

keen interest in the intelligence of ‘primitive’ races . . . and seemingly endless conflict over the relative importance of genetic differences versus the legacy of slavery and tribal culture in the persistent black-white IQ differences in the United States” (57).

Many readers will not find this beginning of eugenics “innocent” and will suppose that contemporary disadvantage is of more relevance than “tribal culture” to IQ differences and other disparities. In fairness, Staddon criticizes the use of statistical heritability as an argument for the view intelligence is largely controlled by genes, and he mentions the Flynn effect (that IQ has been increasing over time). But we hear of no error-filled studies arguing for the inferiority of African Americans.

Staddon also devotes several pages to undermining the conclusions of one of a group of five experiments purporting to show that anxiety about racial status is one of the factors contributing to Tea Party support (41–45). He then attempts to undercut further the significance of racism by arguing that biased attitudes may be unstable. “Conversely, a little knowledge is easily augmented. So a bigot is not a bigot is not a bigot. A person whose beliefs about, say Africans, have formed through hearsay is likely to be much more impressed by personal experience . . . . As a tendentious witticism puts it: ‘A conservative is a liberal who has been mugged by experience’” (46).

Staddon goes on to cite a randomized field study of Airbnb acceptances of accommodation requests made by guests with distinctively African American names versus white names. While 47.9 percent of requests from those with white names were accepted, only 28.8 percent of those with black names were. Posting of (fake) reviews of guests (both favorable and mildly unfavorable) made this discrimination disappear. Staddon comments, “In other words, the modest racial bias Airbnb landlords showed at first was very elastic: it could be dissipated by almost any credible information” (47). The bias may not strike every reader as “modest.” (It would take a white traveler three requests to have an 85 percent chance of an acceptance, while it would take a black traveler six requests to have an 87 percent chance.) Moreover, because Airbnb has a nondiscrimination policy, which threatens to remove a host who shows a pattern of discrimination, the change in renter’s behavior may not reflect a change in attitude.

In conclusion, *Scientific Method* contains astute and helpful examples that show the power and demands of experimentation, but its lack of philosophical sophistication and tact limits its value.

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**Economics, Ethics, and Ancient Thought: Towards a Virtuous Public Policy.** By Donald G. Richards. New York: Routledge, 2017. 188 pp. \$120.00.

There is much to be admired in Donald G. Richards’s *Economics, Ethics, and Ancient Thought: Towards a Virtuous Public Policy*. This book does a great service for economists wishing to explore the theoretical and practical relevance of ancient economic thought for their discipline. Richards is no historian of economic thought, however,

and his monograph is not intended to be an original contribution to ancient economic scholarship along the lines of, for example, Scott Meikle's 1995 *Aristotle's Economic Thought*. Instead, Richards's book falls within a growing genre of history of economic thought that might be termed "socially-relevant history of economic thought." Richards's book shares many similarities with recent books, such as Spencer Pack's 2010 *Aristotle, Adam Smith and Karl Marx: On Some Fundamental Issues in the 21st Century Political Economy* and Ricardo Crespo's 2014 *A Re-assessment of Aristotle's Economic Thought* and 2013 *Philosophy of the Economy: An Aristotelian Approach*. All three scholars—Pack, Crespo, and Richards—find themselves dissatisfied with various aspects of neoclassical economic theory and, in their search for potential solutions, turn their gaze toward ancient Greek philosophers for the purpose of improving theory and policy today.

Richards's book, which consists of nine chapters, is neatly divided into two parts: ethics and economics, and ethics and public policy. The main contention of his book is that "there is an important class of public policy concerns for which the standard model of economic behavior, typically referred to as neoclassical economics, fails to provide adequate guidance due to the inadequacy of its guiding normative presuppositions as well as its assumptions respecting human motivations and behavior" (5). Richards analyzes the concept of *eudaimonia* (as developed by Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, the Stoics, and many others), traces the role of virtue ethics among luminary classical political economists (such as Smith, Mill, and Marx), and then argues that the standard model of behavior—which Richards describes as "revealed choice utilitarianism"—fails to provide adequate policy guidance in cases when a more "expansive view of the human good" is required. Four examples of public policies that require this view include pathological consumption, environmental protection, end-of-life care, and public finance. Richards dedicates individual chapters to each policy issue and uses *eudaimonism*—as opposed to the satisfaction of subjective preferences—as the normative standard. The result is an illuminating read, particularly chapter 5, which is titled "The Problem of Pathological Consumption." In this chapter, Richards defines pathological consumption, as opposed to non-pathological consumption, as contributing *nothing* to a good life or human flourishing. This category of behavior is striking because—as Richards makes clear—the standard model of economic behavior makes pathological consumption impossible. Given the centrality of Richards's critique of the standard model of behavior, I was surprised that happiness economics did not have a more prominent role in Richards's book, particularly because the empirical evidence discovered by economists working in this subfield would only bolster Richards's claims regarding pathological consumption. In any case, by drawing our attention to the questionable rationality of eating disorders and addictions, Richards does a great service by asking the reader to "re-examine the role that consumption plays in our lives and to ask serious questions about its relationship to our individual and collective flourishing" (115).

Caveat emptor: historians of ancient economic thought and philosophers will find much to quibble with in Richards's book. To highlight just two examples, Richards claims that Aristotle is perhaps the very first economic thinker (3) and yet, it is well

known that M. I. Finley argued that Aristotle wrote “no economics” ([1973] 1999, 21). Moreover, in several passages Richards appears to insist that economic theory necessarily presupposes a philosophical theory of human well-being—preference satisfactionism—a theory that he argues is false. However, as Daniel M. Hausman (2012) has recently argued, contemporary neoclassical economists do not and should not commit to any philosophical theory of well-being, including preference satisfactionism, eudaimonism, hedonism, and so forth. On this evidentiary account, the satisfaction of subjective preferences—when properly qualified—can be treated as evidence to support the claim that an agent has been made better off (without committing to a philosophical theory of well-being). But, these are the quibbles of an academic pedant. While Richards’s book contains a few historical and philosophical inaccuracies, it still has much to offer, particularly for practicing economists wishing to reconsider the normative foundations of their discipline.

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