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Nota di contenuto

Frontmatter -- Contents -- Acknowledgments -- Introduction -- Part I. The Demise of the Unitary Individual -- 1. Political Organization and the Conception of Man -- 2. The Challenge to the Unitary Individual in Western Thought -- 3. Economics: The Last Bastion of Rationality -- 4. Economics Goes Behavioral -- 5. From Utility to Happiness -- Part II. The Rise of Paternalism -- Introduction -- 6. Post-Utilitarianism: Searching for a Collective Soul in the Behavioral Era -- 7. The Policy Prescriptions of Behavioral Economics -- 8. The Modern Paternalistic State -- 9. Responsibility Transfer -- 10. The Role of Science -- 11. Markets in a Paternalistic World -- 12. Where to Go? -- References -- Index

Sommario/riassunto

The general assumption that social policy should be utilitarian--that society should be organized to yield the greatest level of welfare--leads inexorably to increased government interventions. Historically, however, the science of economics has advocated limits to these interventions for utilitarian reasons and because of the assumption that people know what is best for themselves. But more recently, behavioral economics has focused on biases and inconsistencies in individual behavior. Based on these developments, governments now prescribe the foods we eat, the apartments we rent, and the composition of our financial portfolios. The Tyranny of Utility takes on this rise of paternalism and its dangers for individual freedoms, and examines how developments in economics and the social sciences are leading to greater government intrusion in our private lives. Gilles Saint-Paul posits that the utilitarian foundations of individual freedom promoted by traditional economics are fundamentally flawed. When combined with developments in social science that view the individual as incapable of making rational and responsible choices, utilitarianism seems to logically call for greater governmental intervention in our lives. Arguing that this cannot be defended on purely instrumental grounds, Saint-Paul calls for individual liberty to be restored as a central value in our society. Exploring how behavioral economics is contributing to the excessive rise of paternalistic interventions, The Tyranny of Utility presents a controversial challenge to the prevailing currents in economic and political discourse.