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Carson writes in an engaging, easy-going style. He is always open-minded and willing to acknowledge that his arguments depend upon assumptions or intuitions that are not universally shared. There is nothing dogmatic or pretentious about this book. There are some passages that shine with a sort of sweet-tempered innocence, as, for example, the one in which Carson describes the joyous state of mind of a happy pig wallowing in warm mud. (Though the curious reader may wonder how Carson knows so much about porcine psychology.)

Carson discusses the views of an impressive array of philosophers. In connection with arguments for hedonism, he talks mainly about Mill and Sidgwick. In criticism of hedonism, he refers to arguments from Brentano, Nietzsche, Nozick, Slotte, Velleman, Chisholm, and others. He writes insightfully about views of Hare, Brandt, Overvold, Rawls, Kraut, and others in connection with preferentialism. He discusses the views of Geach, Hurka, and Aristotle on perfectionism. Later, he talks about Moore, the "Cornell Realists," the emotivists, Hare, and many others in metaethics. Korsgaard, Kant, Blackburn, Gibbard, and many others are also discussed. It is clear that Carson has an almost encyclopedic grasp of the relevant literature.

The book has a number of central themes. Among these, there are two that I found most interesting and controversial. I will focus my critical comments on these.

1. *Hedonism and the motivational theory of pleasure*—Carson devotes two chapters to hedonism. He tells us that his discussion of hedonism is "one of the longest discussions by a non-hedonist" (p. 3) and this may well be true. Throughout this discussion, Carson repeatedly suggests that there is a serious tension between the motivational theory of pleasure (MTP) and the hedonistic theory of value (HTV). Since he thinks that MTP is "very likely true" (p. 13), he is inclined to think that HTV is very likely false.

Carson at first formulates MTP in this way: "To say that an experience is pleasant is to say that the person who has it would prefer to undergo it or continue it rather than not, if he were choosing solely on the basis of its felt quality" (pp. 44–45).

This seems to me to be false. It seems to me that someone could intrinsically prefer to have a certain feeling (e.g., the feeling of weightlessness or dizziness) simply out of curiosity, or out of a desire to feel a wide range of feelings, even though he does not take it to be pleasurable. His interest in the experience might not be based on the thought that the experience will lead to something beyond. He might just be curious about it "in itself." Furthermore, as Robert Adams, Richard Kraut, and others have reminded us, a person in the grip of self-loathing or depression might recognize a certain feeling as pleasant and

Carson, Thomas L. *Value and the Good Life*.

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This is a well-organized, well-informed, and thoughtfully written study of precisely the topics indicated by the title. Several chapters are devoted to the pre-

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might for this very reason intrinsically prefer not to feel it. Such a person might have an intrinsic preference for painful sensations.

Shortly after introducing MTP, Carson introduces an "extension" designed to explain what is involved in one experience (or life) being more pleasant than another. He says: "An experience or set of experiences (e1) is more pleasant (for me) than another experience or set of experiences (e2) provided that I would prefer e1 to e2, choosing simply on the basis of their felt characteristics, ignoring all considerations about the causes or consequences of those experiences" (p. 45). As he proceeds, this extended form of MTP (which I will call 'eMTP') plays a more significant role in the argument.

Carson claims (p. 47) that Mill's qualitative hedonism presupposes that eMTP is false. Elsewhere (p. 56) he seems to claim that eMTP shows that examples such as Nozick's life on the pleasure machine are impossible: "At least some of the cases described in these objections may be impossible, given the truth of the motivational theory of pleasure" (p. 56).

The extended form of MTP is not entailed by MTP. The motivational theory of pleasure concerns only experiences that a given individual actually has, and all it says is that one of those is a pleasure if and only if the experienter intrinsically prefers to have it. It's hard to see how this could yield a principle about the relative pleasantness of two lives, neither of which is actually experienced by the one having the preference. Even if MTP were true, there would be little to recommend eMTP.

I think we can see that eMTP is a nonstarter when we reflect on the fact that if it were true, it would be impossible for anyone to have nonhedonistic intrinsic preferences for experiences or lives. To see the implausibility of this view, consider the possibility of a stoic who claims to have an intrinsic preference for a life of quiet tranquility rather than a life of pleasure. If eMTP were true, we could prove that this stoic cannot have this preference in spite of the fact that he thinks he has it. Equally, if eMTP were true, it would be impossible for a masochistic, or depressed, or self-floating person to have an intrinsic preference for a less pleasant life for himself. Surely, however, such preferences are possible.

Carson himself came close to seeing the implausibility of eMTP when he noticed that there could be people who prefer an ordinary real life to a more pleasant life on a pleasure machine "even if they were judging the various lives solely on the basis of their felt quality" (p. 50). In this example it is stipulated that the life on the pleasure machine would be more pleasant. Any view that entails that it's impossible for a person to have such a preference is pretty clearly misguided. Carson apparently understands eMTP to have this implication.

2. *The rejection of axiological realism*.—Carson sketches what he takes to be Moore's conception of intrinsic goodness (pp. 188–89). He says that according to Moore, this sort of goodness is a simple, nonnatural property. It is not definable in terms of or reducible to any combination of psychological or other natural properties. Carson says that he finds the alleged property "mysterious" and "elusive" (p. 189). But his central objection to the Moorean view is found in this passage: "1. If something is non-instrumentally good, then (other things equal) one has reasons to promote its existence or occurrence. 2. Something's having the non-natural property Moore calls 'goodness' does not give us any

reason to promote it. (It is perfectly reasonable to be *indifferent* to the occurrence or non-occurrence of this mysterious non-natural property.) 3. Therefore, Moore's non-naturalism is false" (p. 190).

Premise 2 seems to me to be an unfounded accusation against Moore, but this is not the best place to try to establish that. Instead, I want to ask whether Carson is right in thinking that his own view fares better against this sort of "indifference argument."

Carson claims that "God's preferences determine what it is rational for us to prefer and what is good and bad" (p. 251). Roughly, his view is that a preference of mine is rational (correct) if and only if God prefers for me to have that preference. This, together with the view that what's noninstrumentally good is precisely what I rationally prefer, yields the result that what's noninstrumentally good is determined by what God prefers. It strikes me that one could raise against Carson's view an objection analogous to the one he raised against Moore's. Suppose some lover of evil has committed himself to the production of evil. He seeks to make the world as bad as he can make it, not only for others, but even for himself. He has contempt for God and feels more kinship to the devil. Carson now points out that God prefers that he prefer otherwise; God prefers that he prefer justice over injustice or health over illness. How does this lover of evil react? "I don't care whether or not my actions produce outcomes that God prefers that I prefer. I am indifferent to God's preferences. Something's having the mysterious and elusive property that Carson calls 'goodness' makes no difference to me. I am indifferent to it, and I have no reason to care about it."

I suspect that Carson will say that this lover of evil is wrong; that he should care about God's preferences; that the fact that God wants him to prefer certain things does give him a reason to prefer those things, whether he recognizes it or not. But if Carson is entitled to any such response, one wonders why Moore is not entitled to the analogous response.

This is an up-to-date, well-informed, and wide-ranging book. Carson's views are sensible and intelligently defended. Anyone interested in recent work in axiology or metaethics will find the book worthy of careful study.

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