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On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice, and Other Essays in Political Philosophy G. A. Cohen;
EDITED BY Michael Otsuka Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011, xiv + 268 pp., \ \$24.95 (paperback), \ \$85.00 (hardcover)

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à justifier moralement, devant un conflit de valeurs, vécu subjectivement, tel ou tel choix à partir d'une interprétation ou réinterprétation des faits.

Le dernier chapitre qui reprend le titre général de ce riche ouvrage, couronne la réflexion. Miguelez, fort de l'ensemble de ses développements précédents, revient à sa distinction entre moralité et éthique pour approfondir deux conséquences essentielles de sa théorie des RAM : la première à visée anthropologique nous fait comprendre la nature de l'être humain comme de part en part morale, la seconde d'ordre ontologique lui fait creuser l'objectivité du mal.

Cette remarquable étude, claire, argumentée avec force, élégance et cohérence, très bien orchestrée, ouvre des perspectives nouvelles qui nous font attendre impatiemment leur prolongation. Contribution originale au champ de la morale distinguée de l'éthique, elle lui apporte un souffle vigoureux, qui lui manque le plus souvent. On ne s'ennuie pas une seconde tant, à chaque détour, la réflexion est stimulée. C'est aussi une défense et une illustration de la raison, de ton résolument moderne (au sens du grand siècle). Laissons à Miguelez le mot de conclusion qui sonne comme une promesse et un espoir : «avoir conscience des modalités perverses de la raison peut, peut-être, rendre plus difficiles les usages pervers de la raison (p. 227).

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In *On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice, and Other Essays in Political Philosophy* (which I shall henceforth refer to as *Other Essays* to avoid confusion of the book with its namesake), Michael Otsuka gives us a stimulating new collection of G. A. Cohen's work in contemporary political philosophy, some of which has gone unpublished until this point. The first of a three book project, *Other Essays* partially fulfills the late Jerry Cohen's unrealized plan to collect a number of significant pieces which, for reasons of thematic consistency, had been omitted from his other six published books. Though this volume contains material drawn from much of Cohen's pre-existing corpus, readers are likely to be most familiar with "Capitalism, Freedom, and the Proletariat" (originally published in 1979, though reprinted here in a substantially revised form which appeared in 1991), "On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice" (1989), "Equality of What? On Welfare, Goods and Capabilities" (1993), "Back to Socialist Basics" (1994), and "Freedom and Money" (2001).

Otsuka organizes *Other Essays* into three sections corresponding to three primary themes in Cohen's work. The first of these, entitled "Luck Egalitarianism," pertains to Cohen's view that justice demands compensation for involuntary inequalities. Beginning with the seminal article from which this volume borrows much of its title, Otsuka proceeds with a series of well-selected works in which Cohen further explores his initial ideas and answers objections from prominent critics. Though not every work is reprinted

in full, those which aren't have been judiciously abridged to avoid unnecessary overlap and eliminate tangential content.

As stimulating as Cohen's previous publications on luck egalitarianism are, fans of his will be especially happy to find a heretofore unpublished afterword to "On the Currency" and "Equality of What?" Within it, Cohen discusses the heterogeneity of his chosen egalitarian metric, i.e. equality of access to advantage. Though Cohen thinks egalitarians should compensate for involuntary inequalities in both welfare and resources, he is also concerned about the crudeness of simply grouping them under "advantage" and then proposing their equalization. As he puts it himself, "one hopes that there is a currency more fundamental than either resources or welfare in which the various egalitarian responses which motivated my proposal can be expressed." (19) Though Cohen doesn't attempt here to take on the prodigious task of reducing resources and welfare to something more basic, he does offer some tentative thoughts about how they might be balanced. In particular, he indicates that it may be desirable to give resources lexical priority when assessing levels of advantage.

Moving away from luck egalitarianism, the second section of *Other Essays* consists of Cohen's work on the relationship between freedom and property, specifically "Capitalism, Freedom, and the Proletariat" and "Freedom and Money." In these essays, Cohen argues for two distinct but related claims: (1) that others' property restricts one's freedom, and (2) that possessing financial resources reduces the degree of that restriction. In both of these cases, Cohen is specifically interested in freedom as the absence of interference, and thus with whether property and financial resources affect the extent to which one is subject to interference. Of particular interest, however, is a previously unpublished addenda to "Freedom and Money" in which Cohen argues for a third distinct claim: namely that lacking the ability to do something is both necessary and sufficient to eliminate one's freedom to do it (regardless of the presence or absence of interference).

The third section deals with Cohen's work on the nature of normative ideals and their relationship with other political matters. As he points out in a charming and humorous piece originally presented as part of a seminar at Oxford, "There are three questions in political philosophy that are in fact distinct but that are not distinguished as often as they should be... (i) What is justice?, (ii) What should the state [or individuals for that matter] do?, and (iii) Which social states of affairs ought to be brought about?" (227) Though I think Cohen is right to distinguish these questions, I also think he runs into trouble with them in "Rescuing Justice from Constructivism and Equality from the Basic Structure Restriction," a paper which Cohen had originally given as an academic talk while his recent book *Rescuing Justice & Equality* was being published. In this paper, Cohen discusses two theses he explicitly asserts are independent of each other. His first thesis is that Rawls and other constructivists conflate questions (i) and (ii) from the above quote when they identify justice with principles intended for the regulation of society. For Cohen, (i) is a conceptual question pertaining to the nature of an ideal (the ideal of equality in his case, as Cohen identifies justice with equality), while (ii) is a practical question that requires taking both factual considerations and the demands of sometimes competing ideals into account, e.g., efficiency, equality, etc (much as Rawls's principles do). His second thesis is that Rawls's difference principle, which had been intended only for application to the institutional structure of society, cannot consistently be excluded from the realm of personal choice. Here's the problem: If Cohen's first thesis is correct, Rawls has unknowingly been concerning himself with "rules of

regulation” instead of justice itself. (239) If this is so, however, then doesn’t it make sense for Rawls to insist upon different principles for different contexts? After all, relevant facts in the context of institutional design are undoubtedly different from those in the context of personal choice (for instance: people, unlike institutions, have personal lives which limit the impersonal requirements that can be placed on them), and since regulatory rules must be sensitive to factual considerations, wouldn’t it be desirable for them to differ across contexts? Interestingly enough, Cohen himself admits that though Rawls should advocate keeping the difference principle in mind when making personal choices, leaving room for a personal prerogative is nonetheless important. In doing so, however, Cohen exposes himself to inconsistency, as he now treats the difference principle as if it’s an ideal which should be traded off against competing considerations in practice.

My concern about the consistency of Cohen’s views aside, *Other Essays* is an enlightening read with appeal for anyone interested in distributive justice. Newcomers to Cohen will be attracted to his clear and engaging style, as well as the chapter-by-chapter development of ideas which Otsuka’s judicious selections have produced. Veterans will be attracted to not only these qualities, but also the issues which Cohen’s heretofore unpublished work raises. All in all, I highly recommend it.

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Peirce and the Threat of Nominalism

PAUL FORSTER

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The philosophy of Charles Sanders Peirce is not easy to classify. A man of many talents, he was at home in a number of fields, including not only philosophy and logic, but also mathematics, linguistics, astronomy and geodetics, to name only a few. As a polymath, he exerted every effort to present his thought in the form of a system, and in his later years claimed it to be his paramount task “to erect a philosophical edifice that shall outlast the vicissitudes of time.” (*Collected Papers*, Vol. 1, p.1.) However, in spite of all the industrious efforts Peirce scholars have made so far, the full meaning of his system, at least in some respects, still remains a riddle.

Paul Forster’s *Peirce and the Threat of Nominalism* adds to these efforts and presents an intriguing way of reading Peirce as a systematic philosopher. Forster chooses to display Peirce’s major ideas against the background of nominalism—the view Peirce incessantly criticized and at times treated with unvarnished disdain. This novel approach to the subject appears to have an important advantage. Reading Peirce, as it were, *ex adverso*, as a matter of fact, turns out to be an attempt to understand him “in his own terms,” because it helps the reader put Peirce’s philosophy in the wider context of nineteenth-century scientific, moral and religious thought, of which the nominalist view, as Peirce himself deeply believed, was a preeminent feature.

Forster’s core insight is that to have a proper grasp of the twists and turns of Peirce’s thought, one has to approach the controversy between nominalism and realism not just as a technical problem of logic, but in the manner Peirce himself approached it. For Peirce, it was a question of the practical choice between the view of reality as consisting