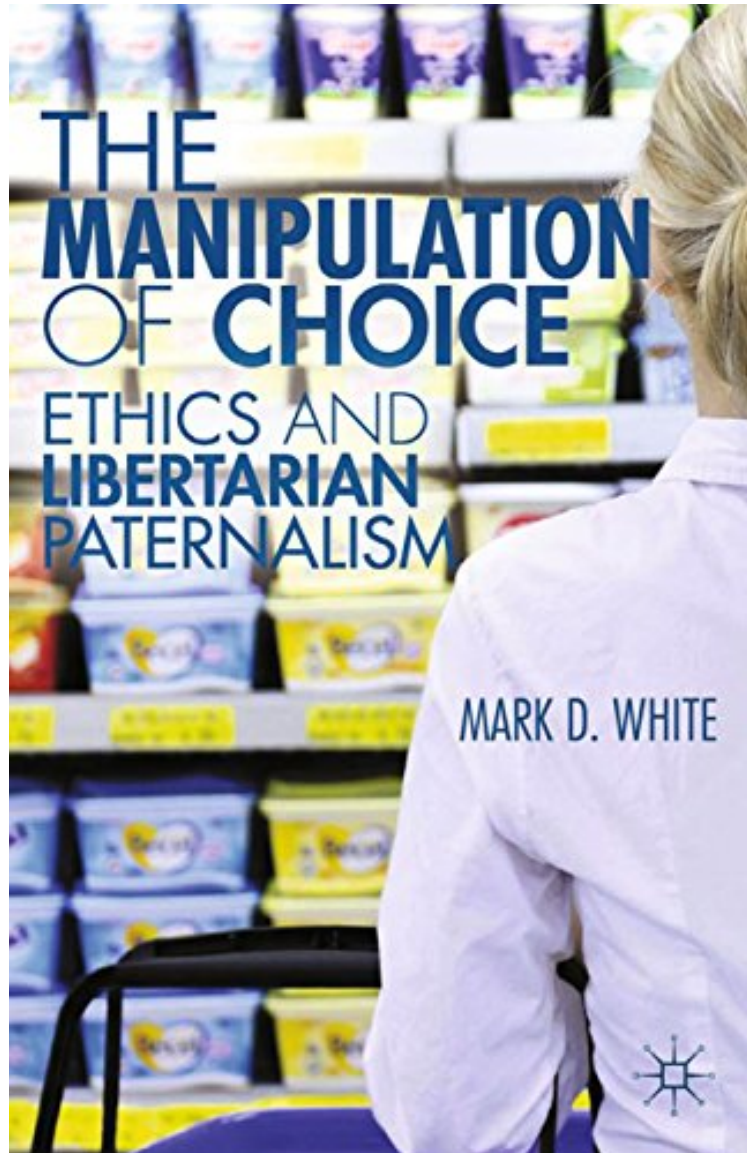


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## The Manipulation of Choice: Ethics and Libertarian Paternalism

*M. White*

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**M. White : The Manipulation of Choice: Ethics and Libertarian Paternalism** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Manipulation of Choice: Ethics and Libertarian Paternalism:

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Important readingBy Academic LawyerWhite's discussion of the so-called "libertarian paternalism" is thorough and important. He does some valuable debunking of both the problems inherent in libertarian paternalism, an attempt to have your cake and eat it too, and perhaps even more importantly, the similar shortcomings of conventional economic thought for resolving many social ills and addressing the places where

markets fail. Alas, his critique suffers from some of the same shortcomings as he charges others, particularly conventional economists, with -- that is, he makes some assumptions about the nature of the relationship between buyers and sellers in the modern marketplace that seem to be of dubious empirical foundation. For instance, he claims that buyers and sellers are "natural" antagonists and he acknowledges that sellers often attempt to manipulate buyers. But he asserts that this mostly works out and buyers' skepticism toward advertising mostly insulates them. White's construction of the marketplace is one in which there is rough equivalence between buyers and sellers and it is the government and its meddling interference on paternalistic grounds with which we ought to be most concerned. However, this rosy picture of functional equivalence is not accurate. Sellers, especially the largest ones, have far more resources at their disposal for persuasion than could ever be adequately defended against by any individual. Indeed, because human beings have limited time and attention, there is no possibility of doing adequate research on all of one's consumer purchases, even supposing that there were no cognitive limitations as well. Of course there are cognitive, resource, and time constraints that make the playing field quite tilted and White does not really grapple with this reality. Instead, he conjures up an imaginary world of rough equivalence. Still, this is a must read for anyone interested in the issues of paternalism and regulation. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. STOP NUDGING! By Ross Levatter Thoughtful philosophical analysis of the problems with behavioral economics and, even more so, forcing its "solutions" on others.

This timely book makes a forceful argument that the analyses from behavioral economists are incomplete, the policies advocated by libertarian paternalists are misguided and unethical, and both actually reinforce the cognitive biases and dysfunctions that motivate 'nudges' in the first place. In a lighthearted manner, the author points out critical flaws in the way economists model decision-making, how behavioral economics failed to correct them, and how they led to the problems with libertarian paternalism and nudges. Sprinkled throughout with anecdotes, examples, and references to a wide range of scholarly literature, this new volume argues against the use of paternalistic nudges by the government and makes a positive case for individual choice and autonomy.

"The 'libertarian paternalism' theory promises to use the state to help correct citizens' wrong decisions without asking their consent, yet also without truly entering the realm of coercion. Too good to be true? Indeed it is, as this book helps to show. Mark White gives us the sort of analysis we need to nudge back." - Walter Olson, Senior Fellow, Cato Institute, USA "The Manipulation of Choice states that paternalists impose their own values and goals onto hapless consumers and citizens. Hence, public policies designed to correct the imperfections of behavioral irrationality are coercive. This is an important point and one that needs to be debated." ndash; Jonathan B. Wight, Professor of Economics and International Studies, University of Richmond, USA About the Author Mark D. White is Chair of the Department of Philosophy at the College of Staten Island, City University of New York, USA, where he teaches courses in philosophy, economics, and law. He is the author of four books, including *The Illusion of Well-Being* (2014) and *The Manipulation of Choice* (2013), plus over forty journal articles and book chapters in the intersections between his three fields. He has also edited or co-edited a number of books, including *Retributivism* (2011), *The Thief of Time* (with Chrisoula Andreou, 2010), and *Theoretical Foundations of Law and Economics* (2009), and he is the editor of the *Perspectives from Social Economics* series at Palgrave Macmillan.