

Saint-Paul, Gilles. The tyranny of utility: behavioral social science and the rise of paternalism. Princeton, 2011. 163p bibl index afp ISBN 9780691128177, \$39.50

With *Tyranny*, French economist Saint-Paul inserts himself squarely into two related conversations. The first is the long-standing but certainly contemporary discussion of the role of the individual (and individual liberty) versus state interventions. The second is the currently fashionable "frontier" of behavioral economics--intersections of economics and psychology. His book's two principal sections, "The Demise of the Unitary Individual" and "The Rise of Paternalism," encompass these two broad themes, respectively. In a thoughtful, challenging, and intellectually honest manner, the author explores the intrusion of these behavioral nudges into the assumptions and theory of neoclassical economics, social science methodologies, and public policy. The weakest section of the volume is Saint-Paul's treatment of the "happiness" material; it is incomplete and too short to cover that topic adequately. There are also minor, though also amusing, instances of faux amis and lost-in-translation moments between the author's native language and the one in which he writes. The references are adequate but not first-rate; the index is second-rate. However, this is a serious book and certainly not to be missed by scholars and public policy decision makers. Summing Up: Highly recommended. Lower-division undergraduate through professional collections.