



Review

Reviewed Work(s): Political Obligation in a Liberal State by Steven M. DeLue

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Book Reviews: Political Theory

Rocking the Boat, and the Prisoner's Dilemma) that also in the state of nature certain coordination problems can be solved by means of enforceable contracts—although he admits that the solutions derived by this fact-deficient exercise appear as a whole to be “unsatisfactory, incomplete, partial or precarious” (p. 68).

As to the assumption that the state is no more than a mechanical *instrument*, de Jasay argues that the social contract, by which the state and its monopoly of force are established, will also contain a social choice clause, which will stipulate how in the future to take account of the preferences of the individuals who are party to the contract. He then proceeds to demonstrate that whatever the content of the social choice rule agreed on, it will lead to a gradual encroachment on the private domain by the public domain and will be about “relaxing or severing altogether the nexus between contribution and benefit” (p. 106).

Having thus established that it cannot be maintained that if the state “had not emerged from multiple historical causes, rational men would have chosen to erect it” (p. 116), de Jasay continues his argument with a discussion of the conditions under which in the state of nature a noncommanded solution of public goods dilemmas can be reconciled with the pursuit of individual narrow self-interest. His conclusions are not very surprising to those familiar with the game of Chicken. There is a presumption that individuals will voluntarily subscribe to the provision of a public good if they (1) do not have a dominating strategy and (2) prefer being the only contributor as opposed to having no one contribute. Whether or not these conditions will be met will be a function of the individual's estimation of the “productivity of publicness” and the “dilution factor” of the public good in question *and* of the size of the minimal contributing set and the number of individuals in the relevant group that will contribute.

In conclusion de Jasay argues that although noncommanded solutions to public goods dilemmas are possible in the state of nature, the demand for fairness—that is to say, the demand that free riders should be either forced to pay or forcibly excluded from consuming the public good—will eventually lead to the social contract. The social contract, accordingly, “is nothing more exalted than an anti-free-rider device” (p. 242). The sad irony of it all is that

with the social contract and compulsory contribution, individuals will develop a revenge strategy for “getting one's own back,” with the result that the actual effect of the social contract “is to open up an altogether new ground on which free-riding thrives with impunity” (p. 243).

Although I am wholly on the side of de Jasay when he tries to show that most public goods dilemmas can be solved without state intervention and that the games people play are more like Chicken than the Prisoner's Dilemma, I am afraid that I find his reasoning, however ingenious and illuminating at times, too loose to carry conviction. This goes especially for his “as if” accounts of successful cooperation in the perfect state of nature. It seems to me to be in complete contradiction to the classic assumptions of the perfect state of nature to assume, as de Jasay does, that individuals are, for instance, part of “overlapping groups defined . . . culturally, by occupation [and] income” (p. 189). In the classic state of nature the individuals are supposed to be completely on their own; accordingly, there cannot be any culture, division of labor, or wealth, not to speak of turnstiles to prevent too many individuals from leaving the minimal contributing set (p. 208)! Nevertheless, I think that thanks to the wealth of material contained in the book and the range of topics discussed in it, students of political theory may find the study of *Social Contract, Free Ride* well worth their while.

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Political Obligation in a Liberal State. By Steven M. DeLue. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989. 179p. \$39.50 cloth, \$12.95 paper.

At the present time influential scholars argue that political obligations cannot be supported on the premises of liberal political theory. Proponents of this view include A. John Simmons, Joseph Raz, and Robert Paul Wolff. In *Political Obligation in a Liberal State*, Steven DeLue takes it for granted that this problem has been solved. Following the work of John Rawls and myself, he argues that political obligations can be established on the principle of fairness. He believes, however, that liberal

societies must satisfy additional requirements before they can ground "strong" (as opposed to "weak") obligations to obey state authority.

According to DeLue, a strong obligation is comprised of a moral requirement both to obey the law in general and to limit opposition to specific laws to actions that will not damage the political system. An individual with a weak obligation will still recognize a requirement to obey the law but will not feel it necessary so to restrict opposition. The implication is that faced with the potentially destructive opposition of citizens with only weak obligations, the state could respond with force, thereby, in effect, treating citizens with weak obligations as if they had none. To avoid such undesirable consequences, the state must establish strong obligations for its citizens.

Chief among the additional requirements of strong obligations is the propagation of an "enlarged culture." DeLue believes that the citizenry of a modern liberal state is implacably divided over questions of political values. In order to generate strong obligations, the state must allow individuals to argue for and promote their particular values to criticize state policies. An "enlarged culture" is one that fosters the traditional liberal values of freedom of thought and discussion, which are in turn closely bound up with individual development. The connection between an enlarged culture and strong obligations lies in the fact that when a government actively supports free discussion and is responsive to the resulting intellectual consensus, individuals will be willing to limit their political opposition appropriately.

The bulk of DeLue's book is devoted to fleshing out the concept of an enlarged culture. He draws on themes in Kant's philosophy and Adam Smith's notion of the impartial spectator. He also discusses a variety of related themes, including the means through which an enlarged culture can be brought about and the kind of educational system one would demand. The emphasis on enlarged culture is great enough to have figured in the title of the book. Though chapter 1 is devoted to the question of political obligation as traditionally conceived and contains brief critical discussions of some familiar alternative views, along with the endorsement of a fairness position, it is not clear how these advance the overall argument.

In many ways *Political Obligation in a Liberal State* is an attractive book. DeLue pursues a reasonable path through a thicket of complex, controversial issues and draws on a substantial body of scholarship (though mainly by political theorists, as opposed to the voluminous—and more rigorous—work of philosophers). DeLue's analysis is characterized by an attractive eclecticism as he weaves discrete discussions of different scholars into a coherent whole, exemplifying the open, reasoned debate that he expounds.

But there are disadvantages to his approach. DeLue's strategy of arguing from the conclusions of other scholars allows him to avoid direct confrontation with many thorny issues. In general, he makes little effort to anticipate and defuse possible objections to his claims. The result is that little in the book is strikingly new or original. The importance of freedom of thought and discussion is of course a commonplace of liberal political theory. DeLue's most striking contribution is connecting this up with questions of political obligation. But the connections are not adequately explored. For instance, discussion of the crucial distinction between strong and weak obligations is perfunctory, as is DeLue's account of exactly how the opportunity to participate in open political debate generates a strong moral requirement to accept its outcome. Absent rigorous analysis of these and other crucial points, the importance of enlarged culture seems more asserted than demonstrated.

GEORGE KLOSKO

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Heidegger and Nazism. By Victor Farias. Edited by Joseph Margolis and Tom Rockmore. Translated by Paul Burrell and Gabriel R. Ricci. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989. 349p. \$29.95.

The hundredth anniversary of Heidegger's birth has been relatively quiet and part of the reason for it is Victor Farias' book. Originally published in French after he was first unable to obtain a German publisher, the present English edition incorporates a translation of the French edition with material that is being incorporated into the forthcoming German edition. Farias has, it is clear, made it once and for all impos-