

superior to the other environmental ethics textbooks I have used and/or know well. I fully intend to try it out the next time I teach environmental philosophy, and for a textbook that is the important recommendation.

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**Exploring Ethics**, Donald M. Borchert and David Stewart  
Macmillan, New York, 1986, 363pp., \$20pbk.

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Borchert and Stewart's new introductory ethics text, *Exploring Ethics*, is divided into three parts of four chapters each. Part One examines foundational questions. Part Two surveys normative theories of ethics. Part Three examines a number of problems in applied ethics. All chapters but one contain two sizable selections from either a major philosophical figure or a contemporary scholar. Each selection is preceded by detailed introductory material and followed by an "Assessment" that makes additional points of comparison or contrast and raises additional questions. There are also detailed introductions and concluding comments for each chapter and each part. So the book teaches primarily through representative readings and detailed introductory and retrospective commentary.

An unusual feature of *Exploring Ethics* is that the authors regularly interrupt the selections with helpful comments and questions to assist the student in understanding them. This sort of technique was used in Albert, Denise, and Peterfreund's *Great Traditions in Ethics* (Van Nostrand, several editions). But Borchert and Stewart use it to even better effect.

The contents of the book are as follows. Part One is entitled "The Fundamental Ethical Question: Challenges to Its Meaningfulness." The book begins with a chapter on psychological and ethical egoism that uses selections from Hobbes and Butler. Next come chapters on: "Determinism" (Blandshard and Campbell); "Ethical Relativism" (Herkovits and Stace); and "Ethical Emotivism" (Ayer and Blandshard). The last three are well done; but this reviewer judges that the first chapter is misplaced. Egoism can surely be treated foundationally and metaethically; but as it is treated here, in terms of the debate between Hobbes and Butler, it must be viewed as an alternative ethical theory. Therefore it really belongs in Part Two.

Part Two is entitled "What Makes an Action Right?" It contains chapters on: "Actualizing Human Nature" (Aristotle and Epicurus); "Obeying the Will of God" (Paley and Brunner); "Maximizing Human Happiness" (Bentham and Mill); and "Pursuing One's Duty" (Kant and Ross). Although both Hobbes and Rawls are discussed elsewhere in the book in other connections, contractarianism as an important form of ethical theory is not examined in Part Two or anywhere else.

Part Three is entitled, "Normative Ethical Issues." Here the term "normative" is used atypically to refer to applied issues in ethics rather than to ethical theory. The opening chapter introduces the application of ethical theories to practical problems. The remaining chapters are: "Ethical Issues in Medicine" (Bok on abortion and Childress on allocating scarce resources); "Ethical Issues in Business" (Reagan and Mingle on engineering ethics and DeGeorge on truth in advertising); and "Ethical Issues in Public Policy" (Buchanan on Rawls' theory of distributive justice and Brandt on criminal justice).

There is also a useful glossary of terms, an Appendix entitled, "Key Concepts in Normative Ethics," and several pages of suggestions for further reading. At 350 pages (in a larger 7x10 inch format), the book is probably long enough to be the sole text for a quarter course. It

could easily be supplemented in a variety of ways to be used as the primary text in a semester course.

*Exploring Ethics* is a very good book. It is better constructed and more likely to be effective in the classroom than most books of similar format. Consequently, it is unfortunate that the first chapter of the book is the weakest, as I shall explain. For when prospective users of the text examine a complimentary copy at their desks or a display copy at a convention, they are likely to assume that the first chapter is representative. In addition, since the first chapter is ordinarily taught first, there is a likelihood that the students will form a low opinion of the text if the opening chapter needs repeated correction and clarification by the teacher. But this book is considerably better than its first chapter; and there are good reasons, already mentioned, for not teaching that chapter first.

What are the book's strengths? The primary selections are well chosen (though some might prefer the inclusion of a few more major figures from the history of ethics), well edited, and, as mentioned above, well presented by the authors. With few exceptions, the authors' introductions and other comments on parts, chapters, and selections are clear, readable, and accurate. In addition, the introductions to the selections ordinarily incorporate, and put to good pedagogical use, a broader understanding of western intellectual history than is usual in such a book. In other words, with few exceptions, the authors have done their work very well.

What are the chief exceptions? The first concerns the explication of ethical and psychological egoism in the first chapter. A minor point is that the materialist-egoist interpretation of Hobbes is only one of three mutually exclusive interpretations, all three of which have textual support and have been defended in scholarly studies. The authors present this interpretation as if it were the only possible reading of Hobbes.

Much more important are several specific statements made in the chapter. For example, the authors claim that, according to ethical egoism: ". . . we project values onto things . . . values are properties that you and I bestow on objects" (12). But this is not ethical (or psychological) egoism. This is much more a statement of the subjectivist position examined in the chapter on emotivism. Later, in developing an environmental example aimed at illustrating the claims of psychological egoism, the authors offer this questionable argument: ". . . whether the dam will be built depends not on whether it is good or evil but on which group has the greatest power to enforce its perspective. Psychological egoism, therefore, leads to the conclusion that 'might makes right'" (28). In both instances, sophisticated arguments might be offered in defense; but they would be out of place here. The effort to explain ethical and psychological egoism to introductory students is surely marred by such passages.

Similarly the explication of utilitarianism in the seventh chapter is marred by the presentation of utilitarianism as a naive majoritarian position rather than a genuine value-maximizing position, in spite of the chapter's title, "Maximizing Human Happiness." The authors claim that utilitarians will invariably prefer the benefits of the majority to the harms of the minority, regardless of the extent of those harms. Few utilitarians have been majoritarians; and Bentham eventually repudiated the phrase, "greatest happiness for the greatest number," precisely because it appeared to imply majoritarianism. But the value-maximizing version of utilitarianism is not even mentioned by the authors as an alternative. In addition, the authors' anemic version of utilitarianism has no room for intentions (199), though the selection from Brandt explicitly discusses their role, and no room for the value of liberty (307), even though J. S. Mill's views on liberty and paternalism are discussed favorably in the Appendix (332).

Finally, the authors work too hard in Part Three to make alternative solutions of the applied issues discussed there resolve into one utilitarian solution at odds with one deontological solution. Students will not be helped by such oversimplification either of the applied

issues being discussed or of the ambiguities of the teleological-deontological dichotomy itself. All of these errors, and the handful of lesser misstatements and ambiguities to be found in the book, could be easily corrected in the classroom by a teacher. But they do deserve notice here.

In sum, *Exploring Ethics* is not flawless; but its flaws are not numerous and are quite corrigible with some careful teaching. Overall, both in the quality of its selections and the way they are handled, and in the clarity and general good quality of the authors' introductions and commentary, this is a very good textbook and better than most that employ a similar format. It deserves a careful examination.

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### **Human Rights: Fact or Fancy?, Henry B. Veatch**

Louisiana State University Press, 1985, 270pp., \$30.

ANTHONY J. LISSKA

During this time when we celebrate the bicentennial of the Constitution, it is appropriate that philosophers treat the foundation of human rights. That these are difficult questions no one denies. Nonetheless, L. W. Sumner observed recently, "The rhetoric of rights is out of control."

In his latest work, Henry B. Veatch attempts to put some sanity into these discussions. Veatch has considered the foundational questions in ethics for the past thirty years, beginning with his response to William Barrett's *Irrational Man*, continuing through the excellent *For an Ontology of Morals*, and now with his latest and perhaps most systematic treatise, *Human Rights: Fact or Fancy?* This book demonstrates Veatch's wide reading in ethics and jurisprudence, and his coming to grips with the issues current in moral and legal discussions.

Veatch begins this impressive work considering what options philosophers might pursue in searching for an ethic to undergird the legal system. Veatch considers the problems with utilitarianism and Kantianism common to recent work in meta-ethics—with discussions of Donagan, Gewirth, Hare, and Mackie—and then introduces what he takes to be serious weaknesses with the new "contractarians": Rawls, Nozick, and Dworkin. Veatch is perplexed why contractarianism has proven so popular in our time, given the theory's rejection when Hobbes and Rousseau were dismissed in the 18th century. For those interested in a rigorous critique of contractarianism, Chapter One will be a fruitful search. Veatch is sympathetic with the questions raised regarding individual rights by contemporary libertarians. Nonetheless, he is at great pains to show that in the end libertarianism is nothing more than a "desire ethic" lacking any foundation. Veatch continually reminds his readers that the "Euthyphro question" must be asked about libertarian foundations; he argues that when ". . . any supposed ethics of Rational Egoism or Rational Self-Interest is spelled out in starkest detail, there is no way that it can claim to be an ethics" (49). This analysis should be required reading for those undergraduates opting for an unreflected libertarianism. Veatch concludes that "none of the regnant ethical theories that dominate the present philosophical scene . . . provide an adequate basis or foundation for human rights claims or for any moral or ethical principles" (49).

Next, Veatch provides a detailed analysis indicating that a natural law theory rooted in Aristotle and Aquinas can provide an option for the lack of a foundation in the other moral