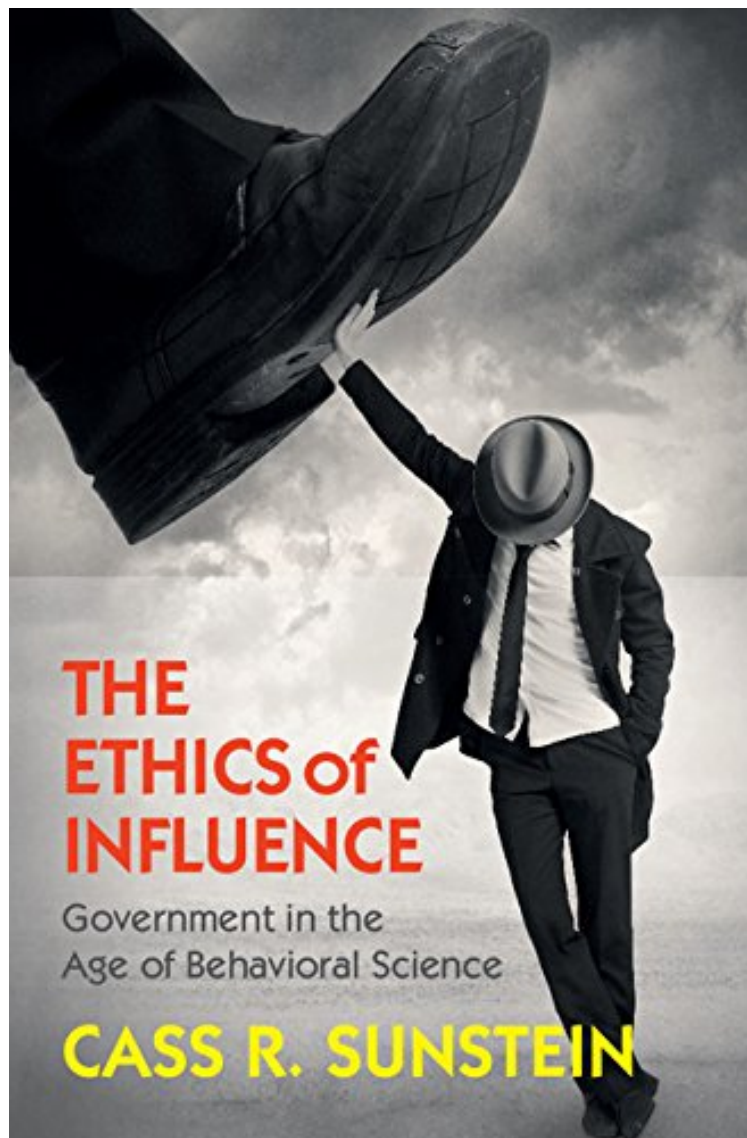


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## The Ethics of Influence: Government in the Age of Behavioral Science (Cambridge Studies in Economics, Choice, and Society)

*Cass R. Sunstein*

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**Cass R. Sunstein : The Ethics of Influence: Government in the Age of Behavioral Science (Cambridge Studies in Economics, Choice, and Society)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Ethics of Influence: Government in the Age of Behavioral Science (Cambridge Studies in Economics, Choice, and Society):

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In recent years, 'Nudge Units' or 'Behavioral Insights Teams' have been created in the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and other nations. All over the world, public officials are using the behavioral sciences to protect the environment, promote employment and economic growth, reduce poverty, and increase national security. In this book, Cass R. Sunstein, the eminent legal scholar and best-selling co-author of *Nudge* (2008), breaks new ground with a deep yet highly readable investigation into the ethical issues surrounding nudges, choice architecture, and mandates, addressing such issues as welfare, autonomy, self-government, dignity, manipulation, and the constraints and responsibilities of an ethical state. Complementing the ethical discussion, *The Ethics of Influence: Government in the Age of Behavioral Science* contains a wealth of new data on people's attitudes towards a broad range of nudges, choice architecture, and mandates.

"In this era of intransigence and intolerance, *The Ethics of Influence* is a vitally needed book. It embraces what all of us - left, right, and center - mutually want: a balance between the goals of welfare, autonomy, dignity, and self-government. What's more, it is a hoot to read. Roll over Mill and Marx; tell Hayek and Gramsci the news." George A. Akerlof, Nobel Laureate in Economics, 2001 "As more governments and businesses turn to "nudging", pioneer Sunstein turns his brilliant mind to building an ethical framework for these powerful approaches. New findings on public attitudes to nudges - showing surprisingly high levels of support even among traditionally skeptical Americans - are combined with Sunstein's trademark clarity of thought to offer a timely framework that will be influential across the world." David Halpern, CEO, Behavioural Insights Team, and author, *Inside the Nudge Unit* "In a book full of convincing detail but free of dogmatism, Sunstein walks us through the case for and against nudges. Nudges are, in some circumstances, the best tool government has at its disposal - cheaper than financial incentives, more freedom-preserving than mandates, and more effective than information. Our government is sometimes ethically required to nudge us. Nonetheless, nudges raise legitimate ethical concerns, foremost among them that they can be manipulative. Sunstein ultimately makes a powerful argument for the widespread use of nudges by government, but without shortchanging the ethical arguments on both sides." Anne Barnhill, University of Pennsylvania "One need not agree with all of Cass R. Sunstein's arguments about nudging to admire him for doing more than anyone to champion the importance of behavioral science for public policymaking. Owing to him, it is an increasingly recognized ethical imperative to measure government actions not only against societal values but also against evidence." Ralph Hertwig, Director, Center for Adaptive Rationality, Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Germany "Cass R. Sunstein knows more than anyone about nudging, and in this very insightful book he brings his acute reasoning to understanding the ethics behind choice architecture. Here he considers sources from Mill to Hayak to Ostrom, and argues that choice architecture is unavoidable and in many cases it is the right thing to do. Just as importantly, he talks about when nudging is wrong and when it is manipulative. All in all, it is an essential book for anyone interested in the ethics of behavioral intervention, either by governments or firms." Eric J. Johnson, Norman Eig Professor of Business, Columbia University, New York "Behavioural regulation has spread to governments worldwide. This brilliant book tackles the many myths that have evolved around the use of behavioural economics in politics. Cass R. Sunstein explains in clear words how (and why) the core values of an Ethical State - welfare, autonomy, dignity, and self-government - are indeed best served by governments that carefully base their policies on an empirical foundation and use behavioural insights as additional effective policy tools." Lucia A. Reisch, Copenhagen Business School "We typically consider ourselves rational actors, whose dignity derives from our autonomy. In fact, our behavior is easily shaped by other actors and by external factors, often outside our awareness and control. When government intervenes to influence our behaviors, often to improve our lives, we recoil. But if government remains uninvolved while other interests are free to shape our world, how autonomous are we then? Sunstein confronts our naiveteacute; with a penetrating discussion about how to balance government influence against personal dignity, manipulation against autonomy, and behavioral facts against political ideals. This book is an engrossing read." Eldar Shafir, William Stuart Tod Professor of Psychology and Public Affairs, Princeton University, New Jersey, and co-author of *Scarcity* About the Author Cass R. Sunstein is Robert Walmsley University Professor at Harvard University, Massachusetts. From 2009 to 2012, he was Administrator of the White House Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. He is the founder and director of the Program on Behavioral Economics and Public Policy at Harvard Law School, and he is the author of many articles and books, including the best-selling *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness* (with Richard H. Thaler, 2008), *Simpler: The Future of Government* (2013), *Why Nudge?* (2014), *Conspiracy Theories and Other Dangerous Ideas* (2014), *Wiser: Beyond Groupthink to Make Groups Smarter* (2014), *Valuing Life: Humanizing the Regulatory State* (2014), *Choosing Not to Choose: Understanding the Value of Choice*

(2015) and Constitutional Personae: Heroes, Soldiers, Minimalists, and Mutes (2015).