Overall, *Cognitive Processes and Economic Behaviour* is a stimulating volume that presents insightful work by leading scholars and belongs to the reading list of economists interested in theoretical, philosophical and psychological foundations of rationality. The book is most useful because it takes the reader to deeper and more comprehensive levels of analysis in its examination of critical facets of economic theory. As such, the book is a good supplementary material for a graduate seminar where students need to develop critical appraisals of topics in rationality (from an economic or psychological perspective) as preparation for advanced theoretical research. However, many chapters lack empirical support, do not address the important role of evidence in theory development, nor do they offer methodologies for acquiring the necessary empirical evidence to support their theoretical claims. For many psychologists – and economists – that could be a serious limitation, especially when we consider that the troubles of economic theory addressed in this book were first brought forward by powerful empirical evidence.

**References**


H. Mano, University of Missouri, St. Louis, USA

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The book *Classical Utilitarianism from Hume to Mill* by Frederick Rosen is an exhaustive survey of this topic. It is indispensable reading for anyone who
wants to understand the concept of utility and its uses. It calls utilitarianism
the use of a concept of “utility” in general (as in continental European
languages nowadays), and not only the social ethical theory of maximizing a
sum of individuals’ utilities (as in present-day economics and political phi-
losophy). Utilitarianism (in any sense) is not the historically central thought
that English and American scholars are used to consider it is. Yet, it has had
an important role in the history of the social science and in the present state
of parts of it (economics). Hence, knowing the social science requires
knowing utilitarianism. Moreover, this work is in fact as much about liberty
and justice as it is about utility, in line with the thought of the thinkers it
discusses. In addition, it also presents the foundation of utilitarianism that the
early utilitarians found in the refined psychology of pleasure of Epicurianism.
Now, the relation of utility with psychology, liberty, and justice are precisely
the reflections needed by many present-day uses of concepts of utility in
order to get out of impasses created by the narrowing in scope and depth
from the philosophy of classical utilitarians (such shortcomings are particu-
larly found in normative applications and in issues concerning social inter-
actions). Hence, the importance of Rosen’s book is not only for knowing the
past of the concept of utility, but also – perhaps most importantly – for
building its future.

This book restates, discusses, and defends against common misunder-
standings, the arguments first developed by the major thinkers in this utili-
tarian tradition, such as Hume, Smith, Helvétius, Palay, Bentham, and
J. S. Mill. The concept of utility is used at three levels: a classical hedonistic
explanation of behaviour; personal normative and “moral” conduct in the
tradition of Hellenistic philosophy introduced by Epicurianism; and the
social ethical theory of maximizing the sum of utilities introduced by
Bentham. The presentation is followed, in a Part II, by four essays. The first
three defend utilitarianism against common criticism with arguments derived
from the thought of the original authors – the ideas that utilitarianism may
require punishing the innocent or sacrificing some to achieve the greatest
happiness of others or “of society,” and that it may lead to a “tyranny of the
majority”. The last chapter discusses and situates Isaiah Berlin’s “negative
liberty”, the absence of forceful interference (the qualificative “forceful” is
unfortunately bypassed) which is also Bentham’s “security”, J. S. Mill’s
“liberty”, the classical “civil liberty” or social freedom, or Benjamin Con-
stant’s “liberty of the moderns” (the “ancients” were supposed to call liberty
political participation), and it ends by a discussion of the worrying possible
opposition between liberty and democracy.