Zoon Eleutherion: Man as an Individualist Animal

Classical Individualism: The Supreme Importance of Each Human Being. By Tibor Machan. *Studies in Social and Political Thought.* New York: Routledge, 1998. 243 pp. + xvii.

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I. Introduction

Tibor Machan's *Classical Individualism* (hereafter, *CI*) brings together a number of themes on the broad topic of "individualism" that have occupied the author's attention for the past three decades. The book consists of a Preface, with fifteen essays and an Epilogue, covering fairly abstract issues like free will and the objectivity of moral value, and relatively concrete ones, like multiculturalism and environmentalism. Like much of Machan's work, *CI* is informed in its broad approach by the writings of Ayn Rand, and Machan devotes a chapter at the end of the book to acknowledging and accounting for this intellectual debt (*CI*, ch. 15).

The breadth of Machan's arguments makes it impossible to discuss each of the essays in turn in the space at my disposal, or even to do justice to any significant number of them. Instead, I'll focus here on what I take to be two overarching themes of the book—the *metaphysical* basis of individualism in free will, and the *ethico-political* basis of individualism in a broadly Aristotelian conception of value.

II. Machan on metaphysical freedom

It's a commonplace of philosophy that the term "freedom" is multiply ambiguous, having one group of senses in the context of metaphysical debates, and another in the context of debates about politics. On a fairly standard account of the distinction, *free will* pertains primarily to mental acts internal to the agent, which are beyond the power of others to control, while *political freedom* consists in the absence of restrictions on overt actions, which lie within the jurisdiction of government and can be violated by the acts of others. As a stylistic matter, I'll occasionally use the term *metaphysical freedom* as a synonym for "free will," and *metaphysical libertarianism* as a synonym for "the doctrine of free will."

It is, of course, important to distinguish metaphysical from political freedom as philosophers typically do, since the two are importantly different phenomena. The failure to distinguish between them leads to confusions like that of the hapless undergraduate I once taught, who, when asked to write an essay on "the topic of free will," instead produced an impassioned tract advocating

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the repeal of all gun control laws, on the grounds that such laws constituted an impediment to "our freedom as Americans." On the other hand, it's possible to go to the reverse extreme, and fail to see that there is an important connection between political and metaphysical freedom--a connection justifying the thought that both things are related to the same phenomenon, the freedom of the individual from restrictions on moral action.

Machan forges a connection between metaphysical and political freedom by stressing the need for a *normative* argument for political freedom (CI, Preface, chs. 1, 2, 10, 13). The root meaning of the word "norm" is that of a principle or standard of evaluation for guiding action. Political freedom is a normative concept, Machan argues, because it denotes the absence of coercive restrictions over action to which we have a *right* (*CI*, p. 164). And rights, in turn, are principles whose primary function is:

> to provide adult persons with a sphere of moral jurisduction. This is due them because of their moral nature, because they have moral tasks in life that they ought to fulfill. Intruding on their sphere of moral jurisdiction would amount to thwarting their moral agency. And basic rights spell out where the conduct of others would or would not amount to intrusion. That is why the 'border' analogy is useful, even if it runs the risk of giving a physical image of a person's sphere of moral authority. Moral agents require borders around them so as to know what their responsibilities are and where others must ultimately leave decisions up to them (*CI*, p. 122).

Rights, in other words, have the irreducibly normative function of identifying where it is that moral agents *must* be treated as *sovereign* over their actions. *Justice* tells us that within specified limits, they are *entitled* to assume control over their own actions without interference by others. The normativity of rights arises from the fact that the italicized terms in the preceding two sentences are ineliminably part of the concept of rights, and all four of those terms are normative. If *political freedom* is defined in terms of *rights*, and *coercion* is defined correlatively in terms of *political freedom*, then political freedom and coercion are normative terms as well.

The move from political to metaphysical freedom now becomes fairly straightforward. If political freedom is in fact morally valuable, and worth protecting, then respect for its conditions is a moral obligation. But if moral obligation entails moral responsibility, and responsibility entails metaphysical freedom, then an argument for political freedom must affirm free will and reject determinism (*CI*, ch. 2). Free will, in turn, requires an agent-causal conception of human action (*CI*, p. 23). So a commitment to political liberty ultimately turns out to be grounded in a metaphysical commitment to individualism via agent-causality.

Machan's central discussion of these claims comes in chapter 2 of the book, which lays out a case for free will, and discusses the problematic nature of its neglect in ethics, political philosophy, and the social sciences. The most valuable feature of the chapter is Machan's attack on John Rawls's "independence thesis," which denies the existence of a methodological priority between the claims of "comprehensive" doctrines on the one hand, and those of moral and political theory on the other.[1] A *political* theory of justice, on this view, must be "freestanding":

> While we want a political conception to have a justification by reference to one or more comprehensive doctrines, it is neither presented as, nor is derived from, such a doctrine applied to the basic structure of society, as if this structure were simply another subject to which that doctrine applied . . . To use a current phrase, the political conception is a module, an essential constituent part, that fits into and can be supported by various reasonable comprehensive doctrines that endure in the society regulated by it. This means that it can be presented without saying, or knowing, or hazarding a conjecture about, what such doctrines it may belong to, or be supported by.[2]

As Rawls puts it, a political conception of liberalism and justice is "impartial" on such issues as the existence of God, the problem of universals, the truth-conditions of moral propositions, and the nature of free will and mind; it is consistent with any and all "reasonable" conceptions of these things.[3] It is "as far as possible, independent of the opposing and conflicting philosophical and religious doctrines that citizens affirm."[4] As Machan points out, the independence thesis (and the method of reflective equilibrium) predictably sanctions a theory that is shielded from criticism by those who reject the intuitive presuppositions and "settled convictions" of Rawls's epistemic constituency. Rawls's appeal to this constituency for the warrant of his theory relieves him of the need to argue for its *truth*, which in turn saves him from having to confront the charge that the theory is false. Correspondence-truth and falsehood are beside the point; the theory aims at a "practical political purpose" that is realized if it "makes our considered convictions more coherent," where the pronoun "our" refers to "those who accept the basic ideas of a constitutional regime," defined as Rawls defines it.

Rawls's treatment of free will and moral responsibility is a case in point. On the one hand, Rawls repeatedly tells us that his political conception of justice "disavows reliance" on any particular metaphysical view.[6] On the other hand, he finds himself addressing topics like moral responsibility that seem to require metaphysical treatment of some kind. His solution is to insist that what he says on such topics is somehow impartial between competing theories. But

this claim is hard to square with passages like the following from *A Theory of Justice*:

> The assertion that a man deserves the superior character that enables him to make the effort to cultivate his abilities is equally problematic [as the assertion that he deserves his native endowments in the first place]; for his character depends in large part upon fortunate family and social circumstances for which he can claim no credit. The notion of desert seems not to apply to these cases.[7]

Rawls's view of character-formation clearly privileges determinism over free will. At the very least, it tells us that determinism has more explanatory power than metaphysical freedom in the explanation of character-formation, since the tiny (apparent) concession that Rawls makes to free will ("depends in *large* part") is compatible with his rejection of "the notion of desert" in character-formation. This decided preference for determinism shapes the structure of his theory at a fundamental level by means of the constraints that Rawls places on the concept of "desert," and by implication on "justice." It is hard to see how such assumptions can be "irrelevant" to "the structure and content of a political conception of justice," as Rawls implies they are.

Given Rawls's influence on contemporary moral theory, and the frequency with which he is cited as an authority in the literature, Machan argues plausibly that Rawls is indirectly responsible (so to speak) for the creation of a cottage industry in applied ethics that takes determinism as its point of departure, and churns out its consequences, sometimes with tragic-comic effect (see *CI* ch. 2 and references). The result is an artificial and self-perpetuating consensus in philosophy on the irrelevance of metaphysical freedom to practical life. Having marginalized free will from explanations of action from the start, theorists then insist that it is irrelevant, on the circular grounds that it doesn't figure in explanations of action. Having marginalized "unreasonable" comprehensive doctrines, we are told that the search for a true foundation for a comprehensive meta-ethics is "delusional."

Machan disagrees, and develops his own agent-causal conception of free will in chapter 3 of *CI*. His thesis here might be expressed in the slogan *self-determination explains moral individuation*, that is, the way in which a moral agent initiates and takes responsibility for his action explains the ways in which that agent is the individual he is, or has the moral identity he has. In brief, the argument is this. Non-human animals are certainly "individuals" in the sense of being individually separate, three-dimensionsal entities, and even in the sense of having their own distinct quasi-moral "characters" or "dispositions." Pet owners, zoo keepers, and naturalists insist—often vehemently—that some animals are "sweet-tempered" while others "have a bad temper," and some are "timid," while others are "bold." But the character of a non-human animal is entirely a function of nature and nurture; such animals don't *control*

the making of their characters by controlling the causal influence of nature and nurture on them. Non-human animals are not, in short, self-determining or self-responsible agents.

By contrast, human beings are. How a person controls the antecedent factors that influence his action is an essential part—if not *the* essential part—of the etiology of human action. Machan correctly stresses that self-determination is a *causal* variable—that it actually explains empirical events in the real world in a way that cannot, in principle, be explained in any other way. The importance of this point is hard to underestimate, since it is often ignored even by those who defend free will. Thus one advocate of free will tells us that though we have free will, it "must account for a fairly small percentage of the things we do."[10] Another goes so far as to assert that:

> If prediction and explanation are paradigmatic of scientific understanding, it appears that agent causation neither contributes to nor detracts from such understanding. Its contribution rather would be to our understanding of ourselves as moral agents. [11]

Both claims amount to the concession that free will has no empirical, explanatory, or practical significance. When it comes to explaining human action, we are best advised to call on the resources of determinism.

The trick to constructing a plausible theory of free will is to combine the thesis that we are self-determining agents with the thesis that our actions are part of the causal order, and involve goal-directed states of motivation. The attraction of determinism consists in the seeming ease with which it makes action intelligible by citing its causes: it often seems easier to understand how an act could be caused and motivated by deterministic antecedents than by self-determination without determinative antecedence. Given this, self-determination seems at first glance to lead to the absurdities of counter-causality or randomness. To avoid absurdity, the metaphysical libertarian needs to give an account of mental causation which shows in detail how and why mental action can be self-determined and produce physical action. Following Ayn Rand, Machan locates metaphysical freedom in the phenomenon of mental focus, and such related phenomena as attention, evasion, and the like. These phenomena are the right ones for solving the free will problem because they are *basic motivations*, involving both cognitive and conative elements; they make reasoned deliberation and action possible without themselves requiring prior deliberation or action.

Machan applies this framework to explain the actions of Rhoda Penmark, a character in the film *The Bad Seed*, depicted there as a quasi-psychopathic murderer. Provisionally setting aside the possibility that Rhoda is the victim of "involuntary cognitive impairment,"[12] Machan sets out to show, by the method of inference to the best explanation, that Rhoda's actions are best explained by

appeal to intentional and volitional evil. The explanation involves three important variables. As a preliminary, Machan claims, Rhoda's actions can only be made intelligible if we see them as *intentional* or *volitional*, a fact that opens the door to an agent-causal explanation. Second, the relevantly explanatory volitions involve subversion of Rhoda's cognitive faculties best understood as a form of *voluntary self-subversion*. Finally, the self-subversion in question consists in an *evasion* of moral principles to which Rhoda (presumably)[13] had epistemic access, and thus serve to indict her of a form of irrationality that Machan calls "cognitive malpractice." Machan's explanation succeeds to the extent that these three variables in fact explain what Rhoda does better than rival explanations can.[14]

How well does Machan succeed? Not having seen the film, I find it hard to say; impressionistically, I found the account plausible but incomplete. But completeness is neither to be expected, nor the appropriate standard of evaluation for a single article on the subject. The value of Machan's account lies in its giving us an ingenious "just-so story" for explanations of intentional evil--one that invites further development. As James Lennox has argued in a different context, "just-so stories" function as tests of a theory's explanatory potential: they lay out the broad framework within which we can isolate the variables of a full explanation, plan a research program, and eventually test the results of that research.[15] By isolating volitional evasion as a factor in the explanation of evil, Machan opens up a number of exciting directions for future research at the frontiers of action theory and moral psychology. What makes that prospect especially exciting, I think, is the way in which Machan's account coheres with what we know about evil from other sources in the recent literature. Sometimes an explanation is incomplete because it is empirically inadequate. The coherence of Machan's account with that wider literature suggests just the opposite—that his theory's incompleteness is less a matter of empirical inadequacy than a sign of explanatory potential waiting to be realized.

III. Machan on individualism

"Individualism," writes Susan Love Brown,

> has been a dirty word ever since the French coined the term *individualisme* in the nineteenth century to label the horrific phenomenon that had overtaken their country in the form of a bloody revolution based on such radical ideas as individual rights and the rule of reason.[17]

In this respect, the provenance of "individualism" resembles that of "egoism" and "capitalism." All three terms were coined with the explicit intention of tarnishing each target by association with something obviously perverse, irrational, and evil. In each case, the coiners' strategy consisted in what Ayn Rand has aptly called "package-dealing": subsuming fundamentally dissimilar items under a single word, and then using that word univocally to convey the illusion

of similarity between the items.

The standard story in mainstream political theory holds that while "individualism" has some legitimate attractions, it is in most respects a "problematic" ideal. But so is collectivism. Therefore, we're best off rejecting the "simplistic categories" of individualism versus collectivism in favor of a "more sophisticated" terminology that transcends them both.[18] This "sophisticated" insight is typically applied with a double standard, however, and theorists often forget the supposed attractions of individualism in their more moralistic moments, dredging up its Jacobin connotations when they need to make a polemical point. The result typically sounds something like this: "This book... describes a way of life that is dying—the culture of competitive individualism, which in its decadence has carried the logic of individualism to the extreme of a war of all against all, the pursuit of happiness to the dead end of a narcissistic preoccupation with the self."[19]

As Machan points out, despite the lip service given to the ideals of individualism, it is precisely this diabolical conception of it that informs a good deal of contemporary political theory. Though theorists tell us that they are only interested in giving the concept some "nuance," the nuance-giving is often led, as if by an invisible hand, to the task of delegitimizing individualism by packaging it with hedonism, narcissism, anomie, Social Darwinism, or Jacobinism. The plausibility of such manuvers rests on a refusal to give the term a definition, but an insistence on using it to conjure up images of social or psychological dislocation.

Contemporary critics of individualism might be said to fall into five groups:

1. *Neo-Marxists* (e.g., C.B. MacPherson, Jon Elster);
2. *Conservatives* (e.g., Leo Strauss, John Gray, Irving Kristol);
3. *Communtarians* (e.g., Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, Michael Sandel, Amitai Etzioni, Mary Midgely);
4. Various subgroupings of New Left *identity politics* (e.g., environmentalism, multiculturalism, some brands of feminism);
5. Non-Marxist *social democrats* (e.g., Richard Rorty, John Rawls, Martha Nussbaum, Will Kymlicka, Christopher Lasch).

Though the differences between these groups might matter in other contexts, such differences fade into the background when we view all five groups against the foil of Machan's classical individualism. Whatever the differences between them, all five groups share an explicit hostility to the view Machan espouses. This includes groups (2) and (5), which contain members that in some sense might be called conservative or liberal "individualists." None of these theorists, however, would be comfortable with Machan's conception of individualism as individual sovereignty over the products of one's labor, or of individual rights as restricting the government to the functions of a classical liberal state (*CI*, chs. 5, 10). A good deal of *CI* is devoted to responding to all five sorts of critics.

To this end, Machan distinguishes between two brands of individualism, Aristotelian and Hobbesian. *Hobbesian individualism*, on his account, is the problematic form, characterized by nominalism about universals, subjectivism about value, and atomism about human nature. *Aristotelian individualism* is the "classical" and defensible form, characterized by conceptualism about universals, objectivism about value, and what we might call biosocial essentialism (my term) about human nature. On this latter Aristotelian or classical version of individualism, Aristotelian individuals ought to be the primary unit of analysis in normative theory, and the primary concern of a legitimate social order. Each of us ought to strive, as Aristotelian individuals, to regard the pursuit of our own happiness as our overriding moral obligation. A just social order would respect that obligation by protecting the conditions that facilitated its optimal pursuit by each of us. Machan argues that the anti-individualists mentioned above are successful in their attacks on Hobbesian individualism, but fail to distinguish between it and Aristotelian individualism, which they leave entirely unscathed in their criticisms.[20]

Among the criticisms Machan works to overcome in *CI* is the objection that the very idea of "Aristotelian individualism" is incoherent. Aristotle, after all, is best known for his dictum that "man is by nature a political animal." Anti-individualists have often used this Aristotelian thesis to argue against individualism as follows: 1) Aristotle was correct to argue that humans are by nature political animals; 2) but individualism denies this Aristotelian truth; 3) hence individualism is false. The argument raises a dilemma for Machan: if classical individualism is Aristotelian, it can't be genuinely individualistic; but if it's really individualistic, it can't be genuinely Aristotelian. So, the criticism goes, Machan must choose between his commitments to Aristotelianism and to individualism.

Machan, however, believes that he can have both Aristotelianism and individualism simultaneously. Granting the existence of contrary evidence, he isolates a solid core of textual evidence for a form of individualism in Aristotle and generally in the Aristotelian tradition. The plausibility of Machan's argument derives from the fact that individualism is in fact a pervasive theme in several important elements of Aristotle's philosophy. Thus some support for individualism comes from Aristotle's metaphysics of entities which, to quote Edward Zeller, makes "the Individual...the primary reality" in Aristotle's ontology, and gives it "first claim on recognition" (*CI*, p. 175). Some of it comes from Aristotle's theory of action, which is the *locus classicus* of the agent-causal theory of free will that Machan defends elsewhere in the book. Some of it comes from Aristotle's theory of value, which makes an individual organism's flourishing that organism's ultimate end, and the source of the norms that guide its life. Some of it comes from Aristotle's theory of practical reasoning and virtue, which places a high premium on ordering one's life by one's own rational choices. Some of it even comes from the most anti-individualist part of Aristotle's philosophy, his politics; in a justly-celebrated study, Fred D. Miller Jr. has recently argued that Aristotle's political theory gives a central place to individual rights and a "moderately individualistic" theory of the common good.[21] Machan usefully points to similarities between this Aristotelian conception of

individualism and various historical influences on contemporary life, from Christian and Islamic theology, to classical liberalism, to the thought of the American Founders, to the writings of Ayn Rand (*CI*, Preface, chs. 1, 14, 15).

One of the virtues of Machan's discussion is that he manages to maintain a healthy sense of perspective on the texts, making a good case for Aristotelian individualism while acknowledging the existence of other ways of reading the texts, and some texts that contradict his interpretation. The purpose of appealing to the texts is to identify two forms of individualism at a fairly high level of generality, and the evidence that Machan cites is more or less sufficient for this task. In this respect, Machan's approach differs drastically from some of his critics, whose *modus operandi* consists in making bold, unsupported—and occasionally downright wild—assertions about the relationship between Aristotle and individualism. A close reading of the Preface, and of chapters 1, 4, 14, and 15 of *CI* should give such critics pause, and give others a lot to think about.

Having made the case for the coherence of an Aristotelian form of individualism, however, it's a separate task to make that case relevant to contemporary life. Aristotle lived nearly 2400 years ago in a slave-owning, deeply misogynistic society, and explicitly deprecated the value of productive work. In fact, Aristotle's view of productive work—that it is an inferior task performed by inferior people whose products can be expropriated at will (cf. *Politics* 1254a4-8)—is not only the antithesis of Machan's individualism, but is arguably one of the sources of opposition to it. Drawing on Locke and the other classical liberals, Machan works to detach these Aristotelian prejudices from Aristotle's more fundamental claims (e.g., those mentioned above), and then connects these fundamental claims with an essentially Lockean politics. One of the best results of this approach is Machan's treatment of the so-called "tragedy of the commons," which he renames the *moral tragedy of the commons*, and conceptualizes in a way that is both clearer and deeper than that of its "original" author, Garrett Hardin (CI, p. 49). The idea of a moral tragedy of the commons has deep roots in Aristotle's critique of Platonic communism, and in Locke's theory of property; Machan redeploys the concept to offer criticisms of redistribution and environmentalism that maintain continuity with the Aristotelian and Lockean arguments (CI, chs. 5, 10, 11, 12, passim).

My one objection to Machan's treatment of individualism is his tendency to overstate the case against "atomism" without really making clear what is supposed to be wrong with it. In fact, Machan goes so far as to assert that human beings are "essentially social animals," and (I assume) takes "atomism" to be the denial of this claim.

This strikes me as too much of a concession. It is, I think, far from obvious that human beings are "essentially social animals" in the literal and technical sense that "sociality" is the essence of the animal *Homo sapiens sapiens*. For one thing, that assertion would require a worked-out theory of essentiality, which neither Machan nor his anti-individualist critics discuss. It would also require criteria for what it is to be a social *animal*—criteria that do not yield

obvious results in the human case. On one definition, a "social animal" might be an animal species whose adult members were literally incapable of physiological self-maintenance apart from a social structure of other conspecific adults. Honeybees and ants seem to fit this description, but even intuitively "social animals" like lions do not. Though lions usually live in groups—and usually enhance their life-prospects by doing so—adult lions promote their *own* survival as individuals (not that of their prides, much less their species), and are capable of surviving as nomads. In fact, in some cases nomadic life is *better* for a given lion than life in a pride. [22]

Human beings may in some sense be "social animals," but if so, they are more like lions than they are like honeybees or ants. In fact, focusing on our unique attributes, it is clear that our life-functions are far *more* individualistic than those of lions or of any non-rational animal. If flourishing is a matter of self-generated and self-sustaining action, then an animal's essential attribute is the irreducible capacity that is causally responsible for generating, directing, and sustaining action in that kind of animal. In the human case, that attribute is *reason*, which is causally responsible for our acquiring knowledge, setting ends, and determining action. To be sure, social life plays an important role in the development of that faculty, and in creating the conditions for its optimal functioning. But that only means that sociality is important to human life, not that sociality is our essence. If we have free will, we initiate action on our own; if knowledge is a property of individuals, we acquire it on our own; if survival qua human is our ultimate end, we pursue it for ourselves; if we are sovereign agents, then our persons constitute inviolable boundaries against others; if self-esteem is a value, we can enjoy it by and for ourselves.

We identify the requirements of the best society in terms of *these* needs, individualistically conceived, not vice versa. That is why, as Ayn Rand puts it, "No society can be of value to man's life if the price is the surrender of his right to his life." Notice that Rand's claim presupposes that we can identify the requirements of "man's life" prior to and independently of our conception of human sociality. The requirements thus conceived provide the standard for a *subsequent* conception of human sociality. We can't, without vicious circularity, begin with an irreducible conception of "sociality" and then assume that "man's life" includes it as a constituent.

If so, I don't think that there's much to be gained by denying that classical individualism is "atomistic." It's worth remembering that atoms form bonds based on their natures—powerful and lasting ones. It's hardly an indictment of a naturalistic theory of individualism to recognize that, in our own way, we do the same thing—with the difference, to paraphrase Thomas Jefferson, that when the need arises, we can choose to dissolve our social bonds in the name of independence.

IV. Conclusion

Though virtually every reader of *CI* will have quarrels and quibbles with

Machan's claims, as I did, most readers, I think, will find it a useful distillation of the case for neo-Aristotelian individualism, and a catalyst for more finely-grained work on the issues it raises. Action theorists, ethicists, and theorists of culture might pay attention to the details of Machan's account of volitional evil, and test the plausibility of his just-so story on works of fiction, history, journalism, or on everyday life. Social scientists and political philosophers might ask how the concept of "a moral tragedy of the commons" integrates causal consequences and normative principles in the case for classical liberalism. And historians might ask questions about the explanatory power of the distinction between Aristotelian and Hobbesian individualism, whether applied to texts or to events. There is much more in the book than can be conveyed here, however; anyone interested in individualism would profit by taking a look at *CI* for himself.

NOTES

1. The initial statement of the thesis is in John Rawls, "The Independence of Moral Theory," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, vol. 49 (1974). Machan mostly limits himself to Rawls's earlier statements.
2. John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, paperback edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 12.
3. Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, pp. 58-66. The point is hard to state with any precision, since Rawls tells us that his "account of reasonable comprehensive doctrines is deliberately loose" (p. 59). The 1974 statement of the view (note 1) is clearer.
4. Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 9.
5. The quoted phrases are all from Rawls, Political Liberalism: "settled convictions" (p. 8), the remainder from p. 156.
6. The quoted phrase and one instance of the claim are found at *Political Liberalism*, p. 29. One of the puzzles of this "disavowal" is that Rawls concedes that he is unsure of what is being disavowed (p. 29n.31). He then ventures some suggestions, "avoids" commenting on them, and finally offers an alternative tentative suggestion without fully endorsing it.
7. John Rawls, A *Theory of Justice*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 104, discussed on p. 22 of *CI*. Rawls asserts the basic continuity of A *Theory of Justice with Political Liberalism* on p. xvi of the latter book.
8. Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 29n.31.
9. Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. xviii.
10. Peter van Inwagen, "When is the Will Free?" in *Agents, Causes, and Events: Essays on Indeterminism and Free Will*, edited by Timothy O'Connor, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 235.
11. Randolph Clarke, "Toward a Credible Agent-Causal Account of Free Will," in *Agents, Causes, and Events*, p. 210.
12. Machan sets it aside not necessarily because he takes it to be false, but because he wants to offer a disjunctive explanation: *either* Rhoda is involuntarily impaired—or if she is *not* involuntarily impaired, then she is volitionally evil. Obviously, since we're dealing with a fictional character in a film, Machan can't have access to all of the information needed to offer the "true" explanation of Rhoda's actions, so the disjunctive procedure is perfectly justified on his part.
13. Again, subject to the proviso in the preceding footnote. If Rhoda were involuntarily impaired, she could not have had epistemic access, but if she were not involuntarily impaired, she would have had to evade her own moral knowledge.
14. For a rival explanation, see Laurie Calhoun, "Moral Blindness and Moral Responsibility: What Can We Learn from Rhoda Penmark?" *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, vol. 13 (1996), pp. 41-50. Calhoun's essay contains more detailed analysis of the film than Machan's, but suffers from what seems to me a serious difficulty. On the one hand, Calhoun argues that Rhoda "has no cognitive deficiencies whatsoever" (p. 41); on the other hand, Rhoda is described as "morally blind." On the face of it, this seems self-contradictory: "moral blindness" is typically taken to be a failure of moral discernment, which is precisely a "cognitive deficiency." Further, Calhoun describes Rhoda as engaging in "rationalization" (p. 43), and as being self-deceived (p. 47). Calhoun's response seems to be that the relevant explanatory variable is lack of the relevant moral (but not cognitive) sentiments (p. 49). But this explanation flies in the face of Calhoun's own evidence, which bears on cognition.
15. James Lennox, "Darwinian Thought-Experiments: A Function for Just-So Stories," in *Thought Experiments in*

Science and Philosophy, edited by Tamara Horowitz and Gerald J. Massey, (Savage, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1991), pp. 236-238.

16. The most famous source is Hannah Arendt; see *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking, 1964), pp. 287-88. See also Neera Badhwar, "Self-Interest and Virtue," in *Self-Interest*, edited by Jeffrey Paul, Fred D. Miller Jr., and Ellen Frankel Paul, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 226-263, and David Kelley, "Stalking the Criminal Mind," Harper's (August 1985), pp. 53-59.
17. Susan Love Brown, "Breaking the Habits of the Heart," *Critical Review* vol. 5:3 (Summer 1991), p. 379.
18. By "mainstream," I mean: "liberal academic theorizing in Departments of Politics and Philosophy in the English-speaking world, usually influenced primarily by Rawls and/or Dworkin." Non-mainstream leftists whose views are to the left of the mainstream consensus are often entirely comfortable with the individualist-collectivist dichotomy. See, for example, Robin Blackburn, "The New Collectivism: Pension Reform, Grey Capitalism, and Complex Socialism," *New Left Review*, vol. 233 (January/February 1999), pp. 3-65. Blackburn's purpose in the article is explicitly to defend a form of collectivism against individualism. One seldom sees mainstream liberals inveighing against the "simplistic" nature of this use of the dichotomy, however.
19. Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), p. xv.
20. For a concise statement of Aristotelian individualism, see *CI*, p. 170.
21. On action theory, see Roderick Long, "Aristotle's Conception of Freedom," *Review of Metaphysics* vol. 49:4 (June 1996), pp. 801-2. On value theory, see Allan Gotthelf, "Aristotle's Conception of Final Causality," p. 233 in *Philosophical Issues in Aristotle's Biology*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987), edited by Allan Gotthelf and James G. Lennox. On choice, see John M. Cooper, *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1975), ch. 2. On politics, see Fred D. Miller Jr., *Nature, Justice and Rights in Aristotle's Politics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
22. Anne E. Pusey and Craig Packer, "Divided We Fall: Cooperation Among Lions," *Scientific American*, vol. 276 (May 1997), pp. 52-59. I thank James Lennox for helpful conversation on the issues in this paragraph (but absolve him of responsibility for what I say here).