

has a reason to support Anne that (most of) the rest of us do not have – namely, that she is his daughter – and that he has it, ‘even if he could not care less about how she is doing’ (102). And he says that he has another reason to support her, ‘which is the same reason that you have to support whatever children you have’ (105). Grant, for the sake of argument, that the second of Larry’s reasons to support Anne *is* partly explained by his having any desire, together with the fact that Anne is his daughter. Now, suppose that Ben happens to have the same desires as Larry. Still, Larry has a reason to support Anne that Ben does not have. If this is right, it does not appear to be Larry’s and Ben’s desires that explain why the former has this reason and the latter does not.

Readers who start reading this book thinking of themselves as non- or anti-Humeans about reasons, but are prepared to buy into Schroeder’s optimism, may end up with a friendlier view of the ‘Humean’ label – not because they now accept views that they used to reject (e.g. that there is a reason for you to do A only if you desire to do A, or that moral reasons do not apply to all), but because the ‘Humeanism’ defended here sheds many of those views. Schroeder seems to acknowledge this, when he announces (163) that he is about to defend the Aristotelian Doctrine that ‘responding appropriately to your reasons requires desiring the right things to the right degree’ (196). Indeed: for this is not quite the thought behind Hume’s remark that ‘Tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger’. This shows that the term ‘Humean’ in the name of the theory should be taken with a pinch of salt, first because, as Schroeder says, Hume did not hold this theory, but second because, although in Schroeder’s theory reasons are somehow beholden to desires, their status is much less slavish than the title of the book implies.

MARIA ALVAREZ  
*University of Southampton*  
*Southampton SO17 1BJ*  
*m.alvarez@soton.ac.uk*

## What is Good and Why: The Ethics of Well-being

By R. KRAUT

HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2007. XI + 286 PP. £25.95 CLOTH

Anyone familiar with Richard Kraut’s work in ancient philosophy will be excited to see him putting aside the dusty tomes of the ancients and delving into ethics first-hand. He does not disappoint. His book is a lucid and wide-ranging discussion that provides at least the core of an ethical theory and an appealing set of answers to a range of ethical questions.

Kraut aims to provide an alternative to utilitarianism that preserves the good-centred nature of that theory. He claims that all justification ‘proceeds by way of

good and bad' (208) and that the only way for something to be good or bad is for it to be good or bad for some living thing. He is adamant that this does not commit him to utilitarianism, nor to downplaying considerations such as promise-keeping or special relationships. On Kraut's view, such factors can make it the case that I have *more* reason to perform one action than another but it is a condition of my having any reason to perform an action that it does some good or impedes some harm. Kraut once seems to dissent from this, claiming that: 'the strength of a practical reason varies according to the amount of good or harm (properly understood) to which it refers', but this is a misleading slip because he often denies the natural interpretation of this claim (that the amount of good or harm *alone* determines the strength of a reason).

To fill out his general ethical theory, Kraut asks:

- (1) What is it for something to be good for someone?
- (2) Which things are good for people?

His answers come in a theory he labels developmentalism. To be good for someone is to produce, or be a part of, their *flourishing*. And the components of flourishing are the maturation and exercise of cognitive, social, affective and physical skills. Kraut also adopts as a 'plausible working hypothesis' (127) that something can be good for someone *only if* it is enjoyed. As such, his view is a hybrid. The things that can be good for us are the components of flourishing but only if they are enjoyed.

Kraut objects to desire-fulfilment theories of well-being because they abstract from the content of desires by regarding fulfilment of any desire to be good for a person. But an analogous objection looks to apply to developmentalism if it claims that *any* instance of the enjoyable exercise of those skills mentioned above is good for a person. One could dig in here and defend this but Kraut does not and his not doing so is significant in understanding and assessing developmentalism.

Kraut discusses another apparent counterexample to developmentalism – someone enjoyably exercising their capacities destructively – and concedes (191): 'If that is counted as the activation of our destructive powers, there is no plausibility in the idea that such an activity is noninstrumentally good.' He explains that this is not a counterexample to developmentalism because developmentalism is only a *generalization* about what is good for us. This allows him to claim that not all enjoyable exercises of capacities are good for a person. But it does mean that developmentalism is a weaker claim than it is sometimes presented as (or could reasonably be understood). This is not to deny that Kraut has given us something interesting. But if developmentalism is only a *generalization* then this does detract from its significance as a *theory* of well-being.

Developmentalism is diluted further when Kraut gives an account of the things that are *bad* for us, or that which constitutes what he calls 'unflourishing'. He (150) writes of pain and other kinds of unpleasant sensations:

When we feel bad in these various ways, the powers of these various organs are being used to ill effect. What we feel is not pleasure – something positive – but, rather, various forms of distress or unpleasantness – something negative. We are not merely in neutral territory as sensory beings. In that sense, the sensory system we have been given by nature is disordered and not functioning as it should, from the point of view of our well-being; rather it is made to go in the opposite direction.

There are two problems here. First, it is not true that whenever one experiences pain, cold or hunger, one's sensory system is disordered. In experiencing pain from your poking me with a stick, my sensory system functions perfectly. Second, Kraut's remarks suggest that whether our sensory organs are disordered is determined by the goodness or badness of their output. But allowing that these sensations are independently good and bad, and judging the function of our capacities by reference to whether they deliver good or bad sensations undermines the importance of developmentalism. It is not the case that I am unflourishing because of the stunting or disordered exercise of my capacities or powers. Rather, my capacities or powers are stunted or disordered because I am unflourishing. This, in conjunction with the fact that Kraut's developmentalism is only a generalization, means that developmentalism is different from, and explanatorily less ambitious than, what one would expect in a theory of well-being.

On the book itself, it is notable that it could be profitably read by non-philosophers. Kraut covers many interesting issues and is engaging in his willingness to take a stand on controversial moral issues, whilst nonetheless refusing to ignore their complexities. A negative aspect is its organization, which presents a challenge. The book is divided into four large chapters which, combined with the range of topics discussed within each, makes things hard on the reader. Lest this be considered a mere trifle, it is worth mentioning that the last chapter discusses (amongst other things): promises, retribution, cosmic justice, social justice, paternalism, duties to aid, slavery, torture, moral rightness, lying, honouring the dead, sentimental value and good thieves. Kraut's prose always keeps things running as smoothly as possible but the book, and reader, would be better off with the material rendered differently.

GUY FLETCHER  
*University of Reading*  
 P O Box 218  
 Reading RG6 6AA, UK  
 guyfletcher16@gmail.com

## Rationality and Moral Theory: How Intimacy Generates Reasons

By DIANE JESKE

ROUTLEDGE, 2008. X + 180 PP. £60.00

This is an interesting, complex and in some ways original book, that repays careful study. It is also blessedly well written; not in the sense of being an easy read, but in the sense of being as easy a read as one could expect given the difficulty of the subject matter. This is aided by a nice use of concrete examples.