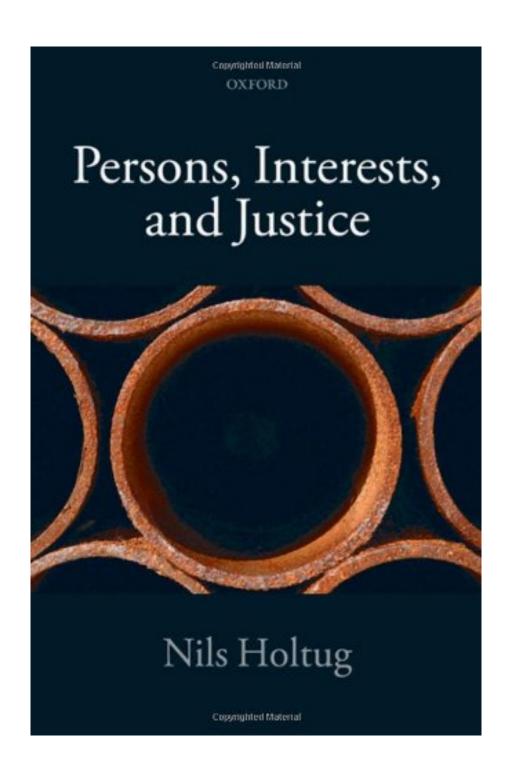


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Review

This superb book insightfully and systematically addresses the key issues confronting theories of self-interest and theories of justice in the distribution of self-interest fulfillment. It is essential reading for anyone working in these areas. Peter Vallentyne Holtugs Persons, Interests, and Justice is a magni?cent book. It exhibits a most thorough analysis of the most dif?cult problems in contemporary moral philosophy. His vigorous project deserves the highest acclaim. Any moral philosopher, actual or possible, ought to examine this book carefully. Iwao Hirose, Economics and Philosophy If you are working in the Par?tian tradition and yet neglect to study closely Holtugs intricate arguments, I am afraid that there is very little that can be said in your defence. Jens Johansson, Theoria The book shows how the seemingly uncontroversial assumptions about personhood and interest made by many philosophers especially political philosophers are in fact controversial, and that that makes a big difference to how we should think about justice. It is highly recommended for advanced postgraduates and professional philosophers with interests in justice or personal identity. Carl Knight, Analysis

About the Author

Nils Holtug is Director of the Centre for the Study of Equality and Multiculturalism and Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Copenhagen.

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In our lives, we aim to achieve welfare for ourselves, that is, to live good lives. But we also have another, more impartial perspective, where we aim to balance our concern for our own welfare against a concern for the welfare of others. This is a perspective of justice. Nils Holtug examines these two perspectives and the relations between them.

The first part of the book is concerned with prudence; more precisely, with what the necessary and sufficient conditions are for having a self-interest in a particular benefit. It includes discussions of the extent to which self-interest depends on preferences, personal identity, and what matters in survival. It also considers the issue of whether it can benefit (or harm) a person to come into existence and what the implications are for our theory of self-interest. A 'prudential view' is defended, according to which a person has a present self-interest in a future benefit if and only if she stands in a relation of continuous physical realization of (appropriate) psychology to the beneficiary, where the strength of the self-interest depends both on the size of the benefit and on the strength of this relation.

The second part of the book concerns distributive justice and so how to distribute welfare or self-interest fulfilment over individuals. It includes discussions of welfarism, egalitarianism and prioritarianism, population ethics, the importance of personal identity and what matters for distributive justice, and the importance of all these issues for various topics in applied ethics, including the badness of death. Here, a version of prioritarianism is defended, according to which, roughly, the moral value of a benefit to an individual at a time depends on both the size of the benefit and on the individual's self-interest, at that time, in the other benefits that accrue to her at this and other times.

Sales Rank: #4312110 in BooksPublished on: 2010-06-18Original language: English

• Number of items: 1

• Dimensions: 6.40" h x 1.20" w x 9.30" l, 1.65 pounds

• Binding: Hardcover

• 352 pages

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