Cohen has, I believe, captured a chimera. "Exploitation", by employers or by the state, is not a hard but a soft concept. It occurs when workers put a lot of unpleasant effort into a system but receive few compensating rewards. This was the situation of many nineteenth century proletarians, but it is not the lot of most twenty-first century suburbanites. And "soft" exploitation is a species of unfairness that can be captured by standard liberal theory, without invoking fantastical creatures like self-ownership.

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Routledge Philosophy GuideBook to Mill on Utilitarianism, by Roger Crisp. London: Routledge, 1997. Pp. xiii + 232. H/b £35.00, P/b £7.99.

Utilitarianism, by Geoffrey Scarre. London: Routledge, 1996. Pp. viii + 225. H/b £40.00, P/b £12.99.

Contemporary Ethics: Taking Account of Utilitarianism, by William H. Shaw. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998. Pp. x + 311. H/b £50.00, P/b £15.99.

It would be unlikely, were one to select at random a trio of recent books on utilitarianism, to end up with three that complement one another as well as these do. One of them dwells at length on perhaps the most influential of all the canonical utilitarian authors; another catalogues utilitarianism's historical roots more broadly, before discussing the most pressing challenges facing contemporary utilitarians; and the last—while drawing freely on earlier works in the utilitarian tradition—does so mainly in the service of an essentially ahistorical examination of utilitarianism's current content, implications, and merits. So although each of these books pursues its own specific agenda, together they provide broad and deep coverage of the history and current state of utilitarianism. And they do so very accessibly, since each book is aimed as much at students as at specialists.

Crisp's book, as its title suggests, is a guide to Mill's work on utilitarianism and, as such, focuses primarily on Mill's essay of that name. After providing a brief but rich summary of Mill's life, Crisp discusses Mill's conception of happiness, paying special attention to Mill's distinction between higher and lower pleasures. Although Crisp's account is clear in its presentation and nearly flawless in its content, there is one mistake worth mentioning here (which at least one other reviewer has noted elsewhere). Mill writes,

> Of two pleasures, if there be one to which all or almost all who have experience of both give a decided preference ... that is the more desirable pleasure. If one of the two is, by those who are competently acquainted with both, placed so far above the other that they ...

> would not resign it for any quantity of the other pleasure which their nature is capable of, we are justified in ascribing to the preferred enjoyment a superiority in quality, so far outweighing quantity as to render it, in comparison, of small account. (quoted in Crisp, p. 28)

Given that the test expressed by the first sentence reveals whether two pleasures differ in desirability (which is a function of both quality and quantity), Crisp reads the test expressed by the second sentence as revealing whether two pleasures differ in quality (pp. 29–31, 32, 36). But this is not what the test expressed by the second sentence reveals. Instead, it reveals whether two pleasures differ in quality to such an extent that considerations of quality altogether overwhelm considerations of quantity. Now certainly such a test is worth having on hand (since it would be convenient, in practical deliberation, to know when considerations of quantity can simply be set aside), but it must not be read as a test for all differences in quality. For many differences in quality are not so great that considerations of quality altogether overwhelm considerations of quantity, and if the test in question were treated as the test that reveals whether two pleasures differ in quality, then pleasures would be found to differ in quality so rarely that Mill's higher/lower distinction would lack the practical relevance that it was surely intended to have. This slip, however, does not keep Crisp from making the important point that although Mill's higher/lower distinction is often thought to imply two mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive categories into one of which every pleasure is to be definitively placed, it is actually a merely pair-wise relation, meaning that a pleasure may be higher in one comparison and lower in another (p. 30). Also instructive—if not of strictly interpretative interest—is Crisp's presentation of his own view of welfare, in which he dissents from Mill in arguing that "not all welfare value lies in experiences, enjoyed or otherwise" (p. 51) and opts for a Moorean strategy of offering an ideal, or objective-list, account (pp. 59–62).

Almost as well known as Mill's distinctive view of well-being is his complex account of the sources of support, both logical and psychological, that he claims for utilitarianism, which Crisp presents next. After drawing on passages from Mill's first chapter for some insight into Mill's methodology, Crisp earnestly reconstructs Mill's notoriously muddled proof of utilitarianism, discussing both of its well-known apparent fallacies. In doing so, Crisp makes clear how this passage, which many philosophers have made such sport of dissecting, can be read as containing at least the germ of a plausible line of argument. The chapter closes with a look at how Mill's proof is complemented by his account, in his third chapter, of what he calls the "sanctions" of utilitarianism.

Crisp next draws on Mill's long second chapter in order to clarify and specify Mill's particular conception of utilitarianism. Crisp attributes to Mill positions on such issues as actual versus probable (that is, expected) consequences, act versus rule utilitarianism, multi-level moral thinking, the demandingness of morality, the relation between morality and other systems of norms (such as prudence and aesthetics), and supererogation. Readers versed in Mill scholarship, in which a consensus on Mill's position on the first and second of these issues has long been elusive, will be struck by the short work Crisp makes of these debates. Advancing the unconventionally simple view that "according to Mill, the right action is that which maximizes happiness" (p. 102), Crisp classifies Mill as an actualist (pp. 99–101) and as an act-utilitarian (pp. 102–105). These interpretations do, of course, face some resistance from some well known passages in Mill's text—such as the claim in Mill's fifth chapter that what makes conduct wrong is not that it fails to maximize happiness, but that it "ought to be punished", as Crisp puts it later (p. 129)—but Crisp deals with these obstacles gamely, if not absolutely convincingly. And his interpretations gain more plausibility in light of his clear description, and attribution to Mill, of a sophisticated, multi-level understanding of moral thinking resembling that now associated with Hare.

Having laid out the essentials of Mill's theory, Crisp describes two deficiencies that he says utilitarianism has due to its strict impartiality (pp. 82, 92, 137, 149), or due to "its failure to recognize the significance of the separateness of persons" (p. 171; see also p. 136). First, Crisp develops the objection, associated with Bernard Williams, that utilitarianism fails to respect persons' integrity because it "fails to capture the importance to each agent of their each having their own life to live and their own personal attachments to others" (p. 136). Crisp's ultimate endorsement of this objection won't win over all his readers, but even those who dissent will appreciate his even-handedness and sensitivity to the subtleties of the issue. Unfortunately, the same rigour is not evident in Crisp's discussion of justice, where he argues that the only understanding of justice that utilitarianism leaves room for is an impoverished one. Crisp begins, naturally, by considering the response to this objection that Mill offers in his fifth chapter, and Crisp's close reading of this chapter (pp. 155–162) is illuminating. But his interpretation of Mill's view of duties, rights and obligations (pp. 162–167) is confusingly intricate, and his criticism of utilitarianism's implications for distributive justice (pp. 169–170) is too fast, resting on little more than the observation that most people intuitively approve of equality in distributions. It is unfortunate that Crisp did not explicitly distinguish utility from its sources (such as material goods), note the diminishing marginal utility of those sources (in contrast to utility itself), and consider the possibility that we intuitively approve of equality in distributions because what we normally have the opportunity to distribute is not utility, but its sources.

In the final two chapters of his book, Crisp draws on Mill's *On Liberty* and *The Subjection of Women* to show how the views expressed on those essays may be seen, as Mill intended, as outgrowths or applications of Mill's utilitarianism. These chapters could, in principle, have merely surveyed the explicitly utilitarian passages in the essays they discuss, but instead they offer balanced accounts of these other essays' main themes and complications. Only an author who had made the extra investment of arriving at independent

understandings of these other essays could have written these chapters; Crisp's readers will reap an ample dividend.

Throughout, Crisp's strategy is to draw on Mill's work (both within and outside of *Utilitarianism*) as needed for the schedule of topics he wants to cover. So what he offers is not a systematic commentary—except, perhaps, for his analysis of Mill's fifth chapter (pp. 155–162)—and his coverage of Mill's text does not turn out to be complete. He touches on (p. 89), but does not clarify, the complicated relationship between desire, will, and habit that Mill discusses at the end of his fourth chapter, and he has little to say about the discussion of the constituents and conditions of happiness in the middle paragraphs of Mill's second chapter. And although Crisp does not claim to cover all parts of Mill's text—directing the reader seeking more thorough coverage to the text of *Utilitarianism* that he edited for Oxford University Press (pp. 16–17)—an index of the paragraphs of Mill's text that he does mention would have been a useful addition.

On the whole, though, Crisp's strategy works out well. The liberties Crisp takes give him the flexibility to discuss Mill in the context of the issues that are of the greatest contemporary interest; indeed the topics he treats at length—integrity and justice—are, as he says, "the areas on which those who wish to defend utilitarianism should concentrate" (p. 171). Crisp tells us, in effect, not just what Mill said, but also what Mill most likely would have said if he could have anticipated the questions his readers would later want to ask him. Answering on behalf of Mill, Crisp uses vivid and imaginative examples to bring to life interpretations that are sometimes unconventional, but are almost always well argued and never irresponsible.

Whereas Crisp tries in his book to show the contemporary meaning and interest of an important part of the history of utilitarianism, Scarre's emphasis is essentially the reverse, as he hopes for his book to "relate the lively contemporary debate about utilitarian ethics to the historical development of the theory" (p. vii), covering Mo Tzu, Jesus, Aristotle, and Epicurus in the second chapter and Chastellux and Helvétius, Hutcheson, Hume, Priestley and Paley, Godwin, and Bentham in the third chapter. Mill is the sole subject of the fourth chapter, where Scarre traces the development of Mill's thought through its Benthamite, reactionary, and moderate periods before reporting on the higher/lower distinction, Mill's troubled proof, and Mill's remarks on justice. Scarre's historical survey ends in the fifth chapter, which includes discussions of Sidgwick, Moore, and Rashdall.

The first subject of contemporary debate that Scarre discusses is rule utilitarianism. He argues that any of the various ways in which rule utilitarianism may be specified inevitably involves some unhappy combination of being unrealistically idealistic and collapsing into act utilitarianism (pp. 122–129), and although his critique is sound, the distinctive position he advances—a "hybrid one, compounded out of act-utilitarian and rule-utilitarian elements" (pp. 131–132)—is far less satisfying. The main idea, which draws on Hume's

distinction between natural and artificial virtues, seems to be that "Most of the time we should reason as act-utilitarians; but we should accept the utilitarian value of such products of human 'artifice' as the rule-governed practice of promising" (p. 132). But because Scarre devotes only a few sentences to sketching this view, it remains so vague and suggestive that it can be read only as a proposal for a new approach, not as the fruits of one.

Also unsatisfying are the remaining three chapters of Scarre's book, which he devotes to what he believes to be "the three most important areas of concern for contemporary utilitarian moral theorists: the definition of a philosophically viable concept of utility; the justification of utilitarian ideas about justice and fair treatment; and the defence of utilitarianism against the charge that it is too demanding a moral doctrine, requiring of individual agents a readiness for self-sacrifice that is possible only for moral saints" (p. vii). On the first of these topics, Scarre claims that any of the various ways in which utility may be specified (as pleasure or enjoyment, or as preference satisfaction, or in some more complex way, such as in terms of Moorean ideals) inevitably involves some unhappy combination of being intuitively implausible and violating the special utilitarian requirement of being "an aggregative commodity, something which comes in greater or lesser amounts" (p. 133). This strategy, though obviously structurally similar to the one Scarre successfully deploys in his critique of rule utilitarianism, is misplaced here. He saddles utilitarianism with a commitment to a more demanding version of the aggregation requirement than it actually needs to presuppose, and he underestimates the extent to which intuitively plausible specifications of utility allow for the sorts of trade-offs in practice that the aggregation requirement demands.

In regard to justice and fair treatment, Scarre ably presents the usual utilitarian case in support of rights-like protective barriers around people, but he wrongly considers the pleasures of the sadist to be the main threat to this response. In fact, although the never-sated sadist is certainly a concern for utilitarianism at the theoretical level, far more pressing practically—as well as more perplexing theoretically—is the question of whether rights insofar as they can be accounted for by utilitarianism are anything more than a simulacrum of rights as traditionally conceived, even assuming a society of people of fairly good will. Here Scarre also introduces a discussion of Harean multilevel moral thinking which, while competent, proceeds at a distinctly more abstract level than that at which the problems of justice and rights arise; it would have been more appropriate as an extension of the discussion of rule utilitarianism (where it might have saved Scarre from having to propose the unsubstantiated "hybrid" view mentioned earlier). Finally, against the objection that utilitarianism is too demanding, Scarre rehearses the standard replies.

The value of Scarre's book, then, lies primarily in its catalogue of the occurrences of utilitarian ideas in the history of ethical thought. Also valu-

able, though, is its first chapter, in which Scarre provides a general overview of utilitarianism. In lively and energetic prose (which, in fact, persists throughout the book), he notes that most versions of utilitarianism are welfarist, consequentialist, aggregative, maximizing, and universalist, and he spends several pages clarifying each of these in turn. This chapter is outstanding; all of it is both insightful and clear, with the characterization of consequentialism (pp. 10–14) being especially so. This overview of utilitarianism, along with the exceptionally encompassing historical survey that follows it, enables the first five chapters of the book to be an effective summary of the core ideas and history of utilitarianism.

In *Contemporary Ethics: Taking Account of Utilitarianism*, Shaw introduces utilitarianism somewhat differently. After briefly reiterating Scarre's characterization of utilitarianism in terms of its five main properties, he helpfully contrasts utilitarianism with Kant's ethics and with Ross's commonsense pluralism, bringing the differences among these theories into focus by discussing the well-known "deathbed promise" case.

Shaw also differs from Scarre in his treatment of the various theories of welfare available to utilitarians. Although he follows Scarre in exposing the difficulties with mental-state theories, desire-satisfaction theories, and ideal theories (citing Crisp's as an example of the last), he does so by way of a fairer portrayal of the views in question, and so he sensibly refrains from making too much of their deficiencies. Instead, he argues that the concept of well-being is indispensable to so many areas of thought that "deficiencies in our grasp of the nature and sources of well-being do not, by themselves, vitiate a utilitarian approach to ethics", particularly since there is considerable agreement in practice as to what enhances well-being and what doesn't (p. 67). Shaw then considers historically influential arguments for utilitarianism and some general reasons favouring utilitarianism over deontology, and he shows how utilitarians typically reply to objections concerning such issues as promise-keeping, distributive justice, and demandingness.

In the second half of the book, Shaw moves to a higher level of sophistication, fortifying the basic utilitarian position sketched in the first half of the book with those refinements and justificatory remarks that he thinks characterize utilitarianism in its most defensible form. This task leads Shaw into many fertile and engaging discussions. One of these addresses important issues in moral psychology (such as the assignment of praise and blame and the role of secondary rules in moral thinking); Shaw ends up rejecting rule utilitarianism in favour of Hare's multi-level approach to moral thinking. In regard to distributive justice, Shaw not only distinguishes the utilitarian approach from those of Rawls and Nozick, but also (as a result, perhaps, of his interest in business ethics) approaches the problem by way of a helpful summary of some empirical facts of poverty in the United States. Finally, Shaw answers the challenges to the utilitarian outlook posed by feminist ethics of care and by virtue ethics.

Shaw's book has many strengths. Throughout, it is informed by an impressive familiarity with not only the current content but also the history of utilitarian thought; and the historical material, though ample, never compromises either the topical unity of each chapter or the logical progression of the book. Moreover, the overall organization of the book is thoughtful, with the second half of the book not only succeeding but also effectively reinforcing and deepening—but without being repetitive of—the first half. As a result of this subtle construction (but also of because of its thoroughness), this book is longer than the others, but Shaw's polished and unobtrusive writing style make it easy to get through. Perhaps its greatest strength, though, is its honesty and fairness: although Shaw is clearly a supporter of utilitarianism, he explains its rivals sympathetically, and he openly acknowledges those points where utilitarianism is weak. This fairness, as well as being intrinsically desirable, makes the book very safe for use in the classroom.

As mentioned earlier, the other books, too, are well-suited to instructional use; this is just one of the many similarities among the books. In addition, each book surveys various ways in which utilitarians conceive of welfare, with special attention to Mill's view; each book discusses how utilitarianism can be proved or otherwise supported, again with special attention to Mill's view; each book discusses the problems of demandingness, integrity, promises, and distributive justice; and each moves beyond the debate between act and rule utilitarianisms by appealing to Hare's approach to multi-level moral thinking.

But the differences among the purposes to which the books may appropriately be put are important. As a commentary on Mill's text, Crisp's book is not only the best of these three but also probably the best of any now available. For a broader survey of the historical roots of roots of utilitarianism, the first half of Scarre's book is a valuable resource, but the problems of balance and emphasis in its second half limit its overall usefulness. Far more balanced is Shaw's book, both in its treatment of utilitarianism and in its characterization of utilitarianism's place in ethics. With execution as expert as Crisp's deployed in a project as ambitious as Scarre's, it is easily the best of these books for most purposes generally and as an introduction to utilitarianism specifically.

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