

Preface

This varied collection explores a recurrent theme connecting philosophy and politics: the relation between the nature of man and the structure of society. This is by no means the only intersection of interests between politics and philosophy—the contemporary collaboration on methodological issues has led political science to rival political theory—but it is above all the common concern of philosophy and politics with the nature of man as an essentially social being. This current collection approaches this absorbing problem by concentrating on the topical issue of the market economy, viewed as an attempt to resolve the clash between individual autonomy and collective action.

The thesis is that democracy, the ideal of summing individual desires into an aggregate intention, is best realized through the market. An individual's votes (or pounds as they are often called) are allotted in proportion to rendition of service to others. The aggregation of the votes follows from their being used to buy the services of many others. The power of the individual is in proportion to his serving others. The power of society is no more than the sum of the independent votes of its members, and democratic equality is guaranteed by common currency. Society is just the exchange of services. As the essays show, this market thesis is sometimes thought necessary for a democratic society, sometimes wholly sufficient.

Would that it were so simple. The antithesis defended in a number of the essays shows that the assumptions about the nature of the individual which lie behind the market analysis are more complex than might be supposed. The individual may not be as autonomous as is required by market theory. The view that an individual's personality is a social construction is at variance with the foundational role personal decisions play in market theory. Further, an individual's religious, ethical and social rules may conflict with particular desires and wishes as they are felt at each market transaction. For example, an egalitarian ethic may override a sensible particular decision about the value of a service. Personal interactions are thus mediated through social and ideological constructions.

The substance of this wide ranging debate centres on whether, and how, these difficulties can be resolved. It involves thinkers whose views differ greatly. Enoch Powell begins with an historical and personal

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recollection (with a response by Robert Skidelsky), and the essays that follow allow political theorists and philosophers to take issue on each of the topics of Markets and Morals, Liberal Man, Equality and Libertarianism.

The volume is aimed at the general reader who wishes to understand the deeper issues in the current debate over the proper role of the market in a liberal democratic society, but is also very suitable for students and teachers of senior classes, both for examination courses and supplementary studies. The essays were originally delivered to an audience of sixth form and Further Education teachers. The book adds a summary article by A. Phillips Griffiths, Director of the Royal Institute of Philosophy.

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