

such as evolutionary psychology, archaeology, sociology, economics, and the latest in neuroscience, Krznaric expertly weaves together these academic subjects into a broad, multifaceted study that is both intellectual and accessible. Krznaric's *The Good Ancestor: A Radical Prescription for Long-Term Thinking* is sure to garner significant interest from widely varied readers interested in the future.

—Blake I. Campbell

Student at Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, DC

A Consequentialist Defense of Libertarianism

Richard Fumerton

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In the introduction to his book *Libertarianism: What Everyone Needs to Know*, political philosopher Jason Brennan states that it was after reading the book *Economics in One Lesson* by economist Henry Hazlitt that he began to take libertarianism as a serious political theory. But there is one thing in particular that caught Brennan's eye: "Hazlitt taught me that when evaluating policies, you must see past people's intentions and look instead at results. He taught me to view politics without romance" (Brennan 2012). In short, this was not only Brennan's conversion to libertarianism but also his conversion to consequentialism. Brennan's marriage of political libertarianism and ethical consequentialism is not particularly novel, as other libertarians have also been consequentialists (Milton Friedman, Thomas Sowell, F. A. Hayek). However, in the most prominent defense of libertarianism to date, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, Robert Nozick takes specific aim at consequentialism, arguing that it is not how humans think and is not practical either, and for that reason, should be rejected by libertarians. What is needed, it seems, is a counter to Nozick's claim, and in his book *A Consequentialist Defense of Libertarianism*, Richard Fumerton aims to provide such a defense.

As the book's title implies, Fumerton aims to defend libertarianism on consequentialist grounds and, in particular, to show that when followed consistently, a consequentialist will have to be a libertarian. The first chapter of the book outlines Fumerton's case: he aims first to show that we have good reason to think of law, morality, and reason as separate but, in some sense, dependent on each other in certain respects; he then takes aim at other forms of moral realism, claiming that a consequentialist ethic is the most compelling theory of ethics; finally, he focuses on the cost-benefit analysis, as well as why the harm principle of John Stuart Mill needs to be rejected. Each of these areas could warrant a review in and of itself, so I will focus on the key part of Fumerton's argument, which comes in chapter 3 of the book. In chapter 1, Fumerton points out that before he can lay out the case

for libertarianism, he first needs to defend the objectivity of moral values, defeat other ethical theories, and show that consequentialism is the preferred one. On the first point of moral realism, Fumerton assumes this more than argues for it. This is understandable, as it is common to assume moral realism over anti-realism. But in a work of moral theory, this needs to be argued for rather than simply assumed. To his credit, Fumerton does mention the work of J. L. Mackie, one of the most prominent anti-realists of the past sixty years. However, after mentioning it, rather than refuting Mackie's arguments, he simply moves on. This is a shortcoming of the book, as it presumes moral realism but does not address the powerful ideas of anti-realism.

Furthermore, when Fumerton critiques other areas of normative ethical theory, he tends to do so superficially. Take his critique of divine command theory, for example. The divine command theory is the view that what is ethically right comes to us through divine commandments. Fumerton raises two issues with this view. First, this would raise the question of whether or not God exists, and it would be preferable to have a theory of ethics that was not dependent on an ever more seemingly insoluble problem (a view that Michael Huemer also mentions in his book *Ethical Intuitionism*).

But furthermore, even if God did exist, it is not clear that this would be a good foundation for moral values and duties. Fumerton brings up the Euthyphro dilemma, made famous by Plato in his dialogue *Euthyphro*: Does God willing something make something good, or does God will something because it is good? If you take the first way, what God commands is arbitrary; he could command us to torture and rape children, which would become our moral duty. If you say that God wills something because it is good, then the good is independent of God, so there is no need to bring God into the moral equation.

While I am not a divine command theorist, this is a frankly pathetic argument. Notice that Fumerton goes back to Plato rather than to recent scholarship to refute the divine command theory. Why does he do that? Well, I cannot read his mind, but it is likely because no person who defends the divine command theory would be susceptible to this objection. Many prominent philosophers, such as Brian Adams and William Lane Craig, have responded to this argument, but like Mackie, Fumerton ignores rather than engages them. How would they answer the dilemma? In the case of Craig, he would say that God is Good and that his commandments to us are, therefore, not arbitrary whims but flow from his necessarily good nature (Craig 2008). This is not to say that, therefore, we should be divine command theorists (as I mentioned previously, I am not one myself), but this is characteristic of a flaw of Fumerton's book: giving hasty generalizations of an opponent's view, assuming it is obviously wrong, and then moving along as though a knockdown refutation has been delivered.

Having said that, the overall way in which Fumerton lays out his case, beginning with a theory of metaethics, normative ethics, and rationality before proceeding to specific policy recommendations, is commendable and for that reason, I recom-

mend the book: even if one disagrees with the content, Fumerton's philosophical methodology is formidable.

Fumerton's original contribution can be summed up similarly to what Daniel Dennett said of Sam Harris's book *Free Will*; namely that Fumerton persuasively argues for the position that libertarians assume but seldom if ever argue for. Consequentialism is at the bedrock of most libertarianism, but due to the work of thinkers such as Nozick, who is the intellectual to whom most if not all libertarians defer, are very critical of the position, few come out openly and espouse it. Fumerton on the other hand has the courage of his convictions, and will not be constrained by fear of offending a prevailing taboo.

Fumerton's most clear advancement of the argument for consequentialism lies in his denial of the harm principle. This principle, elucidated by Mill and other consequentialists, seems like the brick and mortar of consequentialism; to deny it seems for consequentialism to fall apart at the seams. But Fumerton shows that this is not necessarily the case, and gives a point of view that other consequentialists will have to tackle in the future.

—Tarik LaCour
Texas A&M University (email: tarikllacour@tamu.edu)