Hegelianism). To collapse many, many pages of debate, his argument is that Europe's essence lay in aristocratic competitiveness, contrasting with a 'serene and deferential East'—an aspect, however, that Duchesne explores sparingly. Europe's individualism, aggressiveness and so on reached the continent, he insists, as the baggage of invading, prestige-hungry Indo-European steppe nomads. These qualities, let alone their transmission to society as a whole, are rather imprecise and I was on the brink of dismissing them as too speculative when I found myself rather extensively cited. There must be something in the topic after all! But these hoary, contentious themes are really several orders of magnitude more speculative than the tracts of early modern history where Duchesne fences with the most fashionable of the revisionists.

It is a problem to exhume the history of thought and social structure in ancient Greece, but at least reams of scholarship exist on the subject. For centuries, higher learning in Europe dwelt on little else, except the slightly less faded history of Rome. Duchesne shows himself a master of the subject, especially in its anthropological guise. He shows himself, too, as a master of the archaeological based sagas of the Indo-Europeans. He faces down anyone who would frighten us off the subject because of the Nazi's Aryan perversions, after which everything Indo-European was amputated and sanitised into mere linguistic studies. The task of taking the Indo-European legacy forward and connecting it with the priceless individualism and liberty of modern European peoples is of an even taller order. This section of the book—or books—is relatively diffuse.

Europe's central merit, in my eyes, is to have installed in its polities a flexible system of self-correction. Europe's societies and their overseas heirs are far from faultless, but they do seem to show themselves better able than the alternatives to recover from mistakes—and often do so within the lifetimes of individual citizens. The greater part of The Uniqueness of Western Civilization is a critique of the type of revisionism that would toss all this out with the bathwater of Europe's militarism and imperialism. The author makes creative use of his combats with first one, and then another, revisionist—but a work of criticism remains a work of criticism. Its contribution stems from contradicting the negative. Only towards the end does Duchesne construct a more positive solution to the 'why Europe' question.

In a section on the emergence of the self, he turns from Hegel to Nietzsche, then back to Hegel and phenomenology. This goes beyond or even deeper than his view that 'the restlessness of barbarian individuals was the primordial source of all that has been noble and great in Western civilization.' It requires him to contemplate, and even speculate about, human motivation and the drives that animate us. Duchesne's book may persuade readers to ponder on the ineffable nature of the human soul. It will certainly become an indispensable reference on the great passages of history.

Reviewed by Eric Jones

The Ethics of Voting
By Jason Brennan
Princeton University Press, 2011
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The Ethics of Voting argues that if we vote, then we should vote well or not at all.

Jason Brennan, an assistant professor of philosophy at Brown University, asks: 'what defender of democracy wishes to see her favoured system polluted?' Bad voting occurs when voters vote without sufficient justification 'for harmful policies or for candidates likely to enact harmful policies. For example, a person who votes to ban gay marriage because she finds it disgusting would, except in extraordinary circumstances, be guilty of harmful voting.'

Bad voting also occurs when someone accidentally or fortuitously votes for beneficial policies or candidates who support beneficial policies, but vote without sufficient reason to believe that those candidates or policies would be beneficial. in other words, they make the right choice for the wrong reasons or for no reason at all. Voters, Brennan says, are like surgeons. Not everyone can be a
surgeon, but if you are a surgeon, then you should be a good one. While surgeons make mistakes from time to time, like voters, they can also be negligent. Voters who have not sufficiently educated themselves about the good or harm a party's or candidate's policies will do should not vote.

One might be led to think that Brennan is saying that voting for someone like Hitler, Mussolini or Stalin is to act in a harmful manner, but his arguments go much further than that. He considers the example of Sanda, a Burmese immigrant who recently achieved US citizenship and is excited about voting for the first time but does not know enough to vote well. Brennan says if Sanda were to vote, she would act in a harmful manner. Brennan finds Sanda's desire to vote 'bizarre' and expects her to invest the time and energy required for her to vote well.

One must wonder how much time and energy must be invested into every vote for it to be a good one in Brennan's opinion. Must a prospective voter analyse in excruciating detail the policy manifestos of every party and meet every candidate to vote well?

The expenses involved in meeting the epistemic requirements of Brennan are potentially impossible for bad voters, but are difficult even for most ordinary people. Anyone who has not had a university education or doesn't speak the mainstream language well is not likely to satisfy Brennan's criteria. This largely excludes people from poorer backgrounds and immigrants who may not have had the opportunities of native born middle and upper middle-class people. Applying this criterion to India, the world's largest democracy, would immediately classify tens of millions of people, if not hundreds of millions, as bad voters and as people who should not vote.

Brennan rejects the idea that the disenfranchisement that may result from his argument is a failure of his theory. He says that it is a failure of society, one that can be fixed by spending on education so people don't cast bad votes.

Brennan also makes an interesting argument about the morality of vote-buying and selling. He disputes the common 'folk' argument that the buying and selling of votes has no moral status, says Brennan, arguing that paying someone to vote well is not wrong because it enhances the common good without harming others.

This book relishes its controversial nature. Suggesting that many millions of voters are polluting the pool of votes that choose governments, and that vote buying and selling has 'no inherent moral status,' will no doubt provoke a hostile response. The question remains whether Brennan is persuasive.

Some may find the practical implications of Brennan's argument to be repugnant. It may appear that only a handful of politically engaged elites—who obsessively watch the news every day, read the papers, and get constant updates of political machinations via Twitter—meet the minimum epistemological requirements to vote well. In a democracy like Australia, this might be restricted to the approximately 30,000 people who regularly watch ABC News 24 or Sky News, a small number compared to the 13 million people who voted at the last federal election.

Brennan writes in a fashion that is not overly technical or jargon filled, which some philosophers can sometimes be prone to. It is a fairly accessible book, although probably not recommended for the lay reader. It is better suited to political junkies and moral philosophers with an interest in voting theory and ethics.

Brennan finishes with a reference to John Stuart Mill, who argued in On Liberty that people are not in a good position to hold their views until they have confronted contrary views. Most readers of this book will confront its contrary views but not necessarily be persuaded by them.

Reviewed by Andrew Baker