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Poverty, Justice, and Western Political Thought (review)

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into Hegel's philosophy" (70). If anyone ever took these claims to mean literally that no Dane had heard of Hegel earlier, or knew anything at all about his views, with or without having had the slightest influence on the Danish Hegel-reception, that view is decisively refuted by Stewart, who cites Henrik Steffens, von Berger, Oehlenschläger, Baggesen, and others as exceptions (chapter 1). Nearly eclipsed by all this is the fact that F. C. Sibbern, who dominated the University of Copenhagen for half a century (and was the director of Kierkegaard's dissertation, *On the Concept of Irony*), really did know about Hegel, far better than Heiberg himself did. But unlike Heiberg, he did not take himself to have any special mission to "spread the word." Surely this spreading the word is all Heiberg's claims meant (rightly or wrongly), and all they were taken to mean. Stewart quotes H. L. Martensen himself as crediting Heiberg with being the one who had "introduced Hegel into Denmark." Yet Stewart dismisses this remark by saying Martensen "probably knew better" (545). It seems far more likely that Martensen, like everyone else, never took Heiberg's original claims in the extreme sense Stewart no doubt refutes. I see no evidence to the contrary.

Despite these criticisms, readers will appreciate Stewart's tireless and productive labors, both here and elsewhere, to illuminate this neglected but important area of European thought.

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Sharon K. Vaughan. *Poverty, Justice, and Western Political Thought*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008. Pp. ix + 221. Cloth, \$75.00

This book is an important effort to fill a notable void in moral and political philosophy, for there has been, according to Sharon K. Vaughan, "no formal study of the treatment of poverty in Western political thought" (1). Vaughan attempts to rectify this with a survey of the views of Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Rousseau, Adam Smith, Mill, de Tocqueville, Hegel, Marx, Rawls, and Nozick on the subject of poverty, the poor, the redistribution of wealth, and justice. Her effort is valuable, even if more work remains to be done.

The time is well chosen for Vaughan's undertaking, both because of the resurgence of political philosophy in the past forty years and also because of a more recent interest in the relationship between the empirical sciences and philosophy. An account of poverty, and a philosophical theory of how to respond to poverty, are clearly of importance to the justice project, central to contemporary political philosophy; but it is unlikely to be carried out well without attention to empirical details concerning the sources of poverty, the demographics of the poor, analyses of programs that have, and have not, been effectively used in the past, and the like. As Daniel Shapiro has recently shown in *Is the Welfare State Justified?* (Cambridge 2007), unexpected conclusions can be drawn when empirical evidence is brought to bear on orthodox liberal premises.

Vaughan's book is helpful in drawing attention to the connection between theorizing about poverty and the wider ethical, political, and even metaphysical views of the authors she discusses. Similar attention could profitably be paid to the relationship between these thinkers' views on education and ethics, politics, and metaphysics, for in many cases, the relationships are quite similar to those limned by Vaughan. Plato, Locke, Rousseau, and Mill, for example, have political concerns that have implications for poverty *and* education. But her book leaves one wanting to see her more *directly* take up the question of poverty in relation to justice, something she does not really do. Nor does she draw many bold conclusions from her study; rather, she is content to provide a fairly detailed exposition of each thinker's work insofar as it addressed the question of poverty.

Vaughan's attention to the texts is both a strength and a weakness. A glance at the footnotes provides much assistance to anyone wanting to find out, for example, where exactly in the *Politics* Aristotle discusses poverty. At the same time, the book does not go very deeply into any sustained exegetical controversies; thus, it reads like a narrowly-focused general

history of philosophy, which makes few positive contributions either to historical studies or to constructive philosophy. Moreover, Vaughan occasionally misses the nuances of a thinker's work; thus, she finds no irony in Plato's treatment of Cephalus at the beginning of the *Republic* and rather blandly implies that Plato endorses Cephalus's claim that "wealth allows one to choose more easily not to cheat or to deceive someone. . . ." (12).

I would note two further, and not unrelated, areas in which Vaughan's work could, I believe, be stronger.

First, she pays no sustained attention to medieval Christian thinkers. But an investigation of Aquinas's views on property, the obligation of almsgiving, and the duties of those in public authority to provide the "necessaries of life" (*Summa Theologica* IIa-IIae, q. 77, a. 4, c) for their citizens would have provided helpful background to later thinkers like Locke and would have helped address a misunderstanding of Aquinas as one concerned only with the virtue of beneficence, rather than the duty of justice, where the poor are concerned.

Second, two distinctions are important throughout Vaughan's work. The first is a distinction between a state concern for the poor for their own sake—call this a welfarist concern for the poor—and a state concern for the poor insofar as poverty is a source of political instability. The second is a distinction between a moral concern for the poor and a legal or political concern for the poor. With regard to the first distinction, Vaughan argues that some thinkers (such as Plato and Aristotle) who might be thought only to endorse the second concern—for state stability—*also* show a concern for the poor for their own sake. And with regard to the second, she argues that the commitment of some thinkers (such as Locke) to the moral obligation to aid the poor underwrites a commitment to the legal obligation.

Neither argument is prosecuted in this book to the extent that it must be, in my view, to be convincing. The book is nevertheless to be recommended as a helpful voice in an essential discussion.

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