

Forum

Cass R. Sunstein's "nudge science" *Ethics, influence, and public policy*

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In 2008, Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein's best-selling book *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness* set the standard for the philosophy and psychology of political influence.¹ Sunstein's works since then — *Why Nudge: The Politics of Libertarian Paternalism* (2014),² *The Ethics of Influence: Government in the Age of Behavioral Science* (2016),³ and *Human Agency and Behavioral Economics: Nudging Fast and Slow* (2017)⁴ — expand and expound on (what we shall call) "nudge science." The following collection of essays will explore this body of work from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, with a special emphasis on explaining and predicting how each discipline might address the ethics of influence in a democratic society. The intent of the following articles is not to critique "nudge science" but to focus on current U.S. public debates — obesity policy (psychology), retirement savings policy (economics), breast cancer screening policy (medicine), and climate change policy (philosophy) — and, ultimately, to speculate on the immediate future of libertarian paternalism in the United States.

Note

Earlier drafts of these five essays were presented in a research session at the 35th Annual Meeting of the Association for Politics and the Life Sciences, held at DePaul University, Chicago, April 5, 2017.

References

1. R. H. Thaler and C. R. Sunstein, *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008).
2. C. R. Sunstein, *Why Nudge? The Politics of Libertarian Paternalism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014).
3. C. R. Sunstein, *The Ethics of Influence: Government in the Age of Behavioral Science* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
4. C. R. Sunstein, *Human Agency and Behavioral Economics: Nudging Fast and Slow* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

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