

It is worth recalling, however, that the Enlightenment is only one part of the cultural inheritance of Australia. Nineteenth century Catholicism, for example, took an entirely different view of the Enlightenment. The Catholic *Freeman's Journal* praised the Middle Ages and carried the flag for protection and what it termed 'fair trade'. Also the colonists often appealed to traditionalism as expressed in their Britishness. In politics the image of the British Constitution and the rights of free-born Englishmen remained very potent.

Finally there was Romanticism, the reaction against the rationality of the Enlightenment that emphasised feeling. Gascoigne rightly argues that Romanticism had a hard time in Australia because of the lack of both a sacred landscape and an organic past with which the present could be contrasted. This does not mean that Romanticism in Australia was absent, rather it took another form. Just as the representatives of Enlightenment in Australia were often Scottish, so it was a Scot, Nicol Stenhouse, who was most influential in introducing Romantic ideas into this country. Stenhouse came from a Tory background and had been involved with Thomas de Quincey, of opium fame, before coming to Sydney. The Stenhouse circle in the 1840s and 1850s developed a Romanticism of alienation built on writers such as de Quincey and Edgar Allen Poe. It was a Romanticism that found expression in the poetry of Henry Kendall and was later to emerge in the work of Christopher Brennan and his disciples down to the early James McAuley.

The other problem with placing too much emphasis on the influence of the Enlightenment in Australia is that while the Enlightenment emphasises rationality Australian culture has a very powerful streak of what is has been described by George Shaw as 'sentimental humanism'. Feeling rather than reason is often the

dominant factor in debates about public matters. There is a sentimental attachment to such things as inefficient universities, trade unions, Telstra and other archaic practices that defies commonsense and reason. The interesting question relates to the origins of this sentimental humanism. Did it develop because of the failure of Enlightenment values in the second half of the 19th century?

There is a division between rationality and feeling within Australian culture: on the one side there is science, law and economics and on the other the arts, moral self-righteousness and emotion. This division that has become greater in recent years as areas that previously favoured rationality, such as history, have increasingly succumbed to basing their approach on feelings of moral outrage. This is fortunately not true of this book. It is urbane, well written and, most importantly, increases our knowledge of the topic. It is highly recommended for anyone seeking to understand seriously Australian culture.

Reviewed by Gregory Melleuish

The Voluntary City

David T. Beito, Peter Gordon and Alexander Tabarrok (eds)
Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, and Oakland, The Independent Institute, 2002, 480pp, US\$24.95, ISBN 0472088378

THIS IS A first-rate book. I'd strongly commend it to anyone who reads *Policy*, and especially to those who don't but ought to. It would make an excellent gift for any student. It is also an important book. This is because it is subversive of some ideas that we tend to take for granted, but which this book shows to be incorrect.

What is the book about? Essentially, the non-governmental provision of all kinds of services that we make use of in an urban context, and which we typically assume that government has to provide. The book is a sampler of historically or empirically based studies of non-governmental provision, commercial and non-commercial. It discusses planning, urban infrastructure, roads, law and justice, police, health insurance and medical care, and education, and also private community associations. These latter bodies play a quasi-governmental role in the provision of services relating to housing to some 47 million Americans, typically by way of administering, privately, the common space in, and the furnishing of regulations for, condominiums and suburban residential developments.

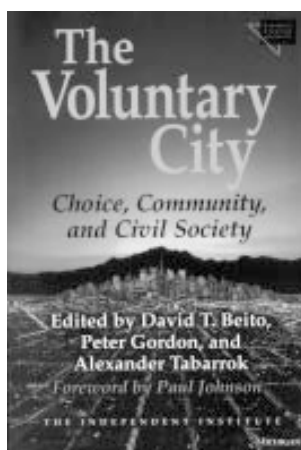
Why is the book interesting? Largely because of the different, detailed stories that are told. Rather than trying to tell you these, let me pose some of the questions that they address. How could infrastructure be furnished to a rapidly expanding area, without government doing it? How might the private provision of infrastructure function in an urban setting? How could turnpikes be constructed privately—and even in conditions when those involved did not expect them to make a profit? Could the infrastructure needed for a manufacturing district be furnished privately? How could law and courts be provided, if not by government? How could one have the effective prosecution of criminals, if there were no police? How could welfare and medical services for the poor be provided, if the state did not do it? And surely, if government were not involved in education, a smaller percentage of children would be in school than they are today. If you read *Policy*, it is possible that you might be able to guess the overall answers to these questions. But—and this is the

power of the book—you would not, I suspect, even be able to imagine the specific ways in which some of these things took place. The fact that the book consists of short pieces by a variety of authors also makes for lively reading.

In addition, the book not only documents the current role played in the US by private community associations, discusses their constitutions as useful objects for academic study, and considers how they might be extended to current urban areas, but also offers some criticism of them. The author of the criticism—in my view understandably—would prefer arrangements under which companies continue to own and run residential areas (much as they do shopping malls), but which are currently discriminated against by U.S. government policy.

What might one gain from reading this book?

First, an expansion of one's imagination. Through reading it, one may discover that presumptions that one had made about how services have to be provided, and for the need for government to be involved, are shattered. What is more, one discovers the way in which all kinds of needs were catered for, and in many different ways. The contrast with our current approaches—which assume that a few people in government know both what we need and how it is best provided—could not be more stark. Yet these same assumptions also infect current forms of privatisation and contracting out, under which the same few people again get to decide what is needed and in many respects how it is to be provided—and create incentives for rent-seeking and corruption, to boot.



Second, one might feel a certain sense of outrage or just wrath. For the very flowering of the imagination and the possibilities for learning by trial and error that these essays reveal, are also typically cut back by government. Experimentation in private provision is often shackled by unnecessary regulation. Further, those who might pay for private provision typically have to pay for government services, too.

It is not unreasonable that the more wealthy might be asked to assist those who can't provide for themselves at all. But to compel people to pay for services that they will not use because they are providing privately for themselves is not only unfair but also limits the range of ideas that will be tried out, and the range of needs that are met. These essays also contain some striking arguments for the greater efficiency of private provision.

Third, the book brings home the extent to which our current work in the universities is often statist in its assumptions. As Boudreaux and Holcombe suggest, it is striking that, if economists and political philosophers consider contractarian political theory, what they study are typically either the constitutions of states, or ideas that they make up for themselves—rather than, say, the rules of the 230,000 private community associations that currently exist in the US. Bright philosophers and economists may have some good ideas. But consider what might be learned if their more abstract speculative ideas were stimulated by a knowledge of the plethora of different arrangements that have actually flourished. There is much else here that may also give the scholar food for thought—for example, David Green argues that the private

provision of health services through friendly societies served to promote good character (which classical liberals are often accused of simply taking for granted), and did so by appealing not just to self-interest.

All told, this is the kind of book that can—and should—open people's minds, both through its contents and also through the vast range of material to which it refers. It should be bought and read not only because it is interesting, but also because it may help to free us from some key unconscious assumptions. If there is a problem, we all too often expect that it is the state that must resolve it. All too often we also assume that there is only one way in which this can legitimately be done. This book, while American, is sorely needed in Australia. For what other federal system has such an abhorrence of diversity? And what other Western country has such an expectation that the government will take care of us—and in our case, amazingly, despite what we actually know about our politicians and public servants.

Reviewed by Jeremy Shearmur

***Does Education Matter?
Myths About Education and
Economic Growth***

Alison Wolf

London, Penguin Books,
2002, 332pp, \$25,
ISBN 0140286608

IN 1988 John Dawkins, then Education Minister, released a statement on higher education that set universities on the policy path they are still, with a few variations, following today. The economy was one of the statement's main priorities. Expanding the number of students would help foster the 'conceptual,