



Reflections on the Logic of the Good

Chana Cox

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Reflections on the Logic of the Good argues that a single overarching theory of the good is not possible or desirable. Nor can the common good be achieved by means of the perfect cooperation between the members of the community. In fact, a coherent plan for what Isaiah Berlin calls a 'frictionless and factionless society' is a priori impossible. All such plans fail not simply because of a failure of nerve, or commitment, or idealism. The failure of each of these utopian visions is inevitable. In this respect the mathematics of control systems is entirely general and does not distinguish between mechanical, electronic, biological, or social systems. In adaptive systems, multiple automatic control mechanisms are far more effective than any single central plan, no matter how benevolent, rational, or enlightened that single source of control. Even reason itself, on this account, is best understood as a complex, constantly adapting system. In fact, stability and the health of the community is achieved by checks and balances, agonists and antagonists, forces and counterforces, rather than by central guidance and near perfect cooperation. Reflections on the Logic of the Good offers an alternative to monism in terms of a new interpretation of Protagoras' maxim 'Man is the measure of the good' based on an analogy between 'measure' as applied to space and 'measure' as applied to the good. Cox provides a metaphysical and philosophical foundation for those who argue against the micromanagement of the individual, the economy, and society. In doing so, she offers a defense of the open mind, the open society, and the open universe. What emerges from this analysis is a defense of a nonrelativistic ethical pluralism and an entirely general invisible hand theory entrenched not only in the nature of man but also in the nature of nature.

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