judged them favourable to the ends of subsistence and abundance. On the other hand, he considered the feasibility of government intervention in order to add to the benefits of private choice. He concluded that government intervention is in these cases generally harmful, and rarely indifferent.

Sigot masterfully analyses the arguments that Bentham uses in order to demonstrate the evils of government intervention. A first 'Hayekian' argument is that government lacks both the appropriate motives (*inclination*) and the mass of information (*knowledge*) that private agents on the whole possess. Moreover, according to Bentham, the government has no material means (*power*) to increase wealth, since 'trade is limited by capital'. True, the government could generate a better allocation of capital than that spontaneously determined by the market. Unfortunately this is rarely the case. A second argument employed by Bentham refers to security as a fundamental condition of happiness. Individuals usually make their decisions in the expectation of future pleasures. Private property creates a sentiment of security because it makes individuals confident in the enjoyment of the pleasures they expect from their activities. Every re-allocative intervention of government is then an evil not only for those whose resources are reduced; any individual can feel it as a threat of further limitations of his income or of his liberty. Being less sure of the fruit of his work, he will then prefer idleness to activity. We are brought back here to the central role of the theory of incentives in Bentham's economic theory, which Sigot has meritoriously highlighted in this book.

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Alan H. Goldman, *Practical Rules: When We Need Them and When We Don't* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. xi + 210.

On the first two pages of a book called *Bridge Made Easy*, one finds the following advice: If you have a balanced hand with 16–18 high-card points and an ace, king or queen in at least three of the four suits, then your bid should be '1 No Trump'. What makes this advice good (assuming that it is) are certain underlying justifying considerations – considerations about balancing the conflicting aims of (1) winning very many points, if one makes one's bid (which would favour very ambitious bidding) and (2) minimizing the probability of not winning any points at all, because of not making one's bid (which would favour minimally conservative bidding). Some players give only as much weight to this advice as they do to its underlying justifying considerations. They 'look through' the advice to the reasons behind it. Others take the advice more seriously, giving it more weight in their deliberations than they would give simply to the considerations on which it is based. The difference between the players' two ways of regarding this advice marks the boundary of the central concept in Goldman's new book. The advice is a genuine *rule* for the players who give it extra weight, but not for the ones who do not.

Goldman's aim is to present a theory of when one should employ rules in one's deliberations (that is, when one should give extra weight to certain considerations), and when one should not. His account is a general one, appropriate not only (and not even primarily) for games, but also for other kinds of prudential reasoning, for legal reasoning, and, especially, moral reasoning, which is Goldman's principal concern. (He discusses moral reasoning at considerable length, then prudential reasoning and legal reasoning also at some length.) The overall thrust of his theory is that rules are important, but not in the circumstances in which they are typically thought to be important. So, Goldman can be seen as defending two theses. The first is a negative one: Although rules are commonly regarded as essential to ordinary practical reasoning, they are normally dispensable. The second is a positive one: There is a special, little-noticed class of circumstances that are 'paradigm' cases (p. 13), although not the only cases, in which rules are needed. I shall discuss each of these theses in turn.

According to Goldman, rules are commonly thought to be essential to practical reasoning. In regard to the moral case, he writes that 'the tradition has conceived of moral reasoning as the application of rules to cases' (p. 42). Rejecting this view, Goldman maintains that correct practical reasoning is analogical: Regarding certain cases to have been decided in certain ways (by one's considered judgements or by precedent), one is to decide new cases by analogy with the already decided ones. The task in moral reasoning, then, is to compare and to contrast cases in order to figure out whether a given new case is more like *these*, which have been decided in one way, or more like *those*, which have been decided in the other way. Rules, in the sense specified above (the sense having to do with certain considerations being given more weight than their underlying justifying considerations independently deserve), have no essential role to play (p. 32). Now Goldman's analogical account of practical reasoning is plausible enough, and he defends it ably. But Goldman's claim that his view is contrary to 'the tradition', because of its dismissal of rules (in Goldman's sense), is less compelling. For although moral reasoning is traditionally understood in terms of rules in *some* sense of 'rules', it is not traditionally understood in terms of rules in Goldman's special sense of 'rules'.

The 'most interesting' (p. 12) and 'paradigm' (p. 13) cases in which rules *are* needed, Goldman writes, 'have not been explicitly noticed before' (p. 12). He characterizes these cases as ones in which the effects of *each* of a series of different agents' acts are desirable, all things considered, but in which the (cumulative) effects of *all* of the acts are undesirable (p. 67). One of Goldman's examples has to do with 'Using resources such as water or electricity during shortage'. In these cases, he writes, 'each benefits far more from using the resource than she harms particular other people, yet all suffer from the collective overuse' (p. 51). In such circumstances, Goldman says, rules (e.g. against using the resource) are needed, in order to keep individual gains from adding up to a collective loss. But it is unclear whether such cases even exist, and this worry is not much allayed by Goldman's protest that it is 'undeniable' that they do (p. 67). For Goldman stipulates that the individual decisions are desirable from the same moral or collective perspective from which their cumulative results are quite *undesirable* (so these cases are not ones of self-interest vs. collective interest); and the agents are not *mistaken* when they deem their individual decisions to be desirable on the whole – Goldman says that these are cases in which 'individually correct decisions, involving no errors in reasoning, can nevertheless have cumulatively bad results' (p. 147; see also pp. 47, 48 and 53). On the other hand, in additional remarks on such cases, Goldman repeatedly mentions thresholds (see, for example, pp. 13, 44, 48, 72, 74 and 146), refers to agents' 'inability ... to take account of the overall effects' of their actions (p. 43), and contrasts 'the subtle kind of fallibility I have been emphasizing' with 'obvious epistemic liabilities' (p. 48; see also pp. 13 and 47). These remarks might be taken to suggest that Goldman has in mind cases in which some relatively *non-obvious* epistemic liability prevents agents who are at thresholds from appreciating the real costs of their decisions. Although this interpretation saves Goldman from the strange metaphysical commitments involved in positing cases in which *every* agent does collective good while *all* somehow do collective harm, it obviously does not square with Goldman's rather explicit positing of such cases, or with his claim that the cases in question have not been explicitly noticed before, since threshold cases are perfectly standard fare. Ultimately, Goldman's account of his 'paradigm' cases presents some interpretive problems whose solution remains elusive.

Thus I find Goldman's negative thesis to be plausible but not as significant as he suggests, and his positive thesis to be intriguing but problematic. On a broader view, Goldman's book is mixed in other ways as well. Its many clear examples save the reader a lot of speculation and confusion (the trouble with the positive thesis notwithstanding), but its dense style of argument and Goldman's relative unconcern with explicitly laying out the structure of his arguments can leave the reader wondering whether, in a particular passage, Goldman is introducing a claim, clarifying it, defending it, entertaining an objection to it, or qualifying it. Overall, then, this book requires a fair bit of work per page to get through, but this should not dissuade readers who are interested in a competent, illuminating and compact – if not ultimately compelling – discussion of an important question about practical reasoning.

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John Rist, *Real Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. viii + 295.

Like Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor, John Rist believes moral theory cannot succeed without the supernatural. Like them, too, Rist underestimates moral theories in the mainstream of academic discussions. To his credit, he frames his discussion in terms of moral theory, making only limited – and warranted – excursions into political philosophy. His arguments, moreover, are grounded in an admirably sophisticated understanding of the history of philosophy.

Rist recognizes that he defends a form of ethical theory now out of favour amongst philosophers (pp. 140 ff.). He argues that 'the only genuine