

Harvey Brown suggests that it is time to approach relativity by its physical causes because the constructive approach of men like Fitzgerald is more enlightening. Brown begins by searching through the archives to unpick the reasons that led to the original formulation of the theory of special relativity: Einstein was restricted by the lack of knowledge of inter-molecular and sub-atomic forces at the time and inspired by the postulate based formulation of thermodynamics. Furthermore, evidence suggests that even Einstein came to regret his method, and a handful of other thinkers are also called upon to support Brown's thesis. Finally, *Physical Relativity* considers whether taking a different approach to special relativity will have an adverse effect on its role as a limiting case of general relativity; Brown's claim is that it does not.

What is special about this book is that as it makes its grand tour, interweaving historical and theoretical facts with ease, it challenges many common misconceptions in the field. Brown explains, for example, how simultaneity is a convention under Newtonian mechanics, and he clarifies the differences between the many notions of the principle of relativity. Students and professionals alike will benefit from the clarifications, and are likely to enjoy the tale along the way.

Sally Riordan

*Libertarianism without inequality*, Michael Otsuka, Oxford University Press, 2005 (2003). 158 pages.

*Libertarianism without inequality* by Michael Otsuka, now published for the first time in paperback, is a revival of John Locke's political philosophy in the best sense of the word. Using Locke's master-ideas – the right of self-ownership and the belief that political associations and economic transfers can only be established by voluntary consent – Otsuka sets himself the task of retrieving an entire system of political thought that is “cleansed of the regressive ideological commitments of Locke's (and more recent) times”. (p.2) The result is a provocative book that sometimes fails to meet these ambitious goals, but nevertheless shows an original possibility of bringing together libertarianism with a strong commitment to egalitarian principles.

The book consists of three parts, dealing with property rights; punishment and self-defence; and the constitution of political societies. In the first section, Otsuka, who is a Reader in Philosophy at University College London, positions himself between the philosophers G.A. Cohen and Robert Nozick. Although their conclusions differ substantially, both Cohen and Nozick agree that the libertarian appeal to self-ownership, and concerns about equality and distributive justice are mutually exclusive. For Nozick this was a reason to argue that con-

cerns about distributive justice should make way for a free market based on voluntary agreement. Cohen conversely concluded that self-ownership should be restricted to allow for a form of substantive equality.

Otsuka wants to stay clear from both extremes and maintains that the two positions can be reconciled by a re-interpretation of Locke's proviso which states that the acquisition of previously unowned resources is only legitimate if one leaves "enough and as good" for others. While one can question in how far this amounts to a trade-off rather than a reconciliation, Otsuka argues that we should understand this proviso as commanding that we leave enough for others to have an equal amount of welfare, which would lead to an egalitarian distribution of resources.

On punishment and self-defense there is a direct relationship with Locke's philosophy, in as much as it concerns his conviction that everyone has the right to uphold natural law. However, Otsuka's treatment of the topics leans more toward ethics than to political philosophy and this section seems only indirectly relevant to his version of left-libertarianism.

In the third part of the book, Otsuka gives his interpretation of Locke's political voluntarism. He suggests that legitimate political authority should be established by actual, albeit tacit, consent through residence. If people join a soci-

ety freely and opting out is inexpensive enough, Otsuka maintains, the existence of thoroughly oppressive and illiberal regimes can be so justified. This contentious claim leaves him having to argue that children should get an education that will later in their lives enable them to make a well-reasoned decision about residence in the society in question. Such education, however, seems by definition to contradict the character of illiberal societies. What is more, much depends on what one understands as 'rational and well-informed' consent. John Rawls, his main opponent in this section, would argue that opting for an illiberal society is never rational, and Otsuka does not do much to challenge such a claim.

There is much to engage with in this small book and although *Libertarianism without inequality* sometimes reads more like a collection of essays rather than a fully-fledged political philosophy, it is worthwhile all the same.

Laurens van Apeldoorn