

Constitutive Generalism: The very possibility (whether conceptual or metaphysical) of moral knowledge and understanding does depend (constitutively) on the (actual) provision (by either the individual or her society) of a suitable supply of moral principles (one that at least meets Dancy’s four criteria).

Generalism as a Regulative Ideal: The codification of morality (articulation of a “suitable supply of moral principles”) is both possible and morally desirable.

Particularism then comes in two varieties, corresponding to the negation of each of these forms of generalism. Dancy, we suspect, wants to defend both forms of particularism, his canonical statement notwithstanding. Perhaps more importantly, generalism as a regulative ideal is, we would claim, sufficient to vindicate much of the tradition of moral theorizing to which particularism is often thought to be opposed. That suggests to us that Dancy’s definitions should appear too weak—even by his own lights.

Ethics without Principles is essential reading for anyone interested in particularism, or, more generally, in moral philosophy.

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Serena Olsaretti. *Liberty, Desert, and the Market:*

A Philosophical Study.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. viii + 184 pp.

1. Serena Olsaretti observes socialism in retreat. After a century of large-scale central planning, we now take the relative efficiency of markets as given. Do markets occupy the moral high ground in other ways? “If it could be shown that the free market produces distributively just outcomes, then the case for the free market would altogether be very strong indeed” (2).

Olsaretti makes her case on conceptual rather than empirical grounds, and more by rebutting possible positions than by positive argument. She realizes she cannot engage market defenders by saying markets permit unequal-

ity. She asks, what principles *do* market defenders accept? Principles of desert and entitlement come to mind, which Olsaretti rightly treats separately. In my words, principles of desert acknowledge that we are active agents. Principles of entitlement acknowledge that we are separate agents. Olsaretti doesn't reject ideals of desert or entitlement. She says regulated markets promote the most plausible versions of these acknowledged ideals. Her target is "unfettered" markets, not markets per se. The book's first half discusses principles of desert. The second half argues that principles of *entitlement* are supposed to rule out coercion, but even when they succeed, ruling out coercion is not enough to make a transaction truly voluntary. I begin with the latter (regretting the compressed nature of my remarks—the book is detailed and intense).

2. There is such a thing as accepting a job offer, having no real alternative. Olsaretti discusses transactions between a worker and *the* owner of capital (131). "The limited choice he faces is not limited because he only has one entrepreneur who wants to employ him, against a background in which he can choose to abstain from selling his labour; it is limited because he can only sell his labour or starve" (131). Olsaretti acknowledges that real workers are not dealing with "the" owner of capital. They have alternatives to *this* offer, yet still act involuntarily because they have no alternative to *being a worker*, meaning there is no acceptable alternative to being a worker. Olsaretti thus avoids a pitfall of standard Marxist critiques: namely, they criticize a feature not of labor markets in general but only of monopsony labor markets (markets lacking competition among buyers of labor). But if this is a novel spin on the Marxist critique, it also seems to have a novel implication: We no longer say working for *this* employer is involuntary because that would be false in a competitive market. Instead, we say working in a market society per se is involuntary because the alternatives are unacceptable. The advantage of the new premise: market defenders may have to concede that for someone who has to work, there is no acceptable alternative to working in a market society. The disadvantage: market defenders will concede with enthusiasm.

Still, Olsaretti has a point to give market defenders pause. An ideal free society isn't a vision of workers accepting their lot with regret. The real problem isn't that we lack acceptable options but that sometimes we lack *good* options. Many feel trapped in office cubicles, working for incompetent bosses. Work—potentially the most self-affirming part of a person's day—is instead the most alienating part. Their labor is someone else's property, used to further corporate missions they don't even respect, let alone embrace. No system—not the freest society imaginable—eliminates the possibility of alienation. A sober test of a society is whether people flourish—whether they make major life choices into which they grow and some day wholeheartedly embrace: not whether flourishing is guaranteed, unavoidable no matter how irresponsibly people behave, but whether people do as a matter of fact flourish.

3. Olsaretti's response to desert-based market defenders is less engaging. Olsaretti mentions Scott Arnold and Jan Narveson only to say their work is "easily discarded" (23) because they don't share her view about criteria to which principles of desert must answer: in particular, a principle must be pre-institutional, not based on expectations created by the very institutions the principle is supposed to justify. Other criteria: (2) desert must not be parasitic on some other value that wholly defines justice; nevertheless, desert (3) must meet a fair opportunity constraint; inequalities in desert cannot reflect unequal access to the bases of desert; and (4) must be congruent with demands of comparative justice, so everyone is treated equally relative to their deserts (38). Olsaretti says, "people must have had a fair opportunity to acquire differential deserts" (71–72).

Olsaretti does not want her theory to rule out desert by definition. For there to be room for desert at all, there must come a time when people are to be judged by their merits (their merits here and now, not their history of having the same chance as everyone else to acquire their merits). So, *if* we could ensure to all children free and equal access to high-quality primary and secondary education, it would be fair to make access to universities conditional upon desert (29). It is a big *if*, though, too big to create room for desert here and now.

I agree with Olsaretti that inequalities must not be tainted by force (166). I consider it equally important that equalities not be tainted by force. The larger point, though, is that being deserving is not nearly as delicate a status as egalitarians suppose. Being deserving—showing up for work and being worth what they pay you—is not the sort of thing that occurs only in untainted worlds. Our world need not be any fairer than it is right now for there to be justice in paying people what their work is worth.

Olsaretti rejects Scott Arnold's argument *qua* argument that "distributional consequences of market choices" are deserved (21). But Arnold justifies earnings, not distributional consequences. On a conception of desert originating not with Arnold but with Arnold's Marxist interlocutors, capitalists fail to pay workers what labor is worth. Workers are deserving not because they can justify "distributional consequences of market choices" but because they show up for work and do what they get paid to do.

So, suppose I show up for work and do something to deserve my paycheck. I do what I get paid to do. If I do something to deserve *what I have*, have I also done something to deserve *more than you*? Must I deserve more than you to deserve what I have? Not in general, although we can imagine circumstances where the answer would be yes. If a socialist central planner were deciding whether to pay coal miners more than strawberry pickers, justice would indeed be comparative. In a market society, though, desert is not comparative in that way. We may concede that *in a race*, there ought to be equal opportunity. Why? Because a race's purpose is to measure relative performance. Society, though,

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is not a race. Society's purpose is not to measure relative performance but to give people a chance to live good lives. The test for such a society is not that opportunities be equal, or even fair, but that opportunities be *good*. This would better connect with the second part of Olsaretti's book (too briefly discussed above), the burden of which is to argue that mere absence of coercion cannot guarantee that workers have acceptable options, meaning opportunities that are in some sense *good*.

No system of entitlements unerringly tracks what people deserve, but a marketplace exhibits the following dynamic: customers buy stuff they consider worth the price. We need not exaggerate this tendency. The point: there is something nonrandom about how money flows in a marketplace. Do people do something to make their customers better off? Are they rewarded for so doing? When the answer is yes, markets are tracking something worth tracking. In a sense that matters (and matters preinstitutionally), people are getting their due.

Olsaretti's book, limited though it may be in engaging desert-theoretic defenders of unfettered markets, is nonetheless a superbly crafted work of analytic philosophy. Such acknowledgment is the book's due. It genuinely enriches our marketplace of ideas. Defenders of markets should mull it over.

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Brian O'Connor, *Adorno's Negative Dialectic:*

Philosophy and the Possibility of Critical Rationality.

Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004. xviii + 199 pp.

Adorno's *Negative Dialektik* (1966) purports to be the capstone of his philosophical output. Not only is it the last major philosophical work he published during his life (*Ästhetische Theorie* [1970] appeared shortly after his death), it was by Adorno's own estimation the basic document in his oeuvre. It is often true that "basic documents" such as this are not pellucid—hard thoughts sometimes require complex presentation—but, even measured against the less than