LIBERALISM AND THE LIMITS OF JUSTICE
by Michael J. Sandel
(Cambridge University Press: 191 pp.; $29.50/$9.95)

Stephen J. Whitfield

The publication of John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* in 1971 struck a chord in political, legal, and moral philosophy that still reverberates. His Harvard colleague, Robert Nozick, won a National Book Award for *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974). From Oxford, Ronald Dworkin's *Taking Rights Seriously* battered even further the utilitarianism that had so decisively shaped the legacy of Anglo-American liberalism. Jeremy Bentham thought he had quashed the notion of inviolable rights by dismissing it as "nonsense on stilts." Whatever their sharp individual differences, these contemporary thinkers have revived the primacy of the citizen's rights over the claims of Bentham's social calculus.

Without defending utilitarianism, Michael J. Sandel here challenges the intellectual coherence and the moral attractiveness of *A Theory of Justice*. Trained at Oxford, presently at Harvard, Professor Sandel has executed a first book of unusual intelligence and elegance, an essay so sophisticated that it cannot but be a promise of other distinguished books to come. Although *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* could not have been written without the stimulus of Rawls's ideas in particular, this volume is not merely exegesis; it offers fresh and plausible readings of what politics is and might be. The analysis is lucid, admirable, devoid of the play misty-for-me approach that the reader almost has come to expect from philosophers. Nevertheless, the nonprofessional is likely to find the design of the argument demanding, as Sandel leads the reader carefully past the bleached bones of earlier explorers of the treacherous terrain of political theory. Fortunately the austerity of the logic is tempered by a prose that is uniformly stately and modulated, sometimes soaring to exhilarating eloquence and flashes of insight.

Taking a deep breath, the author defines the regnant view of rights as "deontological liberalism." This view, which Rawls has extracted mostly from Kant, seeks to "derive a set of regulative principles that do not presuppose any particular conception of the good, nor depend on any particular theory of human motivation. Connected with this aim are the views that conceptions of the good are diverse, that there is no single, dominant human end, that man is a being whose ends are chosen rather than given, and that the well-ordered society is therefore one in which people are free to pursue their various aims." Because the human estate exhibits so much plurality (as noteworthy as our mortality), justice becomes for deontological liberalism the first principle of social life. In this way, diversity can be respected and conflict resolved fairly. Defining justice as fairness, Rawls argued that social inequalities could be justified only if the least advantaged would be benefited. And in order to imagine how a just society might be established, Rawls hypothesized an "social contract drawn up by subjects ignorant of their own future status in that society and, so, unable to exploit their advantages.

Against this system of thought Sandel marshals an arsenal of compelling objections. With the single exception of affirmative-action admissions to professional schools, in which he exposes the curious utilitarianism of Dworkin's endorsement of such policies, none of Sandel's objections is practical. They are stinging nevertheless. He challenges the very notion of contract that Rawls's reasoning obligates him to hypothesize. Not only were the terms of this particular contract never agreed upon historically (as is also the case with the social contracts posited by Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau), but Rawls's version of the contract is also "imagined to take place among the sorts of beings who never really existed, that is, beings struck with the kind of complicated amnesia necessary to the veil of ignorance." Later generations are presumed to be free to pursue their own diverse ends and particular conceptions of the good, and to do so fairly, only because creatures who never have existed managed to write a compact that never was effected.

In its own terms Rawls's heuristic device, the so-called original position regulating the conditions under which goods are sought and distributed, makes little sense. But Sandel's critique, for all its adroitness in identifying categorical flaws, springs from a certain conception of the moral personality. Even though Rawls is credited with restoring the primacy of the individual, Sandel discerns in him an impoverished and distorted version of the self. Cut off from its own ends, devoid of self-knowledge behind its veil of ignorance, the self of deontological liberalism is "without character, without moral depth." Its distinctive attributes are "irrelevant from a moral point of view," as Rawls himself acknowledges. The separateness of this self from others has driven Rawls to assert the necessity of the ideal of justice and to conjecture how it might be formulated. But deontological liberalism cannot provide a satisfactory account of the intersubjective dimension of human experience.

The rectification of this failure gives *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* its impact, making it more than a work of interpretation, even though no alternative theory is finally and explicitly developed. Sandel's positive cognition as an essential facet of the self and values self-consciousness as the bridge between the right and the good, between individual impulse and communal sentiment. "The capacity for reflection," he writes, "enables the self to turn its lights inward upon itself, to inquire into its constituent nature, to survey its various attachments and acknowledge their respective claims, to sort out the bounds—now expansive, now constrained—between the self and the other...and so gradually, throughout a lifetime, to participate in the constitution of its identity." Justice cannot easily prevail against the primordial ties knotted within families and tribes and among friends, nor can it be expected to. In deprecating self-reflection, the liberalism against which Michael Sandel has so deftly argued makes problematic that achievement of human solidarity that justice was designed to ensure.

THE IMPERIOUS ECONOMY
by David M. Calleo
(Harvard University Press: 304 pp.; $17.50)

John Milberg

At times this reads like a marathon run through all the newspapers that have been piling up since the days of Kennedy. Calleo's analysis, however, is punctuated with important theoretical passages that keep the reader from jumping to the sports pages. His goal is to shift our eyes from the financial section of the newspapers and pro-
vide us with an historical lens. For Calleo, professional economists are cursed by monetarist and fiscal blinders. Conformed by their "sectarian" economic models, they fail to incorporate politics and history into their theoretical designs. Calleo's recurring theme, not a novel one, is that the country's increasingly tenuous grip on itself and others is a product of the tension between dreams and realities. This is all too often skirted in classrooms and smoke-filled chambers. How did we reach our present, relatively unenviable state? Can an understanding of recent history clear up some of the muddledheadedness with which many issues are handled?

As Calleo stresses in the opening pages, the post-World War II period was the era of Pax Americana. As the richest and most stable nation, the U.S. assumed a central economic and political role in the West. The success of the American grand design created open trade routes and liberal markets that, secure from aggression, have fostered rapid growth and development. But this postwar model, with America at the center of the earth, appears to be showing signs of wear. Waning productivity and competitiveness and balance of trade deficits are evidence of diminishing international influence; high levels of unemployment and inflation, bankruptcies, and bank insecurity are obvious on the domestic front. Moreover, in Calleo's view, we are and have been since the golden days of Kennedy plagued by erratic, ad hoc policymakers.

The bulk of The Imperious Economy is concerned with the rollercoaster ride produced by the monetary and fiscal manipulations of the last twenty or so years. Much of this the author brands "economic abracadabra," and the allusion to magic is not fortuitous. Economic magic has succeeded not in controlling but in obscuring the structural problems of the economy. Monetary depreciations, wage and price controls, superficial reins on multinationals and on investment abroad have not been able to make certain economic facts disappear: inflation, foreign competition, the weakening of the dollar, balance of payments deficits fueled in large part by the demand for foreign oil, and a poor level of capital formation and investment. These growing problems never are confronted directly or consistently.

The oil crisis of the early '70s is a good example of the "self-defeating character of American mercantilism." While American oil prices had been kept artificially low by government policy, they could not hold in the face of Middle Eastern tension and the upward pressure of the going market price for crude. U.S. intervention abroad was out; it would have undermined price and purchasing stability at home. However, in place of a domestic energy policy the government, with oil company assistance, absorbed a predictable rise in both oil prices and general inflation. The oil story is central to Calleo's analysis. Neo-mercantilist policies designed to expand and liberalize trade and therefore to open new markets for both the U.S. and its allies, paradoxically became incompatible with a Keynesian program designed to accelerate growth and achieve "full" employment.

The Nixon-Kissinger "world system," which saw all markets as havens for economic intervention and thus political control, is a classic embodiment of the tension Calleo highlights. The "liberal" trade policies and domestic intervention assumed a dollar forever strong, competitive access to foreign markets, and a positive balance of trade. Strength abroad would yield stability and growth at home. But economic intervention yielded tension, rather than compatibility. Calleo's focus on this destabilizing element of American political economy is not unique. Economist Lester Thurow, for instance, has argued that the Johnson administration's Vietnam and Great Society policies should serve as warnings to the Reagan government. Both analysts reach similar conclusions: Intervention abroad—economic or military—creates not only such problems as the costs of military and troop upkeep, the flight of capital, and subsequent trade deficits, but it also limits resources and control at home.

"His book is excellent."

—William Shawcross, The Sunday Times (London)

The Russians and the Chinese—what are the significant differences between these two great communist powers? How do their people live, think, what are their hopes and fears? "No one could be better placed to draw up the balance sheet than Philip Short, the BBC's correspondent first in Moscow and lately in Peking. He is an admirable witness...His book can be unreservedly recommended to all those interested in either country."

—Richard Harris, The Times (London)

"Mr. Short is especially skillful in charting a course through the intricate maze of internal Chinese politics...He is also that best kind of foreign correspondent: one who feels a deep sympathy for the people and the territory he is covering, yet who never forsakes a cool objectivity in assessing their triumphs and tragedies.—The Times Literary Supplement (London)

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David Morrow on the Bear

Wolf"
Who is to blame for the present entanglement? President Reagan is half right; it is the Democrats. But his own party has contributed a healthy portion to the mismanagement. Nixon and Kennedy stand as the major policy innovators of the last two decades. Kennedy launched trade liberalization, but his efforts to insulate the U.S. from an international economy based on a fixed American dollar rate of exchange was, in Calleo’s words, “naive.” Nixon’s abandonment of the Bretton Woods agreement lifted the burden from the U.S. of converting its dollars to gold. Exchange rates were free to float. But while this improved U.S. exports through depreciation of the dollar, it did not curb multinational investment abroad. Nor, as Calleo asserts, did it cure “the American naivete…The economy had grown even more addicted to inflation.” Nixon’s “New Economic Plan” was a mere palliative handed down to subsequent presidents. The rotten core—inflation, for example—was left unscathed.

Whatever the policy, whoever the architect, a new relationship among Atlantic allies is here to stay. The Kennedy and now Reagan-resuscitated vision of Pax Americana is outdated and unrealistic at best: it is potentially dangerous and confrontational at worst. Perhaps we are witnessing a revival of the Nixon-Kissinger approach, where “geopolitics comes to the rescue of economics.” That the country has failed to face up to its underlying mismanagement its fragmented energy and jobs policies, its inflated military economy—Calleo makes clear. But his prescriptions for institutional renovation, however bold they may be, are themselves the victim of too broad generalization. History is surely helpful in showing how we reached this juncture, but it does not dictate the next step. If Calleo has sketched the broad lines, the details need filling in.

FEIFFER: JULES FEIFFER’S AMERICA FROM EISENHOWER TO REAGAN
edited by Steve Heller
(Alfred A. Knopf: 254 pp.; $25.00/$12.95)

Kalman Goldstein

For over twenty-five years now we have enjoyed being depressed by Jules Feiffer cartoons. That ever-machoistic narcissist, Bernard Mergendoller; the Dancer, Zeitgeist and Feiffer’s alter ego; the monumental Talking Heads who spout political and social obscenity with almost complete lack of affect—all these have become part of a generation’s cultural imagery. Now Feiffer and Heller have chosen the most representative times and the most representative pieces and grouped them by presidential administration, with some introductory hindsight for each section. Most are still as fresh, as shocking, at times even as cathartic as when first penned. They are angry, satiric, sarcastic, sometimes quite profound—and they usually ring true.

The book reveals how intellect, subject, and style of presentation produce images. As Feiffer has aged, his characters have become more substantial, more heavily drawn, fuller in contour. Bernard is no longer a wispy figure; and even when he is shown tap-dancing his way through life, his slender outline is encased in a heavily inked Fred Astaire tuxedo. Huey became bald, paunchy, and suburbanized, much to Bernard’s satisfaction, but that has obviated any vicarious identification with the young stud. Early Feiffer cartoons have a resemblance to those of Shel Silverstein (short, thin lines, wispy and only tentatively filled in); much of his ’60s work has the thicker, bolder line of an Oshorn (if not the spiraling expressionist horror); his most recent work is so heavily scored, shaded or blacked in that it would express a mood effectively even without a line of dialogue. Compare his drawings of Nixon during 1960 with those of “Vietnixon,” as he called him, and the style tells much about what had happened to America and how Feiffer felt about it. If, as he admits, his presentation of Ford as “Happy Hooligan” does not quite work, his Carter—a puffy, toothsome, bland visage—complements the words the cartoonist places in his mouth.

In his introduction Feiffer worries whether over the years he has lost his radicalism. He has. One can follow the Dancer from early aspirations, through anger and exasperation during the 1960s (the dances with a gun or in Weather Underground riot regalia), to her most recent self-righteous cynicism. Bernard has given up on politics and frenzied sexuality and just muses on the meaninglessness of it all. Portrayals of Ford and Kissinger were flatter and more sarcastic than sharply satiric. Feiffer’s reaction to Reagan is bleakly pessimistic, even