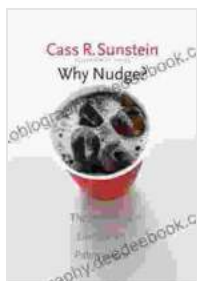


# The Politics of Libertarian Paternalism: The Storrs Lectures Series



## Why Nudge?: The Politics of Libertarian Paternalism (The Storrs Lectures Series) by Cass R. Sunstein

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

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Libertarian paternalism is a political philosophy that seeks to reconcile individual liberty with the state's interest in promoting welfare. It is based on the idea that individuals should be free to make their own choices, but that the state can intervene to prevent them from making harmful choices.

Libertarian paternalism has been the subject of much debate in recent years, as policymakers grapple with the challenges of promoting public health and safety while respecting individual autonomy. This article will explore the concept of libertarian paternalism, its philosophical underpinnings, and its implications for public policy. We will also discuss the potential benefits and drawbacks of libertarian paternalist policies, and examine the ethical and political challenges they pose.

## **The Philosophical Underpinnings of Libertarian Paternalism**

Libertarian paternalism is based on the idea that individuals should be free to make their own choices, but that the state can intervene to prevent them from making harmful choices. This is based on the premise that individuals are not always the best judges of their own interests, and that the state has a responsibility to protect them from themselves.

Libertarian paternalism is often contrasted with classical liberalism, which holds that the state should not interfere in individual liberty, even to prevent harm. Libertarian paternalists argue that classical liberalism is too narrow in its conception of freedom, and that it fails to take into account the fact that individuals may be unable to make rational choices in their own best interests.

## **The Implications of Libertarian Paternalism for Public Policy**

Libertarian paternalism has implications for a wide range of public policy issues, including public health, safety, and environmental protection.

Libertarian paternalists argue that the state can intervene to prevent individuals from making harmful choices in these areas, even if they have not violated any laws.

For example, libertarian paternalists support laws that require people to wear seat belts, even though they are free to make the choice to not wear a seat belt. They also support laws that ban smoking in public places, even though people are free to make the choice to smoke. Libertarian paternalists argue that these laws are necessary to protect individuals from the consequences of their own bad choices.

## **The Benefits and Drawbacks of Libertarian Paternalist Policies**

Libertarian paternalist policies have a number of potential benefits. They can help to protect individuals from making harmful choices, and they can also help to promote public health and safety. However, libertarian paternalist policies also have a number of potential drawbacks.

One of the main drawbacks of libertarian paternalist policies is that they can be seen as paternalistic and intrusive. Critics argue that libertarian paternalist policies are based on the assumption that individuals are not always capable of making rational choices, and that they are therefore in need of protection from the state. This can be seen as a violation of individual autonomy, and it can lead to a loss of trust in the government.

Another drawback of libertarian paternalist policies is that they can be difficult to enforce. It can be difficult to determine when an individual is making a harmful choice, and it can be even more difficult to prevent them from making that choice. This can lead to a situation where libertarian paternalist policies are either ineffective or they are enforced in a discriminatory manner.

### **The Ethical and Political Challenges of Libertarian Paternalism**

Libertarian paternalism poses a number of ethical and political challenges. One of the main challenges is the question of who decides what constitutes a harmful choice. Libertarian paternalists argue that the state should be responsible for making this decision, but critics argue that this gives the state too much power over individual liberty.

Another challenge is the question of how to balance individual autonomy with the state's interest in promoting welfare. Libertarian paternalists argue that the state should only intervene to prevent individuals from making harmful choices, but critics argue that this is too narrow a conception of the

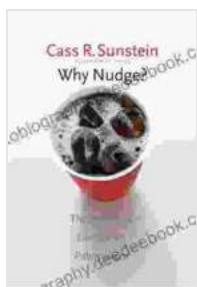
state's role. They argue that the state also has a responsibility to promote the welfare of its citizens, even if this means limiting their freedom to make harmful choices.

## The Storrs Lectures Series

The Storrs Lectures Series is a series of lectures that brings together leading scholars to discuss the latest research on libertarian paternalism. The lectures are held annually at the University of Connecticut, and they are sponsored by the Institute for Social and Economic Policy.

The Storrs Lectures Series has been a major forum for the discussion of libertarian paternalism, and it has helped to shape the debate over this important issue. The lectures have featured some of the world's leading scholars on libertarian paternalism, including Cass R. Sunstein, Richard H. Thaler, and Michael J. Sandel.

Libertarian paternalism is a complex and controversial political philosophy that has implications for a wide range of public policy issues. It is based on the idea that individuals should be free to make their own choices, but that the state can intervene to prevent them from making harmful choices. Libertarian paternalist policies have a number of potential benefits, but they also have a number of potential drawbacks. The ethical and political challenges of libertarian paternalism are complex, and they will continue to be debated for many years to come.



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