to say about morality as human beings actually experience and practice it. And his commentaries on this literature are often insightful. But in the end, the empirical evidence he reviews does not add up to a proof of the conservative theses.

David Kelley
Institute for Objectivist Studies

The Wisdom of Henry Hazlitt
Henry Hazlitt
Irvington-on-Hudson, N.Y.: Foundation for Economic
Education, 1993, 358 pp.

A few months before Henry Hazlitt's death on 8 July 1993 at the age of 98, the Foundation for Economic Education republished 31 of his essays from its monthly magazine *The Freeman*. They follow an Introduction by Hans F. Sennholz, tributes written by Bettina Bien Greaves and Edmund A. Opitz for Hazlitt's 95th birthday in 1989, and Ludwig von Mises's tribute on Hazlitt's 70th birthday in 1964. Hazlitt's autobiographical response at the 1964 celebration is also included.

The reprinted essays date from 1956 to 1985; 1971 is their median year. A few of them also appeared as parts of his books. Recurring topics include the logic of a market economy, the calculation-and-knowledge problem of socialism, poverty and welfare programs, growth of government intervention, and the uphill battle facing libertarians. Noting the bias implicit in speaking of the "private" and "public" sectors of the economy, Hazlitt suggests sometimes substituting the more forthright terms "voluntary sector" and "coercive sector."

Libertarians are handicapped, as Hazlitt says, in having to debate with bureaucrats and special-interest spokesmen who, unlike themselves, naturally have technical expertise and the details of government programs and interventions at their fingertips. In several of his articles, nevertheless, Hazlitt deploys a remarkable variety of facts and figures. He shows that he is no mere ivory-tower philosopher of freedom.

Yet he *is* a philosopher. He dissects the prize-winning *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974), in which Robert Nozick tries to legitimatize the state, though only a minimal state, as opposed to anarchy. He faults not so much that conclusion as the defective arguments that Nozick employs and his rambling, involuted, "self-heckling" style. Nozick rejects any form of utilitarian justification of his position and even caricatures utilitarianism.

Hazlitt identifies the attempt of Nozick and some other libertarians to ground their policy preferences in "natural law" or "natural rights," as in John Locke's self-ownership axiom. Hazlitt traces the appeal of natural law largely to its ambiguity. No two of its votaries seem to agree on just what it enjoins. Hazlitt quotes Jeremy Bentham: "A great multitude of people are continually talking of the Law of Nature; and then they go on giving you their sentiments about what is right and what is wrong;

and these sentiments, you are to understand, are so many chapters and sections of the Law of Nature."

The terminology of natural rights and natural law, Hazlitt notices, has helped perpetuate an unfortunate mystique, suggesting entities "independent of the human will, independent of consequences, inherent in the nature of things." He embarks on demystification, rejecting "vague and easy rhetorical solutions." The notion of rights is indeed sensible if we understand the term to mean *ideal* rights, the legal rights everyone *ought* to enjoy. (The concept of rights originated as a legal concept, says Hazlitt—how correctly I do not know—but it became extended into a concept of *moral* rights as well.) Rights imply duties: one's person's right implies the duty of one or more other people to fulfill or respect it. "If we abandon this two-sided concept the term *right* becomes a mere rhetorical flourish without definite meaning."

Left-liberals often try to stretch the concept of rights to mean entitlements to all sorts of good things, like adequate incomes and paid vacations. Hazlitt sees through these pseudo-rights. He also punctures the attempt to simplify all rights down to one single right to equality of consideration. (Nowadays Ronald Dworkin's postulate of "equal concern and respect" comes to mind, but Hazlitt traces the flawed attempt to Hastings Rashdall in 1907.)

Hazlitt distinguishes between absolute rights, which seldom if ever occur, and prima facie rights. Subject to certain conditions and within necessary qualifications, however, he maintains that legal and moral rights "are or ought to be *inviolable*."

"This inviolability does not rest on some mystical yet self-evident 'law of nature.' It rests ultimately (though it will shock many to hear this) on utilitarian considerations. But it rests, not on *ad hoc* utilitarianism, on expediency in any narrow sense, but on *rule* utilitarianism, on the recognition that the highest and only permanent utility comes from an unyielding adherence to *principle*. Only by the most scrupulous respect for each other's imprescriptible rights can we maximize social peace, order, and cooperation."

The reprinted article on "Rights" is almost identical with chapter 28 of his *The Foundations of Morality* (1964). This, my own favorite among Hazlitt's many books, deserves all the emphatic recommendations it can get.

Hazlitt grounds his own libertarian position on a sophisticated rule, or indirect, utilitarianism. Like Ludwig von Mises, he focuses on the requirements of social cooperation—the institutions, laws, ethical precepts, behavioral dispositions, and character traits necessary for people to live together peacefully, coordinate their efforts, and reap the gains from sociability, specialization, and trade. Arguing that justice does not stand in tension with utility but serves it instead, Hazlitt reminds us of the eloquent chapter 5 of John Stuart Mill's *Utilitarianism*. He also shows how even John Rawls, celebrated author of *A Theory of Justice* (1971) and avowed Kantian and contractarian foe of utilitarianism, is in fact a crypto-utilitarian. Gratifyingly, and rather by way of exception in libertarian circles, both Sennholz and Mrs. Greaves, in their introductions, show knowledgeable sympathy with the philosophical position of Hazlitt and Mises.

Among several other topics Hazlitt touches on in his newly collected essays is "The Art of Thinking," his title for an epilogue to the 1969 reprinting of his first book, *Thinking as a Science*, which he published in 19__ at the age of 21. Hazlitt expounds his strategy of lifelong self-education. Refreshingly, though perhaps uncharacteristically for someone so closely associated with Mises and the modern Austrian school of economics, Hazlitt shows a convincing sympathy for mathematics, among other fields of scholarship. A section on "Words Sharpen Observation" presents psychological insights, apparently independently arrived at, much like those that F. A. Hayek expounds in *The Sensory Order* (1952). Expressing an insight that should be preached to students who say they can scarcely begin writing their theses before getting their thoughts straight and almost completing their research, Hazlitt explains how writing can be an invaluable aid to thinking itself.

Hans Sennholz says that although Hazlitt "thought as wise men do," he "wrote as the common people speak." Not so. Phone calls to radio and television talk shows—as well as rambling discourses at university faculty meetings—furnish evidence that the lucidity and simplicity of Hazlitt's writing style are rare virtues in actual speech. Conceivably Hazlitt had a truly exceptional facility, but most writers achieve a style as good as his either not at all or only through laborious self-editing and rewriting.

Leland B. Yeager
Auburn University