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Charles R. McCann Jr., *Individualism and the Social Order: The Social Element in Liberal Thought* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 256, \$135, ISBN 0-415-32627-3.

Constrained by genetics, social mores, and the laws of physical science, how are we free? This is more than an academic preoccupation: it determines the practical mitigation of "errant" behavior. Is it appropriate to punish or to treat? The philosophy that relates to freedom divides: in the socio-political domain, holism is in contention with atomism (that is, "individualism"); in the psycho-biological domain (or, rather, within the broad church of cognitive science) determinism is in contention with free-will.

Debate within the socio-political domain is hamstrung by entrenched ideology, so that familiar themes are well-worked and that little progresses. This alone should discourage preoccupation with ever-finer distinctions. Better if the discussion could advance with less penchant for the "labels" that are variously attached. To illustrate: why is there a "preference for a dissatisfied Socrates over a satisfied fool"? (p. 43). We are told that for Bentham it is on the basis of extrinsic value: the former has greater social usefulness; and that for Mill it is because of intrinsic value: the former *is* Socrates. Yet, if the fact of the former is the essential feature of the latter, surely there is no difference? Or, if there is, what is its practical significance?

Sharply contrasting with that ethos, a broad engagement with evolution (or, rather, with the notion of 'universal adaptation') within the psycho-biological domain achieves much more than exegesis and new ground is regularly broken (see, for example, Plotkin 1994 and Dennett 2004). This reviewer is in little doubt that the frontier between the socio-political and the psycho-biological domains might be opened to great advantage.

This book is what it says it is: firmly in the tradition of the first domain. Its introduction is followed by chapter-by-chapter coverage of "six of the more significant liberal social theorists of the past 150 years." There are successive examinations of "the place of the community in the social philosophies" of John Stuart Mill, James Fitzjames Stephen, Herbert Spencer, William Graham Sumner, Ludvig von Mises, and Friedrich Hayek. The detailed elucidation in regard to each of these principals must appeal to pendants (long may they prosper!) and to aficionados of one or more of the six. The author's primary thesis is proven beyond any doubt: "within liberal philosophical thought as defined in the writings or our chosen exemplars, there has consistently been an emphasis on the social nature of man" (p. 214). The

presentation is lucid and scholarly, but to read the book from cover-to-cover demands special commitment.

In further detail, the conclusions are that:

Mill and Stephen agree with respect to the basic utilitarian principles that underlie the liberal social order, but disagree with respect to the role of coercion and the constitution of the value structure (pluralist versus absolutist). Spencer and Sumner grant to the individual a degree of sociality with which communitarians and conservatives could readily agree, but disagree among themselves as to the nature of values and to the extent to which society has a real as opposed to a nominal existence. Mises and Hayek likewise situate the individual with the social order, but disagree as to the role of reason and rationality in the process, as they disagree as to the role of the State (p. 215).

As always, debate is most heated when protagonists are discussing different things. Often there is disingenuousness in the selection of targets. Extreme holistic and atomistic tendencies face particular pitfalls and contradictions so that the holistic/atomistic affray is littered with disemboweled and dismembered straw men. The author confronts the caricaturists of liberalism; so, for example, he notes that the “commitment to pluralism as a core value is simply incongruous, as pluralism in and of itself represents a denial of any basic core value” (p. 215). In the extreme—in the absence of a social dimension—individualism is necessarily amoral. Evil is a social concept, so there is some difficulty in digesting such statements as: “Insisting on a greater individual autonomy as an answer to social evils ignores the possibility that evil as much as good is the object of choice” (p. 215). As a necessary, though not sufficient condition, evil requires hurt to be perpetrated deliberately upon someone else. If there were no interdependencies between the well-being (or rather, “welfare functions”) of rational individuals and if all exchange were to mutual advantage, morality would be redundant. Introduce perfect knowledge and the point of all human action dies. Morality enters to secure man’s rationality in the face of interdependencies and ignorance. In the very broadest presentation, morality is represented as an adaptive embodiment of knowledge securing social cohesion by allowing individuals to draw upon reasonable expectations in confronting uncertain outcomes.

Aristotle needed no Darwinian insight to make the distinction between wanton preferences (driven by appetite) and values (driven by reason or virtue). By contrast, “Mill . . . conflates pleasure and happiness as *desires* with pleasure and happiness a *goods*, as ends to be pursued” (p. 40). Even for von Mises, we learn that morality is the product of rational evaluation: intelligent reflection reveals that personal benefits are enhanced by social co-operation; and moral behavior is “the name we give to the temporary sacrifices made in the interests of social co-operation” (p. 167). It is as if Darwin never existed. What comes naturally? and how is intelligence (*n.b.*, not omniscience) relevant to the highest social order?

Even though a moral sense is unique to mankind—“Animals . . . have beliefs not opinions” (Dennett 1997, p. 307)—coherent social behavior (with different roles undertaken) is characteristic of pack animals. So how is genetically driven conditioning to be distinguished from spontaneous intellectual development? Although the interdependence of genetic and cultural dispositions defies separation, cognitive

science addresses many new and relevant issues; for example, from a recent experiment, a nasal spray of the hormone oxytocin increased individuals' willingness to trust others (see Kosfeld *et al.*, 2005). Greater awareness of the relevance of such findings to social science could be the catalyst for some novel presentations that would serve to advance, rather than simply to elucidate, attempts to further understanding of an individual's autonomy and freedom.

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Donald Rutherford (Ed) *Biographical Dictionary of British Economists* (Bristol: Thoemmes Continuum, 2005) 2 vols., pp.xxv, 1330, \$630, ISBN 1-84371-030-7.

Enoch Soames—a dispirited *fin-de-siecle* poet from Preston, Lancashire—sold his soul to the devil to find out what the reference books would say about him in 100 years' time. Transported to the British Museum in 1997 he found one solitary mention, by an “authority” who believed him to be a fictitious creation by Max Beerbohm.

As a matter of fact he was, but one wonders which of the economists born, say, around 1800 (the median date of birth in this Dictionary is 1796) would have been surprised to be in, or out of, Donald Rutherford's compilation. If one could travel back in time to give advice, then some good tips would be: take an interest in monetary theory, the poor laws or how to deal with the national debt. If you are no great shakes analytically then try an economic experiment (utopian community, novel method of poor relief) instead or, if this is too exacting, rise to fame in some other field and have strong opinions on economic subjects. Being a woman will neither help nor hinder you (more on this later.) Be Scottish (seventy-nine entrants were born in Scotland and thirty-eight even died there.) There is nothing to gain by arranging to die a violent death (to date only one economist, the regicide John Cook, has been hanged drawn and quartered, though William Prynne (1600–69) did have his ears cut off.)

However one defines an economist, it is likely that ninety-five percent or more of them are alive today. That half the entrants here were born before 1800 might seem remarkable. Partly it comes about because living economists, with two exceptions, are excluded, but is it also because more has meant worse? Comparisons are difficult for all the obvious reasons, but one does have a sense that, as more university and government economists become available for inclusion, others who would have