of "slumming," whites realize that they are dead inside. They turn to black culture and appropriate it in an attempt to restore their bodies. White oppression of blacks is therefore double-edged. Blacks are expected to be

bodied and are therefore simultaneously rejected as dirty and appropriated as a means of white salvation.

Black responses to white expectations are complicated. Sartwell claims that blacks can appear to live the stereotype set up for them by whites while retaining a strong inner life that rejects white stereotypes. The risk is that the resulting split between the outer and the inner life might prove to be too difficult to sustain, and a person might find it easiest to kill off the seemingly more expendable and less practical inner life. But it is possible to live the stereotype with the intent of throwing it in the face of white folks. Sartwell convincingly argues that rap is a perfect example of this last strategy of combating white racism. Rap openly flaunts those traits which scare whites to death. Whites are confronted with the very traits which they secretly fear they have not sufficiently trampled down in themselves.

Sartwell points out the savagery involved when whites deny that blacks have any good traits. Whites fail to see that they have defined what constitutes a good trait and labeled as "evil" all traits that failed to meet these criteria. And whites believe that blacks have all of these evil traits. Whites think that black redemption is possible only if black persons adopt white ideals. Sartwell says this is another response to white stereotypes. Blacks can become white. They can take up Western thought and show that they can reason with the best of whites. The advantage of this strategy, which Sartwell claims was used by W. E. B. DuBois, is that blacks can gain the economic and social advantages that they previously lacked. And in a culture so focused on economic success, a successful black man is given a lot of respect. The downside of this strategy is that assimilation requires shedding one's own culture. Black culture wants to survive, not be subsumed. Ultimately, blacks in America cannot win under the current structure. Rebelling against stereotypes can be just as dangerous as acting them out.

Race Traitor and Sartwell have something to learn from one another. Race Traitor could certainly benefit from Sartwell's analysis of race consciousness. Sartwell has found that white people cannot tell him what it is like to be white, but most white people think they know what it is like to be black. Sartwell says: "It means nothing, phenomenologically, to be white; to be white is to be whited out; white race consciousness is the erasure of itself" (140). Whites have erased themselves by means of their own objectivity. And they cannot become conscious of their race on their own. If Sartwell is correct, then we cannot abolish the white race without the help of black people. Sartwell can benefit from Race Traitor's concrete suggestions regarding ways to subvert the assumed relationship between race and behavior. Race Traitor focuses on the white race and its culpability for racist

social structures. Sartwell frequently remarks throughout the book that he might be writing a racist work. He admits that as a white man he is only an expert on white racism. An approach which focuses more on white behavior and less on African American responses to that behavior might put Sartwell's experience as a white man in America to better use.

There is no more tangible issue than race relations in this country. I agree with Sartwell that we are all affected by it and we all contribute to it, whether consciously or not. If we want racism to end, whites must reconstruct their beliefs about themselves and black persons. And this is only a first step. Ultimately, if whites do not humble themselves, there just might be fire next time!

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